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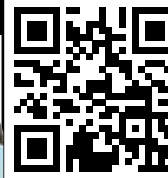
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2023: Tread with cautious optimism

With the tourism business witnessing green shoots of revival, the industry stakeholders look at the New Year with hope and a whole lot of caution. It is not yet time to relax but ensure this boom sustains amid a spurt in COVID-19 cases. **TRAVTALK** finds out what the decision-makers have to say.



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister for Tourism
Government of India

“In the years to come, the Indian diaspora will be eager to witness Ayodhya, Kushinagar, Varanasi, and Amritsar. Char Dham, Kedarnath, and Badrinath are also top attractions for spiritual tourism. The tourism department will promote 100 IC centres. The department

is also looking forward to promoting river tourism. Since connectivity is key to a country's growth, India is building 30 km of national highway every day. Now, the journey from Srilan to Gauti takes two and a half hours. The G20 meetings are also bound to steer tourism.”



Jyotiraditya Scindia
Union Minister for Civil Aviation
Government of India

“UDAN is an ambitious scheme of the Government of India, under which during the last six years, since its inception in 2016, nearly 1.15 crore people who had never travelled in an aeroplane were able to undertake journey. Eleven airlines are currently part of

UDAN, out of which three are startups, whereas 70 new airports have been established. Apart from these, we are going to establish 68 new airports by the end of 2024. As on November 30, 2022, after four rounds of bidding under UDAN, 453 routes have commenced, operationalising 70 airports.”



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Tourism
Government of India

“We have started with WTM London and then the next two events that we are looking at in Europe are Fitur in Madrid and the ITM Berlin. We are slowly now scaling it up because as domestic tourism is getting back on the track to pre-COVID levels,

we need to attract more tourists from abroad and that is why we will be participating in international events. Also, the G20 Presidency will give a big boost to India's image or cultural heritage destinations. The 55 places where the meetings are, they will definitely get showcased.”



Rakesh Kumar Verma
Additional Secretary
Tourism, Government of India

“As we are recovering from the pandemic, we have seen our domestic sector has already grown and we have really achieved record footfall at many destinations. And after opening up of the international travel, I think now our focus is to ensure that the inbound also recovers to pre-pandemic level. I think there is already significant recovery, and we hope by 2023 we should be able to recover inbound traffic to pre-pandemic level. That is where we are working with industry and with other state governments.”

Contd on page 7 ▶

CM goes big on UP's tourism potential

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, while addressing the 37th IATO Convention in Lucknow recently, highlighted the state's developments and the immense potential it has for tourism.



Janice Alyosius

Addressing the IATO members at the Lucknow convention, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister **Yogi Adityanath** shared that UP has changed dramatically since the last convention took place in the state 26 years ago. “Under the Prime Minister's

leadership, Uttar Pradesh has made enormous progress in the last five years, making it India's top domestic tourism market and the state has immense tourism potential in all segments,” he said.

The event witnessed more than 1,000 participations from the travel fraternity. Yogi urged tour

operators to visit the state and promote it. Talking about Varanasi and its spiritual tourism prospects, the chief minister said, “Kashi is India's religious capital and has seen a massive increase in the number of tourists in recent years. In comparison to the one crore tourists who used to visit Varanasi each year, Sri Kashi Vishwanth

Dham alone attracted more than one crore visitors in the month of Shravan.”

Currently, projects worth ₹30,000 crore related to infrastructure development and tourist facilities are being developed in Ayodhya and its surrounding area. “Once these projects are completed,

Ayodhya will be positioned as the most beautiful city in the world,” Yogi said. After completion of the development work in 2024, the number of tourists visiting the state will increase 10 fold, he added.

Yogi said the central and state governments are working in synergy to promote the Buddhist Circuit. “Kushinagar airport has begun operations, and an airport in Shravasti is being built,” he added. ↴



Yogi Adityanath
Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

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Time to prove India's MICE mettle

India took the G20 Presidency officially from December 1, 2022, which kickstarted with a meetings at destinations that showcased their MICE facilities as well as tourism potential. Such meetings have been planned throughout next year to welcome delegates from across the world and it might just be India's turn to play big in global MICE arena.

 Nisha Verma

It is a known fact that every country after its G20 Presidency could boost its tourist numbers and India might be part of that list, at least that is what the industry and the industry leaders are expecting. To make sure it happens, India will be showcasing all its tourism assets to delegates. However, apart from leisure, India is betting big on getting good MICE business as it puts its best foot forward in terms of its meeting facilities.

Tourism showcase

G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, Government of India (GoI), claimed that the G20 offers the best opportunity for India to showcase its culture, history and tourism potential and to position itself as a major tourist destination in the world.



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER



Amitabh Kant
G20 Sherpa, India



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Tourism, GoI

must go back physically elevated as an Indian. That experience is not about hardware, but it's about creating a unique experience around India's culture, which can only be done by the state governments. They have their unique strengths. Every state should go back to its roots, create a unique state product, which is thoroughly

tourism industry. The upcoming G20 meet in India will be a key factor in aiding recovery for the Indian hospitality industry."

 **India will host over 200 meetings across 55 cities, many proposed to be held in the Northeast, from December 2022 to November 2023**

He also shared that sustainability commitment needs to come in mainstream in tourism, especially with G20. "There are four tourism track meetings slated to be held during G20. It is the ideal time that India should take the leadership position in responsible tourism," he said.

He added that at the time of G20, Ministry of Tourism is going to organise the Global MICE Conference. Sharing the aim behind the same, Singh said, "The agenda will be to place India as an attractive MICE destination. Today, India has very good MICE facilities, air connectivity has improved, new convention centres are coming up, along with new hotels are coming up. Thus, there are many new destinations where MICE events can be held. I am sure India is in a position to attract MICE events much more than it did in the past."

Face-change for India's MICE

Rakesh Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, GoI, claimed that G20 meetings are all important. "There are a large number of countries and other participants at these meetings. These destinations will showcase that they have capability to organise these meetings. That's how the MICE traffic to these

destinations will be improved due to G20," he said.

On Global MICE Conference, Verma said, "MICE is one segment where India needs to do a lot. There is a lot of potential, but we have not got our market share. This global conference that we are planning with particular focus on G20 countries will be putting the best foot forward by telling what all is always available in the country in terms of MICE infrastructure, MICE specialties, and MICE ecosystem. A lot of new things are happening and the MOT has recently unveiled a strategy for MICE tourism and a National MICE Board, has been set up. It is an inter-ministerial board to help us coordinate policies, take decisions and help us support the MICE."

Global hub of MICE

India must be the global hub of MICE and events, says **Naveen Kundu**, MD, EbixCash Travel & Holidays. "There's no doubt that we will be a global hub for MICE and events one day. Currently, whatever the government is doing is reasonably good. With the kind of infrastructure development there are more con-



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General
HAI

ventions happening in India. Thus, there are 3Cs required—we need more convention centres, creativity and connectivity. Above all we need the conviction of the government to do that rapidly to take us to that objective fast. For that, we all are hopeful that they will do something or the other," he added.

Govt, industry on same page

MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General, HAI, shared that they trying to see that the industry and the government are on the same page. "Events are taking place in the remote corners of the country like Siliguri, Tripura, North-east and certainly these places will get an exposure, which has not been there earlier. It's also perhaps we hope will help in improving the infrastructure in many of these areas and will en-

the world while celebrating the country's rich and varied heritage and diversity," he added.

Need more int'l conferences

Informing that the hospitality industry is working with the G20 organising committee **Arun Kumar**, Market Vice President-North India, Nepal and Bhutan, Marriott, shared, "We have over 100 hotels in India, and we want business at the end of the day. The same goes for other opera-



Arun Kumar
Market Vice President- North India
Nepal and Bhutan, Marriott



Valmiki Harikishan
Managing Director
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

courage the states to create more destinations along those places," he said.

Golden opportunity

Sharing that the year-long event is a golden opportunity for the tourism and hospitality industry to shine on the global stage, **Jaison Chacko**, Secretary General, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), urged the government to intensify promotional initiatives under Incredible India to attract as many foreign tourists

tors. For us as a company, G20 is a prestigious event for our country. I think it's very nice that instead of big cities, we have identified 55 destinations across India to have meetings and everybody will benefit from this."

PPP is key

Valmiki Harikishan, MD, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions, shared that even Telangana has got two G20 events to be organized. "We are equally excited to support the MOT, because government alone cannot do everything and anything. They need the stakeholders, particularly tourism industry, which will always add value and laurels to it making the G20 events pan India more successful. My expectation is that in every state public and private partnership should happen to make these G20 events more successful. Value addition can be given to experiential projects, where tourism only add experience, local authenticity, right from local cuisine tasting, or local cities showcasing or monuments showcasing. This will offer the much-needed break in between the meetings and tourism can add value to it. The delegates can also rejuvenate with wellness tourism, which is doing very well in India. I'm sure tourism is the key to rest of the industries to make G20 successful," he said.



Jaison Chacko
Secretary General
FHRAI

as possible during the year and leave an indelible mark of India on the tourism map of the world. "This is the time the government should go full throttle to promote tourism under the Incredible India banner. The hospitality industry is raring to showcase its world-class standards and facilities to



Rakesh Verma
Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, GoI



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbixCash Travel & Holidays

"We will host over 200 meetings across 55 cities from December 2022 to November 2023. These meetings are also proposed to be held in several states of Northeast including Aizawl. Among the G20 member countries, China, Mexico, India, South Africa and Indonesia are projected to expand their tourism industry post COVID. With our presidency we definitely can stride ahead of these 4-5 countries to build the rightful place of India's tourism industry in the global arena," he claimed.

Role of states in G20

Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa, India, feels that all states should step up their game for G20. "The Prime Minister has asked us to do G20 meetings in all the states and Union Territories (UTs). Important thing is that every single visitor during G20 who comes to India is not coming just for G20. We must send him back as a brand ambassador of India. Every single tourist who comes during G20 must go back mentally rejuvenated as an Indian, he must be spiritually invigorated as an Indian and he

Indian, and that is what every G20 visitor must experience."

Opportunity for hospitality & MICE

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, GoI, said that earlier, countries that took G20 Presidency, used it as an opportunity to project their nation

 **India will be showcasing all its tourism assets to the visiting delegates, expecting a boost in foreign arrivals after their visit**

to global community. "The expectations of the Indian hospitality space are rising rapidly, mirroring the growth in the quality of international tourism. This also reflects the growth of the Indian tourism industry, which is twice that of the global

Prepare and flourish

The last year has seen our industry go from a crisis towards a transformation. 2022 set the pace for an extremely promising 2023, full of hopes and dreams. 2023 is the year to predict, prepare and flourish. The industry is geared up to show a full recovery and, in some cases, even go beyond 2019 numbers.

The second half of 2022 led the path towards re-thinking tourism and reassessing every part of the sector. Most enterprises went back to the drawing board to look at what they do, why they do it and how to make it more efficient. Working methods followed by the right amount of communication to ensure that the work gets done and the message gets delivered. This now means that processes are in place and the industry is all geared up to scale up operations when required.

