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New era of overseas promotions

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, Government of India, has claimed that the closing of overseas India tourism offices will not be the end of an era, but a new beginning for the country's marketing prowess, led by the National Tourism Board, and by the Indian missions.



Arvind Singh
Secretary Tourism, GoI

Overseas tourism offices
Singh informed that when the India tourism offices were established overseas in the pre-internet era,

Contd on page 22 ▶

Nisha Verma & Janice Alyosius

Speaking at the recent PATA India seminar, **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Tourism, Government of India, shared that the country is witnessing a huge upsurge and robust growth in the domestic tourism sector. For inbound, he said that a finding by NCAR has revealed that even though the UNWTO expects inbound to be at 65 per cent globally, figures for India will be better than the prediction for the rest of

the world. "We expect that given the activities that we have in the country, which includes the G20 Presidency, will be giving a big fillip to inbound tourism. All the state governments and relevant agencies are working hard to showcase the best that India has to offer in terms of the G-20," he said.

Events galore

Talking of G20, Singh revealed that for tourism, they are doing four working group meetings. "The first

We expect that given the activities that we have in the country, which includes the G20 Presidency, will be giving a big fillip to inbound tourism

will be in the Rann of Kachchh from 7 to 9 February. The second will be at Siliguri-Darjeeling in April, and for the third, we are deciding on the location somewhere in the hills in May. The last working group will be in Goa, which would be followed by the tourism ministers' meeting in June. Apart from these, there will be side events. The Global Tourism Investors summit will be held in April at Pragati Maidan. Roadshows for that are already underway. There will be an adventure summit and

a MICE conference will be held at Bengaluru. There will be a business expo that FICCI is doing in Jaipur in April and the WTTC and UNWTO do the G20 ministerial summit—a Global CEO Conference, which they did in Bali when the G20 Presidency was with Indonesia. There will be a global CEO's meeting during the ministerial meeting in Goa in June as well. Thus, from February onwards, till June, there will be a lot of action, in terms of the tourism working group meetings," he said.

Stable airfares: Still not a reality?

The airfares have skyrocketed ever since the flights have restarted in full fervour and the government removed the initial capping on fares. While this is good news for the airlines, the industry wants them to stabilise, which doesn't look like the case currently. Hence, as the industry is busy booking packages, the customer might just be feeling the pinch on his pocket.



Guldeep Singh Sahni
Founder President, OTOAI & MD, Weldon Tours and Travels

“The outbound traffic that had to go after revenge tourism, has already taken off. However, there is still a lot of volume left to go. Thus, I don't think the fares will come down before the summer season because most flights have not returned back. Thus, the number of seats are not available. Even if we say that post-COVID, flights are nearing normalcy, the number of outbound passengers has increased a lot. The supply is not in proportion of the demand. Hence, airlines will have to struggle with Government as well to get the slots. For example, Turkish Airlines can do a lot of business in India, provided they get inroads to other cities like Chennai, Bangalore Hyderabad and Kolkata. This way competition will be created and fares would reduce.”

“I don't think the fares are going to stabilize soon because there is a shortage of international air seats, to and from India and the demand has gone up substantially. The fares will come down or will stabilize only after there is an increase in the number of seats from, and to India. This can only happen if we open the skies and allow any international airline that wants to come to India. I would suggest that since India has the leadership of G20, we should at least open the skies for all G20 countries. Once the supply of international seats increases, both to and from India, automatically the fares will start coming down. It's a negative change and only those people are travelling who have no other choice. In such a situation, only the rich are travelling for leisure.”

Contd on page 10 ▶



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Chairman, STIC Travel & Air Charter Group and Former President, IATO

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Industry elated after MOT's relief

Persistent efforts by inbound tour operators has resulted in the MOT relaxing the rules of recognising tourism service providers in the country, by considering the turnover of FY2019-20 instead of FY2021-22, which didn't see any business for the industry owing to COVID-19. The decision has spread a wave of delight among the stakeholders.



Nisha Verma

The Union Ministry of Tourism (MOT), in a recent order, has relaxed the requirement of validity of minimum annual turnover for recognising tourism service providers. The recent order states that for recognition of tourism service providers, the MOT will accept the minimum annual turnover for financial year 2019-20 instead of FY2021-22. To be recognised, the applicant must have minimum annual turnover of ₹20.00 Lakh.

It has been a longstanding demand by the industry, and the MOT's order also stated that requests/representations from stakeholders have been received for exemption in the annual turnover of the FY2021-22. "It has been submitted that the entire tourism industry was affected by COVID-19 pandemic till 2021-22 and therefore they are unable to fulfil the requirement of minimum turnover. It has been requested that exemption for the same may be given by the ministry," it said.



Rajiv Mehra
President
IATO

Thus, the ministry has decided that annual turnover of FY2019-20 would be accepted for recognition, and it would be applicable till 31 December 2023. "Subsequently, the turnover for the financial year 2022-23 would be required," stated the order.

The news was received with much aplomb across the industry. An elated **Rajiv Mehra**, President,



EM Najeeb
Senior Vice President
IATO

IATO, said that IATO had been requesting the ministry for the same for the last 1.5-2 months. "I had spoken with the Additional Secretary, Rakesh Verma, several times on this issue, and he had assured that he will get this done. Finally, the order has come. Our members were facing a problem because during 2021-22 they didn't have any business, and hence their MOT recognition was not being extend-



Ravi Gosain
Vice President
IATO

ed. Thus, now with the 2019-20 balance sheet to be given, which everyone has, they can renew MOT recognition once again. It is a great relief to our members," he said.

EM Najeeb, Senior Vice President, IATO, also called it a welcome move by the government. "This is excellent and timely help to the tour operators, travel agents and transport operators from the MOT. It is a

good gesture and we are thankful to the ministry," he said.

Ravi Gosain, Vice President, IATO, agreed that it is an appreciable gesture. "It's a great decision from MOT for which IATO wrote to them a few days back. We are happy that our members can keep their recognition intact because of no businesses during pandemic. It's an appreciable gesture from Secretary and Additional Secretary of Tourism, and we can't thank them enough for this kind consideration," he added.

It's a move that will benefit smaller tour operators, said **Rajnish Kaistha**, Honorary Secretary, IATO. "Many of our smaller tour operators, who found it difficult to survive and operate during last more than two years, are now beginning to revive. Such MOT approved tour operators need handholding and help during these tough times. Thus, this extension of 19-20 forex earnings shall help them in big way to have

a new lease of life by remaining MOT approved and encourage them to join MOT roadshows and participate in international fairs abroad. Overall, it shall help our beleaguered industry to come back to life. We would like to thank MOT for this one and IATO President Rajiv Mehra for his continuous efforts."

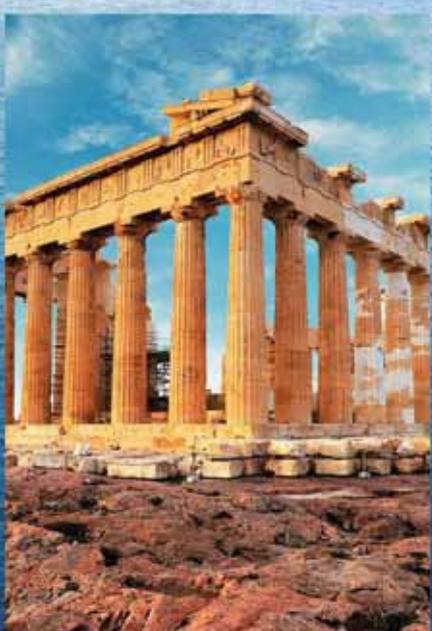
Appreciating the move, **Sunil Mishra**, Honorary Treasurer, IATO, shared, "This change has been requested personally by IATO President for some time and is a much-needed move in light of the current COVID-19 situation. IATO appreciates the Ministry of Tourism's understanding of the challenges faced by the travel industry."

Even **Nasir Shah**, Chairman - IATO Jammu & Kashmir Chapter, said that it is a welcome step from the MOT. "This will surely benefit small tour operators to get recognition from MOT and create more confidence in carrying forward their business," he underlined.

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The beginning of success

The year 2023 has come with lots of promises and actions to fulfil these promises. The Ministry of Tourism was extremely active this month, in India and abroad, leaving no stone unturned to welcome foreign tourists to India.

The ministry started the year with participating in FITUR, one of the world's largest international travel exhibitions. India's participation at FITUR is significant to step up the recovery of inbound tourism to pre-pandemic levels.

FITUR was also a platform for Invest India to discuss investment opportunities in the Indian tourism & hospitality sector. Building up to the 1st Global Tourism Investors' Summit, being organised by the Ministry of Tourism between 10th and 12th April 2023 in New Delhi, the summit is surely catching international attention. Presentations on the recent major policy initiatives by the tourism department to improve ease of doing business and the unique fiscal and non-fiscal incentives in the tourism and hospitality sector, along with recent investment-related success stories, are sure to impress investors.

The Government of India has a vision of US \$56 billion forex, creating around 140 million jobs in tourism by 2030 through inclusive growth and are particularly focusing on cruise tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism. The government has been investing in infrastructure and promoting the tourism and hospitality sector through various schemes and initiatives, and introducing Swadesh Darshan 2.0, which will focus on sustainable and responsible development of tourist destinations.

The first Global Tourism Summit has come under the aegis of India's G20 Presidency while G20 will be the Union Tourism Ministry's main focus in 2023, to establish the country as a key tourism destination during its year-long leadership. During the period, India would be hosting close to 1 lakh delegates from G20 countries and nine observer nations. More than 200 meetings will be held across 56 locations of the country, providing an unmatched opportunity to showcase the various tourism offerings across the country. An opportunity that can help India tourism reach its vision of 100 million international traveller by 2047.

Metaverse, biometric to rule travel

A team of Amadeus travel tech experts have identified the annual travel trends. As per the trends, increased use of metaverse, new biometric possibilities, working from anywhere and travelling light will be major trends of 2023, which will transform the industry in future.

TT Bureau

The Amadeus 2023 Travel Trends has identified five new developments that, according to the travel tech giant, will play a part in shaping travel over the coming year.

❖ Meet a new kind of travel agent: Exploring the metaverse will allow travellers to explore a destination before they arrive or relive their memories once they leave

❖ Smile for your seat: Biometrics will help create a smooth travel payment experience

❖ Travel without baggage: Hotels will offer travellers more amenities, so they can travel lighter

❖ Working from roam: Remote workers will adopt an increasingly nomadic lifestyle, migrat-



worldwide expect seamless travel experiences driven by comfort, security, and personalization. The growing sophistication of technology underpins travel providers' ability to deliver on these expectations and transform the customer experience. Now that the future has arrived, new and emerging technologies are enabling us to achieve these objectives in



ing to different locations as 'work from anywhere' policies become normalised

❖ Welcome to bonding business breaks: A new category of business travel, focused on connecting teams, building relationships and unlocking creativity away from the office, will emerge

Amadeus' team of travel tech experts have identified the annual travel trends and have mentioned that while technology is a major driver of change, and Web3 and biometrics will have a big part to play, human relationships are equally important.

