

# 1 IN CIRCULATION &amp; READERSHIP

SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

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SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

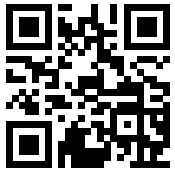
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# Sustainable tourism a way of life

'Travel for LiFE', one of the most comprehensive sustainability initiatives started by the Union Ministry of Tourism, not just encourages individual responsibility, but also addresses broader aspects of sustainability.



Janice Alyosius

'Travel for LiFE' is not just a government initiative; it's a clarion call to make sustainable and responsible tourism a way of life for every individual, business, and traveler. The program, which is part of the broader 'Mission LiFE' of the Indian government, focuses on taking simple, voluntary actions

that collectively make a significant impact on the environment and our planet's future.

**V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said that Travel for LiFE is about embracing sustainable practices as part of our daily lives. It's not about setting a specific end goal but rather integrating eco-friendly actions into our ev-

eryday routines. "You don't need to have a target for travel of life because you can't have a target for ensuring that a planet survives for much longer than we think it should. Instead, the focus is on making simple changes, like conserving energy and water, reducing carbon emissions, and choosing eco-friendly travel options. These seemingly small steps contribute to a greater,

collective goal of preserving our planet," she said.

Highlighting that Travel for LiFE is going to be a way of life and significant for us in ensuring that our planet survives for much long, Vidyavathi says that is the biggest incentive for the industry to adopt this initiative. "I think we all need the planet, don't we? I think that's the biggest incentive.



**V Vidyavathi**  
Secretary, MOT, GoI



**Rakesh Verma**  
Additional Secretary, MOT, GoI

So, we don't need an incentive for that. I think it's in the interest of all of us that we follow these actions," she said.

**Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, delved into the

Contd. on page 9 ▶

## A convention(al) destination

India needs a concerted effort not just to build great convention centres but also match the convention facilities with the room availability at the planning stage. Here is what experts have to say:



**Sheo Shekhar Shukla**  
Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture  
and MD, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board

“India has emerged as a phenomenon in **Incredible India** MICE events and the Heart of Incredible India - Madhya Pradesh's incredible journey to becoming a premier MICE destination in India reflects our commitment to excellence. With the successful hosting of global events such as G20 meetings, UNESCO gatherings, Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas, and aviation summits, Madhya Pradesh has firmly established itself on the world stage. Together, we are charting a new chapter in India's MICE landscape, where every occasion is a masterpiece waiting to be written.”

Contd. on page 20 ▶

## All set for OTOAI's Nairobi meet

OTOAI will organise the 5<sup>th</sup> annual convention in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24-27 November to leverage the rapidly growing popularity of Kenya among Indian travellers, informs Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI.



Janice Alyosius

After a hiatus of four years, OTOAI is set to hold its 5<sup>th</sup> convention in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24-27 November this year. Talking about the convention, **Riaz Munshi**, President, OTOAI, highlighted the opportunities that members will get during their visit. "This will not only enhance their promotional capabilities but also lead to increase in revenue generation for them,"



**Riaz Munshi**  
President, OTOAI

he said. "With a recent surge in demand, Kenya has emerged as a promising destination in the Indian market. Destinations like Kenya need to be experienced firsthand by the tour operators to effectively promote and sell it to their clients," said Munshi.

Around 200 delegates are expected to attend the convention, which will feature a business session. The members will be informed about leveraging technology. ➔

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# PATA CEO hails India's potential

Noor Ahmad Hamid, CEO, PATA, highlights India's potential in the travel and tourism industry due to its large population and the government's "Travel for LiFE" concept promoting sustainability. India's diverse cultures and attractions make it an appealing travel destination, he says. He also mentions the country's recent achievements in space travel.

Janice Alyosius

Emphasising on the India's potential in travel and tourism industry, **Noor Ahmad Hamid**, CEO, PATA said, "India is a very important source market for travel and tourism industry, not only because the country has a huge population base, but because of the recent announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Travel for Life" concept of sustainability and caring for the earth, which resonates well with what the whole global industry is talking about."

He added, "India has diverse cultures and attractions that can attract the world and I think Incredible India marketing campaign that was launched many years ago still resonate well. And I think people will love to come to India because it is just an incredible destination."

In terms of customer experience, Hamid pointed out that India's diversity is one of its most remarkable



Noor Ahmad Hamid, CEO, PATA, (extreme left) at the PATA Tourism Mart 2023 in New Delhi

features. "Travelling from one place to another within the country can feel like entering a completely different world. I believe that India has great appeal as a travel destination and the fact that PATA is here with our partner, travellers speak volumes about India being the upcoming destination of choice," he said. He also stressed on India's recent achievement in

space travel, suggesting that this will further enhance its global appeal as a travel destination.

Emphasising on sustainability, Hamid highlighted PATA's commitment to promoting responsible travel and tourism. "One of our key focus is sustainability. That is a very important agenda and very close to our heart. But more

importantly, we also keep talking about responsible travel and tourism. I think it is not just about the destination being responsible for providing new safe spaces for travel and tourism, but more importantly, there must be responsible tourists also," he said.

Discussing the necessary steps to attract more inbound tourists,



Hamid pointed out, "One of the key challenges that India has, and maybe a lot of other destinations are facing too, is about the carrying capacity and over-tourism. There are a lot of destinations and attractions in India that are not well travelled, or not well known, while others are very popular, that is where we have the challenge of overtourism. I think this is one of the key issues that we must look at seriously. For instance, the iconic Taj Mahal faces issues of overcrowding. Managing and controlling visitor numbers in these popular destinations is crucial to preserving their cultural and historical significance."

Regarding PATA Travel Mart 2023, Hamid said that its primary focus is bringing together buyers and sellers in the travel and tourism

industry. "There is a lot of interest from around the world to come to India, and likewise, for Indian tour operators to take outbound to the rest of the world. But more importantly, during the PATA Travel Mart, we also have sessions that

**India has diverse cultures and attractions that can attract the world and I think Incredible India marketing campaign still resonate well**

will talk about various issues that are very important. Not only the trend, but also the key factors on how we can move forward and be more responsible and more sustainable for the industry," he concluded.

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### India's coming of age

India's tourism industry has undergone a remarkable transformation in the years after the pandemic. The outbound travel has picked up pace at an astonishing rate. So much so that it demanded a shift in global visa policies, with many countries re-evaluating and streamlining their processes to cater to the growing number of Indian travellers. Airlines, sensing the newfound vigour of Indian tourists, expanded their routes and introduced new services to meet the surging demand. Hotels abroad began catering more specifically to Indian travellers, offering cuisine that resonated with their palates and even hosting Indian weddings.

As we move forward, a testament to the agility of India's private sector, their ability to respond rapidly to changing dynamics, and the heightened global presence of Indian leadership has made significant strides in connecting India with the world.

With the inbound tourism sector in India opening up, the nation has witnessed a surge in international visitors. Remarkably, this growth has been achieved without an aggressive marketing campaign, suggesting the impact of the private sector and India's international presence.

