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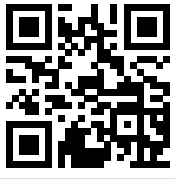
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Reshaping business of travel, hospitality

Corporates and professionals from airline, travel and hospitality industries delve into finer points of business at the 8th Travel MICE & Corporate Show, in Chennai.



Lipla Negi

With more than 1,000 fruitful business meetings, the 8th edition of Travel MICE and Corporate Show concluded successfully in Chennai. Over a span of two days, the select gathering welcomed corporates and professionals from airline and

hospitality sectors, as well as international tourism boards. Over the years, the platform has earned a reputation for bringing decision makers and stakeholders under one roof for an insightful interaction that strictly deliver business.

Featuring **Suraj Nair**, Founder, Travel Spends; **Ashish Arpit**,

CEO, Itilite; **Gaurav Nagwekar**, Head, Corporate Travel, Reliance Industries, **Jyoti Varma**, renowned industry expert and consultant, Travel MICE and Corporate Show and an audience of around 200-strong professionals and decision makers from corporate airline, travel and

Contd on page 24 ▶



Govt eyes more investment

In a precursor to the first Global Tourism Investors' Summit, to be organised in New Delhi from 17-19 May 2023, the Ministry of Tourism organises an interaction with Heads of Missions.



Janice Alyosius

India has become a prime destination for tourism and is now gearing up for investment to further boost its growth in the sector. The Union Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is celebrating Visit India 2023, highlighting the diverse experiences that India has to offer. The government, taking a mission mode approach to promote tourism and attract private sector investments, will organize the first Global Tourism Investors' Summit from 17-19 May 2023. The summit will provide a platform for



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER

collaboration between the public and private sectors, leading to increased investments in the sector.

In a precursor to the summit, the MOT recently organised a Roundtable Interaction with Heads of Missions, which was chaired by **G Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER.

Addressing the meet, Reddy said that guided by the Prime Minister's vision, tourism development in the country is being undertaken by the government in a mission mode. "Our Prime Minister has stated, India is entering a robust phase of tourism and has been gaining global attention in recent years.

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Ramping up on sustainability

The Ministry of Tourism's workshop, organised recently in New Delhi, aims to build capacity among policymakers and program designers, with a focus on creating awareness about sustainable tourism.



TT Bureau

The Union Ministry of Tourism (MOT), in collaboration with Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management (IITTM), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI), organized a workshop on the development of sustainable and responsible tourist destinations, in New Delhi on March 22, 2023. The workshop was attended by senior government officials and tourism industry stakeholders from the Northern region, including Delhi.



Rakesh Kumar Verma
Additional Secretary, MOT

In his keynote address, delivered at the workshop, **Rakesh Kumar Verma**, Additional Secretary, MOT,

put emphasis on the need for sustainability in tourism and collaboration among the Centre, States, and Industry to achieve the objective. He also highlighted the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism, launched by the MOT, and its seven pillars to promote sustainable tourism.

Each state shared its strategy and best practices at the workshop. Verma said, "Most states have developed a clear roadmap for sustainable tourism, with detailed plans and activities that require further discussion and refinement."



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'Convergence is key in tourism'

If tourism in the country is to move forward, convergence of many domains and departments is necessary. If these work as a cohesive unit, a multiplier effect can be created in the development of tourism and challenges in the sector can be overcome easily, says Rakesh Verma, Additional Secretary, Tourism.



Nisha Verma

Tourism cannot move forward without convergence because it's a cross-sectoral thing, as it has many more domains and support of many other departments is necessary, says **Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Tourism. He moderated the second breakout session – 'Convergence – The Power of Collaboration' of the post-budget webinar on 'Developing Tourism in Mission Mode', organized by Union Ministry of Tourism recently.

Speaking about the session on convergence in the tourism sector, Verma shared, "In this session, all departments of Central Ministries, whose initiatives impact the tourism sector were present. Apart from that, at state government level, we had inputs from Principal Secretaries of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. We also invited two district collectors to see at the implementation stage how this convergence and synergy is there. Apart from that, to represent the

industry, office-bearers of our industry associations and leaders were there. It was visible that tourism cannot move forward without convergence because it's a cross-sectoral thing, as it has many more domains and support of many other departments is necessary. If this support is taken properly, then a multiplier effect can be created and the challenges in the tourism sector can be removed well."

Verma highlighted a few suggestions given during the session. "There is a group that has been made, called the Project Monitoring Group, which monitors important infra projects and same way since tourism is complex and needs support from different departments. Thus, a portal should be developed where project related information and from which agency they need clearance and we should align it with the PM Gatishakti Portal," he said.

Destination masterplan

Verma also shared that a masterplan for destinations should be cre-

ated, "whereby doing SWOT analysis, we should know in advance, which are the areas where support is needed and then the programs



Rakesh Verma
Additional Secretary, Tourism

of that ministry and department should be plugged into it. Then the convergence and synergy will come out in a much better way."

He added, "Same way infrastructure gap is there, which has been mapped via masterplan or other-

wise, so that the involved ministries are updated that these are our priority destinations and where is the missing link, like in road, railway or airport. Thus, if infrastructure mapping is done, convergence can be done in a better way."

Focus on quality of services

He informed that the Bureau of Indian Standards and Ministry of Commerce is working on National Standard of Quality of Services. "They have also suggested that if we take the standards forward in a good way, the ministries can also contribute very well in the same by getting those standards in different segments like skills, marketing and promotion. For everything we should have standards and practices." In the same way, said Verma, "funding, convergence, program objectives was highlighted. At many places the funds of schemes can be dovetailed, if we can pool funds at district level and achieve a common objective."

Environment & Wildlife

He also said that environment and

wildlife is a sensitive segment. "On this, Ministry of Environment and Forests have a lot of plans to develop wetlands, ecotourism and the vision is to develop them for high-end tourists. In that there is involvement of many departments—not just infrastructure, but even departments related with skills and



Development of Tourism is a cross-sectoral thing, as it has many more domains and support of many other departments is necessary

livelihoods. In this way, they are taking all the ministries who want to do development in wetlands and ecotourism," he shared. Another suggestion, Verma said, was of joint participation in events. "It

was mentioned that there can be a taskforce at the state level to fast track the issues, particularly from regulatory side. Another suggestion was to sensitise every department about the importance and value of tourism and the peculiar issues that tourism has. There is a need to create awareness on all this, and based on that we should design a program where all stakeholders can be sensitised, because this convergence is very important aspect, but achieving it is not easy. The suggestion was for continuous education and sensitisation."

Destination management

He said that the objective was that if we can document with clarity what the destinations need, and which ministry can offer what, everyone will have their role clear. "Communities are very important for the projects and plans that we make. Every ministry needs to keep community event," he said.

Capacity development for guides

Another issue that was high-

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Advantage Adventure

The 2nd Tourism Working Group Meeting, being held in Siliguri and Darjeeling in early April, focuses on adventure tourism. The Ministry of Tourism is hosting a side event on Adventure Tourism as a vehicle for achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The seven North-eastern states are showcasing their offerings on adventure tourism at the event, which provides a global opportunity for the Adventure Tourism.

A full day event has been organized for industry partners and States to deliberate on Tourism in Mission Mode: Advantage Adventure Tourism.

Promoting Adventure Tourism, India has a significant geographical advantage owing to its rich natural & eco-tourism resources. It is home to 70 per cent of the Himalayas, 7,000 kms of coastline, among one of the only three countries in the world with both hot and cold deserts, and ranks 10th in total area under forest cover. Let's hope the industry comes together and makes the most of this opportunity.

Top Priority: M!CE

India has great potential as a destination for M!CE tourism. M!CE tourism has also been seen as the 'saviour' of tourism since the pandemic. The spend is huge, demand is high and its rebuilding travel confidence. Critical in the formulation of tourism policies now, M!CE travel needs to be the priority for the industry. In recent years, the Indian government has also taken steps to promote M!CE tourism in the country. The Ministry of Tourism has launched several initiatives to attract more international events and conferences to India. Additionally, the government has eased visa regulations and introduced incentives for event organizers to host their events in the country.

This growing sector has been our focus for the current issue of **TRAVELTALK**, as we asked the trade of their preferences and take on this growing sector. India's cultural diversity, modern infrastructure, and government support make it a promising destination for M!CE tourism and we hope the country grows to its full potential soon.

'Affluent' future of travel

Nearly two in five affluent consumers in India plan to take wider group holidays in the next 12 months, states a research by YouGov, which gets under the skin of high-end travel to understand what luxury travel looks like post-pandemic in 18 international markets.

TT Bureau

The pandemic has fuelled the appetite for travel across the globe, and nearly three in five urban Indians (57 per cent) state that travel has become more important to them since the pandemic compared to one in eight (12 per cent) who disagree with the statement, reveals a research by YouGov.

Agreement is higher among affluent in India, with three-quarters of them saying that travel has become more important to them since the pandemic, states the YouGov's Global travel & tourism whitepaper 2023, which covered 18 international markets.



largest increase (of +8 per cent points) from the previous year. Another travel activity that affluent Indians are planning on undertaking to a greater extent in the next 12 months is taking a longer holi-

destinations. Safety is the primary travel priority among global affluent travellers (at 37 per cent), followed by a desire to experience diverse cultures (36 per cent) and great local attractions (33 per cent).

Enjoying luxury accommodations, having the best culinary experiences, visiting remote destinations, and doing things few others can do resonate with affluent consumers and luxury travelers who will be looking for brands, experiences and travel companies that understand their individual needs and unique requirements.

Factors affluent travellers are looking for in their next travel destinations

	Indian affluents	Global affluents
A secure and safe environment	42	37
A once in a lifetime experience	34	25
Experiences different cultures	33	36
Quality services	33	24
Improving my health and wellness	33	21
Great entertainment	32	17
Great local attractions and amenities	30	33
To learn new things/ experience something new	28	32
Enjoying quality luxury accommodation	25	22
Having the best culinary experience	23	26
Finding an interesting tour, concert, or activity	22	18
A wide range of activities available	21	22
Visiting remote destinations	20	18
Having personalized experiences tailored to me	20	12
Doing things that few others can do	13	12
None of these	2	6
Don't know	2	4

The research gets under the skin of high-end travel to understand what luxury travel looks like post-pandemic. It focuses on the attitudes and behaviours of affluent consumers, particularly the affluent under 35 years of age – the audience that will shape the luxury travel industry of the future.

"Looking specifically among the affluent travellers in India, we see that travelling with a wider group of family or friends continues to be the top travel activity year on year. Almost two in five (37 per cent) have travelled with a wider group in the past 12 months, and the same proportion intend to do so in the forthcoming 12 months. Even though this is the top activity, taking a luxury rail trip sees the

day than usual or taking a cruise (+5 per cent points each)," the report states.

Moreover, the research reveals the priorities of global affluent travellers for their next travel

Among the affluent people in India, most of the parameters rank higher, but safety is the top priority (at 42 per cent). For a third, having a once in a lifetime experience (34 per cent), quality services (33 per cent), improving their health and wellness (33 per cent) and experiencing different cultures (33 per cent) are important when choosing their next travel destination.

Compared to global affluents, they are more likely to prioritise a once in a lifetime experience (34 per cent Indian affluents vs 25 per cent global affluents) and having a personalised experience (20 per cent vs 12 per cent), and less likely to focus on learning something new (32 per cent vs 28 per cent).

