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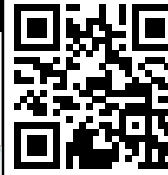
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IATO rejoices 5% TCS relief

Association expresses its gratitude to the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Finance for the exemption of 5 per cent TCS charged on sale of overseas tour packages to foreign individuals and foreign tour operators (FTOs).



Nisha Verma

IATO has thanked the Government of India for withdrawing completely 5 per cent Tax Collection At Source (TCS) charged on sale of overseas tour packages to foreign individuals and foreign tour operators (FTOs). **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO, said, "This means that both foreign individuals and FTOs (buyers) buying overseas tour packages from the Indian tour operators will be exempted from TCS provisions."

Mehra shared that this TCS was earlier withdrawn only for individual foreign tourists but now on IATO's representation, the government has announced removal of tax, both on individual



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

foreign tourists as well as FTOs. The removal would make the tour packages offered by Indian tour operators to foreigners a bit cheaper and would help provide relief to the travel and tourism sector, which has been severely impacted by the pandemic.

Many foreigners book overseas tour packages for neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives through Indian tour operators. Since there was a levy, they preferred booking the tours directly with tour operators in those countries as there was no such charge there.

Sharing how much they worked hard to reach the decision, Mehra said, "When TCS was introduced for all overseas packages, it was applicable to Indians as well as foreign nationals. Now, for Indians, if they paid TCS, they could get that money back when they file the returns. However, for foreign nationals, this was not possible. So, we have been requesting the Ministry of Finance through

the Ministry of Tourism, as well as directly that this is wrong and should be removed. Thus, on 30 March 2022, the government issued a notification, partly amending it by saying that if there's a for-



eigner booking a tour through an Indian operator, then it will not be applicable, but if it is a foreign tour operator booking then it would still be applicable." 🐦

ECLGS extension gives industry oxygen

Tourism & hospitality industry hails the government's decision to enhance ECLGS limit by ₹50,000 crore.



TT Bureau

G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of the Northeastern Region (DoNER) praised the government's decision to enhance the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) limit by ₹50,000 crore from ₹4.5 lakh crore to ₹5 lakh crore, with the additional amount being earmarked exclusively for enterprises in hospitality and related sectors.



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER

"The ongoing pandemic has adversely impacted the hospitality and tourism related sectors severely. The enhancement in the limit of ECLGS by ₹50,000 crore from ₹4.5 Lakh crore to ₹5 Lakh

crore has been earmarked exclusively for enterprises in hospitality and related sectors. This decision is timely as the demand for these services is picking up," he said. He also pointed out, "The Modi

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Elation over offline TAFI meet

As TAFI gets ready for its first convention since 2018, Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, discusses the knowledge sessions planned over three days and its J&K Chapter that has received 20 member applications.



Hazel Jain

There is palpable excitement, says **Ajay Prakash**, President, Travel Agents' Federation of India (TAFI), as he discusses the upcoming convention. "The enthusiasm is remarkable because our convention is happening directly after 2018. The destination is interesting as well as it is a relatively unknown destination for the Indian travel trade. We opened registrations for the convention on August 5 and within just two weeks we received over 400 registrations already. However, seats are limited and we are not taking more than 500 people. We are also very clear that we are only taking members who are actively involved in the trade



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

and of course the first preference is for our members," he says.

An interesting spin-off, Prakash adds, is that there are several travel agents who applied for TAFI membership because they wanted to be a part of the convention.

"So perhaps a convention is a great way to boost membership!" he jokes.

Exciting sessions ahead

TAFI is looking to have interesting sessions. Prakash shares, "We need to start talking about some of things which we have all learned from the pandemic when we did have time to think. Therefore, the theme – Build Back Better – is something that we must explore in detail during our knowledge sessions. We will have people who have built back brands after Covid and who have re-invented their businesses so they can share their experience with everyone. This will include not just travel businesses but also

Contd on page 17 ▶

'Indians love to shop'

Activities and attractions are not the only that Indian travellers love to do; shopping is a great draw for them too! **TRAVTALK** talks to a few travel agents to find out their clients' choices and shopping destinations.



Hazel Jain

Indians have always loved shopping, especially when travelling abroad. But over the past few years, the interest has gone a notch higher. **Nagsri Sashidhar**, Chief Happiness Officer, NAGSRI Creating Special Memories, who creates bespoke itineraries for her high-end clients, says, "We are noticing that clients are ensuring that they now factor in some dedicated time for shopping. We see this trend among the millennials and families more than any other segment. In fact, we create itineraries specially around shopping. Depending on the city they are going to, we keep at least one entire day or even more dedicated to shopping alone. My clients



Nagsri Sashidhar
Chief Happiness Officer
NAGSRI Creating Special Memories

love everything from luxury brand shopping, normal mall shopping, local shopping, outlet malls to handicrafts shopping."

Mentioning some of the popular places for this, Sashidhar adds,

"USA for outlet malls, Thailand, Vietnam, Milan, Paris, Spain, Italy, Singapore and Dubai have always been popular. A few outlets across Europe have shown keen interest in the Indian market and have come up with several VIP benefits that makes shopping here very special, affordable and a complete pleasure. McArthurGlen Designer Outlets and Chic Outlet Village are two such products."

Segment agnostic

When it comes to shopping, there is no specific segment that indulges in it. **Anshu Tejuja**, Managing Director, Ashoka Dream Holidays, says, "Indians love shopping. A lot of them don't shop much in

Contd on page 18 ▶

Rethinking Tourism

As we get ready to celebrate World Tourism Day this month, rethinking tourism, the theme for this year, seems extremely appropriate. The focus on re-imagining the sector's growth, both in terms of size and relevance, will be an interesting one.

Now is the time when we must plan for the tourism that we want and work on the key elements of recovery. It's time we ask the questions: Where is tourism going? Where do we want it to go? How do we get there? This opportunity to rebuild tourism may not come again and we must take steps to identify the way forward.

These days, there is a lot of conversation around sustainable travel as the way forward. Healing the world and taking responsibility for the actions of tourism is of utmost importance. Amplifying the message of tourism as an inspirational and transformational force is important too. Resilient and sustainable practices are being developed as we rebuild towards the pre-pandemic tourism numbers.

From India's point of view, we have guidelines in place to develop a more sustainable ecosystem for tourism, but self-implementing these guidelines will be crucial. India's outbound tourism industry is currently flourishing, the sector is rebuilding its rules and showcasing new trends. The world is knocking on India's doors and the Indian traveller is gaining popularity globally. The Indian traveller is not only from the top cities in the country, but also from across the country, exploring remote corners of the world and undertaking newer activities and experiences in international destinations. But is the Indian traveller taking responsibility for all their actions abroad? Has the traveller matured? While the industry is celebrating the return of outbound travel, it's time to re-imagine the growth of this sector and capture the new trends across the industry.

Foreigners are also making their way back to India and exploring the country again. Focus on wellness and ayurveda has gone up but how are we rethinking tourism in this space? What new are we promoting? What trends are we expecting? How are we identifying solutions to realign tourism for the future? If we don't retrospect in five years, we regret not rethinking our tourism strategy and policies.

Hospitality registers growth in Q2

Backed by summer holidays, weddings, and MICE demand, Indian hospitality sector witnessed a strong growth in Q2 2022. RevPAR witnessed an exponential growth of more than 300% year-on-year in Q2 2022 over Q2 2021.



The Indian hospitality sector witnessed strong growth in Q2 (April – June) 2022, primarily driven by demand for weddings and events as well as stellar recovery of corporate travel. Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) witnessed an exponential growth of 339.3 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in Q2 2022 over Q2 2021, when the country witnessed the second wave of the pandemic.

At the pan-India level, the hospitality sector witnessed a stellar 44.6 per cent growth in RevPAR compared to Q1 2022 when the sector was still emerging from the third wave of the pandemic. The demand across the sector soared during Q2 2022, primarily driven by weddings and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), and business travel, according



to JLL's Hotel Momentum India (HMI) Q2, 2022.

Furthermore, corporate MICE demand also witnessed a recovery in the form of corporate off-sites, team meetings, training, and so on. Domestic leisure continued to be an important segment during this period driven by the pent-up demand of travellers who had

not experienced a summer vacation for the past two years.

The next two quarters are expected to remain busy on the back of domestic leisure amid long weekends and festivals. Business travel will continue to grow and will remain the main demand driver for the sector. Whilst wedding and social function demand will continue to be an important driver. MICE demand is expected to witness an uptick in the coming months with many corporate meetings and large format conferences being planned. The total number of hotel signings in Q2 2022 stood at 47 hotels with

4,010 keys. The hotel signings witnessed a significant increase of 90.9 per cent as compared to signings in Q2 2021. Domestic operators dominated signings over international operators with a ratio of 52:48 in terms of inventory volume.

