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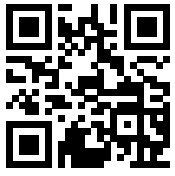
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G20 shaping tourism map

V Vidyavathi, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, speaks about the recently held TWG and Ministerial Meeting in Goa, and says that the major outcome of the event was the Goa Roadmap.

Nisha Verma

Speaking about the TWG meeting, **V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, said that this time the theme was Cruise tourism. "There were also thematic discussions on plastic pollution and how to make tourism more sustainable. Another one was on how public and private sector come together in promoting eco-friendly green and sustainable tourism in the country and across



V Vidyavathi
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Goa

the world too. The industry participants were there and we discussed we can contribute to make those goals a reality."

Goa Roadmap

Speaking about the Goa Roadmap, she said, "The roadmap gives a sense of direction and puts the entire thing as one framework. These are priorities, not just for MOT, but for every ministry. These priorities emanated from the National Tourism Policy draft, she said."

Adapt or fall behind

Well-rounded marketing strategy necessary

In B2B distribution business, one can not ignore digital platforms for promotion in the present day world. You are not considered serious about business if you are not visible on social media platforms.



Abraham Alapatt
President & Group Head - Marketing, Service Quality, Value Added Services & Innovation, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel

"We are facing an unprecedented demand surge and the resultant improvement in marketing efficiency due to reduced cost of acquisition—currently at almost 50 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Our current ad spends have already increased by about 40-50 per cent over last year, and we aim to further increase them by 100 per cent versus 2022; bringing it close to our ad spends of 2019. We have been focusing on digital post-pandemic with 40 per cent of our marketing spends being on social media, primarily on YouTube, followed by Facebook and Instagram, with brand level messaging like best price guarantee, no cost EMI holidays, and forex in under 2 hours to create top-of-mind recall. Thomas Cook's campaign on the significant shift towards customised holidays was promoted across all digital and social platforms across regions. Additionally, a 24x7 on-tour assistance has been extended to all customers."

Contd on page 18 ▶

India Travel Awards makes comeback

India Travel Awards is all set for its 7th edition, which will be hosted at Hyatt Regency New Delhi with the industry in attendance.

set for its 7th edition, which will be hosted at Hyatt Regency New Delhi with the industry in attendance.

Nisha Verma

The 7th edition of India Travel Awards will be held on 25 July 2023 at Hyatt Regency New Delhi. The awards commemorate industry players from across the country under various categories of travel, tourism and hospitality industry. There are top awards for stalwarts from the industry, which take home the golden trophy 'Maya'. These awards are known to recognize the excellence, hardwork and success, thereby making tourism synonymous with progress, development, and opportunity. This exclusive one-of-its-kind event can be attended by invitation only, and is supported by major associations, trade bodies and the government.

The success of the awards can be gauged by the fact that leaders from different sectors of the industry attend this prestigious ceremony. The audience includes legends, visionaries, and potential leaders of tomorrow. India Travel Awards acknowledges the achievers of the travel and tourism industry, who have worked steadily

fastly towards enhancing the environment to allow the growth of tourism in the country.

Our highest honour, the Gold Maya, is awarded to those stalwarts who have shaped the industry the way it is today and have created innovative ways and products to take the industry a notch higher.

**INDIA
TRAVEL
AWARDS
NORTH 2023**

The earlier editions of India Travel Awards have set the beginning of a journey of long-term associations for some and a renewal of the bond with many others. India Travel Awards will have a new season this year with equally thrilling editions.

The awards ceremony is a formal black-tie event with a formal sit-down dinner. A networking event is also held before the awards exclusively for the winners, which helps professionals connect with other regional stalwarts.



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Relief on overseas travel packages

In a relief to the travel fraternity, the Union Ministry of Finance has said that there will be no change in rate of Tax Collection at Source (TCS) for overseas travel tour packages for up to ₹7 lakh and 20 per cent TCS will be charged for the packages above ₹7 lakh, which will come into effect from 1 October 2023.

TT Bureau

The Union Ministry of Finance has finally come up with a change in its Tax Collection at Source (TCS) system on payments under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) and on overseas tour packages.

According to this year's budget, TCS on foreign remittance through the LRS was supposed to be 20 per cent from the existing 5 per cent, except in certain cases, which was to kick in from 1 July 2023. It was also announced in March that credit card payments would be brought under the LRS. However, as a temporary relief to the travel fraternity and after numerous comments and suggestions from across industries, the government has made some changes.

As per the new directive, there will be no change in the rate of TCS for all purposes under LRS and for overseas travel tour packages, regardless of mode of payment, for amounts up



Guldeep Singh Sahni
MD, Weldon Tours and Travels and
Founding President, OTOAI

to ₹7 lakh per individual per annum. It has also been decided to give more time for the implementation of the revised TCS rates and for inclusion of credit card payments in LRS. The increase in TCS rates, which were to come into effect from 1 July 2023 shall now come into effect from 1 October 2023.

Apart from that it has been decided that transactions through Inter-



Riaz Munshi
President
OTOAI

national Credit Cards while being overseas would not be counted as LRS and hence would not be subject to TCS.

Threshold of ₹ 7 lakh per financial year per individual in clause (i) of sub-section (1G) of section 206C shall be restored for TCS on all categories of LRS payments, through all modes of payment, regardless of the purpose. Thus, for first ₹7 lakh

remittance under LRS there shall be no TCS. Beyond this, ₹7 lakh threshold, TCS shall be: a) 0.5 per cent (if remittance for education is financed by education loan); b) 5 per cent (in case of remittance for education/ medical treatment); and c) 20 per cent for others.

For purchase of overseas tour program package under Clause (ii) of Sub-section (1G), the TCS shall continue to apply at the rate of 5 per cent for the first ₹7 lakh per individual per annum; the 20 per cent rate will only apply for expenditure above this limit.

Reacting over the issue, **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, MD, Weldon Tours and Travels and Founding President, OTOAI, expresses gratitude to the Finance Ministry saying that it is a relief for the whole travel industry, especially the outbound tour operators. "We were never against collecting taxes, but we just want that there should be no discrimination. I need to personally congratulate various individuals, organizations, me-

Revised TCS rates

Nature of payment	Earlier rate before Finance Act, 2023	New rate wef 1 Oct. 2023
LRS for education financed by loan	Nil up to ₹7 lakh 0.5% above ₹7 lakh	Nil up to ₹7 lakh 0.5% above ₹7 lakh
LRS for medical treatment/ education (other than financed by loan)	Nil up to ₹7 lakh 5% above ₹7 lakh	Nil up to ₹7 lakh 5% above ₹7 lakh
LRS for other purposes	Nil up to ₹7 lakh 5% above ₹7 lakh	Nil up to ₹7 lakh 20% above ₹7 lakh
Purchase of overseas tour program package	5% (without threshold)	5% till ₹7 lakh, 20% thereafter

Note: (i) TCS rate in column two shall continue to apply till 30 September, 2023.
(ii) There shall be no TCS on expenditures under LRS under clause (i) of Subsection (1G) for the first ₹7 lakh, irrespective of purpose.

dia and also the travel fraternity as they kept on reacting, tweeting and approaching the ministry. One-in-all, a big victory of the whole travel fraternity," he said.

Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI, said, "It is somewhat of a relief for now, but the situation remains complicated. They have introduced an allowed threshold, which is

good news to some extent. However, we still need to present our case and offer assistance and suggestions on how to proceed. It's a complicated matter, the bank finds it challenging to recognize transactions and determine if they fall within the 20 per cent limit, or if someone has already exceeded the ₹7 lakh limit. It's a problematic situation." 📌



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Green tourism top priority

The Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a vehicle for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was welcomed by all G20 participant nations at the recently organized G20 Tourism Ministers' Meet in Goa, and lauded by the Indian Prime Minister and tourism ministers.

TT Bureau

VIEWPOINT

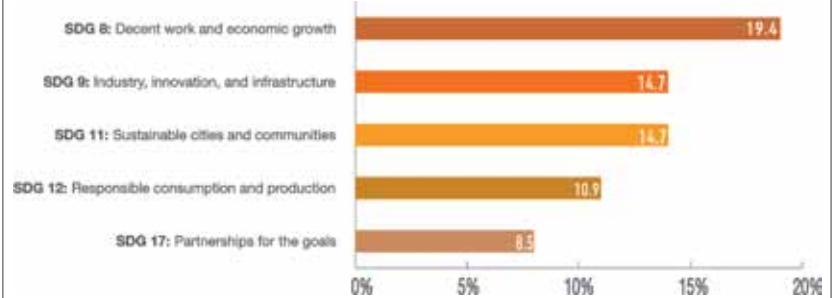
Sustainability path

Among the many issues that the Ministry of Tourism is tapping, sustainability remains on top, especially on its G20 agenda. The much talked about Goa Roadmap, which has been picked up from the draft National Tourism Policy of India, reflects India's strong ethos on sustainable tourism. However, how much of that will be put into practice needs to be seen. The MOT is keen and positive to bring sustainability in action, not only at the core of its own policy, but also push other line ministries to follow a sustainable framework. Green tourism has been the top priority for all G20 countries as well, but in a world where countries are still not renouncing war, there are agendas in the roadmap, which are still under questions and need a global acceptance. While that remains an issue, we see sustainability being part of most businesses. Hotels have been adopting practices like water recycling plants and self-bottling plants. Destinations are also putting in place sustainable practices for tourists. All this proves that we are moving in the right direction, but is it enough to reach the sustainability goals of 2030?

Govt on tourism board

Around four years back, the Ministry of Tourism constituted an advisory committee, which consisted of tourism industry stalwarts, government representatives and private sector analysts. A lot of discussions were on the cards then, followed by events. Discussions did start, but a comprehensive summary of the deliberations did not come out in the way of a policy change or an initiative dedicated to industry. Whether that body was eventually dissolved, or its term was over, we don't know. Take two, the government has come up with the National Tourism Advisory Council, what they call the tourism 'Think Tank', which has stakeholders, line ministries and experts as its part. The aim is to take advice from stakeholders for creating policies and make changes when needed. With the National Tourism Board on cards, this seems like a smart move by the Ministry, as we expect to see some big changes for the industry soon.

G20 Tourism Working Group survey results on the top Sustainable Development Goals that tourism contributes to, 2023 (%)



Source: G20 Tourism Working Group survey to the question: "What are the top five SDGs that tourism contributes to most in your country?" n = 26

Green tourism top priority

According to the results of the survey conducted among G20 members and guest countries for the development of the document, green tourism emerges as the most important priority, a priority that sets the overarching goal for a sustainable and inclusive tourism future. UNEP found that for every US dol-

lar spent on nature restoration, one can expect USD 9 of economic benefits. Green buildings sector represents a USD 24.7 trillion investment opportunity by 2030 across all emerging market cities.

Main takeaway

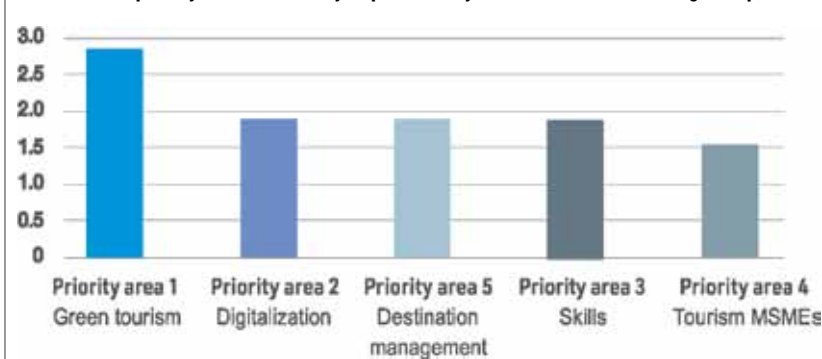
The roadmap states, "A main takeaway from this roadmap is the importance of collaborating

across sectors to leverage these initiatives and collectively contribute to achieve the goals. This out-

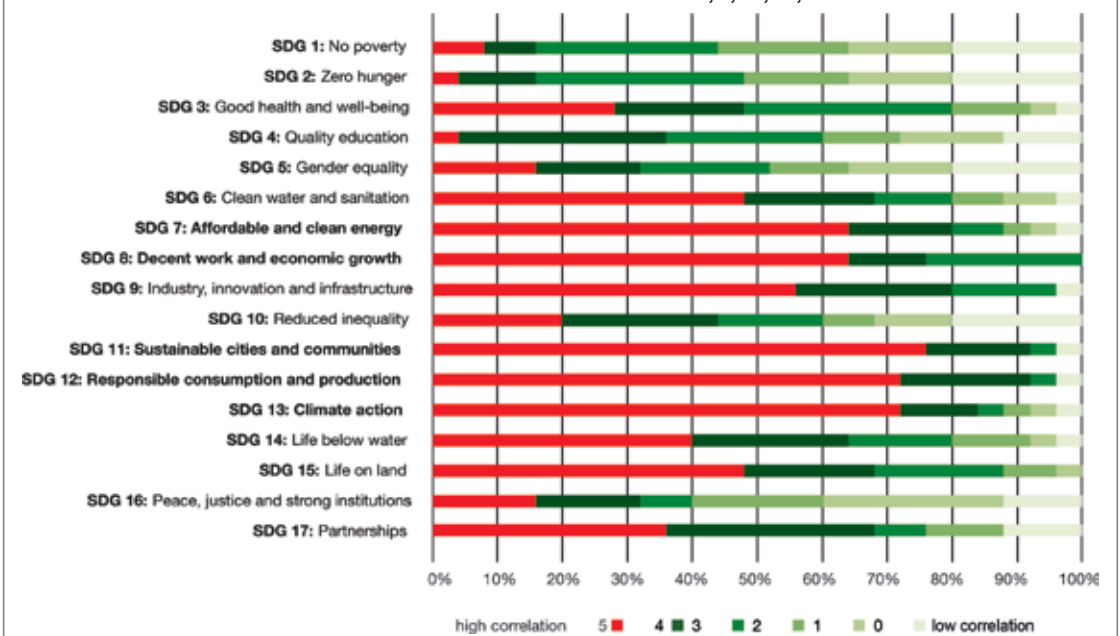
Green tourism emerges as the most important priority that sets the overarching goal for a sustainable and inclusive tourism future

come document is an opportunity to reflect on how the tourism sector can boost its partnership with all ecosystem actors and beyond to position itself as a pioneer in the collective progress towards the SDGs."

G20 tourism priority areas ranked by importance by the G20 Tourism Working Group, 2023



Green Tourism can contribute the most to SDGs 7, 8, 11, 12, & 13



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Tourism ‘think tank’ of India

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has constituted a 'National Tourism Advisory Council', which will act as a 'think tank' and advice the government on various policy matters relating to tourism, according to a circular issued recently by the ministry.

Nisha Verma

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has constituted a 'National Tourism Advisory Council' to be headed by the Minister of Tourism as Chairman. The Vice Chairman will be the Secretary, Tourism.

According to a circular by MOT, the council will act as a 'think tank' and advice the government on various policy matters relat-

The council will also constitute secretaries of many other ministries, or their representative, not below the level of Joint Secretary

ing to tourism. It would have a tenure of three years from the date of constitution and may meet as often as necessary. Also, the council can co-opt other official members as and when required.