Methodology

The insights in this report are drawn from a recent global YouGov Custom survey to understand what luxury travel looks like post pandemic, explore luxury travel experiences, what affluent consumers are seeking and their future travel aspirations. Covering 18 global

Safety is primary travel priority among global affluent travellers (at 37%), followed by a desire to experience diverse cultures (36%)

markets of more than 19,000 respondents, the survey results were further bolstered by connecting respondent level data to YouGov's proprietary syndicated data solution, Global Travel Profiles, allowing YouGov to merge their respondents and their answers to the 100,000 consumer attributes that they collect on an ongoing basis for audience segmentation and profiling. The survey was fielded in the week of 9th to 23rd November 2022. Data for India is based on a national online sample (of 18+) of 1007 respondents.

Indian aviation on a roll: Scindia

Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Minister of Civil Aviation and Steel, Government of India, recently addressed the CAPA India Aviation Summit 2023, where he touched upon various aspects of Indian aviation industry, including its growth trajectory.



Nisha Verma

Addressing the summit, Scindia said, "Today we have crossed figures of 4.56 lakh domestic passengers in a day. India will have more than 140 million passengers in FY2024 alone. In the six years from FY2014 to FY2020 the number of domestic passengers has more than doubled from 120 million to about 275 million at a CAGR of 14.5 per cent, and had there been no COVID outbreak, we would have reached a CAGR of about 18-20 per cent."

He said India has a scope of exponential growth. "India is the third largest domestic market in the world in terms of seat capacity, but in terms of international seat capacity we are still ranked at 18th position. Therefore, the prospect for long-term consistent growth in the market seems very strong. India's real GDP is expected to grow to about ₹252 trillion in FY2030 and GDP per capita will have increased from that of a lower middle-income country to an upper middle-income country. India is witnessing increasing urbanisation, and it is expected to increase from 34.9 per cent in 2020 to a projected 40 per cent in 2030. The disposable income of middle and high-income households is rising much faster than the national average. India is going to have one of the largest young populations in the world, which usually has a greater propensity to travel," he said.



Jyotiraditya Scindia speaks at CAPA India Aviation Summit 2023

He also spoke about resolving supply-side challenges. "The government has been taking unprecedented steps to create capacities, remove bottlenecks and simplify processes so that the nation can have the requisite aviation infrastructure in place. The focus is to ensure that in 2047 when the

8.5 years increasing from 74 in 2014 to 148 now. Government is simplifying regulations to ensure ease of business in the sector. Policies have been liberalised to ensure adequate availability of pilots, cabin crew and engineers in the country," he said.

He informed that to augment pilot training capacity in the long run, the government has liberalised the FTO (flight training organisation) policy, as a result of which we are seeing a proliferation of FTOs in the country. "The concept of airport royalty (revenue share payment by FTOs to AAI) has been abolished and land rentals rationalised. We currently have 35 FTOs. Nine other FTOs are coming up at five airports. Six FTO slots have been awarded by AAI at five airports, which will be operational by December 2023 (taking the number up to 50)," he said.

Scindia lauded the Aerospace Manufacturing and MRO (maintenance, repair, and overhaul) sector potential. "As part of the

Make in India campaign, the government has been focussing on ensuring that India becomes an integral part of global supply chain. The launch of private manufacturing for the C-295 transport aircraft by the Airbus-



Govt has doubled the number of airports from 74 in 2014 to 148 now. It is simplifying regulations to ensure ease of business in aviation

Tata joint venture is a major stride towards achieving the goal of self-reliance. With Indian carriers expected to order about 1,500 to 1,700 aircraft in near future, we should work towards making India an Aerospace Manufacturing base. At the same time, we have taken steps to ensure that we develop an ecosystem for MROs for aircraft. We have reduced GST rates on MRO services from 18 per cent to 5 per cent and allowed 100 per cent FDI into the sector. I urge our MRO industry to think big, think global, and act global - the sector has a turnover of close to US \$2 billion but our work is limited to 15 to 20 per cent of the market today, which we need to ensure is fully tapped into, he added.

From FY2014 to FY2020, the number of domestic passengers has more than doubled from 120 mn to about 275 mn at a CAGR of 14.5%

nation celebrates 100 years of its independence, it has an aviation system that can support US \$20 trillion economy. As part of this vision, the government has doubled the number of airports in the last

Compliance, process key to biz

► Contd from page 5

lighted was capacity development for guides. "In Arth Ganga, they have used the ashrams at Ganga to develop spiritual tourism. In Artha Ganga, there are many components that are tourism relevant. They are making intangible and tangible heritage directories. Hence, MOT can use it and make good tourism products and experiences around it. We can use their support to promote the same," suggested Verma.

Industry view

"From industry, it was suggested that we need to have convergence from the regulatory side as well, whether it is from our hotels, restaurants, and other tourism related businesses. What are the touchpoints of those businesses,

will also have to be raised with different departments and different regulatory authorities. We need to

Compliances should be there (for the industry), but the process should be efficient, so that businesses do not face any problem

give them ease of doing business and how the compliance burden can be reduced. Compliances

should be there, but the process should be efficient, so that businesses do not have any problem," he said.

He also mentioned about urban local bodies. "We need to see how can we take help from them. In Swacchh Bharat Mission, the concept of aspirational toilets was mentioned. This is not only basic toilets, but we need to create aspirational toilets, so that good quality public conveniences are available. We can use this very well for tourism destinations," he said.

He also talked about self employment and self-help group cooperatives. "These are multiple schemes on the supply side—communities and individuals—how they can be

strengthened and supported so that they can continue in the tourism sector through jobs, entrepreneurship. Many ministries are working on this. If a mapping can be done at the district level, and every district with a target of 500-1,000, can be covered via different programs. Last mile connectivity was also highlighted. Verma mentioned, "After highway is made or railway station is made, circulation needs to be constructed. Hence, whether it is municipal body or road, the last mile connectivity is important." He informed that at district level, collectors shared their experience. "There also conservation versus development issues arise for clearances, and if the district administration is sensitised well, they can strike a balance," he said.



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Building a MICE destination

Should business hotels around the country feel threatened with India going on an overdrive to build more state of the art convention centres? **TRAVELTALK** speaks to industry leaders from both the buyer and supplier sides to understand where the gaps lie and if they are hampering India's potential to be a great MICE destination even for its own people.



Sudesh Poddar
President, FHRAI

“There is no competition between hotels and convention centres, as both co-exist. Depending on the scale, events are organized at hotels or convention centres. Typically, smaller events are held at the banquet halls in hotels, whereas the larger ones are held at convention centres. In either case, hotels are the beneficiary, since the people participating in conventions eventually are accommodated by the hotels in the city or the region where the event takes place. When large conventions are organized, the delegates and visitors stay at hotels. The two formats actually complement each other. So, whether conventions or MICE activities take place at hotels or at convention centres, ultimately the hospitality industry benefits.”

“While a hotel does offer some advantages in terms of the proximity to rooms for the delegates, it is much more advantageous and preferable to do a convention in a convention centre that is purpose-built for such events. TAFI did this large annual convention in Kuching, Malaysia and the Borneo Convention Centre was an eye-opener. It was excellent. It could handle 5,000 Wi-Fi connections simultaneously, all the meeting rooms, all the banquet spaces and everything were on the same floor, so it was convenient for the delegates as well as organisers. It was a very productive, useful, and pleasing experience. In India, we do have a shortage of large convention centres.”



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

“In terms of hosting conventions or events, the choice between a hotel and a convention centre depends on the size of the event. For smaller events, hotels are the most convenient option as they provide both rooms and event spaces. However, for larger events, convention centres are necessary, as they have a higher capacity to accommodate more people. When it comes to weddings, the same principle applies. The choice between a convention centre or a hotel depends on the number of guests attending. For smaller weddings, hotels are a suitable option, as they can provide accommodation and event spaces. For larger weddings, convention centres are necessary as they can accommodate a higher number of guests.”

“It's not about how, but why you would choose a hotel or a convention centre for your accommodation needs. Since you can't stay in the convention centre, you will need a hotel regardless. The decision ultimately depends on the size of the conference you are attending. Sometimes, even if a certain hotel has good rates, it may not have the capacity or resources to accommodate a large conference. If the conference is held in the hotel, it's more convenient for all participants. However, for larger conferences, it may be necessary to look for conference facilities outside of the hotel. In some cities, it can be difficult to find hotels with the necessary facilities.”



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI



Ravi Gosain
MD, Erco Travels & Vice President, IATO

“Both hotels and convention centres have facilities to hold events. However, convention centres are well equipped to hold small or large conventions, be it the hall structure, break away meeting rooms, audio system, or lighting, whereas hotels build their conference rooms for multipurpose use and major thrust is on room inventories. In my opinion convention centres are much better and convenient for bigger MICE events and hotel can be used where lodging is required for events depending on available room inventory and rooms required for the event. Choosing between a hotel and a convention centre for hosting an event depends on several factors, including the event size.”

“In our experience, hotels offer an appealing combination of inventory and event spaces (generally ranging up to 20,000-25,000 sq.ft.). Given the ease, convenience and higher level of services, hotels make for an ideal venue choice for small to mid-size groups of 500-1000 delegates. They also serve as a more economical option for many corporates as per their budgets. For large group sizes, ranging from over 1,000 to 3000 and above, convention centres are an ideal choice, as they are more versatile and offer larger spaces (20,000-1,00,000+ sq.ft.) with other logistical requirements for MICE corporates.”



S D Nandakumar
President & Country Head
Corporate Tours, SOTC Travel



Anil Kalsi
Joint Secretary, TAFI

“Hotels and convention centre are two sides of the same coin. They have to complement each other in capacity and room availability. Large scale convention centres have opened up in India in recent times in major cities, and the big chain hotels have come up with all the requisites of convention centres. Cities where room availability does not match the convention centre capacity, it becomes a task to hold large conferences. A concerted effort to match the convention facilities with the room availability is a necessity at the planning stage, then only can the numbers increase and success realized in this sector. MICE is a big ticket sector and India needs to put its best foot forward.”

“Convention centre with rooms and all other facilities are always a better choice. Right now, only Hyderabad has this facility in India. This is one of the reasons why we are not getting meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions business to India. Our hotel tariff in metro and secondary cities are very high nowadays because of the increase in domestic tourism in the country. This is another reason why we need convention centres with rooms in all metro cities. State government in Maharashtra, Delhi, Kolkata, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu should also get convention centres to accommodate 5,000 delegates with 2,500 rooms.”



S. Mahalingaiah
Chairman - IATO Karnataka Chapter



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General, HAI

“So far as the general objective of tourism promotion and the role of MICE is concerned, I think the distinction between hotels and convention centres is artificial. They complement each other and should not be seen in isolation. MICE, as the acronym implies, cover several activities that can be shared in a planned manner by hotels and convention centres to achieve maximum spread of facilities across the country. Personally, I find the model of Hong Kong Convention Centre very attractive. It has facilities for big convention, for many smaller breakout sessions, and hotel accommodation around it for seamless commuting and time saving. Such convention centres are capital intensive.”

“Hotels and convention centres play an important role in boosting tourism of a country, as they become hubs that drive spending in the local facilities and shopping centres by both leisure and business travellers. As a global business hub, Singapore attracts a large number of business travellers throughout the year, for whom the country has hotels and convention centres that offer world-class service standard, along with a feeling of home away from home. The choice between a hotel and a convention centre for an event would be influenced by various factors, including the event's size and nature, location, budget, and amenities.”



