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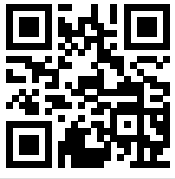
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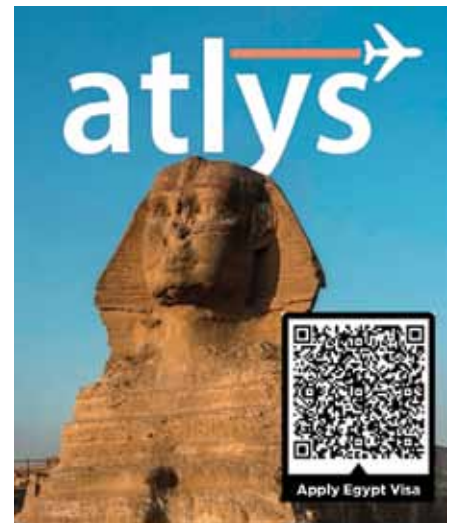
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Indian wedding biz worth \$50bn

The 8th edition of Travel Wedding Show in Udaipur discussed various topics related to the booming Indian wedding industry, including hotel pricing and visa processing.



Janice Alyosius

The eighth edition of Travel Wedding Show in Udaipur was a resounding success, with more than 2,000 productive meetings held during the show. Renowned wedding planners, hotels, airlines, and international tourism boards participated during the two-day event. A captivating

panel discussion, moderated by **Rajeev Jain**, Founder and Managing Director, Rashi Entertainment, was the highlight at the event. Eminent panellists, including **Elisa Maria Robles Fraga**, Director (India), Spain Tourism Board, **Kamilia Hani Abdul Halim**, Deputy Director, Tourism Malaysia, and **Aishvarya Guhagarkar**, Director, MICE, Switzerland Convention

Bureau, shared their valuable insights at the panel discussion.

Highlighting the remarkable growth of India's wedding industry, Jain said, "India is on its way to become the world's fifth-largest economy and how the business has skyrocketed post-COVID. The Indian wedding sector alone accounts for \$50 billion (approximately ₹5,00,000



(L-R): Elisa Maria Robles Fraga, Kamilia Hani Abdul Halim, Aishvarya Guhagarkar, and Rajeev Jain

crore). From small intimate weddings to extravagant celebrations costing ₹100 crore, the industry offers a wide range of options."

India leading in wedding biz Jain emphasized that India boasts the largest growth rate in wedding business globally. "With a

remarkable surge of 30 per cent following the challenges posed by COVID, India has outperformed

Contd on page 22 ►

Industry hails adventure push

India is upping its game for adventure travel. Stakeholders are positive about the outcome after the Union government's push for the sector through policy changes and new national board.



Ajeet Bajaj
President, ATOAI and Managing Director,
Snow Leopard Adventures

"Adventure travel was a \$683 billion industry globally before the pandemic, showing a 21 per cent Compound Annual Growth rate since 2012. According to the World Bank, adventure travel is the largest niche market with about 238 million travellers annually. Adventure Tourism is likely to see exponential growth in the next decade. As per pre-pandemic projections of the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and George Washington University, USA, Adventure Travel was to be a trillion-dollar global industry by 2024. According to the World Economic Forum, India's Natural Heritage is ranked sixth best in the world. India is blessed to have every conceivable geographical terrain, we are a global biodiversity hotspot, we have 73 per cent of a culturally diverse Himalayan range and rich fauna, flora, and avifauna in our country. Given the potential, we can easily double our inbound figures in the next five years through Adventure Tourism alone."

Contd on page 20 ►

M!CE momentum on with G20

Basking in the success of 4th TWG and Ministerial meetings in Goa, the Union Ministry of Tourism is hopeful that G20 meetings taking place in India will open doors for international M!CE.



Nisha Verma

Vidya Vathi, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, talking about the India's M!CE potential with G20, said that all the G20 meetings, under the direction of the Prime Minister, have been held in many cities. "The kind of infrastructure that has come up in these places for hosting world class meetings, is phenomenal. For us, it is the beginning of the opportunity to keep this momentum going for them as tourist destinations,



V Vidya Vathi
Secretary, MOT, GoI

especially for M!CE. The idea is to attract more meetings and conventions to happen at these places," she said.

Adding to this, **Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, GoI, shared, "All the destinations, where G20 meetings are taking place have established themselves as having infrastructure and capability to host meetings. We would like to promote these 50-55 places in a big way to attract more

Contd on page 25 ►

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Measuring success the wrong way?

As the travel and tourism industry embarks on the path to recovery, the focus on responsible and sustainable practices has become paramount. In a recent panel discussion hosted by PATA in Nepal, challenges and opportunities for responsible tourism were brought forward by the industry leaders.



TT Bureau

The path to a responsible tourism industry presents both challenges and opportunities. The insights shared by industry leaders highlight the importance of measuring success beyond arrival numbers and emphasizing the well-being of local communities and the environment. Through initiatives like community-based tourism, infrastructure development, and responsible practices, destinations like Nepal, the Maldives, Ras Al Khaimah, and Azerbaijan are demonstrating their commitment to sustainable growth. By embracing responsibility across various sectors and influencing policy-making, the industry can contribute to a more sustainable and fulfilling travel experience for all.

Rethinking measures of success

Dr. Dhananjay Regmi, CEO, Nepal Tourism Board, emphasizes the need to redefine how success in tourism is measured. Rather than solely focusing on arrival numbers,



(Left to right): Dr. Dhananjay Regmi, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Raki Phillips and Florian Sengtschmid

he suggests considering the standard of living for local communities and the state of the environment. Nepal has long embraced sustainability, with initiatives such as Tourism for the Rural Coordination and the preservation of ethnic group cultures through homestays. "The country has also made significant efforts in protecting national parks and increasing tiger populations. It is important to find sustainable solutions to keep fragile environments free from pollution and encourage responsible behaviour from locals and tourists," he adds.

The accessible & sustainable vision

Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Minister of Tourism, Maldives, shares the Maldives' commitment to becoming the world's leading sustainable tourism destination. "The Maldives' fifth master plan focuses on accessibility for all, including people with special needs and seniors, while ensuring the benefits of tourism reach the local population and protect ecosystems," he explains. The country is investing in infrastructure development across its islands, providing essential services like wa-

ter, electricity, and internet access on all islands. Dr. Mausoom highlights the shift towards community-based tourism, with 118 out of 185 islands already engaged in tourism activities.

Supporting community & financial growth

Raki Phillips, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA), discusses Ras Al Khaimah's ambitious goal of becoming the Middle East's most sustainable destination by 2025. "Rather than solely pursuing sus-



tainability, we must emphasize the importance of responsible tourism, which encompasses environmental, cultural, and economic responsibility," he mentions.

Ras Al Khaimah has partnered with Earth Check to develop a roadmap towards sustainability and has gained commitments from 30 corporate companies. By focusing on responsible practices, the destination aims to benefit the community while supporting financial growth for businesses.

Quality and responsibility

Florian Sengtschmid, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board, highlights Azerbaijan's vision of resilient growth, emphasizing the significance of quality over quantity. "The destination aims to leverage its assets and enhance capacities to create a competitive advantage, while

acknowledging that sustainability and responsibility encompass various verticals beyond tourism," he says.

Sengtschmid believes the industry can contribute by raising awareness, influencing policy-making, and shaping the tourist experience.

Highlighted point was measuring success beyond arrival numbers and emphasizing the well-being of local communities and the environment

Azerbaijan is implementing projects focused on local travel, such as hiking and bird watching, to foster responsible practices and enrich visitor experiences.

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Mark your TCS calendar

The recent changes in TCS regulations have sparked discussions again on what it holds for the future. While holding a 20% hike on outbound packages till 1 October 2023 gave temporary relief to outbound operators, the fear is still looming. The industry, in light of the latest update in this regard, is making sure the current business goes on smoothly and there are no hassles for customers who have booked in advance. The summer season is crucial for them, but business post-pandemic has changed and is not seasonal anymore. A breather, while it has come as a sigh of relief, has raised questions for the impending future of travel businesses.

The TCS hike will indeed increase the costs for tour operators, who might have to revise their pricing structures to accommodate the additional tax burden. It would potentially make travel packages more expensive for domestic as well as international tourists.

Inbound too might not stay untouched. Higher cost of travel packages may deter some potential visitors, especially budget-conscious travellers. A decrease in tourist arrivals would not just impact the tour operators, but also the hospitality industry, local businesses, and the overall economy.

But would this change in TCS prevent Indians from travelling abroad and boost domestic tourism? While this seems to be the government's intent too, but with the kind of money Indians are spending, this looks far-fetched. This change is part of the government's strategy to streamline the tax collection process and provide clarity on the applicability of TCS to different tourism-related transactions.

Still, tour operators can focus on developing attractive domestic travel packages to cater to the changing preferences of Indian tourists and have best of both the worlds.

The way forward after 1 October, of course, is for the stakeholders, the government and tourists to work together.

OTAs high on gross bookings

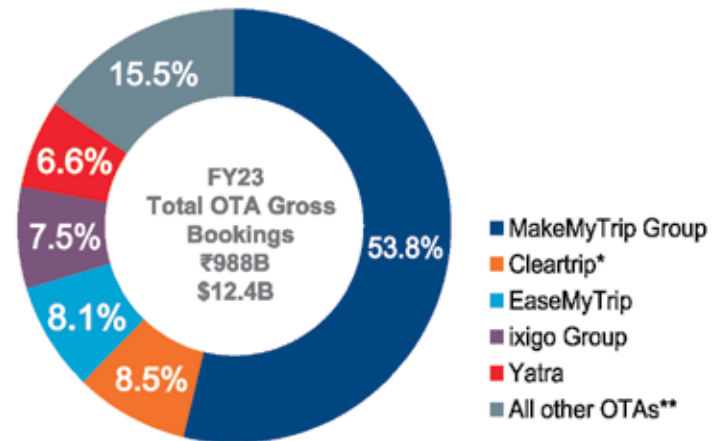
The MMT Group is a market leader among OTAs in India in total gross bookings (GBV) with 53.8 per cent share. Among other market participants, Cleartrip and EaseMyTrip were neck-to-neck at 8.5 per cent and 8.1 per cent market share respectively, with ixigo close behind at 7.5 per cent.

TT Bureau

MakeMyTrip (MMT) Group is a clear market leader among online travel agencies (OTAs) in India in terms of total gross booking (GBV), finds a study on the India Travel Market Sizing and OTA Benchmarking, released recently by VIDEA, a boutique advisory and analytics firm dedicated to the travel, tourism and hospitality industry.

As per the study, MMT shares more than 50 per cent market of total gross bookings (GBV), followed by Cleartrip and EaseMyTrip, which are competing neck-to-neck for the second position, with the ixigo group close behind. In financial year 2023 (FY23), the total gross bookings for MMT were 53.8 per cent, compared to Cleartrip's 8.5 per cent, Ease-

India OTA Total Gross Bookings (GBV), Share by Top OTAs (%) FY 23



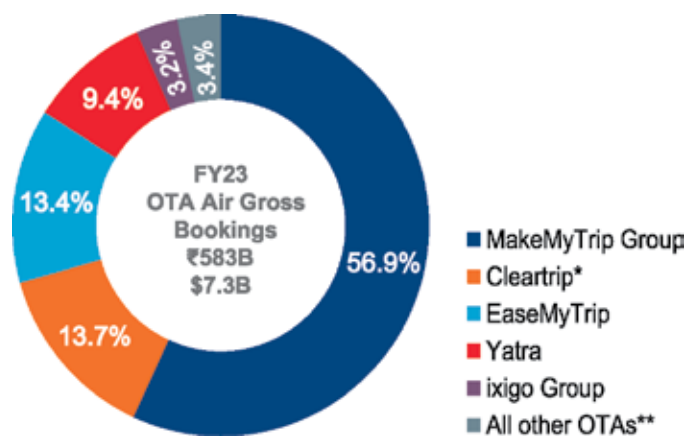
MMT also registered highest hotel gross bookings (GBV) with 55.6 per cent market share. However, Yatra pipped Cleartrip and Ease-

MyTrip in hotel gross bookings for the second position with 3.6 per

cent market share. In rail gross bookings (GBV), ixigo stood first with 47.7 per cent market share, while MMT recorded 10.2 per cent market share. However, in intercity bus gross bookings

second position with 11.4 per cent market share. Jain said that the study has many firsts. "Considering the foreign carriers account for more than

India OTA Total Air Gross Bookings (GBV), Share by Top OTAs (%) FY 23



MyTrip's 8.1 per cent, ixigo's 7.5 per cent, and Yatra's 6.6 per cent, while the remaining OTAs together accounted for 15.5 per cent of the total gross bookings. "The research aims to unravel the fascinating Indian travel market opportunity," said **Virendra Jain**, Co-Founder and CEO, VIDEA.

