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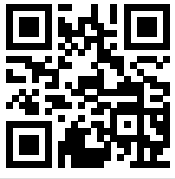
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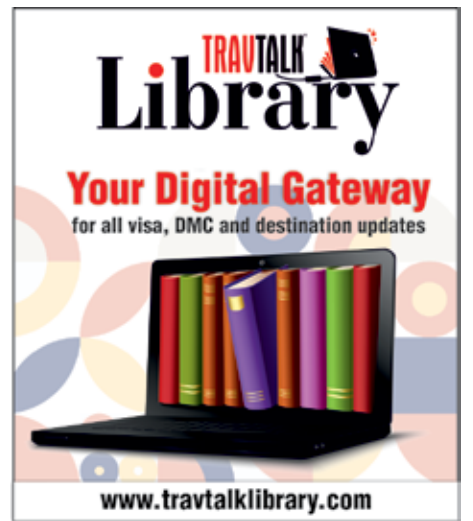
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Tourism in 'mission mode'

Going by the Budget speech of Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, Government of India, the tourism industry can expect a lot from the government in the coming year. The government has proposed ₹2,400 crore outlay for the tourism sector with extended focus on Dekho Apna Desh, Swadesh Darshan and Unity Mall schemes.



Nisha Verma

Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, Government of India, in her Budget Speech, highlighted that tourism promotion will be a priority for the government. She said that tourism promotion will be taken up in a 'mission mode' with active participation of states, convergence of government programs and PPP.

Speaking about tourism at length, she said, "With an integrated and innovative approach, at least 50 destinations will be selected through challenge mode. In addition, aspects such as physical connectivity, virtual connectivity, tourist guides, high standards for food streets and tourist security, would be made available on an app to enhance tourist experience. Every destination would be developed as a complete package. The



Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, Government of India, in New Delhi on the Budget Day

focus of development of tourism would be on domestic as well as foreign tours," she said, adding that sector-specific skilling and entrepreneurship development will be dovetailed to achieve the objectives of Dekho Apna Desh initiative and theme-based tourist circuits, as well as the Swadesh Darshan scheme. "Under the vibrant villages program, tourism infrastructure

and amenities will be facilitated in border villages," she said.

A total of ₹2,400 crores has been allocated to the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), with major portion of the outlay amounting to ₹1,742 crores allocated for development of tourism infrastructure and ₹242 crores for promotion and branding. An outlay of ₹1,412

crores has been allocated for the Swadesh Darshan Scheme. An amount of ₹250 crores has been allocated for the PRASHAD Scheme. The tourism sector holds huge opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship for the youth and that 50 additional airports, heliports and aerodromes for regional air connectivity will be taken up, the minister said.

"We are very happy with the increased focus and attention on tourism in the Union Budget 2023-24. The focus on infrastructure and skill development outlined by the Finance Minister in the budget will definitely help revive the tourism and hospitality sector in India. All the stakeholders will have to work together to take the mission, which the PM has for the sector to take it forward. For the app and the Unity Mall, we will work out the scheme as we go forward."

Arvind Singh
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, GoaRohan Khaunte
Minister for Tourism, IT and Printing, and
Stationery, Government of Goa

"This budget has brought a ray of hope for the pandemic-affected industry by interweaving various missions to strengthen it. The fact that Goa is in line with the centre's mission of opening a Unity Mall is significantly encouraging. The budget also emphasizes on promoting active participation of associations between government initiatives and PPPs, which will provide unique experiences to the visitors."

Contd on page 10 ▶

1st G-20 tourism meeting a hit

The first Tourism Working Group meeting under India's G20 presidency was a huge success. The 5 key priority areas were endorsed by all member countries, invitee countries and international organisations.



TT Bureau

Under India's G-20 Presidency Ministry of Tourism and Gujarat put its best foot forward at the 1st Tourism Working Group meeting, held at Rann of Kutch from 7-10 February. There were two side events held as part of this meeting. On Day-1, first side event was held before the working group meeting, with the theme 'Rural Tourism for Community Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation'. At the inaugural session, **Bhupendra Bhai Patel**, CM of Gujarat; **G. Kishan Reddy**, Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER; and Parshottam Rupala, Union Min-



ister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, were in attendance. Indian dignitaries shared their views on Indian tourist destinations, steps taken by govt to promote tourism, safety of tourists, digitisation in the sector and impact of tourism on local economy and employment. The five priority themes identified by the Indian Presidency for the working group meeting include—Green Tourism: 'Greening of tourism sector for a sustainable, responsible and resilient

tourism sector'; Digitalization: 'Harnessing the power of digitalization to promote competitiveness, inclusion and sustainability in tourism sector'; Skills: 'Empowering youth with skills for jobs and entrepreneurship in tourism sector'; Tourism MSMEs: 'Nurturing tourism MSMEs / Startups/ private sector to unleash innovation and dynamism in tourism sector' & Destination Management: 'Rethinking the strategic management of destinations towards a holistic approach that delivers on the SDGs'. All 5 key priority areas set for the deliberations were endorsed by all G20 Members, Guest countries and international organisations.

'Visit India Year' takes off

G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, launched 'Visit India Year 2023' initiative recently, under which year-long activities will be held to promote tourism in the country.



TT Bureau

Bharat Parv, a six-day mega event, was organised at Red Fort Lawns by the Union Ministry of Tourism from 26 to 31 January. **G Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER, inaugurated the event and also unveiled the Incredible India digital calendar, with the theme 'The Incredible Festivals of India'. In his inaugural address, Reddy said that the artists, handicrafts, and food stalls from all over India being present, Bharat Parv fulfils the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'.



Reddy also launched the Visit India Year 2023 initiative and unveiled its logo, officially kicking off the year-long activities for promoting tourism in India. Reddy said that this is an important year as India is heading G20. "More than one lakh foreign dele-

gates will visit India this year and they will be showcased entire gamut of India's culture, including monuments and festivals. Each foreign delegate of G20 will be a brand ambassador of India's culture, heritage and tourist destinations," he added.

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GTIS 2023 to change tourism landscape

The MOT is set to organise the first Global Tourism Investors Summit (GTIS) in New Delhi from 10-12 April this year, which will see a plethora of projects being showcased by states. Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, shares his views with **TRAVELTALK**.

Nisha Verma

GTIS is aimed at promoting India as an 'investment destination' for tourism and provide a common platform for the central/ state governments and the investors to discuss investment possibilities in the tourism industry of India.

GTIS 2023

Sharing details for the same, **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, said, "The main aim is that we have been seeing significant investment from both domestic and foreign investors mainly in the hospitality and accommodation sector in the past. However, there was no investment in the last two years because of the pandemic. Thus, GTIS is to rekindle interests of the investors in that sector and to show them the new areas or new products



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

crease is not seen in the number of international flights yet. "The number of flights has not yet gone back pre-COVID levels. Thus, limited capacity, coupled with other geopolitical issues like the price of oil or gas going up due to the war, is probably leading to a rise

pand and increase their network through aircraft acquisition. This will ease the process and increase the supply among Indian carriers. I think the government will then take a proper stand. Apart from that, there are bilateral rights and political elements involved in this," he updated.

Participation in trade fairs

Despite overseas tourist offices closing in March, the MOT will take part in all trade shows wherever the tourist offices are there till they are open. "They will not vanish and the officers will be here as part of National Tourism Board of India (NTBI). We had a successful participation in WTM and FITUR. We expect a strong participation at ITB Berlin also. Going ahead, we will be participating with the help of local missions and local ambassadors taking keen interest. In fact, our ambassador in Berlin

between the MEA and the board. Since the message has come from the PM about promotion of trade, technology and tourism, all the missions are being monitored by the MEA."

Marketing campaigns

Singh said that they also want the marketing campaigns to start early. Before the NTBI comes into being, he informed, "We are taking case by case approvals for participation in exhibitions and shows like we did at WTM and FITUR. Now, we are going to do the same at ITB Berlin. Alongside we will do an event in Berlin."

States will showcase the investible projects they have in hand in different parts of the NE, in deep South, Lakshadweep or Andamans

Transition to missions

Speaking on how the overseas offices will be handing over to the missions, Singh explained, "Our proposal initially was that while we would get the senior level tourist officers back to the country, we would be employing the local level staff within the embassies so that the transition process is smooth, but that was not agreed to. Hence when we get the staff back, they would be our main personnel from the tourism industry in the board and with their experience globally, they will be helping the trade and doing the handholding in connection with the missions of the local persons who will be there on board. They can travel from India whenever they have to do some physical work, but the station will be at the national headquarters."

Arrival targets

Singh said that they are expecting to go back to pre-COVID numbers for inbound by next year and domestic by this calendar year itself. "The G20 would give it a push and we have projections. We expect 100 million tourists by 2047. There is a trajectory we are working on," he added.

Cruise Tourism

Singh said cruise operators were optimistic. "According to them, the cruise market in India will explode. Thus, we have invested a lot and given money to the ports to invest in cruise terminals."



where there are possibilities of investment. Thus, we have roped in the states, and we are doing roadshows in various parts of the country. States have come out in an encouraging way. They will showcase the investible projects they have in hand in different parts in the Northeast, in deep South, Lakshadweep or Andamans, in front of the investors."

He informed that leading representatives from the domestic sector will be there and it will be a well participated event. "The states will put forth hospitality projects; amusement parks; theme parks; or any other place of tourist interests. Anything that supports tourism infrastructure, and the operation and maintenance of tourism related infrastructure will be showcased at GTIS," he said.

Open sky policy

Speaking on the suggestion of open sky policy, Singh said that while in domestic civil aviation sector, number of flights have gone up, the corresponding in-

in fares. However, there is a need to increase capacity. One reason for capacity not going up, which I saw as Chairman-AAI earlier,

GTIS is to rekindle interests of the investors in that sector (hospitality and accommodation sector) and to show them the new areas or new products



was that there was no major acquisition of wide-bodied aircraft by Indian airlines. Air India was going through the process of disinvestment, and hence it was not doing any acquisitions. The other airlines were concentrating on domestic aviation or not interested in long-haul flights. Now, with Air India being in private hands, we are hearing of their plans to ex-

wants to do many events on the sidelines of ITB Berlin in March and we are going ahead with the same," he added.

Business leads

Speaking on how inbound operators would be able to take help of NTBI, Singh said, "As per the proposed structure of NTBI, there will be someone to head all regions in the board. There will be a trade's pointsman in the board for every region, who will connect tour operators to relevant persons in the embassy or the market representative. The job of the person in the NTBI will be to connect Indian trade with the person stationed locally on ground. On the ground will be the mission person from the embassy and the local marketing representative agency, whom we appoint through a process of selection."