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



Bengia Mrinal
Secretary General, APTOA & IATO State
In-charge, Arunachal Pradesh

“As per my experience is concern for big events such as travel fairs, it is better in a convention centre, as it has more facilities like space, parking and accessibility, but it has challenges for participants as they are always away from the city, making it hard for transport, taking more travel time and incur huge cost on accommodation, food, transport. It is a logistical nightmare to put up a stall, decorating it-the cost of product, transport and labour cost is on the higher side. In case of emergency if you need anything, it is always miles away. Therefore, holding it in a city centre hotel is always good where you have more options for accommodation and food.”

“It depends on varying factors and the product profile. A hotel may cater to a convention facility and currently this is the case. The convention gets all the facilities of a hotel—Rooms, F&B, service and other requisites of a convention. However, nowadays large conventions, catering to over 2,000 people, are likely to go to a convention centre that can handle such big numbers and has rooms and facilities for a large exhibition. Such convention centres have come up in India in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bangalore, Noida, Jaipur and other places. At times, the convention centre may not be able to cater to the room requirement that goes with a large convention.”



Sunil Mishra
Honorary Treasurer, IATO

Contd on page 10 ►

'Direct air link to boost India numbers'

Roger Cook, Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism of Western Australia, during the recent CAPA India Aviation Summit in New Delhi, held discussions for better aviation connections between India and Western Australia and sought direct flights to Perth to tap the Indian market.



Janice Alyosius

Roger Cook, Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism of Western Australia (WA), recently attended the CAPA India Aviation Summit in New Delhi and discussed starting of direct flights from India to Perth. Cook also met top airline officials during the two-day visit and talked about developing direct aviation connections between the two destinations.

Outlook for India market

The minister emphasized that India is an important market for Western Australia, and the state provides a unique tourism experience. "Although international visitation is currently at 85 per cent of pre-COVID levels, the Indian market has already exceeded pre-COVID levels, and we are optimistic about its potential. Currently, travellers from India reach Western Australia



Discussions with both Australian and Indian airlines are underway to explore the possibilities of direct flights between India and Perth

through travel connections via Singapore, but discussions with both Australian and Indian airlines are underway to explore the possibilities of direct flights between India and Perth. We are confident that direct aviation links between India and Perth will be established in the medium term, and the success of our efforts to establish these connections will allow us to tap into even greater tourism potential for Western Australia," he said.

Focus segment

With the growing diaspora of Indians in Western Australia, the key focus is to tap into the 'Visiting Friends and Relatives' market and encourage travellers from India to stay longer and explore more of Western Australia. "Currently, 80 per cent of the traffic between India and Australia comprises visits to friends and relatives (VFR), while the remaining 20 per cent is related to leisure and business travel. However, we have observed a steady growth in leisure and business travel, and we expect it to

become a more significant proportion of our overall visitations in the future," the minister said.

Connectivity

As per the minister, Western Australia has identified India as a key market and is dedicated to enhancing aviation connections between the two regions. "Establishing direct air connectivity between India

and Perth would bring immense benefits to the tourism industries of both regions. Although airlines that fly to Perth currently play a vital role in connecting the destinations, a direct airline service is yet to be established between India and Western Australia, which presents a massive opportunity for growth," he said. The Western Australian Government is collaborating with

the Indian tourism and aviation sectors as well as Perth Airport to tap the potential of Indian market. "Indian visitor numbers to Western Australia have been increasing over the years, and the Indian market has already surpassed the pre-COVID levels. In 2019, more than 30,000 travellers from India visited the state, and currently, India ranks as Western Australia's 4th largest inter-

national market for visitor numbers in 2023," revealed the minister.

Tourism Western Australia is committed to establishing Perth as the Western Gateway to Australia. The AUD \$195 million Reconnect WA package supports the Western Australia's efforts by investing in marketing, event development, and visitor experiences. ➔



Roger Cook
Deputy Premier and Minister
for Tourism of Western Australia (WA)



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Size of event does matter



Naveen Kundu
Managing Director
Ebixcash Travel Services

“It depends on the requirement of the client. It is always an ideal situation for a corporate to do the event at the same place where people are staying. Unfortunately, in India, we don't have access to many ballrooms which are bigger. Thus, we must use convention centres. However, in India they are also very few. When MICE goes out of India, first preference is given to hotel ballroom. Otherwise, there are convention centres, but depending on the magnitude of the conference, it is very subjective. If the conference is where you need to do exhibitions, showcase products, have a huge pre-function area, you need meeting rooms and breakaway rooms, then convention centre is preferred. However, because of the cost, we do it in hotel ballroom.”

“Both hotel and convention centres are good for different profiles/ events. It is a boon for the entire industry that we have the facilities now to choose between hotels and convention centres, or use both the facilities combined. Hotels and convention centres can offer similar facilities. However, the facilities are chosen based on the size of the gathering. Large scale exhibitions use hotel rooms also, apart from the convention centre rooms. Thus, one cannot go with a single thumb rule to choose between a hotel and a convention centre. A hotel can cater to a convention facility and convention centre has most of the facilities as that of the hotels. Thus, the choice lies with the organisers of the convention and they choose according to the size and budget.”



EM Najeeb
Chairman, ATE Group of Companies & Senior VP, IATO



Meera Charnalia
Executive Vice President and Head - MICE, Thomas Cook (India)

“Our MICE corporates are open to hosting their events at hotels as well as convention centres basis their requirement of services. Corporates have several requirements while hosting their events such as accommodation of a small/large group of invitees, location of the hotel/ convention centre, standardized facilities and additional services. The decision also depends on the available options in the selected location and the budget for the event. Our country is in the process of accelerated infrastructural development and building more hotels and convention/ exhibition centres to meet the requirement of this lucrative MICE segment. As a relatively new concept for Indians, convention centres have not gained much popularity among large scale corporates yet this is expected to change.”

“Choosing between a hotel and a convention centre for hosting MICE events depends on several factors, including the event size, type, and duration. Hotels are suitable for cooperatively smaller MICE events and wedding. They offer comfortable accommodation, catering services, and access to various recreational facilities, such as swimming pools, gyms, and spas. Hotels also provide meeting rooms and banquet halls, making them an ideal choice for corporate meetings, product launches, and small-scale exhibitions. On the other hand, convention centres are purpose-built facilities designed to host large-scale MICE events, such as national or international conferences and exhibitions.”



Debjit Dutta
Director & CEO
Impression Tourism Services (India)



Valmiki Hari Kishan
Managing Partner
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

“As far as budget is concerned, convention centre is much more economical and affordable as we do have 5-star level conventions centres offering much lower than hotel convention rates. Thus, more convention centres are coming in big way - where we need to hire food and beverage, along with other facilities. Lodging can be closer to the convention centres. Post-pandemic hotel tariffs have gone up and thus affordability of banquets has gone up too. Hence, many people are opting for convention centres over hotels. Depending upon the type of event, corporates and individuals take a decision. Hotels have so many restrictions, whereas convention centres don't. Once you engage a proper event management company, they add value to it.”

“India is a vast and developing market for conducting large MICE and events with extensive set-ups. Also, with the increased air connectivity with India, many international conferences and events are choosing Indian cities as destinations for their annual events. The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre, managed by The Leela, is a hotel, convention, and exhibition centre that has a diverse venue offering, which can cater to 15 to 15,000 guests. When venues of this nature are conceptualized and executed as purpose-driven greenfield projects, futuristic design and technology are enabled in the project. Thus, creating venues ideal for comfortably organizing events.”



Vikas Sood
GM, The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre



Arun Iyer
Founder & MD, My Golf Tours

“The decision to select a hotel and convention centre is based on the scale of the event and number of days, expected delegates and what the pre and post events that are planned. Hotels are preferred for the multiple conveniences they offer like onsite catering, location in the city, close access to a mall or other activity area. This is considered when some of the conventions also have programs for spouse accompanying the delegate. Convention centers are designed specifically for large scale events, they have large exhibition halls, multiple venues to conduct main events and simultaneously conduct media briefings side by side and have large parking facility. The convention centre has more flexibility for using technology for lights and other gadgets.”

“Organizing conventions in India can be difficult, and selecting the right venue is critical. Two popular options for hosting conventions in India are 5-star hotels and convention centres. Each option has advantages and disadvantages that must be considered before making a decision. The decision between a hotel and a convention centre for holding conventions in India is influenced by several factors. Hotels are frequently chosen for smaller events requiring luxurious amenities and personalized service. Convention centers can be found on the outskirts of cities or in industrial areas. While this may be less convenient for attendees, it often means lower event space rates and easier parking access.”



Abhay Kanwar
Director, Sales & Marketing, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway



Ashley James
GM, Angsana Oasis Spa & Resort

“A hotel offers greater value in comparison to a standalone convention centre. A hotel with its army of staff and a larger set up can be a one-stop solution. From accommodation, catering to various food preferences, security features, pickups and drops of important guests, spas and other lifestyle related amenities, hotels are well equipped to handle multiple requests at any given point in time. Not to mention that hotels also add a little bit extra with their brand association as a venue. A convention centre on the other hand might offer a quieter place to organise smaller gatherings. However, it might be challenging to organise mega events in standalone convention centres.”

“What makes a hotel better is multiple venues equipped, customised packages for organisers, and varied dining options. At Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, we work closely with organisers to ensure they achieve more with engaging, polished, and productive events. With a grand pillar-less ballroom, seven meeting rooms with state of the art technology, and six outdoor beachfront venues totalling 12,100 sq.mt. of space, our hotel is ideal for hosting corporate gatherings, meetings, and conferences. The hotel has 460 rooms and suites spread across two wings that can accommodate a large group of delegates and VIP guests. What adds to our efficiency is access to two hotel facilities among other things.”



René D. Egle
Area General Manager
Shangri-La Muscat



Jean-François Chong
General Manager, The Residence Mauritius

“Hotels that go beyond cookie-cutter concepts and offer an inspiring ambience are preferred these days. The Residence Mauritius with its captivating island setting and tailor-made itineraries is perfect for meetings and events. Our conference room offers a choice of seating arrangements to host up to 90 delegates. The dining room can seat up to 240 guests and is ideal for larger groups and gala dinners. The Plantation restaurant by the ocean offers an inspiring environment for corporate gatherings and team-building sessions, accommodating 120 within its colonial-style interior and 200-500 guests for a buffet dinner on the Turquoise beach. There are extensive facilities, activities in and around the resort, and excursions such as island hopping.”

“When it comes to hosting MICE conferences, the choice between a hotel and a convention centre hinges on the size of the group. With most companies today seeking optimized solutions, conventions are preferred due to their cost-effectiveness when compared to hotels. However, it's important to note that the decision to opt for a convention or a hotel depends on the group size. Therefore, it's crucial to consider the group size before making a decision. Since COVID, there has been a surge in business travel that resembles the pre-COVID situation. The corporate travel market is booming, and companies are now focused on cost reduction for MICE conferences.”



Pradeep Menon
Deputy GM at Renault Nissan Technology Business Center India

Inputs by TT Bureau

Women drive adventure growth in India

Adventure tourism in India has been witnessing a surge with woman entrepreneurs driving the growth. Jasmine Duggal, Director, Minar Group, shares her experience as a woman adventure travel guide/ operator and discusses the increasing popularity of female-centric travel.