The G20 and the recent PATA Summit have played pivotal roles in spotlighting India's tourism infrastructure on the global stage. Foreign tourists are now exploring India's rich offerings, and the tourism industry is flourishing.

The Indian tourism industry has matured and come of age. The journey to this point has been nothing short of extraordinary, marked by innovation, adaptability, and a commitment to offering tourists a world-class experience. This transformation is just the beginning, and the Indian tourism industry is set to become even more golden, promising a future that is bigger, better, and more prosperous than ever before.

Although TCS had initial concerns, it hasn't hindered the travel agents' profitability as anticipated. India's travel industry is evolving, reaching maturity, and poised for even greater growth and success in the future. The journey has just begun, and the future is looking brighter than ever.

# Inbound travel rises in APAC

International arrivals throughout Asia Pacific grew in 2022 and strengthened during early periods of 2023. In 2022, 44 destinations ended with a gain of 124.2 mn foreign tourists to return to the collective inbound figure of 265.5 mn, reveals a PATA study in 'Annual Tourism Monitor 2023'.

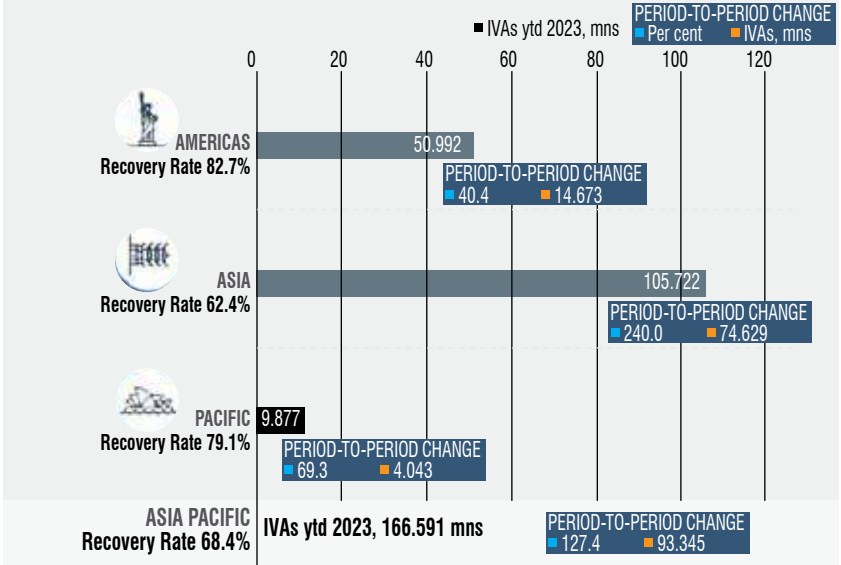


According to a PATA study in 'Annual Tourism Monitor 2023', inbound visits throughout the Asia Pacific region increases in 2022 and strengthened in the first few months of 2023. In 2022, 44 destinations witnessed the annual gain of 124.2 million inbound visitors, to return to the collective inbound figure of 265.5 million.

International Visitor Arrivals (IVA) in and across Asia in 2022 reached only 27 per cent of 2019 levels. The America saw strongest recovery with 69 per cent, followed by Asia Pacific with over 57 per cent, which generates a positive outlook. In early 2023, addition of more than 93.3 million foreign arrivals, a volume increase of more than double compared to the previous period, boosted recovery rate for early 2023 to 68 per cent.

**Asia's strongest performance**  
Asia was very slow in returning to growth until 2022. However, the early 2023 figures show a very powerful return to dominance in arrivals. Asia had the strongest performance of three destination regions. Mixed source markets are all the more fuelling the im-

### IVAs INTO/ ACROSS ASIA PACIFIC DESTINATION REGIONS, YEAR-TO-DATE 2023



Notes: IVAs = international visitor arrivals/ mns = millions

supplier of inbound tourism accounting for 63 per cent in 2019.

Although Asia's recovery rate as a source region in early 2023 is relatively low, at just over 54 per cent, it marks a dramatic improvement of almost 43 percentage points compared to early 2022, which demonstrates significant growth momentum.

gate visitor numbers to Asia Pacific destinations. In 2023, China saw increase, surpassing 23 million, marking the strongest early-period performance since 2019. However, it only represents 34 per cent of the early 2019 levels. With relaxation and reintroduction of group travel, a significant improvement can be expected by 2023 end.

more going to increase to 107 per cent in 2024 and 116 per cent in 2025." He added, "The wave is coming, and we must prepare ourselves to ensure that we have a stronger and more resilient tourism and travel industry."

**Asia was very slow in returning to growth until 2022. However, the early 2023 figures show a very powerful return to dominance in arrivals**



provement rates. Most source regions have achieved 80 per cent recovery rates, except Asia, which has over 52 per cent recovery rate. It raises a critical concern, as Asia was dominant

Among all the source markets in the region, China is the most significant contributor in terms of volume, it accounted for 30 per cent of the IVAs from Asia and 19 per cent of total aggre-

**Peter Semone**, Chairman, PATA, says, "The PATA forecasts of visitor demand indicates that international visitor numbers are predicted to exceed 516 million by the end of 2023. It is further-

Talking about China, Semone said, "The overall growth in IVAs within the Asia-Pacific is primarily fuelled by Asia, serving as both a source and destination region, with mainland China playing a dominant role in visitor flows. Experience shows us that when change occurs in China, it is both rapid and impactful. The question, however, is whether the destinations in Asia-Pacific are prepared, as change involves not only an increase in visitor numbers but also evolving expectations and demands from these visitors."



# STIC Travel signs 4 deals

Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel & Air Charter Group, announces that they have added new products to their portfolio and signed four new contracts with Variety Cruises, Albatros Expeditions, Armenian Airlines, and Geo Sky Airlines.



Suhani Sood

STIC Travel Group has been constantly expanding its product portfolio. In an exclusive interview with **Summit**, **Subhash Goyal**, Chairman, STIC Travel & Air Charter Group, informed, "Variety Cruises, Albatros Expeditions, Armenian Airlines, and Geo Sky Airlines are the four new deals that STIC Travel has signed."

Armenian Airlines and Geo Sky Airlines are right now offline airlines, but hopefully the airlines will be online by the 2024 winters, he added.

Since, MICE Tourism is one of the most important and searched segments, STIC Travel Group is aggressively working on Stepup Xperiences with Take-A-Break Consulting to offer complete



**Subhash Goyal**  
Chairman  
STIC Travel & Air Charter Group

range of services, from travel logistics and accommodation to event planning and execution.

## Marketing & Promotions

Goyal further said, "Since we are a 100 per cent B2B company, our marketing and promotional efforts



are all directed towards travel agents and tour operators. We also do joint promotions with On-line Travel Agents (OTAs), travel agents and tour operators, promoting the various airlines, cruises and rent-a-car companies that we represent." When asked about how does STIC Travel deals with competition in the market, Goyal responded, "We have exclusive products, and we feel that there

**Armenian Airlines and Geo Sky Airlines are right now offline airlines, but hopefully the airlines will be online by the 2024 winters**

is no competition, as there is enough business for everyone in the market."

