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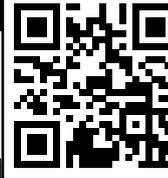
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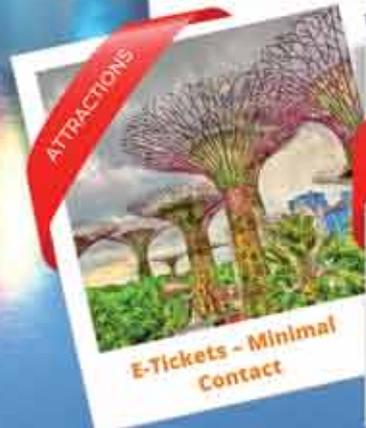
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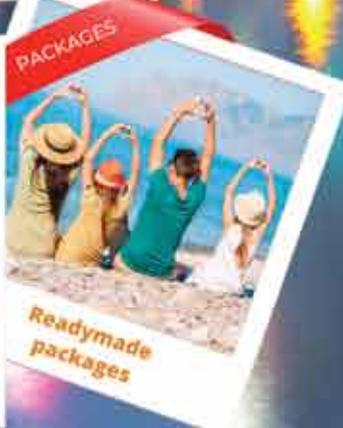
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Visa issues trouble industry

After two years of no travel, opening of borders have paved a visa rush, wherein early appointments are not easily available to those planning to go on summer holidays. It's a struggle for the agents, clients as well as the visa facilitation centres.



Nisha Verma

As borders have opened, the struggle for visa appointments has resurfaced. Post-COVID, travel agents and tour operators are making sure that they get maximum business, but visa appointments have become a hurdle. **Riaz Munshi**, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association (OTOAI) and MD, N Chirag

Travels, agrees, "Major challenges currently are regarding visa and airline fares. We have written to most of the embassies. However, we know that they are not yet working with full team. Even flights are expensive, and hence we need more flights, so that the fair is reduced. We have requested all embassies to deploy more people because this is the time to capitalise as everyone would like to do busi-

ness. All countries are looking for business from India, and there is a huge pent-up demand for the summer season. Hence, if these issues can be resolved, I'm sure even this season will be at par with 2019 volume. Apart from writing to embassies we are discussing the same with VFS too."

Echoing what Munshi said, **Rajan Dua**, MD, Udaan India,

shares, "It's been two years when everything came to a standstill and now we are reviving our work, offices, business, clients and even the internal staff. Everybody, including embassies, airlines, hotels, travel agencies, DMCs - there are issues going on with every aspect of travel. Airline fares have gone sky high. Regarding visas, we have spoken to consulates and embassies.

While they knew that the numbers will pick up, but because of the war, especially Eastern Europe and some Schengen countries haven't got the bandwidth in terms of staff. They are struggling and are incapable of giving us appointments. Although some countries like France and Switzerland are doing well and are the most organised, others have to respond similarly." Understanding the



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI and MD, N Chirag Travels

situation, **Himanshu Patil**, Owner, Kesari Tours and Vice President OTOAI, says that even travel

Contd on page 16 ▶

IATO advocates roadshows

After Ministry of Tourism (MOT) started its virtual roadshows, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has urged the Prime Minister to revive industry by participating in travel fairs and physical roadshows.



Nisha Verma

Ministry of Tourism has started its month-long international roadshow, titled Reconnect 2022, covering 10 major source markets. At the same time, **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO has written a letter to the Prime Minister to help the tourism industry for revival of inbound tourism to India. He has mentioned that the current situa-



Rajiv Mehra
President
IATO

tion is not favourable in terms of overseas promotion and marketing activities by MOT. Mehra has suggested that there is a need for participation in all major international travel marts/fairs and conduct physical B2B meetings at structured roadshows. He said that there is a need to organise cultural & food events and Fam trips for foreign tour operators and media. Electronic and print media campaign should be restarted. ▶

M!CE show boosts segment

The two-day M!CE Travel Show held in Pune recently aimed at stimulating the segment by creating synergies between corporate buyers and sellers of travel products and services.



Hazel Jain

The seventh edition of the M!CE Travel Show 2022 concluded successfully in Pune recently by enabling more than 1,100 meetings between exhibitors and corporate buyers from across India under one roof. The two-day B2B table top event saw 23 exhibitors meet and interact with 45 key corporate buyers on April 23-24, 2022. Organised by DDP Exhibi-



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

M!CE
TRAVEL SHOW

tions, the exclusive M!CE event plans to replicate this in other cities of India soon. Key exhibitors included Singapore Tourism Board, Oman Air, Oman Convention Bureau and Shangri-La as well as

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TAFI spotlight on TCS

The Travel Agents Federation of India has been requesting government to walk the talk and extend ease of doing business for travel industry, which includes scrapping of Tax Collected at Source (TCS).

Hazel Jain

What needs to be done is that TCS needs to be scrapped, says **Ajay Prakash**, President, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI). "It really services no purpose. If the government's purpose is to bring a greater num-



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

ber of people under the tax net, that is already in place. Because anyone who travels overseas is required to file tax returns. The airline records are there for the government to access. If it's a collection of collecting revenue

in advance, I don't know how much of revenue TCS is generating. But what I do know, that it is creating a lot of inconvenience all around, quite contrary to the concept of 'ease of doing business'. We have sent various representations to the government on this – not just TAFI but IATA and TAAI and other bodies have done this. And at the end of the day, we got such a half-baked measure that I don't know what to say about it," he adds.

He said the travel agents are overburdened with compliances.

Session on TCS for members

To help members ride the TCS wave, TAFI recently organised an educational session for its members in Mumbai. Prakash says, "The focus was to explain the nuances of TCS, FEMA and a few other laws and regulations which perhaps not all our members are familiar with. So we invited senior experts in the field to come and talk to our members and educate

them and make them aware of what they need to be careful about when conducting business."

If government's aim is to bring more people under the tax net (through TCS), it is already in place

Jitul Mehta, Western India Chairman, TAFI, who led the entire event, says, "Our members have not understood it accurately and what they need to do while doing business. Some say, it's on the tour package, some say it's on hotels. Or only sightseeing, etc. Basically, one has to be very clear about TCS. So we organised this session."

EU says no to easy transit

Passengers travelling to UK via Schengen countries, barring Netherlands, are being asked for a transit visa before boarding their carriers, a rule that has disturbed the trade over hassles faced by clients.

Nisha Verma

The opening of borders and international scheduled flights from India in March was followed by many Indians headed to UK via EU countries being denied boarding, owing to lack of transit Schengen Visa. This requirement has been put in place now by Schengen countries, despite UK already following it for years, which is a clear result of Brexit. However, Indian passport holders travelling to the UK can transit the Netherlands without having to obtain a Transit Schengen Visa beforehand, announced KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.

This requirement has left many confused and frustrated, leading to many changes in airlines at the last minute, which depends on availability of alternate flights at this time.

Guldeep Singh Sahni, MD, Weldon Tours and Travels, says,



Guldeep Singh Sahni
Managing Director
Weldon Tours and Travels



Geetanjali Alamshah
Director
Universal Journeys India

It is their tug of war and it's going to impact both, especially their respective airlines

Now countries and airlines should attract customers and show how easy it is to travel

"Europe has responded back by putting this restriction and it's between European countries and the UK, which always asked for a transit visa to go to Europe via any UK point. It is their tug of war

and it's going to impact both, especially their respective airlines. They have to do a rethink, because the volume from India is huge. People will now use

Contd on page 16 ▶

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S for Tourism

The new buzz word for tourism is sustainability. Yes, globally the industry has moved its conversations from the pandemic to sustainability. As we rebuild tourism and make the most of this fresh start, we cannot ignore the importance of making this industry more accountable for its actions.

So, what is sustainable tourism? Sustainable tourism is defined by the UN Environment Programme and UNWTO as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.” Additionally, sustainable tourism refers to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and establishing a suitable balance between these three dimensions to guarantee a long-term sustainability.

Further, UNWTO mentions that, as the growth of Travel & Tourism hopes to outpace that of the global economy, which means, more international arrivals, which reached 1.5 billion in 2019, are forecast to reach 1.8 billion by 2030. It is essential, that together, we ensure that this growth is sustainable and inclusive, and that it contributes positively to the communities, natural ecosystems and cultural heritage, upon which our sector depends.

While, in the past, sustainable tourism was just meant to be carbon footprint, it has now gone much beyond that and needs everyone’s attention. Recently, I attended the WTTC global conference in Manila and most of the conversations were around securing future of the planet and rebalancing the equation with the environment.

The Indian hospitality sector has made some remarkable progress towards sustainable tourism. It is setting goals and following a roadmap. While this will take a few years to implement, it’s a step in the right direction and kudos to them for these few steps.

While personally I feel that India can easily become a champion for sustainable tourism, it’s the education and a clear roadmap that we are lacking. As a community, sustainable practices come easy to us, but do we have it in us to become global leaders for sustainable tourism? I hope the answer is yes!

Tour operators’ revenue to go up

High pent-up demand, eased restrictions and higher consumer confidence are expected to drive recovery in domestic travel to over 80 per cent of the pre-pandemic level. However, segments such as outbound and inbound travel should see gradual recovery.

TT Bureau

The Indian tours and travel industry could see revenue increase this fiscal to over 70 per cent of the pre-pandemic (fiscal 2019-20) level, riding on high pent-up demand and increasing confidence of people to travel as the pandemic risks wane, according to a recent report by the CRISIL Ratings.

The report stated that while full recovery to the pre-pandemic level is expected only by financial year 2024, continuing recovery with

and abroad, has taken the severest beating from Covid-19.

Post the initial shock of the pandemic in the first half of fiscal 2021, which brought the entire industry to a standstill, tours and travel operators witnessed gradual recovery in the second half, with improving air traffic and demand for short domestic holidays.

In the first quarter of fiscal 2022, however, the severe second wave of the pandemic slammed the brakes on recovery, that too in the peak travel season of summer, tamping revenue down to less than 20 per cent of the pre-pandemic level.

Corporate travel should also rebound to over 70% as corporates resume WFO

Naveen Vaidyanathan
Director, CRISIL Ratings

The third quarter of fiscal 2022 saw the industry make healthy recovery as the second wave abated, taking revenue up to 60 per cent of the pre-pandemic level on the back of high pent-up demand. To be sure, air traffic reached around 70 per cent of pre-pandemic levels during the third quarter, led by domestic traffic.

The third wave during the last quarter of fiscal 2022 was only a blip in the road to recovery given its lower severity, shorter and limited lockdowns by governments, and improved vaccination rates. With this, the industry appears to be firmly on recovery path, with revenue estimated at over 40 per cent of the pre-pandemic level last fiscal, more than 70 per cent in the current one, and full recovery likely in fiscal 2024, from the lows of 20 per cent in fiscal 2021.

improved operating profitability, supported by cost-control measures and healthy liquidity, will support credit profiles from the .