Mani Ganeshan, Global Head of Engineering, Travel Sellers Unit and Centre Head, Amadeus Labs Bengaluru, said, "Travellers

Global brands such as Hilton are offering exercise gear and equipment, helping travellers get closer to a 'suitcase free stay'

of newer technologies, the travel ecosystem is going through a fascinating and progressive phase. As technologies evolve to meet travellers' expectations, they will rapidly shape the future of travel for the better."

The report claims that in the coming years, the metaverse will take traveller engagement to the next level. Travellers will be able to enjoy deeper cultural experiences in an online world, exploring virtual concerts and exhibitions. The technology also offers enormous potential for pre-trip assistance and the opportunity to "try before you buy", creating further wanderlust and excitement. This will



become increasingly popular way to trial higher-priced items such as luxury cruise holidays.

Amadeus also shared example of the acceptance of metaverse by major brands across the world. Walt Disney Co. has plans to create a real-world theme park ride, which incorporates a parallel 3D virtual world experience, while Seoul is blazing a trail with its plans to go "meta" by 2023 with a platform titled "Metaverse Seoul". Qatar Airways recently announced Qverse with a MetaHuman cabin crew, providing

We will see workforces spend less time at their homes due to the corporate formalisation of 'work from anywhere' policies

an immersive experience to tour, navigate and check-in at Hamad International Airport.

Also, it said that biometric payments – via the likes of ApplePay and GooglePay – are now mainstream for both retail and travel payments. But over the coming years, travel is likely to take biometric payments to the next level. Airports already use biometrics for travel document identification. From paying for train tickets to seat upgrades, in-flight meals or late checkout at the hotel, with biometrics, travellers worldwide will use convenient, more secure, biometric payment solutions.

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Invest in tourism, requests government

Making a pitch in the tourism and hospitality sectors at a precursor event held in Mumbai for the upcoming Global Tourism Summit, the Ministry of Tourism went all out to woo potential investors. Also showcasing these states were Maharashtra, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and the UTs of Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman Diu.

 Hazel Jain

Under the aegis of India's G20 Presidency, the Ministry of Tourism will organise the country's first Global Tourism Summit in New Delhi from 10 to 12 April, 2023, where all G20 member countries will be invited to participate. To discuss this event, the ministry is doing a series of events in different parts of the country. An introductory event was also held in Mumbai recently where Consul Generals of various countries, potential investors, travel agents and other tourism stakeholders were invited.

Sharing details of the summit, **Prashant Ranjan**, Director – IDIP, Swadesh Darshan, Niche Tourism and Administration, Ministry of Tourism, said, "Global Tourism Summit 2023 will be organised to showcase the opportunities of investment and trade to the local players as well as global investors alike. We will be not just focusing on hotels and accommodation, but also cruise tourism, amusement

parks and adventure tourism. We have a vision of creating 140 million jobs in tourism, which will lead to inclusive growth – not just of niche tourism, but also of women, youth and the local communities."

Inviting everyone to share suggestions on how this summit can be made a big success, he added, "I request everyone to invest in tourism so that we can invest in the inclusive growth in this country. Cruise tourism statistics in India are promising – the CAGR of cruise tourism is 25.6 per cent over the last few years. A WTTC report says the cruise tourism in India will explode in the following years. The summit will also focus on wellness and medical value tourism. Moreover, India business travel market is expected to grow three times by 2030."

Swadeshi Darshan 2.0

Ranjan reveals that the new Infrastructure Development Scheme called Swadeshi Darshan 2.0 has come up this year, which will focus on developing 55 destinations across India. "Here, the theme will

be sustainable and responsible tourism. Here we will be focusing on self-employment, youth skilling, private sector investment, and preserving local heritage. This offers a lot of opportunities to the



Prashant Ranjan
Director – IDIP, Swadesh Darshan, Niche Tourism and Administration, MoT

private sector. The assets created out of these projects we are planning to monetise with help of advisors SBI Caps. All these details are available on the website.

Investors who are interested can share their queries here and move at a fast pace even for monetisation of assets that are already created by the Central government," he added.

State government initiatives

In this summit, the ministry will also focus on state government initiatives. "Maharashtra and Rajasthan have industry status and certain states have reduced the number of licences. The western part of the country that includes Maharashtra, Goa and Madhya Pradesh is doing very well in attracting investments. This year being the G20 Presidency of India, we are focusing on all the partner countries, as well as all the countries having global players and key source markers. Here, we request our Middle East friends to have a look at the summit and push investments into India," Ranjan added.

Tourism is deeply involved with the Line Ministries that cater to the demand of tourism sector, he said. "That is why for this summit,

we are partnering with Ministry of Culture, Port, Shipping, Environment, Railways, Road Transport, Civil Aviation, and Housing. We again request you to give us suggestions on which Line Ministries are missing, so we can bring them to this summit. We are in the pro-


We will be not just focusing on hotels and accommodation, but also cruise tourism, amusement parks and adventure tourism

cess of compiling state investment policies on the website so that it can be a one-stop platform for all investors. Please visit the website, go to the query page and give your suggestions. Potential participants will be state govern-

ments, global investors, cruise liners, helicopter services, banking, entertainment, we are looking at everyone who has deep pockets and who are willing to spend in tourism. So, please come and be part of the growth story of India," Ranjan said.

Maha eyes ₹40,000 cr projects

Saurabh Vijay, Principal Secretary of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, who was presenting his state, highlighted that the government is discussing the development of an online application portal to facilitate investment opportunities in the tourism industry of Maharashtra. They have identified various opportunities such as land for amusement parks, aqua tourism, cruise tourism, ecotourism and many other projects. They are also focusing on private investment and partnerships. GoM has identified specific locations and projects such as a mangrove park, an aquarium project etc. Opportunities in MICE tourism and responsible tourism are also being explored. 

India a natural aviation hub

While the central government policies are providing a significant impetus to the aviation sector, there are some issues troubling the industry. The 14th International Conference cum Awards, Civil Aviation, hosted by ASSOCHAM, outlines the industry's prominent pain points and seeks specific solutions to make it sustainable and economically viable.

 Janice Alyosius

The Indian aviation market is rapidly expanding and is expected to become the world's third largest. This expansion is being driven by a growing economy, rising incomes, fierce competition among airlines, and a favourable policy environment. UDAN, the Ministry of Civil Aviation's initiative, has increased regional connectivity. Following Air India's disinvestment, the Indian aviation industry is dominated by private low-cost airlines that have made air travel affordable to the masses. The ministry's continued emphasis on creating an international aviation hub in India, operationalizing the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for drones and components to promote indigenisation, Digi Yatra, skilling and safety, enhanced efficiency, and economic viability of operations in major airports will propel India's Civil Aviation market to new heights. Political and industry leaders express views:

“Internationally, a 40 per cent reduction in time for both passengers and aircraft in terms of boarding, which tremendously improves ease of travel for passengers and enhances the capabilities for airlines and airports. The DigiYatra app has been downloaded 300,000 times. The adoption rates in Delhi and Bengaluru are creeping up. In Varanasi, it is almost 20 per cent; one in five travellers from the airport is not using the orthodox old system of passing through the airport.”



Jyotiraditya M. Scindia
Union Minister, Civil Aviation & Steel, Government of India



Narayan Rao
Chairman, ASSOCHAM National Council on Civil Aviation and Deputy MD, GMR Group

“Civil aviation sector plays a major role in economy in terms of GDP and employment generation. India should focus on how to create a civil aviation hub in the country. New trends such as DigiYatra for touchless travel, use of local sectors, skill development should be encouraged so that country benefits. The most important stakeholders are airports. Tier-I and Tier-II airports should be privatised. The government is planning another 25 airports for privatisation.”

“The government intends to increase Indians' access to and affordability of civil aviation. Civil aviation will propel India to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2024, serving as a significant growth engine for the country. The latest renovations in the sector are enabling many people in India to participate in their first Udaan, as well as assisting the sector in catching up with the growth trajectory more quickly. DigiYatra will help in easing the congestions at the airports.”



PK Thakur
Deputy Director General, Ministry of Civil Aviation, GOI



Vidheh Jaipuria
Chief Executive Officer, Delhi International Airport (DIAL)

“Many countries have geographical advantages, but India has a much stronger flow because there are more than 25 million passengers who fly over India to go from Southeast Asia to Europe. Even if we get a portion of that traffic to hub in Delhi, the traffic can increase multi-fold. From the government, we have three requests. The first is to work out a strategy for hubbing. The second is about pre-immigration clearance and the third is the OTP for connecting to Wi-Fi.”

“If we look at any international hub, whether it is Singapore, Dubai, or America, we will notice that each has a very strong airline that drives traffic. So, in collaboration with Indian carriers, we must define which Indian carrier will serve as the anchor hub carrier for India. Another important factor is airport facilities, with PPP in the airport sector investing in necessary infrastructure. But the more important part is the process at the airport.”



Arun Bansal
Chief Executive Officer, Adani Airports Holding

Luxury comes to India

McArthurGlen, which pioneered the concept of designer outlets in Europe, will host a five-city roadshow in India, including one in New Delhi, in February this year.



With a strong customer focus, McArthurGlen offers coveted labels as well as exciting leisure and entertainment initiatives. To tap the India market and inform the travel trade about their latest offerings, the luxury brand will host a five-city roadshow in Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Amritsar, and Lucknow in February this year.

McArthurGlen welcomed more than 90 million visitors a year to its 24 vibrant designer outlets in eight countries – Austria, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. Each unique McArthurGlen centre is located within easy reach of a major city and is an established retail destination in its own right.

Their designer outlets are home to the world's most prestigious luxury, designer, and premium brands offering the fashion-loving shopper year-round savings of up

to 70 per cent on recommended retail prices. All their sites are within easy reach of a major city, yet each has a unique brand mix and its own architectural style, finely-tuned to the local surroundings, making each of our designer outlets a unique place to shop, meet and be entertained in. 'Evolve', their sustainability programme, is made up of six focus

areas that will enable them to become an increasingly sustainable business. Their ambitious strategy aims to drive real change by focusing on three pillar approach: minimising their negative impact on the planet, maximising their positive impact in the communities where they operate, and embedding sustainability into every aspect of their business.



ITDC, Ministry of Ayush MoU to boost medical tourism

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) has signed an MoU with the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, for promotion of Medical Value Travel in Ayurveda and other traditional systems of medicine. Under the agreement, ITDC will promote 'Heal in India' – Medical Value Travel in Ayurveda, Yoga and other Indian traditional Systems of Medicine as well as assist in



Sambit Patra
Chairman, ITDC

establishing India as number 1 destination for Medical value Travel in consultation with the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Ayush. Under the MoU, ITDC will also explore establishing Ayurveda and Yoga centres in the Hotels run by ITDC.