During last year, global community faced a range of challenges, including geopolitical tensions, rising energy prices and a climate emergency. Addressing these concerns and assuring they get highlighted, UNWTO placed tourism firmly on the G20 agenda. If managed as hoped, this could be the big turning point for India's inbound tourism. A showcase of the country and its tourism developments since 2020. Under India's Presidency of the G20 in 2023, this is the moment for leaders to seize the opportunity to transform tourism.

To deliver its massive potential, tourism now needs to focus on sustainability and opportunity. Sustainability is the buzz word for tourism and will continue to be so in 2023 as well. The travellers are aware and demand responsible actions while travelling. Hotels are offering more sustainable options, airlines are exploring biofuel options and now is the opportunity for the travel agents to package this well and send out the right information.

To conclude, in words of Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General, UNWTO, 'around the world, in countries at all development levels, many millions of jobs and businesses are dependent on a strong and thriving tourism sector. Tourism has also been a driving force in protecting natural and cultural heritage, preserving them for future generations to enjoy'.

'Family & friend travel' in demand

People want to enjoy the company of friends or extended family on their vacations with more than 80 per cent of travellers planning to travel with immediate family and 52 per cent opting to travel with other relatives too, finds the Agoda's Family Travel Survey.

 TT Bureau

Four out of five travellers will take a vacation with immediate family in the next 12 months, reveals digital travel platform Agoda's Family Travel Trend survey 2022. While travelling with friends proves more popular than travelling with extended family, still more than half (52 per cent) are keen to catch up with relatives for their vacation, the report stated.

Travellers from Singapore (61 per cent), Taiwan (61 per cent) and Vietnam (59 per cent) are most likely to take at least one trip with immediate family. Meanwhile, people from The Philippines (47 per cent), Indonesia (40 per cent) and Malaysia (35 per cent) are most likely to plan two or more family jaunts in the coming year. When it comes to vacationing with extended family, it's travellers from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam that take the top three spots, with those from Japan, Korea, and Singapore least likely to take the whole family along for their travels. "The more the merrier for holidays seems to be the message across Southeast Asia, India and beyond this year as Asia finally reopens for travel. The Agoda's Family Travel Survey shows people really want to enjoy the company of friends or extended family on their vacations with more than 80 per cent of travellers planning to travel with immediate



 **77 per cent of travellers globally indicate some concern about international borders closing again while they are overseas**

family and 52 per cent opting to travel with other relatives too," said **Enric Casals**, Associate Vice President, Southeast Asia and Oceania, Agoda Partner Services.

Friends reuniting

Australians are renowned for their love with mates, but it seems it doesn't translate to going on holiday with them, with travel-

lers from Australia ranking only 9th most likely to take a trip with friends this year, knocked off the top spot by travellers from the Philippines, followed by Vietnamese and Indian travellers.

2023 value hunters

When it comes to travelling with families or in a group traveller worldwide are seeking more value for their trips with budget hotels, Agoda Homes vacation rentals and inclusive resorts cited as the top three group travel preferences. "Family travellers often have more complex requirements when choosing their holiday accommodation. Often, they need more space, perhaps with cooking facilities as offered by Agoda Homes, or the services such as babysitting, kids' clubs, extra beds or interconnecting rooms offered by family-friendly hotels," Enric Casals, continued.

Travellers from Philippines (59 per cent), India (44 per cent) and South Korea (38 per cent) showed a high preference for budget friendly hotels, while those from Indonesia (42 per cent), Malaysia (39 per cent), and Taiwan (38 per cent) preferred vacation rentals that tend to offer additional facilities such as kitchens or separate living and sleeping areas. This is in contrast to almost half of Japanese travellers (43 per cent), who favored chain hotels as their accommodation of choice and 34 per cent of Thai travellers who leaned towards the convenience of all-inclusive resorts.

Border closures continue to concern travellers

Despite travel optimism and growth outpacing pre-COVID levels, 77 per cent of travellers globally indicate some concern about international borders closing again while they are overseas. Travellers from most recently opened markets, including South Korea and Japan, are most concerned, in comparison to those from markets that quickly removed border restrictions including US, Australia and India.

Accommodation preferences for family and group travel

Accommodation preference when travelling with family/ group	Global Ranking	Most likely of all markets to consider each accommodation type	Least likely of all markets consider each accommodation type
Budget Hotels	1	Philippines India South Korea	Vietnam Malaysia Australia/ Singapore
Holiday Homes & Guesthouses	2	Indonesia Malaysia Taiwan	Japan South Korea Philippines/ United States
All Inclusive Resorts	3	Thailand Vietnam	Japan US and Indonesia
Hotel Chains	4	Japan United States Singapore	Philippines Thailand Vietnam
Luxury Hotels	5	Taiwan India Singapore	Philippines Thailand Malaysia/ Indonesia

Highlights

- ❖ Four out of five will take a family holiday in the next 12 months
- ❖ Travelling with a group of friends is more likely than travelling with extended family
- ❖ Families gravitate towards budget accommodation, Agoda Homes style vacation rentals and All-inclusive resorts



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Circulation: Ashok Rana

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Durga Das Publications Middle East (FZE)
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DDP is printed, published and edited by SanJeet on behalf of DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd., printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
Ph.: +91-11-23234177

2023: No time to relax

Associations

“The hope is that the industry will move ahead in the new year as the geopolitical situation also plays a big role in tourism. It is important that there are lesser conflicts for tourism to grow. The energy prices need to come down, all of which is influenced by geopolitics as well. And of course, you can never rule out natural disasters. Cautiously optimistic is how I would look at the new year. The industry is resilient. That is the only way we have survived with zero support. It will, however, be good to have an environment that enables us to do business in a more seamless manner. All things considered, anything that happens in 2023 will only be better than 2021-2022. So if we can get our act together in terms of promotion, our inbound market can grow.”



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

“In 2023, we expect our policy makers to offer a kind view to our suggestions, especially on the marketing and promotional front. Marketing & Promotion is at the top of the agenda, along with physical roadshows in target countries under the leadership of Ministry of Tourism. We expect financial support under Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) Scheme of the MOT. To re-store e-Visa from European countries that are key source markets such as Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. Restoration of tourist/e-tourist visa for foreign tourists and to allow entry of foreign tourists through land borders of Nepal and Bhutan for the revival of Buddhist Tourism. In new Foreign Trade Policy, IATO recommended that the benefit of SEIS scheme should be continued for the tour operators and travel agencies for the next 5 years.”



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

“There will be a lot of focus on India as a prime tourism destination in 2023. The G20 meetings, Visit India Year, establishment of the National Tourism Board and other initiatives by the Government of India will contribute significantly to bring India into focus as a premier tourist destination. With COVID paling into the past, we expect the trade to become significantly more active towards promotion of India in key international source markets. We will continue our thrust on educating our members through our two webinar products Jewels of India & Believe It or Not. Additionally, we will work with MOT to conduct result-oriented roadshows to key source markets. We are already working with a state government to conduct an exclusive roadshow for them to four overseas markets in Q1/Q3, 2023. We intend to revive our annual industry-wide meeting tourism PowerHouse.”



Jatinder Taneja
Vice Chairman, PATA India Chapter



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

“In 2023, I anticipate Europe should be available, as major tour operators were not able to begin their series this summer due to visa issues. None of the agents advertised or fully allegedly went ahead with group series, but they have now begun to prepare and advertise for 2023. The fact that European visa takes time, travelers are planning for the coming year. So, if they want to travel now, they must plan ahead of time and choose their travel dates accordingly. The next thing we want to focus on is our membership drive so that we can open more chapters across India. And for that we want to focus on our training programme, and we have signed an MoU with LVG training London. Another thing is that we want to strengthen our relationship with the government, so we are writing to the respective ministers about our problems. I am hopeful 2023 will be a successful year.”



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI

“We as an industry have learned from the pandemic that domestic tourism is the way forward. Though inbound and outbound are equally important to us, but domestic tourism had an upper hand in the revival of our tourism sector. Many states have stepped forward to host state tourism events, and there are numerous infrastructure projects underway. Keeping this in mind, we as an association are developing a states specialist programme along with state tourism boards for all the ADTOAI members so that they can be trained and can learn about the state, all the tourism products it has to offer, and then sell it to their clients. Our strategy for 2023 is to connect members with one another. We have a lot of challenges that we have seen in the past, and we are working on them so that they do not become roadblocks to next year's success.”



K. Ranga Reddy
Chairman, IATO Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Chapter

“To increase the tourism flow to India, whether it is domestic or international, we need to look into the infrastructure. Firstly, the train stations should be uplifted to handle millions of passengers. Secondly, there is also a need to decongest airports. Thirdly, the airfares have to come down at par with other international routes like ASEAN countries or the European countries in terms of what they are offering on domestic routes. More than that, they have to concentrate on infrastructure like professional drivers, professional staff at the hotels and other aligned places, wherever the tourists go and increase the tourism police also, which gives a good opportunity to say that the land order is in place and increase the domestic or the local cuisine facilities. These days people are looking for more local things than going for a multicuisine restaurant.”

“Our vision is to make India amongst the top ten adventure travel destinations in the world by 2030. ATOAI has ambitious plans for 2023. We are starting the year by organising a course in Disaster Management, First Aid and CPR for our adventure guides by the National Disaster Response Force. This will be a force multiplier in case of natural disasters in our country and impart training in First Aid, rescue and disaster management to our adventure professionals. We are looking at organising National Seminars on Responsible Adventure Tourism throughout the country, training our adventure guides and giving a huge amount of value to our membership. The first Seminar on Responsible Adventure Tourism will be conducted in Feb 2023 in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.”



Ajeet Bajaj
Padma Shri Awardee
President, ATOAI

“We were hopeful that we will do very well, or we will do as it was in 2019 because it was an excellent year for tourism, as far as Kerala and India is concerned. It resulted in good arrivals, good income and good revenues. We are hopeful that it will come back to 2023 and 2024. The most important thing is to survive. We have survived and now we will revive and further strengthen. I believe that both Central and State governments must support the tourism business. Tour operators, transporters, aviation, taxi drivers or other suppliers, are together working as a team to give excellent member experiences. We are extending holidays, which is a dream for any traveller. The government should recognize that, support the industry and handhold it to move forward, which can be further strengthened and attract more tourists to the country.”



EM Najeeb
Sr. Vice President, IATO

“With the easing of COVID restrictions, we expect a large number of foreign visitors to our State and 100 per cent occupancy in hospitality business. Swosti Group, in its constant endeavour to provide the best of services since 1981, has been the pioneer in the State of Odisha's hotel industry in adding and achieving new milestone and new features each year. Now Swosti Group is soon unveiling the first five-star premium luxury beach resort Swosti Premium Beach Resorts at Puri, which have been permitted to go up to 13 floors with all rooms (125 luxury rooms, including five large luxury suits on the 12th floor) looking into miles of the Bay of Bengal & the blue sky. The work is going on in full swing and the resort will be inaugurated by Honourable Chief Minister of Odisha in early 2024.”