He informed that there will also be a representative of the MEA in the NTB, apart from representatives from Ministry of Culture, MoCA and Ministry of Commerce. "Thus, there will be a synergy



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Kickstarting Tourism

The G20, an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union, account for over 80 per cent of global tourism, making it a crucial platform for addressing the challenges facing the industry. The Group's efforts to support the tourism sector have been instrumental in the recovery of the industry in India, which was severely impacted by COVID-19. One of the key initiatives taken by the Group was the establishment of the Tourism Crisis Management Group (TCMG). In India, the TCMG has played a critical role in shaping the country's response to the pandemic.

Another important initiative taken by the G20 was the creation of the Tourism Working Group (TWG). The TWG was established to provide a platform for the Group members to share information on the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry and identify solutions to support the recovery of the sector. The TWG has played a role in ensuring that the voices of the tourism industry are heard at the highest level and provided a platform for the industry to engage with government leaders.

The first meeting of TWG under India's G20 Presidency concluded successfully at Rann of Kutch in Gujarat recently. Discussions held during the meeting identified five priority areas comprising Green Tourism: "Greening of tourism sector for a sustainable, responsible and resilient tourism sector"; Digitalization: "Harnessing the power of digitalization to promote competitiveness, inclusion and sustainability in tourism sector"; Skills: "Empowering youth with skills for jobs and entrepreneurship in tourism sector"; Tourism MSMEs: "Nurturing tourism MSMEs/startups/ private sector to unleash innovation and dynamism in tourism sector" and Destination Management: "Rethinking the strategic management of destinations towards a holistic approach that delivers on the SDGs".

The G20 Presidency has provided India a platform to showcase its tourism offerings to the world in more than 50 Indian locations. The government has used the platform to promote the country as a safe and attractive destination for tourists. Let's hope India grabs this opportunity to bring a significant positive impact on inbound tourism in the country.

Tech, sustainability future of travel

A global research suggests in future travelers will be open to new and emerging technologies and want to travel in more sustainable ways. However, there is also a feeling that the industry must work together to ensure all travelers benefit from technological advances.



TT Bureau

About 474 million tourists traveled internationally between January and July 2022 compared to 175 million in 2021, which shows that international tourism has been bouncing back. But how will we travel in 2033? A global research study – Traveler Tribes 2033 – the third in a series that launched in 2007, identifies four 'traveler tribes' that will develop in the next 10 years. It does so by examining the future forces of change transforming travel, alongside emerging traveler traits, behaviours and preferences, to understand exactly what it is that travelers will want a decade from now.

It suggests many travelers will be open to new and emerging technologies and will want to travel in more sustainable ways. But with some travelers concerned about the proliferation of technology and the increasing need for cyber-security and data privacy,

The 5 things that excite Indian travellers most about trips in 2033

(0% listing as one of the top three things which excite them most about trips in 2033, from a list of 9)

- 37% Artificial Intelligence making trip planning quicker
- 37% That technology could reduce problems during trips
- 36% The chance to travel in more environmental friendly ways
- 35% Different ways of paying for trips will make trips more affordable
- 35% Sampling trips in virtual reality before deciding where to go

vides valuable insights about traveler preferences and an outlook of how their distinct characteristics and personalities will shape the

The technologies which will most interest Indian travellers in 2033

- 1 Being able to pay for trips by cryptocurrency, in a virtual reality or via facial recognition
- 2 Using data to create relevant trips
- 3 Fingerprint data: to have a hotel room configured to your personal requirements
- 4 Biometric data to allow you quick access through passport control
- 5 Trips that can be mostly planned by Artificial Intelligence

the industry must work together to ensure all travelers benefit from technological advances. "In a constantly evolving travel industry, the advent of emerging technologies and changing consumer preferences is making the travel ecosystem more diverse, and at the same time, complex. Our Traveler Tribes 2033 report is a ground-breaking study that pro-

future of travel in India and around the world," said **Mani Ganeshan**, Global Head of Engineering, Travel Sellers Unit and Centre Head, Amadeus Labs Bangalore.

Moving beyond the limitations of traditional segmentation, this psychographic approach identifies four key Traveler Tribes likely to be dominant in 2033:

❖ **Excited Experientialists** – This group has a 'try it and see' approach to life and travel. 44 per cent are without children and have a mid to high-income job with flexible working options, which enables them to readily explore the world. They have a you only live once (YOLO) approach. They are more likely than other travelers to act on instinct, making them 2033s 'anti-planners', favouring less predictable and more exciting accommodation experiences.

❖ **Memory Makers** – This group takes a more simplified approach to travel: to make memories and visit places. 44 per cent are aged 42 and over and are habitual in their travel behaviours. The future can be a daunting prospect for them. They put people first and place less value on technology and sustainability, reassured by existing methods. However, despite their skepticism about

technology, they are excited about virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) preview tours with the majority expected to use VR tours before purchasing a trip. 9 per cent Indian respondents identified themselves as memory makers.

❖ **Travel Tech-fluencers** – 19 per cent identified themselves as travel tech-fluencers. This group includes today's young business travelers with a forward-looking perspective on life. 48 per cent of the group are under the age of 32 and their perspective is symbolized by how much technology they own. However, there is a discord when it comes to what excites and concerns them around the future of technology and trav-

✈ **In present world, advent of emerging technologies and changing consumer preferences is making the travel ecosystem more diverse**

el. While many want to travel sustainably, it seems they are more conscious about sustainability options around their method of travel, rather than where they will be staying. 19 per cent Indian respondents identified themselves as travel tech-fluencers.

❖ **Pioneering Pathfinders** – Individuals in this group live a fast-paced life, always looking for their next adventure. Their life is in full swing with 82 per cent between the ages of 23 and 41. They like to plan but are not afraid of risk and are open to new experiences.

Highlights

- ❖ Report commissioned by travel technology company Amadeus and administered by global research firm Northstar Research Partners defines the four new traveler profiles – Traveler Tribes – that will emerge in the next decade
- ❖ Traveler profiles of the future revealed by a global survey of over 10,000 travelers across 14 markets, expert interviews, 5.8 million data points and the application of psychographic segmentation techniques

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India needs better tourism strategy?

Do you think the Union Ministry of Tourism is doing enough to make India a global tourist destination? Important decision-makers and stakeholders of the industry share their views with **TRAVTALK** and offer suggestions on what more can be done so that the country has a top-of-mind recall among foreign tourists.



Hazel Jain

In recent years, the Ministry of Tourism has been taking several steps to make India a more attractive destination for tourists. It has been focusing on developing infrastructure and facilities like new airports and highways to make it easier for tourists to visit India. The evergreen Incredible India campaign has worked well in



Burjis Mehta
CEO, Skyworld Tours & Travels

the last few years. But is it time for a complete overhaul of our marketing campaign and have a more focussed approach?

Burjis Mehta, CEO, Skyworld Tours & Travels, feels that financial allocation to the tourism sector needs to be increased substantially. "Infrastructure in terms of transportation, connectivity, wayside amenities need to be upgraded to international standards. We also need skilled manpower. Instability of jobs, long working hours, low salaries are attracting youngsters to other industries. Most importantly, tourists need to be assured of safety and security. Taxes imposed by the government need to be lowered for airlines, hotels, and tour operators. The government also needs to give a huge push to market Incredible India by way of both conventional methods and on social media," he says.

Leveraging the G20 Summit

Overall, the Ministry of Tourism has done well in promoting India, says **Jaison Chacko**, Secretary General, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), but adds that the process of making India a global tourist destination is on-going, and there may be room for improvement in some areas. "Its proposal to launch a global 'Visit India 2023' campaign is great! But we have been requesting the government



Jaison Chacko
Secretary General, FHRAI

to consider activating many other initiatives. The G20 Summit is expected to host over 200 meetings and conferences in more than 50 destinations. In anticipation of its spillover benefits, the government is requested to reactivate the Champion Sector in Services Scheme (CSSS) to give a boost to the MICE tourism in the country. The yearlong event is a golden opportunity for the tourism and hospitality industry to shine on the global stage. We urge the government to intensify promotional initiatives under Incredible India to attract as many foreign tourists as possible during the year. Moreover, tourism and hospitality should be placed on the concur-



Rajeev Jainapurkar
Chairman, IAAPI

rent list of the Constitution to make it a national agenda. It will ensure better coordination between the Centre and States for fund allocation and implementation of projects and programs," he says.

Infrastructure boost needed

Rajeev Jainapurkar, Chairman, IAAPI, feels that some of the many notable initiatives taken by MOT include e-visa facility, e-visas, e-business visas, e-medical visa and e-conference visas. Also, more than ₹5,500 crores worth

of tourism infrastructure projects have been sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan scheme. "But the Ministry of Tourism can take some more actions that will help India. MOT should release the New National Tourism Policy at the earliest. The new draft policy guidelines will take India Tourism to greater heights. Moreover, its annual budget (that was ₹2,400 crores last year) is not sufficient to take care of huge infrastructure requirements. A lot of funds are required to build last mile connectivity, core infrastructure and social infrastructure. I also feel that India's global promotional campaign also needs massive



Tapan Kumar Mishra
National Tourism Awardee
Best Tourist Guide (Odisha)

upsaling. More international air traffic has to be generated by ensuring direct air connectivity with India's source countries with more airlines, and more seating capacity. India needs to also promote itself as a 'safe' destination while becoming one. We must ensure professional skilling and training of tourism workforce and last but not the least, we have to offer multimodal connectivity at all destinations within India," he says.

A guide's point of view

To get a better perspective on how international tourists view India, who better than a tour guide to shed light on this. **Tapan Kumar Mishra**, National Tourism Awardee, Best Tourist Guide (Odisha), says that at a time when we are thinking of reviving the industry after the pandemic, the MOT decides to shut down its seven overseas offices tasked with tourism promotional activities by 31 March 2023. "What a pity! Instead of shutting down all these offices permanently, government could have merged these offices with embassy offices. It should promote tourism among the NRIs, PIOs, and overseas Indians (Apna



Dharmesh Advani
National General Secretary, ETAA

Ghar Ghumo scheme) in offering attractive offers on airfares of state-owned airlines, on room rent in state-owned hotels and visa application fees. They must be prompted to recommend foreign travellers to visit India, thus must get travel incentives on recommending 10 foreign travellers each in one year. The government should organise frequent roadshows not only in source countries but also in newly targeted countries. We need to incentivise the traveller to visit India, only then can we become a tourism hub," he says.