The study took into consideration three major players that account for over half of the domestic tours and travel industry.

The industry, which provides services such as air/bus ticketing and hotels/packages for both leisure and corporate travel within India



Commenting on the facts, **Naveen Vaidyanathan**, Director, CRISIL Ratings, said, “High pent-up demand, eased restrictions, and higher consumer confidence are expected to drive recovery in domestic travel to more than 80 per cent of the pre-pandemic level. Corporate travel should also rebound to over 70 per cent, as corporates increasingly resume work from office. However, segments such as outbound and inbound travel should see a more gradual recovery as restrictions in other countries ease gradually.”

The continued demand recovery, along with sustained focus on prudent cost measures and adoption of technology, could result in operating profit of over ₹150 crore this fiscal for travel operators.

This would be a turnaround after two consecutive fiscals of operating losses. The industry had already reported an operating profit for the third quarter of fiscal 2022, but losses in the first half of the fiscal and the third wave of the pandemic in the fourth quarter are expected to result in losses of about ₹200 crore for the full fiscal 2022. This is against operating losses of around ₹600 crore during fiscal 2021.

Ankush Tyagi, Associate Director, CRISIL Ratings, said, “Travel operators typically have a negative

working capital cycle because of high customer advances and creditors, resulting in limited dependence on debt. Significant reduction in business had resulted in working capital outflow for the industry in fiscal 2021, which has reversed last fiscal and may accelerate in the current one with

Operators have a negative working capital cycle due of high customer advances

Ankush Tyagi
Associate Director, CRISIL Ratings

expected business recovery. Furthermore, companies had raised significant capital in the face of pandemic-related uncertainties, which boosted their liquidity. Cash balance of over ₹4,300 crore vis-à-vis debt of ₹2,000 crore as of December 2021 supports credit profiles.”

That said, any further wave of the pandemic or new strain of the virus, as well as geo-political risks such as prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict, which impact travel, will bear watching.

Highlights

- ❖ Tours and travel industry in India could see revenue increase to more than 70 per cent of the pre-pandemic level in FY2022
- ❖ However, full recovery to the pre-pandemic level is expected only by financial year 2024.
- ❖ The continued demand recovery, along with sustained focus on prudent cost measures and adoption of technology, could result in operating profit of over ₹150 crore this fiscal for travel operators.

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TAFI's TCS knowledge session held in Mumbai sees attendance from more than 100 agencies

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Goa to roll out online application & registration for tourism industry in a week: Tourism Minister

India's hotel occupancy and ADR surpassed pre-pandemic levels from 16-18 April 2022: STR

Our target is to have net carbon zero footprint by 2050, says Pratima Badhwar, Accor

More than 120 travel agencies attend TAFI's TCS knowledge session held in Mumbai

TCS withdrawal to boost tourism

With a major thrust towards boosting travel in India, the Indian government has announced that domestic tour operators will no longer be required to collect tax on overseas vacation packages sold to non-resident visitors. The travel fraternity applauds this move of the government.

Janice Alyosius

With the aim of boosting tourism in India, the Indian government has decided that domestic tour operators are no longer required to collect taxes on overseas tour packages sold to non-residents.

According to Section 206C (1G) of the Income-tax Act, 1961, a seller of an overseas tour package may collect tax from a buyer at a rate of 5 per cent of the package price.

Representations were received from domestic tour operators facing difficulties in collection of tax from non-resident individuals visiting India booking overseas tour package from such domestic tour operators. Since such persons may not have a PAN, tax is required to be collected at higher rates. Further, such non-residents may find it

difficult to furnish their ITR and claim refunds.

In order to remove such difficulties, the Central Government, in exercise of powers conferred under section 206C(1G) of the Act, has specified that the provisions of the said section shall not apply to a buyer being an individual who is not a resident in India in terms of clause (1) and clause (1A) of section 6 of the Act and who is visiting India. Hence, a domestic tour operator is not required to collect tax on sale of overseas tour package to non-resident individuals visiting India.

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, said, "This decision is a big relief for the entire travel and tourism fraternity as it was not logical to collect tax at source from the Foreign Tour Operators/Foreign Tourists as they are not residents of India. They neither possess any Indian PAN



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

This decision (taken by govt) is a big relief for the entire travel and tourism fraternity

card nor they pay any income tax and hence are not liable to the Indian Income Tax Law. Therefore, there is no scope for

them of availing any refund from the Levy of TCS. These persons are subject to taxation in their native country. It was, therefore, necessary that the provisions of TCS should not be made applicable to persons / companies who are Indian resident/located outside India."

IATO apprehended that in case TCS is collected from non-resident buyers such as FTOs, individual foreign citizens/ tourists, the Indian Tour Operators will lose their business, as the non-resident buyers will directly approach the tour operators based in Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives and buy the overseas tour package from those tour operators directly skipping Indian Tour Operators, resulting in loss of business for the Indian Tour Operators and a portion of foreign exchange. The Association strongly recommended that the provisions of TCS should be

amended not to be made applicable to sale of overseas tour package to non-resident class of buyers / FTOs for packages outside Indian territory.

He added, "We thank the Finance Minister, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Tourism for understanding our view point and withdrawing Tax Collection at Source (TCS) on sale of overseas tour packages for foreign tourists booked through tour operators located in India."

Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI said, "We are truly delighted and relieved that the Government has withdrawn Tax Collection of Source (TCS) on sale of overseas tour packages for foreign tourists who book tour through tour operators located in India. This is a positive move and will certainly reduce the burden on Outbound Tour Operators, who are struggling to stand back on their feet."

'India now hot travel destination'

India aced the vaccination drive, and now the resumption of flights and introduction of e-visas have made India a hot destination for travellers, says Arshdeep Anand, Chairperson, ATOAI Women's Collective. She expresses hope that the country will reach the pre-pandemic levels by 2024, if the emerging variants are kept under control.

Janice Alyosius

There has been a surge in demand for travel after the resumption of flights, although the fares remain high. Holiday plans are already in motion for the upcoming summer

tion and lost revenue," said **Arshdeep Anand**, Chairperson, ATOAI Women's Collective.

She further added, "India aced the vaccination drive, and now the resumption of flights and introduction of e-visas have made India a hot destination for travellers. Meeting family is the number one trend after improvement COVID situation. But the visit to family is supplemented with some experiential travel. Himalayas are beckoning again and foreigners are returning to trek and scale the peaks. The recent visit from the New Zealand Alpine Team for an expedition to Changabang in Uttarakhand is a sign of confidence for travellers as well as operators."

Commenting on when will India Tourism reach the pre-pandemic levels, she said, "India is expected to reach the pre-pandemic levels by 2024, if



Arshdeep Anand
Chairperson, ATOAI Women's Collective

Most important thing one can do is to stay updated with changing travel dynamics

we can keep the emerging variants under control. Indians are known for their resilience and enterprising nature."

From an operator's perspective, the most important thing a person can do is to stay updated with the changing dynamics of travel as COVID guidelines keep changing frequently. It is recommended to ensure every traveller is updated on COVID-19 vaccination and

testing before departure, as every country/ airline has different requirements. All requirements and recommendations at each location during travel should be followed, including wearing a mask and following recommendations for protecting yourself and others as

a norm will continue. The concept of vaccine passports has gained significant traction among policy-makers. The EU Commission has already proposed a "digital green pass" for travel in Europe and the US government is eyeing a similar approach, Anand said.



season. Short to mid-haul destinations are being favoured, but people remain cautious while booking fully-refundable tickets.

"As a result of withdrawal of TCS on sales of overseas tour packages to foreign tourists, the Indian travel industry would have had to charge higher rates for the same package being offered by FTOs, which would have led to unnecessary competi-

Fam trip creates awareness



The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) recently organised the 'TAT/TG Amazing New Chapters Mega FAM Trip', in which about 60-70 travel agents, media and key opinion leaders (KOLs) from around Asia and the South Pacific were introduced to new tourism products and services on offer in Chiang Mai and Phuket.

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France on top of mind for India

A 10-member Indian delegation met old and new friends at the recently held Rendezvous 2022 in Nantes, France. The agents from four Indian cities attended the two-day expo, which gave them an opportunity to interact with nearly 668 exhibitors from all over France, including Marseille Tourism and Le Voyage A Nantes.

“The two-day expo was excellent. We got to meet some great sellers from France. I met some new DMCs, new hotels, and some tourism boards like Toulouse and Bordeaux. So it was good to learn about the new attractions and activities in the different regions which helps me in selling France because most of my clients are repeat travellers for whom we tailor-make itineraries. I feel the younger generation will definitely look at self-drive options in France, which is cheaper than renting a car.”



Asmita Ramnani
Co-Founder, Indiana Travel Services (Mumbai)

“It was a lovely experience meeting everyone after two years. We had fruitful meetings here. We connected with our old partners, understand the new norms if any and to learn about some new activities. A lot of things have changed from the client perspective, for instance those who enjoyed city breaks are now asking for rural visits and apartments instead of big hotels. We have started getting inquiries for France, they are mostly asking for outdoor activities. We met a few sellers, who have products that may appeal to my clientele.”



Anoop Kanuga
Director, Bathija Travels (Mumbai)

“Attending this show gave me a chance to understand the situation on-ground in France personally. This happened at the right time just before India restarted its scheduled flights on 27 March and the tour operators getting ready to selling tours to Europe. So this is a really good time to see what new products are available, building new contacts, etc. We have in fact sent one group to France already since the pandemic. Nantes is new and it may take some time to create demand among Indian travellers.”



Sudhir Patil
Founder & Director, Veena World (Mumbai)



Manish Kriplani
MD, Baywatch Travels (Chennai)

“I met many suppliers from different regions. We also see some new regions like Nantes. Most of them are keen on India market. There was a time when the new regions would discount the India market saying they may not like it. But now any region you meet, they want Indians coming there even though we may not know the place. That's a welcome change we see now because they have seen how Indians have travelling even during the pandemic. They also know now that Indians are high spenders.”

“Attending Rendezvous has given me a new perspective on how I can sell France better as against the normal destinations like Paris, Nice and Monte Carlo. There are the wine regions, Lyon, the Alps, the south of France, and Provence which have some very nice palaces that are more popular than the Palace of Versailles and less crowded also. I want to include that in my next itinerary with a two-day tour covering Fontainebleau and Provence and then return to Paris.”



Shekar G. Kandur
CEO, Flight Shop Holidays (Bengaluru)



Sudhanshu Jaipuria
Director, Travel Oyster India (Delhi)

“This is my third time attending Rendezvous in France. After the pandemic, we have all become like a family wherein we all want to work more closely with each other and have more meaningful conversations. In the past, it was more business-like but now the experience is more personalised and we are all trying to have a better connect. There are newer products that have come into the market and because of the gap, the demand from India is now for a new kind of travel product.”