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Airfares expected to remain high

Agents



Anshu Tejuja
Managing Director, Ashoka Dream Holidays

“The increased airfares are due to many reasons. All the airlines haven't yet started to their full capacity and frequency like pre-covid times. Moreover the fuel prices have shot up and so has the RoE. There are fewer staff and newer employees, and there is a need to cover up losses of pandemic. All this added together has increased the cost. Like they say it takes a while for the dust to settle. I see it settling since if you book in advance or keep searching, you can be lucky to get a good fare. Irrespective of the airfares I see Indians are still booking and traveling as there has been surge in revenge travel. A few still think twice before going ahead with high fares. It should settle this year gradually.”

“The airfares (both domestic and international) in general are expected to remain high for several reasons. The crude is still very high as compared to the pre-pandemic level in March 2020. The Indian rupee has depreciated almost 10 per cent as compared to the USD. All other costs including salaries and overheads have also increased substantially after the pandemic. Moreover, the airlines & hospitality industry must recover the massive losses they incurred for two years. Even though the fare may stabilize over the next two months, they would still be substantially higher than 2020 levels. The customers have now accepted the higher level of airfares. The demand is very high despite the increased fare.”



Manoj Saraf
MD Gainwell Travel & Leisure



Mahendra Vakharia
MD, Pathfinder holidays and Imm. Past President-OTOAI

“The aviation industry was also severely impacted during COVID and is slowly emerging out of the challenge. However, I do not foresee the airfares reducing from the present levels unless the seat capacity on routes increases. It will continue to remain high going forward in 2023 as well, and the flyers will have to fasten their seat belt a notch tighter to cope with this. I feel the present level of airfares both for travel— domestic and international will continue to hold ground and may increase depending on the demand which is looking very good and high at present. This is not an ideal situation and levels of airfare, ironically in the past when the crude oil had crossed more than \$100 a barrel, were not so high. Does industry or customers have any chance or option?”

“David Harvey once said, ‘The equilibrium between supply and demand is achieved only through a reaction against the upsetting of the equilibrium’. If one were to analyse with a lens of simplicity, it's all a function of demand & supply, and how scarcity propels demand, which has been the case over the last couple of years. I suppose that was the reaction of airlines to the ‘upset of the equilibrium’. How airlines shape their fares in the coming months/ years to find the new equilibrium will depend on how demand for travel evolves, the course of which lies in our ability, collectively as an industry, to continually create aspirational value in experiences that inspire people to travel over & over again, with as much fervour as they'd had for their very first sojourn!”



Alpa Jani
CEO & Founder, Ace Connect

“Year 2022 began with restrictions, but ended with a high demand, as India resumed scheduled commercial flight operations in March. The airlines could not meet the rising demand, which is one of the reasons that airfares never dropped to pre-pandemic levels. Some other reasons for the surge are; increase in ATF cost, elevated crude oil prices due to geo-political conditions, rupee depreciation against the US Dollar, inflation, staff shortages and shortage of aircrafts. The airfares are currently 25-30% higher compared to 2019, and during the festive season of last year, the airfares were 62% higher compared to 2019. This trend will continue in 2023, with seasonal changes in airfares. There is a possibility of rectification for the summer of 2024.”

“Understandably, there is a considerable increase of approx. 20-30 per cent in airfares to popular international destinations due to high demand because of easing of restrictions. Our data indicates that despite increase in airfares, we continue to see a strong uptick for international travel compared to pre-pandemic levels. Airfares to Europe's Switzerland, France and Spain; UK have seen a surge by 30-35 per cent, Turkiye by 20 per cent, Southeast Asia's Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia by 35 per cent; Vietnam and Cambodia by 40 per cent; also Dubai and Abu Dhabi 35 per cent and Mauritius 15 per cent. Additionally, long haul destination like Australia witnessed 20-25 per cent uptick.”



Indiver Rastogi
President & Group Head, Global Business Travel, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel



Pranav Kapadia
Founder & Director Global Destinations

“Post-pandemic, the tourism sector has gone through many changes including major increases in prices across the industry. It truly feels like a fresh start for all, with airlines being no exception. Airlines slowly and steadily are building back their network and are currently experiencing high load factors. Airfares are higher this year by 20-30 per cent due to a rise in oil prices and trains have limited availability. Given that globally no one could travel in the past two years, I do believe that it is time for us to get used to the ‘new’ level of airfares, whether on domestic or international routes. Whilst we may expect some correction closer to 2024-25, the current air fare levels are an indication of what they will be like for the rest of 2023.”

“The airfares during the pandemic had gone up drastically as the frequency of flights had gone down, but now flights have increased but the fares are still on the same lines. Stabilization of the airfares will take a few more months I believe but still will not come down to the pre-pandemic level as still, the airlines have their reasons. Though business travellers and others have come to the virtual mode, but airfare still is the most important component, be it business leisure or student. They have adapted the high airfares but have become selective, if the family wants to have a holiday in a long-haul destination are preferring short haul destinations, two family holidays in a year has curtailed down to one. It is a disadvantage for the industry.”



Ekta Watts
Director, Equator Tours and Destinations

Associations



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

“Pricing is a question of demand and supply and even the government cannot enforce its decision on the pricing parameters. The solution lies in more aircrafts, alternate routes and last mile connectivity, on which the airlines and the government are putting their minds together. Once outbound increases in the post pandemic stage, domestic airfares may witness a decline and it also depends on the season and any event happening in a particular place. The IF factor I have outlined above, should happen once outbound is in full swing and more aircrafts are in service and should come up in the start of the Off-Peak season. It is a change based on the market forces of demand and supply. We need to investigate the supply aspect.”

“Artificial intelligence and programming by airlines to gain maximum yield have been put in use in many ways on selling platforms. These keep airfares high and make higher fares the norm. Competing airlines don't complain as they set to gain as well. Demand for Canada, be it for immigrants, student traffic or visiting family apart from leisure are enough to fill up flights out of India. Even via flights get sold out for Canada-bound traffic and high fares persist. For east bound, Australia takes the major traffic. Rest of the world is also a big market for Indians, since we are based in major destinations, and our leisure appetite is also huge. Indians have been paying very high fares by all means post-COVID. Unless there is fare governance, airlines out of India will make hay.”



Anil Kalsi
Joint Secretary, TAFI



Biji Eapen
President- IAAI and Chairman & CEO- Speedwings

“Air travel costs have already been higher than the pre-pandemic levels globally, worsened by the Russia- Ukraine war. Jet fuel has become very expensive, as many countries put trade restrictions on oil from Russia. Inflation has directly impacted business travel due to rising prices and changing currency values. The recession in the aviation industry could lead to an increase in airfares. Airlines will be looking to offset the decrease in demand by raising prices. Many airlines drastically downsized their staff during the pandemic, and now there is a significant pilot shortage in the USA and other countries. The convergence of these trends has caused the price inflation we have all witnessed globally. IATA expects a return to profitability for the industry this year.”

“Prices have increased substantially across the world from what it was pre-COVID. It's not just for international travel, but also for domestic and inbound. However, there are many other factors that are affecting the tourism in the country apart from airfares, like people losing jobs and lack of information. When it comes to high price, it is the case for hotels across the country. Hotels, which used to charge around ₹4,000 per night in 2019, are charging ₹10,000 per night today. However, the service standards and professional staff of many hotels has gone down. We cannot discuss these issues with any higher authority right now.”



Ranga Reddy
Chairman, IATO- Telangana and Andhra Pradesh Chapter

Higher demand pushing airfares



Piaz Munshi
President, ATOAI

“The increased airfares depend on the demand and supply, the demand is high right now the supply is low. So, the supply has to be increase. Once supply is increased then only the fire will come down. Otherwise, this is going to range bound from around this fair only maybe 10% up or down. But most likely it's going to remain in this area. We look forward that the numbers are increasing, and we really wanted more flights to come to existing flight numbers to a frequency to be increased. So, it all depends on that, but as of now I don't see much changes. More people will only travel when the airfare will come down. The fares are quite high.”

“By the looks of it, I do not think the increased airfares will stabilize after post-pandemic surge settles because the airlines are playing absolutely full and we don't see the decline in airfares for post-pandemic, however, we seriously think they should but still the flights are full. I think most post-pandemic at least a year or two to get back to normalcy because people are traveling in revenge tourism right now and everyone wants to travel, and there is an uncertainty of what is going to be back or not. So, people want to make the most of it. Within a year, if things are on a constant and they settle down, the surge in the price should come down automatically.”



Sidharth Khanna
General Secretary, OTOAI



Sunil Kumar
President, UFTAA

“The stability cannot come in place unless the demand meets the supply. Such challenges happen when the demand is more than the supply. Airlines and hotels are sitting with dynamic pricing. In the last 8-10 months, I have travelled a lot on domestic routes and have not seen any flight half empty. In 2019, it was not the case. Seats and rows used to be unoccupied. Airlines in such a scenario are not wrong in covering up the expenses that were incurred during COVID, which were beyond their ability to cope up otherwise. They are in a domain where they want to make up the losses they have gone through, as they have loans, borrowings, and many other challenges.”

Technology

“We see strong airfares for domestic and international flights, including for leisure travel, which tends to book in advance, and for close-in corporate travel. It is also important to note that the average fare disparity between purchase dates is very small. Historically, there has been a more pronounced difference in the average fares based on advance purchase periods. Airlines are continuing to face challenges in bringing capacity back. However, higher air fares encourage carriers to increase the number of seats they plan to fly. We are already seeing this with the large US network carriers.”



Rakesh Narayanan
Vice President, Regional GM (Asia Pacific), Travel Solutions Airline Sales, Sabre

Hotel



Bhagwati Pant
General Manager, The Centrum, Lucknow

“Most people missed out on an international summer holiday in 2022 too. But that is expected to change in 2023 with a huge jet-setting surge. There have been various reports claiming that international travel is set for a big comeback. This could send flight prices soaring in 2023. Out of a number of factors that will contribute to high prices in 2023 one of the most significant, and perhaps the most obvious, is a surge in demand that could outstrip supply. The demand is going to outrun the supply of seats for all of 2023, unless the economy goes into a much more serious recession.”

NTO

“While Indian travelers can be cost-conscious when it comes to planning a trip, travel demand has returned to pre-pandemic levels despite the heightened airfares caused by rising fuel costs, inflation and staff shortages. Indian travelers have not been discouraged by these costs, as many have experienced increased savings throughout the pandemic to travel to their dream destination in 2023. With fleet expansions continuing and new routes from several carriers expected in the coming months, we anticipate a stabilization in airfare and flight inventory by early 2024.”