Dharmesh Advani, National General Secretary, Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA), is all praises for India, and feels the MOT has already been doing a lot to encourage FTAs. He says, "The Visa on Arrival for several countries have been a major boon to inbound. Further, MOT has several

Instead of shutting down all these (overseas) offices permanently, government could have merged these offices with embassy offices

training programs such as skill development and language courses. With the G20 Summit, the MOT has recognised the importance of medical tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, wildlife and are promoting the same. A lot of policies aimed at improving framework conditions for tourism development in the country, supporting tourism industries, strengthening tourism support functions and

developing tourism sub sectors are being looked at unlike before. Along with tourism, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Commerce are also working for the development of this sector, which will help in establishing better synergy and convergence."

Expand the offerings

One area where more can be done is in the promotion of lesser-known tourist destinations in India, feels **Chirag Gupta**, Founder & CEO, Deyor. "While India is known for its popular tourist destinations such as the Taj Mahal and the Golden Temple, there are many other lesser-known tourist



Chirag Gupta
Founder & CEO, Deyor

destinations that are also worth visiting. The Ministry of Tourism should focus on promoting these lesser-known destinations to increase the number of tourists visiting India. Additionally, more can be done to promote India as a safe and secure destination for tourists. The ministry should take steps to ensure the safety of tourists, such as increasing the presence of law enforcement and providing more information about local laws and customs. Overall, while the ministry has been making significant efforts to promote India as a global tourist destination, there is still room for improvement in areas such as infrastructure, promotion of lesser-known destinations, safety and security, and the visa process. By taking these steps, India can become a top tourist destination in the world," he says.

India's Northeast region comes to mind when speaking of lesser-known destinations. **Elina Satapathy**, Partner, Seven Sisters Holidays, which is based



Elina Satapathy
Partner, Seven Sisters Holidays

in Manipur, has a lot to say. "MOT is trying its best to promote India as a global destination. But as you know India is a country of diverse culture traditions and customs, it's really challenging for them. I would suggest instead of promoting India as one destination they can promote circuits, including destinations having similarities."

The Indian travel and tourism industry has evolved threefolds over the past few years with some good initiatives by the Ministry of Tourism, feels **Udit Kumar**, Co-founder of homegrown Brij Hotels. "The new digital initiative by MOT - Utsav Portal is commendable! It aims to showcase festivals, events and live darshan across India to promote different regions of the country and popular tourist destinations worldwide. With our existing portfolio at Brij Hotels across six locations in India - with a unique heritage



Udit Kumar
Co-founder, Brij Hotels

and cultural significance, we have extensive plans to add multiple destinations offering immersive experiences, and these initiatives by MOT stand out in assisting our overall operations and vision to offer bespoke retreats for our guests. I believe simpler GST norms will be of great help to promote India."

TCS hike chokes the trade

The increase in TCS on overseas tours from 5% to 20% has shaken the outbound industry. While many think that the government should have consulted the industry before making such a rule, others feel that it's been done to promote inbound and prevent Indians from travelling overseas.

 Nisha Verma

While presenting the Union Budget 2023-24, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman talked a lot about promoting tourism, which made the industry happy. However, the increase of TCS on overseas travel from 5 per cent to 20 per cent came as a dampener. A disappointed **Riaz Munshi**, President, OTOAI, said, "We requested the Finance Minister to reduce TCS percentage from 5 per cent. Instead, the government has increased it to 20 per cent, which is going to hamper our business and at the same time, there will be a huge deficiency in government revenue as people would prefer to either book through foreign tour operators or foreign OTAs to save GST and TCS both."

Manoj Saraf, Managing Director, Gainwell Travel & Leisure, echoed the view, saying, "This is a ridiculous tax imposed without any thought process. This will only lead to more cash transactions and less compliance. It is impossible to pay 20 per cent TCS."



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

Rajeev Sabharwal, Chief Executive, Gaurav Travels, and a CA by profession, also feels that it's an unreasonable rule by the government. "It is not a positive step and will deter a lot of people who do not want to share their PAN cards. This will also force people to either book through OTAs, who do not collect TCS or through cash. The outbound tour industry should oppose such a move and file a representation before the Ministry of Finance," he said.



Manoj Saraf
MD, Gainwell Travel & Leisure

Valmiki Harikishan, MD, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions, said that while the Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Industry has been recognised as the biggest game changer but the hike in TCS was a great disappointment. "I can only say RIP international travel because of the TCS hike. FM must relook into the matter and support us till we stabilise from post-pandemic disruption." He explained, "On foreign tour packages, the TCS rate is 20 per cent,



Rajeev Sabharwal (CA)
Chief Executive, Gaurav Travels

which means when you collect the money from your client on a foreign tour package, you must additionally collect 20 per cent of the package cost as tax collected at source and the person who pays the TCS can claim the TCS as prepaid tax in his/ her income tax return."

Siraj Ansari, Managing Director, Avion Holidays, claimed, "The most important thing about TCS in present scenario is that after

two years of pandemic we are trying to revive our business. We already have liabilities to clear off. However, the government has come forward to unnecessarily penalise us for charging us, which is not at all acceptable. I think this is going to be a big problem for the entire industry. They are only focused on promoting domestic and inbound travel. I believe that the government must act on this and roll it back."

Madhavan Menon, Chairman & Managing Director, Thomas Cook (India), said, "The TCS hike will significantly increase the upfront cash outflow for end customers. It will drive more of these customers to use alternate channels that are outside the domestic tax net."

Vishal Suri, Managing Director, SOTC Travel, also said, "In our view, such high rates of taxation are an added liability to outbound travellers and negatively impacts tour operators recovering from the pandemic. We request the Union government to reconsider this proposal."

TourismNews

National Digital Tourism Mission formulated to ensure digitalization of sector: Reddy

Government implementing Uniform Tourist Police to offer safe environment to tourists

40 per cent Indians more willing than others to let sustainability influence decisions: Amadeus

Travellers from USA, UK showing more interest in visiting India: Kayak report

India focused on using tourism as vehicle for sustainable development during G20 Presidency: Reddy

Singapore Tourism Board reintroduces the island country as a wedding destination to India market

Kerala government says state received record 1.88 crore domestic tourists in 2022

Thomas Cook India launches forex app with aim to position itself as forex specialist

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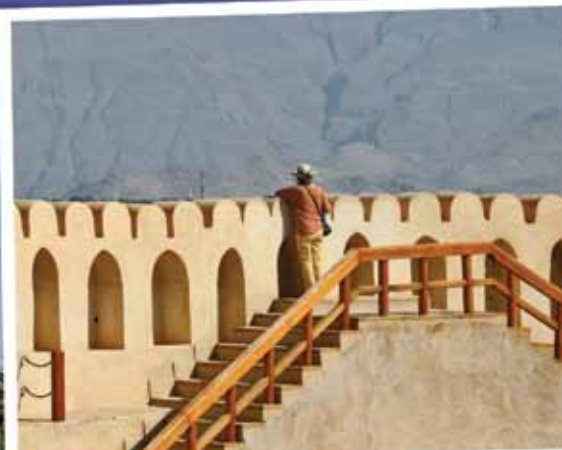
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Budget recognises tourism value

Associations

“For the first time, the FM has addressed the importance of tourism and recognised its potential for growth in employment generation, and it needs to be tapped. She also mentioned that large potential for tourism, especially youth, to be taken up on mission mode, which is very encouraging. She said that about 50 tourist destinations to be developed on mission mode, PPP in tourism, 50 additional airports/ heliports to be developed, ₹79,000 crores for 100 last mile railway projects among other things, which is encouraging. However, none of our demands like rationalisation of GST on tourism industry and exemption of GST on foreign exchange earnings have been considered.”



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

“The FM’s reference to tourism in her opening remarks raised hopes that perhaps, finally, the industry would get due recognition and direct, tangible support. While the Union Budget has positives in the form of infrastructure development, increased last mile connectivity, the new Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs, the promise to develop destinations in a holistic manner and the establishment of Unity Malls – all of which are good in the medium to long term – what’s missing is direct immediate support to a sector that is only now beginning to revive. We had hoped for a rationalisation of GST and a reduction in TCS, but instead have been presented with a steep increase in TCS, which has jumped from 5 per cent to 20 per cent for outbound travel.”

“It’s good that the government has finally thought something about the tourism and hospitality industry. We have been fighting with the Finance Ministry and the Ministry of Tourism for many years, and nothing has been done, which has always been very disappointing, but this time we are seeing that the government has begun to think about tourism and hospitality. This time the government has allocated ₹2.4 lakh crores for Railways, which is a good sign because connectivity is very important in India. Also, the Finance Minister spoke about creating an app to give facility to the tourist. So, this will help travellers to understand the destinations better and help them choose the destination of their choice before they make plans. This is another good move by the government.”



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI



Jatinder Taneja
Vice Chairman, PATA India Chapter

“I was satisfied to see that both international and domestic tourism sectors were mentioned by the Finance Minister in the Union Budget this time. Her mentioning to select 50 destinations, which will be developed as a complete package for tourism; focus on guides; security of tourists and a huge outlay for Railways; overall are very positive signs for the growth of tourism in India. I would also like to say that the infusion of ₹9,000 crores in the corpus of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to offer collateral free loans will help the tourism sector as well. Currently, tourism sector is drawing attention from the highest level in the government, which will help the industry to grow in the coming years.”

“For the first time, the FM has emphasized on the value of tourism and said that we need to promote it. It’s a big thing to dedicate so much time out of the inaugural budget session to talk about tourism. They (government) have established that they will emphasise on new destinations and last mile connectivity, which is very important. We still need to understand the details more. We had requested for infrastructure status, which is still not clear. Overall, the government has been supportive on our requests. I think it’s a great initiative on Dekho Apna Desh and Swadesh Darshan schemes, which will be of great value because more destinations will be developed in border areas, which will boost interest in domestic tourism.”



K.B. Kachru
Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, and Vice President, Hotel Association of India



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

“If we look at the budget from Indian perspective, it is quite good. It will create a lot of jobs, and the kind of tax rebate we have got, we will have more disposable income that will support domestic tourism, as well as outbound tourism. But unfortunately, so far our concern has not been addressed but we will still keep pursuing about TCS and foreign remittances. There are only two things bothering outbound tourism, either the government is not inclined to listen to us or maybe they understand and do not want to implement. So, in case they can give us a hearing and we can explain them that how outbound is also helping inbound in terms of how outbound is generating the revenue for the government. Overall, it’s a good budget and I think it’s going to give a push to Indian economy for sure.”