Inputs by Hazel Jain

Pent-up demand to drive global travel

India has always been an extremely important market for Malaysia Airlines, and being the fastest growing economy in the world at present, the country offers a huge potential. The airline sees many people flying into India from Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, and other countries, apart from the outbound travellers.

Janice Alyosius

With membership in the Oneworld Alliance, Malaysia Airlines provides seamless connections to more than 1,000 destinations in 170 countries.

The Airlines has a fleet of 80 aircraft, which includes 47 Boeing 737-800s (six Airbus 330-200s, 15 Airbus 330-300s, and six Airbus 350-900XWs, which are no longer in service), and is active throughout Asia, Australasia, the Middle East and Europe. “We are expecting to take delivery of 25 new Boeing 737-8 aircraft from May 2023 through the beginning of 2026,” said **Amit Mehta**, Country Manager - South Asia, Malaysia Airlines.

From March 27 this year Malaysia Airlines operates 25 weekly flights from India, including flights from five major cities - Delhi,

Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai. “By early 2020, we will be serving 6 destinations including Kochi with 60 weekly flights. Moving forward, we intend to ramp up the capacity in line with borders re-opening and demand forecasts,” he added.

Strategic moves to ensure recovery

As a top priority, Malaysia Airlines is committed to facilitating safe and seamless travel, so that passengers can fly confidently and enjoy the inimitable Malaysian hospitality. Malaysia Airlines' 7-star rating for COVID-19 health and safety measures from airline ratings highlights the airline's commitment to comprehensive safety protocols. The airlines is offering significant savings on airfare to all destinations within its network to encourage passengers to fly with them.

Outlook for Indian market

“India has always been an ex-

remely important market for Malaysia Airlines and being the fastest growing economy in the world, it offers a huge potential. In addition to outbound travellers,



Amit Mehta
Country Manager - South Asia
Malaysia Airlines

we also see many people flying to India from Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, and other countries,” said Mehta.

“We believe that in a market like India where customers have been cooped up at their homes for approximately two years,



there would be a strong pent-up demand to travel again. We are expecting closer or short-haul destinations such as Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to see a strong uptick in the next few quarters, among the first-time international leisure travellers. We are expecting high leisure demand on the India - Malaysia route,” he further added.

Malaysia Airlines anticipates that with the development of the domestic network in India, more customers will be able to fly into Indian online points from tier-2 and tier-3 cities. The domestic air connectivity will also reduce the cost and travel time for tier-2 and tier-3 customers.

Changes in route

As a part of their expansion plans, Malaysia Airlines will be reinstat-

ing capacities in phases and gradually increasing frequencies to current destinations. “We will be closely monitoring the market in the coming months to seek new

terms of cancellation and refund. Additionally, the fare product includes priority check-in, baggage and boarding, as well as 35 kg of baggage” highlighted Mehta.

Key growth drivers

Speaking of the key growth drivers in the air passenger travel, Mehta said that the biggest driver has to be pent-up demand owing to the temporary halt in global travel. Potential travellers are already searching for the best deals to their favorite destinations and are planning to make up for the lost travel time. Another key driver is enhanced air connectivity within India, which will in turn unleash many first-time travelers.

Our products have been developed based on customer feedback and requirements

opportunities. Our tailor-made products have been developed based on customer feedback and requirements. We encourage customers to check out our new fare products, especially the Flex fare, which has the most flexibility in

“Despite the turbulent times that the travel industry has gone through, we anticipate improvements in travel demand. We expect destinations such as Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, to see a strong uptick,” he added.

‘Welcome Back to Thailand’

To make travellers choose Thailand as a destination this summer, TravelBullz and Tourism Authority of Thailand come together with a special campaign, which offers exclusive deals and promotions for agents.

 Janice Alyosius

TravelBullz is back with another campaign: “Welcome Back to Thailand”. With this third campaign launched with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the company aims to engage with the travel fraternity to promote Thailand in a big way. Under the campaign, TravelBullz brings “super exclusive limited time deals and promotions” to engage all types of travellers with a number of hotel partners offering “amazing rates and discounts”.

“Welcome Back to Thailand” is an initiative of TravelBullz in association with Tourism Authority of Thailand and over 40 hotels in Thailand & over 10

 TravelBullz aims to engage with the travel fraternity to promote Thailand in a big way

Key travel agent / tour operator partners in India enhancing the number of travellers to choose Thailand as a destination this summer of 2022. We have curated four themes namely: KIDS GO FREE, Honeymoon Specials, Workation in Thailand and Party in Thailand, targeting families, honeymooners, GEN Z who work from anywhere and everywhere and friends and families who have been missing travelling and partying to come to Thailand and experience Thai Hospitality,” said **KD Singh**, Founder & President, TravelBullz.

Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi Office, said, “We are excited to launch the ‘Welcome Back to Thailand’ campaign in association with Travelbullz with the ‘Visit Thailand Year 2022: Amazing New Chapters’, which aims to show Thailand’s readiness to welcome back international and

Indian tourists. This pan India campaign is to engage with the B2B as well as Thailand partners, which will focus on new segments. Participating travel agents and front liners will also get a chance to win a Fam trip to Thailand. It is aimed to educate frontline staff to learn and



explore the new products and experience them first hand.”

The two-month campaign, launched on 15 April this year, lasts for two months. Travel-

lers can avail the benefit till 31 October 2022. The destinations comprise Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, Krabi, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, Ko Samui in Thailand. The campaign offers rewards and recognition programme. The bookers will receive for vouchered bookings between 15 April



KD Singh
Founder & President
TravelBullz



Vachirachai Sirisumpan
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand,
New Delhi Office

and 15 June. The company is promoting the campaign through its B2B Homepage - Web Ban-

ner, E-Flyers and social media, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. 



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'Indians returning to Switzerland'

Rhaetian Railway is happy that after being without any overseas customers from outside Europe for two years, Indians are now returning to Switzerland as bookings from India trickle in for its Glacier Express and the Bernina Express, says Sebastian Blaettler, Market Manager Asia-Pacific, Rhaetian Railway.



Hazel Jain

Sebastian Blaettler, Market Manager Asia-Pacific, Rhaetian Railway, was in India recently to meet key travel agents, tour operators, and DMCs from Mumbai and Delhi. He also participated in the Switzerland Travel Experience B2B show organised by Switzerland Tourism in Goa. Speaking about the India market, he says, "We are happy that after two years being without any overseas customers from outside Europe, Indians are coming back and we are already seeing bookings trickling in. They are still in small numbers but at least bookings are on the way back." Rhaetian Railway runs Switzerland's two most famous scenic railway lines – the Glacier Express and the Bernina Express.

To book the product for their clients, Blaettler says that travel

agents have three options. "The one I propose is to reach out to an agent who is already working with us. We are working closely with all the GSAs of Rail Europe and the Switzerland Specialists in India. However, agents can also access our B2C website. But for those who may not predominantly be selling Switzerland, the rail is still a rather complex product. For them, I would suggest reaching out to the experts in the market who already selling rail. Of course, to sell our product, they do not need to be Switzerland Specialists," he explains.

A comfortable to experience

This product will appeal to everyone, feels Blaettler. "It's for travellers who want to experience a country but they do not want to hike up. They want a comfortable experience and our product offers this. You get to witness alpine mountain land-



Sebastian Blaettler
Market Manager Asia-Pacific
Rhaetian Railway

Visitors get to witness Alpine mountain landscapes while sitting in the train

scapes while sitting comfortably in the train. We have also made some improvements recently. We have introduced a new his-

toric train around tunnels and a toy train which goes to the base of one of the most iconic railway bridge. This again is suitable for small family groups with kids. We also have a railway museum in the region," he informs.

Speaking about one of the key requirements for the India market, Blaettler adds, "We have full catering services on board the Glacier Express. On the Excellence Class, food is included in the ticket and vegetarian options are always available. I'm a vegetarian myself. In fact, we even have an Indian meal available in our normal classes. Generally in Switzerland also I would day travellers will get a variety of cuisines, including vegetarian and Indian food."

Working with rail experts

While Rhaetian Railway does not have any special introductory rates for agents post Covid, Bla-



ettler says, "We are always open to helping Switzerland Experts who want to push us pro-actively, who are rail experts and want to work on this connection between Switzerland and Italy and putting a train in their itinerary and who want to market train journeys as an experience. We are not really a public transport – we are an experience. And we are open for collaboration with the travel trade, so I am also asking agents to please reach out to us."

Blaettler is very confident and enthusiastic about the

Indian market. "The Vaccination Pass in Switzerland has been cancelled so we are very positive. Now finally we have positive signs again after the pandemic and that's also why we are here in the market right now immediately after opening up. We want to talk to the trade, we want to encourage them to sell, we want to provide training and assistance to them. We are also represented in India by Kunal Kothari of KKR World. I feel India has tremendous potential for us," he adds.

Nantes: France's art capital

Creativity is the DNA of Nantes city, says Xavier Theret, Head of International Promotions & Relations, Le Voyage a Nantes – the tourism board of the city, where this year's Rendezvous en France was held. He is hopeful that its art and cultural tourism will succeed in attracting repeat Indian visitors to France.



Hazel Jain

Nantes is largely unknown to the Indian audience but **Xavier Theret**, Head of International Promotions & Relations, Le Voyage a Nantes, plans to change that. He says, "We don't get a lot of Indian visitors to Nantes, honestly speaking. But you have to understand that Nantes was not a tourist destination; it was an industrial city. We had shipyards, but they closed down at the end of 1980s and the city started to decline. The new mayor at the time wanted to create a new image for the city and change the city through art by inviting artists and installing their work in the public space."

And that is how it started for Nantes as a tourist destination – from 2007 with three massive art projects. The first one was Les Machines de l'Île, which was a really big boost to the tourism

landscape of Nantes, followed by the re-opening of the castle of the Duke of Brittany. And then it saw the beginning of the Estuary Project along the river Loire which had artworks from different artists. Under the artistic direction of Jean Blaise, the project now comprises 30 permanent outdoor works.

Theret says, "Art and culture is probably the quickest way to change the image of a place. If you wait for the economy to improve it takes time. When you start to reshape a city with art, from one moment to another you start to look at differently. We also have fancy architecture that is a bit out of ordinary; we encourage creativity. Creativity is the DNA of Nantes city. Once we had these things, things started to change in the minds of people, especially the French media which is so focussed on Paris. And they started to take



Xavier Theret
Head of International Promotions & Relations, Le Voyage a Nantes

Art and culture is probably the quickest way to change the image of a place

note of Nantes and that's how Nantes started to attract visitors from Paris, and then other cities of France and then Europe."

