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## Inbound tourism shows promise

Keeping in view the current recovery, tourism industry is hopeful of a good inbound season this year. Extending support to the industry, government has planned a slew of measures, including a Global Media Campaign to boost business, says Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.



Nisha Verma

**Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Chairman, PATA-India Chapter, said that most of the "good" tourism destinations in the country are reporting "full occupancies". "The hotel occupancy data for March 2022 shows that it has almost caught up the pre-COVID levels. There was very good

occupancy in the last quarter of the last calendar year. Then there was a dip in January and February due to the Omicron wave, but in March again, the figure has rebound," said Singh, while addressing the 11th PATA Update and Outlook meeting recently.

### Recovery on cards

Singh said that in his interactions with tour operators, he found

that they were getting queries and had foreign tourists coming in already. "I had a discussion with some tour operators. Most of them are getting good inquiries from abroad. Some tourists are already in the country even during this period, and the industry is hopeful of a good inbound season this year, which starts in September-October," he added.

### Marketing in May

Talking about the overseas marketing initiatives, he revealed that they have started virtual sessions with the new embassy people and the tour operators as virtual roadshows called Reconnect 2022. "These virtual sessions have already started. We are in touch with the newly appointed officers in embassies and they have come up

with strategy papers specific to those countries, out of which we have selected five best strategy papers that will be presented to the Tourism Minister and External Affairs Minister. Based on that, future strategies in all the top potential markets will be adopted. This would be in conjunction with our missions and the tourism offices that are located abroad," he said.



**Arvind Singh**  
 Secretary, Union Ministry of Tourism  
 and Chairman, PATA-India Chapter

Apart from that, Singh said, the much-awaited Global Media  
*Contd on page 20 ▶*

## IATO lauds PM's tourism move

Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) thanks Prime Minister Narendra Modi for promoting inbound tourism during his recent visit to Denmark. Association President Rajiv Mehra urges him to focus on international promotions, which are held up due to lack of funds.



Nisha Verma

**Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO, believes that the central government is working on boosting the promotional efforts after the association had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi with regards to no promotional activity taking place abroad due to shortage of funds. "I believe something is happening on that score, but we have not heard it officially. IATO has

again written to the PM thanking him for extolling NRIs residing in Denmark during his speech there to contribute and help promote inbound tourism to India and thus contribute to the economic development of the country. Addressing the Indian community, he has urged them to send at least five non-resident foreign nationals from their country to India. That is a very good sign of promoting India. If all Indians abroad start sending or motivating



**Rajiv Mehra**  
 President, IATO

five people to visit India, I think tourism will flourish in the coming years," he said.

IATO again urged the government to raise the level of promotion for attracting inbound tourists. "We have written to him (the PM) that whatever hurdles we are facing here with different ministries and departments need to be addressed immediately and steps

*Contd on page 17 ▶*

## Tourist influx on the rise

Based on inquiries, tour operators say inbound tourism is picking up in India. A few of them share views with **TRAVTALK** at TrèS 2022.



**Amrit Singh**  
 Managing Director, TransIndus

“People are now beginning to show interest in India again. India is a huge draw in the UK and by the time season arrives around October, we will have a significant movement. I can't promise it will be a cent per cent at that stage, but they will be notable movement, which will continue up to February. As things stand, February is looking bright. And I think everybody within the Indian hotel industry can take solace from that. People are looking for cleaner, greener, remote and sustainable destinations. They've been locked up during for two and a half years and there is a huge interest in traveling out.”

*Contd on page 10 ▶*


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## Airlines need tailwinds to fly high

As aviation markets opened up, domestic airlines are on the path of revival riding on pent-up demand. But rising fuel prices are giving a bumpy ride to the aviation sector. Experts talk about the way ahead at a brainstorming session recently.



Nisha Verma

The CEOs of the aviation sector discussed the global outlook, key trends and synergy between Indian and global aviation markets at Wings India 2022, held recently in Hyderabad. As commercial air

ing sector is not ready to lend it any money (future credits). Some of the credit limits of the industry are also being considered to be removed. Even for ECLGS, the sector has used ₹250 crores. However, the losses go beyond ₹20,000-₹25,000 crores. Hence, while

present, Dutta said, "About 65 per cent of Indian traffic is carried by the foreign airlines. During the ongoing COVID-19, we had demands for charters from Tashkent, Milan and Manila. Earlier these people travelled by transiting through Dubai or Singapore. However, now we can take them non-stop. There is so much growth here."

a robust franchise," he claimed. He said, "We need all the tax reliefs demanded by all airlines. However, in the early 2010s, for a few years, the fuel price was US \$110-120 across the world. Still some airlines found a way to make money. This means it can be done."

### Full service future

Speaking on the speculated merger of Air India and Vistara, **Vinod Kannan**, CEO, Vistara, said it is an evolving conversation amongst shareholders. "It is a fact that 80 per cent of the market is currently low cost, and so in the domestic space, there are certain constraints or pressures. However, it is a growing population, which is upwardly mobile. Hence, having competition, whether it is Air India or Jet Airways 2.0, it is going to make things better because the customer will have more options. We will have the upper middle class among others moving upwards transitioning from one to the other. However, it is not just fuel. As a domestic airline, your inputs

### Growth is real

Echoing similar sentiments, **Sunil Bhaskaran**, CEO & MD, AirAsia India said, "In terms of growth, the sector is looking good. However, if one looks at costs, consumption and the rate, they say a different story. Indian aviation is efficient in terms of numbers, but I think we are saddled by the high cost of fuel and high indirect cost." Talking about the capital needed, he added, "In our balance sheets, the fixed cost element is small."

### Fresh in the sky

**Vinay Dube**, Founder and CEO, Akasa Air, which is set to launch in June, believes it is the right time to enter the sector. "If you



**Satyendra Kumar Mishra**  
Joint Secretary  
Union Ministry of Civil Aviation



**Ajay Singh**  
CMD  
SpiceJet

Despite the govt's efforts, traffic and bilaterals are taken over by foreign airlines

Civil aviation industry has a huge potential; we only need to get the cost base right

travel is being revitalised with the government opening up the skies once again, the experts mulled over how the sector's growth story can be driven.

### Beyond fuel

**Ajay Singh**, CMD, SpiceJet said, "The aviation industry has huge potential; we need to get the cost base right. It's not only the fuel, the GST department imposed IGST on parts that we are preparing overseas and getting them back. The operators have large volumes of accumulated credit. There is a lot of pressure from the department to pay the amount owed to them despite the government giving the credit. Even the bank-

the ECLGS money is helpful, in the larger scheme of things it is quite irrelevant, because if the banks say that I will lend money if the government guarantees, then the aviation sector will get a small sum."

### An exciting sector

**Ronojoy Dutta**, Director and CEO, IndiGo, said, "We give 21 per cent of our revenue straight to the government in terms of taxes. No industry in the world will produce a 21 per cent margin just to pay the government. This is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately, but still I believe it is a very exciting sector to be in." Stating that seven per cent of Indians are flying at



**Ronojoy Dutta**  
Director and CEO  
IndiGo



**Vinod Kannan**  
CEO  
Vistara

We give 21% of our revenue to govt in terms of taxes, this must be addressed immediately

It is a fact 80% of the market is low cost; so in domestic space, there are some constraints

## Commercial flight of Akasa Air in June

**Vinay Dube**, Founder and CEO, Akasa Air, said, "We hope to launch our first commercial flight this year. We need to get all our licensing done. It's challenging as this is an industry that is steeped in safety. Hence, one wants to make sure that the processes are extremely rigorous and challenging for the licenses to be issued." He said this while addressing the Wings India 2022 held recently in Hyderabad. "Our first commercial flight will be coming up in June and we hope to have 18 aircraft on ground as part of our fleet within the 12 subsequent months and then every year after that 12 and 14 aircraft will get us to about 70 to 80 aircraft in five years. We are very excited and hope to serve our customers with warmth, affection and kindness," Dube said.

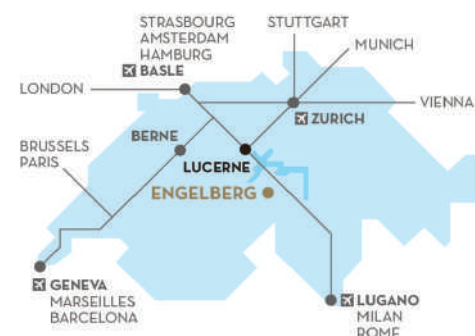
look at it 20 years from now, you will have 1,000 or 2,000 aircraft. If Akasa comes or does not come, it will not make a difference because this is an India story and not an India aviation story. Hence, we believe that in those 2,000 more aircraft flying, why a few cannot be Akasa aircraft. If we are able to run a good, tight airline, serve our customers and employees well, we can find our way in creating

are in rupees, which is a depreciating currency and 70 per cent of your costs are in US dollars, which is foreign currency. Hence, the math does not make sense. Still we are eternal optimists and we have weathered the storm partly because of the Indian customer's support and partly because of our resilience. However, there is hope at the end of the tunnel," he claimed.

Contd on page 19 ►

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Lure of the 'foreign' trip

It is an inevitable event – the growth of the Indian outbound. From time immemorial, we have been known to value international holidays more than the ones taken in India, or even in our neighbouring countries. It holds brag value. But why is that? It could possibly be the level of development in these countries, their robust currency, the wonderful things we can buy from there and therefore the high export duties India puts on them. It's a combination if many things.

But the tables have somewhat turned now and destinations are now equally keen to attract this segment. This is because the UNWTO predicts that this India outbound tourism market is likely to generate around US\$ 62 billion by 2026. This is up for grabs for whoever can package themselves well and get on top of the mind of travellers looking for a break. The timing could not have been right. Indians are keener than ever to pack their bags, and the world is an oyster for them now.

'Chalo India': Next big thing?

As Ministry of Tourism is planning its Global Media Campaign to attract foreign travellers to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi adds to the cause on his recent visit to Denmark. Speaking to the Indian community in Copenhagen, he urged them to inspire at least five nationals of the country to visit India every year. The move sent a wave of delight across the industry, which is still waiting for MOT to officially trigger international promotions in full fervour. The PM requested the NRIs to kick-off a 'Chalo India' campaign and also suggest the foreign nationals some places to visit. From what it seems, the PM's push through the campaign might just be the catalyst to big number of tourists flocking India. If merged with the signature Incredible India campaign, the 'Chalo India' mantra, along with the popularity of PM Modi, will do just the trick to lure international visitors to India. How much is the industry, hotels and the infrastructure can support this momentum being created is what is waiting to be seen. Keeping our fingers crossed.

'Uneven' outlook for Asia Pacific

Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) says tourism growth prospects for Asia Pacific will be 'fragile and uneven' till 2023. A return to near pre-COVID-19 levels of arrivals appears to be feasible, if conditions abate quickly and permanently.