J K Mohanty
Chairman, IATO Eastern Region



MP Bezbaruah
Secretary General, HAI

“We would like to see the government taking decisions on some things that have started. One of the things is National Tourism Board, which is considered the right thing for tourists and will be the foundation of PPP. I hope something will happen next year. We look forward to some decisions of the government on the infrastructure status of the hospitality sector, which is in the interest of the industry and the country because we are expecting a huge demand for accommodation and the gap is quite large. We are also hoping that tourism will be given due recognition. The UN General Assembly had a meeting this year for the first time to discuss the importance of tourism and they have appealed to all the governments to give tourism its due in employment creation, in an inclusive growth, in sustainability, revival of culture and heritage.”



Pradeep Shetty
President, HRAAI

“Absence of a uniform system for approvals and compliances is hampering the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector in the country. From the inception of a hospitality project to the day-to-day running of the establishments, the sector is tangled in the myriad web of bureaucratic processes. Different States in the country follow different licensing and compliance requirements, making the process cumbersome and time and energy consuming. For this, licences and compliances, among other statutory requirements, should be brought down and bottlenecks removed to augment the number of rooms for tourists in the country. The industry needs a unified system of compliance by incorporating and codifying the innumerable rules prevailing in various States to bring Ease of Doing Business for the sector.”



Jaison Chacko
Secretary General, FHRAI

“The hospitality sector is eagerly looking up to the Union Budget of 2023-24, as we have high hopes from the government to back the sector with some positive policy reforms. The upcoming budget will be pivotal to determining the path ahead for the hospitality business in the country. One of our long-standing requests has been granting infrastructure status to the industry. Currently, hotels built with an investment of ₹200 crore or more have been accorded infrastructure status under the RBI Infrastructure lending norm criteria. However, FHRAI has requested that this threshold be brought down to ₹10 crore to give a fillip to budget segment hotels. This will enable hotels to avail term loans at lower rates of interest and benefit of longer repayment tenure. It has also requested for hospitality to be classified as an industry.”

Diverse products, diverse needs

Hotels



Sunjae Sharma
Managing Director, India and Southwest Asia, Hyatt India Consultancy

“Hyatt as a hotel group is focused on a multi-brand presence across leisure and business travel destinations, where guests are currently travelling or would like to travel. In 2022, we launched nine new properties in a single year for the first time in Hyatt’s history in India, and presently operate across 43 hotels and eight distinct Hyatt brands in India and South-West Asia. We expect to accelerate this mindful growth in 2023 as well and we hope to do this by introducing new destinations and brands to meet the diverse hospitality needs of our guests. Our goal is to surpass the ambitious milestone of 50 Hyatt-branded properties in India by the end of 2023 and to establish a more diverse portfolio of hotel options in both existing and emerging markets.”

“Interestingly, 2022 saw most travellers look up luxurious accommodations that checked all boxes for wellness, adventure, and authentic yet immersive experiences. An uptick in demand for enlightening and culturally unique activities was also observed. Our coracle ride, historical treks and trails in Hampi, coffee plantation and worker’s trail in Coorg, and the safaris to discover the Indian biodiversity in Kabini; all piqued people’s interest this year. This also drove a lot of people to choose our properties for intimate weddings and honeymoon. We have noticed a shift in the industry over the last few years as demand for ethical and sustainable travel has increased. As we foresaw the environmental impact of our sector, the core of Evolve Back’s philosophy was implemented to preserve the ‘Spirit of the Land’, curate experiences around local culture and heritage.”



Jose Ramapuram
Marketing Director, Evolve Back Resorts



JB Singh
President, and CEO
InterGlobe Hotels

“The portfolio represents one of the most sizable financial commitments in the mid-market segment by an Indian business house and an international hotel brand. Apart from the 26 operational hotels in various Tier I & II cities, we have a solid pipeline of four under-construction hotels (600+ keys) today including 2 Ibis (Thane & Mumbai), 1 Ibis Styles in Goa and an upscale hotel in Bangalore. We plan to open Ibis Thane in 2022–23, followed by Ibis Styles in Goa in early 2023-24. Therefore, the next three years are important for us from an expansion point of view, with four new, very thoughtfully designed hotels with high-quality rooms, state-of-the-art meeting spaces and colourful public areas to open. Our focus has always been towards providing holistic customer experience.”

“Building on the commitment, IHG has launched a 10-year action plan called ‘Journey to Tomorrow’ that aims to make a positive difference to our people, communities and the planet. In addition to metros and other established tourism destinations, Tier-II and Tier-III markets in India will gain significance as more travellers are exploring these cities. We are well placed to cater to demands arising from secondary markets and have a strong offering for this segment across with our leading brands. Staycations and weekend leisure travel demand will continue to rise as well. With hybrid working model, people will experiment with their work settings, and we will continue to offer a seamless and comfortable ‘workcation’ experience with customised packages. We currently have 45 hotels in South-West Asia across five core brands, out of which 41 hotels are in India.”



Sudeep Jain
MD, SWA, IHG Hotels & Resorts



Ajay Bakaya
MD, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

“We have another 45 active hotels in the pipeline and under construction. We are getting stronger in tier II, III, and IV cities. Smaller cities don’t have strong infra hotel structure. Our portfolio is spread across the country in a strategic manner - 40 per cent North India, 25 per cent in West and South and 10 per cent in East. We are growing stronger on Tulip brand – and working on consciously strengthening and developing these brands in India. Our focus will be on adding more rooms. I believe that RevPAR will surpass far ahead of 2019. I am extremely optimistic. Even if I look at my own company. We have a project going on in Chennai and you cannot resolve all the issues on video calls. For sure COVID has taught us not to travel without reason. But as business demands, one must travel. There is the pent-up demand for travel. After a lull of two years, it’s time for us to make some money.”

“2023 will be another strong year of growth and investment for Accor. We are excited to introduce new properties for our loyal guests. We are looking at everything quarter by quarter to stay aligned with changing guests’ preferences and economic scenarios while focusing on sustained positive business recovery. We continue to focus on domestic leisure travel, staycations and workcations and expect our properties that are geographically covering popular leisure destinations to cater to the diverse demand. Domestic tourism is expected to be the key growth driver, with international travel gaining momentum. As of October 2022, Accor operates 56 properties across India and South Asia, with more than 10,000 keys, alongside 25 properties (4000 Keys) in the pipeline.”



Pratima Badhwar
Chief Commercial Officer
India & South Asia, Accor



Anant Kumar
Co-Founder, Brij Hotels

“With borders now opening up extensively, we are anticipating an increase in inbound tourism. However, the looming recession could cause a slight delay in this! All in all, I expect a good demand this year as people are now opting for more immersive travel experiences and luxury stays. We have some exciting plans coming up for the new year for our brand with several launches in line across various destinations in India. We recently launched Brij Gaj Kesri in Bikaner. Continuing with this expansion is our other interesting projects are underway – with Brij Bageecha coming up in Kukas and Brij Sonebagh in Bandhavgarh! In addition to this, we are also planning projects in Himachal Pradesh. We can’t wait for our guests to experience the Brij Hospitality there, connect them to the destination with its bespoke stay offerings and hyperlocal experiences that it offers.”

“We have three planned openings coming soon, WelcomHeritage Azora in Fort Kochi, WelcomHeritage Ayatana in Ooty and WelcomHeritage Parv Vilas Resort & Spa, Kasauli Hills in Solan. Our properties in Indore and Dungarpur are in the pipeline. We’re also looking at expanding our presence in East India. We plan to have 55 hotels by FY 2025-26 with 2000 keys in all. Whilst expanding our presence to include newer destinations in the hills, wilderness, cultural seats of the country as well as remote lands, we are consciously crafting destination experiences for authentic and fresh perspectives. WelcomHeritage is taking significant strides towards aligning with sustainable practices with initiatives like increasing use renewable energy through solar power and installing EV stations.”



Abinash Manghani
Chief Executive Officer
WelcomHeritage Hotels



Dimitris Manikis
President Europe, Middle East, Eurasia and Africa (EMEA), Wyndham Hotel & Resorts

“We are thrilled to expand our portfolio to make hotel travel possible for all by bringing more brands under the Wyndham umbrella into the market. We have several exciting developments in the pipeline that will further cement our presence in the region. We also continue to expand our corporate team in India to strengthen our support to our hotel partners and our overall growth strategy in the region. India is important to us not just because of the growth and adding new properties but also because of the talent, passion, and bright future we see in the young people within our industry. Specific trends that will continue to shape our industry next year and into the future include digital adoption and technology, sustainable hospitality, and the repositioning of the workforce. At Wyndham, we continue to invest in technology.”

“Though there are signs of global meltdown and India being consumption-based economy with some precautions we may be able to stay afloat and with domestic travellers’ strong desire for travel within India, it would help Indian hotels companies to sail-through. For juSta Hotels & Resorts, as an organisation, we had touched bottom during COVID-19 period and are focused on making a difference in coming year. We will be strengthening our footprints in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand Region and Kerala too in 2023. We were able to strengthen our positioning in small luxury hotels & resort company in 2022. We have signed seven resorts in 2022 with approx. 250 keys and are bullish for 2023 too. Our intent is to add another seven to eight hotels in 2023 and increase Room inventory in existing hotels as planned.”



Rohit Katyal
National Sales Head
juSta Hotels & Resorts



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder & MD
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

“I think that the industry is going to record overwhelming growth in the new year. The pent-up demand coupled with tremendous improvement in the pandemic situation means that the year 2023 is going to be a fruitful one for the hospitality and tourism sector. We have been able to expand our presence across the country with brands that cater to different market segments. All our properties have been able to reach demand levels of pre-pandemic time. We stepped up our expansion plans in 2022 with the opening of properties in markets like Jaipur and Dehradun. Going forward, we are well placed to achieve our target of 100 hotels in the next five years. We are expecting 2023 to be a very good year for our expansion plans. We will be opening seven new hotels in 2023.”

“In 2023, we expect that the macro deterrents (COVID, war, and rising inflation) go away, so that both outbound & inbound travel returns to the optimum level. We expect that airlines operate with adequate frequency and airfare gets rationalised. We expect that hospitality and tourism is able to generate more employment and attracts good talents to grow this industry. Our goal in 2023 is to sustain and grow new clientele and build new partnerships; develop new talents to shoulder growth responsibilities in hospitality and tourism; keep striving to create a system of better ROI and accountability by all stakeholders; encourage our clients to invest in meaningful marketing activities and grow the groups, MICE and wedding bookings to our portfolio hotels & resorts. We have hotel openings in Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam and we are keen to get Indian guests experience these new properties.”