In 2011, the mayor created a new company to handle tourism and culture and that is how Le Voyage a Nantes was born – it literally translated to 'the journey to Nantes'. "We have more than 300 people working with us, which is massive for a tourism board," he says. The city now has a Green line 20 kms long that tourists can follow and see the city's main attractions. It also has an annual summer festival also called 'Le Voyage a Nantes' in July-August where it invites artists and dedicates few spaces for them in the city.

Will Indians like Nantes?

Do you think you can attract Indians to Nantes based on art and culture? "Honestly, I don't know. What I know of the Indian market is that Indians love the mountains hence French Alps is popular with them. But I think that has changed. And I hope we can do something with India. It's



a market that I think needs a lot of communication – they don't know much about this area so there is a lot of work to be done," Theret adds.

He adds that for long-haul markets like India his team has worked on an itinerary that starts from Nantes and goes to Mont-St-Michel. "Right now, travelling from Paris to Mont-St-Michel is complicated and five-hour long. So we want to position Nantes as the gateway

to Mont-St-Michel. Nantes also has a direct flight from Paris so tourists can combine Nantes with Mont-St-Michel – a popular attraction – which is a tidal island and mainland commune in Normandy," he says.

Good to know

For unvaccinated travellers visiting France, a negative RT PCR done 72 hours before departure will suffice.

KTM to show caravan tourism

The 11th Kerala Travel Mart (KTM), to be held from 5-7 May 2022, will be focusing on projecting the state as a hotspot for caravan tourism and also invigorate tourism in Malabar.

Nisha Verma

The upcoming Kerala Travel Mart will have stalls of private sellers as well as stalls of government entities associated with the tourism sector. KTM has 600 members. So far, nearly 500 domestic buyers and 150 international buyers have registered for the event.

The 11th edition of KTM will see Kerala being projected as a caravan tourism hotspot. Also, the focus will be on promotion of lesser explored regions of Malabar as well as advertising the state as a popular wedding destination will also be the focus of the biggest tourism buyer-seller conclave.

Chief Minister **Pinarayi Vijayan** will inaugurate the KTM at Grand Hyatt in Bolgatty, while the venues for the subsequent proceedings will be Sagara and Samudrika convention centres at Willingdon Island. "We have sellers who are into core tourism

activities such caravan, plantation and backwater resorts, besides wedding destination and MICE

added that Kerala, with its idyllic landscape, had been rising in prominence as a wedding desti-



V R Krishna Teja
Director, Kerala Tourism



Jose Pradeep
Hon. Secretary, Kerala Travel Mart

(meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions)," said **V R Krishna Teja**, Kerala Tourism Director. Kerala plans to invigorate tourism in Malabar by renewing its focus on the travel map of the region, said Teja.

Jose Pradeep, Honorary Secretary, KTM, has said that travel is changing and caravan tourism has immense domestic and international tourism potential. This will aid in their promotion. He

nation but restrictions on the sale of liquor in bars has been a disappointment. Thus, he informed that people have started moving to destinations such as Goa. Thus, they are trying to project Kerala as a wedding destination and bring the crowd back.

While earlier the focus was on domestic tourists, but now that international flights have resumed, KTM organisers will be targeting international visitors too.

ATM starts in Dubai on May 9

1,500 exhibitors, representatives from 112 destinations to take part in the event, which is being organised on the theme 'The future of international travel and tourism'.

Janice Alyosius

More than 1,500 exhibitors and representatives from 112 global destinations, along with an estimated 20,000 attendees, are expected to take part in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2022, which will take place in the UAE from 9 to 12 May this year.

Taking place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) in collaboration with Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), the

called Travel Forward, has undergone a year-on-year expansion of almost 400 per cent. In addition to the latest travel technology products and services, the

\$500,000 of funding – as well as the opportunity to compete for an additional \$500,000 of investment as part of TV show, Meet the Drapers.



29th edition of ATM will form an essential part of the UAE's annual Arabian Travel Week. The theme of this year's ATM is 'The future of international travel and tourism'.

One of many show highlights, the revamped and rebranded ATM Travel Tech event, previously

ATM Travel Tech Stage will host a series of seminars, debates and presentations focused on the long-term trajectory of tourism in the Middle East.

The inaugural ATM Draper-Aladdin Start-up Competition, to be held in conjunction with AladdinB2B and Draper Associates, will see 15 travel, tourism and hospitality start-ups pitch for

After joining ATM Virtual 2021, both the ARIVALDubai@ATM forum and the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) will participate live in Dubai for the first time this year.

This year's in-person event will be followed by the third installment of ATM Virtual, which will take place from May 17 to May 18, 2022.



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Relish your holidays with gypsy and tree camping in

Madhya Pradesh

- If you are planning for a camping trip to utilise your summer holidays in the lap of nature, "The heart of incredible India"- Madhya Pradesh has something unique for you

Pitching a tent on the ground, sleeping under the stars, having fun with friends and enjoying bonfire with celestial stories, this is what you may have experienced in the past during your camping trip, but what if Madhya Pradesh invite you to experience all these activities in a unique way?

You just need to forget the old-style camping because there is something exciting and better for you in the jungles of Satpura Tiger Reserve (Satpura National Park). Madhya Pradesh Tourism has introduced the newest and most thrilling way to camp out - 'Tree Camping' and 'Gypsy Camping'.

You will also experience stargazing, bonfire, and dusk drive, swimming, riverside jungle trail with bird watching and tribal cuisine with barbeque in Satpura National Park. One more thing that needs to be added is, with tree and gypsy camping, you should not be worried about the creepy crawlers that might intrude inside your tent at night.

Take your trip to next level with tree camping

You do not have to find any clear and smooth ground to pitch the tent. All that is required is some big and stable trees and this is it. You can enjoy this camping sitting in your tent just above the water or on a steep terrain.

You just need to choose how far up from the ground you want to hang your tent. You will be able to explore a better view if you choose to set your camp on



a height to witness the scenic beauty of Satpura all around.

Gypsy camping – Night on wheels

Here you are going to experience night on wheels nestled deep in the forest of the Satpura National Park. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, these camps offer a balanced blend of adventures and calmness. With delights of river side camping and stargazing, this trip would take you in a rollercoaster of so many experiences like campfire just beside a river, witnessing the twinkling sky and talking about the

secrets of these dense forests.

Experience a perfect morning

The locations for camps are thrilling and safe at the same time. This is your choice, whether you want to go for riverside or a valley view or want to fix a meeting with Satpura's tribal culture & jungle.

The highest point in the Satpura range, Dhoopgarh hilltop is a beautiful spot to see spectacular sunsets and sunrises. Your morning in Satpura would be the best in your life as you will be

able to witness the spectacular sunrise with a cup of tea and breakfast in your hands, listening to relaxing nature songs.

What to carry?

Nothing... You will be given all the required camping gears and equipment along with the tents. So just pack your bag keeping the essential things and head towards Madhya Pradesh for experiencing tree and gypsy camping.

What is offered?

- ❖ Authentic customized jungle experience
- ❖ Accommodation in 'three-person' tree tents along with sleeping bags

- ❖ Bonfire and stargazing with celestial stories
- ❖ Authentic local BBQ/ dinner, breakfast
- ❖ Early morning guided trek with Bird watching

If you are all set to experience camping in Satpura Tiger Reserve, you should not forget to visit Pachmarhi, (also known as Queen of Satpura), one of the best places

to spend summer and monsoon holidays in India. It is also an attractive destination for film shooting.

Here is the list of places you can explore in Pachmarhi

- ❖ 'Apsara Kund', Priyadarshini-Forsyth Point, Mahadeo Temple, Chauragarh Temple, Rajat Pratap (Silver Fall), Jamuna Prapat (Bee Falls), Jalawataran, Ramaya Kund (Irene Pool), Handi Khoh, Pandavas Caves and Jata Shankar Cave, Herbal Garden, Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve and many other herbal parks .

Things to do in Pachmarhi:

- ❖ Jeep Safari, Horse Riding, ATV Ride, Land Parasailing, Zip lining, Waterfall Trekking & Hiking.

Warm and welcoming place to stay

There are 11 Madhya Pradesh Tourism's hotels in Pachmarhi, with 156 luxurious rooms, which suit your taste and budget.



Here is the list of hotels

- ❖ MPT Amaltas, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Bison Resort, Madhai
- ❖ MPT Champak Bungalow, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Club View, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Devdaru Bungalow, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Glen View, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Highlands, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Karnikar Bungalow, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Nilamber Cottages, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Rock End Manor, Pachmarhi
- ❖ MPT Satpura Retreat, Pachmarhi

How to book

Email: thegypscampspachmarhi@gmail.com

Contact details: 9205515652/ 8989421281

Booking platform: Call/ WhatsApp/Website/Email

Experiences: - Stargazing, bonfire, Dusk drive, swimming, riverside jungle trail with bird watching, tribal cuisine with barbeque.

Locations

Gypsy Camping

Pachmarhi - A riverside/ forest campsite in the buffer zone of Satpura tiger reserve.

Madhai - A forest/riverside campsite in the buffer zone of Satpura tiger reserve.

(Near Denwa Backwater)

Tree Camping

Pachmarhi - A riverside/ forest campsite in the buffer zone of Satpura tiger reserve (Near Dehariya & Panarpani)

Vistara flies high on trade ties

Vistara airlines, which started flights to Paris six months back and also flies to London and Frankfurt, has tied up with Air France. The partnership or interline with Air France is meant for both airlines to help each other, says Sumeet Gosain, Head of Sales, India, Vistara.



Nisha Verma

Sumeet Gosain, Head of Sales, India, Vistara, shares that the Paris flight started six months back. Vistara also flies to London and Frankfurt. Gosain informs, "We have also tied up with Air France and all the interline fares are already in the system for agents to sell tickets from any of the onward points. Currently, we have twice weekly flights to Paris and we fly our 787-900 series aircraft, with three cabins. Business class has flatbeds and even premium economy has very plush and comfortable seats with a dedicated cabin. Hence, it's a much more dedicated service even in premium economy."

He added that the partnership or interline with Air France is meant for both airlines to help each other. "We have a strength and brand presence within India, but in Europe we are still new. Hence we



bank upon each other's strengths. The fares are aligned such that customers can choose between both the carriers," he explains.

OTOAI collab

Gosain believes that OTOAI has been a great partner. "I would like to sincerely thank each one of the participants from OTOAI for making it great. There was a huge level of involvement from all the members. I look forward for a greater support from everyone. The biggest highlight for me were the partners. Each one of them was phenomenal."