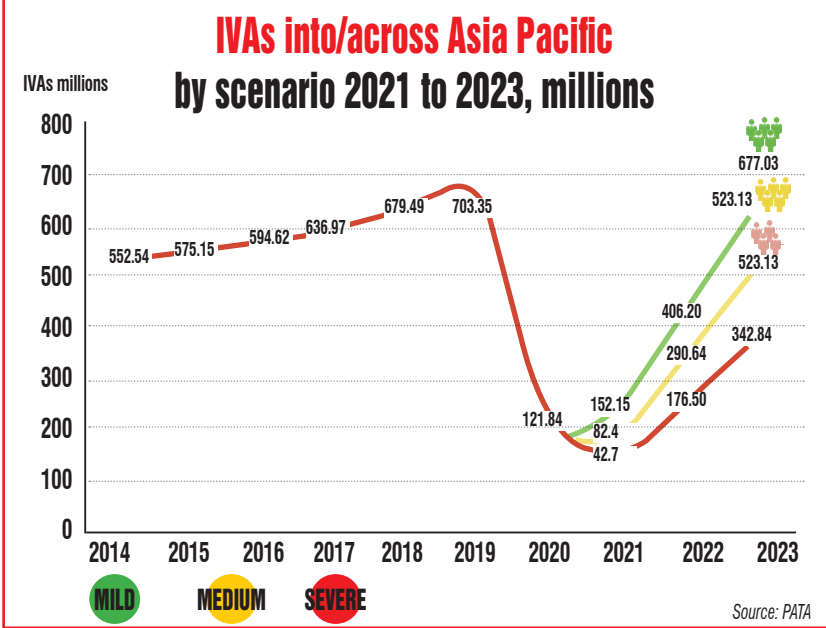
TT Bureau

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has said that the outlook for tourism growth remains "fragile and uneven" between 2021 and 2023.

The association released updated visitor forecasts, in which it portrayed three scenarios – mild, medium and severe – for 39 destinations across the regional tourism business to 2023. Under a mild scenario, the Asia Pacific region in 2023 is likely to still have around -4 per cent fewer arrivals compared to 2019. The medium scenario suggests that foreign visitor numbers in 2023 could be only three-quarters of the 2019 volume, while under the severe scenario, that proportion is predicted to reach less than half of the 2019 volume of international arrivals. The results are uneven for the major destination regions, added PATA.

The Americas for example, after reaching a total of 45.36 million foreign arrivals in 2020 into the four destinations covered by this region, is unlikely to see any annual increase in IVAs (International Visitor Arrivals) until 2022.

"Perhaps the future will depend more on length of stay and visitor satisfaction, than on a generic and



simple headcount of arrivals. Metrics that track such indicators will possibly become a new standard for determining tourism potential and performance in what is likely to continue being a volatile world," stated PATA.

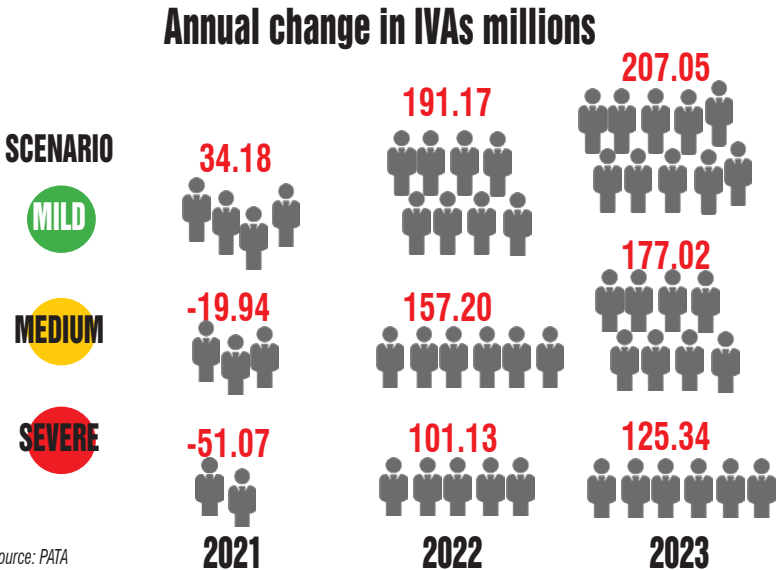
IVAs into and across Asia, on the other hand, are expected to show an increase in 2021 over the 70.64 million received in 2020, but only under the mild scenario. From 2022 onwards, however, annual increases are forecast to gradually improve in volume under each of the three scenarios.

The Pacific is expected to be in a similar position as the Americas in 2021, with IVAs falling from the 5.85 million received in 2020 under each of the three scenarios. While that decrease may be relatively minor under the mild scenario, PATA said, it could still represent a contraction of almost five million IVAs under the severe scenario. Calendar years 2022 and 2023 however, show some return to annual growth under each of the scenarios. The three main visitor generating regions of Asia, the Americas and Europe are likely to remain, in terms of the additional

volume of IVAs delivered into and across Asia Pacific between 2020 and 2023, differing only in their respective relative strengths.

Under mild scenario, the region is likely to have around -4% fewer arrivals in 2023 vis-a-vis 2019

Annual change in IVAs into/across Asia, 2021 to 2023



PATA noted that as each scenario becomes volatile, the relative proportion of IVA growth out of Asia between 2020 and 2023 rises.

Dr Mario Hardy, CEO, PATA, said: "While growth in international visitor arrivals into and across Asia Pacific remains difficult in 2021, there are promising signs for 2022 and 2023. A return to near pre-COVID-19 levels of arrivals, while possible by 2023, appears now to be feasible, at least if conditions as they are now, abate quickly and permanently. Much, however, will depend on events during this present northern winter and the arrival and management of the more traditional flu season."

# Odisha needs better air connectivity

JK Mohanty, Lifetime Chairman, HRAO, says more international flights from Odisha are need of the hour and once they start operating, inbound tourism is bound to revive in the state. Unless more international sectors open up, tourists from Europe and United States will give Odisha a miss.



Nisha Verma

**J**K Mohanty, Lifetime Chairman, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) and CMD, Swosti Group, said, "More international flights from Odisha are need of the hour and once they start operating, inbound tourism is also bound to revive. Unless more international sectors open up, tourists from Europe and US will give Odisha a miss. For tourism sector to become robust, international flights should start operating from Bhubaneswar airport. The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation needs to look at this matter."

"Odisha has an international airport at Bhubaneswar, and the government has given the green signal for another one at Puri. The Sri Jagannath International Airport at Puri would be com-

pleted in three years. Once these airports are ready, we need international flights to bring foreign travellers to the state," he said.

It is quite unfortunate that Odisha has not received its due share in the Incredible India campaign. There are a plethora of tourist spots which appear nowhere in the campaign," Mohanty quipped.

He said Jharsuguda and Rourkela are already connected by air. "Jharsuguda is an industrial belt in the state. Previously, one UDAN flight was launched from there, but today it has more than 16 daily flights. Rourkela airport has also opened up and Odisha government led by Chief Minister Navin Pattnaik is constructing the largest hockey stadium in India in Sundargarh district. The stadium would be ready by this October. Local hockey players

would soon rub shoulders with international hockey players."

## Lifetime Chairman

On his election, Mohanty said, "I have been the Chairman of



JK Mohanty  
Lifetime Chairman, HRAO  
and CMD, Swosti Group

HRAO since 1984 and this year, I submitted my resignation, so that young blood can take the association forward. But the members unanimously elected me as Lifetime Chairman and the post of a Working President was cre-

ated by me for a much younger person who can take the association forward in the years to come. I am thankful to the members."

The HRAO was formed in 1984 with only six members. "Today, we have more than 300 members, including hoteliers, consultants, tour operators, associate members such as chartered accountants, company secretaries among others. The objective is to build a healthy hospitality and tourism industry in Odisha. So far, HRAO activities have been sourcing information of the industry, finding out the problems of the hotel industry and coordinating with the central and state governments to facilitate the members for the growth of the hospitality and tourism sectors of Odisha. This apart, we have expert members from eco-tourism, adventure tourism, ticketing and airlines. These as-

sociate members contribute a lot when we had the Odisha Tourism Conclave which is an annual feature wherein experts from various fields also participate. The recommendations of these experts are forwarded by the HRAO to the state and central governments," he said.

## Revival of hospitality sector

Mohanty, who is also CMD, Swosti Hotels, agreed that the hospitality industry has revived and is doing well now. However, the hotels and hotel chains have incurred huge losses due to COVID-19. "It will take at least five to six years to recover from the losses. Besides, even though the sector is on the path of recovery, shortage of skilled manpower has hit us like a Damocles sword. We need more hotel management institutes in the state to churn out skilled manpower. "It is a pity that the government has not given the

infrastructure status to the hospitality sector. If the sector gets it, we would get long term loans, tax concessions, cheaper rates of in-

It is quite unfortunate that Odisha has not received its due share in the Incredible India campaign

terest and more quality hotels could be built in India. That will make us competitive compared to countries such as Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. What we need now are quality hotels," he said.

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# SINGAPORE is ready and open

With no pre-departure COVID test required for fully vaccinated travellers and no group size limitation, the destination is back to 'near pre-COVID' Singapore! Its timely launch of the campaign 'Enjoy Your Family Times Now in Singapore' reaffirms this as the island nation welcomes back visitors from one of its top source markets – India.



Hazel Jain

With summer family vacation season commencing across India, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and Singapore Airlines, along with their destination partners, have announced an exclusive campaign to welcome back Indian families to the popular island destination – 'Enjoy Your Family Times Now in Singapore'. Under this, children under 12 years old can avail 50 per cent off adult airfare and admissions to attractions.

The campaign includes award-winning Singapore attraction partners such as Sentosa Development Corporation, Resorts World Sentosa, Gardens by the Bay, Mandai Wildlife Group, Marina Bay Sands, Jewel Changi Airport and travel experiences platform Pelago, making this summer season a time to visit Singapore with the family. This is STB India's first major tactical campaign during the pandemic; involving several fulfilment partners namely Pelago, Make My Trip, EaseMy Trip, Thomas Cook, SOTC and FCM promoting the campaign extensively across India.

With this timely campaign, STB is happy to announce that it is



**GB Srithar**  
Regional Director, India  
Middle East & South Asia, STB

With further easing of social gathering restrictions, the city is now back to near pre-COVID situation

back to 'near pre-COVID' Singapore! Just as before, all testing - whether pre-departure or on-arrival - is no longer required for fully vaccinated travellers to enter Singapore. The group size limitation has also been lifted. Moreover, entertainment venues such as bars and clubs will remain open till late.