Janice Alyosius

Adventure tourism in India is on the rise, and woman entrepreneurs are playing a critical role in driving the growth. The sector is projected to grow rapidly in the coming years with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20.1 per cent. Minar Group, a travel and tourism company that has been in the industry for three decades, is helping travellers explore India's hidden gems in the most comfortable and luxurious way possible. Their team of over 200 professionals is a mix of young innovative minds and experienced professionals, committed to quality and smart work, providing an unconventional experience of India, shared **Jasmine Duggal**, Director, Minar Group.



At ATOAI Women's Collective, we want to set a goal to double the number of female tour leaders India employs year after year

"Our legacy encompasses airline representation, ground handling, destination representation, and service operations across corporate, retail, luxury, celebrity, charters, executive jets & cargo; in other words, helping travellers explore India's hidden gems in the most comfortable & luxurious way possible," she added.

Sharing her experience as a woman adventure travel guide/ operator, Duggal said, "Being a women's adventure travel guide/ operator is becoming increasingly popular, driven by the trend of experiential and adventure-based travel, which is being driven by women around the world. These tours offer the opportunity for participants to engage with women from cultures vastly different from their own, providing a unique and valuable experience."

She added, "In the context of women-led tours originating in and from India, these experiences offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the lives and work of local women in societies that may be vastly different from the participants' own. These tours are more intricate and

nuanced than the 'girlfriend get-aways' of the early 2000s, as they combine cultural immersion with adventure-based activities. The high demand for female-centric travel is evident in the popularity of these tours. While I can only speak for my tours, we are finding that our guests offer a unique opportunity to connect with like-minded women from around the world while explor-

ing new cultures and adventure-based activities. It's sisterhood!"

When asked if being a woman in travel has comforted other women on their trips, Duggal said, "I believe it's just 'More Venus, Less Mars!' Recently, we operated, executed and delivered an all-women's trip from the Middle East. The response to this trip has been

phenomenal! Imagine, how exciting it was to give women access to places they could not go to on mixed trips, noting that many places and activities in the Middle East are segregated by gender. Most new-gen women like the small-group curated experience. Perhaps, men do not seem to be as proactive in booking experiential travel in far-flung places."

To envisage growth of women entrepreneurs and guides, Duggal said, "At ATOAI Women's Collective, we want to set a goal to double the number of female tour leaders India employs year after year. It's a bold aspiration, particularly in countries such as India where being a tour guide is not a usual career path for women. One leap at a time and we will be there soon."



Jasmine Duggal
Director
Minar Group



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Indian aviation sector would attract more than \$275 billion in investment over next 20 years: CAPA

MoCA encouraging budget carriers to induct widebody planes to make India global hub: Rajiv Bansal

IATO meets Maharashtra Chief Minister, invites him for convention in Sambhaji Nagar this September

Jewar and Navi Mumbai airport work on track, likely to be inaugurated next year: MoCA

Air India to reduce flight frequency in certain US routes temporarily: Campbell Wilson

Average daily domestic traffic to rise from current 4.2-4.4 lakh to 4.56 lakh by October 2023: Jyotiraditya Scindia

Skill management at local level can help boost tourism in states: PP Khanna

Rajiv Mehra re-elected unopposed as IATO President

Reimagining MICE for India

With Indian travellers looking for novel and non-traditional travel experiences, the STB brought together leading minds in the tourism industry to share their perspective on the rapidly-changing market at its MICE Conclave thought-leadership conference in Mumbai on 10 March.



Hazel Jain

More than 250 attendees from across India's business world learnt about the power of technology in revolutionising MICE travel, and harnessing data to effectively understand and engage young Indian consumers at Singapore Tourism Board's MICE Conclave held recently in Mumbai.

Speaking about the STB's efforts to promote reimagined MICE travel in the Indian market, **GB Srithar**, Regional Director for India, Middle East, South Asia & Africa, STB, said, "MICE is traditionally a very important segment for Singapore; it is a global MICE hub and it continues to attract a lot of MICE events into Singapore. From a Meetings & Incentives point of view, India is a key source market for us. In that regard, we are happy to organize a MICE Conclave in Mumbai – 'Reimagine the Future, Unlocking the New Era of Business Travel'. Our focus is simple, we want to communicate that Singapore is welcoming Indian



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

corporates to come to Singapore and bring their M&I. A lot of things are possible in terms of unique experiences, the ease of travel within Singapore. There are schemes in place to incentivize the corporates. We have the Business Events in Singapore (BEIS) Scheme, which allows group movements of more than 250 pax, cash grants are given to such groups who are spending couple of nights in Singapore for their M&I travel. We also have the

recently-revamped In Singapore Incentives & Rewards (INSPIRE) Global 2.0 Scheme for groups smaller than 250 pax. This revamped version has more than 80 experiences and is totally cost-free to corporates."

STB also recently launched Singapore Rewards – a new programme that offers complimentary experi-

nearly 40 new and off-the-beaten path experiences for free. Srithar shared his perspective on the huge opportunity that the India market offers and added, "With excellent air connectivity from 16 cities in India and its seamless, cutting-edge infrastructure, Singapore is a top choice for business events and an attractive location for business travellers. The city's world-class hotels,

Singapore as an experience

Also presenting at the event was **Sukumar Verma**, Managing Director, Informa Markets Singapore, who said, "With millennials – and Gen Z soon in the future – travelling frequently for business, Sukumar shared his insight that experiential travel is slowly becoming the norm in MICE movements. With more and more business travellers com-



ences for international visitors. Announced on 7 March 2023, it will run through 2023 and offer visitors the opportunity to try one of

restaurants and retail options add to its appeal, providing visitors with a luxurious and comfortable 'bleisure' experience."

binning leisure elements as part of their trips, these bleisure travellers seek out diverse experiences in the destinations."

'We are positive on tourism growth'

Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, IHCL and President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) says they expect a huge positive, a development for the travel and tourism industry. He believes that the 6Ps of Planning, Place, People, Policy, Process and Promotion will make India a tourism power in its own right.



Nisha Verma

Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, IHCL and President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) said that as a company, they have created destinations like Goa, Kerala or more recently Havelock in Andamans.

In his recommendations after the post-budget webinar by Union Ministry of Tourism, Chhatwal also commended the government on creating such destinations in the recent past. "A very good example recently of creating a destination would be that of Ekta Nagar in Kewadiya or Statue of Unity. I think doing 50 new destinations would be like building 50 new Ekta Nagars in the country," he said.

He claimed that with all the potential India has, I think the six Ps of Planning, Place, People, Policy, Process and Promotion is very critical. "Under Planning, we must ensure



Puneet Chhatwal
Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, IHCL

seamless connectivity and transport options for all our destinations. We have also recently won the bid for building Lakshadweep and planning of connectivity and transport to Lakshadweep is as important or even more important than just building the islands of Swahili and Kadmath. We must focus on enhancement of aviation capacity with 80 new airports expected in five

years. We expect a huge positive, a development for the travel and tourism industry. Obviously, the other ecosystem also needs to grow with MICE, F&B, and other 360 degree attractions," he said.

Secondly, Place is very important in choosing these destinations, he said. "We must however, in these places have an inclusive responsible and sustainable development. While everything is being rooted locally, I think responsible



We expect a huge positive, a development for the travel and tourism industry (in India). Obviously, the other ecosystem also needs to grow

destination management would be the main area under place," he added. Thirdly, it is the People. "We should ensure skilling and development of human capital and bring in schemes for reward and recognition, as well as tie-up with global partners to take skilling to the next level. Today, we have announced our 17th skilling centre we have built. The last one being in Lucknow and recent one in Jamshedpur. On skilling, we have committed to skill a hundred thousand people

by 2030, of which 25,000 must be women," he claimed.

"On Policy, we must make requisite policy intervention including tourism. With your support, we have tried very hard for the infrastructure status and industry status in many states. We have succeeded with the industry status, but we still have a long way to go in getting full infrastructure status at the central level," he shared. Fifth being Process, Chhatwal commented that

there is still a need to streamline processes to enhance ease of doing business, ease of travel, visa, immigration and customs and focus on the national digital tourism mission as well as tourism MSMEs. Finally for Promotion, he said, "We must promote key tourism teams, which we had always outlined in the past and also promoting India as a destination internationally. There has been a lot of discussion on that issue in how that should be done," he said.

Proponent of women empowerment

Ritu Chawla Mathur, Managing Partner, Prognosis Global Consulting, shares a few ideas on how the industry can help emancipate more women. She emphasizes on creating an 'equality mindset' at ground-up from education in colleges and enforcing POSH curriculum in catering colleges.



Ritu Chawla Mathur
Managing Partner
Prognosis Global Consulting



How can travel and hospitality companies help uplift women in the sector?

Creating an 'equality mindset' must be done at ground-up from education in colleges. Awareness created by the education sector can pave the way for the employment sector, when it comes to tough conversations around equality at work, and women empowerment. Also, POSH curriculum must be enforced in all catering colleges.

The greatest challenge for women is how to balance their family life and their work. Research has shown that taking on more responsibility at work might have a negative impact on family life. The unbalanced state between life and work is by far one of the major obstacles to women's career development, especially at the mid-managerial level. It's high time

Research has shown that taking on more responsibility at work might have a negative impact on the family life of a woman

that organizations provide various support measures for employees to achieve work-life balance, allow women to take flexible work hours and roles that allow them to work from home, instead of taking sabbaticals and career breaks. Also, consider enforcing day-care norms for young mothers/ parents in organizations with more than 20 employees. Flextime and other family-friendly policies are critical, but must be offered to all employees, not just women to reduce the inequal divide. In this way employees in general will better recognize the company's values and increase their commitment to the organization.

Further, research has documented gender differences in promotions to managerial positions, from which it is clear that men are over-represented in preferred positions that pay better. Maybe it is high time that the fiscal audits include audit of equal pay norms to create level-playing fields.

Part of role of the hotel classifications committee, under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism must recognize, award and rate to hotels based on the number of 'Women Employed'. A minimum of 30 per cent of the workforce to be women, must be encouraged and rewarded. Homestays is a great sector where women have started making a mark. The gov-

ernment has been encouraging rural tourism as well through women self-help groups. However, more can be done, by the financial sector by providing cheaper business loans, and conducting financial planning workshops.

Why should we have more women in the workforce?
Some traits that women bring

on to the table cannot be underplayed, well-organized, full of compassion, spiritually aligned and well-balanced. A high level of emotional intelligence. The best women leaders I've seen are well-rounded people. These women are master multi-taskers and highly collaborative (though not afraid to get territorial to protect their domain). Studies reveal that

financial performance of a company is better with a higher percentage of women at top levels; there is a growing relevance that gender-ratio has on the performance of companies. Organizations are competing in an increasingly global environment, which calls for greater adaptability and a superior combination of technical and survival skills.

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LA Tourism eyes 1 mn Indians by 2030

Adam Burke, President & Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, was in Mumbai recently to understand how to capture the immense opportunity it offers for his city. The NTO aims to attract more than one million Indian visitors in the next seven years and is actively pushing to reduce visa wait times.

Hazel Jain

Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board has been making waves in the Indian market. It was the first time that LA Tourism's President & CEO, Adam Burke visited India (Mumbai and New Delhi) after the organization established its full-time India office in 2019. During the visit, Burke and the LA Tourism delegation met and updated the trade about new offerings in and around LA and at the same time, gathered insights about the changing trends among Indian travellers post pandemic.

Burke said, "As one of the world's fastest-growing markets for tourism, we are proud that Los Angeles Tourism was the first US destination marketing organization to open its own full-time office in India in 2019. We see tremendous opportunities to support the growth of the travel industry in India."