It will also constitute secretaries of many other ministries, or their representative, not below the level of Joint Secretary. This

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- ❖ President, ATOAI
- ❖ General Secretary, ABTO
- ❖ Member Secretary: JS level officer in charge of NTAC

will include Ministries of Home; Finance; Foreign; Culture; Civil Aviation; Urban Development; Road Transport & Highways, Shipping; Drinking Water and Sanitation; Ayush; Health and Family; Commerce and Industry; MSME; Financial Services; Environment, Forest & Climate Change and DoNER. Apart from that, the council will have DG (ASI); Textiles; Minority Affairs; DG (BRO); Chairman, Railway

Experts as member in their individual capacity



Alapati Krishna Mohan
Managing Director
Southern Travels



Anuraag Saxena
Co-Founder
India Pride Project



Ashwani Lohani
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Latika Nath
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and Photographer; Responsible
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Nakul Anand
Executive Director
ITC



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& Expeditions (North East)



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MiraiNXT Innworks



R. K. Anil
Rural Tourism Expert. Former
CEO, NDMC CSR Foundation



Zubin Jal Karkaria
Founder and CEO
VFS Global

Board; Principal Adviser (Tourism), NITI Aayog; and Additional Member (Tourism & Catering), Railway Board, or their representatives, not below the level of Joint Secretary.

Experts in the field of travel and tourism management will also be members in their individual capacity. Also, association heads will be ex-officio members of the council.


The circular mentions that the experts who are member in their individual capacity will not be paid an honorarium. Also, TA/ DA and accommodation charges may be payable to the experts who may be members in their individual capacity at par with Group "A"

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Experts in the field of travel and tourism management will also be members in their individual capacity in the new council

pay commission) of the Government of India, as and when the meetings of the NTAC are held.

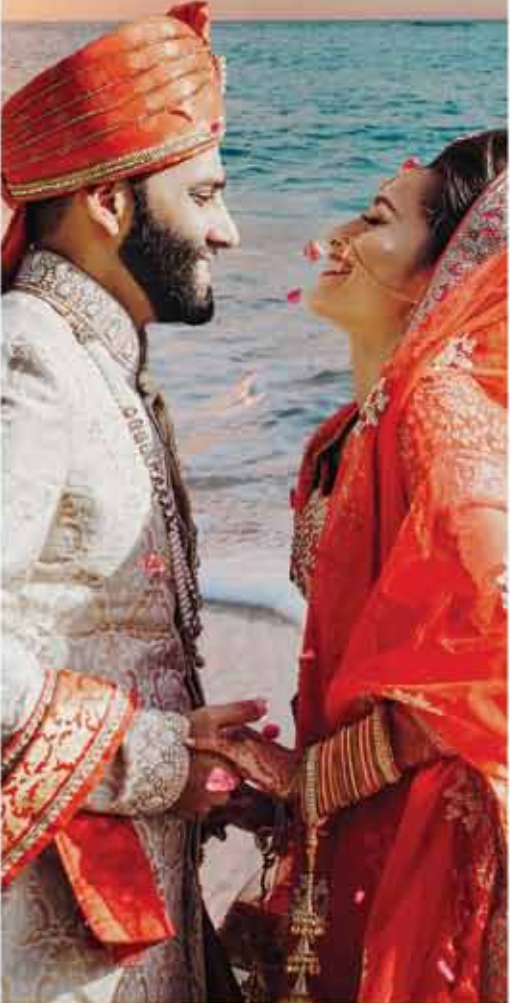
The same will be reimbursed to them upon specific request subject to producing valid proof of travel and stay. Accommodation charges for a maximum of two nights and DA for a maximum of two days may be payable subject to availability of flights for out station members. On specific request stay arrangements may be made by the Ministry of Tourism only in ITDC hotels subject to availability of rooms of entitled amount. Vehicles may be provided subject to their availability, otherwise fare as per their entitlement would be provided. Also, the experts who are members in their individual capacity shall not be entitled for privileges like I - Card, and Red beacon Car.



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India is largest wedding
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followed by UAE at 20%:
Rajeev Jain

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Fleet size must reach 2K in 10 yrs

The civil aviation sector in India is at a significant point with Indigo Airlines' groundbreaking order of 500 aircraft from Airbus, highlighting the immense potential of the industry. Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, hailed the order as a testament to India's remarkable aviation growth.



Janice Alyosius

The civil aviation sector in India has reached a pivotal moment with Indigo Airlines' remarkable order of 500 aircraft from Airbus, emphasising the immense potential of civil aviation in the country. **Jyotiraditya Scindia**, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, praised the order as a testament to the unprecedented growth witnessed by the aviation sector of India over the past nine years and the opportunities it presents for stakeholders and the country's 1.4 billion people, who increasingly aspire to travel by air.

The minister emphasised this landmark transaction, which comes on the heels of Air India's procurement for 470 aircraft—250 from Airbus and 220 from Boeing. "With this latest order, India has once again set a historic milestone, securing the largest-ever recorded order by a carrier from any aircraft manufacturer in the world," the minister said. Highlighting the significance of understanding the multiplier effects



Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation

of civil aviation, including the direct and indirect economic impacts, the minister said, "Every dollar invested in civil aviation yields \$3.1 in terms of new growth, and each direct job in the sector generates 6.1 indirect jobs, showcasing the tremendous dividends derived from the ever-expanding civil aviation sector."

Minister Scindia stressed upon the exceptional growth of the country's airline sector, which has seen a 75 per cent increase in fleet size, expanding from 400 in 2014 to a current count of 700 aircraft. "This

growth has witnessed the emergence of countrywide carriers like Akasa and regional carriers such as India One Air, Star Air, and several others. Furthermore, the orders placed by India's leading carriers now surpass the total fleet size of the country in 2013-14, illustrating the industry's rapid expansion," the minister shared.

Highlighting future plans, Scindia revealed the ambitious goals of expanding the fleet from 700 to nearly 2,000 aircraft within the next seven to 10 years. "The govern-

ment aims to increase the number of airports from 74 to 148, develop water drones and heliports, and enhance the throughput capacity of the six major metros from 221 million to almost 420 million passengers annually by 2030. We are also looking at now creating with this expanding footprint, an international civil aviation hub within India. For far too long, our hubs have been located outside our eastern border or outside our western border, now the government is committed to establishing an international civil aviation hub within India, with Delhi as the first hub, bringing an end to the reliance on neighbouring countries," the minister said.

Scindia said that the Prime Minister's vision of democratizing civil aviation has now become a reality, given the expansion of infrastructure, fleets, and the creation of an international footprint within India. "As civil aviation continues to expand its reach, connecting metros with tier II and tier III cities within India and extending across the seas

to multiple continents, it is undoubtedly time to seize the skies."

The minister congratulated the Indigo team on their remarkable achievement and extended his best wishes for their future endeavours. "With the continuous growth of fleets, infrastructure, and interna-



India has set a milestone, securing the largest-ever recorded order by a carrier from any aircraft manufacturer in the world

tional presence, India's civil aviation sector is poised for remarkable success, aligning with the government's vision to make air travel accessible to all," he said.

Has Nidhi made registration easier?

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) registration is now being done on the Nidhi portal, which is a new for the tour operators, who are used to the older manual process. **TRAVTALK** asked IATO members and office-bearers how convenient has this process been for them and how they are helping the members to go forward.



Nisha Verma

The Ministry of Tourism launched its Nidhi 2.0 scheme, which included registration and approval of tour operators. A simple process,

Andaman & Nicobar and Puducherry Chapter, shares that he has registered on NIDHI portal. "I logged in and it was easy and straightforward. I have uploaded all my documents. It was not difficult."

was rolled in, there were some problems. If someone has sent an email to the Nidhi portal and registered as active member, its data will automatically shift. Once that is done, the members are getting the password. In case of an issue



K Pandian
Managing Director, Cholan Tours and
Chairman - IATO Tamil Nadu



Rajiv Mehra
President
IATO



Ravi Gosain
MD, Erco Travels
and Vice President, IATO



Sanjay Razdan
Managing Director, Razdan Holidays
Hony. Secretary, IATO



Deepak Bhatnagar
Managing Director, Aamantaran Travels
and EC member, IATO



Manoj Kumar Matta
Managing, Oriental Vacations & Journeys,
and EC Member, IATO

as claimed by the MOT, is being now followed by most tour operators. with many still getting there. **K Pandian**, MD, Cholan Tours and Chairman - IATO Tamil Nadu,

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, informed how there were teething issues initially, but IATO is helping all its members to get through the process. "When the NIDHI Portal

they can contact IATO." Agrees, **Ravi Gosain**, MD, Erco Travels and Vice President, IATO, "MOT has moved recognition of tour operators to NIDHI portal. People are having

some problem. However, it's a new system, and will sort out soon."

Moving from a manual system to a digital one, will have its cons. **Sanjay Razdan**, MD, Razdan Holidays, Hony. Secretary, IATO, says, "Previously, it used to be manual. For everything new, it takes time for people to understand. It's a transition period. It is sometimes difficult for people to shift. However, Zia Siddique, one of our EC members,

is helping members to get MOT approvals." Echoing the same thought, **Deepak Bhatnagar**, MD, Aamantaran Travels and EC member, IATO, adds, "It takes time to accept, and I am not saying everything will be perfect. However, eventually once we get used to all this, we will overcome it. I am sure whatever has been done is for the betterment of overall working of the system." **Manoj Kumar Matta**, MD, Oriental Vacations & Journeys, and EC

Member, IATO, said that for him, it was a cakewalk. "People are not aware of the procedure. Hence, everyone started approaching MOT or going on their website to get registered. However, the system has changed. It is a very simple process. All you need to do is to give your complete details on NIDHI portal, get it registered, and you will automatically get a login ID and password and upload the documents. At least, I did not face any issues."

‘Auspicious period for India market’

Julia Simpson, President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) is optimistic about the India market and said that the humongous aircraft orders by Indian airlines in recent times is an indicator that the tourism sector has tremendous potential.



Hazel Jain

Julia Simpson, President & CEO, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), was recently in Goa to address the G20 Summit, on the sidelines of which she also highlighted the WTTC's 2023 Economic Impact Research (EIR).

Talking about India's potential in tourism, she said, "A great credit to India's PM (Prime Minister) and the ministers for the rapid building of infrastructure. It is rather critical to developing the tourism sector. And we have seen a lot of airports and roads are being built. You need

lion more jobs this year, recovering almost all the jobs lost due to the pandemic to reach almost 39 million, with around one in 13 workers in India in the sector.

International visitor spend in India is forecast to reach over ₹2 trillion with domestic visitor spend forecast to reach more than ₹12.6 trillion. Simpson said, "The G20

Presidency provides India with the opportunity to highlight the economic and social value of tourism at a critical moment for the global economy. "Minister Reddy has shown great leadership, rallying the G20 Ministers under the Goa Roadmap, showing the world that tourism boosts economies whilst meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Growth will be double GDP, but we need

governments to focus on reliable energy and sustainable aviation fuel production."

Last year also saw a 125 per cent increase in international visitor spending in India, reach more than ₹1.6 trillion. Domestic visitor spend grew 86 per cent last year to reach more than ₹12.3 trillion. It is now just 1 per cent behind pre-pandemic levels.



Julia Simpson
President & CEO, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)

Visitor spend in India (in ₹)

2022: 1.6 trillion (international) and 12.3 trillion (domestic)

2023: 2 trillion (international) and 12.6 trillion (domestic)

2033: 4.1 trillion (international) and 28.7 trillion (domestic)



We have seen at the Paris Air Show this month that airlines such as IndiGo has ordered 500 A-320s and that is a massive order

good infrastructure; that is an absolute pre-requisite. Another good indicator is aircraft orders. We have seen at the Paris Air Show this month that airlines such as IndiGo has ordered 500 A-320s and that is a massive order! Air India firms up orders for 470 Airbus and Boeing aircraft. Airlines will only put those orders in if they know they will have the demand to fly them. I think India is in a very auspicious period for tourism in India. It is building very, very strongly. It represents 7 per cent of India's GDP now and we are going to be seeing that number increase."

The research reveals this sector's strong recovery in numbers. Highlighting the sector's resilience, growing at twice the rate of GDP not only in India, but across all G20 nations, Simpson said that WTTC research forecasts tourism contributing ₹16.5 trillion to the Indian economy this year, just 3.5 per cent below 2019. The sector is forecast to create over 1.6 mil-

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India's main source markets (2022)

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USA	7%
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Sri Lanka	2%
France	2%

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'FTAs up by 166% from Jan-Apr'

The 4th and final Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting under G20 concluded in Goa recently, which deliberated on five priority areas for this year. G. Kishan Reddy, Union MOT, Culture and DoNER, along with Ministers of State Ajay Bhatt and Shripad Yesso Naik, Goa CM Pramod Sawant and Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte graced the occasion.



TT Bureau

The 4th Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting under G20 was hosted by the Ministry of Tourism in Goa from 19-21 June. All three tourism ministers were present at the inauguration — G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER, along with Ministers of State Ajay Bhatt and Shripad Yesso Naik. Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister, Goa and Rohan Khaunte, Minister of Tourism, Goa, also graced the occasion.

Inbound sees high

Reddy, in his address, said that foreign tourist arrivals in India after COVID-19 have increased. Foreign tourist arrivals from January to April 2023 was 166 per cent higher than the arrivals registered during the same period last year. India is expected to recover its inbound travel to pre-pandemic levels in 2023. "The final TWG meeting will provide us all, action points and recommendations for national and other governments, and other tourism stakeholders, to act upon and



G. Kishan Reddy
Union Minister for Tourism
Culture and DoNER

achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs). Currently our Indian government has two priorities: sustainable infrastructure creation, to cater to the growing needs of the tourists, and raising awareness among the tourists, for responsible consumption and adoption of an environmentally conscious lifestyle, and through the launch of the G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard, a legacy has been created. The dashboard being developed shall



Ajay Bhatt
Union Minister of State for Defence
and Tourism

promote policies and initiatives by the G20 countries, and guest countries in building a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient sector."

Yesso Naik added, "The well-developed tourism infrastructure along the coastal areas and water bodies combined with favourable weather conditions aid in promoting adventure tourism in the country, as is evident in the growing popularity of the segment among domestic



Shripad Yesso Naik
Minister of State (Independent Charge)
for Tourism

and foreign tourists. The National Strategy for Adventure Tourism has been launched to position India as a preferred adventure tourism destination and help adventure tourism grow in the country. This strategy focuses on developing adventure destinations, promoting safety in adventure tourism, skill development, capacity building and marketing. The Goa Roadmap for Tourism builds on the efforts of the G20 TWG in the past three years

and shall be a key guiding tool for creation of a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism sector."

Ajay Bhatt, Union Minister of State for Defence and Tourism, said "The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative brings the travel industry together for achieving a unified goal, that is to eradicate plastic pollution at its source. This requires collaborative and dedicated efforts from governments, industry players and other tourism stakeholders, thereby promoting sustainable tourism practices within the tourism industry."