The research gives us the share of each OTA against the total Indian OTA market, and subsequently for each of the four supplier categories: Air, Hotel, Rail and Bus. As per the research, MMT also topped the air gross bookings (GBV) with 56.9 per cent market share, while Cleartrip and EaseMyTrip registered 13.7 and 13.4 per cent market share, respectively.

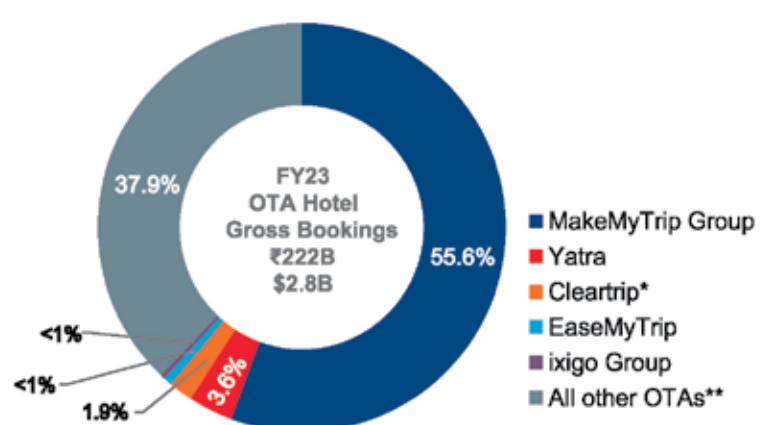
cent market share. Cleartrip and EaseMyTrip recorded 1.9 per cent and 1 per cent market share in

(GBV), MMT was way ahead with more than three-fourth (75.2 per cent) market share. ixigo was at

MMT also topped the air gross bookings (GBV) with 56.9% market share. Cleartrip and EaseMyTrip had 13.7 & 13.4% market share, respectively

half (56 per cent) of the international air passengers, VIDEA for the first time sized the total market and each of the four supplier categories from the demand side, to arrive at the most correct market estimation-to-date," he said.

India OTA Hotel Gross Bookings (GBV), Shared by Top OTAs (%) FY 23



India a source market for Mauritius

Mauritius, known to be a popular honeymoon destination for Indians, is expanding its reach in the Indian market, as it is ready to cater to the family travellers, small intimate groups, as well as MICE and weddings.



Nisha Verma

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) recently organised a Familiarisation trip to Mauritius and showcased its varied offerings. **Arvind Bundhun**, Director, MTPA, shares that this was part of their visibility strategy and B2B trade strategy. "MTPA invests regularly in hosting the media to Mauritius to experience the various facets of the destination. We believe that the experiences lived by the media enable them to have an in-depth understanding of the destination and its products, which can be showcased in their articles as an experience that they have personally lived on the island."

India market

India is an important source market for MTPA. "Mauritius is considered as a honeymoon destination offering high quality service in India, as well as a family destination with a variety of experiences compared to other beach destinations. The destination is one of the world's



Arvind Bundhun
Director
MTPA

aspirational tourism destinations for Indian travellers," he adds.

After the borders to Mauritius reopened in March 2022, flights were reinstated to 5 flights from Mumbai, informs Bundhun. "Thus, last year was a slow recovery and with the start of operation of Vistara in end March 2023, we are expecting a good recovery over pre-COVID year 2019."

India connection

A visit to Mauritius will open

doors to a culture that has a lot of India influence as well, thus making it easier for the country to cater to Indians. "The strong cultural ties, the influence on the food, language as a high per-

Mauritius as a destinations has a panoply of offerings and activities to make sure that there is something for everyone

centage of Mauritians is of Indian descent gives a feeling of home away from home to Indian tourists," he claims.

Activities galore

Mauritius offers a plethora of activities for every kind of traveller. One can not only gaze at its scenic locales, but indulge in varied adven-

ture activities like Quad biking and zip lining at La Vallée des Couleurs Nature Park; or nature walks and interaction with animals at Casela Nature Parks. While water sports and activities are very popular, people can also take a submarine trip, which gives an opportunity to explore the wonders of the ocean up close.

High on MICE

He says that with Air Mauritius launching its flight from Delhi and with the operation of Vistara from Mumbai, they are expecting MICE numbers to grow during this season and especially in September. He adds, "Mauritius is well known for its logistics, facilitations and ease and professionalism of its stakeholders to handle big MICE groups and big weddings."

Travel trade is key

Bundhun insists that they work hand-in-hand with the travel trade. "We are present on key platforms and trade fairs, where we co-host our local stakeholders on our booth to facilitate their meeting with the Indian travel trade," he says.

Bringing back tourism responsibly

Hon Peeni Henare, Minister of Tourism, New Zealand, recently addressed TRENZ 2023 recognizing the role of tourism in the country's economic recovery and its potential to showcase New Zealand as a sustainable destination on the global map.



TT Bureau

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was one of New Zealand's top export earners, contributing a total value of \$40 billion. However, the global halt caused by the pandemic brought the value of international tourism to zero overnight. While visitor numbers are slowly recovering, the industry still faces significant challenges, including labour shortages and changing traveller preferences due to COVID-19 and climate change.

"The world is experiencing a time of change. The pandemic and climate change have influenced people's values, travelling styles, and business resilience. Countries worldwide are exploring ways to limit visitor numbers and prioritize sustainability. New Zealand itself has made significant strides in this regard, with initiatives such as Queenstown



Peeni Henare
Tourism Minister
New Zealand

Lakes' commitment to becoming a carbon-zero visitor economy by 2030," says Henare.

Tourism New Zealand is actively marketing the country to high-quality visitors who will positively contribute to society, culture, nature, and the economy. "To further advance the indus-

try's transformation, the New Zealand government has established industry transformation plans (ITPs), with tourism being one of the key sectors. The Better Work Action Plan for tourism is the first phase of the ITP, aiming to create a stronger and better-skilled tourism workforce. It focuses on areas such as education and training, cultural competency, tourism accord, and innovation to provide a more fulfilling experience for visitors," adds Henare.

"Stakeholders, tourism operators, and visitors play crucial roles in making the industry transformation plan successful. Research is underway to address tough questions and evaluate the industry's fitness for purpose. Furthermore, attracting high-quality visitors who align with New Zealand's values and encouraging sustainable practices among travel sellers are essential," he adds.

In conclusion, Henare highlighted the government's commitment to enabling the aspirations of the tourism industry and the regions. He firmly believes that tourism can contribute to a productive, high-wage, low-emissions economy while delivering unforgettable ex-

With focus on sustainability and collaboration, New Zealand aims to bring tourism back to country in a responsible and regenerative way

periences to visitors. With a focus on sustainability and collaboration, New Zealand aims to bring tourism back to the country in a responsible and regenerative manner.

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Trailblazing the digitalisation path

A leader in many ways, Thomas Cook (India) emerged from the pandemic healthier and more profitable. Madhavan Menon, Executive Chairman, Thomas Cook (India), shares his perspective on the group's journey since the pandemic hit the world and what worked well for the company to lift its financial results.

At the Thomas Cook Group, we call this returning from the break. During the pandemic, we were forced as were most people in our industry to re-view and reimagine how we would do this. As a result, we were able to emerge from the pandemic with a variety of activities that ensure that we were able to improve the customer experience, rationalise our costs, and have high level of productivity using technology as well as digitising our processes.

As we re-emerged from COVID, we witnessed strong demand across all our product lines, be it in the travel space at a B2C level or at a B2B level, as well as in some of our subsidiaries like Sterling Holiday Resorts, like DEI and Desert Adventures, and various destination management businesses across the world.

Conditions apply

This demand came with a string of conditions obviously – that



we needed to ensure that people were kept safe and not exposed to the problems that they had witnessed during the pandemic. As a result, we were able to build strong customer confidence using our experience and improved systems. I think an important element of the strong financial results has been cost rationalisation. During 2021-22, we reduced our costs by nearly 50 per cent across the group. Today, we are at around a cost saving of 30 per cent from our pre-COVID levels. And we expect to rationalise our costs by 20 per cent on a sustainable basis. You will appreciate that all this drops to the bottom line.

Upgrading technology

An important element of this entire journey of back from the brink has been improving our technology and digitising the processes as well as customer interaction to en-

sure that the customer experience is enhanced significantly. We upgraded our technology to ensure that our customers can start their research on the various Thomas Cook products online before they even reach us either through a call centre, through our website or through the branch network that we have. Consequently, all this

quarters and we expect that this will continue over the next few quarters as well.

Strong financial results

The strong results for FY23 for the group, with a record Operating EBITDA at ₹2.7 billion versus a loss of ₹1.2 billion in FY22. Total income from opera-

Operating PBT in a decade and Sterling Holidays recording its highest EBITDA & PBT since the company's inception.

Our focus through the year has been on driving trading volumes, margin expansion, improved productivity via digital solutions and effective cost optimization measures to achieve this. Given the strong forward booking funnels, across business segments and geographies, we are confident of a strong performance in the coming quarters as well.

Partnerships are key

Under its G20 Presidency, India has set ambitious ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) goals, & India Inc. has been called on to implement SEBI's BRSR mandate starting FY23. The need for a trustworthy partner to provide accuracy and speed in reporting is an imperative. At Thomas Cook and SOTC, our leadership in the travel sector

formed the basis of our partnership with LTIMindtree – a leading technology solutions provider. 'Green Carpet', therefore, not only embodies this potent partnership of leaders, but also leverages the global expertise of Fairfax Digital Services to collectively empower enterprises with the ability to seamlessly monitor and manage business travel emissions and drive their net zero goals.



Madhavan Menon
Executive Chairman
Thomas Cook (India)

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

Highlights for FY23

- ❖ The Group's Operating EBITDA grew significantly to ₹2.7 Bn for FY23 against a loss of ₹1.2 Bn in FY22. Growth driven by Foreign Exchange & Travel Businesses (Thomas Cook); Hospitality (Sterling Holidays)
- ❖ Highest Operating EBITDA & Operating PBT for Thomas Cook in a decade. Operating EBITDA at ₹1.2 Bn for FY23; Operating PBT at ₹560 Mn Vs a loss of ₹1.14 Bn in FY22
- ❖ Sterling Holidays registered Highest EBITDA & PBT since inception: EBITDA at ₹1.1 Bn for FY23; PBT at ₹659 Mn Vs ₹436 Mn in FY22

has resulted in the company both on a standalone basis as well as a consolidated basis along with the various subsidiaries, performing very well over the last couple of

tions also grew annually by 163 per cent in FY23 to ₹51 billion. This performance was led by Thomas Cook India registering its highest Operating EBITDA and

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TCS: What after 3-month relief?

The recent regulatory change in Tax Collection at Source (TCS) has given a relief to the trade, but the industry feels that the relief is temporary and the eventual rise in TCS on overseas packages will be a dampener for them. The long-term impact is still unknown, but the industry has urged government to look at ground reality.



Ajay Prakash
President
TAFI

“We welcome the move to defer the implementation of 20 per cent TCS until October. This does provide a breather. However, it does not take away from the fact that this scheme was hastily implemented without fully appreciating the consequences and effects on the travel agents. And the bias for a high value tour against an Indian agent compared to an overseas tour operator will remain because any amount over ₹7 lakh will be liable to 20 per cent TCS. This is honestly way to high.”



Manoj Saraf
Managing Director
Gainwell Travel & Leisure

“It is a short-term deferment or relief, as it is allowing breathing time for the tour operators and banks as well. TCS now or later, will be a deterrent for the international travel and I hope government will get time to think and revise the decision. The reason I am not too happy with this decision is its huge impact on outbound tourism and the problem still remains. I have some hopes as the next year is election year. If the industry continues to pressurize the government to revise the decision, it would be good.”