“It is heartening to note that the Union Budget continues to build on a strong foundation of economic development by promoting inclusive growth wherein fruits of development reach each and every citizen of the country. We are also enthused by the continued focus on developing infrastructure, which will improve connectivity. Digitisation, development of artificial intelligence, emphasis on skilling are other aspects that impact all sectors and hospitality is no exception. In the recent past tourism and hospitality have been recognised as key pillars of the economy. That the destinations will be developed in PPP mode, as announced in the budget, brings a deep sense of satisfaction for us at Hotel Association of India, which has been advocating it for a long time.”



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General, HAI



Jaision Chacko
Secretary General, FHRAI

“The announcement that promotion of tourism will be taken up on mission mode, with active participation of states, convergence of government programmes and public-private partnerships is a crucial announcement. Regional connectivity will help promote local tourism whilst giving a boost to investment in hospitality projects in the region. The industry is expecting appropriate allocation to be made to hospitality as per sector-specific planning envisaged by the Ministry of Tourism. The enhancement of ease of doing business by reducing more than 39,000 compliances will also help to create a positive business environment. Lastly, the revamped Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs with an infusion of ₹9,000 crores into the corpus is expected to help small and medium-scale hotels and restaurants.”

“It is matter of great happiness for the amusement park sector that in the Union Budget speech the government has announced that promotion of tourism will be taken up on mission mode with active participation of states, convergence of government programs and public-private partnerships. Tourism infrastructure will get big boost with the announcement about increase in capital outlay for Railways and the proposal to launch 100 critical transport infrastructure projects, regional air connectivity with the announcement of 50 additional airports, heliports, water airdromes and advance landing grounds. The Unity Mall and the development of 50 tourism destinations as a whole package will help in the growth of domestic and international tourism.”



Rajeev Jalnapurkar
Chairman, IAAPI



Ronny Gulati
Hon. Secretary, ATOAI

“It was very heartening to see what was shared in the budget by the minister. And, while it’s only the top lines that we have got but I think future is really bright as far as tourism goes. One of the top things that we caught as Adventure Tour Operators Association of India is the view on opening border tourism and by doing that it will give a lot of opportunities for adventure to grow. The big part of adventure tourism operation is local communities and getting in employability for the local communities. This will really open up vistas for that to happen. So, we are very hopeful and at least in the living memory, I have not seen tourism being given so much of emphasis or spoken about in the Budget Speech. So, that is great. Let’s hope, how it unfolds in the future.”

“The fact that tourism got attention in the Union Budget is a big welcome. The FM stressed on promoting tourism on mission mode, with the active participation of states, the convergence of government programs and public-private partnerships. This is especially good news for regional tourism and hospitality. Developing new airports, heliports, water aerodromes and advanced landing grounds to improve regional connectivity will unlock the vast potential for growth in the Western region of India. An integrated and innovative approach through challenge mode will be a game changer for the destinations in the Western region selected through this route. The Unity Mall initiative too is a great step in the right direction that encourages states to promote regional tourism.”



Pradeep Shetty
President, HRAWI



Anwar Shirpurwala
Secretary General, CHATT

“We welcome the proposal to launch an app covering all key aspects of tourist destinations, including physical and virtual connectivity, tourist guides, high standards for food streets, as well as security of tourists to help enhance visitor experience. Besides, the proposal to select and develop a minimum of 50 destinations as a complete tourism package through challenge mode using an integrated and innovative approach is definitely a positive step. Be it the proposal to encourage tourism in the border villages by perking up infrastructure under the Vibrant Villages Program or setting up of Unity Mall in states, all of these measures are reassuring and will boost the confidence of businesses of all sizes from MSMEs to the big players. The only concern the industry has is the increase in TCS.”

Govt focus on infra to help industry

“The government has increased TCS for overseas packages from 5 per cent to 20 per cent. This will hit the outbound tourism and the industry, especially since the industry has just started recovering. I don't know who has proposed from travel industry to increase TCS from 5 per cent to 20 per cent. Most agents who do outbound will be affected badly. I am shocked that instead of abolishing it, government has raised TCS from 5 per cent to 20 per cent. I know that this is going to have a direct effect on domestic tourism. In the past, ETAA has demanded many things from government but nothing has been taken care like refund of GST for inbound tourist and ITC for travel agents on interstate GST credit. But I am happy that government has focused on tourism.”



Praveen Ghai
Jt. Secretary ETAA - North India



Col. Manbeer Choudhary (Veteran)
President, HRAH

“The special focus on boosting tourism and aggressive approach to accelerating infrastructure development is just the news the tourism and hospitality industry was waiting for. This would give the runway required for the ailing hospitality industry to take off. The first Union Budget of Amrit Kaal shows a holistic outlook towards nurturing the industry by combining a push for transport infra projects complete with 50 additional airports, heliports, water aerodromes, and advanced landing zones being revitalised. Additionally, Railways get a capital outlay of ₹2.4 lakh crores, which is the highest-ever allocation since 2013-14. An increase in investment outlay by 33 per cent to ₹10 lakh crore (3.3 per cent of GDP) will give the required financial help.”

Aviation

“I believe that the Union Budget 2023-24, announced by Hon'ble Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, is growth-oriented and yet prudent and responsible. Coming as it does in a year when India has assumed the presidency of the G20, it is an object lesson in how an economy should be managed in a crisis. Today, our economy is growing at the fastest pace in the world, where inflation is reducing. In addition to this, fiscal deficit is under control and the entire country continues to increase spending on infrastructure. In my opinion, India is the bright spot in an uncertain world and the budget is the epitome of the same. The announcement of 50 additional airports is a welcome step.”



Ajay Singh
Chairman & Managing Director, SpiceJet



Vinay Dube
Founder and CEO, Akasa Air

“The Union Budget 2023-24 presented by Hon'ble Finance Minister provides a positive focus on infrastructural development/investment. It is growth-oriented and will steer India towards holistic development across all pillars. The announcement of 50 additional airports and ramping up of air transport infrastructure is a welcome move and will support the nation's growing demand for air travel. The focus on promoting domestic tourism will provide impetus to further revival of the sector and aligns with our vision to strengthen India's transportation system. As India's greenest airline, we are delighted to acknowledge Green Growth as one the key priorities of this Union Budget and be at the forefront of creating green job opportunities in the country.”

Trade

“It's one of the best budgets of this government so far. We don't have to just look at the budget only from the prism of tourism. There is positivity for tourism sector and public at large in this budget. Government has highlighted it as a priority sector. It has said that across states, it will maneuver the support to make sure that domestic and inbound sectors foremost importance. That is good enough because now government has realised the importance of domestic and inbound tourism both. Apart from that, it has put more money in the hands of people by reducing taxation, surcharges and cess. Thus, more disposable income will be used for travel. It's a fantastic and favourable budget. There could be reduction in GST on certain hotels and travel products, but the government understands the economy better than us.”



Naveen Kundu
MD, Ebicash Travel Services



Madhavan Menon
CMD, Thomas Cook (India)

“The proposal to increase the rate of TCS from 5 per cent to 20 per cent for purchase of overseas tours and overseas remittances other than education will significantly increase the upfront cash outflow for end customers. It will drive more of these customers to use alternate channels that are outside the domestic tax net. We urge the government to reconsider this. On the positive side, income tax rebates announced in the budget will result in an increase of disposable incomes, which is welcome. Tourism promotion being taken up on a 'mission mode' with active participation of states, public-private partnerships and convergence of government programs will drive domestic tourism growth. Strong infrastructural focus will enhance regional access and connectivity.”

“The announcement on the launch of an app to enhance domestic tourism experience reiterates our country's focus on digitisation. The 'Dekho Apna Desh' initiative focusing on sector specific skilling and entrepreneurship development while the facilitation of infrastructure under the Vibrant Villages Programme and setting up a 'Unity Mall' in state capitals/popular tourist destinations to promote 'One District, One Product' for GI products and other handicrafts will support domestic tourism. However, this Union Budget did not provide the industry the respite we anticipated with respect to rationalization of taxes. Instead, the proposals increased TCS on outbound travel and other LRS transactions from 5 per cent to 20 per cent without any threshold exemption.”



Vishal Suri
Managing Director, SOTC Travel



Abbas Moiz
Owner, Shoiz Travels

“The proposal to develop 50 new domestic tourist destinations, along with 50 domestic airports is a welcome one. The budgetary outlay of ₹2,400 crores for tourism seems to be a little less considering a high expenditure on railways and highways. Though, the focus is on public private partnership, there is no allocation for human resources. It would have been encouraging to incentivise the youth and provide employment year-round at the local level to create a holistic ecosystem, which would sustain the destination and the local populace. The results would be far reaching if local human resources are developed, along with the new tourist destinations. The dampener in the budget proposals is to increase the TCS on foreign tours.”

“The budget mentions that there is a larger potential to be tapped in tourism and I personally believe that this is true and to add to it the tourism industry is growing and experimenting more than ever. Not only does tourism help the economy, but also this sector holds opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship. As mentioned in the budget, that the states and government will actively participate in promotions for tourism in India, I think it's a great initiative to elevate the sector and travel culture. It is a huge step that for the first time in the Union Budget, tourism is the key focus policy area. Tourism and hospitality sectors have a huge potential to cater to the diverse nature and culture of the country and we Cordelia Cruises are happy to be catering to just that.”



Jurgen Bailom
President and CEO
Waterways Leisure, Cordelia Cruises



Sandeep Arora
Director, Brightsun Travel

“Indian economy is expected to increase by 7 per cent in the year 2023 and tourism is one of the major areas that contribute to it. Development of tourist infrastructure is need of the hour, so the announcement that 50 tourist destinations will be developed for domestic and international tourism is a positive step. Plus, the border village tourism initiative will bring tourists to these far corners helping the local communities earn livelihood and prosper. This year's budget also saw the highest-ever capital outlay of 2.4 lakh crore for the Railways, which may provide the push needed for the growth of domestic tourism in the country. Air travel is also expected to rise. Specific focus is needed for the tourism industry to rebound back to the pre-pandemic levels.”