Cruise tourism in focus

The event saw a thematic discussion on 'Making India a hub for cruise tourism', where discussions happened on successful practices of cruise tourism promotion and development, development of river cruising, and way forward in developing cruise tourism. Reddy unveiled 'Draft Strategy-Vision and Integrated Cruise Tourism Strategy for India' at the side event. He said, "Indian government is making all the efforts to encourage and

improve the cruise tourism and is working with whole of the sector approach." He said that that the government is working to ensure that in the coming days anyone can enjoy the experience of cruise tourism. We are coordinating with

Foreign tourist arrivals from January to April 2023 was 166 per cent higher than the arrivals registered during the same period last year

the various ministries, state governments, international organisations, stakeholders and industry to bring about a revolution in cruise tourism. We have a coastal line of more than 7,500 km, which we can explore through cruise tourism."

Contd on page 34 ▶

Travelling is an 'investment'

Travelling or taking a vacation continues to be a luxury in certain households, but at Cleartrip, we believe, it is an investment for growth in future. Travel generates attractive long-term returns in the form of improvement in personal well-being, expanding one's perspective, and helping one recharge and return refresh.

For many years, people have been conditioned to believe that investments are mostly to do with assets such as properties and jewellery for example, or putting money into mutual funds, deposits, or insurance. Travelling or taking a vacation continues to be a luxury in certain households. At Cleartrip, we believe, travel generates attractive long-term returns in the form of improvement in personal well-being, expanding one's perspective, and helping one recharge and return refresh. How can we help people 'invest in travel'? These simple steps to plan well in advance will help you avoid additional expenses and have a great experience during your trip!

Book early, minimise costs

The first step is to identify the intent for travel when you are planning it in advance. Explore deals as per your need (leisure, wellness, adventure, solo, weekend getaway, etc.). Remember, the earlier you book, the cheaper

the fares that you are likely to get. Booking the return leg on the same transaction can unlock discounted fares, and the savings are especially large on international travel. Similarly, booking ancillary services such as seats,

Booking ancillary services such as seats, meals, or baggage at the time of booking the flight is often cheaper than buying them later

meals, or baggage at the time of booking the flight is often cheaper than buying them later.

Flexibility is important

Not all plans go as per your in-



tent. There may be some last-minute changes. You have got nothing to lose by spending a little extra at the time of booking to avail of free rescheduling or cancellations benefits. And with options like CTFlex and FlexMax to cover amendment/ cancellation charges, you don't need to worry about a change in plans.

Choose the destination wisely

Tourist spots will be expensive

during peak season. Picking a less explored destination not only offers the joys of experiencing something new and unique, but it can also be lighter on the pocket. Here are some off-beat locations to travel in India:

- ❖ Jodhpur
- ❖ Pantnagar
- ❖ Shillong
- ❖ Gaya
- ❖ Leh

Pick right payment method

Pick the No Cost EMI option when you book. This allows you to pay for your trip over up to 12 small instalments at no extra cost (thereby improving the affordability factor). Or even better, pick the Travel Now, Pay Later option for greater convenience.

Secure your travel

Lastly, travel insurance is of utmost importance in the post-COVID

world. Don't fret about flight delays, missing/ damaged baggage, and travel restrictions. Just insure your trip for a hassle-free experience

Medical emergencies

Cleartrip's medi-cancel feature allows a user to receive a full refund against cancellation due to an illness or any valid health concern. This is extended to users who have had to cancel due to a family member contracting COVID-19. This facility is available at no additional cost.



Aditya Agarwal
CFO
Cleartrip

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

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e-learning program for travel agents

Atout France has launched its new e-learning program for travel agents and tour operators with India being one of the eight pilot markets. Developed at their headquarters, this certification will allow the NTO to create an inner circle of experts – and one lucky agent will win a trip to France this year.



Hazel Jain

Sharing exciting news for travel agents, **Sheetal Munshaw** – Director, Atout France India, says, “It’s the first time that we have launched a program that is a collaboration, and which has originated at our headquarters. We started with eight countries – mainly long-haul markets – and India is one of the pilot projects. The ‘France Connaisseur’ e-learning program is our first worldwide initiative. In the past, we used to have our own e-learning program, which was specific to our market, whereas this is a certification that will be standardised across the world.”



Sheetal Munshaw
Director, Atout France India

Explaining the need for a new program, she adds, “So much has changed since the pandemic, even from our end in terms of our products and offerings. Therefore, product knowledge became extremely important to connect with our distribution channel, specially in a country like ours where people

still book through travel agents. So, it’s very important that our partners and trade stakeholders have a high level of knowledge where they feel more confident and equipped to be able to sell France. This program will give them an edge.”

France Connaisseur aims to show the diversity of touristic destina-

tions, focusing on local heritage, activities, accommodations and regional gastronomy. It will also help them combine different products together into an itinerary. Tour operators and travel agents are invited to register for it where about 15-odd modules allow them to acquire a France Connaisseur certificate, provided they complete the entire course and obtain a certain percentage of correct answers in the final assessment. One lucky winner will be hosted to a trip to France at the end of this year. “Our aim is to create an inner circle of France experts. Down the line, they will be part of our database of people we will reach out to for various initiatives and campaigns, or invite them to France to showcase different regions or our events in India. The program will also include all of France’s overseas territories like Reunion Island and Tahiti,” Munshaw reveals.

Recovery and numbers

Very unsurprisingly and much as



predicted, the recovery was robust, Munshaw adds. “It happened seamlessly and immediately. For us, revenge travel was and is a reality – across the globe, but also from India. In 2018, we received close to 600,000 arrivals from India to France. In 2019, we were close to 700,000. In 2022, we saw 484,000 plus travellers keeping in mind that the first quarter there was no movement because of the new wave of COVID,” she says.

She predicts this growth will continue even this year. “We have been fortunate that Indians have always loved France. This growth is happening not just in terms of numbers but also the evolution of the segment, of the source market. We are seeing Indians from all over India visiting France. That is a huge development for us. Of course, leisure FIT, but we are also looking at groups coming in autumn and winter this year. And then we

have MICE. Contrary to all predictions, this was the first segment to take off with big MICE movement. We have had some of the biggest MICE movements in the last one year, including 1,500 plus in August last year with Tata Group and 2,000 pax with Asian Paints this year,” she says.

Weddings ring a bell in France

Another area where France is seeing robust growth is weddings! Munshaw says, “We were always working towards this, and I think the pandemic kickstarted a new trend where France has become one of the most sought after wedding destinations from India. We saw one of our biggest weddings in 2021 with over 900 pax during the time when we still didn’t have commercial flights. This was all through the air bubble arrangement and charter flights. Then we had three other big weddings since then and we have another one in the pipeline. We are really excited about this segment.”

Green touch to Swiss tourism

A dream destination, Switzerland follows its own sustainability strategy: Swisstainable. It is all about having one’s finger on the pulse – and maximum relaxation in a natural setting.



Hazel Jain

What makes Switzerland a sustainable travel destination? One of the most closely-knit rail networks in the world, recycling champions, and impressive air and water quality – Switzerland is leading the way towards a sustainable future. Two cities of Switzerland – Lucerne and Zurich – are making impressive headway into promoting this.

Ritu Sharma, Deputy Director, Switzerland Tourism, says, “In Lucerne, we urge tourists to explore the city via public transport, on foot, or on a bike. There are also multiple hikes or multi-day trekking options or customizable tours in and around the city that take you right into the lap of nature. Lucerne also offers several Swisstainable-certified eco-friendly establishments across the Lake Lucerne region to suit every taste and budget. Restaurants in Lucerne too have mastered delectable dishes prepared with locally sourced ingredients. Culinarium Alpinum is one such restaurant that focuses on the culinary diversity of the Alpine region.”



Ritu Sharma
Deputy Director, Switzerland Tourism

Zurich is also encouraging visitors to experience sustainable travel options. Sharma adds, “Zurich

Tourism has adopted a comprehensive and long-term approach to achieve the goal of positioning Zurich and the surrounding region as an international blueprint for a Smart Destination. Committed to preserving the environment and minimizing the impact of tourism on local communities, a mindful lifestyle forms part of the very DNA of the people of Zurich.” All city tours and excursions are marked with a green leaf symbol to show that no harmful emissions were produced or show that the emissions generated are offset through the Zurich-based myclimate foundation. In Zurich, a lot of hotels such as the new Hyatt Place Zurich Airport The Circle are now adopting sustainable measures.

Special itinerary with Trafalgar

Tour company, Trafalgar, and Switzerland Tourism have designed the first-ever ‘Swisstainable’ travel itinerary. It is the first global travel company to develop a tour, which is entirely serviced by ‘Swisstainable’ suppliers. This eight-day journey through Zürich, St. Moritz, Zermatt, Geneva and Lucerne includes ‘Swisstainable’ accommodations, experiences, meals, and greener transportation considerations, such as replacing vans with train travel on the Glacier Express and Golden Pass Train Line.

SpiceJet, Hahn Air sign pact

SpiceJet will now be available under its own SG code in the Amadeus GDS, as it signs an interline agreement with Hahn Air. The LCC is already available under Hahn Air’s H1 code in all GDSs.



TT Bureau

SpiceJet has signed an interline agreement with Hahn Air. The airline has already been available under Hahn Air’s H1 code in all major Global Distribution Systems (GDSs) since 2016.

Under the new interline agreement, the airline will be additionally available under their own SG code in the Amadeus GDS. This would allow travel agents around the world to issue SpiceJet flights on the insolvency-safe HR-169 ticket by choosing Hahn Air as the validating carrier. In addition, travel agents using the Amadeus GDS can combine SpiceJet’s flights with other Hahn Air partners’ flights on one single ticket. “We are proud to extend our partnership with SpiceJet. By providing a wealth of destinations and excellent service, this award-winning airline is very popular with travellers. We are excited to now give the travel agent community various options to easily access this carrier, even in markets where SpiceJet



Kimberley Long
Vice President
Agency Distribution, Hahn Air

does not grant ticketing authority for SG or where the airline is not a member of the local BSP or ARC,” says **Kimberley Long**, Vice President, Agency Distribution, Hahn Air.

Shilpa Bhatia, Chief Commercial Officer, SpiceJet, said, “We are delighted to partner with Hahn Air for distribution of our flights to over 190 markets that will help international passengers to



Shilpa Bhatia
Chief Commercial Officer
SpiceJet

seamlessly travel across various parts of India with ease and beyond. The interline agreement with Hahn Air and the strong distribution network of 350 airlines will positively benefit SpiceJet to increase its global reach under its own SG code.”

Spicejet recently started its Kolkata-Tezpur-Kolkata flight service. The newly introduced flight service will run on a daily basis.

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The Palace

What's selling this summer

Whimsical clients have different reasons for choosing their holiday destination. While some are pressed for time, and others for money, there is also a small percentage of people who are booking their holiday based on the kind of experiences they are seeking. **TRAVTALK** speaks to a few agents and finds out more.



Subhash Motwani
Founder Director
Namaste Tourism

“ This season has been an interesting mix. Some of my clients just returned from Peru. I also have clients in Japan right now, and some others who are going to China – not to Beijing and Shanghai, but doing the Silk Route. I have also sold Vietnam and South Africa, so it's a pretty good mix I would say. Clients are choosing destinations based on the experiences they want to have. Since we deal with quite a few HNI clients, the important factor in choosing a destination is time. ”



Thomas Pappachan
Director
ETI Global Holidays

“ While we started as a MICE firm, post-COVID we branched out to doing everything, including leisure. Currently, due to the visa issues in many countries, we see a lot of demand for Vietnam, along with other destinations that offer visa on arrival. There is a lot of buzz for Korea as well. They are doing much better than others this season, particularly the European destinations. US also on a low right now because of the same reason. Destinations that are giving visas easily is what most of our clients prefer. ”



Abhay Pruthi
Lead Commerce
CRED

“ This summer, Goa, Coorg and Jaipur seem to be the most sought-after destinations for travellers, offering a perfect blend of pristine beaches and lush green landscapes. This is due to their excellent connectivity with major metro cities such as Bengaluru, Mumbai, and New Delhi. The ease of travel and convenient accessibility make them popular choices among our members. These destinations provide excellent connectivity, ease of access, and a wide range of options for accommodation and activities. ”



Manvendra Singh
Assistant VP, Product & Contracting
(Outbound), Tamarind Global

“ While we get major traffic going into Europe because of pent-up demand, what is really astonishing is the interest building up for Korea. In fact, we have big groups lined up and its uncanny that when we ask them for their preferred destination, they say Korea. What is happening is that there is a lot of traction going in for Korea. We are getting inquiries from all over for this. We do a lot of these large associations and YPOs and they have really big spends – like four or five nights and more at luxury hotels. ”



Nishant Pitti
CEO and Co-Founder
EaseMyTrip

“ Due to the continuous surge in travel demand, our platform has experienced a significant increase in bookings for the upcoming months. When it comes to domestic travel, popular destinations among travellers include Mumbai, Goa, Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai. In terms of international travel, destinations such as Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam have garnered considerable attention and interest. Mumbai, Goa, Singapore, and Thailand have been popular due to their diverse range of attractions. ”



Tarun Tahiliani
India Country Manager
Kayak

“ Our new travel search insights show the flight searches between January 2023 and June 2023 made by Indian travellers to domestic and international destinations for travel between June and December 2023 travel. The top five most searched domestic destinations in 2023 on KAYAK.co.in were New Delhi, Vasco Da Gama, Srinagar, Bengaluru and Mumbai. The top five international destinations in 2023 were Bangkok, followed by Dubai, Denpasar in Indonesia, London and Toronto. ”

Inputs by Hazel Jain

VFS clears TAFI members' doubts

In a historic move, the Western India Chapter of TAFI recently organised a tete-a-tete with its members to answer their questions and clear doubts. On the hot seat was **Prabuddha Sen**, COO-South Asia, VFS Global, who discussed key challenges regarding visa applications, visa shopping and fraudulent documents, as well as potential of tertiary cities.



33 European countries with Eurail

Unlimited train journeys and just one travel document. Rail Europe now enables the travel industry to sell seat reservations to their customers holding Eurail or Interrail passes through Rail Europe GSAs or agent.raileurope.com. Travel professionals can now unlock 33 European destinations with this Eurail Pass!



TT Bureau

It may be hard for eager travellers to choose between a shopping trip to Harrod's and lunch at the Eiffel Tower, but now they don't have to. Thanks to Europe's extensive rail network, Paris, London, Amsterdam, and more destinations are just a few hours apart. Multi-country train travel is even easier with a Eurail Pass. Passes allow for unlimited journeys on designated travel days, so there is even time to add a river cruise in Amsterdam and a pint in Germany.

European rail passes were the brainchild of Eurail back in 1959 and have been immensely popular ever since. They have made crossborder train travel accessible to tourists from all over the world. Learn more about Eurail Passes,

activities! More on that later.) The logistics of Passes are easy to manage, too. Most Passes have gone digital, which means they are available for download onto a mobile device, delivered immediately and can't get lost. It's important to remember that Mobile Passes must be activated before use! (More on that in the Rail Planner app section.)



If your customers want to explore a single country, book a One Country Pass. If they would like to discover a better part of the continent, book a Global Passes.

The Eurail One Country Pass
A One Country Pass allows

midnight to midnight. Passes can be personalised, based on the traveller's needs: first or second class, discounted fares for children and youth, and consecutive or non-consecutive designated travel days.

Eurail One Country Passes are available for the following countries and territories: Austria; Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg); Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Ireland; Lithuania; North Macedonia; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Scandinavia (Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden); Serbia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden, Turkey.