Pradip Lulla
Immediate Past President
TAFI

“As per the recent notification by the government, the postponement of TCS till October is a welcome relief, as the machinery of the same in terms of software in the banks was not geared. However, the travel and tourism industry would appreciate if the government would reconsider to maintain the TCS amount of 5 per cent and simply apply the same to all terms of foreign exchange transactions, whether it is credit cards or bank transfer payments. We look forward to some amendments in the future as well.”



Shravan Bhalla
Vice President, OTOAI &
Chief Executive, High Flyer

“It is just a temporary relief, and we still need to fight for it. We need to make the government understand that at the end of the day they are losing not only on TCS, but also on GST, as they will see a lot of clients shifting on booking online with foreign companies. Over and above, we are travel agents and NOT the tax collector for government. The government is the policy maker. They definitely have something in their mind. However, as a travel agent we strongly oppose this.”

Inputs by TT Bureau

Govt clarifies on Tax Collection at Source

Revenue Central Board of Direct Taxes (TPI Division), Ministry of Finance, Government of India (GoI), on 30 June 2023 issued a circular “to remove difficulty in implementation of changes relating to Tax Collection at Source (TCS) on Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) and on purchase of overseas tour program package”.

expenditure of similar nature or in relation thereto.

It is clarified that purchase of only international travel ticket or purchase of only hotel accommodation, by in itself is not covered within the definition of ‘overseas tour program package’. To qualify as ‘overseas tour program package’,

The circular, signed by Jivitesh Anand, Undersecretary, GoI, in answer to Question 8 - Whether purchase of international travel ticket or hotel accommodation on standalone basis is purchase of overseas tour program package? - clarifies that the term ‘overseas tour program package’ is defined as to mean any tour package which offers visit to a country or countries or territory or territories outside India and includes expenses for travel or hotel stay or boarding or lodging or any other



the package should include at least two of the followings: (i) international travel ticket, (ii) hotel accommodation (with or without food)/ boarding/ lodging, (iii) any other expenditure of similar nature or in relation thereto.

Mumbai Port eyes 1mn pax in 2023-24

With the upgradation of Mumbai port passenger terminal, the international cruise traffic will increase this year to more than one million passengers per annum, says Rajiv Jalota, Chairman, Mumbai Port Trust, adding that India has one of the lowest cruise tariffs in the world and is the only country that offers a composite cruise tariff.



Hazel Jain

“India has the potential to become an exceptional cruise tourism destination. One of the studies, which was undertaken by my predecessor Sanjay Bhatia in 2016-17, had predicted that India’s cruise tourism industry has tremendous potential, and the growth may be 10-fold in the next decade, says **Rajiv Jalota**, Chairman, Mumbai Port Trust.

Lakshadweep opens up

With Cordelia Cruises opening the gates for Lakshadweep, now Costa Serena will sail to the Lakshadweep. “In fact, the Andaman islands and Puducherry are also popular destinations for cruising and are being demanded by lots of cruise lines. Cruise lines are willing to homeport of east coast of India. With various bold initiatives taken by the Central government, India is ready for cruising. India is working on enhancing the current cruise tourism ecosystem to facilitate the anticipated growth. Our ministry has formed

an apex body and to help this body, there is a high-level advisory committee. Costa and Carnival members are also part of this advisory committee. Cruise vessel handling terminals with all amenities at ports for facilitating cruise business and ease of movement of passengers are being developed at our seven major ports – Mumbai, Goa, Mangalore, Kochi, Chennai, Vizag and Kolkata,” he said.

Port infrastructure

The upgraded port infrastructure in Mumbai will support proper berthing of cruise vessels and facilities required by cruise vessels such as immigration, customs, waste discharge, provision of loading proper arrangements for embarking and disembarking of cruise passengers and movement of such tourists for sight-seeing. Upgradation and modernisation of the cruise infrastructure is being undertaken at all these ports to handle bigger vessels, and a larger volume of passenger traffic with reduced turnaround time.



Rajiv Jalota
Chairman
Mumbai Port Trust

Jalota adds, “In fact, the Mumbai Port has also embarked on a study on provisioning of shore power for cruise vessels and in a couple of years, we may be in a position to provide shore power to them. We also intend to undertake a study along with Indian Port Association and Director General of Shipping on how ship to ship transfer of LNG to cruise vessels is also possible. This

is because the new cruise vessels that are being ordered across the globe are becoming LNG compliant and that is why we have to be ready to provide this facility and all across our major ports.”

Most of the cruise traffic in India is generated in Mumbai, Mormugao, Kochi and New Mangalore. “With the commissioning of our dedicated Mumbai international cruise terminal at Indira Dock, by the end of 2023 or early 2024, the international cruise traffic is expected to get a boost. This terminal will have the capacity to handle 1 million passengers per annum and cruise ships with capacity of up to 10,000 passengers,” Jalota adds.

There have been several improvements such as the various immigration and customs regulations

being liberated, cabotage relaxation regime has been given up to 2029, and discounted tariff policy. “In fact,

By the end of 2023 or early 2024, the Mumbai terminal will have the capacity to handle 1 million passengers per annum

we have the lowest cruise tariff rates across the world in India, and which is a composite tariff. No other country offers a composite cruise tariff

and we were the first to start this. Plus, our apex committee has also directed us to further ease these standard operating procedures across various ports as far as immigration, customs, and security is concerned. And before the new cruise season starts from this October, we will be in a position to update these SOPs,” he says.

The first Incredible India International Cruise Conference was organised in May 2022 in Mumbai. The second edition will be held in November 2023. “We believe that this year India will also cross pre-COVID cruise passenger numbers. And the number of cruise calls that are going to happen in the coming cruise season is also very encouraging. We have reports of 39 international cruise calls and 100 domestic cruise calls,” Jalota says.

Indian economy has shown resilience amid an uncertain global outlook in the post-pandemic era with an annual real GDP growth of 7.2 per cent in FY23 and 8.7 per cent in FY22. India's GDP is projected to grow at 6.5 per cent in FY24.

Rise of Experiential Sports Travel

India's Outbound Travel Surges: DreamSetGo leads the way, curating unparalleled sports experiences for discerning travellers. With a focus on the MISE (Meetings, Incentives, Sports & Experiences) segment and unique experiential offerings, the shift from sightseeing to immersive sports journeys drives industry growth.

TT Bureau

Growing rapidly under the radar, India's appetite for outbound travel has been turning several eyeballs. Registering a 190 per cent rise in outbound travel, India leads the Asian continent with over 10 million foreign trips, according to the report published by IPK International and published in ITB Berlin 2024. Framing an understanding on the basis of this exponential increase along with the change in consumer travel patterns, it is easy to understand how sports experiences will push India's outbound travel appetite even further.

Post pandemic, the influence the sports market has had on outbound tourism cannot be understated. According to a report by

Future Market Insights report says sports travellers account for 10-12% of the entire outbound travel market post the pandemic

market analysts Future Market Insights (FMI), Sports travellers account for 10-12 per cent of the entire outbound travel market post the pandemic - Five years ago, this number was noted to be barely 5-7 per cent.



Amit Vyas
Head – MICE & Sports Travel
DreamSetGo

Founded with a vision to increase accessibility for Indians to sport-

perience platform, DreamSetGo seeks to innovate and curate lasting experiences with fans alongside their favourite teams, players and tournaments. Growing from strength to strength, DreamSetGo is a member of the DreamSports family that houses iconic brands like Dream11 and Fancode; has been instrumental in developing and facilitating Indian accessibility to key sporting events. In 2021, the company was acquired by Dream Sports, a sports technology company and the parent company of India's biggest sports gaming platform. With the guidance and network of the Dream Sports ecosystem, DreamSetGo continues to grow.



High Tea with Sourav Ganguly at Lord's Cricket Stadium

ing events and contributing to nation building in the process, DreamSetGo has come a long way since its inception in 2020 and has grown significantly in the past 2-3 years. A sports ex-

As the company continues to grow in the post-pandemic world, corporate travel with a sporty twist has emerged as a key focus area. Focusing on the MISE segment – DreamSetGo looks to facilitate

travel for the top 10-15 percentile of traveller profiles. The company offers a wide range of services, including travel management, event planning, and incentive travel. Today, discerning travellers are looking for unique and experiential travel options rather than traditional sightseeing tours. With budgets not factoring as a major constraint, individuals from this sector are willing to spend on unique experiences and as a result the innovative factor of the service from an accessibility, attraction, and accommodation point of view needs to match expectations.

At DreamSetGo, they pride on delivering 'money can't buy' experiences with the greatest premium hospitality access, athlete meets and greets, and private charters with sports legends. "Today's customers crave more than just a culinary journey; they yearn for remarkable venues that elevate their overall experience. The shift from menu to venue highlights the growing importance of immersive and unforgettable moments," says

Amit Vyas, Head – MICE & Sports Travel, DreamSetGo. The shift in customer preferences from the traditional 'sightseeing' approach to one that is experiential and layered with sports has allowed them to innovate and capture a significant market in the sector. With offerings that include High Tea with Sourav Ganguly at the Lord's Stadium, a private yacht dinner planned with Brett Lee in Australia, a DSG Diwali party with Venkatesh Prasad, Aamir Sohail, Mike Hussey and Gautam Bhimani during the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia, current and potential clients are guaranteed an experience like no other. In the recent past, they hosted a holistic experience at ICC Women's T20 World Cup South Africa 2023 to ensure the clients have the best sporting experience as well as with Manchester United, hosting one of their leading corporates to watch the live match between the Red Devils and Fulham.

In the past 12 months alone, DreamSetGo has facilitated more than 5,000 Indian sports travel-

lers to major sporting events like the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Australia 2022, F1 Experiences, Wimbledon Championships, and the FIFA World Cup. Working alongside several other high profile international sporting entities to curate personalised experiences away from the usual match day experience, DreamSetGo also has partnerships with Manchester United, On Location, ICC Travel & Tours, and Rugby World Cup 2023.

As customer demand and mindset shift continues to dictate the experience, they are certain that this year will provide an excellent opportunity for the cross-border sports tourism industry to thrive. As there continues to be a significant untapped market for outbound luxury sports travel

DreamSetGo seeks to innovate and curate lasting experiences with fans alongside their favourite teams, players and tournaments

in India due to the niche nature of the industry, a need to constantly innovate new offerings will be key to standing out and bridging the knowledge gap. As the second half of 2023 looks promising from a sporting event perspective, DreamSetGo hopes to facilitate sports experiences for more than 10,000 people by the end of the year.



Monish Shah, Founder & CEO of DreamSetGo, with Sourav Ganguly

Key trends revolutionising travel space

Yatra Prime is a game-changing subscription offering that enhances the way customers experience travel with a wide range of exceptional benefits. This remarkable subscription offering sets Yatra apart as a trailblazer, providing customers with unparalleled benefits that redefine the travel experience, bringing it to new heights of luxury and convenience.



Due to a rapid increase in digitization post the COVID-19 pandemic, tourists have begun to expect personalized services according to their prerequisites, seamless travel experience and a prompt response to their queries regarding travel. The new trends are shaping travellers' experiences and vacation choices. New trends and technological advancements while exhibiting such trends promise an even more interactive and exciting experience, which has changed the way we travel in this era. Knowing and understanding the current trends allow those in the industry to tailor their operations to meet consumer demand. It is pertinent for tourism businesses to stay up to date.

Millennials have also played a substantial role in this paradigm shift. They love to travel and are passionate about new technological displays. This combined interest has paved a path to a new context where social media, apps, blogs, and so much more have an important part to play when it's time to plan a trip. In this digital age, with user-generated recommendations, and hotels/ hostels providing digital solutions for a personalized experience, the customers can themselves create more touchpoints and channels while making their travel decisions.

We spoke to India's leading travel services provider, Yatra Online Limited (Yatra), to compile a list of top trends that travellers should expect for this year.

Cancellation protection – with zero cancellation fee!
As travellers plan and book their next trip, they are doing so knowing that these plans could still be interrupted by illness or any other change in travel plan. The cancellation protection feature facilitates the traveller to book in advance and this is immensely beneficial when you are planning in advance and do not want your money getting stuck.

The ultimate travel membership is here

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Special introductory offer: 1299 **₹999*** for first 10,000 subscribers only!