At pan-India level, the hospitality sector witnessed a stellar 44.6 per cent growth in RevPAR in Q2 this year compared to Q1

All six key markets witnessed exponential growth in RevPAR levels in Q2 2022 as compared to Q2 2021, due to the low base witnessed last year during the second wave of the pandemic coupled with the stellar performance of the sector this year. Bengaluru emerged as the RevPAR growth leader in Q2 2022 registering a growth of 660.1 per cent over Q2 2021.

Important highlights

- ❖ Bengaluru witnessed the highest growth in RevPAR in Q2 2022 at 660.1%, primarily due to the low performance witnessed in Q2 2021 amid the second wave of the pandemic
- ❖ Q2 2022 RevPAR grew by 44.6% as compared to Q1 2022 on the back of summer holidays, weddings, and MICE demand

APAC countries' progress in travel recovery

PATA shares the list of 20 nations with the status of inbound and outbound travel recovery, and vaccination, as on 10 August 2022.

Destination	Pandemic Status	Inbound Travel	Outbound Travel	Vaccination Booster
Australia	Open	Open	Open	84.7% 55.0%
Azerbaijan	Open	Open	Open	48.3% 33.2%
Bhutan	Open	Open	Open	90.8% 74.1%
Chile	Open	Open	Open	92.2% N/A%
China	Partial	Partial	Partial	90.2% 56.9%
Hawaii	Open	Open	Open	79.2% N/A%
Hong Kong SAR	Partial	Open	Open	86.9% 63.9%
India	Open	Open	Open	68.7% 7.5%
Indonesia	Partial	Open	Open	63.7% 21.1%
Japan	Open	Partial	Partial	81.4% 74.9%
Korea (ROK)	Open	Open	Open	86.2% 76.2%
Malaysia	Open	Open	Open	83.9% 50.6%
Nepal	Open	Open	Open	68.6% 84.2%
New Zealand	Open	Open	Open	83.0% 82.6%
Philippines	Partial	Open	Open	66.4% 14.6%
Singapore	Open	Open	Open	87.7% 74.7%
Thailand	Open	Open	Open	80.1% 46.7%
USA	Open	Open	Open	67.7% 38.9%
Vanuatu	Open	Open	Open	42.5% 5.2%
Vietnam	Open	Open	Open	84.2% 66.1%

Source: Vaccine - World Health Organization



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No GST on cancellation of SOTO tickets

Pawan S Jain, Managing Director, Belair Travel & Cargo, shares how on their insistence and two-and-a-half years of continued efforts the GST Council has come out with a ruling to remove 18% GST on refunds and ancillary services on Sold Outside Ticketed Outside (SOTO) tickets.



The GST Council, under Government of India, has removed the 18 per cent GST on refunds and ancillary services on SOTO (Sold Outside, Ticketed Outside) tickets, which are between two points outside India. **Pawan S Jain**, Managing Director, Belair Travel & Cargo, says, "The change came in after an advance ruling was filed by us to the GST Department, which came in two and a half years after, as it could not be earlier resolved and GST council did not meet due to COVID. Now after our long deliberations with the airlines and clarifications to the GST Dept, they have finally agreed and confirmed with a notification."

He explained that while some airlines did not charge this GST, some others were charging GST on all booking classes. "All airlines didn't want to understand the regulations, while some airlines accepted it two years ago

before COVID struck. The law must be uniform for everybody. We had around 700,000 tickets for refund, which incurred a



Pawan S Jain
Managing Director
Belair Travel & Cargo

huge amount, because the difference between 0 per cent GST and 18 per cent GST was about ₹2,000-20,000 on a business class ticket," he said.

Explaining further, he shared, "The GST rules have always been clear cut since 2017, which means that if the GST on primary booking class was zero, the ancillary services



will also have zero charge of GST. Thus, all the other services, including excess baggage, cancellation charges, refund amounts will also have zero tax and not 18 per cent. All airlines didn't accept it and insisted on charging. In fact, even on SOTO tickets there is no charge applicable because the services are utilised outside India and hence Indian GST doesn't apply. However, airlines insisted on charging, which was wrong."

Thus, they applied to the GST department through our lawyers, and the GST Council Clarified this advance ruling with Circular No. 178/10/2022-GST CBIC-190354/176/2022-TRU Dated 3rd August 2022. The GST Council confirmed that GST (K3) @18 per cent as cancellation charges, RAF charges or rebooking charges, are not applicable on airlines SOTO tickets and are treated as bundled services, with the rate of tax as the original ticket such as refunds and other ancillary

services. Similar concession has been provided to railway booking, business class tickets, and transparency on economy class tickets regarding GST applicable. "The removal of GST on SOTO tickets and on refunds will enhance substantial foreign exchange earnings for India for issuing tickets without GST tax," says Jain. The ruling specifies composite services, which Jain says, includes all services right from booking till exiting the airport. "On all composite services

the tax would remain as original ticket. If a class of tickets, will not have tax, then the other related

The change came in after an advance ruling by us to the GST Department, which came in two and a half years after

services on the ticket will also have no tax. Hence, this 18% GST should be refunded to the agents," he adds.

The same goes for hotel bookings as hotels are charging 18 per cent GST on cancellation. "If a ₹250 hotel room will not have GST, then the cancellation will also not have GST," he points out.

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Indian nationals received highest proportion of United Kingdom's visitor visas, 2.58 lakh visas issued

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World Tourism Day 2022 Theme is 'Rethinking Tourism'

Searches by international guests for Airbnb in India grew 60% y-o-y from 2021-2022

India's aircraft fleet size expected to double in 5 years, says Jyotiraditya Scindia

Hospitality rues apathy of banks

While the FHRAI welcomes the government's move to enhance limit of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) by ₹50,000 crore, it adds that the banks should lend to the hospitality sector this time around and the repayment tenure should be extended to at least by 5-7 years.

TT Bureau

The hospitality sector welcomes the Union Cabinet's move to enhance the limit of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) by ₹50,000 crore from ₹4.5 lakh crore to ₹5 lakh crore, with the additional amount being earmarked exclusively for enterprises in hospitality and related sectors. However, there are some issues that the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) points out.

Pradeep Shetty, Jt. Hon. Sec, FHRAI, says, "Liquidity has been a problem for us so availability of funds at a lower rate is appreciated. But we hope that the apathy of the banks do not continue. Although this scheme was available in the past, we have seen that more than 70 per cent of the banks were not extending it to our sector out of fear. The banks had downgraded the industry to a negative sector and lending was

not happening. This issue needs to be ironed out this time around."

These funds, he adds, can help the sector sustain operations. "There is a huge backlog of losses; there are challenges with



Pradeep Shetty
Jt. Hon. Sec, FHRAI

manpower and establishments require refurbishments. The operational details are not out yet. We just have the salient features and we will have to wait for more clarifications from the government – whether this will be available immediately or it will take some time," he says.



This benefit, however, is not extended across the board. "This is not a fund that is freely available, it is for those who have debt exposure as on March 2020. So if you had debt exposure of ₹50 crore at that time and or a turnover of ₹250 crore, that is where the eligibility is set. But this was another change that we had requested – that it should be made available regardless of debt. Because there are so many owners who did not have any debt at that time but because of the pandemic they now have so much debt," Shetty explains.

From the bank's point of view, they would want to lend money to entities where there is a reasonably good chance of getting their money back. "So they may have had their reasons for denying this industry, but the industry was still

'Hospitality key beneficiary'



Vinutaa S
VP and Sector Head -
Corporate Ratings, ICRA

"The industry has been one of the key beneficiaries of the RBI's moratorium and the ECLGS scheme provided as part of the pandemic relief since March 2020. The sharp pick-up in demand and consequent improvement in business cash flows in the last few months has resulted in significant improvement in liquidity position for most hotels."

entitled to these funds. The entire concept behind this scheme was if you had a loan but you were not able to repay it, you could use this

Availability of funds at a lower rate is appreciated. But we hope that the apathy of banks do not continue

scheme to do that and restructure your loans, and also use it as working capital. But where this scheme lost out was that things did not end with one wave – there were multiple waves. So, those availed of this credit line in the first wave, couldn't repay it because of the second wave, and so on. These disruptions have been tough for the industry as well as the lending institutions. Having said that, I think now is a time for banks to look at it from a positive perspective. I don't expect banks to be apprehensive now about lending under the scheme," Shetty says.

OTOAI members meet in Mumbai

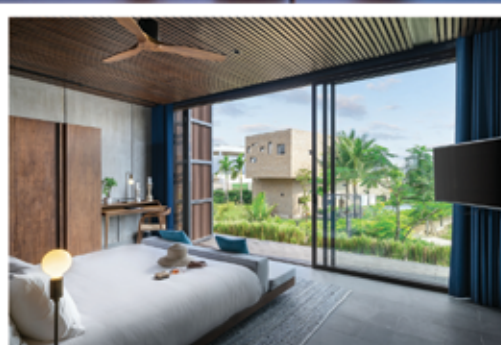
The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), in association with Saudi Tourism Authority, recently held a meeting of its members in Mumbai. Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI, chaired the meeting. He shared that a study tour to Saudi Arabia for the travel agents may be on the cards and the OTOAI election dates will be announced at its AGM, to be held in September.