## Deals of STIC Group

**Variety Cruises:** hosts less than 100 guests in any given sail, offering the intimate experience

**Albatros Expeditions:** is a polar expedition company which provides unparalleled exploration and discovery programs with Arctic and Antarctic expeditions

**Armenian Airlines:** its fleet consists of Airbus A321

**Geo Sky Airlines:** operates in both local and international markets

# Embracing sustainability

► Contd. from page 5

holistic approach of the Travel for Life framework. The MOT unveiled a national strategy for Sustainable Tourism in June 2022. This strategy has now been further enhanced with the incorporation of the Travel for Life framework. Verma said, "This comprehensive approach addresses both the demand side and the supply side of the tourism industry. On the demand side, efforts are focused on raising awareness among tourists. They are encouraged to actively participate in environmental protection and climate action initiatives".

The program includes a wide range of activities, campaigns, and capacity-building efforts di-



rected at tourists. As the largest stakeholders in the industry, their small actions can have a profound impact on these critical issues.

"Concurrently, on the supply side, various tourism service businesses and the entire value chain are engaged. They are encouraged to follow suit with simple, eco-friendly actions that can positively influence areas such as water conservation, climate action, and energy usage. The initiative encompasses a spectrum of proposed actions, ranging from basic commitments to more detailed and audited certification processes, tailored especially for larger players. In its entirety, this initiative addresses all aspects of the tourism ecosystem, aligning them with sustainability goals that encompass environmental, economic, and sociocultural considerations. It stands as a comprehensive and impactful endeavour," Verma added.

To supplement Verma's remarks, Vidyavathi highlighted that the MOT initially introduced a sustainability policy, which, though valuable, remained somewhat generic in nature. Travel for Life has taken this policy to a whole new level by translating it into actionable steps. She said, "It's important to note that Travel for Life extends beyond mere policy; it's a substantial shift from the ground level to a higher plane. It encourages individuals, businesses, travellers, and service providers to actively participate. The essence of Travel for Life, a subset of the broader Mission LiFE, is to exemplify a clear pathway for taking pro-planet and sustainable steps in the realm of tourism and travel."



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APAC hotel investments cross US \$10 bn this year, indicate YoY decline of 14 per cent: JLL

New York City Tourism and Conventions and Destination DC host travel trade events in Bengaluru and New Delhi

DGCA approves 8 per cent more domestic flights for winter schedule than last year

GCC approves unified tourist visa, expected to be rolled out in 2024-25

MOT discusses developing sustainable tourism options at BRICS Tourism Ministers' meet

Sri Lanka waives visa fee for India and six other countries with immediate effect

Diwali season witnesses most tourists from the USA, UK, Singapore, Australia, Netherlands: Agoda

# PTM paves way for global events

Hosting PATA Travel Mart 2023 in India will open doors for many such international events and boost the country's inbound potential, says Manisha Saxena, Director General, Tourism, Government of India. She also emphasizes on taking pro planet steps under 'Travel for LiFE'.

TT Bureau

**P**ATA Travel Mart 2023 (PTM 2023), organised at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi from 4-6 October, was attended by travel leaders from across the world. Addressing the participants at the event, Manisha Saxena, Director General, Tourism, Government of India, said, "To host PATA Travel Mart in India is a very important occasion for us. Since this is the first physical PTM after the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope it will do wonders for India's inbound tourism. Even though PATA is an outbound body, but having events like these bring people from around the world to India and they see how India has changed. At one of the sessions today, the Chairman of PATA narrated his experience of backpacking through India 34 years ago, and he says that he can't believe India has changed a lot. Now, we are here to welcome every tourist from across the world. I hope this message goes through this event, and many more



**Manisha Saxena**  
Director General, Tourism  
Government of India

such events come to India." When asked about other such initiatives the MOT is taking, Saxena claimed, "Of course, events like these are very much the part and parcel of the promotional activities."

## Word of mouth publicity

She said, "We are showcasing India at every forum. G20 Presidency of India has been a great

event in bringing delegates to India, taking them to different parts of the country and giving them experiences, which were very different, and which, we hope, by word-of-mouth publicity will result in having more conferences and

**We have taken many steps towards sustainable tourism in India, phase 1 is about the travellers and phase 2 is about the travel business**

events in India. Also, I believe, on social media, as well as on other platforms and across travel fairs, we will be able to sell India and market India's experiences like never before."

**Choosing Delhi for the event**  
Saxena expressed her happiness over the organisation of the 43<sup>rd</sup> edition of PATA Travel Mart in Delhi. "It is indeed a very happy moment for all of us in the MOT that PATA Travel Mart is happening in Delhi. And the month of October is the best time to be in Delhi



because it is the onset of winters, and the weather is much more pleasant," she said.

## MOT initiatives

The Director General, on the occasion of World Tourism Day, was asked about the measures taken by the ministry on sustainable tourism. She said, "We have taken many steps towards sustainable tourism in India, phase 1 is about the travellers and phase

2 is about the travel business. The idea is that everyone should take pro planet actions in this regard."

She added, "We have also launched two metro trains with the 'Travel for LiFE' branding, and these are the two longest lines of Delhi Metro. We hope that this message will be carried across lakhs of people in Delhi. Simultaneously, we are doing 'Travel for LiFE' pledge at 108 villages under the Vibrant Villages programme and some other places across the country. The message is we can be pro planet."

## Green Investments

The theme for this year's World Tourism Day being 'Tourism & Green Investments', she said, "We launched rural homestays competition and best tourism village competition. The idea behind these competitions is to encourage people to take up technologies for building, waste disposal, sanitation, and some other methods which are not harmful for the environment."

## The great differentiator

Technology and innovation are key factors that will define the way we do business. There is no moving away from any new technology if you want to be successful, say experts.



**MP Deepu**  
Founder  
SeniorWorld

"Technology is giving companies an edge by allowing them to reach customers more efficiently, providing better customer experiences, and streamlining operations. At SeniorWorld, we are investing heavily into it. For example, we are developing a mobile app that will allow seniors to easily book and manage their travel plans."



**Santosh Kumar Naik**  
Cluster IT Head, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru  
Whitfield Hotel & Convention Centre

"Today's tech-savvy travel consumer is forcing the hotel industry to accelerate the adoption of digital technologies and become a digital technology-enabled industry. As a company, we design guest facing technology like allowing guests to use their mobile phones as room keys, for booking tables or order service and check-in/ check-out."



**Abhishek Sahai**  
General Manager  
Conrad Pune

"Technology has become a game-changer in the hospitality industry. It enables personalized guest experiences, with mobile apps and websites allowing for easy reservations, access to digital concierge services, and personalized recommendations. Contactless solutions such as mobile check-ins, and digital key cards have become crucial."

Compiled by: Hazel Jain

## Focus on growing destinations

World Travel Market London 2023, to be organised from 6-8 November at ExCeL London, will inform industry about the shifting landscape of travel and tourism in the world.