*limited period offer

With cancellation protection feature, we aim to provide a safety net for our customers, ensuring that they can travel with confidence

Considering this, it's not surprising that one of the key tourism trends of the past year has been flexible booking policies. Most booking apps guarantee free cancellation, however, charge a premium while the booking is processed adding it to your total cost. Yatra is offering an additional benefit of "free cancellation protection" on all domestic flight bookings. "With cancellation protection feature, we aim to provide a safety net for our customers, ensuring that they can travel with confidence," says **Dhruv Shringi**, Co-Founder & CEO, Yatra.com

Book now, pay later
Domestic and international travels have picked up since the pandemic but, be it budget travel or solo backpacking, there are no

free lunches anywhere. Rising hotel rates and inflation have also increased the cost of travel. Travel companies and their payment partners are, hence, offering 'Book Now, Pay Later' travel schemes for tourists to enjoy travelling. Travel BNPL or travel now, pay later schemes also advance to interest free EMI for three and six-month EMI payment tenures. This feature gives travellers the option of paying back after returning from the trip in instalments without interest for a period ranging from a few days to a few months.

Flexi-stay
Another problem faced by travellers these days is checking-in at a hotel for a few hours but having to pay the tariff for an entire day. In Flexi stays, whether you stay at a hotel for as short as four hours or span it over a period of three days, you pay only for the duration stayed at the hotel. Travellers can now enjoy their stays and not have to pay extra for additional hours.

Yatra Prime
Yatra Prime subscription unlocks a world of advantages for its members, making travel more affordable, convenient, and enjoyable. Key features of Yatra Prime encompass numerous benefits

that go beyond expectations, such as no convenience fees over and above all on-going offers, special fares on domestic air tickets, and access to dedicated and on-priority VIP customer support. In addition to the exceptional benefits of Yatra Prime, subscribers can look forward to milestone-based rewards that further enhance the membership experience. To celebrate the launch, Yatra is offering a special introductory offer for the first 10,000 subscribers.

Sustainable Travel & Responsible Tourism
From an economic standpoint, sustainable travel and responsible tourism are two major keywords that are transforming the way people travel and the impact that tourism has on the world. These have become increasingly popular in recent years as travellers become more aware of the impact of their choices and seek out more ethical and sustainable ways to explore the world. Sustainable

yatra Cricket Mania

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- FLAT **₹599 OFF*** ON DOMESTIC FLIGHTS
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- FLAT **5% OFF*** ON BUSES

These lucky members will enjoy exclusive benefits and privileges tailored to enhance their travel experiences even further.

Yatra Prime offers the best deals to their valued customers through all their channels, wherein customers can avail zero convenience fees, along with ongoing bank promotions and deals – offering a significant advantage and savings for the traveller. During the membership period, customers will also have the opportunity to earn Yatra vouchers by achieving spending milestones of ₹1 lakh, ₹2 lakh, and up to ₹10 lakh.

travel and responsible tourism involve reducing carbon footprints, supporting local communities, and preserving natural and cultural resources. There has been a noticeable rise in weekend getaway trips like nature retreats and luxury resorts around big metro cities. Hostels are also now offering long stay options with high-speed internet and have become more popular. Therefore, they aim to create a more responsible and sustainable travel industry that benefits both travellers and the destinations they visit. As more and more people embrace these trends, travel companies are also

adapting by offering sustainable and responsible travel options that align with these values. This shift towards more sustainable and responsible tourism is a key trend that is revolutionizing travel space and has the potential to create a positive impact on the world. "Yatra Prime aims to surpass expectations of travellers by providing unparalleled value and charging zero convenience," says **Dhruv Shringi**, Co-Founder & CEO, Yatra.com

Yatra Prime aims to surpass expectations of travellers by providing unparalleled value and convenience

Wellness Travel
Wellness and improving quality of life is fuelling travel in 2023. Wellness and well-being are no longer being looked at as an extravagance and are instead considered responsible investments and

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Operations

GURGAON, AHMEDABAD,
MUMBAI, JALANDHAR

Revenue Management

GURGAON



Exp: Minimum 2 to 5 years



Email Resume at: amit.arora@yatra.com

2K+ meets @Travel Wedding Show

The eighth edition of Travel Wedding Show, organised at the Mementos by ITC Hotels, Ekaaya Udaipur on 24-25 June 2023, recorded a whopping 2,015 meetings. The two-day event saw 31 exhibitors interact with 65 wedding planners over pre-scheduled table-top meetings, showcasing their offerings that would interest the growing wedding market.



Networking in City of Lakes **Travel** WEDDING SHOW



Paris gets new shopping hub

McArthurGlen has recently launched its latest outlet—Designer Outlet Paris-Giverny. The centre offers its guests the opportunity to experience the very best of French savoir vivre with a perfect combination of fashion, art and gastronomy from nearby Normandy, shares Matthias Sinner, Head of Tourism, McArthurGlen Group.



TT Bureau

Sharing more about the outlet, **Matthias Sinner**, Head of Tourism, McArthurGlen Group, says that Designer Outlet Paris-Giverny is the group's new luxury and premium shopping destination, located just to the west of Paris. "The centre offers its guests the opportunity to experience the very best of French savoir vivre with a perfect combination of fashion, art and gastronomy from nearby Normandy," he adds.

The French touch

Spanning over 20,000 square metres, the centre boasts a thoughtfully curated brand mix of international fashion favourites, including Missoni, Stella McCartney, Moncler, Philipp Plein, Vivienne Westwood, BOSS, Furla, Karl Lagerfeld, Tommy Hilfiger, Maje, Angelo Vintage, New Balance, Adidas, Claudie Pierlot, L'Oréal and Roberto Cavalli at a minimum of 30 per cent off, reveals Sinner.



Matthias Sinner
Head of Tourism
McArthurGlen Group

"It also plays host to an exceptional line up of food and beverage options, including the globally recognised luxury Parisian establishments Ladurée and Angelina, famous for their delicate macarons and iconic hot chocolate respectively. For guests looking to treat themselves further, French gelato brand

Amorino and an elegant champagne bar offer the perfect places to pause and relax while shopping, and the popular American burger chain Five Guys caters to customers craving a quick bite between visiting their favourite stores," he adds.

Unique offerings

In fact, Sinner reveals, "Not only does Designer Outlet Paris-Giverny have the McArthurGlen DNA, delighting visitors and providing them with an extraordinary day-out experience, it is also home to an exclusive Maison des Métiers d'Art, GVRNY, newly launched in June. Conceived by the world-renowned designer Mathieu Lehanneur, the Maison des Métiers d'Art is an immersive space dedicated to showcasing the exceptional craftsmanship of the Normandy region where the centre is located."

USP

Designer Outlet Paris-Giverny is located just 45 minutes from the Arc de Triomphe. "It provides the



ideal day out for discerning shoppers to explore the brands they love at irresistible outlet prices all year round. Paris-Giverny's luxurious proposition is elevated by the centre's contemporary and elegant architectural style, providing visitors with beautiful surroundings where they can shop, eat and relax. Striking living walls by the French artist and botanist, Patrick Blanc,

and expertly implemented by Biotecture, are complemented by an expanse of green roofing and lush landscaping to create a real shopping oasis," he claims.

Family destination

Paris-Giverny is an ideal place for family visits too. "It has a bespoke, covered outdoor children's play area, offering the centre's very

youngest guests the perfect place to experience their own McArthurGlen adventure," he informs.

Sustainability in focus

Paris-Giverny is guided by McArthurGlen's sustainability program, Evolve, which has been designed to minimise negative impact on the planet, maximise positive impact on communities, he says. 🌱

Amritara enters Sikkim

Amritara Hotels & Resorts has acquired Hidden Land hotel in Sikkim to launch its 18th luxury property, Amritara Hidden Land, which aims to cater to nature lovers and adventure seekers.



TT Bureau

Amritara Hotels and Resorts launched its 18th luxury property, Amritara Hidden Land, in Sikkim recently. The new property is expected to cater to nature lovers and adventure seekers.

The hotel group's new property has been launched by acquiring Hidden Land hotel, a local property. "We are happy to welcome this new property (Hidden Land hotel) to Amritara. This merger would enable us to provide commitments to our guests and offering best room stays," said **Sarvar Hans**, Vice President-Commercial, Amritara Hotels and Resorts. Hans said that the hotel group believes in selling experiences, and not just room nights.

"Customers can delve into next level of experience with breathtaking views of Kanchenjunga and other natural wonders. Apart from that, Sikkim's local cuisines would be offered to the customers," he said, adding that, "We would try to offer curated experiences that provide insights into the local traditions, music, cui-



Sarvar Hans
Vice President-Commercial
Amritara Hotels and Resorts

sines, and dance forms, ensuring a holistic inclusion of culture."

About the occupancy levels, he said there was a 15 per cent increase, as compared to the last year. "We are emerging as a better brand with excellent hospitality services. The occupancy for this year is 65 per cent and we are positioning ourselves as the fastest growing hotel chain in India," he said.

Hans said that travel trade is of immense importance to Am-

ritara. "But this time we are more focused and will be playing around handcrafted packages and special rates," he said. Over the group's global plans, he said, "We already are in the international market, as we have

We are happy to welcome this new property (in Sikkim). This merger would enable us to provide commitments to our guests and offering best room stays

started a new operational office in Germany." He said, "We are practicing loyalty programs and we make sure that every guest will get to know about all Amritara's other properties." He said that Amritara is constantly adding properties, as they are planning to extend to 30 plus hotels by 2024. 🌱

Goa Radisson to add 23 keys

Radisson Blu Resort Goa Cavelossim Beach will add 23 rooms with an additional swimming pool, which will take the inventory to 155 keys, along with an additional banquet of 2,300 sq.ft.



TT Bureau

Radisson Blu Resort Goa, located at Cavelossim Beach, is a beautiful blend of Portuguese and Goan architecture. About 100 keys out of the 132 keys are in villa style with private balconies overlooking manicured lawns offering guests the privacy they seek. It is also the only five-star resort in south Goa with a lounge bar called The Copa Cabana, which is a popular hangout with resident and non-resident guests.

Sharing details of developments at the hotel, **Ajith Nair**, Resident Manager, Radisson Blu Resort Goa Cavelossim Beach, says, "We will be adding 23 more rooms to this resort with an additional swimming pool, which will take our inventory to 155 keys and also an additional banquet of 2,300 sq.ft. Apart from Radisson Blu Resort in Cavelossim and Radisson Candolim, we will be launching our new upper-upscaled boutique resort in Mandrem, North Goa in late Q2."

Nair adds that Q1 this year has been good with an occupancy of



Ajith Nair
Resident Manager, Radisson Blu
Resort Goa Cavelossim Beach

82 per cent; the business mix of 54 per cent from MICE and wedding bookings and 46 per cent from direct channels and through their trade partners. "We are witnessing an upward trend in conversions from non-negotiated mix," he says.

Touching upon a trending topic that is gaining popularity these days, he says that the resort has already implemented measures such as EV charging stations, an in-house nurtured organic vegetable garden for

the guests to choose the greens of their choice. Apart from conservation, measures like LED lights, water recycling and rainwater harvesting has been implemented. "We are also in process of implementing a bottling plant," Nair adds.

The resort ensures that it meets and interacts with its trade partners and corporate bookers during the domestic and international travel

The resort ensures that it meets and interacts with its trade partners and corporate bookers during the domestic and international travel shows

shows. "We will also be looking at conducting a Fam trip in September 2023 for them post the completion of our new banquet facility," he adds. 🌱

Stuba curations to facilitate agents

Stuba has launched two new curations to their website - Trade Deals and Boutique Hotels. While Trade Deals curation will show agents where there is a bigger pricing gap versus online public rates, their 'Boutique Hotels' curation is designed for travel agents to engage with their discerning guests looking for an alternative to larger hotels.



The new curations by Stuba have been designed with agents at the forefront, knowing that the rate they are offering their customers will be the best price and offer transparency. Thus, it will save them time, do their own research, and the customer will have the reassurance of getting a preferential rate and

booking via a travel agent. Apart from that Stuba has launched the 'Boutique Hotels' curation, designed for travel agents to engage with their discerning guests looking for an alternative to larger hotels and chains.