“While the Union Budget for the tourism sector has received mixed reviews from the industry, for me, some of the positive takeaways would be the addition of 50 fresh tourist destinations to be developed through challenge mode, facilitating tourist infrastructure through the Vibrant Villages Program, and setting up 50 new airports to enhance regional air connectivity, which will help travellers from tier 2 and 3 cities. The FM has made her intentions of tapping into the huge potential of our country's tourism sector clear. The 'Dekho Apna Desh' initiative has the potential to boost domestic tourism. I'm certain that these reforms brought about in the 2023 Union Budget will not only help upgrade the tourism infrastructure, but also boost employment.”



Dev Karvat
Founder & CEO, Asego



Rikant Pittie
Co-Founder, EaseMyTrip

“One of the striking features of the Union Budget was the echoing of India's global recognition as a powerhouse of entrepreneurship and innovation. This was mirrored in the government's initiative to support the vibrant ecosystem by extending the date of incorporation for income tax benefits from 31 March 2023 to 31 March 2024. This will provide opportunity for several startups to flourish, especially in the travel and tourism industry, which are yet to recover from the blows that were dealt during the pandemic. The foresight shown with the proposal of extending benefit of carry forward of losses on change of shareholding of startups from seven to 10 years will further provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities within the tourism industry.”

Hike in TCS a matter of concern

“ We congratulate the FM on a job well done in delivering the pro-development and growth budget for 2023-24. The projection of 7 per cent economic growth for next financial year despite the slowdown is a welcome sign for the future of the Indian economy. We are pleased that the travel industry has taken center stage and the National Tourism Policy will enable the tourism sector to significantly contribute towards the government's mission to target an overall GDP contribution of US \$20 trillion by 2047. The new outlay in the infrastructure sector will tremendously contribute to the development of the country. Announcing the 100 new projects for last mile connectivity will help IntraCity to focus on penetrating deep into Indian states. ”



Nalini Gupta
Owner & MD, Lotus Destinations

“ I would like to applaud the Finance Minister on the Union Budget, specially the ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ campaign. Our country offers so much to domestic as well as international tourists, and tourism can be a great boom for our economy. The focus on India will help to further boost domestic tourism as well as inbound tourists. In fact, today many of the international cruise companies are also looking to deploy ships in India, given the domestic potential of the market. However, the increase in tax collection at source for overseas tour packages from 5 per cent to 20 per cent will be a bit of a deterrent for the outbound segment, especially since the industry has just started to recover from the pandemic. ”



Manish Rathie
CEO & Co-founder, IntraCity SmartBus

“ The industry was looking forward to some relief in GST, like minimizing the percentage in various segments and provision for GST refunds for foreign tourists at the departure. Unfortunately, this demand was not addressed. Another point is the TCS on remittance, which has been enhanced to 20 per cent. This will have an adverse effect on the outbound operators. Lastly, even though the minister emphasised on promotional activities of the MOT, the allocation on such activities have been reduced from ₹341 crores to ₹167 crores, which may impact the activities of tour operators availing assistance under the MDA scheme and traveling abroad for promotion. We must wait and watch how the policies are implemented and the industry will respond accordingly. ”



Subhash Goyal
Chairman – STIC Travel & Air Charter Group & President – Confederation of Tourism Professionals

“ Even though for the first time, tourism industry has been prominently mentioned by the Finance Minister, yet, I am disappointed because nothing concrete has been announced for tourism. Also, the expectations that we had from the budget this year have not been matched. Further, we were hoping that the allocation for overseas tourism promotion and publicity, including Market Development Assistance (MDA) will be increased from ₹341 crores, but instead of that it has been reduced to ₹167 crores. This will have an adverse impact on tourism promotion. We were also hoping that there will be an exemption on GST and other taxes based on foreign exchange earnings. Nothing in this regard has happened. ”



Elina Satapathy
Founder, Seven Sisters Holidays

“ The change in the individual tax regime with those with incomes up to ₹7 lakh will now pay no tax is a good move to boost middle-class spending. I hope that the income tax exemption announced will help spur consumption in activities like travel. With the government announcing that states will be encouraged to set up Unity Mall in the capital city or most popular tourist destination for the promotion of ‘One District, One product’ theme, such initiatives will help to unleash the potential vested in the tourism sector. The announcement made by FM to develop 50 destinations for domestic and international tourists will also boost the growth of tourism and hospitality segments. Regional connectivity is key for helping India to showcase its diverse tourism experiences. ”



Alpa Jani
Founder, Ace Connect

“ The budget is largely consumer friendly, but alas, the major deterrent could be global inflation due to hike in crude oil prices. The 4 per cent hike in ATF price will increase the burden on air carriers and eventually affect the end consumer. In context to tourism, domestic tourism has received a boost with a focus on developing 50 domestic destinations, including the budget for infrastructure, branding, and marketing, along with the highest-ever railway outlay to boost affordable regional connectivity. However, international/ outbound tourism would face challenges as TCS has been increased despite the tourism industry's lobbying efforts to waive it. In 2021, the travel and tourism industry contributed 5.8 per cent to India's GDP; thus, expectations were high from the post-pandemic budget. ”



Michael Jain
Director
Belair Travel - The Global Travel Company

“ For me the budget is of mixed feelings. It is heartening to note that tourism was mentioned so prominently in the budget. The industry supports one in 10 jobs and provides livelihoods for a significant number of people. Therefore, the government's support on prioritizing tourism with active participation from local authorities, sustainable practices and encouraging PPP is a positive pivot towards revival. Launch of app in which all relevant aspects of the tourist destination would be made available in addition to aspects such as physical connectivity, virtual connectivity, tourist guides, food streets and enhanced security for good tourist experience. TCS being increased from 5 per cent to 20 per cent is a huge disappointment though. ”



Sanjay Mehta
CEO, Transglobe Travels

“ The budget supports domestic tourism by way of various grants. But for international tourism the GST is not properly understood by all. TCS under Section 206C is increase without threshold limit of 20 per cent from 5 per cent, to have advance tax collection from passengers in the form of TCS. The government wants to increase the base of Federal Income Tax revenue, so the TCS has been increased as more genuine taxpayers can be created by having tax in the form TCS. The government should implement all firms selling overseas packages whether online or offline and pay travelling from Indian airport to have pay for TCS or implant in ticket the same as GST and give credit when paying tax as the responsibility would then lie with the airline. ”



Burjis Mehta
CEO, Skyworld Tours & Travels

Hotels

“ The FM has announced the development of tourist places jointly by public and private partnerships. This will give a much-needed boost to the domestic tourism segment. The budget specifies that 50 tourist destinations will be selected and developed as a whole package for domestic and international tourism. We welcome this announcement. For domestic tourism, ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ has already been promoted widely now. Similarly, international tourism too will be revived with these initiatives. The tourist infrastructure will also be provided on the border and in Northeast India, which will be highly beneficial. The industry can harness the direct and multiplier effects of tourism in employment generation. ”



Kulbhushan Talwar
Cluster General Manager, Mosaic Hotels

“ We welcome the announcement to develop 50 tourist destinations in the country as a whole package to encourage both domestic and international tourism. The selection of 50 destinations to be developed as holistic tourism packages – combined with the focus on local level tourism and the promotion and sale of GI products and handicrafts will give a boost to local arts and artisans. As this step includes the development of destination in terms of transport connectivity, virtual connectivity, tourist guides, tourist security and high standard food joints, it will boost the employment opportunities generated collectively by hotels, F&B players, tour and travel agencies and OTAs. Also, the government's plan to launch ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ will motivate people to travel within India. ”



SP Jain
Chairman and Managing Director
Pride Hotels

“ The Union Budget has brought about reforms aimed at benefiting the middle class and the tourism industry. In terms of the income tax slabs, the government has reduced tax rates and simplified the structure, making it easier for individuals to manage their finances and freeing up resources for personal growth. This move has the potential to drive consumer spending and economic growth. On the tourism front, the government has introduced initiatives to boost the industry, including a focus on rural tourism with investment in infrastructure, access to destinations, and local communities. This will create jobs and preserve cultural heritage, making India an attractive destination. These budget proposals show the government's commitment to creating a more equitable and prosperous society. ”



Chander Bajee
Chairman and Managing Director
Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels

“ Tourism has in some way been given the spotlight that was required for a long time. The focus on ‘Bharat Dekho’ is commendable, as this is an initiative that will push Indians to see their own country. However, there are several areas, especially in the hospitality industry, that have been missed. There are no loans for long terms, as well as no industry status, which has been our request for years. The suggested 50 airports will certainly help the industry but will take another 3-5 years to be built. The same can be said for the 50 tourist destinations that will be selected. This will take a long time, maybe even five to 10 years before completion. In my view, more prominence must be given to our industry. There should be more focus on the connectivity of airports. ”



Chirag Gupta
Founder & CEO, Deyor

50 new destinations can boost biz

“The budget shows positive signs for the tourism industry. The FM has encouraged the states to set up a ‘Unity Mall’ in the state capital or at an attractive tourist destination in the state for the promotion and sale of ‘One District, One Product’ and GI products, along with other handicrafts. While the minister announced 50 destinations will be selected and developed as a whole package, the overall development with this vision is an impetus to the sector. Moving towards, emboldening the active participation of states, convergence of government programs and public-private partnerships. The future seems bright and an exciting one with 50 additional airports and helipads to be revived to increase connectivity.”



Akaal Singh Manchanda
Founder & Director of Operations
Zuper Hotels & Resorts

“The hospitality industry plays a significant role in India’s economy. Needless to say, the industry was majorly hit hard during the pandemic. As India is becoming one of the new tourist stations, the boost to the tourism sector will help attract more foreign visitors, which will spur the hospitality sector. The push from the government for the launch of mission mode in 50 tourist destinations can lead to a boom in business and sales in these regions. This will help the entire sector of ‘travel, tourism and hospitality survive, revive and economically support India in its quest to become the world’s largest hub. The ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ scheme is a great initiative to propel travellers within their own country and will foster domestic tourism.”



Nandivardhan Jain
CEO & Founder, Noesis Capital Advisors

“The Union Budget 2023-24 has reiterated its focus on improving regional air connectivity through the setting up of 50 additional airports, heliports, water aerodromes, and advanced landing grounds revival, which will boost domestic air travel. Further, the budget provides a lot of thrust on the promotion of tourism through the development of 50 tourist destinations covering various aspects and further through the development of theme-based local tourist spots. This will also promote international tourism and hence international air travel, along with domestic air travel. The budget proposals are also likely to improve business, rural, and taxpayer sentiment and consolidate growth prospects of India in a gloomy global atmosphere.”