(Please note that Estonia, Greek Islands, and Latvia Passes are only available as paper Passes.)



With Eurail Pass, travel agents can now book seat reservations for TGV, Lyria, Eurostar, Frecciarossa, and other trains through Rail Europe GSAs

small fee for a designated spot and peace of mind!

The Rail Planner App
Once a Pass has been purchased, travellers can upload it to Eurail's free Rail Planner app, available for iOS (13.0+) and Android (6.0+). The app allows them to flash their Pass for ticket inspectors when boarding. However, they can also search for train times, book journeys, and manage their paperless tickets all in the same place!

(Please note that an internet connection is required at least once every three days to keep a Mobile Pass active on a device. But most train stations have free Wi-Fi, so it should be a snap!)

Additional discounts and perks with this pass

Passholders can take advantage of generous discounts on great activities that will make their holidays even more unforgettable. Perks include free bus transfers,



how to add them to your offer as an agent and earn commission.

What is a Rail Pass?

You are certainly familiar with point-to-point train tickets, which are good for one journey during the period of validity. But rail passes are good for unlimited journeys on designated travel days. That means travellers can take as many train trips as they please from midnight to midnight. European trains depart frequently, and many regional routes don't require reservations. So, your customers will have the ultimate freedom to hop on an earlier or a later train and explore at their own pace.

Plus, purchasing a Pass is a more cost effective than purchasing multiple journeys separately. So, travellers can put the money saved towards restaurants, hotels, and other attractions. (Eurail Passes also include discounts on tourist

travellers to explore the European country of their choice and take unlimited journeys within that country on designated travel days.

A One Country Pass allows travellers to explore a European country of their choice and take unlimited journeys within that on their travel days

One Country Passes are available for between one and eight days within one month (depending on the country). Passholders can take as many trains as they would like on each 24-hour travel day, from

The Eurail Global Pass

A Eurail Global Pass allows your customers to explore up to 33 European countries, with unlimited journeys on designated travel days. Global Passes are available for between four days in one month and up to every day for three months. Passholders can take as many trains as they would like on each 24-hour travel day, from midnight to midnight. Passes can be personalised, based on your customers' needs: first or second class, discounted fares for children and youth, and consecutive or nonconsecutive designated travel days. Global Passes also include select travel by boat.

Countries covered by the Eurail Global Pass include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Great Britain, France, Finland, Hungary, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania,



Luxembourg, Latvia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey.

Passholder fare

It's often enough for travellers to flash their Eurail Passes to board a train. However, travel on highspeed, night, and scenic trains requires a seat reservation for a small surcharge. Seat reservations have been put in place on Europe's popular routes to ensure that travellers have assigned seats and that trains are not sold out. When seat reservations are required, additional amenities are also included (high-speed trains have power outlets and Wi-Fi, panoramic trains have extra-large windows, and night trains have sleeping berths). The reservation is worth the

Here's how to add a Eurail Mobile Pass to the Rail Planner app:

- ❖ Download the Rail Planner app and keep the booking confirmation code handy. (This can be found in the confirmation email.)
- ❖ Go to My Pass, then Add a Pass and enter your surname and booking confirmation code.
- ❖ That's it. The Pass has been added to the app!

To add journeys, simply go to My Trips and search for your origin and destination. Keep in mind that Mobile Passes must be activated before travel. The app will prompt you to activate. Make sure to have your passport information ready and your first travel date in mind.

ferry rides, discounts on museums, and more. A comprehensive list of perks is available on Eurail's website.

How to book a Eurail Pass

The Eurail site is consumertargeted, but travel professionals can purchase Eurail Passes and earn commission with long-time Eurail partner Rail Europe. Rail Europe's agent website, agent.raileurope.com, is an intuitive booking API designed for agents like you. Sign up is free, no commitment is required, and you will be able to book a wide range of European rail products and earn commission. Rail Europe's local GSAs in India are also available to help. Go to agent.raileurope.com for more information or to sign up.

Social media important for biz

► Contd from page 5



Neliswa Nkani
Hub Head – MEISEA
South African Tourism

“ In a country as diverse as India, a well-rounded marketing strategy becomes essential to engage with potential travellers. A holistic approach enables any tourism board to increase brand awareness, target a specific set of audiences, differentiate its offerings, and establish a meaningful relationship with their travellers. At South African Tourism, our marketing spends have been proportionate with respect to the growth and development of the market. Further, to actively engage with millennials and Gen Z consumers, we have recognised the importance of integrating social media into our digital strategies. This not only helps us in leveraging available platforms effectively, but also presents us with an opportunity to increase inbound tourism. ”



Bernadette Willemin
Director General, Destination
Marketing, Tourism Seychelles

“ Our strategy is more hybrid; we don't only rely on in-person touchpoints or online platforms. We also maintain contact with our trade partners. Given the importance of digital marketing in our promotional dynamics, we have strengthened our approach to digital marketing. A significant portion of our strategy is to employ more new measurable outlets, such as our websites and social media. In India, majority of our audience increasingly spends time on digital platforms, particularly social media, which is why our digital team is working to deliver the information that today's global consumers want. This big move to digital marketing was crucial for reaching our target audience and providing new information and updates on what the destination has to offer. ”



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

“ At one time, our company Weldon Tours & Travels used to have a lot of advertisements in daily newspapers. I remember we reached to even four advertisements per day sometimes. However, as the times are changing, we are doing more social media campaigns on various platforms these days. While digital promotions cost much less, we must find the right campaign partners for spreading the word on what we need to offer. Choosing the right channel is difficult as they all claim to have the best data, and making a decision is not an easy task in this regard. Hence, at the end of the day, you have to take a risk. I believe that social media campaigns are part and parcel of modern ways of reaching to new clients and boost business. ”



Manoj Saraf
Managing Director
Gainwell Travel & Leisure

“ Our company, Gainwell Travel & Leisure, has been a consistent spender on marketing and promotions for the last 30 years. We have a set budget for the same. After all these years, we are seeing that the pattern of marketing strategies has changed significantly. We have observed that it has gradually moved to digital mediums and currently about 50 per cent of our budget has moved to social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter. I believe that the return on investment on social media platforms is faster and is more effective these days. The traditional methods that used to be there earlier, are largely aimed at branding, which small and medium companies are not looking for. ”



Noshir A Marfatia
Senior VP - Sales & Marketing
The Fern Hotels & Resorts

“ We have wholeheartedly embraced social media as a crucial part of our marketing strategy. In recent years, we have allocated a significant portion of our marketing budget to digital platforms, including social media. This has enabled us to effectively reach a wide audience, engage with potential customers, and promote our brand. It has allowed us to connect with a diverse range of customers, from tech-savvy millennial to seasoned travellers seeking personalized experiences. Through social media platforms, we showcase our unique offerings, share compelling content, and engage in direct conversations with our audience. Overall, marketing spend has embraced digital platforms, data analytics, and a focus on sustainability. ”



Ajith Nair
Resident Manager, Radisson Blu Resort
Goa Cavellsim Beach

“ The trend has shifted more towards digital platforms than the traditional marketing means, as the same is more commercially viable and also has got boundless reach. It allows focussed activities such as targeting the right audience, be it age or region specific. ROI could also be better measured. Our marketing spend ratio has been allocated with 60:40 for 2023-24 viz-a-vis 40:60 in 2021-2022. We are very active on social media platforms with daily interactive engagements. Customer inquiries for our hotel through social media platforms have gone up by 24 per cent, mainly from leisure and the weddings segments. Apart from the hotel stay promotions, we also do extensive coverage of our F&B outlets and offerings and the traction is encouraging from both incoming guests and resident guests. ”



Dipti Pradhan Thakoor
Director
ETAA - Event Head

“ Marketing is the most important pillar of a business. You may have a good product but if you don't package and promote it well, how will people know about it. In the past, advertising was the main tool to inform customers about products. Now, customers can get detailed product information from a variety of sources. Marketing has changed overtime mainly because of access to larger audience and markets due to the digital revolution. Marketing is no more about just selling a product; it is about connecting with the audience, educating them and sharing knowledge, this way you engage your customer. Social media marketing is no more an option, it is a need of the hour to reach your customers and grow your brand. Digital platforms can connect you with the right audience. ”



Burjis Mehta
CEO
Skyworld Tours & Travels

“ Day by day, social media is becoming increasingly important involving blogs, microblogs, social networking platforms, reviews, and interactive sites. In recent years, social media has emerged as a new commercial communication tool. It provides better targeting and plays an essential part in marketing operations. Social networking helps you link and improve your brand awareness and maximise the productivity and profitability of business. Billions of people access social media platforms monthly, and users and loyalty continue to grow. Facebook, Insta, and Twitter have all influenced travel and tourism in a big way. However, traditional marketing such as billboards, posters, print media, TV, direct mailers, tele-marketing, are still impactful and useful, and will continue to be so. ”



Siriges-A-Nong Trirattansongpol
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand
New Delhi Office

“ The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is allocating increased resources towards collaboration with partners and social media initiatives as part of our marketing strategy. While the specific amount spent remains undisclosed in accordance with our policy, we are actively engaging with numerous partners under the theme "Amazing Thailand, Part of Your Life". Our marketing efforts primarily revolve around the 5Fs: Food, Flight, Fashion, Festival, and Film. With these aspects, we aim to showcase the diverse offerings of Thailand to a global audience. Collaborating with various agents, TAT leverages our partners' social media platforms and channels to promote tourism experiences. By working closely with partners and leveraging social media, we seek to amplify reach of our marketing campaigns. ”



Zach Fyne
Global Markets Specialist
Utah Office of Tourism

“ The Utah Office of Tourism are relative newcomers to the India market, as the approval and allocation of budget for marketing funds came about less than two years ago. For the Millennial and Gen Z audience, we have hosted content creators to produce highly visual as well as engaging video and testimonials of their experiences road tripping the southwest region of Utah to showcase the transformative wealth of experiences and opportunities a road trip in winter can be from an Indian perspective. India has generated the highest engagement rates than all of our other top international markets combined, so social media has been an important tool in increasing the awareness of our destination with this market. Social media takes up 40 per cent of our total budget for the Indian market each year. ”



Akmal Aziz
Acting Director
Tourism Malaysia, New Delhi

“ We are now focusing on ROI-based campaigns with Travel Agents, Online Travel Agencies, and Airlines in order to spend our marketing budget wisely, target the correct audience, and increase arrivals to Malaysia. We opened our border on 1 April 2022, and constantly organizing roadshows in metro cities, as well as Tier II and Tier III cities to re-establish our connection with the travel fraternity and encourage them to actively promote Malaysia in their respective areas. Travel content is one of the most popular on social media. Every tourism board is doing its utmost to emphasise the highlights of its destinations. To engage millennial and Gen Z travellers from India, we are also distributing our material in the form of articles, vlogs, reels, and stories about popular and unexplored Malaysian places. ”



Samar Chokshi
Country Manager - Destination
New South Wales

“ Due to recent elections and a change in government, we don't have limited visibility of the exact marketing budgets currently. However, we can assure you that we will have substantial budgets allocated to promote Sydney and New South Wales as the leading destination in Australia. While the specifics remain uncertain, we are confident in our ability to maintain our marketing efforts effectively. Social media will play a crucial role in our promotional plans, encompassing various platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and collaborative campaigns with our partners. Integrating social media into our strategies has become a default practice. We are committed to utilizing ample resources to reinforce Sydney and NSW's position as the premier destination. ”

Contd on page 34 ►

Hyatt to host India Travel Awards

Hyatt Regency New Delhi is making sure to grab people's attention by not only offering new cuisines and tastes through their Food & Beverage outlets, but also hosting various events at its premises, including G20 and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) meetings.



Nisha Verma

Hyatt Regency New Delhi recently hosted an exclusive Mediterranean lunch at its specialty restaurant Syrah, curated by Chef Mohamed Kassem and Chef Karim. The hotel has been organizing special events around F&B to celebrate its 40 years in India. Speaking on the same, **Barun Gupta**, Director, Sales & Marketing - Hyatt Regency Delhi, says, "Hyatt Regency Delhi is one of the iconic hotels in India celebrating 40 years. This is a big milestone for the hotel this year. In fact, the entire year's celebration, which has just started, have got some unique dining options, which are coming in. We just finished with Michelin star Chef Gaggan Anand's residency, which was the talk of the town. Syrah, which is the new addition in terms



Hyatt Regency New Delhi has been organizing special events around Food & Beverage to celebrate its 40 years of journey in India

of our F&B space, is one of the fine dining Middle Eastern restaurants. I would request everyone to come and explore the food from Chef Kassem."

Travel trade

While F&B is popular at the Hyatt Regency Delhi, the hotel is leaving no stone unturned to boost its business in other ways too. When asked about the relationship with the trade, Gupta claimed, "Travel trade is one of our most integral arms. In terms of our customer relationships, they are one of the biggest contributors to our revenue. As a hotel, we are supporting each other and looking forward to 2024 as a great year for inbound, where I see the recovery to start happening now."

G20 a blessing

Claiming that G20 is an international event, which would boost the business for Indian hotels, he said, "The delegates are coming from across the world. The latest addition at Hyatt Regency is the Grand Presidential Suite, which we are opening for the head of state for the G20. This is a brand-new suite spanning

almost 5,500 sq. ft. Along with that, we have already started refurbishments for all our banqueting to cater to the G20 delegates, as well as our F&B outlets are well-versed to cater

to any of the country's delegates during the G20 period."

He added, "It's not only G20, but also SCO (Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation), which has boosted the business for the hotels, if I look at the revenue, which has come into the hospitality industry across India. The government has touched every city in India in terms of G20 and the government has portrayed India as a great tourism destination while handling the G20 delegates in different parts of India, whether it's Siliguri, Srinagar, Leh, Rann of Kutch, Delhi, Man-

galore, Bengaluru, and because of G20, hospitality industry has got a lot of benefits and a big amount of business too."

What's new?

At Hyatt, Gupta explained, "In the next six months, our Presidential Suite will be a new addition and we will be looking at a lot of collaborations in terms of our food & beverage space."



Barun Gupta
Director, Sales & Marketing - Hyatt Regency Delhi

Hyatt Regency to host India Travel Awards

Talking about the upcoming India Travel Awards, Gupta says, "This year, we are hosting the India Travel Awards at Hyatt Regency Delhi. We are very excited and proud to have them at the Regency Ballroom and looking forward to great awards and nominations."



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G20 bodes well for hospitality

Indian hospitality sector is shining, not only with the post-pandemic rush, but also because of India's G20 Presidency, which is creating revenue streams with promising future. While MICE is certainly on the cards, it is believed that Indian hospitality showcased during the G20 meetings will see huge number of leisure guests checking in soon.



Nisha Verma

For tourism and hospitality, the pandemic was the biggest blow. Agreeing to the view, **KB Kachru**, Vice President, Hotel Association of India & Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South-Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, says, "As travel resumed, Indian hospitality started to recover on the back of domestic tourism, private events, staycations and workcations. International business and leisure travel was slow to pick up impacting the rebound."

G20 blessing

However, he believes that India's G20 presidency has come at an opportune time for hotels. "The G20 related events have contributed in quickening the pace of recovery for hotels, especially in the locations where these events are being organized. Hotels are seeing better occupancies and average daily rates. In some locations, the occupancies and revenues have attained the pre-pandemic levels and surpassed them in certain others," he claims.