Explaining about the two new curations of the company, **Ruchir Bang**, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Stuba, said, "Our latest

The new curations will automatically be visible within Stuba's curated listings alongside other popular categories

curations are both designed to make our partners' lives easier. Boutique hotels are incredibly popular, so to have a curation that highlights them is fantastic. Some of the hotels within the collection are offering value-added offers, which are also easy to find. Trade Deals is giving power back to the agent, so that they can be confident that they are offering a price difference over and above online

public rates; a win-win for them and their customers."

These new curations will automatically be visible within Stuba's curated listings alongside other popular categories including Luxe, Beach and Trending with Other Agents. The more travel agents start to use the curated listings, the more travel agents will start to receive valuable recommendations.



Ruchir Bang
CEO
Stuba

Rajasthan grants full industry status to tourism & hospitality

Tourism and hospitality sector in Rajasthan has been designated as a full-fledged industry recognition. As a result, investors are exhibiting a keen interest in investing in the state's tourism sector. **Rashmi Sharma**, Director, Rajasthan Tourism, said, "The Rajasthan Tourism Department is currently focusing on identifying and developing new, lesser-known tourist destinations within the state as part of its new tourism policy, which is continually luring investors to invest in the state and allows them to conduct all of their business through a single window rather than compelling them to visit various places".

For those looking to invest in the tourism industry, Rajasthan is increasingly becoming the preferred choice. During the tenure of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in the state, from December 2018 to June 2023, a total of 802 tourism units have been sanctioned in the state, under which the state will receive an investment of ₹10,463 crore. These approved tourism units will generate employment opportunities to 40,785 people in the state.

Simultaneously, in 2022, the Rajasthan Inquiry Committee was constituted, which included the President. The committee oversees 379 pilgrimages in the tourism industry, of which 55 have been completed and 149 are currently in various phases. This initiative will invest ₹14,680 crore in the state and create jobs for 60,687 people.

The units that receive this certificate receive power at industrial prices, which are around 30 per cent lower than commercial rates. At the same time, UD tax on these units is levied at industrial rates, which are 80 per cent lower than commercial rates.

Say goodbye to 'I've seen it cheaper direct...'

How many times have you heard that line and wanted to curl up, having done all the hard work and your customer ends up booking elsewhere?

Well, no longer! We're launching our biggest curation to date; our brand-new **Trade Deals** curation.

Our trade deals will:

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Access Trade Deals with Stuba - it could make a world of difference to you and your customers!

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► Contd from page 5



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

“The pandemic induced lockdown led to customers being confined to their homes and this has resulted in travellers opting for outdoor and adventure experiences. India's significant geographical advantage with presence of mountains, rivers, valleys, desserts and deep seas creates a great potential for adventure activities. India is an adventurer's paradise offering unlimited adventure experiences that give an adrenaline rush. Some of the adventure activities in India include paragliding, trekking, zip lining, white-water rafting, rappelling, wildlife safaris, skiing and snow sledding in the snow-covered mountains, biking trips and water sports like scuba diving, snorkelling, dolphin spotting, kayaking and more; also game drives at India's leading national reserves.”



Tejbir Singh Anand
Founding Board of Director & Vice
Chairman, FAITH, Sr VP, ATOAI

“India was always a viable Adventure destination. The important question is how much of a preferred adventure destination it is. There is no denying the fact that what India has to offer as its adventure offerings, there is no other destination which can compete or stand up to it. India offers one of the safest and greatest adventure experiences, which easily comply with the international safety guidelines and standards. India is perhaps one of the very few countries whose offerings are unmatched. Here is what India offers and there are so many reasons to make it a favoured destination. India is 12 months, four seasons' destination, ranked 34th on the World Travel and Tourism Index driven by rich natural and cultural resources.”



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

“India has a lot of potential to promote adventure tourism and gradually we can see the facilities are coming up. We have Himalayas, we have lakes, we have rivers, we have gorges, we have the desert. India has everything which has potential for adventure tourism and India is going to be the future destination for adventure tourism. It will show up on the map of adventure tourism. What needs to be done to make it an adventure tourism is that government has to now support to get the facilities and the security and the safety measures intact, bring rules and regulations in it, make a body which will monitor that and also have a body which can expand the tourism sector and facilitate land and other facilities. I think single window for this will be a good idea to move it faster.”



Vinayak Koul
Director
SnowLion Expeditions

“Adventure Tourism is one of the main catalysts that is helping in transforming the National Tourism Vision of India. It is touted to be the perfect vehicle for achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. India's adventure industry is expected to grow at a rate of 20 per cent per annum in the next five years and reach a value of US\$ 2 billion by 2028. With more than 30 adventure verticals encompassing land, air and water, India offers exhilarating and unique experiences throughout the year. India has immense potential for adventure with its diverse terrain and rich cultural heritage, from the Himalayan ranges in the north to the backwaters of Kerala in the south, from deserts in the west to a long coastline in the east and some exotic wildlife parks in the northeast.”



Reena Sachdev
Founder
Travel Arena

“India is a viable destination for adventure travel, but whether it is a preferred destination or not is debatable. It may take some more time as we do have the topography, locations and supportive weather in the correct months depending on the destination plus there is awareness of the importance of adventure tourism more than before now. Since we haven't been most famous for our safety standards even for mere driving on the roads to any adventure sports, the first step would be marketing the safety measures taken for the adventure activities by showcasing that they are at par with any international destination which is known for its adventure offerings and blowing it all over in order to create a sense of security in people to be willing to try it.”



Kartik Gagger
CEO, Founder
Slo Mo Experiences

“Is India becoming a preferred adventure destination? Our country due to its cultural experiences, natural beauty (north) and adrenaline activities, is becoming a highly sought after adventure destination. Just looking at the Instagram content - the Himalayan region has been covered (post pandemic) with a remarkable increase of newer destinations and unexplored places. This includes Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Himachal. Wildlife tourism has also picked up. It's like the soulful connect with nature and luxury, apart from the adventure and learning for wildlife enthusiasts. I personally visited Ranthambore for the first time, maybe due to the hype and accessibility. Also, scuba diving is picking up a lot of pace.”



Niraj Vashi
Director
Nivalink Holidays

“Traditionally India for Indians was about monuments, sightseeing and following an itinerary on a holiday. That is changing with more travellers opting for activity-based travel and some of the activities are adventure oriented such as Trekking, White-Water rafting, Paragliding etc. Therefore, destinations such as Manali, Rishikesh, Bir, Kashmir etc. are witnessing a rapid growth in tourist arrivals. Adventure travel in India for an International traveller (Inbound), has always been about the mountains and its foothill areas. So Himalayan Treks, Walking itineraries, rafting are some of the popular areas. However, in comparison to Nepal, India gets a small fraction of adventure travel from inbound travellers. That is because lack of adequate infrastructure.”



Priya Rupani
VP- Sales & Marketing
Marc Asia Group

“India is already emerging as a popular adventure destination, and the trend has continued to strengthen. India offers a diverse range of adventure activities, from trekking in the Himalayas to water sports in coastal regions, wildlife safaris, desert safaris, and much more. Several factors contribute to India's growing popularity as an adventure destination. Over the years, India has invested in improving its adventure tourism infrastructure, including accommodation, transportation, and safety measures. Compared to some other adventure hotspots, India can be a more budget-friendly option. India offers unique adventure opportunities, such as exploring ancient caves, river rafting in the Ganges, and wildlife safaris in national parks.”



Dipti Pradhan Thakoor
Director, Adventure Holidays
and ETAA Event Head

“India was always known for its adventure and mountaineering due to its diverse terrain. The Northern Region with the massive mountain ranges has attracted adventure lovers for years now. India offers activities catering to every budget and grade. India has the much-sought Jungle Safaris with tiger being one of the main attractions, Northern region attracting mountaineering, gushing rivers offering white water rafting, caving in the North Eastern and the South with a long ocean line for water sports. India has it all to cater to every preference and expertise. Most importantly, adventure norms set by the Government have to be implemented and have Government registered adventure tour operators with standards of safety and experience.”



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

“India's incredible geography allows adventure seekers to explore various thrilling sports. With more than 30 adventure verticals encompassing land, air and water, India offers exhilarating and unique experiences throughout the year. Each location has immense potential for adventure tourism with its diverse terrain and rich cultural heritage. Northern India is a hotspot for adventure travel: paragliding in Bir, trekking in the Himalaya, white-water rafting in Rishikesh, rappelling in Manali, wildlife safaris in Jim Corbett National Park, skiing in the snow-covered mountains of Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, and zip lining over the Ganges. Southern India offers adventure seekers the southern part of the country, there are biking trails and trekking options.”



Benafier Kapadia
VP- Sales & Marketing
The Club Mumbai

“India is truly gifted with diverse landscapes. Be it for the soaring mountains or forest zones or pristine beaches or deep oceans. From the snow-clad region of Kashmir, to the dune bashing at Jaisalmer, to the meandering back waters of Kerala and Poovar, or scuba diving at Havelock Island, there's no looking back for destinations that cater to adrenaline junkies. To position India as a preferred destination for adventure tourism, globally, Ministry of Tourism has formulated a National Strategy for Adventure Tourism that shall focus on strengthening adventure tourism safety management and encourage private sector participation and investments. It also shared that India will have two mega adventure trails in 2023 - the Ganga Trail and Northwestern Himalayan Trail.”



Arshdeep Anand
CEO, Holiday Moods Adventures &
Chairman, ATOAI Women's Collective

“It will be wrong to underestimate the potential of India as an adventure destination. India's viability as an adventure destination has been undermined and not showcased even till now. India's offerings as an adventure destination are one of the safest experiences on global standards. There are very few countries which offer so many experiences under one roof namely wildlife with many wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and biosphere reserves, more than 73 per cent of the Himalayan range, long rivers systems, deserts, long coastline, backwaters, high altitude lakes and wetlands. There is something on offer for everyone throughout the year. There are thirty-one verticals of adventure activities already listed on the adventure tour operators associations website.”

Rebuilding and redefining tourism

The tourism industry in New Zealand has faced unprecedented challenges and as the country seeks to rebuild and redefine its tourism sector, industry leaders gathered at the TRENZ 2023 to discuss the path forward. Rebecca Ingram, Chief Executive, Tourism Industry Aotearoa, highlights key aspects of the industry's future direction.



While New Zealand looks at a comprehensive plan to navigate the future of tourism, currently, international visitor arrivals, though recovering, are sitting at around 66 per cent of the pre-COVID levels. Holiday arrivals constituted only 40 per cent of pre-pandemic figures.

"The initial revenge travel surge has subsided, making it crucial to compete for high-quality visitors. However, New Zealand's spending indicators remained positive, with domestic spending holding strong, indicating a continued appreciation of the country's offerings by the local population," says **Rebecca Ingram**, Chief Executive, Tourism Industry Aotearoa.

Ingram highlighted that tourism recovery was not homogeneous, with different regions and businesses experiencing varying levels of recovery.

While some regions had a successful summer, workforce re-

New Zealand is working on a comprehensive industry strategy that reflected the significant shifts brought about by the pandemic

covery remained a challenge. To overcome this, the future of tourism needs to focus on regenerative tourism, says Ingram. "The DNA of the industry had been forever changed due to COVID-19, presenting an opportunity for regenerative tourism with a net positive impact. New Zealand's unique position allowed for the creation of next-generation tourism experiences that met the changing demands of consumers and the evolving expectations of New Zealanders," she adds.

"Various initiatives were undertaken to ensure that the New Zealand tourism experience was one to be proud of. Legislative changes, community-led destination management plans, and sustainability measures had been implemented in recent years. Destination management plans

played a significant role in shaping regional tourism offerings and capturing community wishes. The Aroha of Tourism campaign aimed to highlight the positive impact of tourism on communities and celebrate remarkable tourism operators benefiting New Zealand at various levels," she further adds.

New Zealand recognizes the critical role of events like TRENZ in con-

necting the tourism industry with overseas buyers and showcasing New Zealand's offerings.

"By bringing buyers and sellers together, TRENZ facilitated the creation of partnerships and deals that contributed to the wider economy, the host communities, and the families reliant on the tourism sector. TRENZ 2023 would build momentum for a stronger

future for New Zealand tourism," informed Ingram.