**Renjie Wong**  
Area Director, India & South Asia  
(Mumbai), Singapore Tourism Board

Stakeholders have been busy and working hard to reimagine travel and tourism in Singapore

Sharing some more positive developments, **GB Srithar**, Regional Director, India, Middle East & South Asia, STB, says, "Singapore is open and welcoming back Indian travellers. With pre departure testing requirements for vaccinated travellers lifted and further easing of social gathering restrictions, the city is



now back to near pre-Covid situation. Singapore Airlines Group has increased its flight capacity and redeployed A380 in New Delhi and Mumbai. Together with our tourism stakeholders, we have announced half price promotions for children under 12, making it the opportune time for families to enjoy their summer holiday break in Singapore."

Singapore Airlines Group operates in 13 cities in India. These include Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Kochi and Hyderabad by Singapore Airlines and Hyderabad, Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Thiruvananthapuram, Amritsar and Vizag by Scoot.

**Renjie Wong**, Area Director, India & South Asia (Mumbai), STB, shares his perspective and adds, "Singapore has changed a lot over the past two years. Our tourism stakeholders have been busy and working hard by taking the opportunity to reimagine travel and tourism. Many of them have come up with enhanced offerings to suit the market needs. Now the time has come, we would like to invite

you and your clients to come experience a completely reimaged Singapore experience."

## Experiences in Singapore Nerf Action Xperience

World's first NERF-dedicated family entertainment centre (FEC). NAX is 19,000 sqft and consists of four themed activity zones (Compete, Conquer, Challenge and Create), which encourage active play, enrichment, team building, skill-testing and creativity. It offers both group and solo activities such as battlegrounds using NERF blasters, obstacle courses and a NERF blaster-themed playground for young children.

## The Elephant Room

The Elephant Room is a culture-forward cocktail bar focused on bringing the best of their craft and traditional trade and ingredients to patrons. Paying homage to the culturally-rich India, the bar uses only spirits from the country, and the team places effort in educating their guests on the drinks and the inspirations behind them. Interior wise, the bar is decorated with nuggets of information about Little India while leftover material from

Indian tailors are used in fabricating the coasters and menu covers. Through the tipples and space, The Elephant Room seeks to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation for the rich Indian heritage and vibrant character of Little India.

## Adda Restaurant

Serving soulful Indian street-food in the heart of Singapore. Experience the ultimate culture clash with every sip of your cocktail artistically crafted by master mixologists and devour every bite of food from a menu curated by renowned chef, Michelin Starred, Manjunath Mural at Adda Restaurant.

## Museum of Ice Cream

Opened in August 2021, the Singapore's Museum of Ice Cream is the first outlet outside of the United States. The museum, which is dedicated to all things related to the sweet treat, is known for its multisensory and interactive installations that will appeal to those looking to take Instagram-worthy photos. The Singapore outlet in particular will also host the largest Sprinkle Pool and a Dragon Playground inspired by iconic Singapore playgrounds.



# We plan quarter to quarter: Vistara

Five-year plans for businesses are difficult to design in these times, says Deepak Rajawat, Chief Commercial Officer, Vistara. He talks about focus markets for the airline, fleet and route expansion, revenue generation and the immense potential that the country offers to the aviation industry.



Hazel Jain

**D**eepak Rajawat, Chief Commercial Officer, Vistara, who has been working with the airline since its inception, sounds positive while speaking about the future booking trends. "Domestically, we are looking at one of the better quarters in the summer seasons of April-May-June. Hopefully, this will continue to the next quarter as well. Internationally, it is a bit early to forecast. But the trend looks positive for the next two months. Certain pockets are really strong like Europe and some of the Middle East routes. But certain markets that have recently opened up require more awareness among the travellers, which we are also trying to do. We are marketing some of our key routes like Singapore and Bangkok, and more specifically our wide-body routes such as London, Paris and

Frankfurt. So, we expect demand to really pick on both long-haul and short-haul routes," he says.

Speaking about Singapore operations, Rajawat adds that Vistara has done well on the route since April. "We are flying almost 5x

ing a higher capacity aircraft and a life-like bed on the Singapore route, which shows that the demand is coming back. We also see a lot of corporates travelling out of Singapore to meet us specifically the lessors, the OEMs and the banks. They have started taking to the skies and meeting

of the governing body platforms. So, we are planning quarter by quarter because there is no certainty that COVID has gone away. We are the only airline to have grown in terms of capacity

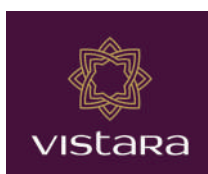
are taking now. I doubt if anyone is making five-year plans. We do track numbers on a daily basis on the MoCA website, and they are in the range of 350K-400K departures. I expect as an industry to hit the 400K mark soon in the coming months. We see corporate demand also pick up significantly from May," he says.

internationally, as well as increasing presence on existing routes. It recently launched flights on Bengaluru-Indore route.

In India, Vistara will focus on three main hubs of Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. "We will be focusing on these three cities and make them our potential hubs to expand further. And that will help us touch tier cities as well. At this point of time, we are not focusing on pan-India expansion."



Deepak Rajawat  
Chief Commercial Officer, Vistara



the airlines personally. India is a market that is emerging strongly – being a domestic heavy market it has shown a lot of resilience after each wave," he shares.

## Quarter by quarter plan

It is difficult to plan for five years today, Rajawat feels. "The projections are not available at any

We do track numbers on a daily basis on MoCA site; they are in range of 350K-400K departures

additions during COVID. We were at 41 aircraft and grew to 51 in the last two years. We now have a lot of deliveries, which were staggered in COVID, which we

## Route expansions

Vistara is now working on expanding routes both domestically and

## Tatas pick Campbell Wilson as Air India CEO

Tata Sons on May 12 announced that the founding CEO of low-cost airline Scoot, Campbell Wilson, has been appointed the MD and CEO of Air India. Wilson, 50, has 26 years of aviation industry expertise across both full service and low-cost airlines. He has worked for the Singapore Airlines Group for more than 15 years.



Campbell Wilson  
CEO, Air India

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# Inbound travel picks up pace

“Indian market in Australia is really picking up. We are booked out in September for our first tour and March next too is looking good. Australians are ready to travel and it's exciting to be here and be inspired and get back to it. There has been a strong cultural connection between Australia and India. What is more, there is always somewhere to come and people to bring over. I think a small group tour is appealing to travellers instead of big tours. The travellers want to stay somewhere remote; something that is more personalised. Australians are ready to travel after having been locked down for two years. By being in India and posting on the social media, I have been telling people excitedly that I am travelling in India as the country is ready for visitors.”



**Ali Barter**  
Founder, Trunk India



**Sunita Ramanand**  
Founder, Trotting Soles Travel

“When live events are organised in the United Kingdom, I plan to be there and promote India and the new things that are coming up in India. We have these beautiful experiential hotels, which have come up; these are the places that we want to promote where people can actually get a taste of real India. They get to stay in heritage properties, family-owned properties, where one can get a very personalised touch. So, that is what I would want to highlight and promote and get more and more travellers to visit India. We have so many states with their own language, rich cultures and traditions, colourful festivals, among other things that people can immerse themselves into. One can come repeatedly visit different places and enjoy the variety it offers.”

“I love India and I have been travelling to this country for many years now. The nation has a rich heritage and culture and traditions. Frankly speaking, I started my travel business because of my passion for this country. I think the need and the want of the destinations will be driven by the tour operators, it depends on how they want to market it for a normal traveller, who is not aware of the destinations. In the United Kingdom, the Britons just want to go to India on a vacation and it is the responsibility of the tour operator to show them the options available. I have built by business slowly by opening up to the other side of India that is unexplored. I believe if we create the itinerary based on interest factors then this will help attract the audience.”



**Michele Immelman**  
Founder, Curious Journeys



**Akanksha Garg**  
Founder and Director  
Waxpool Hotels and Resorts

“The market is going to become very unpredictable as international travel is opening up rapidly. What we encountered in the last two years in terms of reservation and occupancies was phenomenal. So, I urge all hotels and resorts not to charge high rates, a main factor for travellers to travel within India instead of going to Malaysia or Southeast Asia, which are cheaper alternatives. That is exactly what I came to know while talking to the FTOs. While the UK, Germany, France visitors are looking at India for a holiday, pricing is going to be a main factor. India is no longer a cheap destination anymore and what we need to show the visitors that we are a safe, secure and adventurous destination.”

“The experience has been dynamic in nature. We had good business but the third COVID wave had slowed it down. We had the best March-April ever, compared to pre-pandemic days. Domestic travel has played a major role in jacking up the occupancy up as well as the prices. So, the occupancies have gone up and we have started making some money so that our assets are maintained properly. Ever since Indian international flights have resumed, there have been signs from the UK, Germany, Spain, Italy and the US. The bookings in the pipeline and inquiries too have been encouraging. We started talking about something that we have not talked about in the past two years with our DMCs and global tour operators, a sign of returning to pre-pandemic days.”



**Shailendra Mohan**  
Vice President Sales  
CGH Earth Experience Hotels



**Vikas Abbott**  
Managing Director, Vasco Travel

“Business for the inbound space came to a grinding standstill during the pandemic, but of late, the queries and inquiries have started pouring in, which is a propitious sign. Our business is doing pretty well, we ventured into the domestic space when the pandemic started and we were very clear that we are going to stay in the niche space in the domestic segment. I see there is a lot of potential for offbeat destinations, offbeat niche products and that is what we have been offering to our guests. Travellers of today are mature and they look for newer destinations and that is what we are focusing on to offer them. We will focus on offering safe and secure destinations, which we believe will gain popularity with the travellers.”

“Compared to the last two years, business is showing results at last. Initially they were queries people asked about destinations, but slowly and gradually they started booking. We have started getting inbound queries from certain geographies last year and outbound started as well, in the last six months. The queries more often than not converted into business. Before the pandemic, tourism was a common revenue generator, mostly because Indian market is price sensitive. The travellers wanted to join those groups which were not expensive. What we have realised and observed of late is that now the visitors are more interested in smaller groups or individual travel, they do not want to cover seven countries in 10 days but rather cover two countries in seven-10 days in a relaxed manner while visiting through many places.”



**Vikram Trivedi**  
CEO, My Tour Box



**Manan Mahajan**  
Managing Director  
Orange Tours and Trips

“Post-August 2021 we are in the travel business and get indications from some of the countries that are more into the business travel. Post-January, we have started to receive queries from Europe as well as from Australia. As the flight accessibility is getting a little better now, we are receiving queries and we are back in business again. Our top selling points are still traditional culture and wellness tourism, but a lot of people are looking for more sustainable experiences on a societal level. The biggest challenge right now for any travel company would be the disruption to the supply chain both from the buyer as well as the supply side. There is the disruption in terms of the flight inventory, securing visas to India from some of the countries, especially UK, which is the second biggest market for India.”