"The Presidency has also served as a unique and public platform for Indian hotels to send a strong and reassuring message that after the pandemic they are ready and equipped with unmatched excellence in services to host global travellers with additional protocols of safety and hygiene in place. G20 Presidency is a huge honour and a glorious opportunity for India to further strengthen its position on the global tourism map. Hotels are showcasing traditional Indian hospitality, which follows the age-old doctrine of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' that equates guests to God. G20 has not only augmented hotel revenues and receipts; its cascading effect should see India emerge as a preferred leisure and MICE destination as all eyes are on India. The nation is promoting tourism through related side events on different tourism themes. The richness and variety of Indian tourist destinations – focusing on local cuisine, culture and craft – is at display at each of the



KB Kachru
VP, HAI & Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South-Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

G20 related events have contributed in quickening the pace of recovery for hotels, especially in the locations where these events are being organized

50 plus meeting venues, as is the fast paced and continuous development in infrastructure," he informs.

He further says, "Another aspect in which hotels will benefit is the flow of investments in the sector, especially in tier II and tier III cities where the potential is immense. Overall, G20 bodes well for hotel business in more ways than one – in commercial terms, to future outlook of the sector, to confidence building."

High occupancy rates

Saying that the effect of G20 has been encouraging for hospitality, **Puneet Dhawan**, Senior Vice President of Operations - India & South Asia at Accor, shares, "The G20 Summit has positively impacted the overall travel and hospitality industry, including Accor hotels, attracting more visitors and guests during the event. Increased occupancy rates and MICE related business have been observed, leading

to a successful business period for our properties."

Enquiries galore

Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels and Resorts, claims that the visits and corresponding meetings for the G20 delegations are scheduled to take place in August-September and will have multiple pre and post-event stays and meetings. "We are already receiving many inquiries for this period and are engaging with the various parties involved to meet their requirements," he adds.

Long term benefits

The year-long G20 Presidency is the most important thing in the country now and will reap ben-



Puneet Dhawan
Senior Vice President of Operations - India & South Asia at Accor

The Summit has positively impacted the overall travel and hospitality industry, including Accor hotels, attracting more visitors and guests

efits, both direct and indirect for all brands, says **Deepraj Mukherjee**, General Manager, Le Meridien, Kochi. "It is an acknowledgement of the great strides the country has made amid the global challenges,



Kush Kapoor
CEO
Roseate Hotels and Resorts

We are already receiving many inquiries for this period and are engaging with the various parties involved to meet their requirements

and definitely a matter of great pride for all of us. Although, this may not actualize as business for us Le Meridien currently, in the larger scheme of things, the collective momentum the presidency brings to tourism will, no doubt, lend a positive vibe and momentum in projecting the country as a progressive and meaningful destination for Green Tourism, which you know, has been identified as one of the five building blocks of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," he says.

Abhishek Sadhoo, General Manager, Shangri-La Eros, New Delhi, echoes the thought, saying, "The summit has provided a unique chance to promote India to a global audience, attracting both business and leisure travellers and boosting the hospitality industry by generating additional revenues and creating multiple opportunities as well. At Shangri-La Eros, New Delhi, we are witnessing increased bookings, and the hotel is also playing as a host to many important delegates. I believe we should make the most of this unique chance to promote India to the world."

Boon for small cities

Kachru says the G20 meetings are providing opportunities to smaller cities and unknown destinations to showcase their infrastructure, as well as the capabilities of city authorities and the destination's tour-

ism sector, including hotels. "Most host cities are providing renovation budgets. Cities have been spruced up," he says.

Mukherjee adds, "The year-long presidency of India presents a favourable platform for all the cities that are hosting the many meetings and delegates of G20. It presents an opportunity to provide the participants a highly immersive and intimate experience of the vibrantly rich and diversely beautiful cultural heritage of our country."

Unprecedented welcome

While the Indian hotels are known for welcoming their guests in age-old traditions, Kachru informs that HAI member hotels' guest welcome for G20 delegates has been taken to another level by being unique and innovative. "Lobbies of member hotels normally exhibit Indian art and art forms paintings, and for G20 they have donned the avatar of mini museums to give a



Deepraj Mukherjee
General Manager
Le Meridien, Kochi

It (G20 Presidency) is an acknowledgement of the great strides the country has made amid the global challenges, and definitely a matter of great pride

360-degree feel of the city to delegates. Yoga Instructors have been made available as have been interpreters," he shares.

Suiting the offerings

Special arrangements and changes have been made at various hotels for G20 meetings. Dhawan informs, "Our hotels are well geared to host the dynamics of G20 meetings. Starting from setting up multiple

meeting sessions to running various sessions, to curating menus to cater to various nationalities, we are ready to deliver on all aspects.

Kapoor adds, "At Roseate Hotels & Resorts, we will be focusing on experiences and service delivery for the stays for these delegates, their meetings, and side events."

Claiming that Le Meridien Kochi has been one of the best known MICE hotels in South India for



Abhishek Sadhoo
General Manager
Shangri-La Eros, New Delhi

The summit has provided a unique chance to promote India to a global audience, attracting both business and leisure travellers

the past two decades, Mukherjee shares, "As a hotel known to provide exceptional experiences for all our guests, we continually tweak our services and offerings to align with the changing business requirements to meet the diverse needs of our clientele."

Abundant benefits

Kachru claims that during the presidency year, India will host more than 200 meetings in over 59 destinations in the country. "More than 150,000 delegates from the G20 countries are expected. The projected generation of revenue from the event is a whopping ₹850 crore on account of delegations related travelling and accommodation demand. There would be proportional growth in employment avenues and business opportunities in the sector. Jobs in the hospitality sector are estimated to grow at 5.5 per cent CAGR," he shares.




Airlines' profit to be \$9.8bn in 2023

Willie Walsh, Director General, IATA, addressing the 79th annual general meeting (AGM) of the association in Istanbul, said that despite the financial, supply chain and safety challenges, the outlook for global aviation industry looks positive and airlines will share \$9.8 billion profit in 2023.

 Suhani Sood

The 79th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) was held in Istanbul from 4-6 June 2023. Addressing the meeting, **Willie Walsh**, Director General, IATA, said that there was a 90 per cent rise in passenger traffic as compared to 2019 levels and airports, hotels and local economies are showing tremendous improvement and profit. He, however, expressed concern over shortage of planes, costly air fares, usage of sustainable fuel and decarbonizing aviation, and limitations in deploying aircraft.

 **Supply chain shortages will be noticeable when it comes to engine parts, which would delay the delivery of new aircraft from Boeing and Airbus**

Supply chain issues

Walsh specified that supply-chain constraints are going to be one of the biggest challenges in the aviation sector. "Shortages will be noticeable when it comes to engine parts, which would delay the delivery of new aircraft from Boeing and Airbus," he said.

Citing the example of Go First, he said, "The supply chain issues severely affected a few Indian airlines with 100 aircraft grounded due to delays in supply of spare parts and engines." As a result, Go First was forced to seek insolvency, which resulted in high air fares.

Financial performance

Sharing financial data, he said that airlines would share \$9.8 billion profit with \$803 billion revenue in 2023. "This level of profitability is not sustainable. But considering we lost \$76 per passenger in 2020, the velocity of recovery is strong," he said.

Talking about the challenges, he said that inflation, acute cost pressure and shortage of manpower are reasons for high air fares. Mentioning about original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), he said, "OEM suppliers have been too slow in dealing with supply chain blockages that are both raising costs and limiting our ability to deploy aircraft."

Highlights

- ❖ 87% believe that flying is critical, and we must find a way to fly sustainably without restricting travel
- ❖ 88% feel that air travel has a positive impact on society
- ❖ 82% recognize aviation as a key contributor to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and
- ❖ 91% see air connectivity as a modern necessity and
- ❖ 81% of travellers appreciate the freedom to fly more today than they did pre-pandemic

Sustainable aviation fuel

Walsh emphasized on the need for using sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), as production of SAF is not even 0.1 per cent of what is needed to become net zero. SAF production nearly tripled in 2022. "Reaching 30 billion litres by 2030 is challenging but achievable," he said.

Conclusive comments

Walsh claimed that the airlines

will return to profitability in 2023. Praising the development of airlines and airports, he commented, "Airlines and airports were criticized last year for not getting resources in place in time for the recovery. However, I think the airlines have done their bit. Most airports I think are in good shape." He concluded his speech saying, "Taking overall picture into account, we can be positive about this year."



Willie Walsh
Director General
IATA



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Indian tourism on growth trajectory

A session on 'Reimagining the Future, Unlocking A New Era of Travel for Indians' at the Arabian Travel Mart, focuses on the booming Indian travel market. In numbers, before the pandemic, the domestic market in India was 1.75 bn and the way it is growing, it will cross 2 bn mark soon, while the outbound market should cross 40 mn.



Suhani Sood

SanJeet, Founder & MD, DDP Group, along with **Naveen Kundu**, Managing Director, EbixCash and **Matthias Sinner**, Head of Tourism, McArthurGlen Group, took part in a panel discussion on 'Reimagine the Future, Unlocking A New Era of Travel for Indians' at the Arabian Travel Mart, in which they deliberated on challenges and growth potential of the Indian travel and tourism market, which is witnessing a bounce back after the pandemic.



SanJeet
Founder & Managing Director
DDP Group



Naveen Kundu
Managing Director
EbixCash



Matthias Sinner
Head of Tourism
McArthurGlen Group



years. Today, 25 per cent of the FDI coming to India will come through hospitality industry," he opined. Sinner revealed how hotels need to adapt sustainable changes. "Attracting Indian travellers to some destinations might be quick, but if hoteliers don't try to understand them, they will lose their interest. It is important to have a sustainable approach from destinations to attract and develop Indian travellers over the long run, not just in the short term," he said.

Paying more for experiences

SanJeet shared that most of the hotels are asking for ₹30,000 or ₹40,000 at leisure destinations. For example, in Jaipur, if you stay in a palace or a heritage property, it could touch \$100,000. People are paying such money. "Where is this money suddenly coming from? How are Indians paying such high fares? How is this happening

and where is this change coming from?" he questioned from Kundu. The panellists agreed that digitization is the main reason for this sudden shift from being a bargaining market to paying high fares. Kundu said that 2,438 transactions are being made every minute via UPI and Indians do \$40 billion



The panellists agreed that digitization is the main reason for this sudden shift from being a bargaining market to paying high fares

worth transactions every day. "The money is now being spent through official digital platform. Thus, people don't mind paying as they want to consume," Kundu said.

The Indian market is witnessing all kinds of travellers despite a surge in hotel and air fare rates. Talking about the Indian aviation industry, the panellists were unanimous on the fact that India needs more aircraft. Being the third largest aviation market after the USA and China, India only have 360 planes, but the market size demands 2,000 planes, which is leading to spurt in air fares. Kundu said, "As a nation, we have changed and there

is an immediate demand for travel. This is the main reason for these kind of challenges."

Sinner reminisced his last visit to India, saying, "I have been going to India for many years now. I remember, the last time I went, the price (of flight) was double than what it should actually be." He reasoned the costly tickets on low flight capacity, staffing issues and

huge increase in travel demand. Kundu expressed his faith in the Indian aviation industry, claiming that India will become an Asia-Pacific hub, and is already beating Dubai, Singapore, Abu Dhabi and Qatar. "It is time for all these countries to revisit their strategy because India is going to be the next global aviation hub for Asia by being ahead of all other hubs," he said.

Hospitality sector

Hospitality industry is considered to be the 'sunrise industry' having an immense potential. However, some challenges for the sector were highlighted during the panel discussion. Kundu revealed that they are only meeting 20 per cent of the hotel occupancy. "Hence, the supply is inadequate. 80 per cent growth is expected from the hospitality industry over the next 5-7

New airline on the block

Jettwings Airways has received NOC and is all set to roar in the sky. With its base Guwahati, the airline will start its operations from October and initially operate within the Northeast region.



Suhani Sood

With Northeast seeing advancements in aviation infrastructure, the region has got a new airline - Jettwings Airways. The airline has been granted a no objection certificate (NOC) under the UDAN Scheme to offer regional connectivity. After completion of the formalities, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued the Air Operator Certificate to the airline, which plans to introduce a modern aircraft fleet; an 80-seat aircraft will enable the passengers to get premium economy services.

Expressing gratitude to the government, **Sanjive Narain**, Chairman, Jettwings Airways, said, "The government's unwavering commitment and efforts to improve air connectivity through RCS by connecting regional airports has significantly improved trade for particular regions, while fostering economic growth and has given a huge fillip to the development of the tourism sector. Under UDAN Scheme, we have a unique oppor-



Sanjive Narain and Sanjay Aditya Singh at the press conference

tunity to make significant impact on the Northeast region by improving connectivity and creating new economic opportunities."

Sanjay Aditya Singh, Co-Founder and CEO, Jettwings Airlines, in a recent press meeting, declared, "We strongly believe and commit to becoming a reliable and sustainable airline with its roots deeply entrenched in Northeast

India, connecting unique yet important destinations."

The aviation industry is fiercely competitive at this moment. However, Jettwings Airways is determined to provide a distinctive experience the travellers, said Narain, adding that they will also introduce a loyalty program to appreciate and respect frequent fliers.

Minar gets another GSA

Uganda Airlines has appointed Minar Travels (India) as its General Sales Agent (GSA) in India, which will use its vast network in India to boost the carrier's sales across the country.



TT Bureau

In its role as the GSA, Minar Travels will be supporting the launch of Uganda Airlines' new service from Entebbe to Mumbai, which is expected to start later this year. Minar Travels brings onboard a wealth of experience in the Indian travel market and will be providing Uganda Airlines with reservation and ticketing services, as well as sales activities and market development to effectively position the African carrier in the India market. "Minar Group is excited to represent Uganda Airlines as their GSA in India. The fact that Uganda Airlines connects to most of the major cities in East and South Africa will make it an excellent product and a choice airline for Indian travellers to Uganda and the rest of Africa," said **HS Duggal**, Managing Director, Minar Travels.

Currently, the airline's network includes scheduled flights to 11 destinations in eight countries, including Nairobi and Mombasa in Kenya, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Kinshasa in DR Congo, Bujumbura



HS Duggal
Managing Director
Minar Travels

in Burundi, Juba in South Sudan, Mogadishu in Somalia, Johannesburg in South Africa, and Dubai in United Arab Emirates. Other new international routes planned for commencement include Guangzhou, London, Jeddah and Riyadh, as well as more African destinations like Lagos, Goma, Lusaka, Harare and Cape Town.

Uganda Airlines is Uganda's national carrier and operates scheduled air services in Africa and international markets.

Uganda Airlines is one of Africa's fast growing airlines, operating from Entebbe International Airport in Uganda. "We are pleased to partner with Minar Travels as India GSA for Uganda Airlines. Our choice of Minar Travels was informed by their understanding of the market in India and demonstrable experience, and we are confident that this partnership



Uganda Airlines' network includes scheduled flights to 11 destinations in eight countries, including Nairobi and Mombasa in Kenya

provides us a strong foundation and a sustainable future on the route. We look forward to a great market presence as we connect Incredible India to the Pearl of Africa and beyond," said **Jenifer Bamuturaki**, CEO, Uganda Airlines.