TT Bureau

**W**orld Travel Market London 2023 will reveal the latest trends shaping the industry when it releases its global travel report on the first day of the show on 6 November. The exclusive report titled 'WTM Global Travel Report', prepared in association with renowned researchers at Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company, shows how leisure travellers' changing needs and desires and sheds light on growing destinations. The attendees will gain insights into shifting landscape of travel and tourism and learn about consumer demands, helping them shape their business and plan for the future.

**Juliette Losardo**, Director, WTM London Exhibitor, said, "We are thrilled to launch the first ever - WTM Global Travel Report - it demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the travel community have the freshest insight into trends shaping the sector and will sup-



port discussions, meetings and planning taking place during the three days at WTM."

Telling about the partnership with Oxford Economics, he said, "We partnered with Oxford Econom-

and vast, informative findings will give delegates invaluable insights to ensure they stay ahead in the travel sector."

The report will detail how the market has fared in 2023 and forecasts how domestic and international leisure travel will develop in 2024. It considers



ics using an expansive databank covering nearly 185 countries worldwide as destinations and as origin markets and all major bilateral tourism flows in terms of visits, nights and spend, as well as unique industry insights, the report gives a comprehensive outlook on tourism." She added, "The worldwide outlook

the impact of challenges such as inflation and the cost-of-living squeeze - and compares the varying fortunes of different regions and markets.

Losardo also highlights that they hear many positive story over the past few months regarding the success of 2023.



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# Charting a collaborative course

Joel Katz, Managing Director (Australasia), CLIA, highlights how the global cruise tourism market has changed post COVID, some of the successful strategies being adopted by countries internationally for sustainable and responsible cruise tourism development, and the lessons that India can learn from them.



Hazel Jain

**J**oel Katz, MD (Australasia), CLIA, is keenly following the Indian cruise tourism segment. His interest in India was reflected in his presence at the G20 meeting held in Goa.

He says, "India has set goals to increase cruise passenger traffic by 10 times, to about 4 million annually, with an expected economic potential of up to US \$5.5 billion in the future. These goals are indeed ambitious, but I believe having a clearly defined strategy, supported by firm objectives and initiatives, is enormously positive."

He underlines that by creating alignment on key factors like infrastructure upgrades, rationalization of port charges and fees, priority berthing for cruise ships and streamlining of electronic visa requirements, we can see a vision for cruising in India that is



**Joel Katz**  
MD (Australasia)  
CLIA

based on constructive policy and an improved operating environment for cruise lines."

He feels that right now, India's cruise economy is relatively modest compared to several other destinations in Asia. In 2019, CLIA commissioned a deployment research and analysis for Asian destinations,

including India. It showed India to be outside the top 10 cruise destinations in the region but showing impressive growth. At a time when 39 cruise brands were actively operating in Asian waters, deploying a total of 79 ships, India attracted 284 port calls over the course of that year – an increase over the previous year of more than 130 per cent. Growth rates over the previous five years had ranged between 9 and 35 per cent.

More than 400,000 passenger destination days were recorded by India during 2019, chiefly visiting five key ports. "In Goa, the port of Mormugao is India's clear leader, attracting almost half of the country's port calls. Other primary destinations include Cochin, Mumbai, Mangalore and Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. But where India's port calls number in the hundreds, other Asian destinations like Japan and China have

welcomed port call figures in the thousands per year. As many as 12 other Asian destinations sit higher than India on the chart, which suggests there is still a

**India has set goals to increase cruise passenger traffic by 10 times, to about 4 mn annually, with an expected economic potential of up to US \$5.5 bn**

great deal of untapped potential for cruising here," Katz says.

## India as source market

As a source market, however, India ranks much higher among its Asian counterparts. In 2019, India contributed around 313,000

passengers to cruise operations internationally, an increase over the previous year of more than 40 per cent. India's source market had grown at double-digit rates for several consecutive years, putting India behind only Mainland China, Taiwan and Singapore in the Asia region, and ahead of Japan and Hong Kong. Katz adds that to grow as a cruise destination, India must seek collaborations – among tourism authorities,

local and national governments, cruise lines, tourism operators, port operators, ground operators, suppliers, food producers, technical support providers, local chambers of commerce, and retail associations – the list goes on. "These collaborations might be led by government or by tourism authorities, or at a grass roots level they might be united by local business working groups and passionate individuals," he says.

## Strategic areas for India must include:

- ❖ Attracting more cruise ship visits – considering the destination's capabilities and whether that involves a mix of smaller vessels with high-spending guests, and larger ships with a greater overall spend.
- ❖ The onshore offering – ways to foster and develop shore excursion operators, attractions and retailers, in ways that create connections and ensure the right capabilities are there.
- ❖ Having the right infrastructure – considering the facilities in place to accommodate berthing and operational support services, meeting customer expectations both now and into the future.
- ❖ Factoring in sustainability requirements – from meeting cruise line needs in terms of sustainable suppliers, to planning the infrastructure for next generation fuel supplies and shore power.

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# Bihar to develop Buddhist Circuits

The state government is paying attention to develop more religious circuits, apart from adventure sites and wildlife projects. At the same time, it is also giving importance to promotional activities for the same to promote tourism.



Suhani Sood

Bihar is growing in terms of GDP, infrastructure, and tourism. The state government has rolled out special plans and requested stakeholders to work together and make the state one of the best tourism destinations. Speaking at the recent IATO convention, **Nand Kishor**, Managing Director, Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation, Bihar Government, said that the state government has special focus on religious tourism, majorly Buddhist Circuits and Jain Circuits, as both the religions started from Bihar. They are also focusing on wildlife tourism, especially tiger tourism, as Bihar is home to beautiful wildlife reserves and sanctuaries, such as Valmiki Tiger Reserve and Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary.



**Nand Kishor**  
Managing Director, Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation, Bihar Government



**Bihar has great potential in tourism; it needs to be tapped. It (IATO convention) was a good opportunity as many travel agents got to know about Bihar**

Expressing his pride and excitement on hosting Travel and Tourism Fair in Bihar for the first time, Kishor said, "Bihar has great potential in tourism; it needs to be tapped. It (IATO convention) was a good opportunity as many travel agents got to know about Bihar and its offerings."

**Business generation & tourism**  
Asked about the importance of IATO convention, he responded, "It is really important for business development and tourism in the area of Aurangabad. It provides an

amazing platform for the state government, tourism operators, and travel agents to come together and provide better facilities."

He said, "Apart from organizing TTF in October, we also plan to host roadshows in different states and outside India as well. We are aggressively promoting Bihar by organizing familiarization trips for different



stakeholders, developing major attractions, and also diverting people to lesser known destinations."

He said that foreign investors are looking for investment opportunities in Bihar because of its dynamism. "Bihar is the only state that represents all the six major religions. With government efforts, now people from outside feel the changes in Bihar," Kishor said.

Bihar is a beautiful yet unexplored destination due to lack of advertis-



ing and promotional activities. "It is important to focus on advertising and promotional activities; only then tourists will be aware of the

tourism offerings and potential," he said. Kishor said that building confidence among the tourists visiting Bihar is important. 🐦



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# France bets on sports tourism

France received 4,99,000 visitors from India in the first half until mid-June this year. The numbers from India are encouraging and possibly shoot up with the ongoing Rugby World Cup 2023 and the upcoming 2024 Summer Olympics, which is being promoted by Atout France India, along with DreamSetGo.