His visit to India was due to two reasons, he says. "The incredible



Adam Burke
President & CEO, Los Angeles
Tourism & Convention Board

growth potential in India, as well as to collect business intelligence. We want to understand the right way of engaging this market. Seema Kadam, our regional director, has shared tremendous insights. Our aim now is to partner with the trade and understand from them the best way to activate the market since it's such a diverse market. There is no question that India is going to be one of the largest markets for travel

in the world. We want to welcome more than 1 million Indian visitors a year by 2030," Burke shares.

India to be among top 5 market for LA?

Speaking about a six-point strategy for the Indian market, Burke says, "The first one is establishing a full-time presence in the market. In 2019, we became the first US tourism office to open a full-time office here. We are also adding a full-time communications team member here. The second point is learning more about the market by meeting airline carriers and the travel trade and asking the right questions. The third thing is that the Los Angeles International Airport is now offering an incentive programme that is an offset to the gate fees, so that airlines that are looking to bring non-stop service to India are able to apply for that programme that reduces their cost to entry into LA."

About 130,000 Indians visited LA in 2019, injecting \$305 million in

visitor spending to the local economy. It's estimated that 110,000 Indian travelers will visit Los Angeles County in 2023, with full recovery to pre-pandemic levels anticipated

Our aim is to partner with the trade and understand from them the best way to activate the market since it's such a diverse market

in 2024. "If we get non-stop service to LAX, we think that India will jump from being a top-10 market to a top-five market virtually overnight," Burke adds.

Visa wait time to go down

The other issue that is hampering visitor numbers is the long

wait for visas. To this Burke says, "Both State and Commerce are actively collaborating to reduce the visa wait time. They have already enacted some of the things. Anyone with a valid US visa expired in the past 36 months can have that visa renewed without the interview requirement. They are prioritising markets where the wait times are longest and India is one of those priority markets and by using Consular staff from other areas, the goal is to radically reduce wait times. Third is investing in video technology so that people in rural areas can get

visas. Moreover, the MICE segment is a huge opportunity for us to partner with the trade here in India. Visas for MICE groups should in theory be actually easier than individual applicants because every member of that MICE group is coming to the destination on the exact same dates for the same business purpose. That has not historically been the way for the consulates to process visas. We have requested to process all MICE groups in a different way, so that MICE doesn't suffer. We anticipate a release on this soon."

LA Milestone Year: 2023

- ❖ The new Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios Hollywood debuted on February 17. Visitors can battle Team Bowser on Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge, and buy Nintendo themed merchandise.
- ❖ On the infrastructure front, Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) is in the midst of a \$14 billion capital improvement project at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).
- ❖ On the hotel accommodations front, Los Angeles added 5,000 new hotel rooms to its supply over the last two years, bringing the total hotel inventory in LA to 120,000 rooms.

Carnival Cruise promotes India biz

Iain Baillie, Vice President, International Sales, Carnival Cruise Line, along with Luke Smith, Director (UK & International Sales, International Division), recently met the travel trade in Mumbai over a cocktail dinner. Led by Dipti Adhia, Director, Discover the World – India, which represents Carnival Cruise Line in India, the cruise line is re-energising its presence in the Indian market.



A tech-enabled tourism adventure

ParaBooking, a platform for safe, high-quality adventure tourism experiences, was founded in 2021 with an objective to fix the trust deficit in the Indian adventure tourism space, says Ankush Rana, CEO and Co-Founder. He speaks about the immense need for safety in this space in India.



Hazel Jain

Tell us a little bit about ParaBooking and how does it stand out from the crowd?

ParaBooking is a platform for safe, high-quality adventure tourism experiences. Starting from paragliding in premier locations in the Himalayan range, we want to take safe adventure tourism to the masses and at the same time, provide employment to local pilots and guides. We launched ParaBooking with the motto of urban 'Travellers meet local guides', verified guides, along with curated activities by the rural local community ambassadors.

We have worked with actuaries and underwriters to get an insurance product for search and helicopter, thus disrupting the market with our approach. We have come forth in this space with an easy-to-navigate app for operators and have worked with verified pilots and tested equipment to fix the trust deficit in the Indian adventure tourism space.



Starting from paragliding in premier locations in the Himalayan range, we want to take safe adventure tourism to the masses

How are you funding your company and what was the initial capital infusion?

We bootstrapped with INR 25 lakhs and recently through the HIM Startup Yojna via IIT Mandi Catalyst received a funding of INR 50 lakhs.

How tech-enabled is your product?

We are planning to transform in a SaaS model for operations, and hence we are a highly tech-enabled product. We offer booking management systems for operators, app for guides/ pilots, API for integration with insurance providers and OTAs. We use Tech Stack: VueJS, Hasura GraphQL. The SaaS application is built with data federation capabilities specially customized for the real-time operational nature of adventure sports. On one hand, it manages the assets and resources, and on the other hand integrates flexibly with multiple independent data sources covering the booking portal, insurance API integration,

and real-time resource (pilot and equipment) assignments and more. In the future, we look forward to integrating with real-time telemetry through IOT and tracker devices to further enhance the security aspect of adventure sports.

What kind of trends do you expect in this market segment in 2023?

We have come to understand that

the Government of India has dedicated a lot of resources and funds to promote Tourism in 2023. We definitely see a positive growth of adventure tourism considering the National Aero Sports Policy and DGCA regulations being relaxed for the same.

Does adventure tourism will become a huge market in India?

National Air Sport Policy 2022 (NASP 2022) vision is to make India one of the top 'aero' sports nations by 2030, by providing a safe, affordable, accessible, enjoyable, and sustainable air sports ecosystem in India. And one of their objectives is to promote design, development, and manufacturing of air sports equipment in India in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. We

believe India as a country with diverse topography has the great potential to offer varied adventure sports. Ranging from mountains to beaches and terrains, India can boast of it all. With 65 per cent of Indians being under 35 years old, it has the growing culture of adventure sports. It is only a matter of time India will emerge as a top adventure sports nation. 🇮🇳



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Singapore reimagines M!CE travel...

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) continues to pave the way for large-scale, high-quality business and leisure events. This was the theme it set at its recently-concluded M!CE Conclave held in Mumbai, which was attended by key corporates. The conclave aimed to rekindle the passion for Indian M!CE travellers through new and innovative experiences.



...sparks new thoughts on cruising

The STB also brought together some of the top minds in the tourism and lifestyle industries to share their perspectives on the rapidly changing market at its Cruise Conclave thought-leadership conference in Mumbai on 10 March. More than 250 attendees from across India's business community heard cutting-edge insights during a panel discussion and product sharing sessions.



Hyatt to expand in tier II, III markets

Hyatt is gearing up for an expansion in India, with plans to open hotels in tier II, III markets this year. Following successful opening of 10 hotels last year, the hotel group is set to open eight more hotels in 2023. It is also focusing on weddings and MICE business and recently conducted a successful campaign 'Weddings at the Hyatt'.



Janice Alysius

Hyatt has plans to open hotels in tier-II and tier-III markets in India. **Shrikant Wakharkar**, Area Vice President, North and General Manager, Hyatt Regency Delhi, said the brand is on expansion spree this year, with plans to open about eight hotels in tier II and III markets in India. This comes after the hotel group opened 10 hotels in 2022. "These openings include large-format hotels like Grand Hyatt Gurgaon and Hyatt Regency in Trivandrum. The hotel chain is also looking to expand its footprint in Bangladesh next year," Wakharkar said.

Last year, the domestic movement within India was significant. Wakharkar said, "It was great to see a bounce back of sorts. This year, there is a revival of international movement as well, especially with the G20 summit happening in



Shrikant Wakharkar
Area Vice President, North
and General Manager, Hyatt Regency Delhi

India, which is good for the industry. There is movement happening across India where several G20 summits will take place."

Hyatt has also been focusing on weddings and MICE business this year. "Hyatt's recent campaign called 'Weddings at the Hyatt'

has been successful, with videos going viral on social media. The brand is looking at weddings in a big way and will focus on MICE at large-format and destination hotels such as Goa, Cochin, and Jaipur," Wakharkar said.

Adding to Wakharkar's views, **Barun Gupta**, Director Sales and Marketing, Hyatt Regency Delhi, said, "Given our vast inventory

and impressive banquet facilities, our primary focus will be on weddings and MICE events. We have three sets of banquet halls, including the mansion and the Regency Ballroom, which are perfect for hosting a mix of weddings and MICE events. This year, with the availability of inventory in the city and the increasing volume of MICE and group business, we are well-equipped to cater to them."

Elaborating on the wedding segment, Gupta said, "Many people prefer resort locations for residential weddings, but we have also seen a rise in residential weddings happening in city hotels, especially in the west. We are pioneers in providing complete residential wedding setups within hotels, with the number of rooms and various banquet spaces and outdoor areas that we offer. In addition to catering to local weddings, we also host inbound weddings from markets such as



Barun Gupta
Director Sales and Marketing
Hyatt Regency Delhi

the USA and the UK, with numerous NRI weddings scheduled for this year. Our critical focus will be on hosting the G20 meetings this year and residential weddings."

The brand has tied up with travel planners, agents, and wedding planners, and last year, they orga-

nized fam trips at various wedding destinations. "We also implemented several initiatives last year. Most of them are likely to come to fruition this year," he said.



We (at Hyatt Group of Hotels) also implemented several initiatives last year. Most of them are likely to come to fruition this year

Wakharkar said Hyatt is optimistic about the industry future. "The hotel chain is fortunate to have seen a strong bounce back in post-COVID and is bullish on near and distant future," he added.

Red Carpet celebrates 8th anniversary

Thane-based Red Carpet Travels, headed by Rajesh Kakade, recently completed eight years of operations. It organised an evening party at its office to celebrate this occasion with a few of its travel trade partners and to share an exciting development – its new digital portal that will help them create travel itineraries for their customers within minutes.



'Holistic approach must'

Gayatri Rathore, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Govt. of Rajasthan, says there is a need to keep a futuristic and holistic development approach for next 50 years to make India a tourism superpower. She hails MOT's destination focused approach for development.



Nisha Verma

Claiming that Rajasthan's USP is having multiple heritage destinations, **Gayatri Rathore**, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, lauded MOT's recent initiative of organizing the post-budget webinar and having a destination focused approach for tourism. She pressed for collaboration among tourism stakeholders. "Rajasthan traditionally

and ease of experiencing a place. "There must be ranking indicators because we cannot leave our destinations on the whims and fancies of local operators, local guides. As the PM had mentioned that we need to have professional guides in place who can explain not only about the history but also the USP and bring about life to that place, exchange programs and having a feeling of security for those tourists who are visiting from outside," she said.

"Most of these heritage destinations are part of the UNESCO protected sites. If all the destinations coming as part of UNESCO protected sites and protected monuments, we follow a typical master plan, and do not let the surroundings and the city area developments, overshadow that destination. This is one big challenge, and we need to move together. A holistic approach needs to be developed and because now we are focusing on 50 des-

tinations across the country, in our state two destinations have been identified. We are taking a holistic approach with all the factors, including the people. There must be a component of ownership of destination on part of the citizens of that place. Only then we can ensure that the destinations grows and brings actual, tangible, as well as intangible benefits to the place, to the state and to the country as a whole," she added.

Exploring Phang Nga



Tourism Authority of Thailand recently organised a Mega Fam Trip for Indian travel agents to Phang Nga province in Southern Thailand. An hour drive from Phuket International Airport, Phang Nga is a must visit destination for travellers.