New Zealand is working on a comprehensive industry strategy that reflected the significant shifts brought about by the pandemic and outlines key strategic issues, including reducing tourism's carbon footprint, supporting industry prosperity, embedding Maori perspectives, and enhancing innovation

and technology. "The development of a vision for the industry has been highlighted as a crucial step. The vision of enriching Aotearoa New Zealand through a flourishing tourism ecosystem set the stage for pursuing outcomes that supported productive businesses, protected the environment, enhanced local communities, and delivered outstanding visitor experiences," concludes Ingram.



Rebecca Ingram
Chief Executive
Tourism Industry Aotearoa

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LOT Polish Airline to fly from its Global Hub at Warsaw Chopin Airport to Rome Fiumicino

Indian Tourism Statistics Report ranks Tamil Nadu as No. 1 in domestic tourist visits

MOT to promote sustainable practices & boost responsible infra in tourism industry, says Manisha Saxena, DG, Tourism

Rajasthan becomes first state to grant full industrial recognition to tourism and hospitality

Egyptair to start four weekly flights from Delhi to Cairo from August 4 this year

Despite economic challenges, 86 per cent Indian travellers optimistic about travel plans: Booking.com

Every dollar invested in civil aviation yields US\$3.1 in terms of new growth: Scindia

'Saadiyat Island is like Maldives of ME'

From discussing the importance of the travel trade to exploring tier IV & V markets in India, Liam Findlay, Chief Executive Officer, Miral Destinations, highlights the popularity of Yas Island and introduces Saadiyat Island, a hidden gem in Abu Dhabi.



Saadiyat Island, located in Abu Dhabi, is a hidden gem that offers a unique blend of history, culture, relaxation, and opulence. Situated amid the sparkling turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf, Saadiyat Island provides an exceptional escape. The island boasts of luxurious resorts, pristine white sandy beaches, and a wealth of museums, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Additionally, numerous upcoming museums on the island are set to further enhance its cultural offerings. "Miral is the destination management company for Saadiyat. The island is sort of your transformative beach destination, and it has been awarded for 11 years in a row as the best beach destination in the Middle East. We are confident that it will gain popularity among Indians as well," says **Liam Findlay**, CEO, Miral Destinations.

Discussing the importance of India for Miral Destination's Yas Is-



Liam Findlay, CEO, Miral Destinations

land, Findlay emphasizes on the significance of the Indian market, noting its immense potential for economic growth and travel opportunities. "While the focus on first-tier cities like New Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore has been prevalent for years, there has been a notable shift towards exploring the untapped potential of tier-II, tier-III, and even tier-IV and tier-V cities. Miral Destinations has recognized this trend and invested heavily in India, making

it its primary market for growth," he says. The CEO highlights the success of their strategic partnership with Indian actor Ranveer Singh, who was appointed as their brand ambassador. Singh's visits to Yas Island for various events, such as UFC and F1 races, have strengthened the relationship between Yas Island and the Indian market. With extensive data analysis and market research, Miral Destinations

has identified India as its number one market, leading to significant investments in the country. "Miral Destinations has expanded its presence in India, we have tripled the size of our office strength and increased our sales force to focus on tier-II, tier-III, and now tier-IV and tier-V cities," highlights Findlay. Interestingly, the length of stay is also increasing in Yas Island. Traditionally, Yas Island was a single-day destination or an add-on to Dubai. "What we are

seeing now is that the length of stay is increasing to that three, four, five-day visits," he adds.

Findlay emphasises on building long-term relationships with trade partners and the impor-

Situated amid the sparkling turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf, Saadiyat Island provides an exceptional escape from hectic life

tance of B2B partnerships. "India is our number one priority. We have invested. We said we were going to invest in it, and I think we have shown people that we were true to it," he says.

Experts explore wedding potential

Contd from page 5

other nations in the industry. In contrast, countries like the United States have experienced a decline of two per cent," he said.

Challenges with hotel pricing
However, Jain expressed concern over pricing issue with Indian hotels. He revealed that hotels in India tend to charge exorbitantly for wedding events, which is becoming a hindrance for wedding agencies. "Hotels should consider reasonable pricing to support international partners and cater to the growing Indian wedding market," he suggested.

Spain as wedding destination
Elisa Maria Robles Fraga, highlighting Spain's potential as a prime wedding destination, shared a few crucial aspects. The country has pleasant Mediterranean climate, rich cultural heritage with picturesque venues like castles and monasteries, she said.

Simplifying visa procedures
Responding to Jain's concerns over visa processing delays for Indian weddings in Europe, Fraga said, "The visa application process has improved significantly. The Spanish consulate in Mumbai



Rajeev Jain
Founder and Managing Director
Rashi Entertainment



Elisa Maria Robles Fraga
Director (India)
Spain Tourism Board



Kamilia Hani Abdul Halim
Deputy Director
Tourism Malaysia



Aishvarya Guhagarkar
Director MICE
Switzerland Convention Bureau

has streamlined procedures for big groups, including weddings with a quick turnaround time for visas."

Malaysia popular with Indians
Kamilia Hani Abdul Halim revealed Malaysia is well-acquainted with the presence of Indians, and Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Langkawi have become prominent attractions not only for Indian tourists, but also for visitors from various other nations. "These destinations hold immense popularity among Indian tourists. Malaysia boasts a significant Indian population, making it a familiar and welcoming

place for Indians. As a multicultural country, Malaysia embraces diverse customs and traditions, including those of the local Indian community. This cultural richness is one of the reasons why these locations are highly favoured by Indian travellers. Moreover, Malaysia offers a wide array of culinary delights, allowing individuals to easily find their preferred Indian cuisine," she said.

Wedding seasons in Malaysia
Halim pointed out that Malaysia's temperate climate allows weddings throughout the year except the monsoon season on the East Coast,

which lasts from September to February. She advised to avoid this period and recommended March to August as the most suitable months for destination weddings.

Streamlined visa process
Halim emphasized that Malaysia's government has improved the visa facilitation, offering assistance for groups with specific requirements, including special treatment and direct flights to destinations with no direct access to Malaysia.

Customized packages
Aishvarya Guhagarkar emphasized

on Switzerland's offerings. "Switzerland offers a diverse range of wedding packages to cater to the specific needs and desires of Indian couples. These packages often include traditional Indian ceremonies, such as Mehndi and Sangeet, combined with Swiss-inspired elements to create a unique fusion of cultures," she said.

Catering to Indian palates
Guhagarkar said that Switzerland takes pride in catering to diverse culinary preferences, and Indian cuisine is no exception. "Indian food is absolutely no issue. You can get

a whole lot of variety. We have one of the biggest suppliers of Indian ingredients in Switzerland, and he has outlets in at least four different parts of Switzerland. So, ingredients are not an issue. Indian chefs are not an issue. They are all based in Switzerland in different regions. Couples and their guests can indulge in the flavours of home while enjoying the mesmerizing landscapes of Switzerland," she assured.

Switzerland's visa services
Guhagarkar emphasized on Switzerland's efficient visa services and its role in making Switzerland a dream destination for extravagant weddings. "Switzerland is the only country that has 13 VFS centres all across. We have done the maximum number of visas this year until the month of June. And we have done close to 30 per cent more visas than were issued compared to 2019. It's because we were well prepared," she said.

She elaborated on the close cooperation with the Switzerland embassy. "We tell them the forecast well in advance, as to which MICE groups are going, which tour operators are including Switzerland in their programs."

Tech help to cut visa rejections

Nikita Dresswala, Founder, Teleport, a company that provides visa services, says that with 10-30 per cent of visas applied by Indians being rejected, travel agents can help reduce visa rejections by leveraging technology platforms offering valuable assistance and support.



A total of 10-30 per cent of visas applied by Indians get rejected based on the country applied for, shares **Nikita Dresswala**, Founder, Teleport. She adds that mostly European cluster of countries, including Schengen countries like Greece, Malta, and Estonia have one of the highest rejection rates. "The main reason being hard guidelines, tough documentation processes and long waiting times, making customers and travel agents anxious," she says.

Technology to rescue

Travel agencies and companies play an important role in making the visa application process easier for Indian travellers, says Dresswala. "They guide travellers through the complexities, ensuring they meet the necessary requirements, using their expertise and industry knowledge. Travel companies become invaluable partners in achieving successful visa outcomes by understanding the most common reasons for visa rejections and staying up to date on the latest regulations. Teleport makes visa processes simple, by marrying tech-assisted

Travel agencies and companies play an important role in making the visa application process easier for Indians willing to visit foreign countries

streamlined application processes and personalised quality checks. Most of the visa application communication happens via email and manual collection today, and that makes the process cumbersome and prone to errors, using assisted tech and easy digital collection processes, Teleport has been able to help 100+ travel agents and companies already in giving the best travel experiences to their end-clients," she adds.

Dresswala also claims, "In the fight against visa rejections for Indian travellers, travel companies and agents have emerged as heroes. They can improve the visa application experience by leveraging technology platforms such as Use-teleport.com. Travel companies

enable Indian travellers to navigate the visa process with ease by providing accurate information, efficient document management, improved communication channels, and personalised support. Travel companies are leading the charge in reducing visa rejections with their expertise and the help of technology, ensuring that more Indian travellers can fulfil their dreams of exploring the world."

Accurate Information

Teleport offers a variety of services to help with visa rejection issues, which includes tech-assisted document collection and verification; accurate and up-to-date guidelines for every country and dedicated and spontaneous customer support, she says.

Document Management

She says that managing visa ap-

plication documents can be difficult. "Technology platforms, on the other hand, make this process easier by providing tools for document verification and organisation," shares Dresswala.

Better communication

Claiming that clear and timely communication is crucial during the visa application process, Dresswala suggests that travel

companies can now provide personalised assistance tailored to each client's specific needs. "Travel agents can provide individualised guidance and support because they have access to comprehensive visa information and real-time updates. This personalised approach boosts applicants' confidence and increases the likelihood of successful visa applications," she claims.



Nikita Dresswala
Founder
Teleport

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An ultimate Utah experience

Weaving together an itinerary to help your client navigate through Utah's red rock, scenic byways, ski slopes, unique history, and urban culture? Here are a few experiences you should include while touring through the Mighty 5® national parks, state parks and hidden gems of Utah from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas.



TT Bureau

Utah has the Wasatch Mountains and Salt Lake City to the north, the salt flats and Great Basin Desert to the west, red rock country and national parks to the south — and mountains, rivers, forests, and state parks everywhere in between. Wherever you are headed, there is a local community and basecamp town to provide you important amenities and inside knowledge along the way.

Photography session across two national parks

A day of hiking in Arches National Park is one that pairs world-famous landmark views with a humbling sense of respect for the desolate stretches of sandstone formations. The park is one of Southern Utah's most famous hiking destinations, with an easily accessible network of trails that often culminate right at the base of an impressive sandstone arch. Start building out your to-do list by exploring the trails like The Windows, Delicate Arch Viewpoint,

Fiery Furnace Viewpoint, and Sand Dune Arch to name a few.

Imagine endless deep canyons, towering mesas, pinnacles, cliffs, and spires stretching across 527 square miles. This is Canyonlands National Park, formed by the currents and tributaries of Utah's Green and Colorado rivers. Canyonlands is home to many different types of travel experiences, from sublime solitude in the more remote stretches of the park to moderate hikes through the Needles district, to the

opportunity to create your own version of one of the West's most photographed landforms, Mesa Arch.

Stargazing among the hoodoos of Bryce Canyon National Park

Bryce Canyon offers year-round, ranger-led programs and an annual Astronomy Festival in June. Long after the last drop of twilight fades to black, the next phase of the earth's rotation begins to shine. It is a part of the 24-hour cycle that many developed places have lost to the constant shine of the cityscape. Utah has several certified Dark Sky Parks, with Bryce Canyon being Utah's fourth national park, and 24th location altogether, to receive dark sky certification from the International Dark-Sky Association.

Drive ATVs to slot canyons in Kanab

Kanab, Utah is classic American West, surrounded by towering Navajo sandstone cliffs and vistas of sagebrush. On most Southern Utah bucket lists, you will find the local favourite of Peek-a-Boo Slot Canyon in one afternoon of

adventure with ATV. Take an ATV tour through to Peekaboo Slot Canyon with a short hike through stunning orange sandstone walls

catch your breath while climbing the trail to Observation Point or watching the shadows constantly change the mood of the Court of the Patri-



that make an amazing backdrop for photographs.