Manas Sinha
Director, ISA Tourism

Sustainability will be key

Agents

“ We are expecting strong demand for bucket-list destinations for Winter Travel like Iceland and Finland for activities like staying in an ice igloo, chasing the Northern Lights, reindeer sleigh rides, and a visit to the Santa Claus village. The pandemic altered the way customers plan their trips and their expectations and priorities have changed during the past two years, especially when it comes to the mode of travel and stay. Sustainable, responsible and regenerative travel will need to be prevalent. Consumers are also planning longer trips and showing interest in exploring offbeat destinations. The unique outdoor activities like hiking, snorkeling, and biking trips to destinations will continue to remain popular across families and friends and millennials. ”



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbixCash Travel & Holidays

“ Expectations will keep rising, and they must keep rising, because what we saw in 2021, has never happened during our lifetime and I hope it never happens again. However, we hope the visas for various countries resume properly, because right now, we are facing challenges on visas. They need to stabilise. With the challenges in place, our expectations are very high as far as 2023 is concerned. The government, on its part, must continue doing what they are doing. Government’s job is not a short-term job. They must continue to do things. I have been a voice from the private sector towards the government on a lot of things. With the G20 Presidency of India in 2023, there are a huge expectation. It’s a challenging time and G20 will test the tourism infrastructure and the tourism development of this country. ”



Rajeev Kale
President & Country Head, Holidays, MICE, Visa - Thomas Cook (India)

“ At SOTC, we are witnessing an acceleration in our business and we are positive that the strong travel sentiment will see continuum in 2023. To encourage customers, we have already launched our portfolio of Europe Holidays for summer 2023 to favourite. Given the visa challenges in 2022, our intent is to help customers plan well in advance in order to avoid last minute disappointments. Additionally, to delight customers, we are offering an exciting inaugural offer: a complimentary 3-night luxury cruise experience across Barcelona, Savona and Marseille. New emerging destinations like Vietnam, Cambodia and Azerbaijan will continue to witness high uptick, in addition to easy and quick visa destinations remain preferred long and mid haul destinations. India continues to represent significant potential and my sense is we will see a 25% YoY growth. ”



Daniel D'Souza
President & Country Head - Holidays, SOTC



Dev Karvat
Founder & CEO, Asego

“ With the recent proliferation in insurance awareness backed by the radical upward trajectory in terms of tech developments, I feel that 2023 will be a year of digitalisation, with travellers seeking relevant assistance and insurance services for their trips. Therefore, our focus this year will be to further strengthen our position as innovators in the travel protection domain and enhance our global assistance capabilities to boost confidence amongst travellers with crucial services such as doctor-on-call, family protection and 24x7 emergency medical assistance. In 2023, we aspire to lead product innovations beyond insurance with relevant assistance services that will help the travellers manage unforeseen distressful situations with ease. We are certain that our experience in the global market will be instrumental in achieving this for an emerging market like India. Moreover, we are constantly moving to upgrade technology. ”



Prabuddha Sen
COO-South Asia, VFS Global

“ For 2023, the number of diplomatic missions have released statements of intending to open the floodgates as far as India is concerned. So the serious capping issue that we saw last year with the visa appointments should be done away with to a great extent. That should take care of a lot of demand from India. We do see their seriousness because economically the impact that the geopolitical situation of the West has caused is also being a hindrance for many governments. We at VFS Global are completely geared up with everything, including physical infrastructure and people management to take on increased demand. While we are present in 18 locations we are further increasing our footprint in tier 2 and 3 cities to be able to reach people. We are also happy to do temporary enrolment location centres, pre-advertised on social media for a future dates so people can book dates accordingly. ”



Dr. Subhash Goyal
Chairman – STIC Travel & Air Charter Group

“ We are very confident that in the year 2023, aviation and tourism will grow significantly. The e-tourist visas will be re-introduced and more international flights will start, we were very confident of seeing business grow like the pre-COVID days. A lot will depend on opening the skies because if we want to achieve a target of 20 million inbound tourists, then we should have about 40-50 million seats on international flights available, coming in and out of India, because our outbound travel is also expected to be more than 25 million. We will be celebrating our 50th Anniversary in the month of September 2023 and have a lot of plans of celebrations throughout the year. As an organisation, we will be doing a lot of marketing and promotional events including bringing out a commemorative golden jubilee publication and a short film covering the milestone of our progress. ”

NTOs



Sheetal Munshaw
Director, Atout France India

“ France has big sporting events slated for 2023 with the World Ski Championship and the Rugby World Cup. The time is just right for an optimal showcase of France’s touristic offering to the discerning sport fan and those who travel around mega sports events to partake in the same. We are also optimistic that a slew of cultural and artistic events that will take place through 2023 will give the Indian traveler enough reasons to plan a sojourn in France. It is likely that we may have similar inflow numbers closer to pre pandemic times and that people are likely to spend more time discovering France as a solo destination and opt for more offbeat destinations and experiences as we have already seen. We also reckon that sustainable ways of travel will organically form part of travel itineraries of the future. ”

“ We are delighted to announce that we will be hosting our biggest travel trade initiative in India – the annual Roadshow across several Indian cities and the second edition of our experiential consumer activation in New Delhi. These trade and consumer activations will showcase the destination’s new offerings in the run up to the 30-year anniversary of SA-India bilateral ties. Travelling to the Indian cities of Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Chennai, the tourism board will showcase their products and services. We anticipate a large number of footfalls from India as our travel trade partners are already seeing an upswing in enquiries for destination South Africa. In collaboration with our province partners, we are taking conscious efforts to promote sustainable and rural tourism, in an effort to give back to the local communities and economy. ”



Neliswa Nkani
Hub Head – ME/SEA
South African Tourism



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

“ We head into 2023 set on ramping up our pathways to tourism recovery, together with our Indian and Singapore partner-friends. The tourism industry is experiencing a strong resurgence in demand, with Indian consumers eager to travel again and try out new and exciting experiences. As a year-round tourist destination with exceptional culinary and diverse tourism experiences, Singapore will be among the top-of-mind destinations. Given our commitment to travel safety and unique, easy-to-enjoy offerings for both leisure and business travel, we expect to continue appealing to all segments of travellers. We have observed a few shifts in traveller priorities following the pandemic. Working with our industry partners, we have made strategic shifts, creating and curating new experiences to respond to these trends. ”

“ There is a new government in place and VisitBritain is working with the government on presenting the plans for the next year. Once we get approvals on our budgets and our plans, we will be the first to share it with the travel trade in India and everyone else. Apart from that, we are participating in the Global Panorama Showcase, wherein we will be going to North and East India cities in the coming few months. We have already covered West and South India markets extensively through GPS as well as our own roadshows in 2022. We hope that we have done a true and fair job in telling and informing the travel trade in India about how to sell the UK well, how to package it appropriately and how to seamlessly work with the local UK industry in order to promote the destination well. We will definitely continue with this momentum into the new year as well. ”



Shuja Bin Mehdi
B2B Manager – India
VisitBritain



Pranav Kapadia
Founder & Director,
Global Destinations

“ The colossal surge in travel seen in the last quarter are clear indicators that travel will continue to grow and outstretch beyond the ambit of pre-covid 19 levels, in 2023. The predictions for the outbound travel from India are extremely healthy and exciting for the global tourism industry. Travel businesses around the world are looking to capitalize on India’s outbound market. All eyes remain fixed on India as the country’s outbound tourism sector seems to be the solution that destinations overseas need to recover from the impact of Covid-19. With all barometers pointing in the positive direction, we too are very optimistic for an efficacious, successful and profitable 2023. The year 2023 is already looking very promising. We currently have a lot happening behind the scenes, as we prepare to embrace the new year with charged energies and positive enthusiasm. ”

Cruise

“ Travel is going to be a top priority for Indians and our expectations for Costa Cruises to have the biggest numbers yet from the Indian market. We plan to have sailings closer to home - India, Dubai, along with short and long itineraries from Europe, offering a variety of options which can best suit the needs of the Indian client. Along with this we plan to focus on few ships of Costa, to be dedicated to the India market by offering great Indian cuisine and on-board customised Indian experience. We were able to operate some large corporate movements on our Europe itineraries, which went off successfully thanks to the support at all levels, starting with visas from the Italy consulate, strong travel partner and the customer-friendly crew. ”



Vasundhara Gupta
Business Development and Marketing Head, Lotus Aero Enterprises (GSA for Costa Cruises)

Tech boost need of the hour

“ We are very optimistic about cruise travel in 2023. India is a very important market for NCL. As part of our ‘Partners First’ philosophy, we’re doubling down on our investment in travel trade in India, developing tools and resources that will help travel partners maximise their selling potential. We’re continuing to invest in our consumer marketing in India to help inspire travellers to contact their travel agents to start planning a future cruise. We’re doing this by promoting our breadth of destinations offered and range of itineraries included aboard our 18 innovative ships — including our game-changing brand-new ship, Norwegian Prima. We are also counting down to the debut of Norwegian Viva next year, the second ship in our Prima Class fleet. ”

Technology



Sandeep Dwivedi
COO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient

“ I am quite optimistic, to see the previously mentioned 65 per cent figure transform into a stunning 100 in terms of travel regaining its foothold across the world and hopeful that the Ukraine crisis will settle and peace at global level will revive tourism. A rise in domestic travel is anticipated, as almost all offices have opened and people are flying to their hometowns more often. We expect travel to be at the peak of renewal next year and international traffic to pick up pace at around 120 per cent of the pre-COVID levels. The travellers of today are much more aware and know what they want. Our travel subscribers are aware of all these requirements. We plan to continue assisting them in assuring the best experiences possible for their customers. ”



Manoj Singh
Country Head - India at Norwegian Cruise Line

“ The biggest challenge for the travel industry is to keep up with technology now that it is back on its feet and that there has been a greater uptake of online services during the Covid phase. Many Indian travel companies transformed themselves into travel technology startups during the 2020–2021 phase when the entire industry came to a standstill. Many businesses like Deyor made investments in technology at that time, as well as in solidifying their connections with suppliers, hotel chains, and other industry participants. These investments have paid off, and businesses are now reaping the rewards. The majority of the nations now relies on online services. Additionally, deep tech that uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to build customer experiences and itineraries will have to be adopted. ”



Chirag Gupta
Founder & CEO, Deyor

Inputs by TT Bureau

Using sports as a travel hook

West Midlands region in Britain is in spotlight this year, as it hosted the Commonwealth Games recently, and will also be highlighted in the VisitBritain England Expert e-learn platform.



What are the destinations being covered in the modules and why?

We are using sports as a hook to showcase the popular destinations with Indian Experience-Seekers, such as London, Manchester, Liverpool & Lake District.

We are also keeping the spotlight on West Midlands region, which was hosts to the Commonwealth Games recently, with Birmingham as the gateway to the heart of England.

Why are you going beyond London and other popular cities in Britain?

We are focussing on Birmingham & the West Midlands region, to keep the spotlight on the region as a legacy to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.


The world got a glimpse of the other side of the region and wider Britain during the Games and now it's time to experience the region as a great tourist hotspot in the heart of England.



Shuja Bin Mehdi
B2B Manager - India VisitBritain

We are also keeping our focus on the North by showcasing Manchester as the gateway to the North of England, continuing from the success of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2019.