“Our company has been based on technology, so the growth of our business has really been well balanced. In the last 180 days, we performed very close to 365 days operating revenue, so we really did well in the days in the financial year 2020-2021. Last year, we grew by as much as 30 per cent and next year, we are forecasting another 30 per cent growth. So, it has really been 30 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the span of two-and-a-half years that are projecting now. The occupancies for us right now across hotels are better than the pre-pandemic levels. The only hotel that did not pick up as much was the O by Tamara, which I think we have been able to see a resurgence in that business and we are hitting about 80 per cent to 85 per cent in Thiruvananthapuram now.”



**Mukut Chakravarty**  
Vice President, Sales and Marketing  
Tamara Leisure Experiences



**Rajnish Rai**  
Chief Operating Officer, TUTC

“Ever since the COVID-19-induced lockdown began in March 2020, there was no business and we devoted this particular time in scouting for new places. And I think I must have travelled not less than 80,000 km by road across India. We are pleased to announce that we have identified 12 new locations and have divided them into two phases now. All those high-net-worth individuals and those who are niche travellers, those who have been very discerning travellers as they did not have much options started exploring the country. And, fortunately, the locations that the country boasts and the kind of personalised experiences that we provide the travellers have received a tremendous response. This year too, we are expecting a very healthy mix of domestic and inbound tourists.”

“I think international travel is opening up, we see that inquiries have started to come in, though it is nowhere near the pre-pandemic numbers. In terms of occupancy of hotel rooms, they are looking much better than they were during the pandemic. As a brand, we have always tried to promote unique boutique properties and locations, which are not showcased otherwise, and places which you would not see on any traveller's map. We plan to bring places or properties less known into the limelight and that is where we see ourselves growing and expanding. Recently, one of the mega trends that I came to observe is the digital platforms, the tour operators, the online travel agencies (OTAs), everyone is using the digital space, and so we are planning to leverage that in a bid to promoting ourselves.”



**Lavanya Ramachandran**  
Director, Anantya Resorts



**Sowmya Rao Vijaymohan**  
Founder and Director, Très

“Très 2022, rolled out last week at Andaz Delhi, brought together a curated collection of 50 of the region's finest boutique hotels in the mindful luxury segment and experiential travel concepts along with an outstanding attendance of high-profile industry agents, operators and facilitators. A by-invite event, our carefully selected exhibitors and delegates share a common desire to present the Indian sub-continent as a global destination for leisure, luxury and inspirational travel that offers a unique diversity and is magnificent and transformational in its offering. Hoteliers and Très delegates found the show extremely productive; we are elated at the overwhelming response from the travel fraternity! Keeping this momentum of positive outlook for the industry, we are happy to announce that Très 2023 will take place in third week of April.”

Inputs by Janice Alyosius

# 'oa195.com a game changer'

A first of its kind in the DMC business, 'oa195.com' aims to provide B2B partners with a fast and easy online access with a one-stop-shop for all their destination requirements. It also offers tremendous benefits to the travel agents who sign up for this.



TT Bureau

oa195.com is one of the leading online destination booking engine providers exclusively for travel agencies. Promoted by One Above DMC, it aims to provide B2B partners with a fast and easy online access with a one-stop-shop for all of their destination requirements. As the name suggests, oa195.com means (One Above 195 DMCs) that will give access to the best hotel rates across the world.

Now is the perfect time for the travel agent fraternity to use a travel solution that can help them save money, enhance security, and improve productivity.

This (oa195.com) has been our pet project that we have been working for the last two years. It is now live.

Sharing details B. A. Rahim, Founder and Consultant, One Above DMC, says, "This has been our pet project that we have been working since the last two years. It is now live. It is a first-of-its-kind in the DMC business. We give Trust Cards that we have launched in White Blue and Ultimate Black. It will be associated with oa195.com and various hotels and resorts globally where our travel fraternity friends and partners will get rewards whenever they book through the online system. It's a rewards loyalty trust card. We hope to get good support for this from the industry. It is a give and take – whatever business they do with us, they will get back in manifolds."

Vishal Somaiya, Director, One Above, shares more details and says, "We have received an amazing response for this so far. This travel solution is not only for hotels and resorts in the Maldives or Mauritius, but we have gone online with

hotels and resorts worldwide. We have APIs with the largest consolidators. Other than that we are also putting in our static contracted rates exciting destinations like Maldives, Greece, Turkey, Bali, Seychelles, etc. These will be much better than the worldwide contracts."

Somaiya adds, "We will soon add insurance and flights module and more to this. Our aim is to ultimately make this a one-stop shop solution for our travel agent partners so that they can earn a little bit more. They can sign up by simply logging on to our website, clicking on regis-

ter, putting in their credentials and they are good to go. It's as simple as that. This is a three-step process and it can't get simpler."

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with a flair for handling MICE groups, corporate tours, FITs and events with ease, expertise and efficiency. Its DMCs, who closely work with the B2B market, are proficient and have local expertise, huge bed bank, owned vehicles, in-house professional guides and



B. A. Rahim  
Founder and Consultant  
One Above DMC

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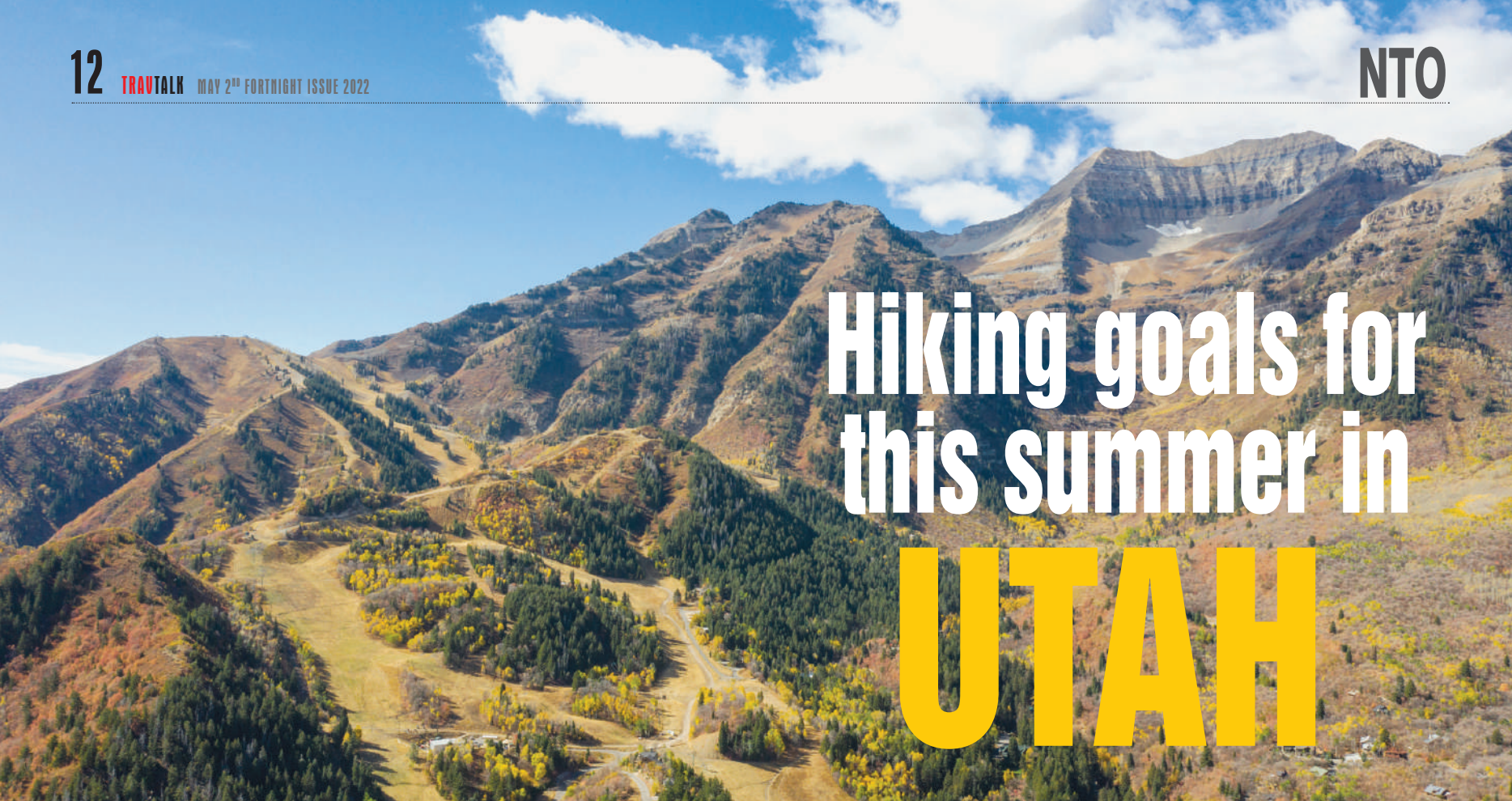
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# Hiking goals for this summer in UTAH

This state in the Mountain West sub-region of the Western United States has 3.5 distinct geographic regions, five national parks, 45 state parks, five national historic sites and trails, and a dozen national monuments and recreation areas. With perfect powder, rugged red rock, alpine lakes, Utah has this and much more to offer to visitors.

 TT Bureau

It's that time of the year to gear up! If hiking is the sport for you, Utah offers a trail with resplendent views, towering climbs and expansive rivers. This summer discover new paths and experience adventures that will rejuvenate your mind and body.

Hiking is no longer just a form of recreation, Utah the hidden gem in America offers every person a unique experience, right from navigating new trajectories, discovering waterfalls, camping under a starlit sky and waking up to a magnificent sunrise at some of the most jaw dropping sceneries, it could possibly be an ardent hiker's dream destination!

There are thousands of miles of great hiking trails throughout Utah. Some trails are most well-suited to rugged, multi-day backpacking, but there are innumerable "out

and back" and "loop" hikes ranging from quick trots to stunning formations, and moderate paths than can be done in a few hours to full-day explorations.

On a hike in Utah, you can be at 13,000 feet above sea level and gaze out over alpine lakes

On a hike in Utah, you can stretch out at 13,000 feet above sea level and gaze out over alpine lakes and dense forests of pine and aspen thousands of feet below. Or, pull on shoes suitable for hiking in water and step into a stream for a journey through a mysti-

cal desert canyon with periodic swim breaks beneath beautiful waterfalls. Crane your neck as your pace slows, walk beneath natural bridges, and wonder what life must have been like for the Anasazi, who lived here a thousand years ago. Mentioned below is Utah's curated list, specifically chalked out for passionate hikers.

**The Narrows, Zion National Park**  
If there ever was a term for a perfect hike, Zion National Park should be high up there in any climbers bucket list. The hikes range from family friendly, moderate to intense. Whether it's hiking, camping, canyoneering or simply driving, there is plenty of scenic beauty encompassing some dramatic desert landscape to take in at Zion National Park.

Zion National Park carries a reputation as a bucket list destination



for adventurous trail seekers around the world. Here you can gaze down the commanding Zion Canyon from atop Angels Landing, reconnect with nature on a multi-day backpacking expedition or visit one of a kind destinations like Emerald Pools via easily accessed day hikes.