Shamsheer Dewan
Senior Vice President & Group Head -
Corporate Ratings, ICRA



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

“The Union Budget 2023-2024 is a growth-oriented, one aimed to help India weather the current global economic challenges. With the FM announcing plans to renew 50 additional airports, helipads, water aerodromes, and advanced landing grounds, it will boost regional connectivity. Moreover, the announcement to develop 50 destinations for domestic and international tourists will also help to draw attention to the country’s tourism and hospitality sectors. The FM said that these tourist destinations will be selected through challenge mode. The impetus on Dekho Apna Desh will provide a further boost to the growth of domestic tourism in the country. States will be encouraged to set up a Unity Mall in the capital city or most popular tourist destination for the promotion of ‘One District, One Product’ theme.”

“The Union Budget seems encouraging with the introduction of new initiatives like ‘Dekho Apna Desh’, which promote domestic travel. Goa being a preferred destination for weekend getaways and annual holidays will benefit through this. The development of 50 new destinations will make travel more experiential and India more attractive to international tourists. International tourists will now get to explore more destinations in India and this could help Goa as being an option at the end of their itinerary. This could even create repeat visits among international tourists, who have visited the country before but missed out on new destinations. I think our continued focus on development of roads, airports and tourist facilities at popular destinations should help in boosting tourism of our country.”



Paritosh Ladhani
Joint Managing Director, Sincere Developers
& Owner, Taj Hotel & Convention Centre Agra

“The Union Budget 2023-2024 presented by the Finance Minister highlighted that the Indian economy is on a growth trajectory in spite of the global economic challenges. In her budget speech, the FM emphasized that the country offers immense attraction for both domestic and international tourists. With the government announcing that states will be encouraged to set up Unity Mall in the capital city or most popular tourist destination for the promotion of ‘One District, One Product’ theme, such initiatives will help unleash the potential vested in the tourism sector. I also expect that the change in tax regime announced in the Union Budget will result in more disposable income in the hands of middle-class consumers.”



Satish Kumar
General Manager, St. Regis Goa Resort

“Overall, the budget is positive and balanced with the plan to select 50 tourist destinations for development as a whole new package for domestic and international tourism. This move will give a big boost to the tourism industry promising strong growth. We are also happy with the announcement of the revitalization of 50 additional airports, heliports, water aerodromes, and advanced landing zones. This will not only improve connectivity but also give impetus to the travel and tourism sector. The government has announced investing ₹75,000 crore, including ₹15,000 crore from private sources into 100 critical transport infra projects for steel, ports, fertilizer, coal, and foodgrain sectors. This is a welcome step that would lead to a new growth trajectory.”



Varun Arora
CEO and Co-Founder, Ekostay

“The Union Budget 2023 came with several great propositions and opportunities for the travel and tourism sector this year. The government identified its lack of concrete monetary support to the sector in the previous budget and took steps to rectify that. The FM addressed the immense importance of the travel and tourism industry in India’s GDP and the ample job opportunities and economic growth potential it holds. Some of the steps taken by the government to improve tourism are impressive. For instance, the selection of 50 tourist destinations in the country to be developed as a whole package and the revamp of 50 airports, helicopters, and aerodromes for improving regional air connectivity and boosting the influx of domestic and international tourists.”



Sonica Malhotra Kandhari
Joint Managing Director, MBD Group

Technology

“The budget gives impetus on infrastructure improvement to capital investment and green growth. Initiatives like pushing tourism to border villages, 50 additional airports, and ₹2.4 lakh crores for railway sector, will foster regional connectivity. Including 33 per cent hike for last 3 years in capital investment of ₹10 lakh crores on infrastructure improvement, tourist guides, high standard food streets and tourist security is commendable. There is no exemption on foreign exchange earnings, instead TCS increase on outbound will affect market growth. Sanction of additional airports and investment in infrastructure is a step towards India’s long been dream of becoming a global aviation hub.”



Sandeep Dwivedi
COO, IQ



Mani Ganeshan
Global Head of Engineering, Travel Sellers Unit
and Centre Head, Amadeus Labs Bangalore

“The Union Budget’s focus on promoting 50 travel destinations in India is a progressive step towards shaping India’s travel ecosystem. This milestone will need the collective strength and support of the industry to cater to the expected demand of travellers from the promotions. Technological advancements will become the cornerstone of success powering seamless and secure travel experiences. Businesses are already making massive strides through secure channels, intuitive interfaces, and contactless payments, presenting an opportunity for growth for travel tech-led experiences. The technology-first approach of the government will help our country in digitizing operations and leverage the power of actionable intelligence.”

“It is noteworthy that the Finance Minister has highlighted tourism as a focus area. The Union Budget entails multiple welcome initiatives like the revival of 50 airports, the building of 50 new destinations, and high budgetary outlays on railways, roads, and highways, which will help long-term growth for the domestic travel and tourism industry. However, one budget proposal that will negatively impact the industry is the move to increase the TCS mandate from 5 per cent to 20 per cent on overseas tour packages. This will not only increase the upfront cash outflow for customers but will also give an unfair advantage to foreign-based online travel booking platforms over India-based travel partners.”



Vinay Karamcheti
Business head, ITW UXP

“An important factor to keep in mind is that the proposed new income tax slabs for salaried professionals may add to the disposable income, and it could translate to more individuals traveling and could prove to be a much-needed shot in the arm for the travel sector. However, it is important to note that international travel may become dearer, as people planning international holidays would have to spend 15 per cent more with the expected increase in TCS from 5 per cent to 20 per cent. The focus is definitely India first when it comes to tourism and we at ITW UXP are geared up for a robust domestic sporting calendar in 2023. India is fast emerging as a world class destination for sports like golf, hockey and badminton in addition to cricket.”



Rajesh Magow
Co-Founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip

Agents meet in Kolkata @



The Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) was organised at The Lalit Eastern Hotel, Kolkata and Welcomhotel By ITC, Bhubaneswar, on 19-20 January and 24-25 January, respectively. The leading business networking and B2B trade event provided an opportunity for tour operators and travel agents to explore the rich tourism offerings of the regions.



Bhubaneswar show a huge success



Connecting with Mumbai agents

B2B companies GRNConnect, Kazin DMC, iloveSeychelles, and Tour Organiser DMC organised a networking event and showcased tourism products to selected travel partners in Mumbai. The hosting companies showcased four different products, which did not have conflicting interests and created a synergy by bringing together different offerings to the trade.



Policies ok, system needs to change

Arun Iyer, Founder & Managing Director, My Golf Tours, shares his perspective on how India can truly become incredible. He narrates his experience of promoting India as a golfing destination internationally under the aegis of the ministry and this is what he has to say.

My Golf Tours essentially promotes India as a top golfing destination in various countries. We come under the segment of niche tourism. The good news is that the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has certain policies for this type of tourism promotion. These policies are great and helpful on paper. But the problem lies in their implementation. I will share an experience. We regularly exhibit at Asian & European Golf conventions with support from the MoT. But there have been instances when we wanted to exhibit at the International Golf Travel Market in Europe, the approval came in a little too late, due to which the money spent on putting up the stall did not achieve a great return since we had crossed the deadline of getting the online appointments from prospective buyers. As a result, exhibiting at the convention was not as fruitful and could not have serious one-on-one appointments with potential buyers. Money, time and efforts were spent with almost nothing to show for it.



My suggestion for this is that any application that is moved through the ministry must have a deadline. Or it is done online with complete transparency, and they have to either approve or reject it within two to three weeks.

Delayed sanctions

During the ministerial meetings organised by our golf trade association, we have been informed that we are looking at countries like Japan to

understand how to attract tourists into India. The Asian Convention is scheduled in Japan in mid-March 2023, and we have made an application to exhibit in December 2023. We have not heard if the application is accepted, rejected or put on hold. Having certain deadlines will help us avoid these situations and help tour operators take faster decisions.

India as a country has a wide spectrum of segments of tourists

coming in. We need to identify the segments and as per that, appoint people and make them accountable. We need to look at tour operators who specialise in these segments and bring about a change in target-



Having certain deadlines (for govt nod) will help us avoid these situations (dilemma) and help tour operators take faster decisions

ing select markets through those specialists who have been doing it for many years.

There are so many good operators working out of India, in the hinterland but they are never really considered.

There is a feeling the closer you are to Delhi, the better chance you have at interacting with the ministry. We should be more transparent given the digital age we are living in.

The government must make sure that the policies are changed and people are made accountable. It is the same people who work in the bureaucracy that have changed India today. Our bureaucracy can also change provided tourism is looked into as a source of revenue for India. From my point of view as a golf tour operator, a normal visitor spends around US \$1,500-\$2,000, but a golfer coming to India will spend at least 40 per cent more. That's a global statistic of a golf traveller!

Experience versus qualification

The policies are excellent on paper but there are issues in implementation. I have met many directors of tourism who are representing our country overseas. They have seniority due to their years of service but they often

lack vision for tourism. This is probably the reason why the ministry has planned to shut down almost six top tourism offices overseas, which will be taken over by the national tourism board once its formed. Having said that though, we have also met helpful people in the ministry who have come forward voluntarily and helped us, but they are few and far between. We should not have to depend on a few people to help us – the system needs to work.



Arun Iyer
Founder & MD, My Golf Tours

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

Kazakhstan upbeat on India biz

Kazin DMC, in association with Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions, organised an educational seminar, Know Kazakhstan, for the travel trade in Hyderabad recently to promote the destination. Dr. Nawab Mir Nasir Ali Khan, Honorary Consul of Kazakhstan, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, was the chief guest at the event.

Nisha Verma

Valmiki Hari Kishan, Managing Director, Valmiki Travel and Tourism Solutions, welcomed the guests and felicitated the chief guest and speakers at the seminar. Rohit Shorey, Ambassador for MICE Tourism to Kazakhstan and Founder & CEO, Kazin DMC, apprised a selected gathering of trade about the various offerings and new destinations in Kazakhstan and how the destination is well-suited for Indian guests.

Speaking about the business from India, Shorey said, "The response we are getting is very positive. In 2022, real business started from April for the destination. We are getting a lot of MICE and many high-end family groups. Even for New Year we had a huge number of bookings."