Seema Kadam
Regional Director, India, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board

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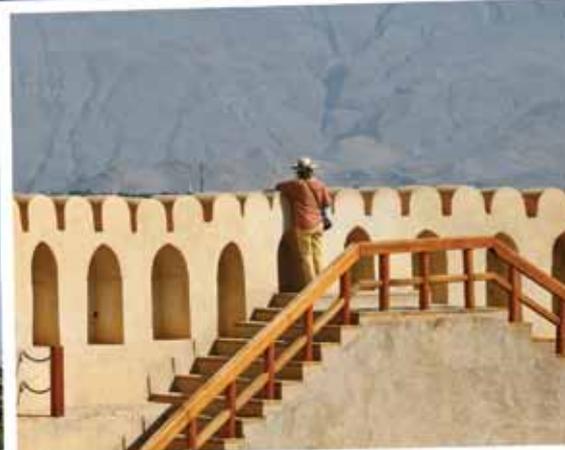
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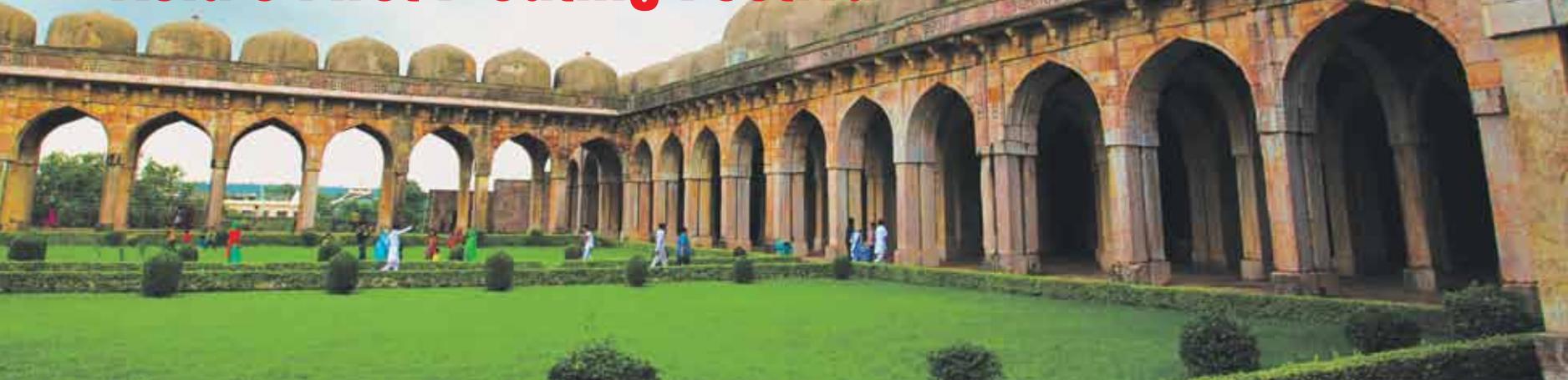
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❖ Fourth Edition of Mandu Fest Organised by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board till March 2023

❖ Gandhisagar Floating Festival to be inaugurated on 1st February 2023 at Gandhisagar, District Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh has emerged as one of the most sought-after tourist locations of the country. The state has reinstated its identity as the hub of adventure tourism and the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has made unparalleled efforts to develop the tourism industry and paint the picture of Madhya Pradesh in front of the eyes of the world. It was a long-term vision of the Tourism Board to establish Madhya Pradesh as a state of Adventure and Cultural Tourism, which is now coming into execution. MP Tourism thrives to provide a 360-degree adventure experience for the thrill seekers by facilitating Air, Water and Land adventure activities.

After three glorious editions of the Mandu Festival, the season 4 is on course and adventure lovers from India and abroad are participating in it with undying enthusiasm. Meanwhile, a recent addition, the Gandhisagar Floating Festival is set to commence from February, which is Asia's one and only floating festival. During this tourism season, MP Tourism thrives to connect all the exclusive festivals of Madhya Pradesh in such a way where the tourists can enjoy all these unique experiences one after another. The festivals have been chronologically lined



The heart of
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up to quench the thirst of all adventure seekers.

Gandhisagar Floating Festival

The Gandhisagar Floating Festival will be a unique glamping experience at the Mandsaur district, Madhya Pradesh, articulating its offerings with the line, 'Gateway to the heart of Incredible India'. The festival site will be a 4-hour drive

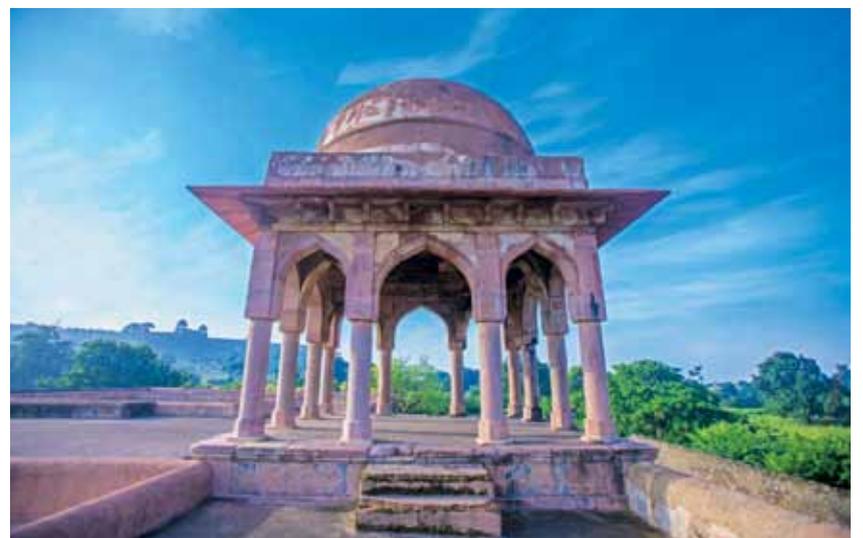
Adventure lovers from India and abroad have been taking party in Season 4 of the Mandu Festival with undying enthusiasm



from Indore, which is well connected by the road and railways.

The key highlight of Gandhisagar Floating Festival is its five-day Festival, replete with live music performances on a floating stage, floating market, boat spa, boat safari, silent forest tour, and much more. The tourists will be facilitated with super luxury tenting facilities until the end of April 23 and the adventure activities will continue until the end of July 23.

What makes Gandhisagar Floating Festival special is the Adventure Sports in the middle of the jungle, which includes a plethora of adventure sports and activities that spans across Air, Water, and Land. The Air Adventure activities would include Parasailing, Hot Air Balloon and Paragliding. The Water Adventure



activities would include Kayaking, Parasailing, Jet Ski, Speed Boating, Zorbing, Dragon Boat, and Banana Boat Ride. The Land Adventure activities would include Duo cycling, Cycling, Trekking, Stargazing, Rope course, Jungle safari,

Night Jungle walk, ATV, Zipline, Paintball, Gun shooting, Kidzone, Indoor gaming, Bullock cart ride, Horse riding, Camel ride, and Yoga.

Mandu Festival

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has announced the fourth edition of Mandu Festival with great elan and pride. This mega festival is witnessing a celebration of the heritage blended with the modern vibrancy of the culture of Mandu. The tent city will be available to book until the end of March 2023.

This festival will be an eclectic mix of adventure activities, cultural activities, performing arts, workshops, art installations, nature trails & walks, poetry reading, food, architecture, music and much more. Offering something for everyone, the Mandu Festival

will reverberate with an exuberant mix of activities weaving together

The Mandu Festival is witnessing a celebration of the heritage blended with the modern vibrancy of the culture of Mandu

traditional norms and the old-world charm. The festival promises to rewind the beautiful love story that unfurled between Baz Bahadur and Rani Roopmati through storytelling sessions.



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Airlines continue to face challenges in bringing capacity back: Sabre

THAI Smile Airways reintroduces direct flight service between Jaipur and Bangkok

IHG revenue was up 26 per cent YoY for H1 of 2022, 2 per cent more of 2019 levels: Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG

Look forward to more investments in J&K, want to outsource assets: Sunaina Mehta, Joint Director, Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir

Maharashtra has identified hotels to be developed in PPP mode, to be showcased at GTIS 2023: Principal Secretary, Tourism, Maharashtra

We witnessed 100 per cent recovery versus pre-pandemic levels for MICE sector: Meera Charnalia, Thomas Cook (India)

We want to transform Kerala into an interconnected tourist destination: Kerala Minister

'We want more Indians to visit Da Nang'

Prabodh Tipnis, Group MD, Global Aviation Services, which has been appointed as the tourism representative for Da Nang Tourism in India, discusses the destination and its appeal for Indian visitors. He also underlines how its clients are recovering in the aftermath of the pandemic.



While the core business of Global Aviation Services is to represent as General Sales Agents of Da Nang Tourism in India, the company has also ventured into destination representation. The company is now in its 47th year of operations. Talking about this exciting venture, **Prabodh Tipnis**, Group MD, Global Aviation Services, says, "I am happy to inform that we are the representatives of Da Nang Tourism in India since August 2022. Our aim is to promote the destination and create more awareness about it in the market and get more Indians to travel to Da Nang. We have already done workshops on it in New Delhi and will now participate in trade shows. Our team has been very active with the trade and tour operators and connecting them to the suppliers in Da Nang."

It is relatively an unknown destination in India today, he says. "But we now receive a huge number

of queries and see tourist traffic swell from India to Da Nang. The numbers may be small right now but our target is to step up to 50,000 in the first year and go up to 1,00,000 within three years. I'm sure we can achieve this based on the response we are getting from the trade and we may exceed those numbers rather quickly," Tipnis adds.

Da Nang is the third largest city in Vietnam which permits e-visas for Indian nationals. The team at Global Aviation Services has planned fam tours for the travel agents and is targeting segments like leisure, corporate, MICE, sporting events, weddings and honeymooners. Da Nang has good conferencing facilities and air connectivity with Vietnamese carriers connecting India to Da Nang directly.

Airlines' restart a challenge

Speaking about their airline clients, Tipnis says that the last couple of years have been very challenging to get the clients



Prabodh Tipnis
Group MD
Global Aviation Services

back into operations. "For the airlines to restart operations into India was a big challenge. Many had reduced their fleet, and their staff and crew were not operating full schedule. The Indian market was waiting for airlines to operate and cater to the Indian tourists, who were just waiting to go somewhere. The demand was up there but number of seats available per week on any plane was rather limited. So, it was a big

challenge. Till date, some airlines are operating limited schedules – not just to India but throughout their network," he says.

Stimulating the market was also one of the major agendas for his team. "Also, convincing airlines with the yields and the seat utilisation capacity was one of our major tasks. We are still hoping that in 2023 we will go back to normal operations to pre-COVID levels with higher yields for our airline customers. We are hoping that we will return to pre-COVID levels and offer more to the Indian traveller," he shares.

New clients in portfolio

Global Aviation Services has added new clients to its portfolio in the last one year. Tipnis says, "At any given time there are multiple discussions going on with potential airlines clients. Some through tender process, some through word of mouth and some through invitation. We will surely have some announcements to make soon. At this point in time, we are

looking at expanded services to India. More importantly, we would like to bring new airlines into the market. Our strategy has been to make the airlines, ourselves, and our customers profitable. So, we are looking at very tight re-

I'm sure there will be some correction as we go along. But I don't see fares going back to pre-COVID days for sure

sources, very tight costs, having learned from the pandemic. Without cutting any essential cost, we will definitely be able to fulfil our commitment to the trade, to the passengers and to our airline customers." He does see a correction in airfares soon.

Kerala focus on caravan tourism

V. Vigneshwari, Managing Director, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), shares how they are making sure that Kerala, known for offering innovative tourism products, has a plethora of experiences and destinations for tourists coming to the state.