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MICE gaining momentum in India

In a paradigm shift after the pandemic, MICE industry is more inclined towards the domestic market. Industry players say the segment has a lot of potential, as hotels in mega cities gear up to host big weddings and MICE events. Unexplored and less popular destinations also have a huge potential that needs to be tapped.

 Janice Alyosius

MICE industry is gaining momentum in India. With the shift in focus from Europe to Asia-Pacific in the aftermath of the pandemic, the country, with its infrastructure facilities becoming on par with that of developed countries, is poised to become a preferred destination for MICE events.

"A lot has changed in the MICE industry over the past two years. In 2020, the MICE industry was worth US\$215 billion worldwide. And Indians mainly used to organise MICE events and weddings outside India. But this year, in 2022 after COVID-19, people have started to organise MICE events and weddings in India due to the difficulty of obtaining European visas and high airfares, which is a positive change for the Indian market," shared **Shubhash Goyal**, Chairman, STIC Travel Group.

The MICE industry has opened up after almost two years and there is a lot of potential. Visa for many source markets for India is difficult to avail, the Indian domestic market is in advantage of this fact. Those who used to choose international destinations for hosting MICE, weddings and other events are now exploring Indian destinations, which is giving boost to the India's MICE industry and the economy. "Everyone is exploring new destinations. Those who never wanted to travel to India, they are now ready to travel because only a few destinations are open abroad. This is giving the domestic market an opportunity to grow their business," said **Gajesh Girdhar**, Chairman, Emeritus.

Another point to emphasize is the enhancement of destinations. There are so many places that are unexplored and have the potential to host MICE



Due to difficulty in obtaining European visas and high airfares, MICE events have shifted to India

Those who never wanted to travel to India, they are now ready, as only a few destinations are open abroad

and weddings better than doing it abroad. The downside is that people don't know about these places yet. Therefore, proper presentation and promotion

of the unexplored and unpopular destination is essential to leverage the potential of the domestic market in the MICE segment.

"Destination showcasing is very important. When we talk about a place for example Rajasthan, most of the people just know Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, the famous places. But there are some not so famous yet places with huge potential. So, destination presentation is a very important aspect. We need to present the destination and their potential to the corporates," said Girdhar.

India has a lot to offer in itself. Big international players, tourism boards are targeting Indian cities to promote themselves and incentivise the corporates to host MICE events abroad. Due to the difficulty in visa facilities and other restrictions hosting MICE abroad is a little tough at the moment, though some have already started. But this is a boon for the India's domestic market. There is a healthy competition between each state to gain opportunities for this segment. Hotels are



ramping up their spaces and creating facilities to host MICE events and weddings.

Speaking on the parallel lines Goyal said, "States in India are competing with each other and many new MICE sites are popping up. Pragati Maidan is ready, Noida Convention Centre is ready, Hyderabad Convention Centre is doing great in Rajasthan. In addition, there is a conference centre in Gujarat. There are many convention opportunities in Kerala. So, we have great opportunity to organise MICE events in India. If we compare it to pre-pandemic levels, a lot has changed for the MICE industry, as each state has its own unique beauty, unique culture and unique cuisine. I think there is a lot to offer the MICE sector in India."

'Visit St. Petersburg' roadshow to be held in Mumbai, Delhi in September

The roadshow will be held in Mumbai on 7 September 2022 and in Delhi on 8 September 2022.

St. Petersburg City Tourist Information Bureau and Committee for Tourism Development of Saint Petersburg organise the roadshow: presentation of St. Petersburg tourist programmes and hospitality industry services in the cities of the Republic of India on 7-8 September 2022.

St. Petersburg is one of the most beautiful megalopolises in the world, which travellers from all over the world come to see. The list of attractions of St. Petersburg is so impressive that it is almost impossible to describe all of them in detail. According to statistics, in pre-pandemic times, the number of tourists in St. Petersburg reached 10 million people. And even more than 10 million!

Presentation will feature new tourist and excursion programmes, standard and off-beat tourist sites, museums, historical and cultural monuments, and events.

Participants from St. Petersburg:

- ❖ St. Petersburg tour operators, DMC;
- ❖ representatives of St. Petersburg hotels;
- ❖ representatives of cultural institutions and other tourist infrastructure of St. Petersburg.

The programme includes:

- ❖ presentation of St. Petersburg's tourism potential;
- ❖ B2B workshop;
- ❖ dinner with cultural pro-

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IN INDIA



City: Mumbai
Date: September 7
Venue: The LaLIT Mumbai

City: Delhi
Date: September 8
Venue: Taj Palace New Delhi

gramme and raffle of prizes from St. Petersburg participants.

Besides, during the presentation, which will be moderated by Mr. Pradip Lulla, Ex-president of TAFI, the professional visitors to the roadshow will get to know from the speaker

of Visa Centre about the peculiarities of obtaining visas to visit Russia and St. Petersburg and find out the latest news regarding the mechanism of solving the most important problems of the hospitality industry related to financial transactions between Russia and the Republic of India from

a representative of Sberbank. To attend the "Visit Saint Petersburg!" roadshow, please register by this link: [https://](https://petersburg-roadshow.com)

petersburg-roadshow.com

Contact us: info@petersburg-roadshow.com

Road Show 'Visit Saint Petersburg!' in India

City: Mumbai
Date: September 7
Venue: The LaLIT Mumbai

City: Delhi
Date: September 8
Venue: Taj Palace New Delhi

Marriott sees potential in Hyderabad

Marriott International recently held its signature event – India Marketplace – first time in the City of Nizams at The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace and saw a huge turnout from hotels under the brand across India networking with the corporate, wedding and travel trade in the city.

TT Bureau

This was the first time that the Marriott India Marketplace was introduced to Hyderabad with The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace playing the perfect host. With over 30 hotels participating in the event, there was a great mix of hospitality offerings from Marriott.

Hyderabad debut

Amitabh Rai, Cluster General Manager, The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace and Hyderabad Market, Marriott International, shared, "Hyderabad is emerging very fast as a primary feeder market for many other cities in India. Until now, people used to consider Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and even Kolkata as major markets, but Hyderabad has now become prominent with new businesses coming in, proactive government in terms of infrastructure development. It's a revelation for Marriott as a brand too. We are

the largest hotel chain in India today with 135 hotels and growing. For us, it's important to grow our roots deep into the Hyderabad market," he claimed.

Claiming that the response to the event was excellent, **Abhishek Rajagolkar**, Area Director Sales & Distribution South & East India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh at Marriott International, said, "We divided it in two sessions. The afternoon session had one-on-one meetings, where around 140 people came. The evening focused on engagement and networking, which included senior leaders of companies. Close to 150 people were present for the soiree."

Why Hyderabad

Saying that they already have seven Marriott hotels in the Hyderabad market, Rai revealed they are building an eighth hotel, which is the next Westin in Hyderabad. "No other chain has so many hotels. Eight hotels of the



Amitabh Rai
Cluster General Manager, The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace and Hyderabad Market, Marriott International



Abhishek Rajagolkar
Area Director Sales & Distribution South & East India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh at Marriott International

People used to consider Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru as major markets, but Hyderabad has now become prominent

brand in one market, and three more coming up over the next few years, shows the importance

The evening focused on engagement and networking, which included senior leaders of companies

of Hyderabad for Marriott and that's the future we see," he said. Rajagolkar agreed, "Hyderabad

has also individually developed as a wedding market, especially because people couldn't travel to international destinations for weddings. We have done many domestic weddings in the last two years and hotels are seeing value in that because wedding dates in the city are not the normal wedding or mahurat dates, followed across India."

Integrating the cluster

When it comes to the Hyderabad cluster, Rai shared that they are integrating many things here. "Firstly, we are synergising our own operations together as a cluster. Thus, all hotels' purchasing in Hyderabad is now clustered, which gives us more power to negotiate with the vendors. In addition, we are clustering the marketing for all hotels. The idea is to operate and get our efficiencies together," he claimed.

However, he added, "For customers, we are going to do a lot of

events. We are planning to do a golf event in October, which will be a Marriott Golf Tournament, and will involve many hotels of Marriott brand and we would get in our customers fly in people from outside to come and play this tournament and have a gala evening. Apart from events, we have many activities planned on the ESG front, which is the sustainability aspect."

Brand expansion

Commenting on a statement from top management at Marriott of developing 27 properties in India in the next 18 months, Rajagolkar said, "Among the many hotels that will be opening soon is a Courtyard by Marriott in Trichy. We also have a beautiful Le Meridien opening in Amritsar. A Westin will be opening in Rishikesh. These are all new destinations bringing some unique hotels." He added, "Tertiary cities like Trichy and Siliguri are seeing good and consistent demand."