'Goa Roadmap' gets global nod

The Goa Roadmap for Tourism will serve as a shared blueprint for G20 nations to achieve the 17 SDGs identified by the United Nations, said G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER, at the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meet held in Goa soon after the 4th TWG Meeting.



Hazel Jain

The Tourism Ministers' meeting, held in Goa recently, was graced by **G Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER, and Ministers of State **Shripad Yesso Naik** and **Ajay Bhatt**. Other dignitaries present at the meeting were ministers of G20 countries and delegates from G20 countries, invitee countries and international organisations. Reddy welcomed the Tourism Ministers and Head of Delegations from G20 member countries, guest countries, and international organisations.

PM inspires ministers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a video message to the gathering, in which he said that the tourism ministers rarely get a chance to be tourists themselves, even though they are handling a sector worth over two trillion dollars globally. He said, "India during its G20 presidency is organizing nearly 200 meetings in 100 different locations all over the country making every experience different from the other. If you ask your friends who have already visited India for these meetings, I am sure that no two experiences will be alike."



We should make greater use of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and augmented reality to drive innovation

He added, "In India, our efforts in this sector are centred on preserving our rich heritage, and at the same time, creating world class infrastructure for tourism. One of our focus areas is developing spiritual tourism. After all, India attracts pilgrims of every major religion of the world. In the last nine years, we have placed special emphasis on developing the entire ecosystem of tourism in the country. From transport infrastructure, to the hospitality sector, to skill development, and even in our visa systems, we have kept the tourism sector as a focal point of our reforms. The hospitality sector has great potential for employment generation, social inclusion, and economic progress. It employs more women and youth compared to many other sectors. I am glad we are also recognising

the relevance of tourism sector for speedy achievement of sustainable development goals."

Commenting on TWG priority areas, he said, "You are working on five inter-connected priority areas of: Green Tourism, Digitalization, Skill Development, Tourism MSMEs, and Destination Management. These priorities reflect Indian as well as the Global South's priori-

ties. We should make greater use of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and augmented reality to drive innovation. For example, in India, we are working on using artificial intelligence to enable real-time translation of the wide range of languages spoken in India. I believe that collaboration among governments, entrepreneurs, investors, and academia can accelerate such technology implementation in tour-

ism. We should also work together to help our tourism companies increase their access to finance, ease business regulations, and invest in skill development."

He said, "Terrorism divides, but tourism unites. Tourism has the potential to unite people from all walks of life, creating a harmonious society. I am happy to note that a G20 Tourism dashboard is being developed

in partnership with UNWTO. It will bring together best practices, case studies and inspiring stories. It will be a first-of-its-kind platform and will be your enduring legacy. I hope that your deliberations and the Goa Roadmap would multiply our collective efforts to realize tourism's transformative power. The motto of India's G20 Presidency, "Vasudhaiva

Contd on page 34 ▶



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister for Tourism,
Culture and DoNER



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'We expect to be sold out by Sept'

Starting November 2023 until January 2024, Costa Serena will offer 23 sailings visiting Mumbai, Cochin, Goa and, for the first time ever, Lakshadweep islands! Sailing right in the middle of holiday and festive seasons, Vasundhara Gupta, Business Development and Marketing Head, Lotus Aero Enterprises, expects 100 per cent bookings by Sept.



Hazel Jain

Costa Serena will offer a new cruise program exclusively dedicated to India, beginning November 2023 till January 2024. It will offer a total of 23 sailings with itineraries of two to five days, visiting Mumbai, Cochin, Goa and, for the first time ever, the Lakshadweep islands. The program was launched in Mumbai in the presence of **Nalini Gupta**, MD, Lotus Aero Enterprises, GSA Costa Cruise India; and **Sarbananda Sonowal**, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways. These sailings are targeted at families and couples, weddings as well as groups and corporate incentive travel.

Vasundhara Gupta, Business Development and Marketing Head, Lotus Aero Enterprises (GSA for Costa Cruises), says, "This is the largest cruise ship to do domestic itineraries in India. It is a relaunch of sorts, as this is the first cruise liners to come to India



Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal at the launch of Costa Serena's cruise program

in 2016. Initially, Costa had homeported a ship from Mumbai to Maldives. But what we are doing differently now is that while we had it earlier as Mumbai to Maldives for about four years, our last itinerary from Mumbai to Maldives to Mumbai was in March 2020, this year we are newly launching pure domestic itineraries, making it very easy for any guests from India to go on a cruise holiday."

One could see the ship sailing for longer periods in the future. Gupta adds, "Right now it's only for two months, but we want to look at a much longer duration in the coming years. We have a combination of two nights, three and five nights. During Diwali, we have something special, where we will stay overnight in Goa. We will be for the first time ever be one of the biggest international cruise lines to have itineraries going into Lakshadweep. These will

be on a five-night route on Mumbai-Kochi-Lakshadweep-Mumbai. We are hoping that by September we are sold out! The sailings are during the festive and holiday months, so we are very hopeful."

The ship chosen by the Italian company for India is the Costa Serena, which, after itineraries from Thailand, South Korea and Taiwan, will extend its deployment in Asia. There are a total of 23 new sailings in India from 4 November 2023 to 1 January 2024, designed in collaboration with Costa's GSA in India, Lotus Aero Enterprises.

Speaking at the occasion, **Roberto Alberti**, Senior Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer of Costa Cruises, said, "We have a strong and lasting bond with this wonderful country: we have already sailed our ships in India in the past, and many of our onboard colleagues are from India. We select and recruit them through dedicated training schools based right in the



Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Vasundhara Gupta, Business Development and Marketing Head, Lotus Aero Enterprises

country. We are committed to offering our Indian guests a unique holiday experience onboard Costa

Serena, which will be the largest cruise ship to operate domestic itineraries in India." 🇮🇳

About Costa Serena

It is an Italian-flagged ship that entered service in 2007 and weighs 114,000 gross tonnes with a capacity of up to 3,780 guests. The ship has a total of 1,500 cabins, 505 of which have private balconies, and 14 passenger decks. It features a wellness centre and gym with a sea view, a beauty salon, a theatre, restaurants serving Indian and international cuisine, bars, four swimming pools, shopping area, and a kids' club for children and teenagers. It will add a local touch, particularly in terms of food and entertainment customised to the tastes of Indian guests.

New programs on cards for NSW

Sydney and New South Wales (NSW) have set their sights on becoming the premier visitor economy in the Asia Pacific region by 2030. Samar Chokshi, Country Manager, Destination NSW, highlights the plans and ongoing efforts to develop programs and events that support business opportunities and drive recovery for Sydney and NSW.



Janice Alysius

Samar Chokshi, Country Manager, Destination New South Wales (NSW), said that there is a need to not only create demand, but also train and develop the supply side of the industry for the industry growth, as Sydney and New South Wales (NSW) aim to become the premier visitor economy in the Asia Pacific region by 2030. "By partnering with airlines and regional stakeholders, the aim is to market the destination and bring experiences to life. This approach is aimed at attracting visitors seeking more immersive and experiential travel, which had become increasingly popular post-pandemic. Sydney and New South Wales have unique offerings to meet this demand and provide unforgettable experiences," he said.

The 'Feel New' campaign

NSW's "Feel New" campaign launched in 2021, aims to energize and rejuvenate visitors by showcasing the unique promise of New South Wales. Chokshi shared, "The campaign captured the transformative effect the region had on people,



Samar Chokshi
Country Manager
Destination New South Wales (NSW)

making them feel renewed and energized. The goal was to ensure that a trip to Sydney and New South Wales left a long-lasting and memorable impact on visitors."

Chokshi shared the success of a recent campaign launched in India, which highlighted the memorable experiences an Indian family had during their visit to Sydney and New South Wales. The campaign garnered positive feedback and was set to be extended.

Events to drive tourism expenditure

Sydney gained popularity as the major events capital of the Asia Pacific region. Chokshi revealed, "With over 70 events scheduled for the year, it is expected to deliver more than half a billion of tourism expenditure to NSW. These events are expected to drive tourism expenditure and contribute to the goal of making Sydney the premier visitor economy in the region. We have substantial plans in the pipeline. We are doing a lot of work in the background to make sure that we have a wide range of programs and events, which will develop our industry and provide opportunities for businesses across the globe. Our initiatives aim to elevate our status as the premier visitor economy for the Asia Pacific region."

Sydney's transformation in aviation infrastructure

Chokshi emphasized Sydney's role as the gateway to Australia, with the highest airlift of any state in New South Wales. Sydney is set to undergo a significant transformation in its aviation infrastructure, with plans

to establish at least three or four international airports by 2026. "This expansion will enable people to fly into various regions, making travel more accessible and convenient. The city is focused on improving connectivity and transportation

By partnering with airlines and regional stakeholders, the aim is to market Sydney and New South Wales and bring experiences to life

options to cater to the growing demand for tourism," he said.

Marketing efforts

Sydney's tourism industry actively engages in cooperative marketing with partners, including travel trade, travel agents, and tour operators. These collaborations aim to pro-

mote and stimulate demand for the destination. The city works closely with its partners to enhance their knowledge and skills through product development and training initiatives, ensuring a high standard of service and experiences for visitors, shared Chokshi.

When promoting the destination, Sydney adopts the 'Sydney Plus strategy', highlighting not only the city itself, but also at least one or two regional destinations. Chokshi said, "The marketing programs and initiatives aim to showcase the diversity and unique experiences offered by Sydney and its neighbouring regions. Popular regional destinations include the Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley, Port Stephens, Coffs Harbour, Byron Bay, and Wollongong."

India's growing travel market

India has emerged as a significant market for Sydney and New South Wales, experiencing remarkable growth post-COVID, shared Chokshi. "As of February 2023, India ranks as the fourth largest market, with a substantial increase of 90 per cent arrivals compared to February 2022.

Indian visitors accounted for 6.3 per cent of all visitors to Sydney and New South Wales, with a significant share of Indian travellers choosing Sydney as their preferred destination."

Aviation connectivity between India and Sydney has witnessed substantial improvements. Direct flight capacity from Indian cities has increased significantly, with daily flights from major carriers such as Air India, Singapore Airlines, Scoot, and Sri Lankan Airlines. "The availability of direct nonstop flights from various Indian cities to Sydney has increased threefold, offering travellers more convenient options for their journeys," Chokshi said.

Sydney's appeal to Indians

Sydney holds a strong appeal among Indian travellers, highlighted Chokshi. "It ranks high in terms of experience awareness, consideration, and intention for travel. Key factors influencing Indian travellers' choices include safety and security, world-class infrastructure, diverse food and wine offerings, value for money, and the friendliness of the local population," he said. 🇮🇳

Araiya Hotels taps tier II, III markets

Amruda Nair, Founder, Araiya Hotels & Resorts, is a third generation hotelier, who is taking her legacy forward by adopting an asset-light strategy and tapping tertiary markets to create a young Indian, female-founded hotel brand, which blends international practices and local expertise.



Lipla Negi

The Founder of Araiya Hotels & Resorts, **Amruda Nair**, is carrying forward the lessons and legacy of her grandfather, CP Krishnan Nair, the renowned hotelier and Founder, The Leela Group.

Looking back

Nair revealed, "My father, Vivek Nair, was instrumental in pursuing the asset-light strategy for The Leela brand." Today, when most hotel brands follow that path, it only strengthens her beliefs.

Sharing Araiya story, she said, "I was fortunate to find a business partner from the Middle East who encouraged me to set up a brand for his hotels in Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The joint venture was my first foray into strategic brand programming, and it gave me the confidence to do the same for myself." Araiya Hotels was thus launched in India in 2018 and Araiya Malta was set up for restaurant business in Europe in early 2019.

Keeping with the times

Nair defines her target client as "an urban adventure seeker that is looking for an immersive, person-

Araiya Group continues to pursue developments in South Asia and is currently discussing projects in Sri Lanka and Bhutan

alized experience adapted to their reason for travel." Another aspect that makes Araiya properties stand apart is their strong focus on food and beverage.

A unique space

Talking of competition, Nair stated, "When competing with bigger brands we have found our biggest strengths to be technical—with a focus on building efficiently, technology—cloud-based and cost-effective and training—adaptive and intuitive service delivery," she said.

Expansion roadmap

Currently, Nair has her mind focussed on two projects under construction in Alibaug, Maharashtra, "where we are currently providing technical services to the developers

to ensure that what is built is efficient and sustainable," she shared. The brand also aims to supplement its presence in Himachal Pradesh this year with a hotel under the 'Soul by Araiya' brand in Dharamshala as well as a resort under the same flag in Kerala. In terms of future tie-ups, the brand continues to pursue developments in South Asia and is currently discussing projects in Sri Lanka and Bhutan. It has also

partnered with the Global Hotel Alliance for its loyalty programme, which rewards Araiya Discovery members. Under the Araiya banner, a serviced apartment project is coming up in Alibaug, Maharashtra. Talking about the future growth of this segment, she said, "As a management company, we have provided technical services for a 180-key serviced apartment tower in Qatar."

Demand is key

Commenting on Indian hotel brands, she says, "Their stronger presence in Tier II & III cities, locally contracted rates with companies, as well as a larger leisure footprint." She feels that the demand from the domestic market remains steady, which is translating into an expansion of resort capacity in Tier II & III locations, accounting for around 33 per cent of future supply. "The overall pace

of growth in 2021-22 remained at 6 per cent, in line with the 10-year CAGR of hotel supply. Mumbai, the second-largest hotel market after Delhi, is seeing much more active development due to increasing demand than Bengaluru, the third-largest. Smaller urban markets are seeing traction thanks to investor confidence in upcoming commercial hubs in Tier II & III cities," she explained.



Amruda Nair
Founder
Araiya Hotels & Resorts



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ATOAI to tie up with govt for adventure

The ATOAI has been actively promoting adventure tourism in India. The association participated in a G20 TWG meeting recently and emphasized on the importance of adventure tourism. It aims to collaborate with government bodies and stakeholders to elevate adventure tourism and create standardized procedures for tour operators.

Janice Alysius

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) has been actively involved in promoting adventure tourism. With the G20 Summit being held in India, ATOAI has been working tirelessly to contribute to the success of the event.

ATOAI had a significant presence in the Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting held in Siliguri, where a series of sessions and panel discussions took place. Emphasizing on the significance of adventure tourism, **Tejbir Singh Anand**, Senior Vice President, ATOAI and Managing Director, Holiday Moods Adventures, said, "The focus of the event was undoubtedly on adventure. It was an exceptional gathering, featuring numerous engaging sessions that spanned the entire day. Panel discussions were a highlight, where we shared insights on adventure tourism. The tourism minister revealed plans for an international event dedicated to



Tejbir Singh Anand
Senior Vice President, ATOAI and Managing Director, Holiday Moods Adventures

adventure tourism in India, which would attract global buyers. He also mentioned about the new adventure-focused website."

ATOAI's contribution to adventure tourism

The establishment of the national tourism board for adventure tourism marks a significant milestone for the industry. Anand shared, "By collaborating with govern-

ment bodies, trade organizations, and other stakeholders, the association aims to elevate adventure tourism to new heights. Through comprehensive deliberations and collective wisdom of all involved parties, the national board intends to create a national strategy and model law for adventure tourism. Once finalized, these guidelines will ensure that all adventure tour operators in the country adhere to standardized procedures and conduct tours in line with safety regulations. The Ministry of Tourism's support and proactive approach in prioritizing adventure tourism have been greatly appreciated by ATOAI".