Hike to the majestic overlook of Zion Canyon in Greater Zion

A thousand-foot-deep red rock canyon, nestled in dramatic surroundings. Whether you are trying to

arches, Zion National Park is always ready to quench your appetite for outdoor wonder. Located just east of the famous Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel, the Zion Canyon Overlook Trail is just half a mile long, but it delivers some of the most spectacular views in the park. 🏹

Apply for an e-visa within 30 sec

As global trends shift towards digitalisation, the market for electronic visas has become even more popular. Amidst this, Atlys – a technology company specialising in e-visas – offers that in seconds. Pariket Doshi, GM (South Asia), Atlys, shares more details on how it can help travel agents and tour operators remove this huge stressor.



Hazel Jain

A lot of countries are now adopting or looking to adopt e-visas for many reasons, the most important amongst them being the speed with which visas can be processed for travellers. E-visas help automated decision-making which in turn means countries can process more visas with fewer resources. Further, with widespread digitisation, various data traveller points can be pulled through automation, which helps the country determine acceptance or rejection.

Overall, e-visas are a win-win for countries and travelers, says **Pariket Doshi**, General Manager (South Asia), Atlys. It is a technology company that specialises in e-visas that take only seconds. Its innovative technology has made the visa process easy, fast, and effortless. Currently, Atlys is focused on developing a B2B portal and now expanding the B2C app, that allows individuals to apply for visas within



Pariket Doshi
General Manager (South Asia)
Atlys

seconds. In addition, Atlys has recently introduced insurance.

Doshi says, "At Atlys, we have automated the visa application process for all e-visas. We currently have 1,000+ travel agents processing visas on behalf of their customers. Some of our top countries are UAE, Malaysia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Turkey, Cambodia, Kenya, Morocco



and Thailand. We have identified multiple pain points faced by our travel agents. Primarily, most agents were unaware of the documents required for specific countries and even after they identified the documents required, they were spending a long time to apply for visas manually or through an offline process. Further, many travel agents faced issues of having to log-in to multiple country portals to check the status of the client visas."

Atlys has built a B2B portal to resolve these pain points for the trade. "Our portal is easy to use, agents get a vast database of up-to-date visa requirements, guidelines and documentation for supported countries. Further, the portal saves time and resources



for the agent and provides real time status of visas through automation," Doshi adds.

Visas are still a huge point of stress for the travel agents and tour operators even today. Atlys has built an intuitive portal with interesting features. It takes less than a minute to create an account. A visa can be applied within 30 seconds and bulk uploads allow for multiple/group visas to be applied within just a few minutes. There is easy access to the ledger with automated invoices generated for each transaction and express visa options are available for multiple countries. There is even a WhatsApp bot which collects docu-

ments directly from the customer helping the agent in saving operational time and effort; and improved support response times in less than 30 minutes!

Further, based on feedback from agents, it has recently introduced travel insurance on the portal with competitive prices. "Also, we will be starting our fulfilment centers shortly, in order to support countries which have an offline visa process viz. South Africa, Israel, Turkey and many more. Our endeavor is to listen to our agents and build new features and products which solve their prob-

We provide e-visas for countries such as the UAE, Malaysia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Turkey, Cambodia, Kenya, Morocco and Thailand

lems. Agents can check out our portal on www.atlys.com/business," Doshi says.

Atlys features:

- ❖ Account is created under a minute
- ❖ Visa can be applied within 30 secs
- ❖ Bulk uploads allow for multiple visas to be applied within few minutes
- ❖ Easy access to the ledger with automated invoices generated for each transaction
- ❖ Express visa options for multiple countries
- ❖ WhatsApp bot collects documents directly from customer

Aiming 4mn cruise passengers by 2040

► Contd from page 5

events at these places, continue this momentum and attract more such activities at these destinations."

Sustainability goals

The Goa Roadmap was the final document released after the Ministerial meeting. Speaking on the way forward, Vidyavathi informed, "The five pillars on which the Goa Roadmap stands, following them is a big responsibility, and we will put out every effort to make sure that we work in that direction. We are already working on most of these priorities, for example, green tour-

the National Tourism Policy. We have suggested very strongly to build initiatives and strategy around these pillars and bring to the G20 Tourism Working Group. No one added anything else to it and were convinced on these priorities. The National Tourism Policy will take it forward," he claimed.

Dashboard

Talking about the dashboard, the MOT will create for case studies after the Ministerial meeting. Verma said, "We have surveyed all countries on how they look at these priorities contributing to sustainable develop-

ment goals (SDGs). We also asked them to give us specific case studies in their respective countries. They have given data responding to the survey form. UNWTO was our knowledge partner, who curated this data and made recommendations. We have signed a partnership with UNWTO for setting up this dashboard. We expect that in the next two-three months, this should be up and running."

Cruise tourism

The Goa TWG meeting focused on cruise tourism. Speaking on the matter, Verma shared, "We organ-

For us, it is the beginning of the opportunity to keep this momentum going for them as tourist destinations, especially for MICE

— V Vidyavathi

ised a session on national vision on cruise tourism, which the Ministry

of Shipping has been spearheading. Currently, we have 0.4 million cruise passengers who board cruises from India. The target is to take it to 4 million by 2040. Work is already going on towards strengthening of infrastructure, developing new circuits and inland cruise tourism. There is Ganga Vilas, which is one of the longest river cruises in the world. India has a lot of potential as there are cruises in river, coastal areas, backwaters, and ocean. For coastal cruises, hinterland also must be developed as people want to disembark from the cruise, and visit nearby places. Hence, there

is a need to integrate the development of those places with cruise development."

In Goa, private stakeholders and associations helped the MOT to put together the agenda. "We also received initial suggestions from industry for the National Strategy on Cruise Tourism. While the Shipping Ministry is spearheading most of the infrastructure and regulations, there is a connection with the MOT in terms of how to bring travel and tourism stakeholders and tourism planning into it," he said.



Rakesh Verma
Additional Secretary
MOT, GoI

Destinations hosting G20 meets have established themselves as having infra and capability to host such meets

ism, tourism MSMEs or destination management. The Goa Roadmap is the defining framework, under which, as a next step, we are going to talk to all the line ministries and tell them that these priorities must get integrated in every ministry's plan of action and workspace."

Verma added, "While previous G20 presidencies picked one focus area, our presidency had the most holistic way forward for the sector with five priority areas, encapsulating the bulk of the sector. We were also able to push one of our key priorities—Travel for LIFE, which is the vision of the PM, into a global document."

Tourism policy

Verma informed that the priorities in the Goa Roadmap were emanating from the National Tourism Policy. "Ultimately, it was our Presidency, and we need to present how we look at tourism on the global stage. The five pillars were picked up from



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EVENT TALK

Published from : India Middle East

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JULY 2023

Date	Event	Time
18-20	Holiday Expo-Vadodara 2023	9:00 am
21-23	India Travel Mart-New Delhi	11:00 am
25	India Travel Awards	7:00 pm
25-27	Gujarat Travel Fair 2023	10:00 am
28-30	India International Travel Mart-Bangalore	11:00 am
28-30	Mitran Travel Fair 2023	9:00 am

AUGUST 2023

2-3	MICE India & Luxury Travel Congress 2023-Goa	9:00 am
4-6	India International Travel Mart Chennai	10:00 am
4-6	Tourism Fair Jaipur	9:00 am
6-10	NIMA Convention	10:00 am
9-10	GPS-Ahmedabad	10:00 am
11-12	International Conference on Leisure and Tourism 2023	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
18-21	Taiwan International Travel Fair 2023	9:00 am

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

Berner Oberland pass now online

Rail Europe expands its range of products with the addition of Berner Oberland Regional Pass. With the pass, travellers will gain the freedom and flexibility to explore the unique and captivating Berner Oberland region at their own pace.



Rail Europe, the leading provider of European train tickets and passes, is excited to announce the addition of the Berner Oberland Regional Pass to its comprehensive range of products. This new offering is now available on Rail Europe's B2B website and API, allowing travel professionals to easily access and book this pass.



Rail Europe's commitment to extending its product offerings remains unwavering as it introduces the Berner Oberland Regional Pass. This pass showcases the unique and captivating Berner Oberland region, renowned for its stunning landscapes, charming towns, and unparalleled alpine experiences. With the pass, travellers will gain the freedom and flexibility to explore this enchanting region at their own pace.

tomers to the Berner Oberland Regional Pass, one of the most visited areas in Europe. This pass provides an unlimited access to the captivating Berner Oberland region, allowing travellers to make the most of its breathtaking landscapes and iconic activities. We are fully committed to supporting our partners in delivering exceptional experiences to their customers and are very excited to further collaborate with them to promote this unique pass and region," says Björn Bender, CEO & President, Rail Europe.

We (Rail Europe) are delighted to offer the opportunity to introduce our B2B partners' customers to the Berner Oberland Regional Pass

pass with their European itinerary, making it an ideal choice for those seeking to discover multiple destinations in one trip. As Switzerland remains a top destination for travellers from all over the world, the Berner Oberland Regional Pass is also an ideal addition to the Swiss Travel System tickets and passes offered by Rail Europe.

Beyond convenience, the Berner Oberland Regional Pass offers a host of value-added benefits. Travel agents will be able to delight their customers with exclusive discounts and additional perks from 50 bonus partners.

"As Rail Europe continues to expand its product range, we are delighted to offer the opportunity to introduce our B2B partners' cus-

One of the standout features of the Berner Oberland Regional Pass

is its seamless integration with other train travel across Europe. Travellers can easily combine this

Costa Serena to sail in India

Starting November 2023 until January 2024, Costa Serena will offer 23 sailings visiting Mumbai, Cochin, Goa and, for the first time ever, Lakshadweep islands. It will start sailing right in the middle of the holiday and festive seasons as Lotus Aero Enterprises (GSA for Costa Cruises) introduced it to key travel agents in Mumbai recently.



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MOVEMENTS

THOMAS COOK (INDIA)

Mumbai

Based on approval and recommendation of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, the Board of Directors have approved re-designation and appointment of **MADHAVAN MENON** as Executive Chairman in the category of Whole Time Director from his earlier designation as Chairman and Managing Director of the company for a fresh term of five years commencing from 5 July 2023 to 4 July 2028, not liable to retire by rotation. The board has also announced re-designation and appointment of Mahesh Iyer as Managing Director and CEO of the Company for a fresh term of five years commencing from July 5, 2023 to July 4, 2028, liable to retire by rotation.



THE TRAVEL CORPORATION

Mumbai

The Travel Corporation (TTC) has appointed **SANJAY TEMKAR** as its new Country Manager for India and Middle East. Temkar, who is working with TTC for 10 years, succeeds Darshan Maheshwari, who has been the Country Manager since 2012. Prior to this, Temkar served as the Director of Sales. He has a demonstrated history in leadership, industry knowledge and has helped achieve a strong track record of growth in the region. Commenting over the appointment, Nicholas Lim, Chief Executive Officer (Asia), TTC, said, "On behalf of the team, we would like to thank Darshan for his service and long-standing commitment to the company."



JW MARRIOTT

Chandigarh

JW Marriott, Chandigarh, has appointed **SAHELI CHAUDHURI** as the new Marketing and Communications Manager. With more than a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, she brings a wealth of expertise to her new role. Throughout her career, Saheli has worked with renowned hospitality brands such as Marriott, Zuri Group Global, IHG, and The Den, Bengaluru. She has also collaborated with communication agencies specialized in the hospitality segment. Her areas of expertise include media-influencer relations, creative direction, events management, campaign strategy, and launching/ re-launching properties.



NHCC AND HICC

Hyderabad

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) has appointed **MONICA EDARA** as the Director of Marketing for the property. With over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, Edara is an award-winning, seasoned marketing professional with a passion for excellence and a proven track record of success. In her current role, she will be responsible for strategizing, budgeting, planning, and implementing marketing and communication activities for the property. She is skilled to create and put into action plans for internal and external communications and set the right processes for delivery.



ACCOR

Gurugram

Accor appoints **NIDHI VERMA** as Director of Marketing & Communication for India and South Asia. With an extensive background in marketing, public relations and brand development, Verma brings a wealth of experience and expertise to Accor's Marketing and Communication efforts in the region. In her new role, Nidhi will be responsible for driving the development and execution of integrated public relations campaigns that align with the brand's marketing strategies, alongside leveraging a 360-degree approach across various media platforms. Nidhi has a proven record of developing and implementing successful PR campaigns.