The best time to visit Zion National Park is between the months of April and November when the park's free shuttles are running and the weather is comfortable.

**Navajo Loop Trail, Bryce Canyon National Park**  
This rather short trail which offers a 1-hour to 2-hour loop from the rim at Sunset Point down to the floor of Bryce Canyon is perfectly carved out for a Marvel fan, dis-

playing hoodoo formations such as Wall Street, Twin Bridges, and wait-for-it Thor's Hammer!

Zion National Park is a bucket list destination for adventurous trail seekers in the world

self, a fascinating structure that rises 50 feet west of the junction at the end of the trail.

The Bryce Canyon National Park is a short trail descending below the canyon rim that takes hikers to interesting rock formations including Gulliver's Castle, the Queen's Castle and Queen Victoria. Best time to visit the place is between April and October.

**Lower Calf Creek Falls, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument**  
Here's one for the laidback climbers, the photographers, hikers that wish to be one with the ecosystem, Calf Creek Streaming down more than 100 feet along mineral-stained sandstone is a



(Advertisorial)

sight to behold, the waterfalls appears to radiate in its clarity.

While the path can get slightly tedious, it's a perfect trail for families with enthusiastic children, the waterfall transforms into an absolutely awe-inspiring picnic spot for both adults and kids.

Calf Creek is a perennial stream located in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. There are two waterfalls that you can visit, the upper falls and the lower falls. Though both hikes are enjoyable, the lower falls is more accessible, an easier hike, a bigger drop, and much more popular. The 6-mile out-and-back hike is relatively flat, and the trailhead is located just off of Utah Scenic Byway 12, the highway between Escalante and Boulder. There is a sign for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Calf Creek Recreation Area.

At the lower falls, a clear stream descends 126 feet into a pool, where folks take a swim. Mist from the falls and shade keep the haven cool even on the hottest of days. Aside from the falls, the trail offers several points of interest, all indicated with numbered posts along the

love looking at a majestic waterfall? This trail offers activities everyone can enjoy.

**Buckskin Gulch Day Hike – Wire Pass Trailhead, Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness**

Buckskin Gulch is renowned not only because of its continuous challenging narrows, but also because there is no other canyon like it in the world. Ideally considered a relatively easier hike, it's also pet friendly (however, the dog needs to be on a leash).

For 12.5 miles the gulch is enveloped in a very narrow gorge 100 to 200 feet deep, flanked by vaulting convoluted walls of Navajo Sandstone. Now you can delve in its beauty with your pet by your side.

This trail is best enjoyed during April through early June and September through October and strictly avoided during rainfall.

**Mount Timpanogos, Wasatch Mountain Range**

Saving the best for the last is Mount Timpanogos. The word "Timpanogos" comes from the native Timpanogos tribe's words for "rock" and "water,"



trail and a handy guide that is picked up at the trailhead.

The feeling of craning your neck to view the top of the 126-foot falls; how the cool mist refreshes you after the long, hot hike down the path; you yelp as you dunk yourself into the cold, cold water; how you never wanted to hike back to the car. Who is going to love it? Kids and dogs will love the swim the most, and you can often hear children giggling and yelling with joy as you approach the falls. But, really, who doesn't

although the hike falls under a strenuous category, the climb offers you some gorgeous panoramic views, stunning caverns, emerald lakes and glacial waterfalls (Fun Fact: It may not look like a typical glacier at first glance; that is because this is a rock glacier. The ice itself is buried underneath a hard crust of dirt and rock).

This leaves Mt. Timpanogos on an absolute must visit list, the most popular time is around May to October.



Here we have it all, a hikers guide through Utah. Don't miss this opportunity to raise the bar this summer with a trail through some of Utah's most infamous spots that have carved a path for both amateurs and professional hikers alike.

While Utah offers a multitude of hiking trails customised for your specific requirement, explore the offbeat tracks that may not be as popular as their counterparts but are known for its distinct characteristics:

- ❖ Hickman Bridge Trail, Capitol Reef National Park
- ❖ Little Wild Horse Canyon, San Rafael Swell
- ❖ Bell's Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Salt Lake City
- ❖ Horseshoe Canyon to the Grand Gallery, North of Canyonlands National Park

**Hickman Bridge Trail, Capitol Reef National Park**

State Route 24 runs right through the middle of Capitol Reef National Park, giving you easy access to a total of 15 good day-hikes and plenty of adventures. While these are considered front-country hikes, it doesn't take long to feel

like you are in the middle of complete wilderness. An afternoon or day spent on the Hickman Bridge or Navajo Knobs trail is enough to seal Capitol Reef National Park into your memory forever.

**Little Wild Horse Canyon, San Rafael Swell**

The San Rafael Swell, a 70 by 40-mile geologic upheaval located in southeastern UT, has been cut, shaped and formed over thousands of years into a crazy assembly of sandstone buttresses,

**Buckskin Gulch trail is best enjoyed during April through early June and September through October**

canyons and plateaus. The Northern Swell, located north of Interstate 70, offers fantastic hiking, backpacking, biking and camping at all levels of fun. The area offers a less crowded alternative for those who are willing to make the journey to the more remote spots on the map.

**Bell's Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Salt Lake City**

Few places so near an urban area are so rich in diversity. Local residents of the Wasatch Front have all of this right here in our "backyard". The granite cliffs are a paradise for both rock climbers and the mountain goats you might see as you drive the byway. Little Cottonwood Canyon is so named because its length and width are "littler" than its big neighbour to the north; however, it is an equally glorious natural playground. At the mouth of the canyon is the site where Mormon pioneers quarried massive granite blocks used to construct the Salt Lake Temple and the LDS Conference Center. The Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest is the westernmost wall of the Rockies.

**Horseshoe Canyon to the Grand Gallery, North of Canyonlands National Park**

Horseshoe Canyon is a remote section of Canyonlands National Park that was added in 1972. Formerly known as Barrier Canyon, this area is home to some of the most impressive rock art created by the ancient Barrier Culture. A journey through this desert region of mature cottonwoods,

desert washes, and soaring sandstone cliffs is punctuated by massive rock art panels, including the Great Gallery, holding intricately created pictographs and petroglyphs.

**Canyonlands National Park**

Imagine endless deep canyons, towering mesas, pinnacles, cliffs, and spires stretching across 527 square miles. This is Canyonlands National Park, formed by the currents and tributaries of Utah's Green and Colorado rivers. Canyonlands is home to many different types of travel experiences, from sublime solitude in the more remote stretches of the park to moderate hikes through the Needles district to the opportunity to create your own version of one of the West's most photographed landforms, Mesa Arch. Do your-

**A day spent on Hickman Bridge trail is enough to seal Capitol Reef National Park into your memory forever**



self a favour and don't hurry through the park. Instead, take your time and let the nature of the Canyonlands sneak up on you and take root in your heart. It is quite likely you will become so attached to the place that you will have to return again and again and again.

Leave no stone unturned and no trail untouched. If America is your destination don't miss out on these glorious trails in Utah. The key is simple, stay hydrated, carry your equipment and let nature lead the way.

# KTM showcases sustainable tourism



Kerala Travel Mart, held in Kochi from 5-8 May 2022, saw dignitaries representing government, state tourism board and delegates from not only India, but international markets too. Around 55,000 B2B meetings happened during the mart, in which Kerala tourism industry showcased the products, offerings and experiences to the tourism sector.



# Ananta focuses on wellness

Gagan Katyal, CGM, Sales & Marketing, Ananta Hotels & Resorts says 2023 will be the year of wellbeing for their properties, as they aim for a full recovery during the current financial year. He shares details of the company's new properties and business strategy.



Lipla Negi

## What are your expansion plans for 2022?

We have a resort named Jagira Ananta Elite in Gir, Gujarat. It is scheduled to open in June 2022. In terms of location, we are growing. The majority of our properties are located amid nature and offer unique experiences. In Udai-pur, for example, the entire resort is sprawled across 100 acres. We have created exquisite jungle cottages amid this vast space to provide our guests with a jungle glamping experience. Ananta gives guests an opportunity to live in nature rather than in a box hotel. As part of our strategy, we look for sellable locales such as Gir, Goa and Bhimtal, among others.

Aside from Gir, we will be expanding our footprint by launching a new 80-key resort in North

Goa early next year. Villa residences are a prominent trend in Goa. We are building a villa community in Goa that will function similarly to a hotel. We are also



**Gagan Katyal**  
CGM, Sales & Marketing  
Ananta Hotels & Resorts

upgrading our spas and wellness facilities. We are going big on wellness. For us, 2023 will be a year of wellbeing.

**Is the room occupancy level returning to normal for you?**



Occupancy has grown. We have been catering to family travel, which has been increasing from locations that are within driving distance. The rooms are rather large. We were really aggressive in our sales calls.

**What marketing strategies are you considering for promoting your properties?**

To win in this competitive atmosphere, strong marketing com-

munication and brand awareness are essential. We will be attending shows for more B2C engagement.

**Where do you see a strong connection and company growth: OTAs or travel agents?**

OTAs are rapidly expanding. They provide fabulous flexibility in terms of rate aggression and property picture uploading. OTA accounts for around 30 per cent of all business.

**What has changed for you and the brand as a whole between 2020 and 2022?**

Bookings used to be long-term, but today they are short-term. Wellness is a differentiator for us, and we are working hard to capitalise on it at our resorts. To keep guests engaged in the resort, a variety of unique venues are available. A close encounter with nature and a high level of hygiene are two key areas of focus.

**How did the shift to domestic travel work out for you?**

Fortunately, we have always had a strong hold on domestic leisure, which has only grown. When it begins, international inbound will only fill the gap, providing a healthy mix.

**What new ideas has Ananta tried or launched recently to stay strong on the road to revival?**

We specialise in resorts that are well-planned and have plenty of open space. These are the factors that have contributed to our success. Our pricing has been

OTAs provide fabulous flexibility in terms of rate aggression and property picture uploading

competitive, and our guest service has helped us earn referrals. We have been able to meet our budgets following the pandemic, and we are aiming for a full recovery in FY2022-23.

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# 'Indian embassies abroad proactive'

► Contd from page 3

should be taken for the same. I am hopeful things will happen in this regard soon," he added.

## Working with embassies

Mehra shared that some of the Indian embassies abroad are "very active". "I have had the privilege of speaking with some of the ambassadors regarding promotion of India. We have given them our ideas and some of them have said that they will implement those shortly. If this process starts, we can get some business. This has added a lot of burden on us also, because apart from the 20 appointed officers with whom we are dealing every day, we are also working with other embassies that are very active as they have directive from Ministry of External Affairs for trade and tourism. We have had certain meetings, especially in Canada and Australia, which a large number of tour operators

India and the way they presented India from the tourism point of view was incredible. It is a very good sign that if we have such a person overseeing the day-to-day promotional activities, people will definitely get business from those countries," said Mehra.