Hazel Jain

**S**heetal Munshaw, Director - Atout France India, reveals that India is within the top 15 source markets for France. "I am happy to announce that visitor arrival figures for the first half of the year until mid-June are at an approximate of 4,99,000. With the Rugby World Cup underway

and the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2024 slated to take place in Paris next year, I believe the interactions between our partners and agents are instrumental to establishing France's strategic positioning as a preferred destination," she said.

Munshaw added, "The Olympic Games will be a big-ticket event

and we have an official agency in DreamSetGo, which is promoting the games in India. They are really pushing the product and we intend to work closely with them to try and think of some interesting ways to showcase France through the games. Our endeavour with them is to showcase how visitors can make the most of their time while in France and go beyond

Paris as well, and also do different things even within the region of Paris while they are there."

## Trade meets sellers, Consul Generals

Atout France India recently concluded the fifth edition of its offsite B2B showcase, Explore France, in Kochi. A delegation of 33 French companies interacted with key representatives of the Indian tourism industry over two days of scheduled meetings. The French



Consul General of France in Mumbai (extreme right) meets travel agents in Kochi



The B2B show in Kochi saw great interactions between buyers and sellers

**The Olympic Games will be a big-ticket event and we have an official agency in DreamSetGo, which is promoting the games in India**

delegation comprised partners who have maintained a steady presence in the market, as well as new entrants interested to make a foray into the market. Munshaw shared, "This year we had almost 25 per cent exhibitors who were participating in this (Explore France) for the first time, including Aix-en-Provence, which shows their increased focus on the India market. There was an eclectic mix of attractions, hotels, transport partners, and tourism boards."

This year also marks 20 years of Atout France's presence in India.

Also present in Kochi were Lise Talbot Barré, Consul General of France in Pondicherry and Chennai; Didier Talpain, Consul General of France in Kolkata, along with Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet, Consul General of France in Mumbai. The NTO also organised an interactive session on visas with the Consulate General of France in Pondicherry and Chennai.

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# India needs global visibility

The inbound travel scenario in India has evolved since the pandemic jolted the industry. While some experts feel that India has reached the pre-pandemic level, others think that there are new kind of challenges that need to be addressed, and there is still a long way to go. Collaboration is key in the new industry order.

“Inbound tourism is beginning to take off almost after a gap of three years. There are lots of challenges not only for the large and medium operators but also small tour operators. International flights to India has



**Sanjay Razdhan**  
Hony. Secretary, IATO  
and Director, Razdhan Holidays

“One of the major trends in inbound landscape is that only a few states are attracting repetitive and loyal customers, which is not a good sign, because when a tourist visits certain place they tick it



**Sejo Jose**  
Chairman-Southern Region, IATO &  
Managing Director, Marvel Tours

“One of the major inbound trends is protection of environment, sustainable practices, and responsible tourism, which is here for a long period of time. Tourists nowadays are very selective as to



**P Vijayasarthy**  
Executive Committee Member, IATO  
and Director, Benchmark Hotels



**Rajnish Kaistha**  
Sr. Vice President, IATO  
and Director, Paradise Holidays

“If we keep marketing India and host events like PATA Travel Mart, G20, roadshows for different cities and states in India, I am positive that we are surely going to come back to pre-COVID levels. Most of the hotels are booked at this point of time all over the world, especially for World Cup (ICC Men's Cricket World Cup). Weddings and MICE will continue to dominate and happen in hotels and big halls.”



**Valmiki Hari Kishan**  
Founder & Managing Director  
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

from their travel list. We need to develop tourism in order to retain same tourists, their word-of-mouth publicity will be really important.”

“We discussed various inbound issues at IATO's 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, which is a great platform to bring all inbound tourism operators, agents and government under one roof. I can see a massive growth and improvement coming in, which is a result of doing regular roadshows and marts, like Kerala has done three marts and various FAM trips to Karnataka. I am sure, South India is certainly going to rock.”



**E M Najeeb**  
Sr. Vice President - IATO and Member,  
Kerala State Tourism Advisory Committee

where they want to spend their money and how to explore destinations. Tourists don't want to go to destinations that don't practice sustainability.”

“The trend of sustainable tourism is not going to fade anytime soon. For example, you pick a particular hotel, they are adapting to solar energies, power conservation, and less usage of plastics, and that is really important, as it not only attracts tourists but also protects the environment. On a personal note, all members of the tourism industry should abide by eco-friendly practices for better future.”

“I see a lot of potential in India's inbound tourism. However, it has still not recovered and reached to its pre-pandemic levels, unlike international destinations, which have recovered and even surpassed. The



**Debjit Dutta**  
Chairman, West Bengal Chapter, IATO and  
Director & CEO, Impression Tourism Services

“Inbound tourism in India will soar massively when you have all the key decision-makers, policy-makers, tour operators, travel agents, and government stakeholders under one roof. For example, IATO convention raises certain issues and challenges of a particular city, and let other stakeholders know, then solutions can be taken accordingly. This is necessary for the destination promotions.”



**Tsering Namgyal**  
Chairman, Ladakh Chapter, IATO  
and MD, Windhorse Expeditions India

“Vietnam, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Indonesia are the markets that India needs to focus on more. You have a lot of potential not only in the Buddhist sector but also other tourism niches. For example, Ladakh is suddenly getting a lot of tourists from Thai market, especially the millennial segment. Also, international travellers to Ladakh was so much that we had shortage of horses during trekking.”

“Inbound tourism in India has tremendous potential ahead. The main concern for any traveller, be it international or domestic, is hygiene and safety. These two elements should absolutely be on top priority. We are also



**Mohamed H Jadwet**  
Chairman, IATO Andaman & Nicobar  
Chapter and MD, Mak Logistics

“Pre-pandemic, we were getting around 5 lakh tourists in Andaman & Nicobar, out of which only 15,000 were foreigners, it is a very meagre figure. The tourists come because of cruise vessels, as a result they bring a lot of numbers. Clearly, foreigners are not staying and it is just a stopover destination. These numbers need to be corrected because Andaman & Nicobar has several attractions.”



**Kapil Goswamy**  
Managing Director  
Trans India Holidays

flights to India are pretty expensive and restrictive, which needs to open up more by having a serious conversation with authorities and government.”



**Prateek Hira**  
Chairman, Uttar Pradesh Chapter, IATO  
and President & CEO, Tomos

visa concerns and high airfares. Nevertheless, as an industry by 2024-25, we will be able reach the pre-pandemic levels and slowly surpass them.”