SOFITEL MUMBAI BKC

Mumbai

Sofitel Mumbai BKC has appointed **RITU GUPTA** as Director of Revenue. Gupta brings over a decade of relevant experience to her role, and owes much of her success to strong leadership traits, excellent interpersonal skills with proficiency in building and nurturing stakeholder experiences, and ability to formulate tactical plans and implement effective business strategies in challenging environments. After completing her BA Hons in Hotel Management from the Institute of Hotel Management in Aurangabad, Gupta began her career at the Taj President Mumbai in 2012 as a Revenue Executive.



HILTON GOA RESORT

Goa

Hilton Goa Resort has promoted **MALCOLM MONIZ** from the position of IT Manager to Cluster IT Manager. Having joined Hilton Goa Resort as an IT Manager in August 2018, Moniz has made significant contributions to the resort's technology infrastructure and operations. His dedication and exceptional skills have been instrumental in enhancing the guest experience through efficient and reliable IT services. With his extensive experience in the IT industry spanning over 17 years, Malcolm brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his new role. Prior to this, Malcolm has held important positions with renowned brands.



DOUBLETREE BY HILTON GURUGRAM BAANI SQUARE

Gurugram

JYOTIRADITYA KUMAR has been appointed as the Food & Beverage Manager at DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square. Prior to this, he served as Director of Events at Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn, Bangalore, Manyata Tech Park. Kumar has more than 13 years of hospitality experience. During his career, he has worked with reputed brands like Sofitel Mumbai & Taj Palace New Delhi. Driven by his passion for work, Kumar brings with him extensive knowledge and skills that will help him successfully lead F&B operations.



CLEARTRIP

Bengaluru

Cleartrip appoints **GANESH RAMASWAMY** as Chief Product and Technology Officer. In his new role, Ganesh will spearhead the company's product vision, strategy, and technology platform to accelerate innovation and help propel Cleartrip's growth in the ever-evolving travel industry. He is a seasoned professional who joins Cleartrip from Flipkart, where he spent four years shaping the product and engineering charter in the Supply Chain Fulfillment and Services group. In the past, he had a successful tenure at Yahoo, leading teams in advertisement systems and data systems. Following that, he joined GwynnieBee/ Caastle, where he led teams in data platforms.



TALKing People

The favourite holiday destination for **KEYUR BARAD**, Founder, Chlorophyll Estate, is Cape Town, South Africa. "It has the best beaches, great night life, all the best adventure sports you can imagine too! I spent eight days in Cape Town on a solo trip way back in 2014, indulged in shark cage diving, swam with the seals, took up surfing lessons, trekked up to lions head, shot AK 47s at a local gun range, visited the best Pinotage wineries in Stellenbosch and, of course, visited the Kirstenbosch botanical gardens! In India, I prefer spending time at beautifully done up vacation homes," he says.



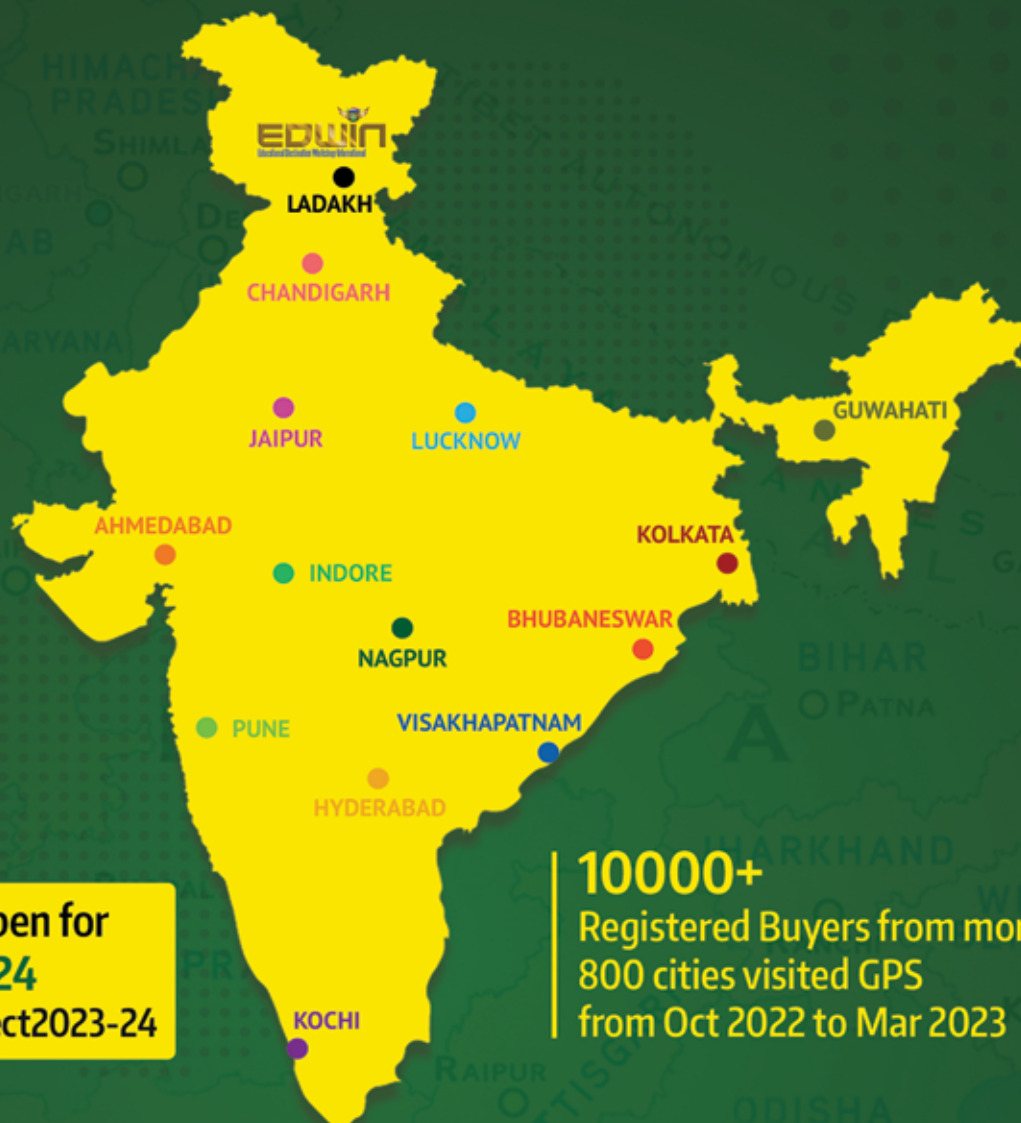
For **RIKHIYA CHAKRABORTY**, Assistant Marketing & Communication Manager, Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road, her stress-busters are her pets. She says, "Whenever I feel low or stressed, I spend time with them or visit a rescued animal shelter. Also, recently I have started going on solo trips once a month to award myself the much needed 'me time'. During the lockdown, I brushed up my skills on digital marketing and embraced painting as a new hobby. My favourite holiday destination in India is Jammu & Kashmir and Internationally it's Masai Mara in Kenya. My next holiday will be to Bali!"



ADITYA SABHARWAL, Revenue Manager, Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore, finds solace in meditation. He also enjoys listening to music. "I also love to travel. In India, my ultimate holiday destination is the breath-taking region of Kashmir. With its mesmerizing landscapes and tranquil ambiance, it radiates a sense of serenity and natural beauty. I am excited for my next holiday in Dubai, a city with iconic skyscrapers, lavish resorts, and rich cultural experiences. I can't wait to explore its architectural wonders, indulge in world-class dining, and immerse myself in its vibrant ambiance," he says.



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Abu Dhabi lures Indians

In an exclusive interview, Abdulla Yousuf, Director, International Operations, Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi, sheds light on the success of the Indian market and the experiences awaiting Indian tourists.



TT Bureau

Abu Dhabi has seen a significant surge in Indian tourists in recent years.

What factors contribute to the success of the Indian market in Abu Dhabi's tourism industry?

India holds a special place in Abu Dhabi's tourism landscape. It is one of the largest source markets for both leisure and MICE travel. We have been witnessing a strong rebound in tourism from India, with a remarkable uplift of 96 per cent in Indian international visitors staying in Abu Dhabi in 2022. This growth can be attributed to various factors such as increased connectivity, fostering relationships in tier-II India markets, and our annual India Roadshow, which offers industry professionals the opportunity to learn about the unique and diverse experiences Abu Dhabi has to offer.

Can you tell us more about the increased connectivity between India and Abu Dhabi?

Absolutely! We are delighted to have major carriers providing direct flights between India and Abu Dhabi. Etihad Airways started a daily flight service to Kolkata, while Air Arabia launched direct flights from Abu Dhabi to Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Cochin, and Mumbai. Indigo also introduced direct daily flights from Hyderabad and Chennai to Abu Dhabi, and Vistara Airlines commenced daily flights between Mumbai and Abu Dhabi. These enhanced flight options have improved connectivity and provided a more seamless travel experience for Indian visitors.

Abu Dhabi recently announced Ranveer Singh as the destination ambassador. How does this partnership contribute to Abu Dhabi's tourism promotion?

We are thrilled to have Ranveer Singh as our official destination ambassador. Ranveer is known



for his versatility and ability to inspire fans worldwide. His diverse personality and constant experimentation with new things align perfectly with the diverse offerings of Abu Dhabi. Ranveer commenced his role by starring in our new summer campaign film, "One Summer Isn't Enough", where he explores Abu Dhabi's cultural hotspots. During the two-year partnership, Ranveer will share

Abu Dhabi's diverse offerings, cultural hotspots, and world-class attractions have made it a preferred destination for Indian travellers

his holiday highlights, inviting Indian travellers to find their pace in Abu Dhabi and enjoy everything the destination has to offer.

SeaWorld Abu Dhabi is creating a buzz in the market. Can you give us more on its progress?

SeaWorld Abu Dhabi opened its doors to the public on 23 May 2023. This next-generation Marine Life Theme Park will be

home to the world's largest and most expansive multi-species marine-life aquarium, along with world-class rides, attractions, and immersive experiences. Through its eight immersive realms, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi tells a captivating One Ocean story based on the interconnectivity of all life on Earth and in our ocean. With more than 150 species of marine animals, including sharks, schools of fish, rays, sea turtles, and hundreds of birds, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi promises an unforgettable journey for visitors of all ages.

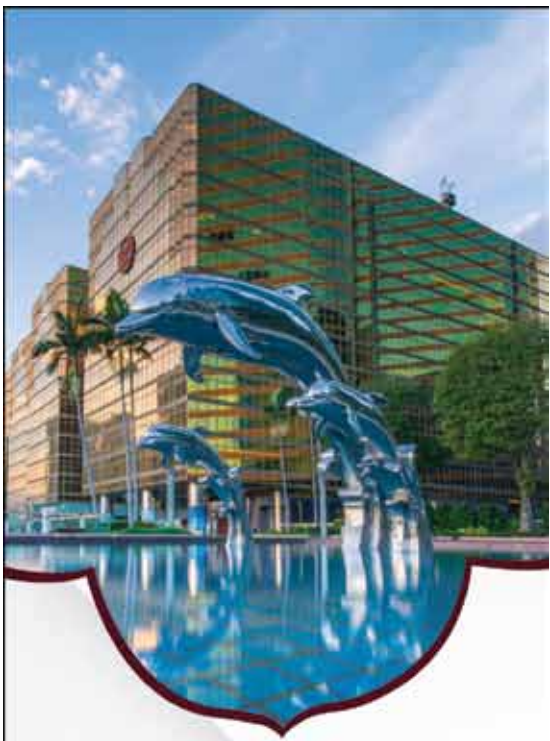
Do you have any message for the Indian travellers considering Abu Dhabi as their next destination?

Abu Dhabi welcomes Indian travellers with open arms. Whether you are seeking adventure, cultural immersion, or relaxation, Abu Dhabi offers something for everyone. We invite you to explore our vibrant city, indulge in our diverse cuisines, experience thrilling attractions, and discover our rich heritage and culture. With the launch of our new summer campaign,

"One Summer Isn't Enough", we encourage you to embark on an unforgettable journey and make lasting memories in Abu Dhabi. We look forward to welcoming you and providing you with a truly exceptional experience. 🇦🇪



Abdulla Yousuf
Director, International Operations,
Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi



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