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Thailand targets 1mn Indians in 2022

Since opening of its borders in January this year, Thailand welcomed more than three million international tourists, including 10 per cent from India. Now, Tourism Authority of Thailand has a new strategy up its sleeve to help achieve its new target for this year – one million visitors from India.



Hazel Jain

Tanes Petsuwan, Deputy Governor (International Marketing), Asia & South Pacific, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), was recently in Mumbai to interact with the travel trade and talk about the focus areas for the destination going forward. “Thailand is now completely open,” he announced, adding, “Entering Thailand is now as easy as it was pre-COVID. All the Indian visitors need are air tickets and hotel bookings. There are no restrictions or quarantine requirements for Thailand. Once you prove that you are fully vaccinated, you are free to enter.”

than 300,000 Indian visitors. Of this, 30 per cent traffic is just from Mumbai. By the end of this year, we expect to receive at least 1 million tourists just from Indian market,” he shared.



Tanes Petsuwan
Deputy Governor (International Marketing), Asia & South Pacific
Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

responsible tourism. We try to go for the new segment which is millennials and the digital nomads. We will also be focusing on the incentive as well as the corporate segments, which is growing from India. For this, we will tap not just the metro cities of India like Bengaluru and Kolkata but also others like Pune, Ahmedabad, Kochi, Indore, Vizag and Guwahati – touching all regions of India.”



on increasing airline seat capacity. During COVID, we lost a lot of seat capacity between India and Thailand because of no flight operations. Our target is now to resume seat capacity above 80 per cent so that we can touch one million Indian tourists. The key is we re-



We have already welcomed more than 300,000 Indian visitors. Of this, 30 per cent traffic is just from Mumbai

Petsuwan also shared that since opening borders on January 1, 2022 Thailand has till date already welcomed more than three million international tourists. “Of this, more than 10 per cent are from India. Which means we have already welcomed more

Focussed strategy for India

Speaking about the strategy for short-haul international markets such as India, he says, “We try to identify good, high-quality products for the Indian market. This also includes promoting new ways in which they can do

New Director for Mumbai office



Isada Saovaros
Director, TAT Mumbai Office

TAT recently appointed **Isada Saovaros** as its Director for Mumbai Office, effective 1 August 2022, responsible for western and southern India as well as Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Sharing his views on the strategy going forward, he said, “We are aiming that the numbers will hit 500,000 by the end of the year.” According to the Thailand Tourism Ministry data, the country recorded over 300,000 Indian arrivals between January to July 2022, ranking India in top five tourism markets for Thailand.

Increased seat capacity

Petsuwan shared that Thailand has also seen a lot of development of new tourism infrastructure in the last few years. “Visitors will now see some new things: the second phase of airport is now under construction, and it will be finished by next year. We will also have the new expressway and the new underpass. We are also focusing on building new partnerships in India. TAT will be very happy to work with airlines that fly to Thailand. We have a huge focus

sume the flights, which is why we have keen interest in forming new partnerships with airlines apart from the ones we already work with,” he says.

Finnair adds yet another trade lane

Finnair – Finland’s flag carrier airline – has added Mumbai as a new destination in Summer 2022 and announced scheduled services between Mumbai and Helsinki starting July 2022. The new launch makes Mumbai its second destination in India. The airline held a gala launch party for the Mumbai travel trade to celebrate the occasion.





Rock Art

A secret treasure in Madhya Pradesh

The heart of incredible India, Madhya Pradesh possesses wealth of prehistoric art painted on the walls of rock shelters. Bhimbetka, a World Heritage Site, is one of the few among many other glorious examples.

In November 2016, a report appeared in many news platforms that petroglyph rock art at Daraki-Chattan (hillock) near Bhanpura in Mandsaur district of Madhya Pradesh is the “world’s oldest rock art” and is almost 2 to 5 lakh years old. There are several such findings that have showed how wealthy Madhya Pradesh is when it comes to rock art.

While the World Heritage Site of Bhimbetka is well known, Madhya Pradesh has many other equally glorious examples of ancient art. Indeed, rock art has a unique beauty – the stylised deer of Hathitola, the great bison of Adamgarh, the mythical beast of Bhimbetka, the vigorous and playful – but what makes these paintings truly valuable is the link they forge with a human past as distant as a half-forgotten dream.

In 1958, the archaeologist Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar happened to be travelling by train from Bhopal to Itarsi. As he gazed out of the window at the landscape of

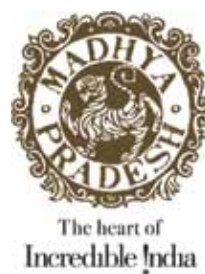


While the World Heritage Site of Bhimbetka is well known, Madhya Pradesh has many other equally glorious examples of ancient art

low hills in the near distance. The archaeologist got off the train at very next station and made his way up the hill. What he discovered were Bhimbetka rockshelters – today, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most eminent examples of pre-historic art in the world.

Bhimbetka is under 50 kms southeast of Bhopal on the National Highway 69, which makes it a comfortable day trip even for travellers with limited time. The town nearest Bhimbetka is Obaidullaganji, 6 kms from the Highway Treat Hotel and restaurant, which is located at the foot of Bhimbetka Hill.

Here the paintings show men, women, boys, girls, infants, dancers, hunters, cattle herders, charioteers, weapons and



decorative motifs and offer insights into the way of life and the environment, of that era. There are various animals and hunting scenes depicting rhinos, bison, deer and even camels.

Scholars have also found rock shelters on the Betwa River’s banks decorated with several images, including the hunting elephant and of bison.

The Vindhya hills that rise and fall in bursts of dense green across Bhopal, Raisen, Sehore, Vidisha and Chanderi districts of Madhya Pradesh contain a vast network of rock-shelters – more than any other region in India.

Apart from this, many places in Pachmarhi, Adamgarh, Mandsaur and Rewa are adorned with beautiful rock art paintings.

Over times these soft sandstone hills were carved into shelters so ideally suited to habitation – with floors and ceilings and dimensions of just the right size that you need only look at them to understand why these were the most popular habitation ‘complexes’ of pre-historic times.



Jungles of Ratapani near Bhopal are home to some of the oldest and unique rock art.

Ran Bhausa Chittauri in Ratapani is Bhopal’s best kept secret, which has one of the largest single rock paintings. Located near Dahod Dam, the rock art galleries in Kathotiya and Ran Bhausa Chittauri have several paintings, which belong to Mesolithic as well as Neolithic age.

Another example of this art can be found at Chaturbhujnath Nala. Situated in Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary near Bhanpura of Mandsaur district in Madhya Pradesh, Chaturbhujnath Nala Rock Art Shelters, named after Chaturbhujnath Temple, are considered the longest rock art gallery in the world.

This site was discovered in 1977. It is now under care of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). This site is home to around 2,510 paintings on 800-metre-long site. These

paintings offer a glimpse of the everyday life of the then native inhabitants of the area and how

The Vindhya hills, spread across Bhopal, Raisen, Sehore, Vidisha and Chanderi districts, contain a vast network of rock-shelters

it progressed with time. This is a depository of rock art images in 12 different styles and time periods, starting from the Upper Palaeolithic period (50,000 – 12,000 years ago) to early historic period. According to research, these paintings were done not at one go, but over centuries and are representative of the evolving human ability to depict and document their lives through.



All about the right Atmosphere

Souvagya Mohapatra shares how Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts are tailor-made for the Indian market and that they are planning to expand their portfolio by opening properties in India; their two properties are already in developmental stage and likely to be inaugurated within a year.



TT Bureau

Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts is a dynamic and fast-growing Asia Pacific Hotels & Resorts group having its registered office in Singapore and corporate office in the Maldives, shares **Souvagya Mohapatra**, Managing Director, Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts for India, Nepal, Bhutan & Sri Lanka operation.

"The brand currently manages and operates eight luxury properties in Maldives," he said. "We proudly say that we are the first and largest Resort Management company in Asia Pacific. Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts offers guest-centric resort experiences through unique resort plans, offering guests a range of all-encompassing experiences, with varieties of dining options as well as several complimentary value-added amenities and activities that ensure a relaxed, hassle-free holiday experience at each

resort, all while staying true to the brand's core philosophy: 'The Joy of Giving'," he added.

India market

Commenting on the India market, Mohapatra said, "It certainly



Souvagya Mohapatra
Managing Director, Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts for India, Nepal, Bhutan & Sri Lanka operation

is a valuable market for us with regards to the guest movements to all our properties across Maldives. Its location advantage and the connectivity from all major cities of India makes it a favourable destination. The weekends,

holidays and festival periods, experience maximum footfalls from India into Maldives. Wedding is a huge market in India and the honeymooners prefer Maldives as a luxury destination, which is easily approachable. Excellent relationship between the Government of India and Maldives is one more aspect Indians are welcomed in Maldives across all seasons."