Gayatri Rathore
Principal Secretary, Tourism,
Government of Rajasthan



We are taking a holistic approach with all the factors. There must be a component of ownership of destination on part of the citizens

has been a part of the Golden Triangle of Delhi-Jaipur-Agra, which has been the favourite circuit for foreign tourists coming to the country. These three destinations have developed together. However, as mentioned by the Prime Minister, we have to now focus on futuristic planning and management of these destinations. As of now, these destinations have developed because of their USPs, whether it is their architectural wonder being of historical importance, or religious importance. However, now we must keep the coming 50 years in mind and have a futuristic, holistic, development approach," she emphasized.

Rathore informed that as part of Swadesh Darshan too, and as part of initiatives of state government, their focus is to have standard parameters, standard benchmarking, so that when tourists come, they have ease of traveling

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90K from 180 nations attend ITB Berlin

ITB Berlin 2023 concluded successfully, attracting more than 90,000 people from 180 countries, including 5,500 exhibitors from 161 countries who showcased their travel offerings at the event. The ITB Buyers' Circle gained success at the exclusive B2B event with the overall international participation growing from 50 per cent in 2019 to 70 per cent this year.



Pachmarhi

Queen of Satpura beckons



Pachmarhi, one of the most enchanting hill stations of central India, situated over 1,000 metres from sea level, provides a sublime tourism experience for the visitors looking for wellness and spiritual tourism.

Summers knocking at the door and the travellers are all set to enjoy their vacations/staycations. With the new trends in the travel industry Madhya Pradesh has emerged as one of the hotspots for travel lovers post Covid because of its responsible and activity-based tourism. MP is home to several verticals which can attract any travel lover. The state is rich in wildlife, heritage, culture and spirituality and on top of that there are countless potential destinations which are relatively untapped in MP. However, talking about the unique summer experiences, 'The heart of Incredible India' offers an eclectic mix of forests, waterfalls and hills, which is rich with natural beauty and recreational activities specially designed to promote wellness tourism. Talking about the best summer spots of Madhya Pradesh, it's impossible to miss out on the crown jewel of Madhya Pradesh; Pachmarhi. The



The heart of
Incredible India

hill station provides a sublime tourism experience for the visitors for wellness and spiritual tourism.

Pachmarhi is one of the most enchanting hill stations of central India, which flourished around 10,000 years ago and is an exemplary example of archaeological treasure. Its also regarded as 'Satpura ki Rani' and is situated over 1,000 metres from sea level. It is also the highest point of Madhya Pradesh. The administration of the Pachmarhi is under Pach-



marhi Cantonment Board, which serves the Indian Army. The hill station is developed around the Satpura Forest Area and there are plenty of natural recreational

activities that are arranged for the tourists. These activities include gypsy camping, tree camping, bird watching, star gazing, mobile camping and many more activities. Tigers, leopards and bisons are easily sighted in this region, which is a once in a life time experience for many tourists. Other than that, plenty of adventure activities like paragliding, ziplining, trampolining and bungee jumping are also facilitated.

Sunrise-sunset walks and cycling tours have also emerged as one of the most anticipated activities in Pachmarhi. The laser and sound show is conducted for the tourists to enjoy after the sunset, along with that tourists can also enjoy bonfire and live music. Pachmarhi is a great family destination that fits the adventure needs of all members of family. Waterfalls like

The hill station is developed around the Satpura Forest Area and there are plenty of natural recreational activities for the tourists

dia. One can easily get a taxi from Bhopal to Pachmarhi. Jabalpur to Pachmarhi is also just 300 km, so one can opt for this route as well.

By Train

Pachmarhi is just 54 km by road from the Pipariya railway station. Several direct trains link Pipariya with important cities like Surat, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Patna, Pune, Kolkata, Agra, Delhi, and Varanasi. One can easily get a taxi from Pipariya to Pachmarhi as it is the most accessible way of reaching Pachmarhi.

By Road

Plenty of state-owned and private buses are available for Pachmarhi from nearby cities like Bhopal, Jabalpur, Nagpur, Indore, and from prominent tourist attractions like Kanha National Park and Pench National Park.

Bee Falls, Apsara Vihar Falls and Silver falls are a must visit for visitors traveling in the summers.

HOW TO REACH PACHMARI

By Flight

The nearest airport is Raja Bhoj Airport in the state's capital Bhopal (around 222 km), which has daily flight services from Delhi and Mumbai and 13 major cities of In-



Tourism NZ celebrates 20 years in India

Tourism New Zealand celebrated its 20th anniversary in India through training workshops and networking events in Delhi and Mumbai. The attendees comprised members of the travel trade fraternity, airline partners and other key stakeholders. A 20-member delegation participated in the frontline training with 200 travel sellers across Mumbai and Delhi.



Odisha - Soul of Incredible India

The 5th Odisha Tourism Conclave was organised by Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha, in association with Tourism Department, Government of Odisha and World Trade Center Bhubaneswar on 23 February 2023. The event organised on the theme 'Redefining The Soul of Incredible India' showcases the state as a major tourist destination.



Nisha Verma

The day-long conclave organised at Hotel Swosti Premium, Bhubaneswar, aimed to promote Odisha's tourism sector and showcase the state as a major destination centre.

Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister, Odisha, inaugurated the event virtually in the presence of other esteemed dignitaries. "To enable more development friendly strategies, the Odisha Tourism Policy 2023 was released during MIO (Make in Odisha) with continuously working on integrated tourism development based on 15-destination masterplan to develop diverse tourism platforms in the state. Apart from sustainable infrastructure development, we are branding Odisha as a diverse tourism hub. The Gov-

ernment of Odisha, highlighted that it was important to identify major selling points and unique amenities of the state. "Steps must be taken to hold tourists for longer duration in Odisha. Middle class huge market capitalisation to be initiated in domestic tourism. Quality and experience is crucial for every tourist visiting Odisha regarding accommodation and tour operation. Need for development of Deomali, Konark and Bhitarkanika on priority basis. Pilgrim tourism and weekend tourism to be incorporated in the strategic planning to enhance tourism in the state," he said.

J.K. Mohanty, Chairman, HRAO; Chairman, IATO Eastern Region; Co-Chairman, FICCI Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Committee; Convenor, WTC Bhubaneswar Tourism & Hospitality Think Tank & CMD,



Express should be extended up to Puri. Domestic flight connectivity from/ to Bodh Gaya, Pune, Udaipur & Allahabad. International Airport in Puri will be expedited as one of the major airports in Eastern India,

"Convention/ MICE Tourism promotion, especially for the state of Odisha should be taken up on priority basis. Tribal Tourism promotion in conjunction with neighbouring states should be taken up. Similar

erators reimbursement for foreign promotion trips/ foreign roadshow participation should be increased from ₹75,000 to at least ₹2-2.5 lakh. The Annual IATO convention in 2025 will be held in Puri," he said.

port, said, "Odisha is being given utmost priority by central government for different UDAN schemes."

Debjit Dutta, Chairman, IATO – West Bengal Chapter; **Sanjit Bhatlacharya**, Director Sales – North & East India, Indigo Airlines; **Gagan Sarangi**, Chairman, IATO Odisha Chapter and **Debasish Mishra**, Director, Pure Trip & VP, EKTAA also addressed the session.

The third session was on Strengthening Eco-Tourism, which saw **Yugabrat Kar**, Director, Heritage Tours Orissa saying that strategies must be formulated to pitch Odisha tourism in a way that it sells better, generates more revenue and invite active in-bound



The second technical session at the conclave focused on "Developing East India Circuit", which was moderated by **Debasis Patnaik**, MD, Crown & Founder, Dalma Restaurant Chain.

Speaking at the session **Sagnik Chowdhury**, Regional Director, India Tourism, clarified that Koraput has been declared as one of the 50 priority destinations by the Ministry of Tourism, GOI and another destination in Odisha

ernment of Odisha is committed towards sustainable tourism sector with much focus on augmentation of livelihood of the local communities," he said.

The event had technical sessions to address the challenges in the sector and to accelerate tourism in the state. The panelists touched upon many crucial topics. The attendees included tour operators, decision makers, industry members, hoteliers, travel agents, civil aviation authorities and government officials. The Chief Guest of the program was **Sujeet Kumar**, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, who deliberated on various factors. He said that there is a need to focus on 41 heritage sites of our country to compete with countries like Singapore and other South-East Asian countries in terms of inbound tourism. "Improve infrastructure, hygiene, sanitation issues in the state. Proactive measures should be taken for optimal budget allocation for tourism industry to address post-pandemic effects on the sector," he said. **Surendra Kumar**, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Tourism, Govern-

ment of Odisha delivered the welcome address. He said, "At least two destinations from Odisha must be on the Gol list of Dekho

One luxury train like Deccan Queen & Maharajah Express must be introduced in Odisha from Kolkata as there is shortage of trains on this route

Apna Desh 2.0 where 51 destinations from India will be developed as major tourist destinations in the country. At least one G-20 meet related to tourism sector should happen in Odisha. One luxury train like Deccan Queen & Maharajah Express to be introduced in Odisha from Kolkata as there is shortage of trains on this route. To accelerate Buddhist Tourism in the state, develop basic infrastructure in Buddhist Circuit. The Mahaparinirvan

along with another airport in Ganjam district. Mega Convention Centre will be constructed under the banner of World Trade Center Bhubaneswar, which has been overdue. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, must expedite revamping tourism offices in Indian embassies/ consulates with right knowledgeable manpower."

A number of senior stakeholders attended the event and shared their views at the conclave.

Need for resilience

Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, IHCL, said that the tourism and travel sector must come up as the emerging sector in the country. "Resilience of the sector is need of the hour. Tourism sector must act as the major employment generator with 126 million new job opportunities globally in the next decade and India contributing to almost 20 per cent of it," he said.

Star category hotels

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, said that more star category/ luxury hotels in Odisha are need of the hour, especially around Chilika lake area.



Koraput has been declared as one of the 50 priority destinations by the MOT and another site in Odisha yet to be declared

conjunction must be done for Buddhist Tourism with neighbouring states. Indian hotelier/ tour op-

erators reimbursement for foreign promotion trips/ foreign roadshow participation should be increased from ₹75,000 to at least ₹2-2.5 lakh. The Annual IATO convention in 2025 will be held in Puri," he said.

Prasanna Pradhan, Airport Director, Biju Patnaik International Air-

port, said, "Odisha is being given utmost priority by central government for different UDAN schemes."

Among others who addressed the session included **Anshu Pragyan Das**, DFO, Hirakud Wildlife Division, (Sambalpur – Bargarh Districts of Odisha), Department of Forest, Government of Odisha; **Mrinalika Bhanj Deo**, Managing Director, The Belgadia Palace, Mayurbhanj; **Sila Siba Prasad**, Joint Secretary, HRAO and **Anil Dhir**, Historian & President, INTACH Odisha.

'Unlocking new era of cruise travel'

In order to harness the potential in Indian market, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) organised a Cruise Conclave that saw thought leaders and decision-makers from across the travel and lifestyle industries to discuss ways to understand the changing travellers of today, and how businesses can evolve to meet their demands in the new consumer marketplace.



Hazel Jain

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) organised a Cruise Conclave in Mumbai – a thought-leadership platform where it brought together some of the leading voices and minds from across the tourism and lifestyle industries. They discussed how the nature of today's Indian consumer is changing and how to engage the travellers of tomorrow on the multi-faceted nature of cruising.