New sectors

Talking about new routes on the anvil, Gosain reveals that they

have a very firm and strong growth trajectory for 15 months. "We are getting almost 20 aircrafts, which means more than one aircraft per month, and these will be deployed in a combination of domestic and international flights. We are planning to start the flight to US very soon. All the approvals are in place and we were just waiting for the aircraft, and very soon direct flight between India and the US will commence," he shares.

Working with trade

Gosain believes that trade partners are their strongest supporters. "I think their success is most important and a key feature in our growth story. I've always made our proposals, our plans and offers keeping them at the forefront and that's going to continue. I believe in the partnership and the kind of support I get from all the agencies and I continue to support them in the best possible way from our perspective, in terms of tweaking

dates, making deals which are mutually beneficial. We will continue to do that," he claims.

"In the last one quarter, as travel is coming back with a vengeance, we have seen that the partners

This shows that both trade partners are pushing us as well as corporates and travellers are preferring us over our competitors. It's a very healthy sign and I hope that continues," he adds.

Traders programme

In light of increased travel for trade fairs across the world, Gosain says, "We saw an opportunity, especially when we started these flights, whether it was to Frankfurt or to Paris, that a lot of trader movement was happening to these destinations.

"There are a lot of fairs, for fashion, garment industry and various other industries, for which people travel to and from both these points. There was a lot of demand and I thought there was this vacuum where people had not customised offers for traders because they generally move with a lot of cargo. They have huge baggage on board as well.

Hence, we've made this program, keeping them in mind, where we'd give them certain extra benefits in terms of baggage as well as flexibilities to take care of their specific needs. We've brought down fares for them from a commercial perspective. Hence, it's a win-win



Sumeet Gosain
Head of Sales, India, Vistara

have really contributed towards our success. It's very clear that the support that we get from our partners and corporates has resulted in our market share getting much higher than the capacity share we have in the marketplace.

I believe in the partnership and the kind of support I get from all agencies and I continue to support them

situation. We get their patronage and they get the service product at a much reasonable cost," he informs.

Glimpses of KERALA

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A slender coastal strip shaped by its layered landscape, almost 600km of glorious Arabian Sea coast and beaches, a languid network of glistening backwaters and the spice-and tea-covered hills of the Western Ghats, Kerala is a world away from the frenzy of elsewhere.

Besides its famous backwaters, elegant houseboats, ayurvedic treatments and delicately spiced, taste-bud-tingling cuisine, Kerala is home to wild elephants, exotic birds and the odd tiger, while vibrant traditions such as Kathakali plays, temple festivals and snake-boat races frequently bring even the smallest villages to life. It's hard to deny Kerala's liberal use of the slogan 'God's Own Country'.

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visits the City of Light

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India recently organised a familiarisation trip for its members in association with Vistara and Accor, where the association members not only explored various sites and shopping points in Paris, but also experienced the airline and hospitality products.

Nisha Verma

Talking about the Familiarisation tour, **Riaz Munshi**, President, OTOAI, said, "We wanted to showcase the destination as well as the airline product to the members. We wanted to travel first, so as to set an example that everything is normal. After exploring the destination, we can say that there is nothing to worry. The idea was to change the sentiment of the customers that everything is going to get normal and they can safely travel anywhere they like."

Munshi added that they did not face any hurdle at all. "Nobody even asked us anything about certificates even in restaurants or clubs. The idea was to get a clear picture, as you cannot advise clients until you don't experience it. There are constant changes for some of the destinations. However, it was really smooth to travel to Paris and visit the various sites.

Hence, things are coming back to normal. Most of our members are happy both in terms of destination and the airline, which is a new product. It is an opportunity for them to increase their revenue by selling and upselling a product. Overall, the trip was fruitful for everyone," he claimed.

Vistara experience

Talking about experiencing Vistara on long haul, he said, "I was surprised with the premium economy product, which was very comfortable. I have briefed my team as well that if somebody is going in economy, we can guide them on the premium economy experience, which is very different from economy with a separate cabin and comfortable seats. Unlike a flat bed, it had leg support and comfortable recline to sleep. I experienced business class one way, which too was fantastic with all comforts and flat bed. Vistara has a great product."



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

The idea was to get a clear picture, as you cannot advise clients until you experience it

Comfortable stays

The delegation stayed at two properties of Accor in Paris—Novotel Paris La Defense Esplanade and

Novotel Paris Est, and Munshi claims that both properties offered comfortable stays and great hospitality. "It was a great experience. Whenever I imagine hotels in Europe, especially 4-star hotels, the perception is of a cramped room. However, that wasn't the case with these two hotels. They were quite good and overall experience was fine and we can definitely promote these hotels," he said.

Issue at hand

Amongst many issues after opening of hotels, Munshi says that currently they are just trying to coordinate with all the stakeholders, particularly tourism boards because there are a lot of rules and regulations in some of the countries that keep changing. "Even the concerned authorities are not updated at times and the passengers are facing a lot of issues when they are at a particular destination. To resolve this, we are getting up-to-date informa-

tion, which we can pass on to our members, so that they can in turn update their customers. Thus, there should be hassle free travel for all the travellers and then going forward we will do a lot of educational webinars and physical meetings with all the stakeholders. Currently, we just want to concentrate on the business and not on training or other modules. However, as soon as we get free, we will line up training," he said.

Tour operators vital

He claimed that the tour operators and travel agents are vital for travellers as they can give actual information. "Travellers want real time first-hand information. Most of the people are preferring travel agents particularly for the long haul travel or longer holidays. Hence, it is time for the tour operators and travel companies to capitalise on the same and create a memorable experience for the customers by giving value add ons, so that they

can stick to them and they can differentiate them from online players," he suggested.

TCS

Munshi claims that it was a positive step that at least they've removed TCS for foreigners because that was a major hurdle for those sitting in India to not be able to do the booking for NRIs or the expats. "One cannot do booking for your friends or anybody who wants to get booking done for you if you don't have a PAN card. Hence, if an NRI or foreigner, who are not paying income tax in India or are not staying in India, you cannot do booking for them. It's a good step towards that, at least now we can make the booking for them and we definitely hope that going forward, the government will give a serious consideration to remove 5 per cent TCS on our Indian nationals also. If that happens, it will be a big relief," he added.

Staff crunch affects visas

Contd from page 3

agencies today are facing the shortage of staff and the same is the case with consulates and embassies. There are many categories apart from leisure, that are waiting in line for visas, including students, and visiting parents. With India's country size, the travelling population has increased

we hit the season. This is a common problem what the industry goes through and we are closely working with VFS and constantly apprise them about the situation. I think it is coming back to normalcy after a while and there's been a lot of staff reduction at the embassies. However, it's a problem, which has been long existing

Statement from VFS Global

"VFS Global works in strict adherence to the service level agreements with its client governments, and this includes appointment bookings. With travel being suspended for a considerable part of the last two years, as travel restrictions ease, the number of available



Rajan Dua
Managing Director
Udaan India



Himanshu Patil
Owner, Kesari Tours
and Vice President OTOAI



Siddharth Khanna
Partner, Khanna Enterprises
Treasurer, OTOAI

so much that it will take another 2-3 months for the situation to normalise. Everyone is looking forward to that. We have requested the consulates to improve the waiting time at our end too."

On the other hand, **Siddharth Khanna**, Partner, Khanna Enterprises (travelengineers.com) and Treasurer, OTOAI, says, "Similar situation arises every year when

in this industry, especially in the 2-3 summer months, when appointments get blocked."

However, he adds that one needs to figure out a way around it. "Just plan in advance. At the same time, we are closely updating VFS and consulates and I'm sure they're working towards the betterment and streamlining of the appointment system."

appointments remain limited and according to the capacity given by the Embassies/Consulates. VFS Global and the Embassies/Consulates work towards catering to all our customers, including pending applications and new ones. We request and appreciate your patience and cooperation during this time, and advise customers to plan much in advance.

Transit taking a toll on trade

Contd from page 5

any Middle Eastern carriers or direct flights."

Geetanjali Alamshah, Director, Universal Journeys India, shares that people are not going to spend more money for applying for a transit visa after already applying for a UK visa. "The airline should be ready to absorb the cost. Now the countries and airlines should attract customers and show how easy it is to travel. This adds to the trouble with existing visa and airline issues. After making all bookings, it is difficult to look for direct airlines, but there is only limited capacity. Indians are last minute planners and applying for two visas in a short time doesn't look feasible."

Many had to even reschedule the tickets. **Manish Kriplani**, MD, Baywatch Travels, claims that they had to change many of their clients' flights because of the transit visa requirement. "That has cost us a lot of trouble. While we haven't had such volume of business even pre-COVID, these things

become unnecessary hassles," he shares.

"It's a big disadvantage," says **Shravan Bhalla**, Chief Executive,

advance have been informed at the last minute that they cannot travel and require a visa. Thus, there's a cost involved. If they had to do it, they could have given a



Manish Kriplani
Managing Director
Baywatch Travels



Shravan Bhalla
Chief Executive,
Highflyer and General Secretary, OTOAI

We haven't had such volume of business even pre-COVID, such things are hassles

They could have given a window of six months or three months to implement it

Highflyer and General Secretary, OTOAI. "Getting a second visa can be cumbersome. Even for applying, we need more time. People who are booked well in

window of six months or three months to implement it, allowing people to plan in advance or take direct flights to go to the UK," he added.



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MICE networking gets a new address

The two-day B2B table-top event, beginning April 23 in Pune, saw 23 exhibitors interact with 45 key corporate buyers. Organised by DDP Exhibitions, the exclusive MICE event concluded successfully by enabling more than 1,100 meetings between exhibitors and corporate buyers from across India under one roof.



Jazeera Airways hopeful of growth

Rohit Ramachandran, CEO, Jazeera Airways says that airlines are expecting strong growth in all Indian destinations. Keeping that in view, the company plans to have a fleet of 35 aircraft by 2026, which will be exclusively neo type aircraft.

Janice Alyosius

Jazeera Airways was the first non-government airline in the Middle East, and it continues to be one of the few Middle East-based private airlines to this day. Jazeera Airways currently flies to 28 destinations operating a reliable fleet of Airbus A320 aircraft.



Rohit Ramachandran
CEO, Jazeera Airways

banks should we need it. After that, our shareholders declined to take their dividends to ease our finances further. Combined with a strong cash position before we entered the pandemic, these factors helped us survive the inevitable losses to the point where we actually returned to profitability in 2021," he said.

Speaking of their outlook for Indian market and how important it is for them, Ramachandran said that they are expecting strong growth in all of the Indian destinations. The airways now fly to six cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Kochi, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Chennai. Therefore, the Indian market is very important to them. Over 1 million

Indian expats live and work in Kuwait, which makes them the largest segment of their target market. India is strategically very important

India is strategically very important to Jazeera Airways because of the travels to and from home

In June 2018, Jazeera was the first airline in the Middle East to introduce the A320neo into its fleet. "There are currently seven aircraft in our fleet: nine A320neos and eight A320ceos. Our current order is for 20 A320neos and eight A321neos. By 2026, we will have a fleet of 35 aircraft that will

be exclusively neo type aircraft as we retire older aircraft," said Rohit Ramachandran, CEO, Jazeera Airways.