## Virtual versus physical

While the MOT has been conducting virtual roadshows called Reconnect 2022, Mehra believes that these online roadshows are

not giving the desired result. "We have done a number of roadshows now and there are more lined up in the next one month. However, they are not giving the desired results. Therefore, we have requested the MOT that physical roadshows should begin immediately, along with the MDA scheme," he stressed.



## Tourism marts

Mehra shared that IATO is participating in Arabian Travel Market (ATM), but surely on other travel marts and fairs is still not there.

"IMEX Frankfurt and other shows are still not finalised by the MOT. They are still not clear because no funds are available. Hence, in the next 10 days, if the ministry gets the desired funds, then we will

go ahead with IMEX. Otherwise, I have my doubts. Let us hope that our letters to the Prime Minister give the desired results," he said.

## UK visa ban

Talking about the UK visa ban, Mehra shared that they have been trying and writing to the Ministry of Home Affairs and MOT to allow the UK and Canada to be included in the list of countries allowed to apply e-visa. "Once this happens, I think by October and November,

at least business from the UK and Canada would cross the 50 per cent mark of what we had. If e-visa is allowed for these countries, it will be very good for tourism in India," he pointed out.

## Flights key to recovery

Mehra said, "As soon as airlines add more capacity and the war stops, we should reach the 40 per cent mark by October-November this year and about 50-60 per cent next year." 📈



We have urged UK and Canada visitors be included in list of nations allowed to apply e-visa

Rajiv Mehra  
President, IATO

had attended. I am hopeful that this will also create some interest for people to come to India and I think the tourism trade will get this additional business too in the coming years. The only hassle now is hotel rates, availability of rooms and airfares, which should be under control so that more people visit India, resulting in more employment directly or indirectly in this sector. We want a total hassle free experience for our foreign tourists because tomorrow they will be our ambassadors," he underlined.

IATO had also requested the PM that someone from the MOT should be posted in the embassies abroad. "That person should be under direct control of the ambassador. It will give a big boost to tourism as our people do understand what the requirement is. During my interactions with various Indian ambassadors abroad, I came to know that all of them had a vast knowledge about

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## TourismNews

Kerala Travel Mart uses technology effectively, organises over 55k meetings in three days

ATOAI meets Tourism Secretary, National Board on Adventure Tourism to be constituted

Digitisation and digital experiences to be included in National Tourism Policy, says G Kamala Vardhan Rao

By the fourth quarter of 2022, across-the-board rates will come back to 2019 numbers, says Rajeev Menon, Marriott

National Digital Tourism Mission on the cards, guidelines for tour operators to be issued soon

To facilitate air connectivity, Haridwar to have an international airport, says Tourism Minister

Maharashtra Tourism conferred with Silver Play Button Award by YouTube

Corporate travel may recover quicker than expected: Sabre

# Mauritius eyes Indian market again

Successful vaccination rollout in many ways is responsible for Mauritius deciding to reopen its borders. Mauritius Tourism is looking to recapture Indian market by launching a campaign and ensuring they offer safe destination for Indian travellers. Around 70% of bookings from Indian market come from tour operators and travel agents.

Nisha Verma

**Arvind Bundhun**, Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) recently unveiled a new advertising campaign, 'Where else but Mauritius', at a glittering ceremony in Mumbai.

Elaborating, Bundhun said, "India is a major source of tourism for us. With the country opening up, Air Mauritius is increasing the frequency of flights. Air Mauritius is adding five flights out of Mumbai. We launched the campaign to target all the segments of the Indian market, be it honeymooners, weddings, families, MICE, weddings, event or productions. This campaign appeals to everyone."

### Strategy ahead

Bundhun said that the travel value chain has been affected since the pandemic. "Around 70 per cent of our bookings from

the Indian market come from tour operators and travel agents. Hence, our first approach is to support them, which we are doing through joint marketing campaigns. The second approach that has been adopted is running joint marketing campaigns with



Arvind Bundhun  
Director, Mauritius Tourism  
Promotion Authority (MTPA)

airlines, because accessibility is visibility for us. Under the B2C initiative, we have launched the campaign and will be implementing a social media strategy to target the travellers so that

Mauritius is on the minds of the travellers," he claimed. The objective is to reconquer the market because their competitors have reopened before them.

### Ease of travel

Claiming that they have reviewed the sanitary protocols in Mauritius recently, Bundhun said, "Only fully vaccinated Indian travellers can enter Mauritius. Upon checking themselves in at the hotel in Mauritius, the guests will have to take the mandatory COVID-19 test. If the result is positive, then he or she will be isolated in a hotel room for a week. Ever since the island reopened its borders, 300,000 tourists have entered Mauritius. The percentage of positive tourists is negligible—0.01 per cent or around 2,000 tourists."

### Mauritius is safe

Claiming that Mauritius is good at COVID-19 management as

per the World Health Organisation, Bundhun said a successful vaccination rollout is responsible for Mauritius deciding to reopen its borders.

"We are also following what other countries are doing, and thus we didn't completely remove all the

With Mauritius opening up, Air Mauritius is increasing the frequency of flights to Indian destinations

COVID-19 tests. We still have a test on Day zero, which is to protect tourists and our population. Out of the 0.01 per cent tour-

ists, who tested positive, none were hospitalised nor were there any casualties.

Ever since Mauritius announced reopening its borders for the Indian market, Bundhun shared, "We could see that there is a pent-up demand for our shores. We are confident that in the coming months, we will see a sizeable increase in demand for the Indian travellers."

### Indian market expectations

Bundhun said, "Before the pandemic, we used to get around 80,000 Indian travellers, which is 7 per cent of the total tourist arrivals. What is more interesting is that Indians travel during our low season. Our entire tourism ecosystem is heavily dependent on Indian tourists. Also, we have historical ties with India and it is a privilege to welcome Indian travellers to Mauritius. It is a home away from home for them."

## TAFI puts spotlight on TCS

Western India Region of Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) recently organised a knowledge session on Tax Collected at Source (TCS), which was attended by more than 120 travel agencies from Mumbai and Pune. The association not only invited its members, but also kept it open to non-members at a nominal fee. The session was also open to the CAs of agents.



# High taxes, fuel hike pinch travellers

Contd from page 5

## Tackling the prices

Believing from the efficiency perspective, Bhaskaran said the airlines are best in terms of efficient utilization of fuel, costs structure and all elements. "For too long the air fares in India have been at very low levels, despite the taxes and the fuel rates. I don't think airlines have tested what could be the potential on the revenue side. Now that all of us are constrained by the fuel prices, I think we will see some increase on the fare side, forced by the fuel price levels," he said

Singh claims that we need to first fix the taxation issues and fuel cost. "This time when fuel prices went up, the airlines increased

the fares. People have got used to paying less for a flight from Delhi to Mumbai than they pay for taxi fare from the airport back home. Let us keep a reasonable

business ought to be that you will sell above your cost and, as the fares were increased due to fuel price hike, the bookings did not decrease much," he claimed.

Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Civil Aviation, said that airlines talk about short-term constraints—fuel cost and capacity at the airports. "We are hopeful that this sector is resilient and is going to have big growth," he mentioned. "The government is aware about the constraints. Issues such as the excise part, infrastructure bottlenecks are being taken up. The government is facilitating on all the fronts that they can take it forward so that this industry thrives," he claimed. "Airlines should think about carbon reduction. They are aware that huge costs will be imposed on them, and this is the time when we have to think in terms of SAF," said Mishra.



**Vinay Dube**  
Founder and CEO  
Akasa Air



**Sunil Bhaskaran**  
CEO & MD  
AirAsia India Ltd

In 2010, the fuel price was US \$110-120. Still some airlines found a way to make money

In terms of growth, it is looking good. But, if one looks at costs, it is a different story

## Focus on international

Mishra said, "We have a huge market in the international sector. I think if some of the airlines focus towards the international sector, they should give room to other smaller ones in the domestic sector and think more towards capacity augmentation. Despite the government's efforts, most traffic and bilaterals are taken over by foreign airlines," he claimed.

## Government perspective

Reacting to what the airlines had to say, **Satyendra Kumar Mishra**,

fare because this is one industry that for no reason keeps selling below cost. The basics of any

## AYUSH visa for tourists: PM



PM Narendra Modi at the Global Ayush Investment & Innovation Summit in Gandhinagar

At the inauguration of Global Ayush Investment & Innovation Summit 2022 at Gandhinagar of Gujarat recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an initiative for foreign nationals who want to come to India to take advantage of AYUSH therapy. He shared that India will soon introduce a special AYUSH visa category.

Explaining, the Prime Minister noted the vital role played by traditional medicines and how it is increasing the Kerala tourism. "This potential is there in every corner of India. "Heal

in India can become a big brand of this decade," he said, adding wellness centers based on Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, among others can be very popular.

Noting the significance of the traditional medicines and how it is developing tourism sector in Kerala, the Prime Minister recently announced that India is going to introduce a special AYUSH visa category to facilitate foreigners travelling to India for AYUSH therapy. In this regard, "Heal in India can become a big brand of this decade," Modi said.

## Sectoral growth

Airlines talk about short-term constraints—fuel cost and capacity. "We hope this sector is resilient and will post growth," said SK Mishra, Joint Secy, Civil Aviation Ministry.



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# Encalm for 5-star care at airports

Encalm Hospitality, which started with the opening of Encalm Lounge at T1 domestic airport in Delhi in early 2022, plans to operate another lounge for business class passenger flying out of T3 International Airport in the capital, with an aim to bring five-star hospitality to the airports that travellers get in a luxury hotel.



Nisha Verma

Encalm Hospitality, started on 1 October 2021, with a vision to be the most admired hospitality organisation of the world, says **Vikas Sharma**, CEO, Encalm Hospitality.

"Our tagline says 'Creating delightful experiences' and this is our primary aim. We have started our business from airport and are already operating a lounge called Encalm Lounge at the T1 domestic airport at Delhi. We have also started our welcome and assist services at New Delhi airport called Atithya, which includes airport assistance at departure till the time a passenger boards the flight and on arrival till the passenger boards the designated conveyance. These services include buggy service, porter, etc.," he adds.

## Moving forward

Encalm Hospitality has also won contract for a business class unified lounge for T3 International airport in New Delhi. "Earlier, there used to be business class lounges by every airline. Now, we will operate one common lounge for every business class passenger flying out of T3 International Airport in Delhi. It would be our signature lounge, which we will start from scratch, right from designing to implementing operations and serving guests. The difference is to get hospitality into airports," he claims.

"Our dependency is completely on airlines. We would be partnering with international airlines to provide our exclusive services to their guests, who prefer experiential hospitality as well as with Indian airlines that fly international from T3 terminal," he adds.