Kerala is currently focusing on Caravan tourism and making sure that the tourists feel safe in the state. **V. Vigneshwari**, MD, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), shares that in terms of campaigning, they are primarily focusing on safety campaigns.

"We are ensuring the safety of every tourist by making sure that our host communities are completely vaccinated, and we also sanitise the facilities as and when it is being used. When it comes to products, Caravan is a new product launched. Whatever is the situation outside, a family or a group of travellers would definitely feel safe within their caravan, which is

our new product," she said. In fact, she informed, post-pandemic they are also offering subsidized packages to the industry stakeholders. "There are subsidy packages and COVID-relief packages for the hotels and we provide interest-free loans for the initial moratorium period of two years for the hotels and the other tour operators to cope up with COVID loss," she added.

While new products are being developed, Vigneshwari informed that they can't pinpoint on destination. "We are coming up with one panchayat, one destination idea under which 900,000 destinations are being developed. We are shifting slowly from mass tourism to experiential tourism, thus making it available to everyone," she pointed out. She lauded the cen-

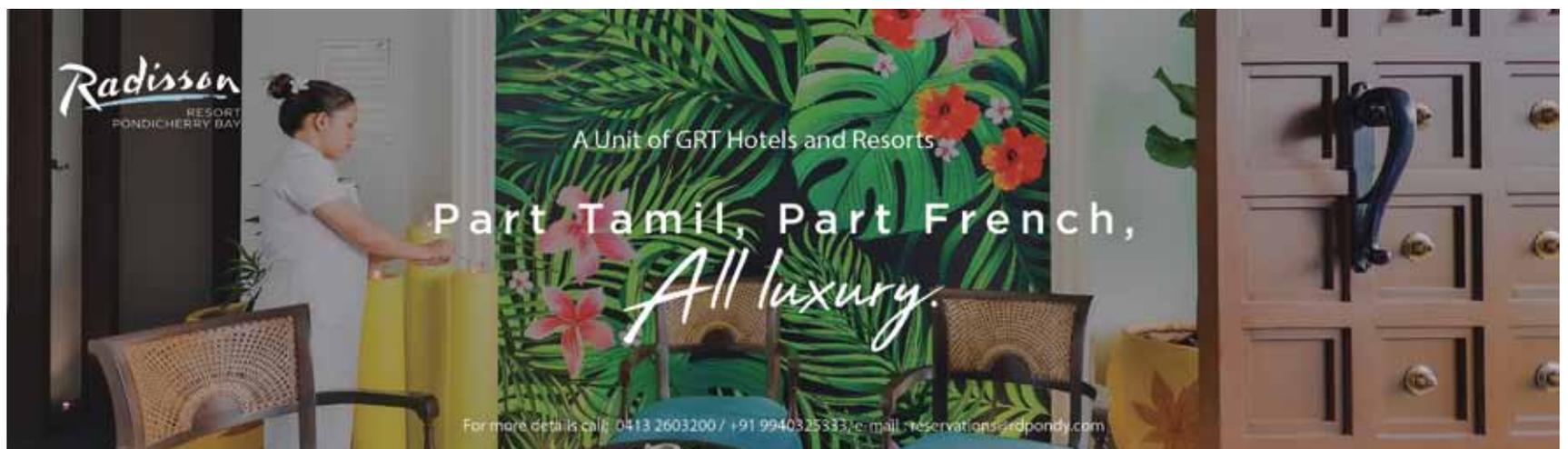
tral government's efforts to work with all states together, making sure that they learn best practices from each other. In terms of setting targets, she claimed, "We don't work on quantifiable targets. It's all quality that matters."

Kerala has a calendar of events, highlighted Vigneshwari. "I would want guests or visitors



V. Vigneshwari
MD, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC)

come over to Kerala to really experience the state in its full form," she shared.



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Tourists in the land of plenty

There are numerous lesser-known destinations in Uttar Pradesh that have huge tourism potential. Realizing this fact, the state government is seriously attempting to showcase and market the state's tourism attractions and offerings. Recently, held IATO Convention in Lucknow has been one of the steps in this direction.

Inder Raj Ahluwalia

UP always had innumerable tourist sites lying in-waiting. Now the wait is over. And the recently-uncovered destinations slated for development are coming thick and fast. **Mukesh Kumar Meshram**, Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism & Culture, Uttar Pradesh, is brimming with ideas revolving around showcasing and marketing the state's plethora of tourist attractions and offerings. He feels the post-COVID trend shows tourism has picked up, people are travelling with families, and want experiential tourism. They want to move to rural areas and eco-tourism sites, and this is one of UP's many trump cards, with the state having boundless such sites on offer.

Meshram feels UP has everything tourists seek. There is an abundance of heritage, culture,



Mukesh Kumar Meshram
Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism & Culture, Uttar Pradesh

nature, palaces, forts, crafts and religious sites. This offering of almost every segment makes the state attractive for tourists across the board.

There are a hundred lesser-known destinations that have huge tourism potential. Agra and Varanasi apart, Dudhwa National Park, Kushinagar, the Chitrakoot



Prateek Hira
Chairman – IATO
Uttar Pradesh Chapter

area, and Mathura, which is on the ISKON route, have enormous potential. Ayodhya is becoming increasingly popular. The Maha Kumbh in 2025 in Thyagraj will be a mega-event, with some 40 crore visitors expected. The 'cup is literally spilling over'!

The state's Buddhist sites also should get more attention and be further developed. There is a need to attract more Buddhist traffic.

Against this overall backdrop of huge growth potential, our travel industry will have to step up a notch or two and do rigorous branding and marketing. The pillars of our effort have to be 'Trade, Technology, and Tourism'. Tourism marketing is now tech-driven with artificial intelligence (AI) and social media becoming significant marketing tools.

Today, tourists themselves become 'brand ambassadors'. They help our marketing efforts by promoting places they visit. So, it is very important to create a congenial atmosphere, offering them what they like, for instance, more cleanliness, increased comfort levels, good accommodation, hassle-free stays, and safety and security. Our ability to deliver all this will determine the level of our suc-

cess. With tourists on their side, state tourist boards can achieve great success.

Ayodhya is becoming more popular. The Maha Kumbh in 2025 in Thyagraj will be a mega-event, with some 40 crore visitors expected

Meshram feels the recently held IATO Convention in Lucknow has been a boon, providing varied and great exposure. On their part, UP Tourism is working to ensure that they garner maximum advantage from this.

Prateek Hira – Chairman – IATO Uttar Pradesh Chapter, feels UP's

resolve to be the top tourism state in India is commendable and the recently held 37th IATO Convention will help enormously by providing a direct and meaningful access to all stakeholders and investors in the tourism sector. Tour operators are the first line in the tourism business, selling destinations and attracting tourists. So having them see the product is a boon.

UP Tourism has been working by way of a four-pronged strategy, namely, Identification, Planning, Time-bound Implementation and Quantifiable Monitoring.

Hira feels the mapping of the state's tourism circuits of spiritual importance was a huge step in this direction. Be it Ramayana, Krishna, Buddha, Jain or Sufi saints, all were mapped strategically to boost tourism revenues. Against this backdrop, it's fair to say that UP has become the proverbial tourist 'land of plenty'.

Trends that will shape industry in '23

The past two years have proven that the travel and hospitality is equipped to adapt to the times we live in. The resilience of the sector is what makes it one to be reckoned with, as it continues to treat trends as opportunities. Parveen Chander, Executive Vice President, Sales & Marketing, IHCL reveals the top trends that will shape the industry in 2023.

Janice Alyosius

With the hospitality sector contributing 9.3 per cent to the overall Indian GDP and accounting for more than 8 per cent of India's total employment with over 60 million jobs pre-pandemic, the sector plays a key role in driving economic growth, and it is imperative to further develop the sector strategically to boost India's position as leading global economy. **Parveen Chander**, Executive Vice President, Sales & Marketing, IHCL said, "The sector shows a huge potential for manifold growth in the future; and in India, there is growing focus on developing the sector to strengthen India's position on the global travel and tourism map." According to Chander, as we look forward to 2023, here are a few trends that will be shaping the travel and hospitality industry in coming times.

Rise of the working nomads
Chander shared that of the many

long-lasting impacts made by the pandemic, one that is here to stay and will evolve in coming times is the hybrid model of working. "An increasing number of organisations have adopted flexible work policies that allow people to adopt a work-from-anywhere lifestyle, which is a huge opportunity in disguise for the travel and hospitality industry to embrace the new generation of digital-first working nomads, who mix business and leisure, thereby creating a new age of bleisure travel. From the latest technology to seamless connectivity to creating contemporary spaces that allow guests to mix work and pleasure effortlessly, the future of hospitality will expand to accommodate bleisure travellers," he said.

'Experience' is the new currency
While travel has always been known to expand one's horizons, today, travellers' expectations from travel have evolved to look beyond the usual highlights to explore a destination more comprehensively,



Parveen Chander
Executive Vice President
Sales & Marketing, IHCL

Travellers are looking for 'experiences' that bring alive the spirit of a destination in all its raw authenticity, from local culture to history to local experiences and traditional arts, food, and heritage. This has resulted in the growth of experiential travel, which brings together a mix of cultural exploration and experience-based activities that allow travellers to delve into all that a destination

has to offer. "For hospitality brands, the growth of experiential travel is an opportunity to curate offerings that are immersive, exclusive and unique while staying true to local heritage and traditions," he said.

Future is sustainability

The need to create a healthier and more sustainable world for future generations is more important than ever, and this growing awareness has led to an increase in the number of conscious travellers looking for brands and experiences that share a similar focus on sustainable practices. This shift in travellers' mindset has resulted in the trend of sustainable tourism, with an increasing number of travellers seeking not only to reduce their own travel carbon footprint but also to travel with brands that place sustainability at the heart of everything they do.

Chander suggested, "For hospitality brands, the rise of sustainable tourism provides a dual-tiered opportunity, because not only does

it encourage one to adopt greener, cleaner business practices in line with travellers' expectations, but it further inspires brands to adopt measures that make their businesses truly sustainable from the core."

Visitors are looking for 'experiences' that bring alive the spirit of a destination in all its raw authenticity, from local culture to history

The healing touch of wellness tourism

The wellness tourism industry is slated to grow to \$1098.42 billion in 2026 at a CAGR of 8.2% as per reports. Chander said, "For a country like India, which is home

to Ayurveda, this is an opportunity to combine ancient knowledge and modern medical expertise with the beautiful locales that India has in abundance to create wellness experiences that are truly world class." He further added, "Even as the 'Heal in India' initiative boosts India's position as a global leader in health, hospitality brands can tap into the potential of wellness tourism to develop offerings that allow travellers to embrace holistic rejuvenation practices while enjoying the kaleidoscopic beauty of all that the country has to offer."

Social tech is the new buzzword
While the advent of technology has been rapid, the pandemic has only accelerated the speed at which technology has been adopted by customers across all walks of life. This has left an impact on the travel and hospitality industry as travellers increasingly adopt digital platforms throughout their travel lifecycle right from planning to booking to in-hotel services to check-out.