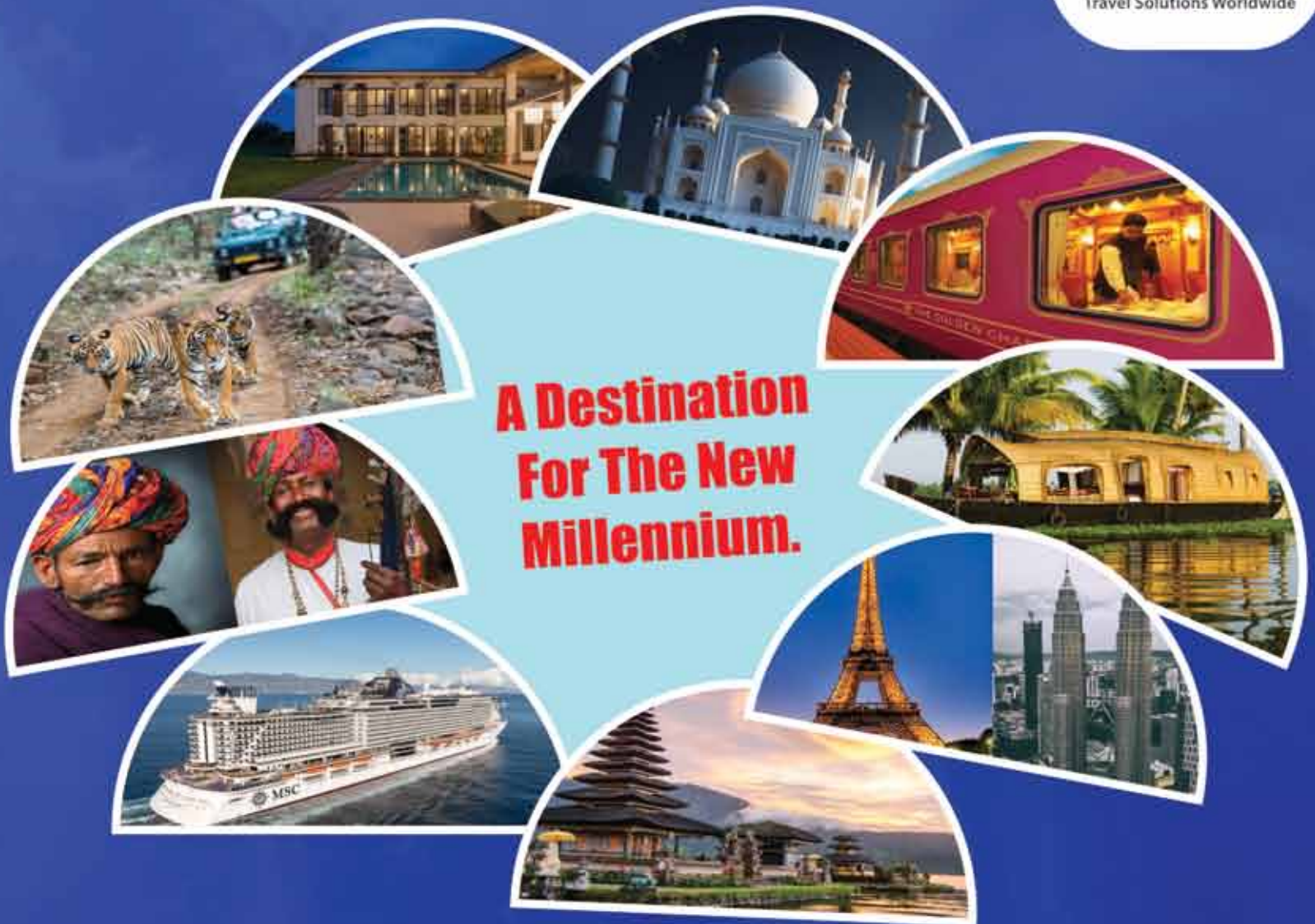


**Manoj Kumar Matta**  
Executive Committee Member, IATO and  
Director, Oriental Vacations & Journeys

promoting cave tourism for inbound tourism. India is focusing on all tourism products and soon it will provide a reason for people to travel.”



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# India No. 2 destination for Bali

While India ranks number five in terms of overall visitor arrivals for Indonesia, Indian travellers pushed it to number two when it came to Bali. That too without any direct flight. Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister for Marketing – Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy, Indonesia, is hopeful that direct flights may push India up to number one.



Hazel Jain

**Ni Made Ayu Marthini**, Deputy Minister for Marketing – Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy, Indonesia, was in Mumbai recently to meet with the Indian travel trade on the sidelines of the Indonesia Tourism Sales Mission. Its theme was 'Exploring New Destinations Beyond Bali' and had a delegation of 40 sellers from Indonesia. Marthini is happy with the numbers so far. "Indian tourist arrival numbers have been growing over the past year with a 230 per cent increase since the pandemic. This year, we have a target of 4,35,000 Indian tourists. So far, from January to July, the numbers are already touching 2,45,000. Of course, when compared with pre-COVID numbers we still have a long way to go. In the past, we have reached a peak of 6,60,000. So we are not yet on par with pre-COVID levels," she says.



**Ni Made Ayu Marthini**  
Deputy Minister for Marketing – Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy, Indonesia

She adds that India ranks number five for Indonesia in terms of tourist numbers. But for Bali, India is number two, only after Australia.

"My aim is to bring India higher up in the ranks. Bali is, of course, on top of the mind, but Indian travellers don't know much beyond Bali. We are here to introduce five new destinations to the trade," she said.

## Better air connections

Better air connectivity will be a game-changer for Indonesia, she says. "Until recently, there were no direct flights between the two countries. Yet, India is number two international source market for Bali! So, with a direct air connectivity, we believe the numbers will hopefully double. We now have Indigo flying Mumbai-Jakarta direct. The good news is that Indonesian airline Batik Air already flies Chennai to Medan. We are now working towards getting another Indian airline to fly to Indonesia directly, possibly Vistara," the minister adds.

## Weddings a big focus

Indonesia is also keen to attract weddings from India. "Bali is known as a high-end wedding destination and we would like to keep it that way. But we have more destinations that can be perfect for Indian weddings. There is also a lot of queries around wellness in Indonesia,



so we do want to push that," she says.

Sharing some new developments in Jakarta, she informs that the city has changed tremendously over the past five years. "It now has better rapid transport, and we are going to inaugurate a new bullet train that will run 400 kmph from Jakarta to Bandung. This will reduce the travel time from 2.5 hours to just 40 minutes. Bandung is known for its culinary delights, for its heritage, and shopping. Now since COVID, Indian travellers are seeking experiences. To cater to this, the ministry has

The minister also inaugurated a Wonderful Indonesia Corner at VFS facility in Mumbai. "We have a partnership with VFS for this corner. More than 4,000 people visit VFS facility and we want to promote the destination to them. Here, they can ask questions and enquire about Indonesia."

created a package on rural tourism that includes village visits. We are targeting families for this which can even stay with the locals in the village and experience the rural life," she adds.

Indians do not require visa to enter Indonesia. It is visa on arrival. The country also offers e-VOA facility whereby tourists can apply for their VOA online before they arrive.