He added, "All our resorts are equipped with facilities such as children's indoor & outdoor play area, extensive recreational activities, water sports, Indian restaurants, wellness & Spa etc., which are loved by the Indian families, thus making our resorts the excellent holiday destination with affordable all-inclusive price."

Targets

Mohapatra said that they have a targeted clientele from India. "Our set up and connectivity from Indian cities attract a large number of holidaymakers and

honeymooners. We have Sales & PR offices in some important cities such as Bengaluru, Mumbai and Bhubaneswar. Our presence digitally across all platforms provides us maximum visibility

It (India) certainly is a valuable market for us with regards to the guest movements to all our properties across Maldives

as well. Roadshows are regularly conducted in Indian cities highlighting our product launches and the new offerings. We invite media houses and prominent tour operators from India during these roadshows. We are one of

the resort groups, which provide all-inclusive rates; this concept is well accepted by our esteemed guests across the globe and, of course, Indians. The brand's core philosophy: 'The Joy of Giving' and the values systems are some of the aspects that set us apart from other hotel chains," he said.

Expansion

After having successful ventures in Maldives and upcoming resorts at Sri Lanka, now the group wants to venture into India, Nepal & Bhutan. "As regards to our expansion in India, our focus is to explore across the country and wait for the right opportunities. Our Business Development team is already in the job of identifying properties in potential tourism destinations in India. Two of our properties are already in developmental stage, hopefully within a year these two properties will be inaugurated. Very shortly we are going to announce our expansion plan in Asia-Pacific," he said.

In Numbers

08 luxury properties Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts manages and operates in Maldives
10-12 hotels the group aims to acquire in India in next 3 to 4 years
2013 the year Atmosphere Kanifushi opened

Industry hails ECLGS relief

Contd from page 5

Government has been taking immediate actions and doing whatever it takes to restore and reactivate the tourism sector while protecting jobs and businesses. We are planning to support the sustainable recovery of tourism, shifting to eco-tourism and re-thinking tourism for the future". The enhancement is expected to provide much needed relief to enterprises in these sectors by incentivising lending institutions to provide additional credit of up to ₹50,000 crore at low cost, thereby enabling these business enterprises to meet their operational liabilities and continue their businesses. Loans of about ₹3.67 Lakh crore have been sanctioned under ECLGS till 5 August 2022."

Claiming that the tourism and hospitality play a pivotal role in economic development and the central government has been actively engaging with industry and other stakeholders to revive the economy. "I thank Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji for extending the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme validity till 31 March 2023. With this all business enterprises/ MSMEs in the hospitality and related sectors like hotels and restaurants,

marriage halls, canteens, travel agents, tour operators, adventure or heritage facilities, leisure and sporting, private bus operators, car repair services, rent a car service providers, event/confer-

ECLGS could help businesses buy some more time to keep the wheels in motion. We thank the Government for considering our appeal

ence organisers, spa clinics, beauty salons, motor vehicle aggregators, cinema halls, swimming pools, entertainment parks, theatres, bars, auditorium, yoga institutes, gymnasiums, other fitness centres, units/persons engaged in catering or cooking and floriculture products etc will be eligible for borrowing," he shared.

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), added, "The Union

Cabinet's decision to approve an additional ECLGS worth ₹50,000 crore specifically for hospitality, travel and tourism sectors is a welcome one. The additional line of credit was much needed by the hospitality sector which is still grappling with massive debts and is simultaneously trying to keep business running. Travel has picked up and tourism destinations are seeing a revival. Several hospitality establishments cannot sustain operations without sufficient liquidity, but the extended ECLGS could help businesses buy some more time to keep the wheels in motion. We thank the Government for considering our appeal for earmarking an ECLGS for the sector."

ECLGS is an already operational scheme and on account of the disruptions caused by the pandemic on hospitality and related sectors, Government has specifically earmarked an amount of ₹50,000 crore for enterprises in these sectors. The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has approved the latest enhancement in the limit. The increase has been done on account of the severe disruptions caused by COVID-19 pandemic on hospitality and related enterprises.

Investing in future, says Gosain

Ravi Gosain, who has invested in travel technology company TravStack, claims that it is a one-stop solution for travel companies looking towards optimising resources and bring in more efficiency.

TT Bureau

TravStack (Gutsytech Travel Solutions Pvt Ltd), a travel technology Startup, has onboarded **Ravi Gosain**, MD, Erco Travels, Tourism Enterprises and Saffron World B.V. & Vice President, IATO, as a strategic investor and growth consultant. The company by 2nd time founders from IITs and other premiere institutes, is based out of Bengaluru and backed by Singapore Tourism Board.



Ravi Gosain
MD, Erco Travels

New road

Speaking about the new role, Gosain, said, "Technology plays an important part in our lives, and travel is not different from that. I was thinking to do something with technology for a long time and was waiting for the right opportunity. I got a great opportunity with a Travstack, which has very innovative solutions for travel agencies, tour operators and all the professionals engaged with the tourism industry. I believe that in the coming years, it will change the life of

travel agents and tour operators in the way they are working. Hence, it's more of helping them in doing their business, optimising resources and work effectively. Hence, I am very happy to be a part of Travstack now as a strategic investor."

Expanding horizons

He further shared that the role would require him to mentor Travstack for growth. "I will push them in travel and tourism industry not only in India but worldwide. My role will be to set up a strategy for marketing, promotions and connecting Travstack with different associations and plan webinars, seminars or physical

presentations, so that people are aware of the use of this technology for their benefit. Currently, I am making a marketing plan and I am confident because the founders are from IIT background. They are thinking far ahead and my participation with them is complementing what they wanted to do for the

I was thinking to do something with technology for a long time and waiting for the right time. I got a great opportunity with a Travstack

travel industry. Hence, I am giving my experience of travel and tourism and they are bringing it and transforming into technology. Thus, it will be a great mix and I think there will be a lot of success and promotions."

Discover Andalucía

Continuing with its series of webinars to help the travel trade discover Spain, the Tourism Office of Spain – Mumbai, along with Andalucía Tourism, recently conducted a webinar titled ‘Self Drive in Andalucía’.



Axis between Europe and Africa and meeting point of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, the region of Andalucía in Spain has been covered by many different cultures throughout history and prehistory. Andalucía has a surface

area of 87,268 sq.km. and represents 17.3 per cent of Spain. The diversity of landscapes and geographical terrain give rise to an array of environments that go from the heat of the Guadalquivir River valley through to luxuriant mid-mountain areas, volcanic landscapes such as the Tabernas desert, and the snow-capped

peaks of Sierra Nevada. The Guadalquivir is Andalucía’s most important river and brings life to many areas in its journey across the region. In barely 40 km, you can go from Alpine landscapes to tropical areas on the shores of the Mediterranean. The coast of Andalucía stretches for almost 900 km and is home to many cit-

ies, towns and beaches that are a delight to visit.

Andalucía today is a modern region with well-developed infrastructure. It not just offers a warm welcome to the visitors, but also takes care of its roots and maintains its important cultural heritage and monuments.



Congratulations winners!

Congratulations to the two winners of ‘Spain Specialist Program (SSP) Know Andalucía’ quiz held on July 23, 2022. They take away a seven-day trip to Andalucía (inclusive of international airfare) in November 2022.



Prinston P Prakasia
Akbar Holidays

“The SSP is well designed with photos, videos and lots of relevant content. The basic course is so simple and easy to understand that even a fresher can get the knowledge and confidence to advise and design a Spain itinerary. It is not just the destinations and sight-seeing, but you also get a good understanding of the history, culture, art, festivals and even local cuisine. For a detailed understanding of Spain, there is the advanced course and region-specific courses. I have found it interesting and informative. It is a one stop place to refer to when designing a Spain itinerary. The webinar gives you a very good idea of what Andalucía is.”



Shalini Kallian
NCS Travels and Tours

“I am truly passionate about Spain and my experience on doing the Spain Specialist Program was very enriching. The SSP Program was very informative and will provide a great usefulness to us travel agents in future. The strongest aspect about the course was how detailed & clear the content was with presenting and structuring each topic. I gained a lot of knowledge about different art, culture, museums, monuments, beaches, cities, fiestas, routes, cuisine and natural spaces in Spain. A big thank you to Spain Tourism for giving us this platform to enhance our knowledge to sell Spain effectively.”

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Exploring another side of Britain

VisitBritain and Oman Air organised an exciting trip to West Midlands exploring one dramatic destination with many twists to discover. Organised during the Commonwealth Games, the trip put Birmingham on the world stage. With excellent sporting venues, shopping, activities for children, great food and warm people, West Midlands felt like a truly global holiday destination.



Hospitality: from nadir to zenith

The best way to do things is to never doubt your self, and keep moving forward. This very industrious perception of the hospitality industry is what brought back the fighting spirit to a winning space. Random research was conducted to gauge the sustainability vibe of the industry and this is what is holistically perceived.