How are you evaluating what the trade has learnt through the modules?

We are getting weekly reports from  on the number of successful completions of England Expert and will continue to work with them on encouraging trade to enrol in greater numbers. The success of the program

is very much dependent on the number of enrolments and completions.

How important is India market, as compared to rest of the world for VisitBritain?

India is an important market for VisitBritain globally. It is listed in the Top 15 in terms of both volume and value to the United

We are also keeping the spotlight on West Midlands region, which was hosts to the Commonwealth Games recently

Kingdom as per the IPS stats from 2019. It is projected to grow by 40 per cent over the next year compared to 2022, which makes it an exciting time for us. ↴

GoldenPass Express wows trade

Vidhya Chettiar, Market Director (India, GCC, Nepal & Sri Lanka) Highlights Lake Geneva Region, Switzerland, recently invited the Mumbai travel trade to introduce the newly launched GoldenPass Express. Also present at the event was Frédéric Delachaux, Head (Marketing), GoldenPass Express, who interacted with the agents.



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Northeast still has connectivity issues

Even though there is huge emphasis on development of tourism and tourism infrastructure in the region by both the Union Ministry of Tourism and the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation, there still exists a problem of connectivity, says Namgyal P. Sherpa, IATO Co-Chairman (Sikkim), and owner of Namgyal Treks & Tours.



Hazel Jain

After the lockdowns of Covid-19, the region of Sikkim continues to have problems regarding movement of tourists and connectivity. **Namgyal P. Sherpa**, IATO Co-Chairman (Sikkim), and owner of Namgyal Treks & Tours, says that there are multiple issues starting with the non-functioning of surface immigration check-post at Raniganj, West Bengal and Kakarvitta, Jhapa in Nepal. "To resolve the issues of increasing inbound foreign clients it is felt very necessary to reopen or rather re-establish the surface Immigration checkpoint at Raniganj, Darjeeling District, West Bengal and Kakarvitta, Jhapa District in Nepal. We have approached the Sikkim Government to take up matters with the Ministries of External Affairs & Home Affairs urgently," he says.

Moreover, the Kingdom of Bhutan re-opened only in November



Namgyal P. Sherpa
IATO Co-Chairman (Sikkim)
and owner of Namgyal Treks & Tours

2022 so the region missed that tourism opportunity. "There is also non-function of the only airport in Pakyong, 35km away from Gangtok due to lack of air passengers and weather conditions. The roads both National Highway and state roads are prone to landslides, during rainy seasons and traffic jams as the roads are narrow. Regarding the non-function of Greenfield airport at Pakyong, we must believe the Civil Aviation Ministry will come up with a solution.

What we propose is to award the air route to established airlines and increase the flights directly with Delhi and Kolkata and if possible, advise the airlines to operate shuttle flight between Pakyong and Bagdogra by smaller aircraft like Dronier daily although the Helicopter Service is there by 5-seater Euro Chopper of Pawan Hans leased by the Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation but flight by fixed wing aircraft give more confidence to the passengers," Sherpa explains.

As for Bagdogra airport, Sherpa says that it needs to be connected with Kathmandu and Dhaka to increase the flow of inbound clients. "So far, only thrice weekly Paro/Bagdogra/Bangkok is being operated by Druk Air of Bhutan. What is needed is the airlines of India, Bangladesh and Nepal should commence at least bi-weekly flights to start with," he adds.

The roads in the Himalayas are prone to landslides due to rains



and snowfalls. And during this monsoon the conditions of the roads remain very bad, with frequent close downs.

"The state as well as the Central Govt seems to have taken the situation very seriously and after the end of monsoon the restoration/repairs works are being taken up. But requirements are for the all-weather roads and we have hope it will become reality in future with the help of the Govt of India," he says.

Inner Line permits

Sherpa says that today, in the age of online activities for documenting anything, agents in Sikkim find the foreign clients find it irritating and time-consuming to obtain the various permits from Inner Line Permit to enter other Protected Areas, Restricted Area and Wildlife Area Permits. "In this regard what we want to suggest is let there be free entry to Gangtok, Pkyonng, Namchi, Soreng and Gyalzing without Inner Line Permit on valid Indian visa and

there should be easy ability of permits to visit the protected, restricted and wildlife sanctuaries, etc and all those from these places itself. Our other main concern is to improve village tour-



Bagdogra airport needs to be connected with Kathmandu and Dhaka to increase the flow of inbound clients

ism and it is necessary to import basic training to the stakeholders to which the Government both the state and Central should provide special funds and initiatives. Hoping 2023 will see a new beginning after this pandemic!" Sherpa adds.

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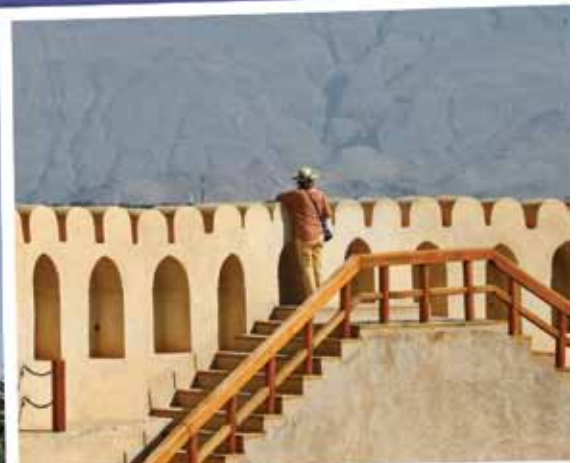
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Khajuraho Dance Festival

Blend of dance, art and culture



At the festival MPTB has introduced activities like heritage walk, nature visits, e-cycle tour, and soft adventure sports to cater to the needs of all type of tourists

Located in the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh, the UNESCO site of 'Khajuraho Group of Monuments' is famous for its Nagara-Style architecture and graceful sculptures of nayikas and deities.

The temples of Khajuraho are India's unique gift to the world, representing life in every form and moods that has been captured in stone, testifying not only to the craftsman's artistry but also to the extraordinary breadth of vision of the Chandela Rajputs under whose rule the temples were conceived and constructed. The Khajuraho temples were built in the short span of a hundred years, from 950-1050 AD in a truly inspired burst of creativity. Of the 85 original temples, 22 have survived till today to constitute one of the world's great artistic wonders.

Every year in February, tourists witness Khajuraho Dance Festival in Khajuraho. This grand cultural extravaganza is a stunning blend of art and architecture. One gets to experience a wonderful symphony of mesmerising classical dance performances being performed by renowned artists coming from different cities and towns in India.

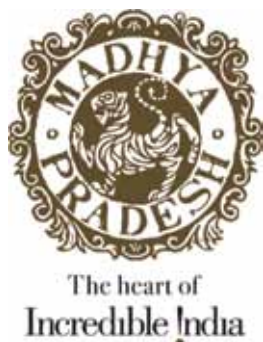
This mega festival is a spirited cel-

bration of classical dance forms, art, and culture wherein renowned exponents of Indian classical and folk dances are performed throughout the week. Apart from the graceful dance performances, there are also other highlights that can be enjoyed simultaneously.

Over the period, Khajuraho Dance Festival has been transformed into a wholesome festival of dance, literature, fine arts and everything

Activities and events like art exhibitions, panel discussions, interactive sessions, adventure sports, village tours and much more keep tourists entertained throughout. The choice is yours to opt from a wide range of multi-dimensional activities.

Khajuraho dance festival is not only a festival of dances; it has been transformed into a wholesome festival of dance, literature,



fine arts and everything. The celebration of art has been all along linked with the tourism in Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB) has taken several initiatives to publicize and engage the tourists during the week of the festival.

At this festival MPTB has introduced activities like heritage walk, nature visits, e-cycle tour, and soft adventure sports by catering to the needs of all types of tourist. Be it a dance enthusiast or an adventure lover.

Screening of movies, documentaries, along experimental cinema of famous artists are also displayed to help viewers understand the dynamics of arts, music, literature, vocals, dance instrumental music, and various art forms.

One can also indulge in mouth-watering Bundeli recipes. Enjoy the widespread dishes and feel the goodness of Bundeli food.

Tourists, who visit Khajuraho and Panna during the dance festival, can also explore other activities



Camping: at Bear Valley Camp - Village Jhinna, District Panna: Luxury Tent (Swiss Tent also available for 15 persons), Alpine tent for 18 persons, Team Games, Stargazing Trek to the hill of Panna, Bonfire, Night Jungle Safari, Live Music, Boat Safari

Village Tour: Old Khajuraho Village Tour: Start from Jawari Temple end in Brahma Temple, Demonstration of Old Panchayat System, Durga Mandir

E-Bike Tour: Visit of Khajuraho - Western group of Temples-Gol Market - Chaturbhuj Temple- Vaman Temple - Archaeological Museum

Segway Tour: Sunrisetour to Datta Pahad (2hrs), Sunset tour to Datta Pahad (2 hrs), Khajuraho by night - A joy ride (1.5 hrs), Farm tour (2 hrs), Trail Joy Ride (15 mins)

Water Sports: Speed Boat, Banana Ride, Shikara Boat, Raft Boat in Kutni Water Body and rafting in Ken River

A visit to Panna
If you are planning to explore Khajuraho, do not forget to visit Panna National Park, situated just 32 km away and a mere 30-minute drive from Khajuraho. The jungles harbour many species of wildlife. The tiger can be glimpsed here, with other rare species such as the leopard, wolf and gharial.

Things to do in Panna: Explore wellness tourism at Kairali Ayurvedam, Jeep Safari in Panna National Park to explore wildlife in Madhya Pradesh.

Places to visit in and around Khajuraho
Adivart Museum, Dhubela Museum, Kandariya Mahadeo tem-

ple, Chaunsath Yogini temple, Chitragupta Temple, Vishwanath Temple, Lakshmana Temple, Lakshmana Temple, Matangeswara Temple, Parsvanath Temple, Ghantai Temple, Adhinath Temple, Duladeo Temple, Chaturbhuj Temple, Sound & Light Show, State Museum of Tribal and Folk Arts, Adivart Tribal and Folk Art Museum and Dhubela Museum.

Places to visit in and around Panna
Wildlife, Fort of Ajaygarh, Mahamati Prannathji Mandir, Pandav falls, National Museum, Panna Diamond Mines

Plan a trip to this picturesque destination in the state of Madhya Pradesh and be a part of the Khajuraho Dance Festival, where all these multi-dimensional segments are waiting for you to explore.



37th IATO Convention concludes

The 37th IATO Annual Convention, held in Lucknow from December 16 to 19, 2022, was a milestone for IATO, with over 1,000 delegates attending from across the country. Following the convention, five post-convention tours were organised, and around 300 delegates and their spouses participated in the post-convention tour of their choice, which concluded on December 22, 2022.