Exploring new destinations

Following the pandemic, there has been a surge in adventure travel, with a particular focus on natural heritage and eco-tourism.

"ATOAI recognizes the need to discover and promote new trails and lesser-known destinations to alleviate over-tourism and offer unique

experiences to travellers. In this regard, destinations like Kashmir, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and the remote valleys of Himachal Pradesh have witnessed increased footfall," he said.

International opportunities in adventure tourism

Internationally, polar countries such as Greenland, Iceland, Norway, New Zealand, and Antarctica have gained popularity among Indian travellers. Anand shared, "ATOAI has received a significant response from travellers interested in exploring these remote destinations and experiencing phenomena like the northern lights and polar bear sightings. Recognizing the growing demand, ATOAI is actively promoting adventure trips to polar countries and has launched a B2B portal to assist travel agents in selling these unique experiences. The portal provides agents with comprehensive information, white-label options, itineraries, and marketing materials, gener-

ating enthusiasm among agents and opening up new avenues for adventure tourism."

Upcoming events and initiatives by ATOAI

Anand revealed that ATOAI is gearing up for several upcoming

The establishment of the national tourism board for adventure tourism in India marks a significant milestone for the industry

events, with plans to organize a total of eight to nine events this year. Anand said, "These events will be held in collaboration with regional tourism offices across

India, covering all regions of the country. Each event will span three days and include a Wilderness First Aid responder course, aimed at enhancing the skills and capacities of adventure tour operators. Additionally, sessions on risk management and best practices in adventure travel will be conducted. The events will conclude with a B2B travel mart, providing a platform for adventure tour operators to network and interact with the travel fraternity, facilitating business opportunities."

ATOAI's vision for the future

With a successful track record and new initiatives in the pipeline, ATOAI is poised to make significant contributions to the adventure tourism sector in the coming years. "By focusing on unexplored destinations, capacity building, and skill development, ATOAI aims to continuously raise the bar for adventure tourism in India and provide travellers with unforgettable experiences" shared Anand.

cleartrip shifts focus on B2B biz

Cleartrip's journey in revamping its B2B strategy has set the stage for exponential growth. In a conversation with **TRAVTALK**, Suresh Shetty, Head of B2B at Cleartrip, shares that with focus on B2B as a separate business line, Cleartrip aims to become a prominent player in the market, offering comprehensive solutions and support.

Janice Alysius

Cleartrip entered the Business to Business (B2B) market in the year 2009 with the introduction of two products: Agent Box and Creator for Business. Talking about the initiative, **Suresh Shetty**, Head of B2B, Cleartrip, said, "The idea behind launching these products was to extend our online booking tool to different cohorts of customers and cater to their specific needs."

The launch of Agent Box and Creator for Business proved to be a success. Cleartrip's unique approach resonated with travel agents and corporates alike. Shetty explained, "A lot of travel agents and corporates started using our products because of their simplicity and user-friendly interface. The success of these products prompted agents to create codes within Agent Box, highlighting its popularity and ease of use."

Cleartrip's B2B segment

Cleartrip's primary focus has always been on the B2C market, with B2B being an ancillary product. However, the pandemic and the acquisition by Flipkart brought a renewed focus on B2B. Shetty shared, "With the Flipkart acquisition, there was a shift in ideology, recognizing the equal importance of B2B and B2C. We started rebuilding the B2B division, aiming for more stability and better brand recognition."

Cleartrip's strategy involves treating B2B as a separate business line, with a dedicated focus on its growth and profitability. Shetty said, "B2B is looked upon separately as a small company within the company. We aim to introduce new products and collaborate with partners such as DMCS to expand our offerings." Cleartrip is actively seeking partnerships and collaborations with various B2B players and international suppliers for content sharing and supply exchange.



Suresh Shetty
Head of B2B
Cleartrip

Differentiating from competitors

Cleartrip aims to differentiate itself by focusing on depth rather than spread. Shetty explained, "Instead of targeting all travel agents, we concentrate on productivity and growth. We provide support to agents, addressing their specific needs and solving any challenges they face. Cleartrip aims to be an enabler for travel agents' growth, offering incentives and services

to help them expand their businesses." Cleartrip's approach to collaborating with hotels and airlines varies based on the target market. Shetty informed, "While corporate bookings lean toward four and five-star properties, B2B agency partnerships cover a broader range. We have dedicated supply teams for airlines and hotels, working on deals for both B2B and B2C. In the corporate space, we focus on specific properties to cater to their booking requirements."

Engaging with the travel trade and expansion plans

To engage with the travel trade, Cleartrip actively participates in trade fairs and events, ensuring its presence is felt in the industry. Shetty shared, "We also have physical representation in 23 cities to work closely with travel agents and understand their needs. We plan to extend our reach to tier II and III cities, aiming to be an enabler for aspiring travel agents by providing

services, support, and print ads in these regions." Cleartrip's growth plans involve achieving a market share in the B2B busi-

Cleartrip aims to be an enabler for growth of travel agents, offering incentives and services to help them expand their businesses

ness. Shetty explained, "Our target is to enter the league of the top five players in the country. We want to focus on consolidating our position in the B2B market and strengthening our partnerships. We aim to increase our market share by leveraging technology, expanding product

offerings, and enhancing the overall user experience."

Role of technology

Technology plays a crucial role in Cleartrip's B2B strategy, shared Shetty, "The company continually invests in innovation to develop cutting-edge tools and features for our partners and users. We believe in leveraging technology to simplify processes, automate tasks, and provide real-time data and insights to our partners. This not only enhances efficiency, but also enables them to make informed decisions."

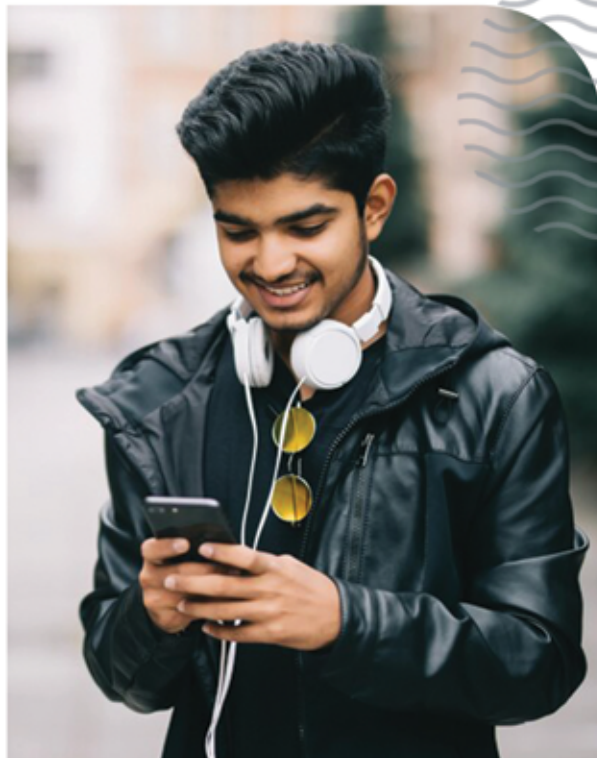
Cleartrip has introduced AI-powered solutions that offer personalized recommendations and tailored experiences for travellers. They have implemented intelligent algorithms to optimize travel itineraries, taking into account factors like preferences, budgets, and time constraints. These technological advancements have positioned Cleartrip as a frontrunner in the industry, attracting more partners and customers.

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Record no. of Indians visit Oman

Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said the Indian tourist flow to the Sultanate has increased to a record 63,492 in April 2023, highest in the past 15 years.



In January 2023, Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism stated that the Indian arrivals were 38,279 more than the pre-COVID figures of 29,094. By April 2023, the numbers had reached 63,492 – the highest it has seen in the last 15 years.

"This stupendous growth in number of Indian travellers to Oman in April is a delight. Following the mammoth rise in Indian tourist flow in April this year against the same period last year, we are optimistic that Oman will become a preferred travel destination for Indian tourists," said **Arjun Chadha**, Country Manager, Oman Tourism India office.

Oman, renowned for its hospitality, breathtaking landscapes, and rich history, has unparal-

The ministry also stated that marked increase in the Indian visitors to Oman can be ascribed to several elements, including its world-class infrastructure, stunning natural surroundings, and rich cultural legacy.

Oman, officially the Sultanate of Oman, is a country located in the Middle East. It is situated on the southeastern coast of the Arabian

Peninsula, and spans the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

The Sultanate is famous for its ancient aflaj oases irrigation system, terraced orchards (Jebel Akhdar), adobe fortresses, mosques, wadis (stream valleys), dhows (traditional Arabian sailing ships), meteorites, and Al Said, the world's third-largest yacht, owned by the Sultan.



Oman will expand its promotional efforts through collaborative efforts, sales missions, FAM trips, and roadshows

leled attractions, combined with the efforts of the ministry and its partners, have culminated in the extraordinary influx of Indian tourists in April, he added.

Apart from investments in marketing tourism, Oman Tourism has carried out activities such as organizing roadshows in five cities and a four-city sales mission in India to jointly advertise and promote travel through various media outlets. According to the ministry's statement, to enhance its presence in the Indian market, Oman Tourism will expand its promotional efforts through collaborative efforts, sales missions, Fam trips, and roadshows.

Recently, Oman Tourism hosted a sales mission in cities such as Kochi, Hyderabad and Kolkata, which was also honoured by the presence of the MHT Head office, Muscat. The ministry met more than 70 trade partners at the time, which received a positive response.

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South India gets a taste of Nepal

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) recently embarked on a six-city roadshow in India to showcase the diverse and enchanting country. The three-city South India roadshow kicked off in Kochi, followed by Coimbatore and Madurai. These events were attended by NTB officials and accompanied by Destination Management Companies (DMCs) from Nepal.





Uganda Airlines Appoints Minar Travels (India) Pvt Ltd as GSA in India

Minar Travels (India) Pvt Ltd has been appointed as the General Sales Agent (GSA) for Uganda Airlines in India. With their extensive experience and deep understanding of the Indian travel market, Minar Travels will effectively position Uganda Airlines as the preferred choice for Indian travellers exploring Uganda and the rest of Africa.

"Minar Travels brings a distinct and innovative approach to crafting captivating campaigns and strategic marketing solutions for their airline partners. With Uganda Airlines' vast network connecting major cities in East and South Africa, they offer an excellent product and an ideal airline option for Indian travellers," stated HS Duggal, Managing Director of Minar Travels.

As the newly appointed GSA, Minar Travels will play a pivotal role in driving sales, executing effective marketing strategies, and fostering business development opportunities for Uganda Airlines. With a proven track record as flight-tested GSA pioneers since 1992, Minar Travels' commitment to delivering successful campaigns and accelerating market growth has established them as a trusted partner for airlines seeking a robust presence in the Indian market.

The appointment of Minar Travels as Uganda Airlines' GSA signifies a promising future as both entities work in synergy to connect India to the captivating beauty of Uganda and beyond.

Uganda Airlines will operate its sales & reservations office in Mumbai, at G-11, Ground Floor, The Summit Business Bay, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri (East) - 400093, ensuring a convenient gateway for travelers & trade with easy access.

About Uganda Airlines

Uganda Airlines is Uganda's national carrier and operates scheduled air services in Africa and international markets. The airline started commercial operations in August 2019 and currently operates a mixed fleet of regional jets (CRJ900) and wide-body Airbus A330-800neo. Uganda Airlines is a winner of the prestigious Ch-aviation Youngest Aircraft Fleet in The World (2021, 2022), a major milestone recognizing the airline's leadership in maintaining a young, modern and efficient fleet, and aligning to the carrier's vision of a World Class airline.



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meets Gujarati travel trade

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) recently embarked on a six-city roadshow in India to showcase the diverse and enchanting country. The NTB has appointed Buzz Travel Marketing to organize the roadshows with an aim to strengthen the relationship between the two countries. The West India roadshow, conducted from 14-19 June, covered Ahmedabad, Vadodra and Surat.





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Date	Event	Time
7-9	Tourism Fair-Ahmedabad	1:00 pm
11-13	Global Travel Marketplace West 2023	9:00 am
12-16	SITE Incentive Summit-Slovenia	12:00 pm
13-16	Travel and Leisure Expo-Philippines	9:00 am
14-16	Travel & Tourism Fair-Kolkata 2023	2:00 pm
21-23	India Travel Mart-New Delhi	11:00 am
25	India Travel Awards	7:00 pm
26-28	Gujarat Travel Fair 2023	10:00 am
28-30	India International Travel Mart-Bangalore	11:00 am

AUGUST 2023

2-3	MICE India & Luxury Travel Congress 2023	9:00 am
4-6	India International Travel Mart Chennai	10:00 am
4-6	Tourism Fair Jaipur	9:00 am
11-13	India Travel Mart - Jaipur	9:00 am
11-14	Korea International Tourism Fair	9:00 am
17	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
18-20	Holiday Expo-Vadodra	9:00 am
23-25	Travel & Tourism Fair-Ahmedabad	9:00 am

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

Social media economical option

Contd from page 18



Reena Sachdev
Founder
Travel Arena

“Our marketing strategy has completely changed, especially since September 2021 when we incorporated social media, client engagement events and many more offline marketing activities for our patrons, which have resulted in much greater bonds and deeper connections with people. We had 800 followers on Instagram in 2020 and as on today our following has increased to 21.6K organic followers. Our spends are heavy on social media, as it is one of the best platforms to connect with the subconscious mind and create awareness. From collabs with celebrity chef Ranveer Brar showcasing Finland through a culinary journey in summers to co-ops with multiple tourism boards and hotel partners, the marketing spends are surely soaring.”



Sandeep Arora
Director
Brightsun Travel

“As digital technologies gained prominence, we recognised the need to shift our focus towards digital marketing. Today, we have increased our investment in digital marketing channels, including search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and email marketing. By leveraging social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, we are able to share engaging travel content, promote our latest offers and promotions, and interact with our customers directly. Social media allows us to showcase stunning travel destinations, provide travel tips and inspiration, and engage in real-time conversations with our audience. Our total marketing spend dedicated to social media varies depending on various factors.”



Valmiki Harikishan
Founder & Managing Partner
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

“Marketing and communications in travel and tourism industry has changed drastically after the influence of social media. Particularly to promote travel, tourism and hospitality, we too started using online tools to make noise about our offers and packages. Even though we are not Online Travel Agency (OTA), by running offline agencies too, penetration can happen through online tools. Our marketing budget has surpassed 60 per cent towards online marketing right from WhatsApp offers to social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google and YouTube. As the users are spending more time online, digital marketing picked up very quickly and lead generation progress is satisfactory for companies like us.”



Chirag Gupta
Founder & CEO
Deyor

“I can confidently say that our marketing spend has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, with a strong emphasis on performance marketing and digital media strategy. We have strategically allocated resources to channels that allow us to track and measure the performance of our campaigns. This approach enables us to optimize our spending based on KPIs such as return on ad spend (ROAS), cost per acquisition (CPA), and conversion rates. We have invested heavily in platforms like Google Ads, Facebook Ads, and programmatic advertising. These channels offer precise targeting capabilities, allowing us to reach specific demographics and interests relevant to our offerings. We have incorporated social media into our marketing.”