No doubt, it has been challenging times for the industry, but the growth has been slow and steadily picking up pace as far as the revenue is concerned. The challenges have been many, and one of it has to do with corporate India's decision to follow the new norm of staying back home and conducting business virtually. With drastic budget constraint on travels as compared to the pre-pandemic times, cost cutting and people cozing up to this very concept of the management. Hotel industry per se is now trying to woo back the corporate India with high-end amenities, discounts and wider range of destinations to choose from for a corporate destination event.

In recent times, hospitality industry has also gone through a technological revolution to keep pace with the rest of the industry. This automation has been the biggest driver of change when it came to dynamic pricing and automated revenue

management. The paradox of this change was that the team members were not ready to shoulder this revolution, because they were still struggling to be on track with the changing trends and best practices. But, now most of the hospitality companies have tech professionals on board to train their staff to be technologically savvy.

These trying times, have also been observed as a period of new adaptations and in fact, Lords Hotels and Resorts has incorporated new tech aides to expediate its productivity; especially with Book on Line (BON), a booking engine from Greece and Rate Tiger, a hotel price intelligence tool that automates management and distribution of the hotel pricing across all channels from a single dashboard. We also intend to soon install various loyalty programs to enhance the customer experience. We are both bullish and optimistic about the future of mid-segment hotel business because of its pocket friendly

budget, which is complimented with high-end amenities, offering exhilarating experiences all the way.

From Sales perspective, the growth has seen a spiral growth, people who never ventured out,

In recent times, hospitality industry has also gone through a technological revolution to keep pace with the rest of the industry

took to travel with a vengeance. And, with the closing of international destinations, the industry has witnessed surface to surface Revenge Tourism movements, including big splurge on vacations

to exotic domestic places. Wedding and pilgrimage destinations also have become a big hit and we see a rise in the visits to such destinations, which has given a significant buoyancy to the market, increasing the sales figures. We foresee, wedding destinations and the MICE movement to take off steadily with regular operations commencing from October season. And, from November 2022, a robust growth is envisioned for the inbound market, student group business and businesses from film production units, who scout for new and unexplored destinations. It is also anticipated that the demand supply in the hotel industry will now play an important role in enhancing the ARR of the hotel. We will also see an uprise of new projects and new chain of hotels in the coming times, bringing about new era of competition. And, we need to be equipped with the best sales team to conquer the vast Indian market. As far as developing business is con-

cerned, the trend is slowly moving towards building hospitality business in the Tier II cities: especially in the Konkan belt. Moreover, we seem to be felicitating various community-based groups, who are big time travellers and love traveling in huge numbers for benefits of a wholesome discount to places like Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Goa.

Last but not the least, it's the Human resource department, who are the game changers; bringing the right talent home for business posterity. Doing the rounds on the Internet is this one motivational quote, which states that, "In order to build a rewarding employee experience, you need to understand what matters most to your people." And right now, it's the money that walks the talk. Because of this factor, the hospitality industry is witnessing big time attrition. The situation is worsened by the latest news doing rounds that 60% of IHM seats have gone

vacant this year which would have a cascading effect in years to come resulting in poor supply to fuel man-power requirements in hotels. It's become a humongous task for the HR department to retain its people. The talents as per companies' budget and requirements are not meted, which are in rapid succession. To combat this, the management needs to be flexible and find productive ways to retain the best talents in the house; by investing fairly and squarely as per the prevailing market trend.



Rishi Puri
Senior Vice President
Lords Hotels and Resorts

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

'Enthusiasm is remarkable'

► Contd from page 5

hoteliers and tourism boards. Each one of us has had to look at business afresh. We will also look at the alternate revenue streams which are becoming more relevant now. Ticketing is what many of us survived on for so many years but frankly, today if you ask me, I will say, "We also sell tickets". The tourism pie is much bigger, it is much more interesting and much more profitable. It is not just tickets. However, in order to service that, we also need to airline tickets. And so yes, we do also sell airline tickets."

The team is also going to discuss the overload of information faced by the end traveller. "The importance of a travel consultant is to help them cut through the online clutter because everything is not as rosy as it seems on the internet. We will also be talking about opportunities beyond leisure. Yes, leisure has been a mainstay of our industry, but there are other niches. The opportunities that ex-

ist and the niches that exist must be explored. We will have some very high-profile speakers so I think it should be an interesting discussion during the conven-

Importance of a travel consultant is to help them cut through the clutter as everything is not as rosy as it seems on the internet

tion," he adds. Pullman Kuching and Kuching Waterfront have been chosen as the two convention hotels for delegates.

J&K Chapter
TAFI also recently started its 12th chapter in J&K. "I think it's a very opportune time that it happened. While there have been other as-

sociations in J&K we never really had a presence there. We had an excellent inaugural of the chapter and the rapport between the trade and tourism dept is excellent in Kashmir- there is a lot of support there - there is no denying the importance of beauty of Kashmir for India's tourism. We hope that with this, we will be able to do the conclave we had planned to do in Kashmir perhaps by the end of this year or early 2023. We got 20 members to start the chapter off! I think it's a great beginning and I think this will be one of our very active chapters. Quite a few members from here will be joining us in Malaysia," Prakash says.

Key talk points for Kuching

- ◆ Reinventing businesses
- ◆ Alternate revenue streams
- ◆ Cutting through online clutter
- ◆ Relevance of travel consultants
- ◆ Opportunities beyond leisure
- ◆ Exploring different niches

Melbourne attracts cricket buffs



Visit Victoria, the official tourism board of Melbourne, Victoria, recently held an event in Mumbai featuring Indian cricketer Rishabh Pant and MasterChef Australia star Sarah Todd. Melbourne will host two ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup matches at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

UAE-India stamps released



Emirates Post Group, in collaboration with India Post, recently launched commemorative stamps in joint celebration of "Year of the 50th Anniversary of the UAE's Formation and the 75th Anniversary of the Independence of India". The issuance highlighted the strong and historic relations between UAE and India.

The total turnover of public sector undertaking India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) in Q1 2022 was recorded at ₹98.37 crore compared to ₹47.72 crore registered in the corresponding quarter last year, which is a jump of 106 per cent.

Korea ready to greet Indians

After announcing reopening of the borders, Korea Tourism shares some of their initiatives that will enable Indians easy access to South Korea's luxury market, business leisure and learning experiences.

TT Bureau

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) India, the Korean tourism arm of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, has announced the reopening of South Korea to all Indian travellers. A series of key initiatives announced by KTO India recently will enable Indians to access South Korea's luxury market, business leisure and learning experiences. **Young-Geul Choi**, Director, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) India, said, "We are elated to welcome travellers from India to South Korea again. In the past two years, we adopted a progressive approach towards reopening tourism. We are excited to share initiatives to facilitate travel for business, experience and learning. We have further elevated traveller experience with immersive experiential centres, re-imagined tourism offerings and look forward to hosting our Indian visitors."

To make travel more accessible, KTO has launched the Let's Go

Korea Savings Plan in conjunction with Shinhan Bank in India. It is a recurring deposit scheme



Young-Geul Choi
Director of Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) India

to help potential travellers to Korea save for their trip, with special interest rates and additional benefits with a minimum deposit amount of ₹2,000 per month for a year, members can avail benefits with Utazzo Travel to book their trip to Korea. The investment will act as a regular recurring deposit in case a member is unable to travel to Korea after a year.

Kim Chan, General Manager (India & Bangladesh), Korean Air, said, "Korean Air resumed its India operations in May 2022 and the

load factor has been very positive, already more than 80 per cent for August. We plan to roll out special fares on the Delhi/Incheon route around Diwali. If things happen as we anticipate, we will soon have more flights."

In recent times, hospitality industry has also gone through a technological revolution to keep pace with the rest of the industry

Asiana Airlines is looking at increased demand to South Korea and plans to respond with increased frequency. "Surprisingly many players have shown interest in Korea for their high-end MICE movement," said **Jung Sub Song**, Regional Manager, Asiana Airlines.

Vietjet woos Indians to Vietnam

Jay L Lingeswara, Commercial Director, Vietjet, reveals their expansion plans and promotional offers to make air travel more convenient and affordable for Indians travelling to Vietnam.

TT Bureau

Emphasising on the importance of inbound traffic from India to Vietnam, **Jay L Lingeswara**, Commercial Director, Vietjet, invited Indians to visit their country. As India becomes the largest tourism gateway to Vietnam, Vietjet continues to expand its flight network in the country, he said.

The airlines recently announced 13 more direct flights from major Indian cities, including Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Mumbai, to Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang and Phu Quoc. Current operational routes are Delhi and Mumbai to Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. According to the expansion plans, Vietjet will soon operate 17 routes



Jay L Lingeswara
Vietjet Commercial Director

from India to Vietnam to further connect to major destinations in India, including Southeast Asia (Bali, Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur), Northeast Asia (Seoul, Busan, Tokyo, Osaka, Taipei) and the Asia Pacific Region.

The airlines offers 30,000 promotional tickets for just ₹9 (excluding taxes and fees) to the Indians wanting to visit Vietnam.