India showcases strength at FITUR

With a total of 8,500 exhibiting participants, 131 countries and 755 exhibitors, the 43rd edition of FITUR was held in Madrid from 18 to 22 January 2023. Dinesh K. Patnaik, Indian Ambassador to Spain; Mohammed Riyas, Minister of Tourism, Kerala, and Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, GOI, inaugurated the India pavilion at the event this year.



Redefining travel retailing

Today's travellers are adept at using technology for their benefit, know exactly what they want, and expect their travel agents to present them with an abundance of choice. Here's how Travelport Smartpoint 11.1 helps in redefining travel retailing with its unique features.

The travel industry has had its share of challenges in the past two years, and as the world is back to normalcy, various changes can be witnessed. Today's travellers are adept at using technology for their benefit, know exactly what they want, and expect their travel agents to present them with an abundance of choice. Customisation also plays a vital role in travel retail today and agencies need the best support possible to sell efficiently to their customers. With Travelport Smartpoint, agencies can cater to their customers' needs easily and plan the best trip in a couple of minutes. With access to the world's travel content packed with special features to help make mundane tasks easier, Travelport Smartpoint is the one-stop solution for all travel agencies' requirements.

Access to unparalleled content
With Travelport, agencies get access to a vast amount of rich content, easily accessible at one place. There is also the option of



customised search results, so that the most suitable options for travellers are visible. With unparalleled travel content at their disposal, the travel agencies have the power to sell more efficiently along with building a devoted clientele. By accessing in-depth information and visual content, Travelport Smartpoint users can streamline the travel decision-making process for their customers.

Airline bookings made easier
Travelport Smartpoint gives its subscribers the ability to choose from over 400 airlines, including the

leading LCCs that can be booked from a single window, with a few clicks. This saves up the travel agencies time, as there is no need to go to the provider's website.

More sales opportunities
Travelport Smartpoint gives you the access to several upgraded features such as SeatGuru integration, graphical seat maps, adding facilities like extra luggage, lounge access, on-board Wi-Fi, special meals and so on. Enabling these features help the travel agencies in securing more sales opportunities, as their trav-

ellers can request everything at a single place.

Access to NDC content
NDC content has proven to be revolutionary in the travel industry and

Travelport Smartpoint gives the ability to choose from over 400 airlines, including leading LCCs that can be booked from a single window

has changed the way travel content is presented to the travellers. Travelport Smartpoint's NDC plugin helps users to deliver the best possible experience for travellers, as it gives the agencies access to a vast pool of NDC content.

Customisation and configuration
Travelport Smartpoint comes with the option of easily configuring and customising the platform so that it reflects the travel agencies' standard operating procedures.

Flexibility
Travelport Smartpoint is a flexible platform that supports both styles of working as the user can either enter a command or simply point and click to make a booking or view options. Up to 8 windows, plus the PNR viewer screen, can be run simultaneously, which leads to a never-interrupted workflow. Also, there are various third-party apps available on the Travelport Marketplace for travel agents' use.

Improved customer service
For the travellers, receiving regular quotes and itineraries from their travel agents makes them feel connected and secure. But at times, sending these quotes and itineraries can be a hassle. However, Travelport's Electronic

Miscellaneous Document (EMD) Manager makes it possible to issue EMDs for paid seats and ancillaries without getting in touch with the carrier. The difficulty involved in issuing an EMD is eliminated by the straightforward graphical user interface. Also, Travelport Trip Quote and Travelport ViewTrip enables the travel agents to send quotes and itineraries directly to their customers.



Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Operating Officer
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

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

Offering a 'home' away from home

Represented by Renuka Natu in India, this London-based DMC offers HNIs and small private groups the comfort of being at home away from home when they are in the UK or Europe. Khushboo Shah, Founder & CEO, GO2UK&Europe Travels, shares details of what they offer and what are their focus areas.

Hazel Jain

What was your vision behind starting GO2UK&Europe Travels?

With a professional background in public relations and having worked in the travel industry what was clear to me was that there was a gap in the market for a destination management company that understood the needs of the Indian traveller and delivered a customer-centric service model for the luxury segment, which broke barriers of language, food, and at the same time was cost-effective. Having travelled extensively in the UK and Europe and managed tours for HNIs and private groups from across the world, it became clear to me that the comfort of 'being a home away from home' was a gap for Indians travelling to the UK and Europe: in many ways that become the genesis of Go2UK&Europe Travels. Headquartered out of London, GO2UK&Europe Travels focusses on private tours for FITs and small groups (15-20 pax).



Khushboo Shah
Founder & CEO
GO2UK&Europe Travels

How does it differentiate itself from others in the market?

Customer experience is at the centre of our company ethos. Additionally, we focus only on private tours for FITs and smaller groups (up to 20 pax) with experiences and itineraries which are still untapped. All our suppliers and hotels are hand selected through a vigorous process, which includes testing them on their ability to meet the customer

experience. Our team is available to our customers all the time on tour.

What is the core customer base and target audience of GO2UK&Europe?

All leading large travel agents of India are now customers of GO2UK & Europe Travels – more and more, we are becoming the preferred partners for these folks for their private tours for FITs and private groups. Our customer base is now expanding beyond India to travel agents in Sri Lanka, Middle East and other parts of Asia. We specialise in tours for the UK and Europe. Popular destinations include England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Croatia.

Europe is increasingly becoming a DIY destination. How do you differentiate services to ensure agent retention?

When travel agents come to us, they specifically look for private



tours and an overall tried and tested service which they cannot find on the internet. There is a lot of time and effort that is involved in curat-

Our customer base is now expanding beyond India to travel agents in Sri Lanka, ME and other parts of Asia. We specialise in UK and Europe tours

ing a great experience, including finding the right suppliers (hotels/restaurants/ drivers) and on tour support. Our ability to deliver that end to end service with a peace of mind, which is effortless not only

for the travel agent/ end customer, but also delivers 'value for money', and will continue to be unmatched.

India representative
Speaking about what attracted her to represent GO2UK & Europe Travels, **Renuka Natu**, Travel Market Advisor, GO2UK&Europe Travels, says, "Europe has always been one of my top favourite continents.

Having explored it as a solo traveller in my early 20s, Europe has always remained very close to my heart. The ethos of the team at Go2UK&Europe Travels resonates with my sensibilities and is aligned with my body of work in the luxury segment of the B2B platform in India. Hence, I am happy to be their marketing partner in India under 'Renuka Natu Travel Relations'."

GO2UK&Europe specialises in:

- ❖ 4/5-star accommodation – Stays in hotels, villas as well as castle stays for luxury travellers. For the adventurous ones, it can also provide igloo and treehouse stays
- ❖ One of its kind experiences – Out of the box experiences, going out of the way to curate an experience that has never been done before
- ❖ Private chauffeur driven vehicles – Tours in luxury cars like Bentley, Range Rover, Mercedes V class (for 5-7 people), Mercedes sprinters, as well as tours in helicopters. The chauffeurs are licensed and English speaking and can work with the clients to customise their tour based on their likes and dislikes. Multilingual drivers who know Hindi, Tamil, and Arabic
- ❖ Meals – Caters to all religions and provide all sorts of meals, which include Michelin, vegetarian, Jain, and Halal

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GoldenPass Express excites trade

Frédéric Delachaux, Head (Marketing), GoldenPass Express, was in India recently to introduce the Swiss train to the travel trade in Mumbai. The newly launched train makes travel for visitors convenient with direct connections between Montreux - Interlaken - Montreux without any change in Zweisimmen within 3 hours 15 minutes.



Hazel Jain

Sharing information about Swiss train GoldenPass Express with travel trade in Mumbai recently, **Frédéric Delachaux**, Head (Marketing), GoldenPass Express, said, "It is a touristic train passing through the most scenic route connecting the French-speaking part of Switzerland with the German one. The train passes through the fairytale landscape between the villages, UNESCO World Heritage Vineyards - Lavaux, meadows, valleys and

lake of the Lake Geneva Region. The new Golden Pass Express is a venture, which has been under planning for more than 100 years and we are happy that the yesterday dream comes true and it's happening now. The idea behind the Golden Pass Express is to make travel convenient with direct connections between Montreux - Interlaken - Montreux without any change in Zweisimmen within 3 hours and 15 minutes."

Trains are the most convenient mode of transport in Switzerland.

"They are on time and connect the country in a few hours with luggage storage facility, wheelchair easily boarded on the train, baby pram space and many more facilities. So, travelling is very easy and convenient on Swiss trains, which attracts every Indian, and also the Swiss Travel pass covers all the public transport trains," Delachaux said, adding that, "We are very happy to have our dream come true with the new train and serve convenience to our clients. We are happy when our clients are happy. We are waiting to welcome our clients on the Golden Pass Express."

Highlighting the Lake Geneva Region in Switzerland, **Vidhya Chettiar**, Market Director - India, GCC, Nepal & Sri Lanka, said that the direct connection between Interlaken Ost - Montreux - Interlaken will be a boon to the Indian market where changing the train with luggage will be no more a hassle. "Travel agents can sell the sectors through their wholesalers and web-



Frédéric Delachaux and Vidhya Chettiar

shop. GoldenPass Express is a part of the Swiss Travel pass, which is a famous product in the Indian market. This can be combined with Glacier 3000 with activities on the mountain with Indian lunch. Visitors can then take the Golden Pass Express train passing through Gstaad to Montreux and take the CGN Boat Cruise from Montreux to Lausanne passing through the UNESCO World Heritage vineyards," she said.

Switzerland is a dream destination for every Indian. Chettiar

Travelling is very easy and convenient on Swiss trains, which attracts every Indian, and also the Swiss Travel pass covers all the public transport trains

said, "We are very happy with the growth of the Indians com-

ing to the Lake Geneva Region, GoldenPass train and the excursions of Lake Geneva Region. We are very positive that the Golden Pass Express will be a great success in the Indian market. We are doing marketing campaigns and educating the trade about our new train. The travel agents are very happy with the new train, which will be the most convenient mode of transport between the German speaking and the French speaking parts of Switzerland. They are excited for the start of the train," she added.

Prepping for 1st global tourism meet

The Union Ministry of Tourism is getting ready for its first Global Tourism Summit, to be organised in New Delhi from 10 to 12 April 2023, in which G20 member countries are invited to participate. An introductory event for the summit was held in Mumbai recently, which was attended by Consul Generals of various countries, potential investors and other tourism stakeholders.





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'Robust growth in domestic sector'

► Contd from page 3

physical presence was paramount and hence a lot of money was spent on hiring location, recruiting people and doing physical events for distribution of material, literature, roadshows and doing physical events in those countries. "After a reassessment a few years back, the number of these offices was reduced from 14 to 8 crucial markets. There were reservations within the government of the efficacy or utility of these offices. Hence, finally after assessment at the committee of secretaries it was decided that we do away with all these offices, because given the changed circumstances, the growth of internet, in an era where people are digital nomads, there is no necessity to maintain such physical offices. Thus, it would be better to look or try different models that many countries have adopted," he explained.