... to meet again in Maharashtra



India 10th biggest global medical tourism hub, says Union Finance Minister

DGCA to make amendments to CAR rules to give more rights to passengers

ATOAI requests tourists to book only licensed adventure operators in view of two recent accidents

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board's Rural Tourism Programme a success

Amritsar, Chandigarh together have 42 air traffic movements internationally per week, says Jyotiraditya Scindia

E-visa for Canada welcome move, we now push for South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, says IATO

2023 will see 53 per cent millennials planning more last-minute trips: Booking.com

One Above Global DMC opens new branch in Chennai

Mountains key to our sustenance

Our picturesque mountain regions offer potential for developing environment friendly sustainable eco-tourism as a source of livelihood for most of us. Therefore, there is a need to conserve the mountains, architecture, arts and crafts, as well as indigenous knowledge for future generations.

International Mountain Day is celebrated annually on 11 December to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development, and to build alliances that will bring positive change to mountain peoples and environments around the world.

When the French doctor François Bernier entered the Kashmir Valley for the first time, in 1665, he was astounded by what he found. "In truth," he wrote, it "surpasses in beauty all that my warm imagination had anticipated. It is not indeed without reason that the Moghuls call Kachemire the terrestrial paradise of the Indies." The valley, which is some 90 miles long and 20 miles across, is sumptuously fertile. Along its floor, there are walnut and almond trees, orchards of apricots and apples, vineyards, rice paddies, hemp and saffron fields. There are woods on the lower slopes of the surrounding mountains—sycamore, oak, pine,



and cedar. The southern side is bounded by the Pir Panjal, not the highest mountain range in Asia but one of the most striking, rising abruptly from the valley floor. The northern boundary is formed by the Great Himalayas. At the heart of the valley lie Dal Lake and the graceful capital, Srinagar.

Mountain resources play a significant role in our State. The diverse mountain products such as water,

wood, horticulture, agriculture produce, fisheries and sericulture are creating sustainable opportunities to us. Our picturesque mountain regions offer potential for developing environment friendly sustainable eco-tourism as a source of livelihood for most of us. There is a need to conserve the mountains, architecture, arts and crafts, as well as indigenous knowledge for future generations. Our mountains could create potential for sustainable supply of renewable energy.

We have a responsibility to protect the environment!

Illegal construction, timber smuggling and a decades-long conflict have degraded Kashmir Valley's forests. But locals are stepping in to protect the unique nature of their home in the Himalayas.

Reckless construction and lack of waste management have wrecked the fragile ecosystems of Sonamarg, Pahalgam and Gulmarg in Kashmir.

Let's be environmentally friendly citizens in Kashmir

We must come forward and protect our state. We must realize that this is not the legacy we are supposed to leave behind for our future generations.

Let's educate others about the significance of living an environmentally friendly life. The more we will share an awareness of the richness of the environment, the more we can do together to protect it.



Irshad Hazari
Director, Euphoria Travel Services

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

Santa from Finland visits Mumbai

As the official carrier of Santa Claus since 1983, Finnair was proud to bring him for the first time ever to India! Finland Tourism, along with the airline, hosted a lovely evening for the Mumbai trade recently to celebrate Christmas with Santa, who spreads happiness among the fraternity.



Guatemala partner nation at FITUR

Fitur 2023, to be organised by IFEMA MADRID at Trade Fair Centre in Madrid from 18 to 22 January, will be one of the most powerful and strategic editions showing the strength of tourism ecosystem.

TT Bureau

Guatemala will take part as the partner country at Fitur 2023. The Central American country, under its new brand, 'Guatemala. Amazing and unstoppable', which encompasses the industries of tourism, economy, investment and culture, invites you at the international tourism fair to get to know the country from a Guatemalan culture viewpoint, with the essence of its typical textiles, the shell of time and



the vibrant and dynamic colours of a developing society. With the Country Brand, Guatemala pays homage to the richness and traditions that characterise the country, as well as the ancestral wisdom, the historical cultural heritage and the biodiversity of its forests, volcanoes and rivers.

Guatemala is one of the most diverse countries in the world, being one of the main natural

destinations that stands out for its pre-Hispanic Mayan heritage, where its past is mixed with its present. This natural, cultural and historical heritage can be discovered in every corner of the country, making it the ideal destination for leisure holidays and business trips.

The destination offers many activities, since the qualities of the territory generate a wealth for the development of tourism in this country, where there are mountains, 37 official volcanoes, rivers, lakes and lagoons that are the perfect setting for adventure and nature activities, surrounded by communities that enrich the trips by showing their culture. In addition to this, Guatemalan culture stands out mainly because of the quality of its people, always friendly and helpful, making any trip a fabulous experience.

New features

This edition of Fitur 2023 will also be one of the most powerful and strategic, showing the strength of the tourism eco-

system in the world, through the participation of companies, countries and destinations and 10 large sections that will allow professionals to learn about and discover the business opportu-

FITUR Techy will offer a full programme of debates and meets under the title "Journey to the Centre of Tourism"

nities offered by these segments in communication with tourism activity. Among them, FITUR Techy will offer a full programme of debates and conferences under the title "Journey to the Centre of Tourism" to talk about technology and sustainability and address issues such as the role of Artificial Intelligence, Circular Economy and Digital Twins in the tourism sector.

Reaching out for business

Fortune Hotels has gone through a face change from a business brand to a leisure and even wedding & MICE brand today, while expanding its portfolio in pilgrimage destinations as well.

Nisha Verma

The hospitality business, says **Dhananjay Saliankar**, Head of Sales & Marketing - India for Fortune Hotels & Welcomheritage, has not changed much after COVID. "We are coming back to normalcy, but the way we approach towards business in different segments has changed a little bit, simply because of our dependency on corporate travel, leisure travel and MICE travel, which were some the basic fundamental segments that used to feed businesses in the past," he said.

"Pandemic has taught us to look at things differently. Since then, one has started exploring all other opportunities available in the marketplace like weddings and social events. Every hotelier and event manager were running behind that business. It continues to be a good opportunity. Segments like movies, Bollywood, OTTs, sports, are new avenues, which we didn't focus on much before, and used to do only if something



Dhananjay Saliankar
Head of Sales & Marketing - India for Fortune Hotels & Welcomheritage

came our way. Now, it's becoming one of our core businesses. We are still waiting for inbound to happen, while domestic has shaped very well and outbound has also taken off. It's a long wait for inbound, which should start by 2023 second half," he added.

Samir MC, MD - Fortune Hotels, ITC, shared, "We have opened some interesting hotels at some exciting locations. We've launched a hotel in Katra and opened another hotel in Kufri. As we go into this year, the most interesting thing to see is that travel

has rebounded and it's great to see everybody travelling again."

Focus segment

Saliankar revealed that earlier, Fortune Hotels, as a company used to be a business brand. "However, now our footprint is going to leisure locations more including secondary cities as well as tertiary cities, where we are looking at new business coming in. We have started con-

Pandemic has taught us to look at things differently. Since then, one has started exploring all other available opportunities

centrating on pilgrimage sector as well and we have properties in Tirupati, Haridwar, Katra, Amritsar, etc.," he added.

KTO enthrals agents in City of Nizams

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) concluded a multi-city sales mission at Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Hyderabad Banjara Hills, where the Chief Guest was Suresh Chukkapalli, Hon. Consul General of the Republic of Korea in Hyderabad. KTO team, headed by Young Geul Choi, Director, KTO India, showcased Korea's tourism products to the travel trade at the event.



Event Talk

2023

JANUARY

- ❖ **Gujarat Travel Fair**
Date: 3-5 January
Venue: Gujarat, India
- ❖ **Holiday Expo**
Date: 6-8 January
Venue: Coimbatore, India
- ❖ **Tourism Fair Oslo**
Date: 7-8 January
Venue: Oslo, Norway
- ❖ **Outbound Travel Roadshow Delhi**
Date: 9-13 January
Venue: Delhi, India
- ❖ **Destinations: The Holiday & Travel Show**
Date: 12-15 January
Venue: Manchester, UK
- ❖ **Chicago Travel & Adventure Show**
Date: 14-15 January
Venue: Chicago, USA
- ❖ **Thailand Tourism Forum**
Date: 16 January
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
- ❖ **FITUR (Fitur)**
Date: 18-22 January
Venue: Madrid, Spain
- ❖ **India International Travel Mart**
Date: 19-21 January
Venue: Cochin, India
- ❖ **Matka Expo**
Date: 20-22 January
Venue: Helsinki, Finland
- ❖ **IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism**
Date: 20-25 January
Venue: Victoria, Canada

FEBRUARY

- ❖ **OTM Mumbai**
Date: 2-4 February
Venue: Mumbai, India
- ❖ **East Mediterranean International Tourism and Travel Exhibition**
Date: 8-11 February
Venue: Büyükçekmece, Turkey
- ❖ **SATTE**
Date: 9-11 February
Venue: Noida, India
- ❖ **International Inbound Travel Association Summit**
Date: 12-15 February
Venue: San Diego, USA
- ❖ **Travel & Tourism Fair**
Date: 10-11 February
Venue: Bengaluru, India
- ❖ **Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event**
Date: 13-15 February
Venue: Melbourne, Australia
- ❖ **International Mediterranean Tourism Market**
Date: 14-15 February
Venue: Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel
- ❖ **Thai International Travel Fair**
Date: 16-19 February
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
- ❖ **India Travel Mart**
Date: 17-19 February
Venue: Chandigarh, India
- ❖ **International Tourism Fair**
Date: 23-26 February
Venue: Ahmedabad, India
- ❖ **The Outdoor Adventure Show**
Date: 24-26 February
Venue: Mississauga, Canada
- ❖ **Global Adventure & Mountaineering Conference and Expo**
Date: 24-26 February
Venue: Delhi, India
- ❖ **Travel & Tourism Fair**
Date: 24-26 February
Venue: Chennai, India

MARCH

- ❖ **Women in Travel and Hospitality Conference**
Date: 2-3 March
Venue: Los Angeles, United States
- ❖ **India International Travel Mart**
Date: 3-5 March
Venue: Kolkata, India
- ❖ **India Travel Mart**
Date: 3-5 March
Venue: Goa, India
- ❖ **ITB Berlin**
Date: 7-9 March
Venue: Berlin, Germany
- ❖ **Adventure Travel Show**
Date: 11-12 March
Venue: London, UK
- ❖ **Adventure Travel Film Festival**
Date: 10-12 March
Venue: Bright, Australia
- ❖ **MICE Travel Show**
Date: 18-19 March
Venue: Chennai, India
- ❖ **Holiday Expo**
Date: 17-19 March
Venue: Vadodara, India
- ❖ **MATTA Fair**
Date: 17-19 March
Venue: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- ❖ **India Travel Mart**
Date: 17-19 March
Venue: Bhopal, India
- ❖ **Dhaka Travel Mart**
Date: 23-25 March
Venue: Dhaka, Bangladesh
- ❖ **Indian Travel Exhibition**
Date: 24-26 March
Venue: Bangalore, India
- ❖ **India International Travel Mart**
Date: 24-26 March
Venue: Ahmedabad, India
- ❖ **International Luxury Travel Market Africa**
Date: 31-2 April
Venue: Cape Town, South Africa
- ❖ **Travel Agent Forum**
Date: 31 March - 3 April
Venue: Las Vegas, Nevada