The offer, valid till 26 August 2022, allows travelling from 15 August 2022 to 26 March 2023 (excluding public holidays). "With 17 direct services, Vietjet will operate the largest flight network ever between India and Vietnam from September onwards. It is also more convenient and affordable for Indian travellers to visit not only Vietnam's top destinations, but also connect to other destinations in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and all over Asia Pacific, thanks to Vietjet's expanding flight network. As the first airline flying directly between Vietnam and India, Vietjet is confident of further strengthening both countries' connection in the coming time to meet travellers' evolving demands while being able to offer them the most affordable airfares," he said.

In Numbers	13	17	30,000
	more Vietjet direct flights from Indian cities to Vietnam	routes Vietjet will soon operate from India to Vietnam	promotional tickets Vietjet will issue for Indians

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:

SEPTEMBER 2022

Date	Event	Time
5-8	ILTM Asia	9:00 am
6	Spain Webinar	03:00 pm
7	St. Petersburg Roadshow - Mumbai	10:00 am
7	VFS Webinar	12:00 pm
8	St. Petersburg Roadshow - Delhi	10:00 am
9	Hospitality and Tourism Conclave	10:00 am
10-11	Business MICE and Luxury Travel Mart Delhi	11:00 am
12	Abu Dhabi Roadshow - Delhi	10:00 am
12	Switzerland Webinar	03:00 pm
13-15	OTM Mumbai	10:00 am
14	Abu Dhabi Roadshow - Bangalore	10:00 am
15-17	GSTC Asia-Pacific Sustainable Tourism Conference	9:00 am
16	Abu Dhabi Roadshow - Mumbai	10:00 am
17	Vancouver International Travel Expo	8:30 am
20-22	IFTM Top Resa	10:00 am
20-23	TAFI convention	10:00 am
22	Switzerland Webinar	03:00 pm

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

'Travelling for shopping goes up'

Contd from page 5

their own city but when they are travelling, shopping is the highlight of the trip. So, it is very crucial for them to include it in every international vacation. Indians love brands and they love good deals! We have so many of our clients going to Europe for McArthurGlen Designer Outlets. Indians largely

home country or find the same goods at a more reasonable price. Sometimes, they are just collecting some memories in the form of a souvenir. However, recently the trend of travelling primarily for shopping has increased, especially among luxury travellers, says **Sandeep Arora**, Head, Brightsun Travel. "Dubai is a good



Anshu Tejuja
MD, Ashoka Dream Holidays

like to buy brands when they are travelling because its cheaper with no tax and duties as compared to India. Shopping is not limited to any traveller segment – whether it is FIT, couple, family or even corporate, they all love to shop!"

Shopping indulgence

Shopping has always been an integral part of tourism activities. Tourists purchase things or brands they cannot find in their



Sandeep Arora
Head, Brightsun Travel

example of this trend where people go solely for luxury shopping. With the pandemic almost over, people are travelling now more than ever and they are booking in advance to save money."

Pranav Kapadia, Founder Director, Global Destinations, agrees. He says, "Shopping has always been an important part of any holiday for Indian travellers. Even when we travel, we shop like



Pranav Kapadia
Founder Director
Global Destinations

there is no tomorrow. And its attractiveness has only increased. I have had clients going to Greece where we have an office, and they have shopped in Santorini and Mykonos also! You may think what you could possibly shop on an island except souvenirs but it has many lifestyle and fashion stores as well. We have had a lot of luxury clients this year who have splurged on shopping."

India a huge source market

Speaking about how his outlets are receiving more and more Indians, **Mathias Sinner**, Manager, Senior International Markets, McArthurGlen Group, says, "We know that Indians love to shop while they travel; it is an important activity for them. They also like a good deal and look for discounts while shop-



Mathias Sinner
Manager, Senior International Markets
McArthurGlen Group

ping. That is why we believe our brand and our product fits very well with this market and there is a lot of attractiveness for the Indian travellers when they come to Europe. We offer anything between 30 per cent-70 per cent off the normal retail price – that's standard across all our outlets all year round. But we also have sale season where you get even more discounts. We also know how important VAT refunds are for Indian travellers. Our biggest outlets, especially those favoured by Indian travellers, have in-centre tax refunds. Getting these refunds at the airport is tedious and time consuming so we offer these services at our outlets. Shopping really adds to the local economy so it benefits the destination as well."

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MOVEMENTS

HYATT PLACE PUNE, HINJAWADI

Pune
RYAN D'SILVA has been appointed as the General Manager of Hyatt Place Pune, Hinjawadi. An industry expert, Ryan has more than 17 years of experience in hospitality industry converting strategic vision into measurable results at various hotels. In his new role, Ryan D'Silva will be responsible for heading and managing the hotel operations and maintaining high standards of guest satisfaction. Prior to joining Hyatt Place Pune, Hinjawadi, he served as the Director of Rooms at Park Hyatt, Hyderabad. He has studied from Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology - Ahmedabad.



SHERATON GRAND PALACE

Indore
SEEMA TAJ has been elevated as the Director of Sales at Sheraton Grand Palace Indore. In her new role, Seema will be responsible for sales, revenue management, marketing and business operations and will overlook all aspects of the sales department. With more than 17 years of experience in the hospitality industry, she has been instrumental in initiating and organising many successful sales initiatives. She started her career in 2005 and has worked with many renowned brands in the industry such as ITC Fortune, Radisson and Sayaji Hotels before joining Sheraton Grand Palace Indore. She possesses a strong business acumen.



THE WESTIN HYDERABAD MINDSPACE

Hyderabad
PANKAJ PRADHAN has been appointed as the Director of Human Resources. Pankaj comes with more than 15 years of diverse experience in flagship hotels across the country. He started his career in the hospitality industry with the human resource department at Mahindra Holidays & Resorts. He displays a rare and cherished quality of connecting with team members to ensure their well-being and high morale. He has been leading the department across hotels in Chhattisgarh, Hyderabad, Pune, Goa, Madhya Pradesh and New Delhi.



CLEARTRIP

Bengaluru
 Cleartrip, India's fastest-growing online travel company, has appointed **SHUBHAM KHURANA** as the Head of Brand Marketing. In his new role, Shubham will be responsible for augmenting Cleartrip's brand presence across the country and further expanding its footprint in the newer markets. He joins Cleartrip with more than 12 years of experience at corporates like Facebook India, Unilever, and startups like Treebo Hotels, where he played an instrumental role in accelerating the growth strategies of the brands. He completed his Engineering from IIT-Roorkee and MBA from XLRI Jamshedpur. He has also been recognised at India's top business forums and won awards.



RENAISSANCE BENGALURU RACE COURSE HOTEL

Bengaluru
 Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel has appointed **SATHENDER SINGH** as Associate Director of F&B. Sathender, a veteran in the industry, will now be responsible to carry out overall beverage and food operations of the hotel. He comes with exemplary knowledge and has more than 15 years of experience working in the food and beverage sector, managing restaurants, running banquets, and organising events. He started his career with 'Ananda In The Himalayas' in 2005, and has worked with different hotels across India, including Westin Sohna, Le Meridien, Hyatt Regency and Courtyard and Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru.



THE WESTIN MUMBAI GARDEN CITY

Mumbai
SHIKHA KHANNA has been appointed as the Director of Rooms at The Westin Mumbai Garden City. In her new role, Shikha will helm guest-facing teams in Front Office, the Housekeeping Department, and the discerning Concierge teams. She will focus on ensuring bespoke and personalised service, while driving Guest Voice, BSA, and Rooms Division Profitability. Shikha earlier worked with The Westin Mumbai Garden City in 2014-16. She has over 17 years of experience in the luxury hospitality business with leading hotels, ensuring service excellence.



KAIRALI AYURVEDIC GROUP

Palakkad
ANOOP VIJAYARAJ has been appointed as General Manager for Kairali - The Ayurvedic Healing Village, Palakkad. Anoop has over 20 years of experience in the national and international hospitality industry. He will oversee operations at Kairali - The Ayurvedic Healing Village, Palakkad, a wellness retreat with NABH certification. Prior to onboarding the leadership team at Kairali Ayurvedic Group, he worked as a Consultant General Manager & Resort Manager at Kimmane Golf Resort & Munjoh Ocean Resort in Karnataka & Andaman Nicobar Islands. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management from Himalaya Educational Institute of Management & Technology.



ANGSANA OASIS SPA & RESORT

Bengaluru
 Angsana Oasis Spa & Resort Bangalore appoints yoga and wellness expert **PUNEET SHARMA** as the new Wellness Manager. In his new role, Puneet will be responsible for overseeing the entire wellness division of the property and curating special wellness menus that includes signature yoga retreat programmes for inhouse guests, immunity boosting treatments and healing therapies. Puneet has worked with world renowned hotels and other platforms helping people understand the ancient Indian Vedic practices and their benefits. He has been instrumental in creating the entire journey of wellness offering for ultra-lux resorts like the Cheval Blanc Randheli.