He further added that in March 2020, they took swift action to reduce their cost base. "We also secured additional credit from our



to Jazeera Airways due to the travels to and from home as well as visitation of friends and relatives. In addition, they also offer connections to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries through Kuwait. They also offer leisure destinations to Indian tourists through Kuwait.

Norwegian cruise line announces first NFT collection

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), the innovator in global cruise travel, recently announced it will sail into the Metaverse with the launch of the cruise industry's first collection of NFTs, adding to the brand's legacy of pioneering firsts. NCL opened auction

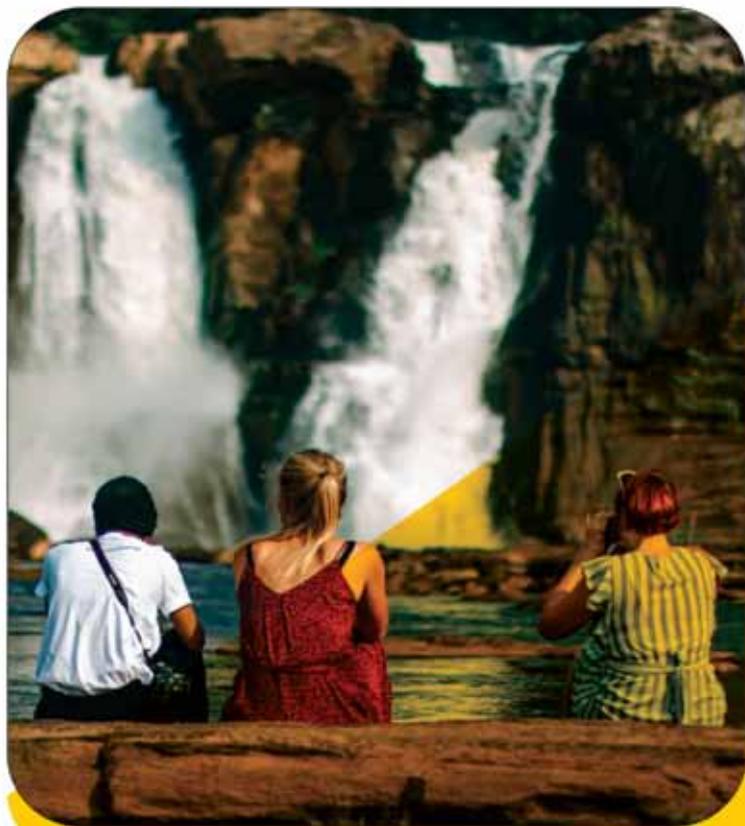
Norwegian Prima and her sister vessel Norwegian Viva.

The first of the six art pieces was to be auctioned at the starting rate of \$2,500, with the remaining NFTs sold for prices beginning at \$250. The winner of the auction was to be award-



and sale of a collection of six NFTs to celebrate the launch of the company's cutting-edge Norwegian Prima Class on April 13, 2022, ET on NCL's soon to launch online NFT marketplace. The NFT art pieces were created by Manuel Di Rita, widely known as "Peeta," the Italian artist who designed the hull art on the record-breaking

ed a balcony stateroom on one of Norwegian Prima's US inaugural voyages, setting sail from NCL's beautiful new PortMiami terminal located in Miami, the Cruise Capital of the World. "We are so excited to partner with Peeta on this first for our brand and for the industry," said NCL President and CEO Harry Sommer.



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• Rainforest Resort
- Hassan**
• Hoysala Village Resort
- Jaipur**
• Indana Palace
- Kumarakom**
• Lakesong Resort. Kumarakom
- Munnar**
• Eastend, Munnar
- Poovar**
• Poovar Island Resort
- Ranthambhore**
• The Kipling Lodge - Nature Ka1p
- Thekkady**
• Carmelia Haven Resort
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• Yaan Wellness Retreat

Celebrating Indo-Japan ties

Newly launched book, Healing Strings, written by Manmohan Sadana, ex-Joint Director General, Union Ministry of Tourism, celebrates 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Japan.

Manmohan Sadana, former Joint Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has launched his book titled 'Healing Strings' as part of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan.

Koji Yoshida, Counsellor, Embassy of Japan, New Delhi was the chief guest at the launch ceremony. "It is of great significance that the publication of a book symbolizing the friendship between India and Japan is taking place on such an auspicious occasion," said a representative of the Embassy of Japan.

Speaking about the book, Sadana said, "Love has only a beginning and music is its soul. Music provides succour, brings people closer and raises us from a physical to a spiritual level. In today's times, there is a great need to strengthen friendship among nations. My book will



Manmohan Sadana (left) and Koji Yoshida at the book release.

serve as a great tool to build a stronger connection and also to promote tourism between different countries."

The book depicts how music heals, provides succour to the protagonist, the lovers, and the nation. It exquisitely portrays the Japanese culture and resilience and ends in the beautiful environs of Bekal in Kerala.

The launch saw more than 100 attendees gather in the evening

over hi-tea, including artists, novelists, tourism experts and diplomats. It included a violin performance by Doordarshan artist Ustad Hamid Hussain Khan and a singing performance of traditional Japanese song by Simran Sadana from Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, London. A depiction of the story of the novella through Ikebana by the Guru-Shisyaa duo, Meena Iyer and Simran Sadana was a major highlight. 🇮🇳

Cosima aims inbound traffic

Cosima Travel & Trade Links aims to tap the inbound market into Kerala, as it expects huge movement from the Middle East and European markets in the upcoming season.



Cosima Travel & Trade Links commenced operations in 1998 as a private limited company registered under the Indian Companies Act. Catering to the vacation aspirations of customers worldwide, it has been crafting the finest



Ajith Kumar
Director, Cosima Travel & Trade Links

holiday experiences through its global partners and trusted networks in the industry. Led by **Ajith Kumar**, Director, Cosima Travel & Trade Links, the company offers value-added travel

services by tailoring its customers' holiday plans as per their taste and requirements.

Kumar outlines the company's main focus right now. "We are now giving more focus on the inbound division to Kerala as the tourist traffic to Kerala is increasing these days. We are expecting more guests from the Middle East and the European markets in the upcoming season now that borders have opened up and the travel requirements have opened up," he says.

Relationships matter

Speaking about the company's focus, Kumar says, "We always strive for building and keeping long-standing relationships with our customers. Being a global player and a reputed name in the travel industry, we are renowned for our professionalism and quality of service. Accreditation of national and international bodies steered us to become one of the most sought-after travel consultancies in the country." 🇮🇳

Sustainability at core of discussions

▶ Contd from page 3

some luxury Indian hotel brands like Ananta Hotels and Resorts Truly India Camps & Safaris.

The event also saw a serious panel discussion on Sustainable Business Travel on the first day where panellists discussed the possibilities of reducing carbon emissions while travelling and what entities such as destinations, airlines, hotels and corporates can do towards this goal. Moderated by **Mritunjaya Chandra Mohan**, Senior Manager - Corporate Travel, Palo Alto Networks, an expert on sustainability, the panellists included **GB Srithar**, Regional Director, India, Middle East & South Asia, Singapore Tourism Board; **Pratima Badhwar**, Head of Commercial India & South Asia at Accor; **Ritam Saha**, Manager, Passenger & Cargo Services, India, Nepal & Bhutan International Air Transport Association (IATA); **Gaurav Shekhar Nagwekar**, Head (Corporate Travel & Logistics), Reliance Industries;

and **Devendra Saraiya**, Travel - Deloitte Shared Services India.

Introducing the topic was industry influencer **Jyothi Varma**. She said, "Sustainable travel is a very relevant and important topic today. Everyone is worried about how to go about being sustainable. It is about the environment, it is about recycling and reducing our carbon footprint as a corporate wherever we can."

Kicking off the discussion, moderator of the session, Mritunjaya Chandra Mohan said that 'sustainability' has become a buzzword today. "The pandemic gave an opportunity to many corporate companies to rethink about the environment and sustainability, apart from safety of employees and overall travel cost," he said. Sharing results of a survey, he said that 36.2% of corporates out of the 316 global travel buyers say that the commitment to sustainability has increased post pandemic. However, 14.9% of them say that their company does not have carbon reduction target and does not expect to implement them which



(L-R): Industry influencer Jyothi Varma; Gaurav Shekhar Nagwekar, Head (Corporate Travel & Logistics), Reliance Industries; Devendra Saraiya, Travel - Deloitte Shared Services India; Ritam Saha, Manager, Passenger & Cargo Services, India, Nepal & Bhutan, IATA; Pratima Badhwar, Head of Commercial India & South Asia, Accor; GB Srithar, Regional Director, STB; Mritunjaya Mohan, Senior Manager - Corporate Travel, Palo Alto Networks.

means they still are not ready to touch this topic.

Leading the conversation to hotels, Mohan added that a lot of big hotel chains have been quietly working on becoming eco-certified and green hotels, which is now a necessity. Sharing initiatives from Accor, Pratima Badhwar, said, "Nowadays every hotel chain has its own sustainability goal. And every hotel has to run as business unit its operations sustainably. At Accor, we have taken up this initiative very early on. In 2005 or so, we had launched a project for it. Cut to now, that initiative is called

'Planet 2021'. We have a target net carbon zero footprint by 2050. We even have a Global Chief Sustainability Officer who looks after this."

What are corporates doing?

Sharing some details about what Deloitte India as a corporate is doing towards this, Devendra Saraiya, says, "There are two parts to sustainability. One if that you just want to create a brand value of your company and the other part is that you are actually helping the cause. At Deloitte India, we are seriously looking at sustainability initiatives and the biggest contributor of emissions is travel."

Sharing some insights on what Reliance as a corporate has been witnessing of late, Gaurav Shekhar Nagwekar said, "There was a recent study conducted that specifically mentioned how corporate travel is going to evolve. Interestingly, it mentioned that 20% of corporate travel don't want to come back, specifically from the IT sector. The other 20% of the sector - which is pharma, banking, etc, never left. The remaining 60% is in a dilemma and are not sure if they want to have MICE movements. These are the ground realities. For Reliance, we are also looking at mitigating carbon footprint. We have started tighter travel restrictions

with immediate effect and look at how best and which department should actually travel. Secondly, we want to move to accommodation options that have sustainability goals. This doesn't just include star hotels. I have some disagreement about air travel being one of the largest reason for emissions. I believe it is the ground transportation, specially when we speak about India."