APRIL

- ❖ **WTM Africa**
Date: 3-5 April
Venue: Cape Town, South Africa
- ❖ **Incentives, Business Travel & Meetings Expo**
Date: 3-5 April
Venue: Cape Town, South Africa
- ❖ **Azerbaijan International Travel & Tourism Fair**
Date: 7 April
Venue: Baku, Azerbaijan
- ❖ **Uzbekistan International Tourism Exhibition**
Date: 12-14 April
Venue: Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- ❖ **TRAVELEXPO**
Date: 14-16 April
Venue: Terrasini, Italy
- ❖ **Outdoor & Adventure Travel Show**
Date: 15-16 April
Venue: Ottawa, Canada
- ❖ **Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair**
Date: 19-21 April
Venue: Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan
- ❖ **The Great Indian Travel Bazaar**
Date: 23-25 April
Venue: Jaipur, India
- ❖ **ITB India**
Date: 26-28 April
Venue: Mumbai, India
- ❖ **Global Meeting & Incentive Travel Exchange**
Date: 30-3 May
Venue: San Diego, California

MAY

- ❖ **Arabian Travel Market Dubai**
Date: 1-4 May
Venue: Dubai, UAE

- ❖ **ILTM Arabia**
Date: 2-3 May
Venue: Dubai, UAE
- ❖ **Tourism and Sport Fair**
Date: 4-5 May
Venue: Besianë, Serbia
- ❖ **Global Travel Marketplace**
Date: 4-6 May
Venue: Hollywood, USA
- ❖ **Seoul International Travel Fair**
Date: 4-7 May
Venue: Seoul, South Korea
- ❖ **ILTM Latin America**
Date: 9-12 May
Venue: São Paulo, Brazil
- ❖ **International Wellness Tourism Expo**
Date: 10-12 May
Venue: Koto, Japan
- ❖ **Travel and Leisure Expo**
Date: 11-14 May
Venue: Davao, Philippines
- ❖ **Universal Tourism Exhibition**
Date: 16 May
Venue: Shanghai, China
- ❖ **Travel Marketing Conference London**
Date: 17-18 May
Venue: London, UK
- ❖ **Thailand Dive Expo**
Date: 18-21 May
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
- ❖ **IMEX**
Date: 23-25 May
Venue: Frankfurt

JUNE

- ❖ **International Conference on Tourism**
Date: 5-8 June
Venue: Athens, Greece
- ❖ **Universal Tourism Exhibition**
Date: 8 June
Venue: Zhengzhou, China
- ❖ **Black Travel Expo**
Date: 9-11 June
Venue: Atlanta, USA
- ❖ **Cairo International Tourism Exhibition**
Date: 12-13 June
Venue: Cairo, Egypt
- ❖ **World Travel Expo**
Date: 13-15 June
Venue: Miami, Florida
- ❖ **Bali & Beyond Travel Fair**
Date: 14-17 June
Venue: Bali, Indonesia
- ❖ **Hong Kong International Travel Expo**
Date: 15-18 June
Venue: Hong Kong
- ❖ **The M.I.C.E. Travel Expo**
Date: 19-22 June
Venue: Hong Kong
- ❖ **Romance Travel Forum**
Date: 25-29 June
Venue: Mexico

JULY

- ❖ **International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality**
Date: 3-4 July
Venue: Singapore
- ❖ **Global Travel Marketplace West**
Date: 11-13 July
Venue: Henderson, USA
- ❖ **Travel and Leisure Expo**
Date: 13-16 July
Venue: Iloilo, Philippines
- ❖ **Travel & Tourism Fair**
Date: 28-30 July
Venue: Kolkata, India

AUGUST

- ❖ **Travel and Tourism Fair**
Date: 2-3 August
Venue: Hyderabad, India
- ❖ **International Conference on Leisure and Tourism**
Date: 11-12 August
Venue: Colombo, Sri Lanka
- ❖ **Korea International Tourism Fair (KITS)**
Date: 11-14 August
Venue: Goyang-si, South Korea

SEPTEMBER

- ❖ **PURE**
Date: 10-13 September
Venue: Marrakesh, Morocco
- ❖ **Adventure Travel World Summit**
Date: 11-14 September
Venue: Sapporo, Japan
- ❖ **International Trade Fair for Travel & Tourism (OTDYKH)**
Date: 12-14 September
Venue: Moscow, Russia
- ❖ **Luxury Travel Mart Kiev**
Date: 20 September
Venue: Kiev, Ukraine
- ❖ **ILTM North America**
Date: 18-21 September
Venue: Playa del Carmen, Mexico
- ❖ **Meetings Arabia & Luxury Travel Congress (MALT Congress)**
Date: 20-21 September
Venue: Dubai, UAE
- ❖ **Corporate Travel World Asia Pacific (CTW)**
Date: 20 September
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand • Online
- ❖ **Vancouver International Travel Expo**
Date: 30 September
Venue: Vancouver, Canada

OCTOBER

- ❖ **IFTM Top Resa**
Date: 3-5 October
Venue: Paris, France
- ❖ **Group Leisure & Travel Show**
Date: 5 October
Venue: Milton Keynes, UK
- ❖ **Kazakhstan International Tourism Exhibition (Astana Leisure)**
Date: 4-6 October
Venue: Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan
- ❖ **TTG Travel Experience**
Date: 11-13 October
Venue: Rimini, Italy
- ❖ **IMEX America**
Date: 17-19 October
Venue: Las Vegas, USA
- ❖ **Black Travel Summit**
Date: 20-22 October
Venue: Miami, USA
- ❖ **ITB Asia (ITBA)**
Date: 25-27 October
Venue: Singapore

NOVEMBER

- ❖ **International Tourism & Travel Show (ITTS)**
Date: 3-5 November
Venue: Montreal, Canada
- ❖ **Swiss International Holiday Exhibition**
Date: 3-5 November
Venue: Lugano, Switzerland
- ❖ **Taipei International Travel Fair (ITF)**
Date: 3-6 November
Venue: Taipei, Taiwan
- ❖ **World Travel Market London**
Date: 6-8 November
Venue: London
- ❖ **Qatar Travel Mart (QTM)**
Date: 20-22 November
Venue: Doha, Qatar
- ❖ **IBTM**
Date: 29-30 November
Venue: Barcelona

DECEMBER

- ❖ **Universal Tourism Exhibition (UTE)**
Date: 5 December
Venue: Hangzhou, China
- ❖ **TRAVEL TURKEY izMİR**
Date: 7-9 December
Venue: Izmir, Turkey

For more details, contact: talk@ddppl.com

The dates shown on the annual event calendar are subject to change. Please refer to Event Talk in TravTalk to track the changes dates.

IATO Convention exudes positivity

The dominant mood seen during the recently held 37th IATO Convention in Lucknow was one of positivity. The leaders, who assembled to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, looked keen to race ahead and offset the losses engendered by the pandemic, and seems to be in overdrive.

“ Mukesh Kumar Meshram, Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism & Culture, Uttar Pradesh, feels that post-COVID, there is a surge in tourist travel, and people want experiential travel. The industry will have to do rigorous branding and marketing. The pillars of its effort have to be ‘Trade, Technology, and Tourism’. The industry’s success will rest on its ability to create a congenial atmosphere for tourists, offering them what they want. ”



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

“ Bhagwati Pant, General Manager, the Centrum Lucknow, felt that since their hotel is ideal for MICE, the IATO Convention being held in Lucknow and in their hotel, presents a superb platform that will provide them a boost. The post-COVID time is one in which industry players have to just stay focused, and exploit recent trends, such as online business and home deliveries. ”



Bhagwati Pant
General Manager
the Centrum Lucknow

“ Sidhartha Sharma, General Manager, Fortune Park BBD, Lucknow, feels India has handled COVID well, and the country is on the right path and stable. Government’s recent initiatives have been pro-travel industry, ensuring the industry’s trajectory is right and it is on the right path. A great positive is the fact that domestic tourism has come of age, state governments have introduced new schemes, and hotels’ recoveries have been fantastic. ”



Sidhartha Sharma
General Manager
Fortune Park BBD, Lucknow



Homa Mistry
Chief Executive Officer
Trail Blazer India

“ Homa Mistry, Chief Executive Officer, Trail Blazer India, feels the extent of post-COVID recovery depends on one’s area of business, simply because some countries have recovered completely, while others are still battling the pandemic. But the industry has to go for gold now and maximize. More airlines will generate more business. COVID has made the industry more selective, with more data. ”

“ C. P. Sharma of Neptune Travco, feels that India’s booming economy and rising disposable incomes is heralding a tourism boom of proportions not seen before. The fundamentals and indicators are very strong. Today’s scenario suggests that people want to break-free and travel further and faster than ever before. They are willing to venture out and pay for special experiences. ”



C. P. Sharma
Managing Director
Neptune Travco



Lajpat Rai
President
Lotus Trans Travel

“ Lajpat Rai, President Lotus Trans Travel, sees the post-COVID era producing ‘winds of change’ in the Indian travel industry and its clients. The industry is bouncing back and looking positively at the future. There seems to be both urgency and focus. But there’s no place for complacency. It is imperative that the industry works hard and fully exploits the platform built. The high levels of focus must continue. ”

“ Kamaljit Singh of Jaagir Manor IHCL Seleqtion, Dudhwa National Park, states that COVID-engendered lack of overseas travel led to the rise of domestic clients. The pandemic helped promote properties like theirs because their location amid nature and wilderness areas are safer from infections. This launch-pad has made them more ambitious and making them look further and work harder. ”



Kamaljit Singh
MD, Jaagir Manor IHCL Seleqtion
Dudhwa National Park



Ritu Makhija
Interim Director, ‘Travel Operators
For Tigers India Wildlife Association

“ Ritu Makhija, Interim Director, ‘Travel Operators For Tigers India Wildlife Association’, feels the prevailing situation means now it can no longer be a case of ‘business as usual’. All conservation efforts should combine business with environment, keeping in mind the upkeep of the planet. The tourism industry would do well to increase their digital involvement, which would help its messaging. ”

38th IATO Convention will be held in Aurangabad, says Mangal Prabhat Lodha, Minister of Tourism, Maharashtra



Inder Raj Ahluwalia
Travel Journalist and Author

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

Kazakhstan charms Hyderabad

In a bid to promote the various offerings of Kazakhstan to the travel and tourism stakeholders, Kazin DMC and Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions organised an educational seminar at The Park Hotel, Hyderabad. It was the first such seminar in Telangana State and the Chief Guest on the occasion was Dr. Nawab Mir Nasir Ali Khan, Hon. Consul of Kazakhstan, AP & Telangana.