## Five new destinations you should promote

- ❖ Lake Toba, a large natural lake in North Sumatra, and the biggest volcanic lake in the world
- ❖ Borobudur Temple, a big Buddhist temple located in central Java
- ❖ Island of Lombok, located next to Bali, which also has the MotoGP race track, and this will become an annual event
- ❖ Nusa Tenggara Timur, which has the iconic Komodo dragon in Komodo island
- ❖ Likupang, an eco-tourism destination located in the north tip of North Sulawesi

# LATAM brings South America closer

InterGlobe Air Transport, GSA for LATAM Airlines Group in India, recently organised two significant B2B workshops in Delhi and Mumbai that were attended by about 150 agents from the travel industry. Enhancing the global ambiance of the event were Eduardo Patta, Sales Manager-Asia; along with Mariana Tagwerker, Sales Executive-Asia.





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# G20 puts spotlight on India

► Contd. from page 5

“India’s G20 Presidency will benefit India and its tourism sector, particularly the destinations where conventions can be held. The G20 series of events has given us good exposure to the rest of the world. Many people were not aware of all the things India has to offer, and the MICE products, and the G20 Summit held at vari-



**NS Rathor**  
Chairman, IATO Western Region  
and CEO, Garha Tours and Travels

ous locations in India has put a spotlight on those places and offerings. The travel trade hopes to get more business.”

“Our country is in the process of accelerated infrastructure development and building more hotels and convention/exhibition centres to meet the requirement of this lucrative MICE segment. As a relatively new concept for Indians, convention centres have not gained much



**Meera Charnalia**  
Executive Vice President & Head - MICE  
Thomas Cook (India)

popularity among large scale corporates, yet this is expected to change in the upcoming years, as corporates have several requirements.”



**Arun Iyer**  
Founder & MD  
My Golf Tours

“The G20 Summit at the grand Bharat Mandapam, capable of hosting 7,000 delegates, and the colossal Yashobhoomi, accommodating 11,000 delegates, have truly sparked India’s emergence as a major convention hub. This aligns perfectly with the magnificent NMACC at Mumbai, setting a trend that is hard to ignore. What makes India stand out is the massive surge in infrastructure development such as expressways, and airports.”



**Debjit Dutta**  
Chairman, IATO WB Chapter and Director  
and CEO, Impression Tourism Services (India)

“Global standard convention centres are essential for promoting MICE tourism in any potential destination, including tier II and tier III cities. These cities may not have the same level of infrastructure offered by a hotel as the metros, but investing in a modern convention centre can be a catalyst for economic development and tourism promotion. By hosting large-scale MICE events, these cities can attract travellers and generate revenue for economy.”

“As far as CEC (convention and exhibition centre) business is concerned, its performance is an indicator/reflection of the country’s economic progress. Whenever we pitch for a business/event, we are not only promoting our venue, but also the country, the destination, location, proximity to hotels,



**Devendra Bharmha**  
CEO  
Jio World Centre

airport, and amenities, as any booking has a direct trickle-down effect on boosting these ancillary businesses.”

“India is a thriving convention destination, offering a rich blend of culture, history, and modern amenities. Its diverse landscapes, world-class cities, and renowned hospitality make it an ideal choice for MICE. Maharashtra is a frontrunner in the MICE industry. The state boasts of state



**Jitendra Kejriwal**  
Chairman, IATO Maharashtra and Dadra,  
Nagar Haveli & Daman Chapter

of the art convention centres. Mumbai’s financial hub, cultural attractions, and culinary scene make it a compelling choice for business events.”



**Ajay Prakash**  
President  
TAFI

“By and large, in India we do have a shortage of state of the art and large convention centres. But if we are serious about attracting MICE, we need to pay more attention to this. One of the biggest travel trade fair happens in a really out-of-the-way place in the middle of nowhere because we don’t have anything in Delhi. The Jio centre in Mumbai is something that has really made a difference. We need more venues like this to attract MICE business to India.”



**Subhash Goyal**  
Chairman  
STIC Travels & Air Charter Group

“India is an upcoming convention hub because the government is seriously focusing on development of MICE infrastructure like convention centres. The opening of world-class convention centres like Jio World Centre, Bharat Mandapam, and India International Convention and Expo Centre in Dwarka are becoming the best convention centres in the world. A foundation has been laid and lots of new convention centres are coming up.”

“I find the model of Hong Kong Convention Centre very attractive. It has facilities for very big conventions, for many smaller breakout sessions, and hotel accommodation around it for seamless commuting. Such convention centres are very capital intensive. Therefore, I suggest a hub and spoke approach



**MP Bezbaruah**  
Secretary General  
HAI

for India. We should develop a few high-quality convention centres in the metros to attract big conventions.”



**Parveen Chander Kumar**  
EVP Sales and Marketing  
IHCL

“India has lot of untapped potential, especially when it comes to tier II and III cities. MICE and wedding tourism will never fade away and continue to grow for various reasons. As the Indian industry continues to grow, MICE will grow as well. In terms of weddings, the concept of big fat weddings and destination wedding have come back again. IHCL makes sure that they open properties not only in metro cities but also in tier II and tier III cities.”



**Mahendra Vakharia**  
EC Member/ Immediate Past President,  
OTOAI & MD, Pathfinders Holidays

“What does one look for in a convention destination? India is one of the few or only destinations in the world where besides the business part of convention, you have the choice to extend the trip and experience culture, wildlife, wellness, history, architecture, nature, shopping, spiritual and yoga sessions. The list is endless. So surely India is one of the top draw convention destination more so now with some modern convention centres that are opening.”



**Vikas Sood**  
GM, Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma  
Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre

conceptualized and executed as purpose-driven greenfield projects, futuristic design and technology are enabled in the project.”

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# Fortune sets sights on Northeast

In the dynamic landscape of the Indian hospitality industry, Fortune Hotels has stood the test of time, evolving and expanding over its remarkable journey of more than two and a half decades. Samir MC, Managing Director, Fortune Park Hotels, shares the exciting developments and future plans of the renowned hotel chain.

Janice Alyosius

Fortune Hotels' journey has been marked by adaptability and a keen understanding of the evolving demands of the Indian hospitality market. As the brand continues to grow and expand into new destinations, its commitment to offering quality experiences for business and leisure travellers remains at the core of their mission.

With a legacy dating back to more than 25 years, Fortune Pak Hotels has firmly established itself in the Indian hospitality landscape. **Samir MC**, Managing Director, Fortune Park Hotels, highlighting the brand's accomplishments, said, "Fortune Hotels has been around for over two and a half decades. Currently, we operate 47 hotels with over 3,500 rooms in more than 40 locations."

The brand is well spread out, having a long history in the industry,



**Samir MC**  
Managing Director  
Fortune Park Hotels

and a deep understanding of the Indian market. Sharing insights about this year and their expansion plans for next year, Samir said, "At this stage, we are excited to share that this year has been fantastic for us. We have opened five new hotels in the last few months, one in Kalimpong, one in Khajuraho, two in Amritsar, including one close to the Golden Temple, a location we

particularly admire, and a wedding-centric hotel in Hoshiarpur. We are thrilled to share this accomplishment. Looking ahead, we have plans to open eight to 10 hotels in diverse destinations across the country in next few months."