Walking the talk

Sharing ideas about how a destination can do its bit towards this goal, GB Srithar underlined what Singapore is doing in this area. He said, "It's a huge challenge. It is such a serious, necessary, existential topic of the hour. Thankfully, for Singapore, it has been on the minds of our leaderships - both political and public and private sector partnerships. Singapore is the only country in the world to have a net zero vehicle growth rate." Ritam Saha said, "What IATA and its member airlines have done today is that we have adopted a mission called 'Fly Net Zero' and it is targeted at reducing carbon emissions to zero by 2050." 🇮🇳

Creating new synergies at **M!CE TRAVEL SHOW**



Buying zero-risk travel insurance

Even as the world recovers from the pandemic, travel insurance seems more critical than ever amid all the uncertainties. Here are some points agents must be familiar with so that they can assist their clients to choose the most beneficial travel insurance policy.

Numerous safety procedures, travel restrictions and airline guidelines have disrupted the travelling experience. As the world works towards going back to a sense of normalcy and pre-COVID travel levels, travel insurance seems more critical than ever amid all the uncertainties. Travellers must be well informed on how to benefit fully from their travel insurance. This is not possible unless the agents guiding them have complete clarity on the nuts and bolts of travel insurance policies.

Travel insurance helps safeguard travellers in unexpected situations. COVID is still prevalent in many countries. Unexpected circumstances disrupting travel may still arise in domestic and international travel – sudden flight cancellations, denied boarding for non-compliance of ever-changing COVID



guidelines, contracting the virus during a trip, missing the flight because of testing positive, and many more. Good travel insurance must safeguard travellers that find themselves in such circumstances, and agents must help travellers choose the best travel insurance policy with comprehensive coverage for unlikely situations.

Here are some questions agents must be familiar with on how travel insurance can aid policyholders.

How does the insurance cover COVID-affected booking cancellations of clients?

COVID travel insurances cover most of the trip, including flight tickets, excursion bookings, and hotel bookings. If the traveller tests positive, the insurance companies bear the cost difference of altering their travel dates or cancellation charges up to a specific limit.

How will sudden lockdowns or border closure affect the

insurance and refunds?

If someone has booked a holiday trip and is looking to get insurance, they should know beforehand what it covers and how it can help in emergencies. In case of sudden lockdowns or restrictions, flights are bound to get cancelled or at least delayed. In these unavoidable circumstances, when flights are cancelled by the airlines, the airlines issue a refund with deductions. Insurance can cover such deductions and protect travellers from unnecessary loss of funds. In case travellers cannot return to their home country, some policies cover the expenses of such a prolonged stay in a foreign country.

Does travel insurance cover emergency COVID hospitalisation for both domestic and international trips?

If a traveller catches the virus

while travelling internationally, the travel insurance can help them avail immediate inpatient hospitalisation. Here, all the medical covers opted for will come in handy.

With authorities constantly updating guidelines since COVID, the agents must stay up to date and inform clients of all relevant details. Agents must inform travellers standard terms and conditions, varying rules from border to border, and the different procedures to claim reimbursement benefits depending on the insurance provider.

Unexpected circumstances disrupting travel due to COVID may still arise in domestic and international travel



Parag Ved
President, Consumer Lines
Tata AIG General Insurance

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

What key points must a travel agent discuss with the client before policy issuance?

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:




MAY 2022

Date	Event	Time
4	Costa and Carnival Cruises Webinar	3:00pm
5	Know IBIZA (Webinar)	3:00pm
5-8	Kerala Travel Mart (KTM)	10:00am
5-8	Thailand Dive Expo	11:00am
8-11	IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism	9:30am
9-12	Arabian Travel Market Dubai (ATM Dubai)	11:00am
10-11	ILTM Arabia	9:00am
17-19	Airport Show Dubai	10:00am
18-20	SATTE 2022	10:00am
20-22	Guangzhou International Travel Fair (GITF)	9:00am
25-26	CAPA Americas 'Aviation & LCCs Summit'	10:00am
25-27	ACE of M.I.C.E. Exhibition	10:00am
26-27	Hospitality Trends Summit India 2022	10:00am
31-2	June IMEX Frankfurt	10:00am

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

Cruise comes to Holiday Moods

Holiday Moods Adventures, a 25-year-old experiential and adventure tour operating company located in New Delhi, has been appointed distributor for Havila Cruise in India by Havila Kystruten Operations AS (Norway).

Janice Alyosius

Havila is a family-owned Norwegian shipping company that has started sailing the classic coastal voyage between Bergen and Kirkenes with the most environment friendly ships from December 2021 onwards. Havila Voyages is part of the Havila group that dates back to the 1950s and Havila is now a group operating in shipping technology, offshore, transportation and tourism.

Tejbir Singh Anand, Managing Director, Holiday Moods Adventures, said: "It's a great honour and a proud privilege to be associated with the Havila group and the journeys ahead seems very exciting to distribute Havila cruises inventory in India."

Arshdeep Anand, Director, Holiday Moods Adventures, said: "Being an experiential and adventure tour operating company, it gives us an advantage of understanding the product better. The sailings on

offer range from a day trip to 11 nights on board the cruise ships. More than the cruise



Tejbir Singh Anand
MD, Holiday Moods Adventures

It's a great honour and a proud privilege to be associated with the Havila group

experience, the experience of activities in the arctic outdoors that Havila cruise ships offer is more exciting."

The company's vision is to be India's top global adventure travel company. They intend on protecting the environment, respecting local cultures, benefiting local communities, conserving resources and minimising waste. They believe in purpose

philosophy revolves around showcasing the destinations by stimulating the senses through exotic smells, delectable tastes and soulful sounds patronising slow travel which will retain amazing memories. From leisurely walks beside



before profits and are working to facilitate life changing experiences for both hosts and travellers.

They take pride in offering unique immersive adventure tours showcasing travel chronicles and inspiring journeys. The trips are led by knowledgeable guides who are local experts on activities, food, history and the culture. The

pristine lakes to gentle rambles across quaint little towns, discover mesmerising natural wonders and interesting facets of delightful places. From expeditions cruises to the arctic and polar regions to the luxurious ships across seas, from the snow-clad peaks to big jungle cats on scenic wildlife safaris, a bounty of outdoor travel itineraries are on offer.



Centara opens first Centara Mirage Resort in ME

Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai, which opened in Dubai in October last year, brings a new concept in hospitality to the emirate in line with its tourism strategy. A family-friendly destination inspired by mythical Thai and Arabian adventures, the resort promises fun-filled, activity-packed stays for the people of all ages.

Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand's leading hotel operator, expands its global collection of world-class resorts with the opening of Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai in October last year.

The new resort – a joint venture with world-leading master developer Nakheel, creator of the award-winning Palm Jumeirah and the new Deira Islands waterfront city – brings a new concept in hospitality to Dubai, in line with the emirate's tourism strategy. It will be a fantastic family-friendly destination inspired by mythical Thai and Arabian adventures and promises fun-filled, activity-packed stays for all ages.

Nestled in a prime waterfront setting on the Deira Islands, overlooking the Arabian Gulf just 30 minutes from Dubai International Airport and just minutes away from the newly opened Souk Al Marfa seafront souk and marketplace, this brand-new themed resort offers 607 rooms and suites, ranging from Superior, Family and Mirage Rooms to Junior and Two-Bedroom Suites with 32 to 95 square metres of bright, contemporary space and panoramic city or sea views.

Mirage represents Centara's themed family resort concept, where the whole family's, and especially the children's, happiness is at the heart of the experience. Parents can be rest assured that their youngsters will enjoy unforgettable, inspiring stays, with a wonderful water park, multiple

kids' clubs, a colourful candy-themed children's spa, and the dedicated Mirage Family Lounge, a club lounge experience for all the family. The rooms are perfectly suited to families, with flexible bedding options including bunk beds that accommodate up to two children.

Youngsters can spend exhilarating days at this aquatic oasis, which is centred around a thrilling water park with lagoon pools, a lazy river,



Hemant Jagtap
Regional Sales Manager
Centara Hotels & Resorts

kids' splash play area, waterslides and cliff jumping platforms, rope climbing course, all surrounded by palm trees and sun decks. Winding wooden walkways lead to the golden beach and turquoise sea, which creates a sparkling setting for water sports.

Children will be kept entertained at three age-specific kids' clubs, an outdoor playground and Candy Spa, the colourful, candy-themed children's wellness zone. Adults can work out at the fully-equipped fitness centre and unwind with Thai-inspired therapies, including couples' treatments at Spa Cenvaree.

Outstanding cuisine and social venues can be enjoyed at a choice of our nine dining experiences. Suan Bua specialises in authentic Asian cuisine, while Uno Mas is a traditional Argentinian grill with its own wine cellar. Fresh seafood and prime meats can be savoured at Sands, the casual beach club, Waves Pool Bar and Zing promise refreshing drinks and light bites, and Sheesh is a chic rooftop shisha lounge and Lebanese restaurant. Finally, meeting planners can host one-of-a-kind events in a choice of indoor and alfresco function spaces.

Like all Centara hotels and resorts worldwide, Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai adheres to the highest health and safety standards as part of the Centara Complete Care programme, which was developed in partnership with Ecolab and SGS.

"It gives me great pleasure to introduce Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai, our inaugural resort in the UAE, as we continue to bring our timeless values of Thai hospitality to travellers around the world. The Centara Mirage concept immerses visitors in a world of wonders, creating unparalleled guest experiences. This marks another major milestone for Centara in 2021, following the opening of Centara Mirage Resort Mui Ne in Vietnam and Centara Reserve Samui, the world's first Centara Reserve resort in Thailand," said **Thirayuth Chirathivat**, Chief Executive Officer, Centara Hotels & Resorts.



Omar Khoory, Chief Assets Officer at Nakheel, said: "Our joint venture with Centara Hotels & Resorts is a shining example of our commitment to partnering with reputable,

Thailand's biggest, most popular hotel operators has chosen to invest in Dubai and help us create another unique offering at Deira Islands."

"We are delighted to welcome the world to Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai, a fully immersive oasis that will excite visitors of all ages with its enchanting Thai and Arabian theme. Dubai is a world-class tourist destination with many iconic attractions. With our fantastic leisure facilities, including our beautiful beach and wonderful water park, this spectacular new resort is set to become a favoured destination for families and exceptional events," said **Sebastien Scheeg**, General Manager, Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai.

Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai becomes the first Centara

Situated in Deira Islands, the resort is 30 minutes drive from Dubai International Airport

international hotel brands to bring new tourism concepts to Dubai in line with the government's tourism vision. We are delighted that one of

property in the United Arab Emirates and represents the third Mirage family-themed resort worldwide, following the Lost World-themed Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya, one of Thailand's most popular family resorts, and the Explorer's Playground-themed Centara Mirage Resort Mui Ne, Vietnam, which opened its doors this year. This remarkable new resort also represents Centara's debut in Dubai, one of the world's most iconic cities.