He further said, "MOT did a study with the help of Invest India and our consultants on National Tourism Board of India (NTBI), and the promotion strategy and the efficacy of these offices. It was felt that the MOT was not equipped to do the



Arvind Singh
Secretary Tourism, GoI

promotion work, and an external agency is needed, which would be nimble and housed with experts from the industry to do this kind of executive role. That is how the proposal to set up NTBI came, which will overlook all the overseas promotion and domestic promotion activities as the primary mandate. This will be housed by tourism officials, who are coming back from the countries and they will manage those regions, but will be based in New Delhi at NTBI. That is the mandate from the committee of secretaries, and we could hire talent from outside to run these boards, get

representatives from industry and the budget for promotion would be placed with this board, which would manage the overseas and domestic promotion work, which is currently being done by the MOT."

Singh revealed that the COVID period gave them time to rethink the strategies. "The idea to establish NTBI came and has found acceptance within the government. The offices, in such a situation, do not have any utility. If any physical work would be required, the officers at the 20 missions could do it. More such officers can be designated in future. Under the Prime Minister's order, now the missions are being monitored by the MEA on the promotion of Trade Technology and Tourism—the 3Ts. The officers have devised strategy papers for that. Secondly, there would be market representatives, or private agencies, which will be selected through a transparent bidding process. We have already identified the markets, where we would place these market representative agencies," he said.

He elaborated, "Moving ahead, the role of the missions and the

UDAN scheme and tourism

Post-pandemic, the MOT has placed a greater emphasis on sustainable and responsible tourism, in addition to promoting traditional destinations. **Arvind Singh** stated that the government is working on a number of initiatives, including a change in MDA guidelines to encourage tourism to the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir, as well as a revision of financial assistance. The government is making attempts to improve connectivity shared Singh. "The numbers of highways that are being built are highest than ever we have witnessed in our times. The number of airports that have come up in the country in the last few years are in multiples." He informed

that under the UDAN Scheme, India witnessed the highest percentage of passenger traffic growth in tier II and tier III cities pre-COVID. "Airports such as Ranchi, Bhubaneswar, Bagdogra, Guwahati showed above 25 per cent growth. This was primarily due to the expansion of airport infrastructure and connectivity provided by the low-cost airlines."

He said that the government will continue supporting UDAN scheme because it has helped to provide connectivity and access to remote areas. "Some airports that we had never heard of have appeared on India's aviation map. Belgaum Airport began to overtake Bengaluru as the sec-

ond busiest airport in Karnataka, competing with Mangalore. An airport in Odisha, such as Jaipur or Jharsuguda, has taken off. Darbhanga, which began in Bihar, has taken off and all flights are operational. Initially, three flights were operated under the UDAN scheme; now, there are eight flights, which are fully booked. Connectivity is improving and people are taking advantage of these services," he said. He also highlighted that the draft national tourism policy is in the final stages of government consultation. "Another challenge is destination management. As we grow, we require new skills. We need to skill the population that will work in these sectors."

officers will be replaced by the NTBI, which would overall see the campaign in the different regions, as well as study the trends. Work through the Indian missions abroad in crucial markets and through the private agencies would be placed and selected through an open bid-

ding process. We have done all the thinking, paperwork and the groundwork. We presented this to the PM in May 2022, and he asked the cabinet secretary to go through it, which was done in August 2022. We have his in-principle nod to set up the NTBI and to restructure

our media strategy. Further processes of getting the Finance Ministry's approval and the Cabinet's approval is underway. Our notes to the finance ministry in the cabinet are virtually ready and we are just waiting for the dates for the meeting." 🇮🇳

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:

FEBRUARY 2023

Date	Event	Time
2-4	OTM Mumabi	10:00 am
9-11	SATTE	10:00 am
12-14	BIT Milano	9:00 am
13-14	GPS-Nagpur	11:30 am
13-15	Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event	8:00 am
14-15	International Mediterranean Tourism Market	9:00 am
14-17	UNWTO Global Tourism Innovation Forum	11:00 am
16	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
16-19	Thai International Travel Fair	9:00 am
17-19	India Travel Mart - Chandigarh	11:00 am
20-21	GPS-Lucknow	11:30 am
20-22	Gujarat Travel Fair	10:00 am
23-26	Romanian Tourism Fair	10:00 am
23-26	International Tourism Fair	10:00 am
24-26	Travel & Tourism Fair-Chennai	10:00 am
28-1 Mar	GPS-Chandigarh	11:30 am

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

Amusement industry in recovery stage

Rajeev Jainapurkar, Chairman, Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries, says the amusement park industry continues to recover from the pandemic effect and it is important to focus on interactive tourism, both for domestic and inbound tourists.

TT Bureau

The amusement park industry suffered a huge setback even after COVID cases reduced and travel opened for everyone. However, **Rajeev Jainapurkar**, Chairman, Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI), says, "COVID was a challenge and fortunately the good news is that all the parks across the country are doing well. We as an association represent theme parks, amusement park, water parks, adventure parks, snow parks, as well as aquariums and visitors attractions. We even have a spiritual experience at the Saiteerth — India's first devotional theme park in Shirdi. We also have a special indoor-attractions called family entertainment centres, which number to about 2,000 in India," he said.

He claimed that the association also has manufacturers. "They manufacture rides and experiences. We attended the Dharamshala state tourism ministers' meeting last year to share what this indus-



Rajeev Jainapurkar
Chairman, Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI)

try was doing. That was the first time we were invited to talk about it," he mentioned. Highlighting the challenges that this industry is facing, he shared, "We have challenges, especially in terms of GST, which has been 18 per cent. We also have a challenge of import duties. This industry has three arms — infrastructure, investment and employment. This is the only industry where skill development is our strength because the people who work in a park for years at length must keep smiling

and make the people laugh and smile. In India, we have observed that it's mostly the middle class and upper middle class that goes to the park. I always believe that to have a higher happiness quotient, we require more parks."

However, he believes that India is way behind other Asian countries when it comes to adventure park industry. "If you compare India with other Asian countries, we are at the infant stage. Average footfall with a good park is

governments, by giving land for our infrastructure. We have always told the central government, that if they can write down or cut down the GST and give us an opportunity to move more on the land bank or creating special zones like in tourism, India will have huge opportunities to grow," he said.

"There is a lot of talk on ecotourism, adventure tourism and experiential tourism, but no one is talking about interactive



about 1.5 to 2 million (in a year), whereas in neighbouring countries, it is about three times or four times higher. I have always felt that if the government partners with us, especially state

tourism. We as an industry believe in giving experience and it's a lifetime investment for the guest who wants to come to experience adventure parks," he concluded. 🇮🇳

India 2nd best market for Singapore

India has been ranked the second-largest tourist market for Singapore in 2022. During the year, the island nation received 686,000 visitors from the country, nearly half of the pre-pandemic levels. Singapore Tourism Board, Singapore Airlines (SIA), and Scoot recently organised an 'Industry Appreciation Gala Night' in New Delhi to thank the travel trade for their support.



Janice Alyosius

Singapore Tourism Board, Singapore Airlines (SIA), and Scoot recently organised an 'Industry Appreciation Gala Night' in New Delhi to recognise the contribution of their travel partners in the strong recovery of Indian visitors to Singapore in 2022.

Raymond Lim, Area Director, New Delhi, Singapore Tourism Board, praised the travel partners for their support in reviving the Singapore's tourism industry. He said that Singapore received 686,000 Indian visitors, which is nearly half of the 1.4 million Indian visitors received in 2019. "This is a very good result, and it is only possible because all of you are rooting for the Singapore destination and helping us in achieving a very good and strong recovery in tourism," he added.

Lim believes that the cruise segment contributed significantly to the tourism revival in Singapore,



(L-R); Brian Torrey, Kelvin Kwan and Raymond Lim

particularly in the last two quarters of 2022. "In the months of May and December. We saw nearly a 36 per cent recovery of cruise passengers that we achieved in 2022, first with Royal Caribbean and then with Resorts World Cruises. The trend provided us with a second win of tourists from India," he said.

Speaking of the MICE segment, Singapore did exceptionally well,

and in September, the country received two "very large" groups of MICE, and it sent a strong message that the traffic from India is back. "We are very happy to know that small, medium, and large groups are all lining up for 2023. We have a very good and healthy pipeline of M&I groups coming to Singapore in 2023 despite the fact that the year did not begin on a very positive note because of the

requirement of RT PCR for people returning from Singapore to India. But I believe that is something that we can all manage, and we have managed that very well over the last few years. So, this should not derail our progress in 2023," he added.

Kelvin Kwan, Manager – Northern and Eastern India, Singapore Airlines, said, "I believe Singapore Airlines is very confident because of the continued efforts that we have made during the pandemic years into the product and services that we have had despite the challenges that we have faced. So, we are hoping that 2023 will be another successful year for us as a company."

He added, "We have spent a lot of time ensuring that capacity is restored to India. And when it comes to Singapore Airlines as a company, and as a global network, India was one of the first to receive the capacity injection that we re-

quested. And henceforth, India continues to remain at the forefront of Singapore Airlines."

Brian Torrey, General Manager, Scoot India, thanked the trade partners for their support and said,

India was one of the first to receive the capacity injection. And henceforth, India continues to remain at the forefront of Singapore Airlines

"The pandemic tested the entire aviation industry, but we emerged stronger because of our loyal partners. Scoot does not operate to Delhi currently, but provided the

support the company would leverage the opportunity of pioneering a new market or go to a second-tier city. In the future, we hope to expand to newer destinations and start operations from more Indian gateways. Scoot has remained an affordable way to travel without compromising safety and comfort over the years. We hope that 2023 will be a fantastic year for all of you."

Singapore Tourism Board, Singapore Airlines (SIA), and Scoot awarded the travel partners in different segments. MakeMyTrip and EaseMyTrip won the top tech partner award, Zeith Holidays and JTB India won the top MICE partner award, DPauls Travel and Tours and Yoker Holidays Services won the top leisure partner award, Yatra for business and Ebix Travel and Holidays won the top business travel partner awards and FSR Travels and Trackbudget Travel Services won the Emerging Star award. 📌

Recognition for role in biz revival

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB), Singapore International Airlines (SIA), and Scoot organised an 'Industry Appreciation Gala Night' at Bo Tai Switch, Shangri-La Eros Hotel in New Delhi. The networking event was held to thank and recognise their travel partners for their contributions to the Singapore's tourism industry's strong revival in 2022.



MOVEMENTS

IAMAI

New Delhi

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) has appointed **SANJAY MOHAN**, Group CTO, MakeMyTrip, as the new chair of the TravelTech Committee, which functions under its aegis. Rikant Pittie, Co-founder, EaseMyTrip and Yang Li, Head-Public Affairs (APAC), Booking.com, have been appointed as the new co-chairs. The new leadership of the TravelTech Committee will actively engage with the government as well as industry representatives to address some of the key challenges faced by the sector through policy and advocacy at both domestic and international levels. The new leadership team brings a unique perspective for the future.