When it comes to source markets within India, Shorey said, they are getting visitors from across the



Dr. Nawab Mir Nasir Ali Khan, Honorary Consul of Kazakhstan, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana (centre) with Valmiki Hari Kishan, MD, Valmiki Travel and Tourism Solutions (right) and Rohit Shorey (left) at the educational seminar in Hyderabad.

country. "We are getting business from almost every corner of India. However, we are getting a very positive response from South India, especially during winters as South Indians want to enjoy the snow. Thus, it's a very important market in addition to, of course, Mumbai and Kolkata. However, Delhi isn't in one of our top 10 source markets. We get a lot of business from other north

Indian states like UP, Punjab and Rajasthan. Our marketing efforts have been more geared towards other cities other than Delhi so far, and we are trying to fix that. India is our main source market, but we are also trying to get business from Middle East, especially Dubai, as we have a sales office there as well. Apart from that, Qatar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, are also in focus," he said.

In terms of marketing efforts, he shared that they are increasing their sales team next year. "We are going to have a salesperson dedicated to South India. We will have one for East and West as well. Apart from that, we will participate in travel shows and do a lot of roadshows. We are very strong in social media. We are trying to create as much awareness as we can. We are travelling

a lot and meeting a lot of agents. We are now close to about 1,500 agents, who are working with us or at least giving us queries. So, in 2023 we will put in more efforts to create awareness about this beautiful destination," he added.

He informed that MICE numbers are increasing. "We are taking very big MICE groups to Almaty. In fact, the biggest group we did pre-COVID was about 800 passengers for Dulux through another B2B company, Greenlam. MICE is a big aspect of what we are doing, but we also have a niche destination with golf tours, women groups, and cultural groups. The country has so much to offer – everything from shopping, nightlife, culture, scenery and hiking trips – the list is endless," said Shorey.

When it comes to being an economical destination, Shorey said that Kazakhstan ticks all boxes. "The local currency of Kazakhstan - Tenge has devalued over the last years (1INR=5.5 Tenge).

Thus, it's economical. Eating out doesn't burn your pocket and it's probably cheaper than a decent restaurant in India. In fact, for the



We are getting business from almost every corner of India. However, we are getting a very positive response from South India

same money, it would be a better restaurant," he claimed.

Khan, in his address, shared that the government in Kazakhstan is focusing a lot on film tourism. "We have asked for incentives for film shooting, like free import of equipment and tax rebates on the same," he added.

Fam trips on ETAA agenda

ETAA's objective is to bring its members on single platform, organise knowledge sessions for them, and assist them in growing together, says Saurabh Tuteja, Chairman, ETAA's North India Chapter.



Bryan

ETAA, a professional association representing the retail tour operators in India, has always been vociferous about creating more and more opportunities for its members. Its objective is to bring the members, including OTAs, on one platform, organise knowledge sessions for them, and assist them in growing together. In the current scenario, ETAA seeks the central government's intervention to help the industry. "The government must consider the value of tourism, travel, and tourism commerce in India. When it comes to travel and tourism, it affects a large population and a significant portion of GDP," says **Saurabh Tuteja**, Chairman, Enterprising Travel Agent Association's North India Chapter.

Future plans

The association is planning a domestic Fam trip, as well as a few international trips for its members. "We have some wonderful plans for the members over the coming months. We are collaborating



Saurabh Tuteja
Chairman, Enterprising Travel Agent Association's North India Chapter

with forums such as OTM and ITV, and there will be more knowledge sessions in new locations creating additional opportunities for members," says Tuteja.

Vietnam USP

Vietnam is relatively a new destination for Indian tourists, thanks to Vietjet's flight connectivity, which provides direct flights from Delhi to many Vietnamese cities such as Da Nang, Phu Quoc, and Ho Chi Minh City. People's desire to

look for new destinations brings good prospects for Vietnam. "Indian families are looking for new destinations, and Vietnam has done well as a family destination.



Government must consider the value of tourism, travel, and tourism commerce in India. It affects a large population and a big portion of GDP

It is affordable to Indian tourists. Post-COVID, they have performed admirably in terms of COVID rules and everything," informs Taneja. He said the government must consider the value of tourism, travel, and tourism commerce in India. When it comes to travel and tourism, it affects a large population and a significant portion of GDP.

Iconic hotel gets new look

The Radisson Blu Hotel GRT Chennai, an iconic airport hotel catering to the upscale hospitality market of Chennai since 1998, has been relaunched as 'The Finest New-age Luxury Hotel'.



TT Bureau

The Radisson Blu Hotel GRT Chennai is relaunching as the first post-pandemic hotel of Chennai in tune with the paradigm shift in hospitality design trends since the pandemic. The hotel has been designed ground up with many unique features and can brag of bringing distinctive hotel facilities to cater to the upscale clientele. Among its many 'firsts' are:

❖ The first IOT hotel building in Chennai with the latest technology to facilitate seamless convenience for guests while embracing sustainability.

❖ The first hotel in Chennai to feature a saltwater pool and offer in-pool hydrotherapy. The al fresco floating lounge adds panache to the ambience.

❖ The first hotel to launch a Humanoid Concierge – 'Nanbi', aided by Artificial Intelligence.

❖ The first hotel in Chennai to

have a techno-lounge to cater to the trend of online conferences, presentations, and podcasting.

❖ The first hotel to launch a 2800 sq. ft state-of-the-art fitness studio



Subhasish Gupta
Senior General Manager
Radisson Blu Hotel GRT Chennai

designed as a temple of fitness – Sculpt – equipped with individual pods for treadmills overlooking the airport runway and dedicated sections for strength training and functional fitness.

❖ The first hotel in Chennai to launch a Turkish Hammam with a Chakra hydro-shower in the luxurious Bodhi Spa.

❖ The first hotel in Chennai to guarantee an AQI (air quality index) of 25 with the latest microfilters and a state-of-the-art ventilation system.

The hotel has been designed with concepts of neuroscience impacting multiple senses while using all the facilities leading to an overall focus on a holistic wellness experience.

The hotel has launched a unique program – The GREaT Eight. This signature program has eight pillars of wellness - Great Touch, Great Move, Great Taste, Great Sleep, Great Breath, Great Meets, Great Bath and Great Secure – all of them ensure a luxurious and a unique experience for the guests.

The hotel is renowned for its novel food and beverage concepts and is launching the following outlets.

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:

FEBRUARY 2023

Date	Event	Time
16	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
16-19	Thai International Travel Fair	9:00 am
17-19	India Travel Mart- Bengaluru	10:00 am
17-19	Holiday Expo-Vadodara	9:00 am
17-19	India Travel Mart-Chandigarh	11:00 am
20-21	GPS-Lucknow	11:30 am
22-24	Gujarat Travel Fair	10:00 am
23	Odisha tourism conclave 2023	10:00 am
23-26	Romanian Tourism Fair	10:00 am
23-26	International Tourism Fair	10:00 am
24-26	India International Travel Mart- Ahmedabad	9:00 am
24-26	Travel & Tourism Fair-Chennai	10:00 am
28	New Zealand Webinar	11:00 am
28-1 Mar	GPS-Chandigarh	11:30 am

MARCH 2023

3-5	India International Travel Mart-Kolkata	11:00 am
3-5	India Travel Mart-Goa	11:00 am
7-9	ITB Berlin	9:00 am
24-26	India Travel Mart	11:00 am

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

India top market in APAC: Utah

Considering the high visitor spend, and growth potential of India, Utah Office of Tourism is on its first 'real sales mission' in the country to promote the destination, says Zach Fyne, Global Markets Specialist, Utah Office of Tourism.



Janice Alyosius

With an aim to deepen existing partnerships with tourism stakeholders in India and foster new partnerships, the Utah Office of Tourism organised a series of roadshows and media conferences in Mumbai and Delhi from 16 to 20 January 2023. The events were attended by **Rachel Bremer**, Global Markets Director and **Zach Fyne**, Global Markets Specialist, who enthusiastically interacted with the travel fraternity and media professionals, while assuring them about the importance of India market for Utah's tourism industry. The events also saw officials from U.S. Commercial Services marking their presence. Commercial Officer David Pasquini and Commercial Specialist Ruma Chatterjee were present in Mumbai, while Commercial Attaché Debra Martin and Commercial Advisor Aashima Sachdeva attended events in Delhi.

Highlighting the efforts that the Utah Office of Tourism made to increase its market share from



Zach Fyne
Global Markets Specialist
Utah Office of Tourism

India in 2022, Fyne said, "Bringing a new destination on the other side of Earth to a market as massive as India is a challenge we have been thrilled to take on. This is our first real sales mission from our destination in this market. So, it's really about getting the brand awareness out and letting people know that there is more to the United States than just Orlando, LA, New York, and that's just the great American road trip that is Utah." In 2023,

the Utah Office of Tourism will aim to double its accomplishments of 2022 by continuing to collaborate with top wholesalers in developing new Utah products, hosting more travel trade and media across the state to absorb and learn about their destination offerings, attending roadshows in collaboration with Indian DMCs to spread awareness of their Utah-based tours, and opting to the Brand USA roadshow in March for additional exposure.

Speaking of the Indian market, Fyne said, "India ranks among our top 10 international markets in terms of both visitation and spending. That was even before we had international representation. So, we are relatively new to the market, and we anticipate India to be one of our top performers in the Asia Pacific region. Because we have been present in the international market throughout the pandemic, Utah is expected to outpace our Western neighbours in terms of both visitation and spending." He added, "We will be continuing to focus on the leisure market with a

special emphasis on experienced travellers to the United States of America that already have a U.S.A.

Bringing a new destination on the other side of Earth to a market as massive as India is a challenge we have been thrilled to take on

visa and are open to exploring the beautiful scenic landscapes of the American West."

Utah Tourism has also been working on developing a new training platform, Utah Specialist Academy, for the travel trade to become certified as Utah Specialists, with a heavy emphasis on showcasing beautiful imagery and video assets to drive home the gorgeous landscapes of each region.

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Day 2	1030 to 1800 hrs	B2B Event for Trade and Corporate Buyers

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Buyer enquiries:

call: +919890765617

email: mohit@gps-india.com



MOVEMENTS

RAFFLES

Udaipur

Raffles Udaipur has appointed **GAUTAM KHANNA** as the Director of Operations. He will be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the hotel, ensuring exceptional guest experiences and driving operational excellence. He will also work closely with the hotel's management team to develop and implement strategies to enhance the hotel's performance and reputation. Gautam brings with him a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry spanning over 14 years. He has worked with renowned hotel chains like ITC Hotels and Marriott International. His last assignment was as the Director of F&B of Pullman and Novotel at the Aerocity in New Delhi.