Singapore considers India as an important source market in the cruise space. In 2019, Singapore welcomed 1.6 lakh Indian cruise vacationers, making India its number one overseas cruise source market. In 2022, cruise travel restarted with two ships home-ported year-round – the Genting Dream by Resorts World Cruises, and the Spectrum of the Seas by Royal Caribbean International. Speaking at the Conclave, themed 'Reimagine The Future – Unlocking the New Era of Travel', **GB Srithar**, Regional Di-



GB Srithar addresses the gathering at Cruise Conclave in Mumbai

rector for India, Middle East, South Asia & Africa, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), said that of the 6.86 lakh Indian visitors, 49,000 entered Singapore via sea – an encouraging sign that Indian cruise holidaymakers are coming back to Singapore for its cruise options. The array of offerings for cruisers also include the likes of award-winning cruise line TUI, homeported in Singapore on a seasonal basis.

Sharing some points on why Singapore has grown to be a popular

choice for cruising among Indians, Srithar added, "Singapore's cruise tourism industry has undergone a massive transformation in recent years, with the country investing in infrastructure and initiatives to attract more cruise passengers and cruise lines. Today, the city-state stands to benefit from the increase in tourists and spending, due to its strategic location, state of the art infrastructure, and air connectivity to the Asia-Pacific and the rest of the world. We have focused on increasing infrastructure, enhanc-

ing amenities and supporting sustainability, all of which are enticing more cruise lines to our shores. Singapore has established itself as a major player in the domestic and global cruise industry." He said that one key selling point of cruising in Southeast Asia is the port calls across the region. "Port calls are essential to the appeal of cruises and its resumption is an important milestone," he added.

Highlighting some of the new initiatives for the trade, **Renjie Wong**, Area Director, India, South Asia & Middle East, STB, said, "We work in close partnership with the travel trade and have created a Cruise Development Fund for them. This grant scheme supports the investments that travel agents are doing to promote cruise products from Singapore to their clients, and is really a way for us to say that we are in this together to further penetrate the Indian cruise market."

At the recently concluded ITB Berlin, the STB also launched

its brand-new SingapoRewards scheme, which offers complimentary, hidden-gem experiences to all international visitors. This invitation to experience Singapore's reimagined destination offerings complements the dynamic lifestyle experiences that Indian cruise travellers – including millennial and Gen Z travellers – can leverage in

to be tourism destination today, and engaging the Early Career segment in India," Wong added.

Cruise lines discuss opportunities Also present at the conclave was **Diksha Batra**, Assistant Vice President, India Sales, Resorts World Cruises, who addressed the audience. "Post pandemic we have seen a panoramic shift in the entire travel network, so for us it was an excellent platform to share ideas to elevate the FlyCruise business from India, and venture into new opportunities that we can tap. This could be in the form of weddings, social events, or themed cruises," she said.

Sneha Choksi, Senior Business Development Associate, Tirun Travel Marketing, said, "Cruising has taken off rapidly since the re-opening of borders and this season is also looking positive. We are putting up focused strategies for Royal Caribbean to better market it to the audience. Cruising is no more only about product presentations."

Of the 6.86 lakh Indian visitors, 49,000 entered Singapore via sea – an encouraging sign that Indian cruise holidaymakers are coming back

Singapore. "This conclave builds on our strategy in the market, with a key focus on engaging the travel trade, re-imagining what it means

Vietnam Airlines adds flights

Vietnam Airlines has announced three additional flights to their existing schedule of four flights a week, making it a daily flight service between Delhi-Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City effective 26 March 2023.



TT Bureau

The new flight schedule provides non-stop flight services with four non-stop flights a week on every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday between Delhi & Hanoi and three non-stop flights every week on every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday be-



Flight Schedule

From	To	Flight#	Days/Ops	ETD	ETA
Delhi	Hanoi	VN 970	1,3,5,7	2335	0540+1
HAN	DEL	VN 971	1,3,5,7	1905	2205
Delhi	Ho Chi Minh City	VN 976	2,4,6	2335	0625+1
Ho Chi Minh City	Delhi	VN 977	2,4,6	1825	2205

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The daily departures from Delhi will further enhance seamless connectivity to Japan, Korea, China, Australia and other international destinations on the airlines network. More information relating to the flight schedule, destination network and fares is available

on www.vietnamairlines.com. Travelers may also contact World Connect Pvt. Ltd. – the appointed GSA for Vietnam Airlines in India on their email ID vnreservation.del@wcplindia.com and/ or contact them on their landline numbers +91 11 4103 9747/ 4166 3788/ 2373 0390, for real-time information on the product, offers and destination network.

Daily departures from Delhi to enhance seamless connectivity to Japan, Korea, China, Australia and other global destinations

tween Delhi and Ho Chi Minh City, to meet the demand and facilitate travel between the two countries. With night departures from Delhi and early morning arrivals in Hanoi and/ or Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam Airlines is fast becoming preferred

M!CE rise triggers talent hunt

Contd from page 3

hospitality industries, the panel discussion witnessed highly animated and forward-looking conversation around—the right fit TMC—a myth or reality? The subject touched upon the right pain points and attracted varied yet insightful perspectives from the panellists and audience alike.

New challenges

Riding on the rising demand for in-person events, MICE makes a big comeback on corporate calendars. With an unspent budget and an appetite to connect and converse, the corporates are back with incentive travel and big MICE groups. Reflecting upon the spectacular recovery of MICE, **Suraj Nair**, Founder, Travel Spends, said, "Bouncing back from COVID, the business started zooming up. Hotel and airline costs went over the roof and many of us, heading travel vertical at corporates, are still grappling with these things." While MICE is back with a bang, the price rise has got many corporates staring at the pertinent question of how do we control costs? Addressing the question, Nair believed, "The balance of demand and supply over the period of time is going to bring some sanity to the market."

Highlighting two major challenges for TMCs, **Gaurav Nagwekar**, Head, Corporate Travel, Reliance Industries, explained, "Talent is an area where TMCs are losing their pulse."

Collaboration

Delving into the complexity of processes, **Ashish Arpit**, CEO, Iltite, explained, "Booking is one aspect of digitization program. Before booking there are a series of workflows, which need to be

the booking process but also accommodate the company policies and rules around it."

Plug-in & play

Underlining how one supplier cannot bring everything under the roof, Nair asked the corporate representatives if they are ready to create the framework wherein, they allow the people to plug and integrate into their system. Agreeing with the idea, Nagwekar said, "Building the framework is critical for any corporate in this era."

RFPs not hot anymore

While the panellists and audience agreed that it is never one size fits all scenario, they differed on the subject whether RFPs of hotels are required or not? "Gone are the days when RFPs are used to be a hot cake," stated Nair. In a major departure from 2019, most of the corporates accepted that they do not ask for RFPs anymore.

Varma summed up, "The concept of lower price wins needs to change. It is not the right thing to push down the supplier on pricing. Let the buyer also decide what this service costs. Corporates need to see—will that service be valuable to them."

Hotel and airline costs went over the roof and many of us, heading travel vertical at corporates, are still grappling with these things

automated and there comes the complexity. For instance, the kind of approval rules which one company will have, will be very different from what other companies will have. Hence, our focus has been to not only automate

CAPA brings together aviation leaders

The CAPA India Aviation Summit 2023, organised from 20-23 March at the Hyatt Regency in New Delhi, brought together more than 300 influential executives from the Indian and international aviation industry. Organised by the leading aviation advisory and research practice, CAPA India, the summit featured critical and strategic discussions on industry issues.



61 hotels participate in Accor show

Sixty-one hotels, including big names in international and domestic markets, participated at the much-awaited Accor Showcase, held recently in Mumbai after a gap of three years of the pandemic. The hospitality event provided travel trade partners an opportunity to meet a mix of business and resort hotels that cater to all segments such as MICE, weddings, sports, corporates and leisure.



EVENT TALK

Media Partners:

APRIL 2023

Date	Event	Time
1-3	2 nd Tourism Working Group Meeting of G20	10:00 am
3-5	World Travel Market Africa	10:00 am
3-5	African Tourism Investment Summit	9:00 am
4-6	Azerbaijan International Travel & Tourism Fair	10:00 am
11	IHCL Trade Connect	11:00 am
13	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
14-16	TRAVELEXPO- Italy	3:00 pm
19-20	Texas Travel Expo	9:00 am
19-21	Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair	10:00 am
23-25	The Great Indian Travel Bazaar-Jaipur	9:00 am
26-28	ITB India- Mumbai	9:00 am
30-4 May	Australian Tourism Exchange	11:00 am

MAY 2023

1-4	Arabian Travel Market Dubai	9:00 am
2-3	ILTM Arabia	9:00 am
4-7	Seoul International Travel Fair	10:00 am
9-11	TRENZ - New Zealand	9:00 am
17-19	Global Tourism Investors' Summit-Delhi	9:00 am

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

'6.9 mn visit India in 2022'

► Contd from page 3

Our aim is to make the most of the opportunities available and promote tourism through a mission mode approach that involves active participation from state governments, as well as the convergence of government programs and public-private partnerships. This summit will significantly aid us in achieving these goals," he said.

The minister said that after a significant growth in tourist arrivals, which jumped to 6.9 million in 2022 after two years of negative growth, India is working hard to achieve a resilient growth in the sector. He that the first Global Tourism Investors' Summit is aligned with India's new national tourism policy, which is designed to improve the competitiveness of the tourism sector and attract private sector investments. "International investors will be able to explore India's tourism and hospitality sectors at the summit, which will also facilitate collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote growth in the country's tourism industry," he said.

He also stated that the current investment landscape of the country makes it an appropriate destination for investment in various sub sectors of the Indian tourism industry



G. Kishan Reddy, flanked by Arvind Singh and Rakesh Kumar Verma, at the Roundtable Interaction with Heads of Missions

such as Hospitality & Lodging, Wellness tourism, Adventure tourism, Eco-Tourism, Rural Tourism and others. The Minister thanked all the participating Missions for attending the Roundtable Interaction and invited them to actively participate in the forthcoming Investors Summit and be a part of India's growth and development in the tourism sector.

Hyderabad workshop

Earlier, the Union Ministry of Tourism (MOT), aiming to develop sustainable and responsible tourism in the country, organised the third regional workshop on 'Development of Sustainable and Responsible Tourist Destinations' in Hyderabad. Senior government officials and tourism industry stakeholders from the States/ Union Territory of the Southern region viz. Andhra

Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana took part in

Government of India's aim is to make the most of the opportunities available and promote tourism through a mission mode approach

the workshop. The event started with an inaugural speech by **Mohamed Farouk**, Regional Director, India Tourism, Ben-

galuru, who highlighted the need to target the tourism sector growth while keeping in mind the limitation of resources and protecting the ecosystem.

Alok Sharma, Director, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITM), said that the aim behind the regional workshop was to give shape to the concept of sustainable tourism.

Representatives from tourism departments of various states and UTs made presentations and highlighted their best sustainable tourism practices. They talked about the positive economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of their interventions such as getting Blue Flag Certifications to many beaches and economic growth.

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MOVEMENTS

FHRAI

New Delhi

SUDESH PODDAR has been elected as the new President of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) at the recently held 66th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in New Delhi. During the AGM, the FHRAI members also elected the new Executive Committee; a 24-member team comprising six representatives each from East, North, South and West of India to manage the affairs of the apex industry body. Poddar has previously served in the position of Honorary Treasurer in the federation. Poddar is a veteran of the industry and has been in the hospitality business since 1977. He owns many restaurants in Kolkata.



NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

Mumbai

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) has appointed **DAVID J. HERRERA** as the new President. Herrera, who currently serves as NCL's Chief Consumer Sales and Marketing Officer, has been with NCLH since 2015, and previously served as a Senior Advisor to the CEO and Chairman of Prestige Cruise Holdings from 2012 through 2015. Throughout his tenure, Herrera has successfully held a variety of senior leadership roles within the organisation, including SVP Brand Finance, Strategy and Consumer Research; SVP Corporate Development for NCLH; and President of NCLH China. He has played an integral role in positioning NCL as one of the world's leading cruise lines.



ETIHAD AIRWAYS

New Delhi

UAE's national airline Etihad Airways has appointed **SALIL NATH** as General Manager of the Indian Subcontinent. Based in New Delhi, Salil will be responsible for all commercial activities across a key cluster for the Etihad network within the central region - India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives & Seychelles. Since joining Etihad in 2012, Nath has served as the Regional Sales Manager of key sectors starting with Bangalore-Hyderabad, followed by the North and East India. During the COVID-19 restructuring, he took on additional responsibility of managing Central India and Bangladesh & Seychelles.



EFFOTEL, SAYAJI

Sarola

HARENDRA KUMAR has been appointed as the Director of Operations at soon-to-open Effotel by Sayaji, Sarola. Kumar started his journey with Taj Hotels as Guest Service Associate post completing his B. Sc. in Hotel Management. Prior to joining Sayaji Hotels, he was associated with Sterling Holidays as a Resort Manager. In his new role, he will lead the opening of Sayaji Hotels' latest outpost in Maharashtra and aim at delivering heartfelt Sayaji moments to the Guests. Sarola MIDC is a promising and upcoming industrial micro market. Kumar will help consolidate the hotel's presence in the Maharashtra region through the opening of Effotel by Sayaji, Sarola. Effotel by Sayaji Sarola houses 55 rooms and suites.



ROYAL ORCHID & REGENTA HOTELS

Bangalore

VIJAY KRISHNAN has been appointed by Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels as the new Vice President of Operations for South India. A 25-year veteran of the industry, Vijay has worked for many brands such as The Oberoi (Oberoi & Trident), The Starwood Hotels (Le Meridien & Design hotels), Hyatt International (Regency & Alila), and A Relais and Chateaux Golf Hotel (Windsor Golf Hotel & Country Club). He was responsible for the inception of Aramness - Luxury Lifestyle Wilderness Resort at Gir National Park in Gujarat. Vijay graduated from Mangalore University in India with a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management.



JW MARRIOTT NEW DELHI

New Delhi

JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity appoints **ANURAG MISHRA** as its new Director of Finance. With more than 15 years of financial management experience and a comprehensive understanding of establishing, enhancing, and monitoring financial and accounting functions, Anurag brings unparalleled expertise to his new role. Prior to this, Anurag served a host of renowned organisations in senior roles including working as an Auditor with Vikas Kochhar and Associates - Chartered Accountant Firm, New Delhi, and Assistant Vice President with Genpact. Anurag is a Bachelor's degree holder in Commerce from Lucknow University and a CA.



FAIRFIELD BY MARRIOTT

Kolkata

ABHISHEK MUKHERJEE has been appointed as Director of Sales at Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata. With an illustrious career spanning over 13 years, Abhishek brings with him a vast knowledge and understanding of the hospitality sales and marketing. As the director of sales, he will be in charge of overseeing and guiding the hotel's sales team in engaging with other teams to implement successful strategies and identifying opportunities for growth. He completed his graduation in Bachelors in Hospitality and Hotel Administration from IHM Kolkata and started his career by working with The Paul, Bangalore as Front Office Associate.



THE DEN

Bangaluru

The Den Bengaluru has appointed **POONAM NATASHA** as the Marketing & Communication Manager. Poonam has a keen eye for developing and executing successful marketing campaigns, thanks to her extensive background in product and brand management. She brings with her a wealth of experience in the fashion and lifestyle industry, having completed an MBA in Global Fashion Media from the International Fashion Academy, a Master's degree in Fashion Designing from Army Institute of Fashion & Design, and a Diploma in Fashion Designing from J.D. Institute of Fashion Technology.



JW MARRIOTT BENGALURU

Bangaluru

JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru appoints **SREELAKSHMI DINESH** as their new Training Manager. Sreelakshmi has been a part of the hospitality industry since 2015 when she began her journey as an Industrial Exposure Trainee at Taj Bekal Resort & Spa. Since then, she has worked with several top brands in the hotel industry such as The Oberoi Bangalore, Army Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Bangalore, and Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore, handling various operational activities. Sreelakshmi possesses a Master's degree in Business Administration in Hotel Management.



TALKing People

AMIT GERA, General Manager, Operations, Sayaji Hotels, exercises to relieve stress, along with meditation and networking with friends. "During the lockdown, I learnt the art of video conferencing and tele consultation, which proved to be very productive. Lockdown also gave



me a perfect opportunity to take time out to read my favourite novels. We couldn't travel during lockdown, so my next holiday will be to Mcleodganj in Himachal Pradesh to energize my mind and soul. Shimla and Manali have been my favorite destinations in India and Switzerland outside India because of its lakes, beautiful mountains and snowfalls," he says.

SANDRA POLO CANUDAS, Commercial Director (Asia & ME), Palladium Hotel Group, de-stresses by practising a sport. "I have always played sports since I was a child and the pandemic has given me the opportunity to have a regular schedule. Get some fresh



air running meanwhile observing sun going up or down next to the Mediterranean sea is just an incredible boost of energy. Moreover, during the lockdown, I have learned to cook a bit better!" she says. Canudas loves India and says, "During all these years of travelling to India, I had the opportunity to visit Jaipur and I loved it."

NEHA GAUTAM, Assistant Manager (Marketing & Communications), Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore, says, "Listening to calming music and spending time with my pet are some of the ways in which I unwind and de-stress. During the lockdown, I took up painting



and started enjoying it as a hobby. I also got the opportunity to spend quality time with my family. It was a unique stage of my life where I was able to cherish each moment with my dear ones. The lockdown taught me the importance of family time and me time. My favourite holiday destination in India is Kashmir."

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Accor to enter tier II cities

Pratima Badhwar, Head of Commercial India & South Asia, Accor, is excited about this year. ‘We will continue with the uptick from domestic markets and explore the potential of tiered cities this year,’ she adds.



Hazel Jain

Accor is “very excited” about 2023! This is going to be a great year in terms of new openings, says **Pratima Badhwar**, Head of Commercial India & South Asia at Accor. “We opened Novotel Mumbai Andheri Airport early January. This was the first opening of the year. In March, we are going to open two more hotels – we are opening the ibis in Thane and a Novotel in Jodhpur that will expand our footprint in Rajasthan. In terms of luxury, our Raffles Udaipur is in a ramp-up stage right now. We have couple of good luxury hotels in the pipeline. We have signed up Fairmont Udaipur last year, which we will open sometime in 2024, and have earlier this year signed up Fairmont in Shimla, which we are looking to open by early 2026. Our focus now is to expand and diversify across brands, get a lot of luxury and lifestyle brands, along with our premium brands in the country. We are focused on our entire growth pipeline. We will be about 10,700-odd keys in total for the entire portfolio with the new openings,” she says.

Business from tiered cities

Accor is also going to explore tier-II and III cities. “There is a strong demand coming from these markets, specially when it comes to the SME segment. The domestic business that we have seen emerge during the pandemic has come from this segment from cities like Raipur, Bhopal, and Indore. These are some new trending markets for us. We also see a lot of wedding business come from these pockets, a lot of business from manufacturing companies from these cities. So tiered cities are where we are definitely heading to. In fact, last year we signed up two hotels here – one in Bhopal and one in Indore – both Novotels. With these hotels we will initiate our footprint into these

markets and help us grow business from these cities,” she adds.

Action plan for 2023

One of the biggest outcomes of the pandemic was the much-needed ADR corrections after a slump in 2020. Badhwar says Accor will continue to grow its ADRs. “That is going to be our biggest focus – to drive business via the ADR route. Occupancies are building strongly and demand is coming in strongly as well. So, we are going to maximise that demand across all chan-



We are focused on our entire growth strategy. We will be about 10,700-odd keys in total for the entire portfolio with the new openings

nels and ensure that we are putting the right price to our business. We are also focusing on keeping the domestic share of our business intact. We are diversifying our segments of business that we are going into. While the corporate business comes back and that demand builds back to the 2019 potentials, there is a huge focus that we have put on the SME segment, the sports segment, and the wedding segment. This has given us additional forays to drive additional demand. We are not putting all our eggs in one basket,” she adds.

Manpower and training issues

Talent is hottest topic right now across verticals and industries and the hospitality sector was one of the many to take a severe beating during the pandemic with regards to talent. To tackle this issue, Badhwar says, “We are now working

on an entirely different strategy of not only hiring but also what we do with regards to retaining them. We saw that the new joiners were often leaving within the first six months. So, we changed the pattern of engaging them. We are ensuring that we are doing regular catch-ups with them, taking their feedback, ensuring that they feel included in the Accor family.”

Weddings and entertainment segments

Weddings will continue to be one of the focus segments for Accor hotels. “It is becoming a bigger and bigger industry and there is a huge focus as we at Accor are also putting on this segment. Moreover, G20 is a huge demand generator in the country right now, which is giving us the right platform on a global front to drive business into the country. This is not only from a MICE perspective but also from the FIT and government point of view. Visit India Year 2023 will also give us an impetus from an inbound perspective. These will be interesting addition to the overall mix. Now, with the corporate business coming back, we are seeing good growth from there. SMEs will continue to grow, entertainment and sports are also big segments for us – a

trend which is coming up, all thanks to the OTT platform,” Badhwar says.

Sustainability is important

Accor has always been a huge advocate for sustainability. “This is a big initiative for us, and it will become an integral part of our delivery. Last year, we decided to get rid of all our single-use plastic across our hotels. We have done that. We are now working on going into deeper sustainable measures – what are we doing with our purchasing, and where are we buying our raw materials and food supplies from. Are those vendors also sustainable? So, this is a continuous effort, and we are fully committed to driving sustainability across all our hotels,” she says




Pratima Badhwar
Head of Commercial India & South Asia at Accor

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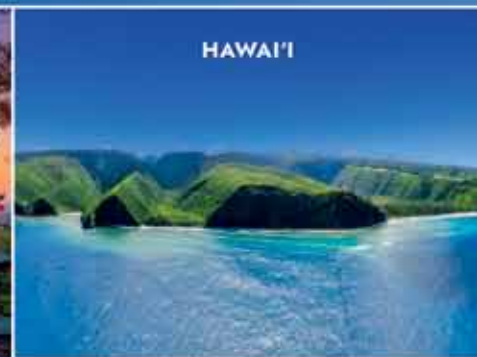
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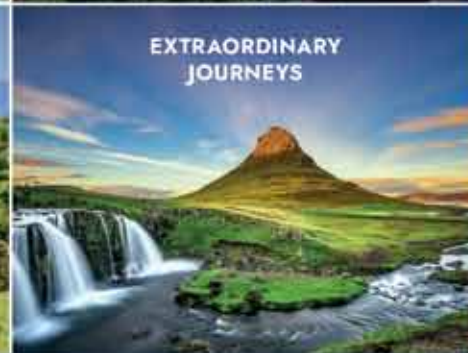
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