THE WESTIN RISHIKESH RESORT & SPA

Rishikesh

The Westin Rishikesh Resort & Spa appoints **ROHIT CHHOKAR** as the Director of Sales and Marketing. With more than 14 years of expertise in innovating and implementing strategies in the hospitality industry, Rohit will be focusing on optimizing the resort's revenue performance, as well as establishing the brand's positioning of being the most versatile and preferred resort in the Himalayas. With the new position, Rohit will be instrumental in implementing strategies to enhance the brand reputation by driving innovative campaigns. He will spearhead business plans to deliver profitability and continue the successful growth trajectory for the hotel brand.



THE WESTIN KOLKATA RAJARHAT

Kolkata

The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat has appointed **ANJALI YADAV** as the Assistant Manager Marketing & Communication. She will be responsible for developing and implementing the overall Marketing & PR strategies, supervising and elevating digital platforms and creating a sound network for the mentioned functions for the property. Anjali graduated from Amity University with a Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication. She then went on to pursue a post-graduate diploma in Corporate Communication and Event Management from Apeejay Institute of Mass Communication in New Delhi.



CROWNE PLAZA

Kochi

JOHN MATHULLA has been appointed as the Director of Operations at Crowne Plaza Kochi. John has 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has been associated with well-known reputed brands like ITC Gardenia Bangalore, Crowne Plaza Kochi, Holiday Inn Chennai for various assignments. Prior to re-joining Crowne Plaza Kochi, he was working with ITC Hotels & Resorts Dharamshala as the Unit Head. He is passionate for travelling and watching movies. Crowne Plaza Kochi, ideally located on the new business district of city NH 47 Bypass, is easily accessible. The location of the property is 45 minutes away from Cochin International Airport.



THE WESTIN

Goa

The Westin Goa appoints **NITIN GOHRI**, a highly driven professional with more than 12 years of experience in IHCL, as the Director of Sales. He adds a great deal of industry knowledge and expertise to the MICE business. Nitin will be further taking up the responsibility to lead and manage strategic sales, developing MICE strategies, and expanding the wedding portfolio for The Westin Goa. Nitin began his career with the Regional Sales Team in Delhi before moving to the Taj Palace in New Delhi, where he worked on several convention segments.



BUSINESS EVENTS SYDNEY

Sydney

Business Events Sydney has appointed **JOO-REI MATHIESON** to the BESydney bidding team as Associate Director – Global Corporate & Incentive, targeting new opportunities in the rapidly rising India market and driving business development across the Southeast Asia region. Mathieson brings to BESydney close to 19 years of experience in the hotel industry covering various roles and experience in sales, business development, conferencing, and business events. She was most recently with Marriott International as the Market Director of Sales (Australia and Fiji). Prior to that, Joo-Rei worked with Sheraton Grand and St Regis Macau.



THE TRAVEL CORPORATION

Kolkata

An adept professional with more than 16 years of experience in the tourism sector, **SREEMOYEE MITRA** has been appointed as the Assistant Director of Sales North & East India at The Travel Corporation. She has proven her mettle in business development, operations and commercial achievements for companies like Club7 Holidays, Cox & Kings and Europamundo Vacations. In each of her previous roles she has contributed immensely towards creating incredible achievements for the organizations and will now oversee business development strategies.



CROWNE PLAZA CHENNAI ADYAR GATE

Chennai

Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Gate appoints **SHANMUGAVEL THANGAVEL** as Learning and Development Manager. Shan brings along with him an industry experience of 14 years across brands like Starwood Hotels, The Leela Hotels, ITC Hotels, Marriott Hotels & Resorts, and Hilton Hotels and Resorts. With his skills and ability to resolve conflict quickly and efficiently, Jacob will be responsible for the recruitment of the team, managing payroll, ensuring ethical business practices, statutory compliances, associate well-being, learning & development and team engagement. Shan is an expert in employee engagement.



CROWNE PLAZA

Greater Noida

KKEYUR SANGANI, a seasoned professional with extensive experience, has been appointed as the Crowne Meeting Director at Crowne Plaza Greater Noida. He is a result-oriented and passionate professional with a wealth of experience in enhancing sales, marketing, and revenue streams. He has a deep understanding of the market and has worked with renowned brands, his professional portfolio includes JW Marriott, Jin Jiang International Hotel, InterContinental Hotels Group, and PVR Cinemas. His last assignment was as a General Manager of Operations at PVR Limited, Mumbai. Kkeyur holds an MBA in Hotel Management from the Business & Hotel Management School (BHMS).



TALKING People

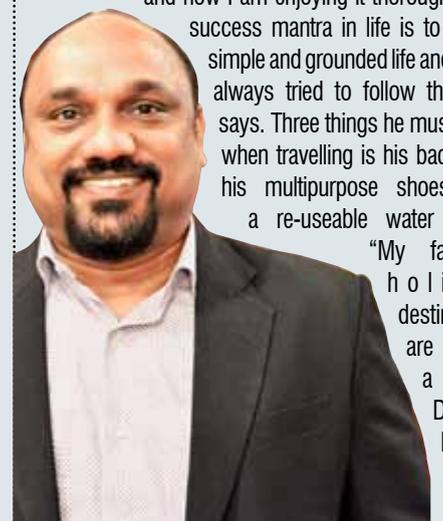
Work-life balance is a very important at the hotel, says **SIDDHARTH NILKANTH MEHENDALE**, Director of Finance, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences. "To de-stress, adventure travel or long walks and swimming, helps me feel rejuvenated. The pandemic was a big challenge for all of us individually in hospitality. It also helped us open doors to hidden talents and develop a wide array of additional skill set. I learned on how to play guitar and it helped me develop my range of skill set. One of the key benefits of working in hospitality is that you get the opportunity to explore new places. In India, Goa and wildlife destination in Kabini are one of my favourite places."



AMIT SIDANA, Vice President (Sales & Marketing), Pride Group of Hotels, doesn't believe in the word 'stress'. "I don't allow negative thoughts into my head, so life is sorted. My day starts at 5:30am and 6:15 onwards I am playing lawn tennis, which is the best way to start the day. During the lockdown, there have been some realisations. I could implement everything I studied during my Hotel Management during the lockdown after almost two decades. But importantly, I have learned the art of visualizing."



CLEVIO MONTEIRO, CEO of Visa Lounge, de-stresses by doing yoga diligently every day without fail. "During the lockdown, I also took up cooking and now I am enjoying it thoroughly! My success mantra in life is to lead a simple and grounded life and I have always tried to follow this," he says. Three things he must carry when travelling is his backpack, his multipurpose shoes, and a re-useable water bottle. "My favourite holiday destinations are Goa and Dubai," he adds.



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Small planes to drive next phase of aviation growth

Rakesh Bansal, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, says the government is working towards expanding small and big airports, and once smaller airports are operational, smaller aircraft will lead the next phase of civil aviation growth.



Janice Alyosius

Rakesh Bansal, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, says the civil aviation industry in India is in one of the best phases in its history. "We are expanding small and big airports. The ministry is working towards expanding the airport network and building capacity of major airports. Airports in Delhi and Hyderabad are being expanded. A second terminal is being built in Delhi and Bengaluru. We have already opened a new airport in Mumbai and smaller airports are being built in Goa. Kushinagar International Airport, Devegowda Airport, and Keshod Airport are all operational. As a result, the range of large, medium, and small airports is being broadened," he says.

"While there were around 70 airports in the country till 2015, we have added 70 more in the last 7-8 years. And we will add another 70 in the next 2-3 years. So, we will fly up to about 220 airports from around 145, where we are now. So, there is tremendous growth in the airport sector. Many of these additional airports are smaller and connecting to small towns," he adds.

Uttar Pradesh currently has nine airports, another five airports are set to open in the coming months, bringing the total number of airports in the state to around 18. "So, there are a lot of airports being built in UP," shares Bansal.

Speaking of Udaan scheme, he says, "There is a three-year lock in period under the Udaan scheme, but there is no lock-in period for normal operations in non-Udaan



sectors. Several flights were cancelled during COVID, but this will not happen again because there is so much demand that airlines



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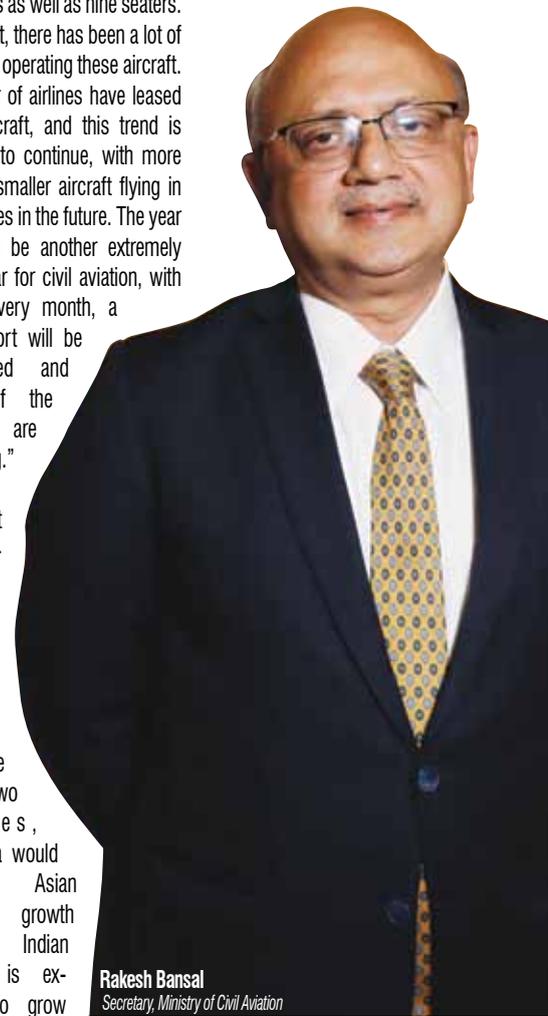
will not cancel flights. Demand is at an all-time high today, and domestic passenger numbers have surpassed pre-COVID levels, with which we are very pleased."

He adds, "Most of the airlines in India are operating either A320 or a Boeing 737, these carry about 180 passengers. A number of airlines, including Indigo and Alliance Air, operate the 80R72 aircraft, which carries 72 passengers. Spicejet operates the Q400, which carries approximately 90 passengers. When we operation-

alize smaller airports in the next phase of growth, it will belong to smaller aircraft in the category of 19 seaters as well as nine seaters. As a result, there has been a lot of interest in operating these aircraft. A number of airlines have leased these aircraft, and this trend is expected to continue, with more of these smaller aircraft flying in Indian skies in the future. The year 2023 will be another extremely bright year for civil aviation, with almost every month, a new airport will be inaugurated and many of the terminals are expanding."

A recent study indicates Asia will drive the global aviation growth over the next two decades, with India would become Asian aviation's growth engine. Indian Aviation is expected to grow

four times by CY41. Realising this growth potential, it would require industry efforts on multiple fronts such as creation of international hubs in India, implementation of digital solutions in the aviation sector, indigenization of the aviation sector, skilling and safety. India has the dual advantage of a large market and geography. India is the world's third largest market for civil aviation and moving forward, Indian airports can be a transfer point for over 90 million I to I pax per annum from other regions. 



Rakesh Bansal
Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation



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