DESTINATION NEW SOUTH WALES

Mumbai

Destination NSW has appointed **SAMAR CHOKSHI** as the Country Manager. He joins from Tourism Australia in India, where he spearheaded a range of high-impact initiatives to boost Australia's appeal to leisure and business travellers. His track record in promoting Australia as a destination in India is outstanding – as are his relationships with stakeholders right across the Indian travel and tourism sector. In his new role, he will lead marketing and promotional activities for NSW in India and identify new and growing opportunities. India is one of NSW's priority markets, rebounding strongly in the 12 months since Australia reopened its international borders to now rank fourth in overseas arrivals.



NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

Mumbai

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) has appointed **JASON KRIMMEL** as its Head of International Business. In his new role, Krimmel will oversee NCL's Sales, Marketing and Brand Communication efforts outside of the United States and Canada, including in the Asia Pacific region, to expand the brand's international footprint, with a specific focus on optimizing collaboration between regions, surfacing new sales opportunities, and driving impactful through-the-line campaigns. In this Miami-based role, he will report into Todd Hamilton, the company's Senior Vice President of Sales. Since joining NCL in 2003 as Business Development Manager for North Texas, Krimmel has held various positions.



JW MARRIOTT

Kolkata

SAKET VERMA has been promoted to the position of Director of Sales and Marketing (DOSM) at JW Marriott Kolkata. A versatile individual, Saket has more than 12 years of luxury hospitality sales and marketing experience. He will be responsible for implementing new sales and marketing activities to accentuate hotel room and event sales. He has done his graduation in Bachelors in Hotel Management and Hospitality Administration from Institute of Hotel Management, Goa. He undertook his Industrial Training at The Oberoi, Bengaluru and his professional training at Intercontinental - The Lalit, New Delhi. He has worked with The Oberoi hotels, Accor hotels, Hilton hotels and Marriott International.



SAYAJI

Morbi

Sayaji Morbi has appointed **RAJNEESH TIWARI** as the Director of Operations. With more than 19 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Tiwari in his new role will be responsible for driving the hotel operations and extending heartfelt Sayaji moments to the guests. He has completed Hotel Management from IHMCT and AN Hyderabad. Prior to joining Sayaji, he was associated with Marriot Hotels, Hard Rock Hotels, The Zuri Hotels, Radisson Hotels, The Oberoi and Taj Hotels in various capacities. Tiwari commented: "I am thrilled to become a part of the Sayaji Parivar. I look forward to working with the entire team to take the guest experience at the hotel to the next level."



GRAND MERCURE BENGALURU GOPALAN MALL

Bengaluru

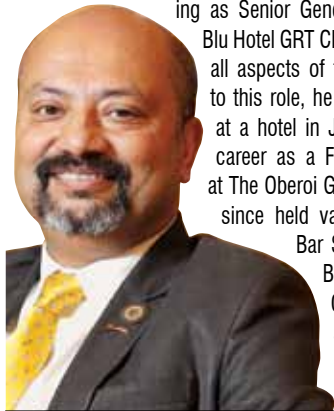
With over a decade of rich experience in the hospitality industry, **SYED YAKOOB KALEEM** joins Grand Mercure Bengaluru Gopalan Mall as the Rooms Division Manager. In his new role, he will lead the front office and housekeeping functions of the 212-key hotel with two F&B outlets and 10 meeting spaces. A graduate of the Institute of Hotel Management Bangalore, Syed began his career as a Graduate Management Trainee in 2011 at the Novotel ibis Bengaluru Outer Ring Road. Later, he moved to the ibis City Centre Bangalore as the Front Office Manager and also took on an additional responsibility as the All Safe Officer.



RADISSON BLU HOTEL GRT CHENNAI

Chennai

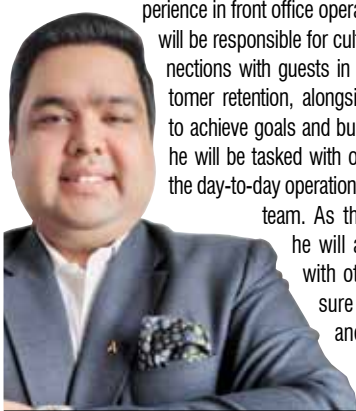
A seasoned hospitality professional with more than 33 years of experience in the industry, **SUBHASISH GUPTA** has been working as Senior General Manager of Radisson Blu Hotel GRT Chennai, where he overlooks all aspects of the hotel operations. Prior to this role, he was the General Manager at a hotel in Jodhpur. Gupta started his career as a Food and Beverage Server at The Oberoi Group in New Delhi and has since held various positions, including Bar Supervisor, Assistant Food Beverage Manager, Senior Captain, and Food & Beverage Executive at different hotels and companies in India and the UAE.



NOVOTEL VISAKHAPATNAM VARUN BEACH

Vizag

Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach has appointed **NITIN GOSAIN** as the new Front Office Manager. Nitin brings with him a decade of experience in front office operations. In his new role, he will be responsible for cultivating professional connections with guests in order to encourage customer retention, alongside developing strategies to achieve goals and budget targets. Additionally, he will be tasked with overseeing and managing the day-to-day operations of the customer service team. As the front office manager, he will also be working closely with other departments to ensure seamless integration and cooperation in achieving the overall goals of the organization.



HILTON BANGALORE EMBASSY GOLFLINKS

Bengaluru

Hilton Bangalore Embassy GolfLinks appoints **SHARIN JOSEPH** as Commercial Director. With over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, Sharin brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the role. In his new role, he will be responsible for driving the hotel's commercial strategy, maximizing revenue, and developing strong relationships with key stakeholders and will work closely with the hotel's leadership team to ensure the property continues to deliver the exceptional guest experience. Sharin has a proven track record in sales and marketing, having worked at many hotels.



TALKing People

ANUP MANJESHWAR, Head - Sales and Distribution, AIX, prefers to write out his to-do list and also encourages his team to do so. "It's simple, but it helps me de-stress. I love my lists! Since the lockdown I've started investing time to eat right and stay fit. Fitness helps me handle challenges and pressures without feeling burnt out," he says. Kerala is his favourite holiday destination. He adds, "Why bother taking an international trip when your own country India has so much to offer. From graceful valleys to colourful streets, lovely beaches and inspired architecture to rich heritage, they remind us that India has her share of attractions," he says.



Being in the industry for close to two decades, **RAHUL MISHRA**, Director, Sales & Marketing, Novotel Kolkata, has mastered the art of enjoying work and relaxing too. "Still on days when there is a need to break the shackles, running is something that helps me unwind. Lockdown itself presented everyone with the unique challenge of acquiring a new skillset. While being away from family, one of the key things I picked up was cooking. I enjoy travelling a lot. Austria and Uttarakhand are two unique destinations which has always piqued my interest," he says.



ABISHEK RAMESH, Executive Director, Kairali Ayurvedic Group, says, "These are three activities I found useful to ensure I reduce stress – go for a run, go golfing, and a good Abhyangam – full body massage with ayurvedic oils. In India, I have always encouraged everybody to see each state, as it has so much to offer. But my biased answer will always be Kerala. It has so much natural beauty to offer, with culture, ayurveda and spirituality, I find it the most beautiful destination in India. Internationally, I find a similar ethos only in Thailand. The people are so friendly."



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SriLankan Airlines eyes Indian visitors

Richard Nuttall, CEO, SriLankan Airlines, says Sri Lanka is a safe place to visit, and India being a major source market for the country, the airline plans to serve more secondary cities in India and connect with greater frequency.



Janice Alyosius

India and Sri Lanka share a bond that dates back to more than 2500 years, built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural and historic connections, immortalized by the epics such as 'Ramayana'. Travellers from India hold a special place in the hearts of Sri Lankans for their unquenchable hunger for discovery, which has made India, Sri Lanka's topmost tourism source market.

Stressing on India-Sri Lanka relations, **Richard Nuttall**, CEO, SriLankan Airlines, said, "SriLankan Airlines is almost like another Indian carrier, even though we are not in India. If we look through the years, India has usually been the number one tourism provider. The country is big, and we are right next door. So, if we look at the Indian diaspora, particularly based in the South, we look at the ability for us to connect people, particularly going East in the future and the opportunity to sell Sri Lanka to a huge population next door. India is directly sort of linked with the future of the airline."

The pandemic has had a significant impact not only on the tourism and hospitality sectors, but also on the aviation sector. This resulted in significant reductions in passenger numbers and flight cancellations or planes flying empty between airports.

Speaking of the flight frequency, Nuttall said, "We used to fly 120 flights per week to up to 14 cities in India, but at the moment we fly a little less. This is due to two factors. The first is that, like many other airlines, we are still working to get our fleet back in the air. And

second, after the pandemic, everyone was grounded and trying to get back at the same time, so supply chains, engine overhaul, and facilities couldn't keep up with everyone trying to do everything at once."

Speaking over the rising airfares, he said, "I believe that air travel costs will remain high for the next



SriLankan Airlines is almost like another Indian carrier. If we look through the years, India has usually been the number one tourism provider

12 to 18 months. It's driven by two factors. The first is that fuel costs are extremely high, more than double what they were a year ago, and the second is that, like many other carriers, we do not have our entire fleet in the air. Reason been the supply chains, engines and things like that have suffered due to COVID, and a lot of the raw materials that come from countries that have not been truly open."

He added, "After the problems that we had in the country last year, Indians have yet to return to Sri Lanka. I believe the media exaggerated the issues in Sri Lanka. It's still a fantastic place to visit, and probably now

is a better time than ever. With the currency devaluation, everything remains the same; it just happens to be a little cheaper, which is why we are here trying to promote it. But in the long run, I believe, the airline should have twice as many aircraft as it does now, allowing us to feed into more secondary cities in India and connect with greater frequency, particularly going east. When you look at India, there are many carriers that can connect you going west, but not so many going east, and we are just off the bottom on the right. So, we are perfectly placed to do so."

Nuttall emphasised that Sri Lanka is a safe place to visit, and India being a major source market for the country, they hope to attract more Indian visitors. "The top tourism arrivals in January were actually Russians, which may be due to the fact that, for obvious reasons, they have limited places to

visit at the moment. India was ranked second, and India was ranked first overall in 2022. I believe there has been a lot of negative perception in India about the situation in Sri Lanka, but the reality is exactly the opposite. So, now is the time for everyone to return, and we need to give Indians a reason to visit and actually experience Sri Lanka. And the more people come, the more they will send the message out that Sri Lanka is safe, and our hospitality is great value for money. I can tell you, everything is perfectly okay, but you need to go and experience it."



Richard Nuttall
CEO, SriLankan Airlines




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