MOVEMENTS

RENAISSANCE BENGALURU RACE COURSE HOTEL

Bengaluru

NIHAL KURIAN has been appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing at Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel. His core responsibilities will include planning and implementation of the hotel's sales and marketing strategy, maximizing hotel's revenues, exploring business opportunities through events, setting annual budgets, forecasting, analyzing revenue reports and strategy among others. Nihal is a result-oriented professional with more than 13 years of experience in the industry. Prior to joining Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, he was the Director of Sales and Marketing for the Hilton Garden Inn Pune.



THE RESORT

Mumbai

The Resort, Madh-Marve in Malad, appoints **ABHIJEET ADURKAR** as the Hotel Manager. Abhijeet brings with him an extensive experience of more than 14 years in the hospitality industry. His key role at The Resort will be to overlook all operations at the hotel and ensure that it continues to deliver the highest level of guest satisfaction. Before joining The Resort, Abhijeet was General Manager at Yauatcha Mumbai. Earlier, he has worked with Le Méridien Resort and Spa in Mahabaleshwar, Courtyard by Marriott in Surat, Ritz Carlton in Riyadh, JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar as well as JW Marriott Juhu and JW Marriott in Aerocity.



THE FERN HOTELS & RESORTS

Mumbai

VIKRAM PANDEY has been promoted as Associate Director Sales, Regional Sales Office – Mumbai, at The Fern Hotels & Resorts. He has been associated with the company since March 2017. He is a passionate hotelier with more than 12 years of experience across renowned hospitality brands such as Della Adventure, Sayaji Hotels, ITC Welcom Hotels and Sarovar Hotels & Resorts. His expertise is in MICE and the Travel Trade. Vikram's competitive spirit and love for sports and innovation drives him each day to collaborate and synergize. The Fern is the brand that goes out of its way to deliver authentic and enriching experiences.



SAYAJI HOTELS

Mumbai

Sayaji Hotels has appointed **SANDEEP ROY** as the Head of Business Development for the group. With over two decades of experience across multiple brands such as Royal Orchid, Clarks, Cambay Group and Sarovar Hotels, Sandeep has creative and intellectual skills with a professional approach. He is keen on contributing to its development and success. This role has presented him with a massive opportunity to expand the group's presence and he is confident of making a big impact. Sandeep's appointment is aligned with the imminent openings of Sayaji Hotels at Morbi, Shirwal, Bhopal, Panchagani and Gwalior.



INDORE MARRIOTT HOTEL

Indore

The Indore Marriott Hotel has appointed **NISHEET SHRIVASTAVA** as Food & Beverage Manager. Nisheet brings with him 15 years of experience and expertise in the F&B industry. Having worked with renowned brands such as JW Marriott Chandigarh, The Taj Residency Mumbai, The Leela Mumbai, and Radisson Bhopal, Nisheet's expertise will be an asset to the IMH team and elevate the dining experience for guests. Nisheet began his career in 2006 at Taj Residency Lucknow and then moved on to Leela Mumbai. His achievements include Most Innovative Resource Award in 2019 at Le Méridien Jaipur and Manager of the Year Award in 2014 at Courtyard by Marriott Bhopal.



The Fern Hotels & Resorts has promoted GILBERT BUTHELLO

as Associate Director of Sales, Regional Sales Office - Mumbai. With over 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Gilbert is a seasoned hospitality professional with a high level of integrity in handling clients. He is results-driven, analytical and passionate about sales. His new responsibilities will include mentoring the team and contributing towards the achievement of budgets for the corporate segment in the Mumbai region. Outside of his work, Gilbert loves to visit his hometown and spend time with his family over indigenous cuisines from the area. He is also an avid nature enthusiast and loves being surrounded by local fauna and scenic landscapes.



NOVOTEL

Pune

Novotel Pune has appointed **SANYUKTA GHOLAP** as the Director of Human Resources. She has been a part of many Indian and international hospitality brands during more than 12 years of her career. Prior to joining Novotel Pune, she was heading the human resources team at Courtyard by Marriott Pune Hinjewadi for over five years. Sanyukta has completed her MBA specialising in HR in 2012 from Pune University and has been a part of several 5-star properties such as Accor Hotels - Mercure Lavasa & Lavasa International Convention Centre, Le Meridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa and Oberoi Hotels – Trident Bandra Kurla, Mumbai.



GRAND MERCURE BENGALURU AT GOPALAN MALL

Bengaluru

With more than 19 years of rich experience in the Hospitality Human Resource arena, **DHARANISWAR** joins Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall as Talent & Culture Manager. In his new role, he will spearhead the Talent & Culture Department of the 212-key premium five-star hotel. His prime focus areas will be to recruit, retain and develop talent, as the industry walks out of the pandemic. Dharaniswar began his career in hospitality in 2003, after completing his Bachelor Degree in Hotel Management & Administration from IHM Kolkata.



Ahmedabad

DEEPAK KUMAR has been appointed as Associate Director Sales, Regional Sales Office – Ahmedabad, at The Fern Hotels and Resorts. He has 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry. In his last assignment, he was handling Fariyas Hotel's Gujarat and MP Sales Operations. He has also worked with Club Mahindra Holidays, Cambay Hotels, Absolute Hotel Services and Sayaji Hotels, all in the Gujarat market. Deepak enjoys music, movies and travel. The Fern is the brand that goes out of its way to deliver authentic and enriching experiences that make their world feel bigger. The promise is a premium standard of amenities & service with a true passion for the environment.

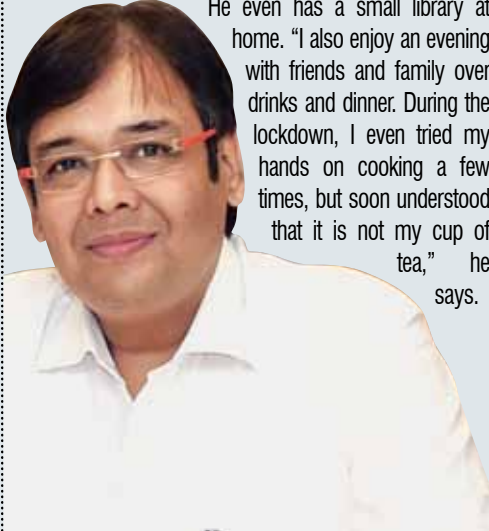


TALKING People

KULPREET KAUR, Director of Sales, The Den Bengaluru, believes the most effective way to relieve stress is to resort to music. "During lockdown, I've rekindled my love for wines and cocktails. Studying the nuances of wines and learning to concoct lip-smacking recipes has always energized me. Culture brings curiosity, I've always lived by this motto. You can never see enough of a place, so I personally have many favourites. In India, I am partial towards hills and internationally, nothing beats Prague. My next holiday will be to Israel," she says.



JITUL MEHTA, Managing Director, VP Travels and TAFI Western India Chairman, is an avid reader and reads all kind of books, newspapers and magazines to de-stress. He even has a small library at home. "I also enjoy an evening with friends and family over drinks and dinner. During the lockdown, I even tried my hands on cooking a few times, but soon understood that it is not my cup of tea," he says.



Days and nights of **DR. AMEET PATIL**, Founder & CEO of Ecobillz, are very stressful and at times it becomes too overwhelming. "I have an annual destress ritual that I follow since ages now. Each year my close childhood friend and I pick a random location in the world and go there to walk a 100 kms in 4-5 days. Yes, you read it right. Once there, we are solely on our feet and min. 100 kms. We switch off our phones, gadgets and just walk. Throughout the journey we introspect and let the entire year go by us in our mind," he says.



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Tour operators driving force

The 37th IATO Convention underlines the role of tour operators and travel agents. They are the people who assist and coordinate with the Ministry to promote tourism and on whom the industry's success dependent, says experts.



Janice Alysius

Tour operators are responsible for moving the travel and tourism industry. Addressing the participants at the IATO Convention, **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group, said, "Since we are sitting in the tour operators' convention, all the tour operators are here, so we are going to look what lies ahead from the tour operators' point of view." He praised the tour operators for making a huge monetary contribution to the country's kitty.

Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Tourism, Government of India, said that tour operators



Sachin R Jadhav
Director, Tourism
Government of Odisha

are the most important component of the tourism value chain. "They interact with customers and markets, and their role will only grow in the aftermath of the pandemic. There are structural and pattern changes that will emerge and stabilise the tourism sector. As a result, the tour industry will be the first to feel and be impacted by these changes. The way forward will most likely be to work closely with the tour operators and travel agents and the states to figure out what those changes are and how we can respond to those changes to ensure that inbound increases and we get back to pre-covid levels as early as possible," he said.



Rakesh Kumar Verma
Additional Secretary, Tourism
Government of India

Emphasizing on the development taking place in Uttar Pradesh, **Mukesh Kumar Meshram**, Principal Secretary and DG Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh,



Mukesh Kumar Meshram
Principal Secretary and DG Tourism
Government of Uttar Pradesh

We are willing to organise familiarisation trips for you to visit all of these locations, prepare yourself, and then sell it forward," he said.



Sheo Shekhar Shukla
Principal Secretary
Tourism, and MD, MP Tourism Board

procedural issues that we are attempting to synchronise, build a better synergy, and we are actually the platform where we would like India to be seen as one. With all the state efforts, bringing perceptual changes in the minds of tourists, who will have India on their mental map. So, here SEPC plays a significant role and we are planning a number of events and activities with the support of the Ministry of Tourism."

Sachin R Jadhav, Director, Tourism, Government of Odisha, said, "The budget allocation for the state of Odisha for tourism in 2018 was ₹80 crore. 2022-23, I have just completed that exercise for the proposed budget for next year 2023-2024. The budget outlay we have given is ₹600 crores."

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, while emphasizing on international marketing said, "We are still getting up, recovering from the pandemic. Although most of the hotels have already come out of the pandemic, but we have not. Inbound is still around 20-25 per cent, accounting for roughly one-third of what we did in 2019-2020. The most important thing right now is overseas promotion, which is completely absent. So, the first requirement from us is international marketing, followed by international roadshows." 🇮🇳



Abhay Sinha
Director General
Service Export Promotion Council (SEPC)

said that the state is emerging as a significant tourist market, with numerous destinations to showcase. The government is working on development and has identified 5,000 destinations in the state, of which 750 have already begun to develop infrastructure. "We have completed a lot of infrastructure in all of these tourist destinations in the last 5-6 years. So, we are ready, and I would like to request the tour operators and travel agents to guide us through your needs. I would also suggest that you make tailor made packages to the needs of the inbound tourists and share it with us, and whatever your suggestions are, we are ready to provide them.



Rajiv Mehra
President
IATO

Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Tourism, and MD, MP Tourism Board, said the MP government is working consciously toward a well chartered roadmap that is multipronged and multifaceted. "The first and foremost, we must comprehend the international market, its needs, and priorities, particularly in light of the pandemic's paradigm shift. People are now looking for different types of products, experiences, and itineraries, so we need to figure that out depending on the source country," he said.

Abhay Sinha, Director General, Service Export Promotion Council (SEPC), said, "There are some

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