Deira Island is a new coastal city that is transforming Dubai's Deira district into a world-class hub for tourism, retail and entertainment. Located at Dubai's oldest and most traditional trading hub, Deira Islands has added 40 kilometres, including 21 kms of beachfront, to Dubai's coastline. ↘

CATHAY PACIFIC

Hong Kong

Cathay Pacific has appointed **RAKESH RAICAR** as the new Regional General Manager for South Asia, Middle East and Africa (SAMEA). Raicar, who has over 30 years of experience working with Cathay Pacific, will take over from his predecessor, Mark Sutch. Based in Mumbai, India, Raicar would be responsible for the growth of the airline's business and operations in the said regions. He began his career with Cathay Pacific in 1992 and has held several roles through the course of his tenure, including Regional Marketing & Sales Manager, South Asia.



2HUB

Gurugram

KAVITA BHALLA joins 2HUB as Sr. Vice President – MICE & Special Projects to bolster its B2E offerings. She brings with her an extensive experience of more than three decades. One of the pioneer members to set up the MICE segment in India, Kavita has successfully developed new destinations and markets for the Indian MICE clients and has also handled numerous government related projects. In her current role, Kavita will be responsible for further enhancing 2HUB's market positioning of a premier MICE operator also will be responsible for developing new business avenues under special projects.



LE MERIDIEN JAIPUR RESORT & SPA

Jaipur

RAHUL SHARMA has been appointed as the General Manager at Le Meridien Jaipur Resort & Spa. He comes with two decades of experience in the hospitality industry. Prior to this role, he was the Hotel Manager for Marriott Amritsar since 2019. Sharma has spearheaded various initiatives that has resulted in enhanced guest and associate experiences, along with financial profitability during and after the launch of the hotel. His primary objective has been to run seamless operations and deliver stellar levels of guest service. Sharma holds a Master's in Business Administration in Sales and Marketing from Karnataka State Open University, Mysore.



RADISSON BLU RESORT DHARAMSHALA

New Delhi

RAJESH RAJPUROHIT has been appointed as the new General Manager at Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala. A seasoned hotelier, with a career spanning more than two decades in hospitality, Rajesh will lead the team at Radisson Blu Resort to position the property as a leading resort in Dharamshala, streamline hotel operations, align sales and marketing strategies with hotel's commercial objectives and drive excellence in guest experiences. Earlier, Rajesh served a successful six-year stint at Radisson Jaipur City Centre as the General Manager. He is a post-graduate in Business Management and an MBA in Hospitality.



COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT

Faridabad

RAJNEESH KUMAR has been appointed as the General Manager of the soon to launch Courtyard by Marriott Faridabad, Aravalli Resort. Earlier, he worked as the General Manager of Courtyard by Marriott Raipur since March 2018. In his current role, Rajneesh will take on an all-encompassing role, and will be responsible for the hotel's overall performance in addition to front-lining all conversations. Throughout his association with Marriott International, he has climbed the corporate ladder and has held various positions like Restaurant Operations Manager, F&B Manager, Director F&B, and Director of Operations before becoming a General Manager.



THE WESTIN

Hyderabad

AMITABH RAI, a seasoned hotelier with a successful career of about 25 years in directional roles spanning hospitality and business, has been appointed as the Cluster General Manager for The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace and Hyderabad market. Amitabh has mentored and trained hoteliers into accomplished leaders, has coached and motivated his teams to hone their potential, ensuring their growth and pitching them for success. In his previous assignment as the General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore, Amitabh positioned the iconic luxury hotel as the top runner and flag bearer, across the globe.



RENEST BANDHAVGARH MEADOWS

New Delhi

MAYUR SHINDE has been appointed as the new Resort Manager at Renest Bandhavgarh Meadows. Mayur, in his new role, is responsible for business development, reporting and status sharing, day to day resort operations, experience sharing with guests, photography discussions and story sessions and providing the famed Renest guest experience to all the guests at Renest Bandhavgarh Meadows. A keen wildlife photographer, Mayur's love for all things wildlife, enthusiasm to share knowledge with travellers and exceptional people management skills made him a perfect candidate for this role.



MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

Mumbai

Marriott International Inc. has promoted **RANJU ALEX** as its Area Vice President for the South Asia region. Ranju takes over the role from Neeraj Govil, who relocated to Singapore after being appointed Senior Vice President of Operations for Asia Pacific (excluding China) last year. As a key member of Marriott International's leadership think tank, Ranju will oversee the company's operations across India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. She will be responsible for creating and executing a roadmap that will focus on establishing brand positioning and expanding market share of the Marriott portfolio in South Asia.



CORDELIA CRUISES

Mumbai

Cordelia Cruises has appointed **ONEEL VERMA** as its Chief Operating Officer. Verma brings in a vast experience of more than 30 years in sales, marketing, operations and general management across sectors like FMCG, Consumer Durables, Services – Telecom, Retail, Financial Services and Hospitality. In his new role, he will be spearheading the sales, marketing, customer services, human resources and IT functions. Oneel, who has done his Executive Leadership Programme from Cornell University, is a postgraduate in business management with a specialisation in Marketing and Finance.



TALKING People

MANISH GARG, General Manager for Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, believes that every day is a new day with new opportunities.

"So I avoid carrying forward stress from the previous day. Instead, I focus on clarity, staying agile, and keeping the end goal and bigger picture in mind always. I enjoy my morning cuppa with Sudoku. Also, outdoor sports like running or badminton are the go-to exercise routine that keeps me charged up. I am a sports enthusiast and love to learn new games. In the lockdown, I learned to play table tennis," he shares.



For **SUCHITRA PRITESH**, Vice President & Head Global Marketing, Cybage, de-stressing is all about 'me-time'. "I find solace in having some time reserved for workouts or simply enjoying some quiet time. I usually go for long runs, treks, and swimming. Holidays are also a perfect getaway to connect with the realms of the creator. So, when I am on holiday, I usually set out on foot to explore hidden gems and move beyond the mediocre tourist places," she says.



PAYAL LUGANI, Associate Vice President (FIT PMT), SOTC Travel, likes to do different things to de-stress.

"However, the most important ones are taking a break from my phone, listen to soothing music, positive self-talk and meditation. One hobby I have learned during the lockdown is gardening. This also works as a great stress reliever for many reasons including getting you outdoors and appreciating the sunshine and fresh air, also creating beautiful surroundings. I also enjoy holidaying and my favourite destination in India is Ladakh."



Opening Soon
IN
FORT KOCHI, KERALA

The rich history of the property spans more than 200 years, being built as a banking office during the British Raj. It then served as a courthouse for more than a century, before being used as a warehouse for coffee and spices. Now renovated with the utmost comfort and a unique art deco aesthetic, WelcomHeritage Azora by Ayatana combines sophistication, history, and comfort into an unforgettable experience.



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• WelcomHeritage Azora by Ayatana, Fort Kochi
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Rewriting the rule book

WTTC recently hosted its Global Summit 2022 in Manila, Philippines, where travel industry leaders from across the globe converged to discuss sustainable industry practices and the way forward.

 TT Bureau

As the world is reexperiencing travel and reemerging after two difficult years, **Julia Simpson**, President and CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), draws light to opportunities, challenges, and rediscover travel together. Here are some excerpts from the 21st Global Summit held in Manila.

Resilience

In times of crisis, true grit and resilience of the Travel & Tourism sector was seen. During the pandemic, airlines transported vaccines and PPE, airports became vaccination centres, cruise liners used their connections to help repatriate people,



hotels opened their doors to the homeless. The pandemic showed how totally inter-reliant the industry is. Businesses and governments need each other to make travel happen.

Unsteady recovery

Now, recovery is in sight. It is not uniform, it is faltering, but it is recovery. In Asia-Pacific the reopening is just beginning. WTTC in its latest Economic Impact Research, which measures the value of Travel & Tourism to the global economy, shows that over the next 10 years Travel & Tourism is poised to have an average annual growth rate of 5.8 per cent. The sector's growth will again outstrip the global GDP. In 2019, the sector contributed \$9.6 trillion dollars to

the global economy. That is over 10 per cent of the global GDP. 2021 was a stuttering recovery, regaining 22 per cent globally and getting back to a \$5.8 trillion global business.

This year, the data shows that by the end of 2022, Travel & Tourism will have recovered to \$8.35 trillion.

126 million new jobs

Over the next decade Travel & Tourism will create 126 million new jobs worldwide. In fact, one in three of every new job created will be related to the Travel & Tourism sector. Looking to this year and the next, WTTC forecast a brighter future with both GDP and employment set to reach pre-pandemic levels by next year. The recovery in 2021 was slower than expected due to the impact of the Omicron variant but mainly due to an uncoordinated approach by governments, which rejected the advice of the World Health Organisation, which maintained that closing borders would not stop the spread of the virus but would only serve to damage economies and livelihoods.

Integrated travel

Necessity is the mother of inventions. During the crisis, e-commerce cemented its position as the DNA of businesses. In travel, digital technology has leapfrogged some of the old analogue and manual systems. But the problem has been that digital solutions to COVID have been uncoordinated as nations made up their own rules to tackle the pandemic. If we are to survive another pandemic, we need to fully integrate travellers' health status into their digital travel documents. A good example is

the EU green travel pass that has now been adopted by 62 countries. We need to find a single system for the world.

Codes to resilience

It is not just a human virus that threatens us. As we accelerate our digital transformation, the threat from cybercrime has accelerated too. It has been estimated that cybercrime will grow by 15 per cent a year to

seven out of 10 (72 per cent) SMEs in the UK, the US, and Europe, have fallen victim to at least one cyberattack, and with SMEs representing 80 per cent of all Travel & Tourism businesses, mitigating cyber risk must remain a priority for the sector.

Triple crisis

We are facing a triple planetary crisis of climate, nature and pollution. Our carbon challenges are all different - whether you are a hotel, a cruise line or an airline. So, for the first time ever, our sector has a single, clear roadmap to deliver net zero by 2050. WTTC is launching a globally recognised set of sustainability indicators for hotels. Developed by the industry for the industry. The hospitality sustainability basics bring the science down to the grassroots. If we all work together, we can support all life on this planet.

This year, the data shows that by the end of 2022, Travel & Tourism will have recovered to \$8.35 trillion

cost the world US\$10.5 trillion annually by 2025. WTTC launched a report to understand how cyber resilience is shaping the Travel & Tourism sector. The report shows that while the pandemic has propelled the world and the sector into a more digital future, with the opportunities provided by digitalisation, new challenges have emerged, especially in cybercrime. More than



Julia Simpson
President and CEO
World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)



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