GOPAL KRISHNA VOHRA has been appointed as the Front Office Manager of The Westin Mumbai Garden City. In his new role, he will be responsible for delivering immaculate service and unparalleled experiences to the guests. In his 13 years of hospitality experience, Krishna has worked with various brands of Select, Premium, and Luxury categories of Marriott International. Earlier, as Front Office Manager at Le Meridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa, he was responsible for overseeing the front office operations, concierge and butler service. He started his career with Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre in 2010.



TALKING People

SHYAMKRISHNA A, cluster Revenue Manager for Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore & Hyatt Place Hampi, is an ardent sci-fi fan. He also loves watching and playing football. He says, "During the lockdown, it was difficult to keep our creative instincts. I spent most of my time on learning new skills and reading books for personal and professional development. I also enjoy travelling. My favourite destination in India is Uttarakhand due to historical facts. I would also like to visit Singapore again as that country has a lot to offer in terms of modern architecture, nature, and cuisines."



venu GOPAL, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Tiruchirappalli, de-stresses by cooking. He says, "Nothing relaxes me like cooking. It is also a passion and I'm always on the lookout for new and interesting recipes. Yoga and walks are some other ways I de-stress. During the lockdown though, I caught up on social media skills. Now that borders are open, my next holiday destination will be Europe."



ANKIT NAYYAR, Director of Revenue, Hyatt Hotels Pune, de-stresses by listening to music, cooking and travelling to the hills frequently. However, when the borders were closed during the lockdown, he learned a new skill that would help him in his work - Advance Excel! He says his favourite holiday destination in India is Binsar in Uttarakhand and London internationally. However, his next holiday will be to Greece, South France and Japan. He says, "Hopefully I will be able to visit these places soon."



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Polishing India connection

Amit Ray, Director India, LOT Polish Airlines, shares how the airline is making its presence felt in the Indian market, ensuring that its time, service and offerings are different from other European carriers, whether it is for direct connections or transit business.

 Nisha Verma

After beginning its India operations in 2019 and then facing a pandemic, LOT Polish Airlines has restarted its operations in the country with a bang and is planning to expand its horizons in the country.

Amit Ray, Director India, LOT Polish Airlines, said, "We started our India operations in September 2019 by launching new nonstop flights between Delhi and Warsaw, followed by new flights from Mumbai to Warsaw in June 2022, hence offering seven flights per week from India to our Star Alliance hub in Warsaw: from Delhi every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday; and from Mumbai every Sunday and Wednesday."

Highlighting the network of the airlines, Ray said, "At Warsaw's Chopin Airport, our guests enjoy seamless connectivity to the global network of LOT Polish Airlines providing a broad choice of destinations throughout Europe and North America. All LOT Polish Airlines flights from Delhi and Mumbai are operated by modern Boeing 787 Dreamliner offering three classes of service onboard: Economy Class, Premium Economy Class and Business Class."

Expansion on cards

On the India market expansion, Moczulski Krzysztof, spokesperson of LOT Polish Airlines Warsaw, said, "India has a great potential for us and we definitely want to strengthen our position (in the country). As we are recovering from the impact of pandemic, we have gradually increased our frequencies and consider new destinations."

High on India

Sharing that India remains a significant market for LOT Polish Airlines, Ray said, "We see



significant potential for growth in India, being one of the most important international markets for LOT Polish Airlines, and we remain committed to this market."

However, with so many other European airlines plying from India, it is not an easy market to tap. Ray


India being one of the most important global markets for LOT Polish Airlines, we remain committed to this market

shares, "In terms of bookings and market forecast, and perhaps even more importantly, based on consumer and B2B feedback from the Indian point-of-sale market, we are convinced that LOT Polish Airlines and India fit together very well. Our mid-morning departure time from Delhi and Mumbai distinguishes us from other European carriers for example. Secondly, we provide a seamless and hassle-free transfer experience at our hometown airport in Warsaw, when connecting to onward flights across Europe and North America. LOT Polish Airlines' dense network

in Central and Eastern Europe gives access to unexplored leisure destinations, while also providing connectivity to the business and industrial centres in Western Europe. Besides having a young fleet, three classes of service on intercontinental flights, we are a member of Star Alliance and offer travel choices as well as additional benefits and frequent flyer recognition. LOT Polish Airlines is a fully integrated partner of the Miles & More frequent flyer programme."

Aircraft and service

"All of LOT Polish Airlines long-haul flights are exclusively operated by Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircrafts. Due to popular demand from India, we primarily deploy our B787-9 aircraft on the India routes, offering

three classes of service (Economy Class, Premium Economy Class, Business Class)," claimed Ray.

When it comes to catering to the needs of Indian passengers, Ray informed, "These state-of-the-art aircraft offer a comfortable passenger experience which, among other features, includes a special mood light system helping guests to rest and relax while onboard so that they reach their destination more refreshed. Also, Indian meals onboard catered by Taj Sats are served aboard our India originating flights, while our inflight entertainment offers a wide choice of Bollywood blockbusters and classics."



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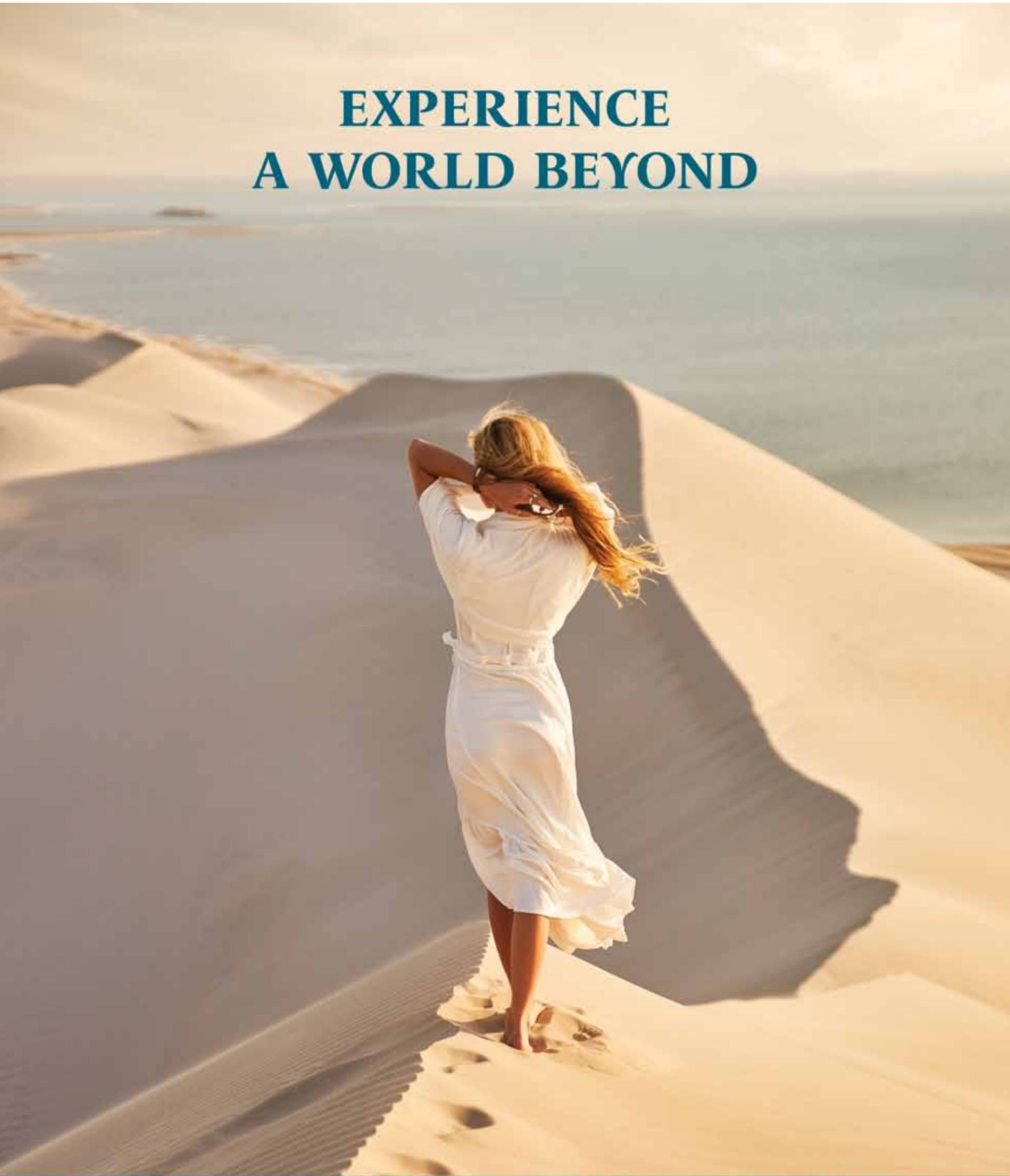
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