Vikas Sharma  
CEO, Encalm Hospitality

The company plans to diversify into hotels in future. "We have already sent a proposal for a transit hotel in one of the airports. If we get that contract, we would start designing that project too. Eventually, we would like to get into any aspect of food & beverage, and hospitality across airports and beyond that," he shares.

## Current projects

The company has more than 300 employees at present. "We aim

to make it 1,000 plus by the end of financial year 2022-23. Apart from meet & greet services and lounges, we are looking at operating around 30 different outlets by the end of financial year 2022-23. The total number of lounges would be around 11 in Delhi; five in Hyderabad and three in Goa," he says.

## Signature lounge

The company plans to open the signature lounge in T3 international airport in October. "It will have facilities unseen in many of the lounges before. There will be an open kitchen and live counter. It will be similar to a five-star multi-cuisine coffee shop, along with a spa. We want to have an exercise room where people can go and perform yoga, recreation room with a virtual golfing session. It will be a very special launch for us," he adds.

## Atithya

While lounges get their own captivated customers, Sharma says, "Where we are making real impact is Atithya, which is our meet & greet service that we launched on 26 Janu-

we will be available on online travel booking portals as well," he says.



A Unit of Encalm Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.

ary (this year) in Delhi, and we have seen some great response for the same. We have involved a professional agency. Currently our Atithya services are available at Delhi airport and Hyderabad." Encalm Hospitality has also tied up with a few individual programmes. Very soon,

We will operate a common lounge for business class passengers at T3 in Delhi

## Well prepared

Sharma says that they are waiting for travel to come back to its old glory. "We are eagerly waiting to see that. The good thing is by the time it comes back to its old glory, we shall be ready," he says.

## EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



MAY 2022

Date	Event	Time
17-19	Airport Show Dubai	10:00 am
18-20	SATTE 2022	10:00 am
20-22	Guangzhou International Travel Fair (GITF)	9:15 am
22-24	Riyadh Travel Fair	3:30 pm
23	Akbar Holidays Webinar with Thailand	3:00 pm
23	IATO Interactive luncheon Meeting	11:30 am
24-25	Future Hospitality Summit	9:00 am
24-26	The Hotel Show Dubai	11:00 am
25-26	CAPA Americas 'Aviation & LCCs Summit'	10:00 am
25-27	ACE of M.I.C.E. Exhibition	10:00 am
25-27	International Conference on Sustainable Tourism	10:00 am
26-27	Hospitality Trends Summit India 2022	10:00 am
27-30	Taipei International Tourism Exposition	9:00 am
30-31	Texas Travel Expo	9:00 am
31	New Zealand Webinar	11:00 am
31-2 June	IME Frankfurt	10:00 am

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddppl.com](mailto:talk@ddppl.com)

# Global Media Campaign in offling

Contd from page 3

Campaign by the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) will be released in May. "It is stuck due to some issues at the Ministry of Finance level. We are in dialogue with them, and I hope to get those sorted out quickly so that we would be able to launch the campaign, which will be predominantly digital and TV campaigns, along with the participation in all the marts. I think this process will start in May. Hence,



with all our campaigns starting off in May, we are in the right position to have a good and promising tourist season in this winter, as far as in inbound tourism is concerned," he claimed.

The MOT is ready with the content for the campaigns. "Everything has been worked out because we were waiting during

COVID to launch it, but there are some internal clearances within the government that are not in place. We are awaiting those approvals and once we get them, we will launch them," he said.

## UK visa

Responding on resuming e-visa facility for the UK citizens, Singh emphasised, "Visa regime is based on reciprocity. We have been liberal in giving e-visas to many countries. This was re-

make, where I will again take it up to relax the e-visa ban on the UK."

## Working with tourism officers

Singh revealed that the appointment of tourism officers in various embassies has been done by the Ministry of External Affairs on their request and the response has been "very good". "One of the primary reasons for it is that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his meeting with all the ambassadors of India, has emphasised on the importance of 3Ts—Trade, Technology and Tourism. He has given them a clear message that the performance of the missions abroad will be judged on how good they have been in promoting the 3Ts, where tourism means inbound tourism. That has definitely geared up all the embassies and when I meet the ambassadors, or when they are going out on the postings or transiting through India, I find them geared up for this because of the PM's instructions and appeal to them," he claimed.

## Virtual roadshows

Singh claimed that virtual roadshows have a limit because one can't reach out to large numbers with online medium. "It is a 2-D medium where you don't get the

response since it is digital. There is the advantage of reaching out in physical shows where you meet and talk to people in person and gauge the response in time.

Visa regime is based on reciprocity. We have been liberal in giving e-visas

Arvind Singh  
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and  
Chairman, PATA-India Chapter

Once we get our clearances, I hope, along with the media campaign, we can start things soon shortly," he shared.

## Medical tourism in focus

Speaking on the launch of Ayush visa, Singh said, "We are in touch with the Ayush Ministry and the Home Ministry on this. This is under serious consideration because there is the intention of the government to promote medical value tourism including tourism for Ayush."

# More Ethiopian flights to India

Ethiopian Airlines, celebrating 50 years of uninterrupted service to Mumbai, plans to increase its services to India. The airline is starting three weekly flights to Chennai from July 2 this year, and also bringing three to five more Indian cities under its ambit. The Chennai flights were initially planned in 2020 and later shelved.



Hazel Jain

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest aviation group, has announced Chennai as the fourth passenger destination in India. This comes on the occasion of the group completing 50 years of continuous service in Mumbai this month.

Ethiopian Airlines is starting thrice weekly flights to Chennai from July 2 this year. It will also deploy Boeing 787 aircraft on its four weekly Addis Ababa-Bengaluru flights. Similarly, Mumbai and Delhi will have two daily flights from mid-June, up from the current single daily operation. The airline is allowed to operate 35 flights per week to Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai.

The airline recently hosted a gala evening in Mumbai for its partners and travel agents to thank

them. Sharing details about the company plans, **Lemna Yadecha Gudeta**, Chief Commercial Officer, Ethiopian Airlines, said, "We would like to add three to five more destinations in India and increase the number of flights. Discussions are ongoing between the civil aviation authorities of Ethiopia and India for this. We do have very serious business interest in the Indian market and have plans to grow even more in India."

Gudeta said that the airline wanted to start the Chennai flight in June 2020 but was forced to shelve the plan. "Hopefully, we will be able to replicate the success we have seen in Mumbai and Bengaluru in Chennai as well, which will encourage us to look at more destinations in India. We chose Chennai because there is a lot of business interest between the city and Africa. Currently,



**Lemna Yadecha Gudeta**  
Chief Commercial Officer  
Ethiopian Airlines

We hope to replicate the success seen in Mumbai and Bengaluru in Chennai

the export business between the two countries is more than \$ 1.5bn," he added.



**Tigist Eshetu**  
Regional Director (India Sub-Continent)  
Ethiopian Airlines

We are looking at 24 Business Class seats and 240 Economy Class seats on Chennai flight

The airline currently links Mumbai to 127 destinations, of which 62 are in Africa. Around 65-70 per

cent of passengers from India travel onward from Addis Ababa to other destinations within Africa.

Vision 2035 is a strategic plan that the airline has devised. It had started planning five-year plans since 2000, but it achieved its target of being the biggest aviation group in Africa by 2020 instead of 2025. "Based on that, we have planned until 2035 because we need to know where we are headed and simultaneously work on infrastructure. We would like to be one of the top 20 aviation groups in the world," he further added.

Sharing details about the seat configuration on the Chennai-Addis flight, **Tigist Eshetu**, Regional Director (India Sub-Continent), Ethiopian Airlines, said, "It depends as we have different wide-body aircraft, but we are looking at 24 Business Class seats and 240 Economy Class seats. But



the type of aircraft deployed on this route will eventually depend on the market demand. It is also mounted on the system and the travel agents can start booking."

She shared updates on Ethiopian Holidays, another wing of the group. "We will now start promoting Ethiopia as a destination again and work closely with tour operators in India for this," she said.

## Good to know

Ethiopian Airlines made its debut flight to Mumbai, one of its oldest destinations in Asia, in December 1971, although it started operations to New Delhi in 1966, just 20 years after the airline was founded.

## Lords paves way for growth

With ambitious expansion plans, Lords Hotels & Resorts has been striving to maintain its popularity with masses by offering sustainable and purposeful services that focus on health and well-being.



Janice Alyosius

With a belief that moving forward is the only way to survive, Lords Hotels & Resorts has moved forward during the pandemic with full throttle. They have conducted extensive market research and worked their way up cautiously with the assistance of virtual tools to allow consumers to connect with them, and through creative email marketing and social media posts to drive brand awareness.

**Rishi Puri**, Senior Vice President Operations & Development, Lords Hotels & Resorts, said, "In recent years, we have seen a trend of solo travelling among people, enjoying a blissful existence with nature. We have also seen a rise in holistic hospitality, health and well-being; and we are working to offer digitalised guest experiences for contactless service."

He added, "We have seen a slow but steady recovery across our hotel units and there is plenty of room for growth.

Lords offers comfortable accommodations at reasonable rates, and in recent months we have seen occupancy rates of

around the world in partnership with its franchise owners.

Recently, Lords Hotels and Resorts had signed up a room sale agreement with Country



**Rishi Puri**  
Senior Vice President Operations & Development, Lords Hotels & Resorts

40 per cent, or at least a stable occupancy figure, and we are regaining momentum lost during the pandemic. We have several new properties that are doing extremely well, including Pushpam Lords Resort in Karjat, Lords Eco Inn in Panchgani and Lords Inn Chandigarh-Zirakpur among others."

With unprecedented growth and ambitious expansion plans, the hotel is poised to continue developing its collection of properties

In recent years, we have seen a trend of solo travelling among people, enjoying existence with nature

Club India Ltd (CCIL), expanding business venues at leisure and pilgrimage locations for the CCIL members. Under the agreement, the members would get to experience the Lords' hospitality at their 25 exotic locations. This would mean more business for Lords Hotels units and, at same time, also offering more destinations to the CCIL members.

## Embracing change for good

Indian hospitality industry looks forward to support from government, as revival from pandemic will be an arduous journey: Naresh Arora, Founder and CEO, Trully India Hotels, Resorts, Camps & Safaris.



Janice Alyosius

The pandemic had a significant impact on the hospitality sector in India with a lasting effect. Now popularity of staycations, hygiene protocols and contactless technologies firmly embedded in the daily activities of hospitality businesses, some new trends are emerging. An increased consumer awareness of all things sustainable, purposeful and health and well-being has set new benchmarks for the hospitality enterprises. Keeping in view the situation, Trully India has embraced new strategic changes to entice customers back into food and beverage outlets and assure holiday goers a safe stay. It is working on the following strategies.

### Focus on niche markets

Offering increased customisation to result in value creation for hotels. But one has to be cautious as this requires one to carefully think about the value proposition of the offer and not simply branding and rebranding.