'Coexistence with nature must'

Contd from page 12

He claimed that India's long coast is not only a key lever for building trade and growing exports, but also an opportunity to promote tourism, and India's long and scenic coastline provides access to several ports, natural beaches, and beautiful islands. “The cruise passenger traffic grew from 1.26 lakh in 2015-16 to 4.68 lakh in 2019-20. Cruise vessel traffic increased from 128 in 2015-16 to 451 in 2019-20. Today 73 per cent of cruise travellers are sailing with family members, which represents at least two generations,” he informed.

Reddy also highlighted that the Central Financial Assistance Scheme has been supporting tourism infrastructure development for developing ports and cruise terminals, development of lighthouses, purchase of ferries, development of river cruise circuits. “Ministry of Ports Shipping and Waterways is also working towards the development of dedicated terminals for cruise passengers and cruise vessels. A dedicated task force has been formulated on cruise tourism jointly by Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Shipping. Waterdromes at 16 locations are being developed to enable sea-plane operations and are also aiming at domestic and in-

ternational cruise terminal development at selected ports by 2023,” he claimed.

Yesso Naik said that the event has shed light on the immense potential that cruise tourism has and its achievement across the world. “Cruise tourism holds immense potential not only for Goa tourism, but also for the entire country, as it provides employment opportunities, add to tax revenue and fosters economic growth,” he said.

G20 nations should take concrete steps to contribute to reducing plastic with the ethos of mindful and sustainable consumption

Addressing plastic problem

The second side event was organised on the theme ‘Towards a circular economy of plastics in tourism - The global tourism plastic initiative’, where Reddy said, “In-

dian philosophy and lifestyle have always been rooted in the concept of coexistence with nature and we belong to a civilisation where sustainability and environment protection is an integral part of our ethos. Sustainability is a key driver of conscious and responsible hospitality and when we talk about sustainable tourism, people and planet first; decarbonization of destinations; empowering entrepreneurs should be prioritised. There are approximately 30,000 Yuva Tourism Clubs in India, with membership ranging from fourth-graders to college students and these clubs will promote responsible tourism practices, renew interest in sustainable tourism, re-emphasise the initiatives of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat and Dekho Apna Desh.”

He said, “MOT's National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism and Swadesh Darshan 2.0 initiative have laid down the guidelines for management of plastic waste in the tourism sector. The G20 countries together should take concrete steps to contribute to reducing plastic with the ethos of mindful and sustainable consumption.”

MOT signed an MoU with Airbnb to jointly promote heritage homestays as well.

G20 key to global governance

Contd from page 23

Kutumbakam” - One Earth, One Family, One Future - can itself be a motto for global tourism.”

TWG meetings a success

In his address, Reddy said, “We are all aware of the immense significance of the G20 and its role in global governance. The G20 brings together the world's leading economies to address key challenges and promote sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth. Through our collective efforts, we can harness the power of tourism to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, ensuring that no one is left behind.”

Pointing out the achievements of TWG meetings, the minister informed that there were extensive discussions on the five priorities of Green Tourism, Digitalization, Skill Development, Tourism MSMEs, and Destination Management. There were insightful presentations by G20 member countries, shedding light on their contributions to the five priority areas. “Both the outcome documents of G20 Working Group were welcomed. Travel for LiFE incorporated in the Goa Roadmap is based on our PM's visionary initiative 'Mission LiFE' and urges individuals to act, to protect the environment against the effects

of climate change. Travel for LiFE aims to nudge visitors and tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage,” he shared.

G20 brings together the world's leading economies to address key challenges and promote sustainable growth

Welcoming the Goa Roadmap, he commented, “We welcome the Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a vehicle for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and reaffirm the pivotal role of the five key priority areas identified under India's G20 Presidency for driving development, innovation, and cooperation in the tourism industry.”

PPP in focus

There was also a thematic discussion on the ‘Public private

dialogue: Importance of travel and tourism to the G20 economies’ on the same day, which was addressed by Reddy in the presence of Julia Simpson, President and CEO of World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

Reddy said, “Today, tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economic sectors. We are all aware that tourism is a major source of employment, along with several socio-economic benefits such as trade, investment, infrastructure development and social inclusion. Tourism should become an investment magnet for both the private and public sectors and there is a need to innovate, explore new areas and craft new strategies to not only achieve pre-pandemic status, but also to rise beyond that. The private sector has a critical role to play in all the five priority areas.”

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO, said, “As tourism bounces back close to pre-pandemic levels, we must ensure that recovery is sustainable, inclusive and resilient. The Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a vehicle for achieving the SDGs offers the G20 economies a proposed plan of action to lead the way forward towards a better future for all.”



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MOVEMENTS

RADISSON JAIPUR CITY CENTER

Jaipur

PRADIPPTA BIISWAAS, General Manager, Radisson Jaipur City Center, has been promoted as the Vice President Operations. A seasoned hospitality professional with 25 years of work experience, Biiswas has worked as General Manager for The Orchid Hotel Mumbai and The Grand New Delhi. He has also worked with The Leela, Accor, and IHG in various capacities. In his previous assignment, he was Head Asset Management at Saraf Hotels. His career has taken him to many locations in India and abroad, which has given him a wide range of market information. His core areas of expertise are Hotel Operations, Revenue Optimization, and Talent Acquisition.



STUBA

London

Accommodation specialist Stuba appoints **MALCOLM LINDOP** as Sourcing Director. Lindop has a stellar background in direct contracting and commercial management, having worked with JAC Travel, AC Group and Gulliver's Travel Associates among others. He will report to Matt Stuart, CCO, Stuba. Lindop will be London based with a primary focus to drive Stuba's direct contracting and curated hotel collections, to become a more significant part of their supply mix, as well as in 2024 assuming further responsibility for all sourcing, including third-party supply. His network and knowledge will assist Stuba's commercial strategy.



STAR ALLIANCE

Frankfurt/ Singapore

Star Alliance has appointed **THEO PANAGIOTOULIAS** as its next CEO. He has over 25-year international experience in the aviation industry. He joins Star Alliance from Hawaiian Airlines, where he had been Senior VP for Global Sales and Alliances since 2014. Earlier, Panagiotoulis worked as VP and GM (Asia Pacific) at Sabre Corporation, and held several commercial, operational and management positions at American Airlines. Scott Kirby, CEO of United Airlines and Chairman of the Star Alliance Chief Executive Board, said, "On behalf of the board of Star Alliance, I would like to congratulate Theo for being named the next CEO of Star Alliance."



RENEST

Kumbhalgarh

Renest Hotels and Resorts appoints **ABHISHEK BHATNAGAR** as the General Manager of Renest Kumbhalgarh. With an experience of more than 18 years in the hospitality industry, Bhatnagar stands out as a veteran in the field. In his new role, he will oversee and coordinate all aspects of the resort's operations. His exceptional leadership and outstanding communication skills will prove instrumental in ensuring that the resort's guests receive nothing short of the most exquisite and luxurious services, be it housekeeping, food and beverage, guest services, or administration. He has worked with various hotels in Udaipur, Rajasthan.



JW MARRIOTT

Kolkata

SUNIL KUMAR has joined JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata as the General Manager. His primary responsibilities include enhancing the hotel's productivity, ensuring customer satisfaction, and implementing strategic initiatives. He has more than 20 years of experience in the luxury hotel industry. Sunil has previously served as the General Manager of The Westin Goa for over two years, where he established the brand in the highly competitive market and ensured that it achieved great success. Prior to this, he has also been associated with JW Marriott Juhu, St. Regis Mumbai, Four Seasons, The Westin Mumbai, Grand Hyatt, and The Oberoi Group.



SHERATON GRAND BENGALURU WHITEFIELD HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER

Bengaluru

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center has appointed **VARUN MEHROTRA** as the Director of Sales & Marketing. He has more than 17 years of experience in the industry across renowned hospitality brands in India. He possesses a rich and extensive background in driving sales, marketing, and revenue growth by employing meticulous planning, extensive research, and innovative solutions. In his new role, he will be responsible for optimizing the hotel's revenue. Working closely with the Food and Beverage team, he will enhance the visibility and contribute to the hotel's marketing strategies.



COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT BENGALURU OUTER RING ROAD

Bengaluru

Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Outer Ring Road has appointed **RABINDRA RAI** as the new Director of Operations. With more than 15 years of management experience in the luxury hospitality industry, Rai brings a wealth of expertise and a customer-centric approach to his new role. Rai will be responsible for overseeing the hotel's core departments, ensuring compliance with operating controls, SOPs, and service standards. He will also play a crucial role in driving business development, maintaining guest relations, and fostering a high-performing team to achieve operational excellence.



FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

Mumbai

Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai welcomes **SALIL KOPAL** as its new Director of Marketing. Kopal has two decades of experience in the hospitality industry with a proven track record in luxury sales and marketing. In his new role, Salil will spearhead strategic marketing initiatives, brand development, sales and customer engagement strategies to further promote the commercial interests of the property and strengthen its position as a premier destination for luxury hospitality. A graduate from the IHM Ahmedabad, he has worked with leading luxury brands such as the Ritz Carlton, Sheraton Hotels, The Oberoi Group, Marriott Hotels and Encalm Hospitality.



RAFFLES

Udaipur

Raffles Udaipur has appointed **SWATI SAHOO** as the new Head of Marketing. She has more than 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry. She has worked with prestigious hotel chains such as Taj and Hilton Hotels, and her most recent position was the Director of Marketing and Communication at 1000 Island Hotels and Resorts. In her new role, Swati will be overseeing the hotel's marketing and communications efforts, aiming to elevate the hotel's profile and establish a remarkable presence. Collaborating closely with the management team, she will play a vital role in formulating and executing strategies that enhance the hotel's visibility.



TALKing People

BRAYDON HOLLAND, Senior Director – Sales (Asia), NCL, loves the outdoors. He says, "I like to spend time at the golf course on a sunny day, hiking mountain trails with my family or swimming in the ocean to de-stress and clear my mind. During the lockdown, I found myself taking on new roles as the family hairdresser and schoolteacher to my two wonderful kids. Thankfully, those days seem to have passed now. I think it's best to leave those jobs to the professionals!" He says there are a few places he would like to take his family to, like Hawaii and Thailand, for holidaying.



RACHAEL HARDING, CEO (East and South Asia & Pacific markets), Club Med, says, "My favourite holiday destination in India is meandering through the backwaters of Kerala. It is a fascinating, once-in-a-lifetime experience through these tranquil waters with incredible wildlife. Internationally, it is definitely the endless turquoise playground of Club Med Kani and Finolhu Villas in the Maldives. My next holiday will be to sail across the Mediterranean and discovering charming towns on the French Rivera's coastline on renovated sailing yacht Club Med 2."



RAMANPREET SINGH, Vice President – Growth & Strategy, SKIL Travel, unwinds by listening to spiritual music, mostly Gurbani. "The COVID lockdown came as a blessing in disguise in many ways. One great hobby that I picked up during COVID was badminton. It's a great stress buster and a demanding sport that requires you to be fit and active. Even though I travel 10-14 days in a month, I make it a point to ensure I play one-and-a-half hours daily whenever I am at home. Among my favorite holiday destinations in India is the Andamans as well as Udaipur. Internationally, it is Singapore," he shares.



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'We aim to cross 462k arrivals'

The newly appointed Director of Tourism Malaysia, Noriah Jaafar, is gung-ho about the India market. Her main focus is to tap millennials and further develop the weddings and MICE market from the country.



Hazel Jain

She is the new face of Malaysia in India. As the new India Director of Tourism Malaysia, Noriah Jaafar took over her new office only this June. She has a clear target in sight. Sharing arrival numbers, she says, "Pre-COVID in 2019, we saw 735,309 tourist arrivals from India and currently from January to April 2023, we have welcomed 164,566 arrivals into Malaysia. Our target for this year is to reach 462,000 arrivals from India. As an international source market for Malaysia, India ranked number four in 2022. This makes India a very important market for us. We now want to promote Malaysia beyond Kuala Lumpur and Genting. Indian travellers already know these two destinations, so we want them to explore newer places in Malaysia now, such as Langkawi, Penang, as well as the Borneo side of Malaysia that include Sarawak and Sabah. We believe that Indian travellers are ready to see and experience new and offbeat destinations and attractions. They now like to immerse themselves in destinations and the unique experiences they have on offer."

Malaysia offers caving activities such as at Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak. Visitors can also experience the longest

water slide at Escape Theme Park in Penang. Malaysia also has good diving spots and a unique attraction called The Sky Mirror Kuala Selangor, which is a natural phenomenon.

"We will be organising a big roadshow in August this year in five tier-II cities in India where we will bring local sellers and DMCS to meet Indian agents. We will be touching Amritsar, Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, Raipur, and Pune. The reason we chose these cities is because they show great potential, and we can already see a lot of demand coming from these pockets. More importantly,



As an international source market for Malaysia, India ranked number four in 2022! This makes India a very important market for us

the buying power of Indians has increased. The first leg of the roadshow included the metros of Mumbai, Delhi, and Ahmedabad, so this time we want to reach out

to agents in tertiary cities to share more information about the destination," Jaafar adds.

Millennials and Gen Z

Based on the current situation, there is a change of demand in India's outbound markets towards experiential and special interest tourism. There is also a change in tourist behaviour, which indicates a move away from mass group holidays to more personalised holidays. She adds, "Millennials and Gen Zs are our key target audience today. They are also decision-makers today and spend a lot of money on experiences such as travel. Moreover, since they are very active on social media to showcase their experiences while in Malaysia, they indirectly become our ambassadors."

Weddings are a huge focus

Weddings are also a huge focus for Malaysia right now. "We want to promote Malaysia as a top wedding destination. For this, we will be participating in the Wedding Travel Show in Udaipur. We are ready to accept weddings, as we now understand all the requirements that they need. We have already received some 3-4 weddings at Lexis luxury resort," she adds.

MICE, particularly incentive groups, is also key. "In the past, incentive groups would spend around three to four nights, which has

Arrival numbers from India

- ❖ 2018: 600,311
- ❖ 2019: 735,309
- ❖ 2020: 3,916 (COVID period)
- ❖ 2021: 187,037
- ❖ 2022: 324,548 (April – December)
- ❖ 2023: 164,566 (January – April)
- ❖ 2023 target: 462,000

gone up to four to five nights in Malaysia. For the FITs, it has gone up to seven to eight nights now," Jaafar adds. Malaysia has announced Visit Malaysia Year in 2026 and will soon begin promoting it in India. 🇲🇾



Noriah Jaafar
Director, Tourism Malaysia

About Noriah Jaafar

Noriah Jaafar joined the India office in June this year. Her professional journey began in 2002 when she joined Tourism Malaysia as an Assistant Director at the Convention Division. Her dedication and expertise led to steady promotions and a diverse range of roles, including her role as the Director of Tourism Malaysia's Stockholm office in Sweden from October 2014 to March 2017, overseeing operations in Europe. Her international experience also includes managing the Thailand and Myanmar market for nearly two years. Throughout her career, Jaafar has demonstrated exceptional language skills, excelling in both Malay and English. She also possesses a good understanding of Mandarin and Korean. Hailing from Johor, Malaysia, she has always had a penchant for travel.



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