### Tech to accelerate business

Technological advancements will continue to have an impact on the travel industry, especially



**Naresh Arora**  
Founder and CEO, Trully India Hotels, Resorts, Camps & Safaris

in hotel rooms before and after the trip. The incorporation of technology initiatives will lead to a variety of new innovations within the industry.

### Responsive trade models

Following an increase in tourist footfall, there is always the danger of the health crises returning again. If and when the pandemic throws life out of gear, the strict regulations will be imposed by the government, which has brought many

business to its knees. In addition, hotels have played their part in supporting local medical needs and have turned hotel rooms into alternative work spaces for those tired with working from home.

Technological advancements will continue to have a significant impact on the travel industry

### Social responsibility

The impact of global warming can today be considered as a major risk for corporations and the society as a whole. It is thus crucial for the governments and the corporations to first become more sustainable business models, rather than planting saplings to increase greenery.

## THE TRANS BHUTAN TRAIL

### India

Trans Bhutan Trail has appointed **RENUKA NATU**, Travel Relations, as Market Advisor for India. Renuka brings with her more than 25 years of travel trade experience, along with an in-depth knowledge of the travel pattern in India. The trail will be launched this year, following a generation of disuse. Travellers will now be able to see some of the remotest parts of this last Shangrila, hidden deep in the Eastern Himalayas. The trail, with origins that go back at least 500 years, will offer walkers and mountain bikers the opportunity to explore Bhutan's culture and heritage and see the country in an authentic way.



## SAROVAR HOTELS

### New Delhi

Sarovar Hotels announced the appointment of **JATIN KHANNA** as the new Chief Executive Officer for the brand. Before becoming part of Sarovar Hotels, Jatin was with Marriott, handling 32 hotels as Vice President-North India, Bhutan and Nepal. Earlier, he served as VP Operations for Hilton Hotels India. He is a graduate from Delhi University and holds a BA Hons. in Hospitality Management from the University of West London. "It's a sheer delight to join one of the leading and fastest growing hospitality brands in India. I look forward to work with the talented team of Sarovar hotels," Jatin said.



## INDIGO

### Gurugram

The Board of Directors (Board) of InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) have appointed **DR VENKATARAMANI SUMANTRAN**, an Independent Non-Executive Director of the Board since May 28, 2020, as its Chairman. Dr Sumantran succeeds Meleveetil Damodaran, who has stepped down as an Independent Non-Executive Director on May 3, 2022, on attaining the age of 75 years. Dr Sumantran is a business leader, technocrat and academician, having worked in the USA, Europe and Asia through a career spanning over 37 years. He is currently the Chairman and Managing Director of Celeris Technologies.



## GRAND HYATT MUMBAI HOTEL AND RESIDENCES

### Mumbai

Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel and Residences has appointed **BAANKE PRASHAR** as the Director of Sales. With over 12 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he has with the crème de la crème in the hotel industry. He began his career with the Hyatt Family, working as a Food and Beverage associate at Hyatt Regency, Mumbai. He has gained exposure in the US, before moving back to India to work with some of the elite brands such as Leela Hotels, Taj Hotels and Marriott Hotels.



## ENRISE BY SAYAJI AURANGABAD

### Mumbai

Enrise by Sayaji Aurangabad has appointed **DHARMENDRA RANA** as Director of Operations. In his illustrious career spanning 15 years, Rana has worked with reputed brands such as The Oberoi New Delhi, Trident Agra, Taj Lake Palace Udaipur, and Ananta Spa & Resort Udaipur. Prior to this, he was associated with Hotel Avadh Utopia, Surat as Food & Beverage Manager. Rana has an excellent track record in F&B Operations, Business Planning, Profit Centre Operations, Vendor Management, Quality Management, People Management, Business Development and Budgetary Control.



## JW MARRIOTT BENGALURU PRESTIGE GOLFSHIRE RESORT

### Bengaluru

**MOHAMMAD SHOIB** has been appointed as the Director of Sales and Marketing at the newly opened JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort and Spa. Having held various leadership roles in a career spanning over 14 years in the hotel industry, Shoib takes on this role to create a new benchmark in service excellence in the South-Asia region. Shoib had been associated with the Marriott family for nine years as the Director of Sales and Marketing.



## OVOLO

### Hong Kong

Leading designer boutique hotel collection Ovolo announces the promotion of **DAVE BASWAL** to Chief Executive Officer.

With 20 years of experience in hospitality, finance and real estate management, Dave has been instrumental in Ovolo's growth during the pandemic and in building a strong team aligned around the group's core values. A National Board Advisory Member of Tourism Accommodation Australia and former executive at Mantra Group, Dave holds a Master's in Professional Accounting, a Master's in International Tourism and a Bachelor in Hotel Management.



## HYATT CENTRIC MG ROAD

### Bengaluru

Hyatt Centric MG Road, Bangalore, has appointed **INBA EZHILAN** as Information Systems Manager. In his new role, he will be responsible for effective implementation of the hotel technology components, provide technical assistance and lead the department. Ezhilan is a professional IT manager with more than 15 years of experience in the industry. He holds a degree in Bachelor of Computer Application. Earlier, he worked with Bangalore Marriott Whitfield for three years as Multi Property IT Manager, Park Hyatt Chennai for seven years as Assistant Manager IT, and with Microsense for five years as Help Desk and Network Engineer.



## COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT FARIDABAD ARAVALLI RESORT

### New Delhi

An accomplished and experienced professional, **GAUTAM CHHABRA** joins the soon-to-be-launched Courtyard by Marriott Faridabad Aravalli Resort as Director of Sales. He is among the youngest sales leaders to take on this role, having worked with the JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa, as an Associate Director of Sales for over two years. In his current profile he will direct and oversee high-value projects and drive business through integration and transition to elevate occupancy rates and business demand.



## TALKing People

**PANKAJ MISHRA**, Director of Finance, Novotel Pune, tries to spend as much time as possible amid nature to unwind. "Sometimes to relax I also listen to music or go cycling or running. The pandemic has taught us all many lessons and one of the key skills I have learnt is resilience and patience," he says. Mishra also loves to travel. "India has amazing holiday destinations. If I have to name one of my favourites, it would definitely be Shimla. And internationally it would be Paris. For my next holiday though, I would really like to visit Kedarnath," he adds.



**SANTOSH CHAND**, Head - Customer Happiness, AirAsia India, is a travel bug. "My favourite place in India is Goa. I find it to be magical and it never ceases to mesmerise me even after multiple visits. I prefer to spend time in South Goa for its exclusivity, tranquillity and scenic beauty. Outside India, I really liked Cambodia. Its hospitality is simply amazing and heart-warming. Cambodia's history is an intriguing journey, be it its heritage sites, or its laid-back floating villages," she says.



**MADHU PAI**, Marketing and PR Manager, Tourism Australia, de-stresses by reading fiction. "The last book I read was 'A man called Ove' by Fredrik Backman, an absolute easy read while thought provoking in so many ways. During the lockdown, I also started cooking! Perhaps a top-rated typical lockdown skill but I discovered a real passion and interest for it. I have experimented with a wide range of foods, thankfully to the delight and approval of my family!" she says. Her favourite holiday destination is Rajasthan," Pai reveals.



# Paris or Barcelona?

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# Malaysia woos Indians

Manoharan Periasamy, Senior Director, International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa), Malaysia Tourism, says they want to achieve the target of one-million tourists by 2023-24. They are also inviting Indian filmmakers to shoot movies at locations in Malaysia.

 Hazel Jain

A popular personality with the Indian travel fraternity, Manoharan Periasamy, Senior Director, International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa), Malaysia Tourism, is determined to not only bring back the numbers Malaysia enjoyed from India pre-Covid, but also breach the one-million mark. Sharing details, Periasamy says, "I met local tour operators while on my visit to India to tell them that we are ready to welcome their clients. India has always been in the top four source markets for us for the last few years. As a matter of fact, we received more than 760,000 tourists from India in pre-pandemic days. Increase in Indian tourist arrivals will happen in due time. But we are confident that by 2023-24, we will achieve our objective to get more than a million tourists. We understand that a lot of them were waiting for the borders to reopen and so the potential is enormous."

The Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board recently completed its first roadshow to six Indian cities - Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai - after more than two years.

## Focus on films and weddings

The tourism board will focus on three main segments: The wedding segment, film shoots and incentives. Periasamy adds, "We will reach out to wedding planners, and couples looking to get married. Destination weddings are huge in India, so we are looking at attracting a few of them, not only to our beach resorts, but

also to our new attractions and destinations, specially down south to an idyllic getaway destination called Desaru, near Singapore. We have a lot of excellent, high-end properties there such as Anantara, Westin, Hard Rock and One & Only, which will be perfect for weddings. It also has one of the biggest theme parks."

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board recently completed first roadshow in six Indian cities

Besides, he also wants to focus on film shoots. "Not just Bollywood, but we want Kollywood and Tollywood film producers to choose Malaysia as a shooting location. We brought in another government agency called National Film Development Corporation Malaysia or FINAS, through which we offer a lot of incentives to film producers. For instance, we have a 30 per cent rebate when

## Good to know

Malaysia has opened its borders from 1 April 2022 to welcome fully-vaccinated international travellers. The entry requires an RT-PCR test two days before departure and visitors undergo administered RTK-Ag within 24 hours upon arrival in Malaysia.



you shoot in Malaysia, and the minimum spend for this is around US\$ 1 million, which I think translates to maybe one song for Bollywood. If there is usage of Malaysian culture or our traditional attire, and so on, the authority will give another five per cent over and above this 30 per cent," he shares.

He explains that promoting destinations through movies in India works well. "This is because in terms of reach, it is going to every nook and corner of the country. So, by doing this, we can reach every corner of India and promote Malaysia as a holiday destination. A couple of production houses have already shown interest and we will invite them for a reconnaissance to a number of destinations. Hopefully, by June-July some of these trips will happen for shoots in Q4 of this year," Periasamy says.

## MICE and corporate events

MICE and incentive trips are another huge segment from India to Malaysia for incentives. "For this, we have another set of incentives for these groups if they meet certain criteria. For instance, if they stay more than three nights, we give them a certain amount of financial assistance. If they stay more than five days, there are more incentives. So, we are working together with local operators

in Malaysia and DMCs in India to woo corporates."

Currently, three airlines connect India to Malaysia: Malaysian Airlines, AirAsia and Malindo Air. There are Indian airlines also such as IndiGo, Air India and Spicejet, which has shown interest in starting flights to Malaysia, Periasamy shares. "We believe that Indians will visit not more than two countries when they come to the Far East now, as against in the past when they used to combine more than three countries. They will now go mono destinations and we hope they will spend more number of days in Malaysia. We hope that their average length of stay will go up from seven pre-COVID to nine or nine-and-a-half nights in Malaysia," he says.



Manoharan Periasamy  
Senior Director, International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa), Malaysia Tourism



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