The hospitality industry in the Northeast has tremendous potential that everyone is eyeing. There is an increasing interest among travellers to explore the region, and the hospitality industry wants to leverage the potential by establishing a presence in the region. Emphasising on the region's potential, Samir said, "The Northeast appears to be an emerging destination, primarily due to the improvements in connectivity to various locations in the region. I'm confident that it will become a preferred destination for many tourists in the next few years. At this stage, we are actively seeking interesting properties in the area. We have recently started exploring this region. While we have opened a

hotel in Kalimpong, which technically serves as the gateway to the Northeast, we are also planning to open more hotels."

In terms of market segmentation, Fortune Hotels has shown a remarkable adaptability. Originally

**Looking ahead, we have plans to open another eight to 10 hotels in diverse destinations across the country in the next few months**

known for its business-oriented hotels, the brand has recognised the growing significance of the leisure segment. This realisation led to a strategic shift towards a



balanced portfolio. Samir shared, "When we consider our segments and reflect on our journey, Fortune Hotels originally began as a business hotel chain. However, over the last few years, we have recognized the growing importance of the leisure segment. We have gradually expanded our presence in the leisure market. Looking ahead, our aim is to strike the right balance between business and leisure locations, targeting a 50-50 per cent mix in terms of business and leisure properties." He added, "In the coming year, we are set to open approximately eight to 10

hotels with an even split between business and leisure properties. This expansion covers tier I, tier II, and tier III locations. Notably, around 65 per cent of the new hotels in our pipeline will be situated in tier II and tier III cities."

Speaking about their relationships with tour operators and travel partners, Samir said, "We are currently offering standard pricing to tour operators. Additionally, as one of the pioneers in providing net pricing to our travel partners, we have recently integrated with the ITC distribution system."



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# Immersive experiences of Punjab

Rakhee Gupta Bhandari, Principal Secretary, Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Punjab, says that the present state government's policies aim to catapult the state to become a leading international tourist destination by 2030.

**Suhani Sood**

**Punjab's hospitality**  
Punjab is truly a destination that will soak the tourist in its hospitality, vibrancy, and beautiful historic attractions. "We also gave travellers familiarization trips, so that they can explore destinations. We all know Amritsar, Patiala, and Jalandhar are already explored destinations, yet there are so many unexplored destinations that needs to diversified and included in the itineraries," she said. "Punjab has only showed colours of red and green, which represents sacrifice, fertility and green revolution. However, now is the wakeup call to showcase colours of tourism and hospitality as well," she added.

**Hope IATO chooses Punjab**  
When asked about the experience in the recently held IATO Annual Convention, Bhandari praised the event and said, "A lot of promotion happens with such a convention and that too in a tier II city. We expect to host IATO convention or some trade mart of a similar effect, so that we can showcase Punjab to tourism operators."

**Immersive experience**  
She said that the state government wants people visiting various places in the state of Punjab to go through ultimate experiences, where they can relax and enjoy mouthwatering local delicacies.



"We don't focus on just one segment, we focus on providing all-in-one experience to the travellers," she said.



**Rakhee Gupta Bhandari**  
Principal Secretary  
Tourism and Culture, Punjab

**Punjab's aspiration to become a wellness hub aligns with its heritage. Additionally, empowering women in tourism promises socio-economic growth**

**Government policies**  
Appreciating the state government's effort, she informed about the upcoming policies on wellness and women in tourism.

"Punjab's aspiration to become a wellness hub aligns seamlessly with its cultural heritage. Additionally, empowering women in tourism promises socio-economic growth. By fostering women's participation and offering training and financial support, we aim to catalyse positive change," Bhandari said. "The new adventure policy and water tourism policy have already been framed and taken shape. With all these initiatives, I am sure Punjab can do wonders," she added.

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# The Spanish connection

The latent demand for Spain that was brewing during the pandemic is now bubbling over. Not just leisure but even MICE is picking up, and to leverage this potential, more than 20 exhibitors from Spain flew down to India to showcase their new offerings to the Indian travel agents and re-ignite their connections with them.

“We have been active in India market for more than 15 years now. We are really happy to be here and meet old friends, as well as some new ones too. In fact, the travel trade here is now more like friends. The



**Florencia Molet**  
CEO  
SmartWorks Events

“Pre-pandemic, we received more than 220,000 visitors from India. This year till date, we have welcomed 123,000 visitors already. At this B2B show, we have some first-time exhibitors who are keen on tapping the India market.



**Maria Garcia**  
Executive Consultant  
Costa del Sol Tourist Board

“Galicia is a region in the northern part of Spain. The three cities we visited in India showed a lot of interest in our destination, which is relatively new for the Indian market. Our region is a little bit unknown than



**Pia Louw**  
Promotion Director  
Tenerife



**Cristina Lozano**  
Managing Director  
Century Incoming

“We are a destination management company based in Spain and do luxury and high-end events. We met a lot of MICE agencies in the three cities that are interested to send big groups to Spain. Before the pandemic, we used to get a lot of groups from India, especially for incentives. We now look forward to welcoming more groups again. For us, size is not that important as long as they are high-end clients.”



**Elisa Robles-Fraga**  
Director  
Tourist Office of Spain, Mumbai

For instance, there is a company that specialises in flamenco dance and a company that offers luxury weddings and MICE packages.”

“I look after the luxury travel and emerging markets at the tourism board and this three-city roadshow has been a great experience. We are very happy to be back in India after more than three years. We received a lot of interest for Costa del Sol and our province. In fact, we have seen an increase of Indian travellers visiting our destination in the last season. This market has huge potential and we will keep coming back.”



**Sandra Mayán**  
External Relations  
Galicia

the rest of the country. So our focus right now is to inform the travel trade about our region first. We see huge potential in this market for Galicia.”

“We are relatively new to India market. Tenerife is in the Canary Islands located in the Atlantic Ocean. Our island is a hidden gem of Spain and not many people know us. But we do have a very good reference of travellers visiting Tenerife from India because we have a very strong community of Indian diaspora. And this is why we are here to showcase the destination and it has been well received.”

“Spain as a destination is very close to my heart. We met a few new tourism boards here, as well as a variety of suppliers from Spain. There were two particularly new destinations here that I found interesting.



**Sunita Amarnani**  
Executive VP  
Vexlore

“We have had the chance to meet some new regions like Tenerife and Galicia, which is known for its amazing hospitality and landscape. Tenerife is a very interesting product and I see a lot of potential for the destination for my



**Hutokshi Marker**  
CEO  
Trail Blazer Tours India

“In the past, we used to do five to seven-day itineraries but today we are noticing that our clients want to spend more time to experience the destination. And there is so much to discover. So, these days our average



**Farida Attarwala**  
Director  
Butterflies Holidays



**Nagsri Sashidhar**  
Chief Happiness Officer  
NAGSRI Creating Special Memories

“We have been selling and promoting Spain for a very long time and we work with two to three suppliers. For the first time, we have interacted with so many inbound suppliers that have come down from Spain. I believe, post COVID, this is the first time we have actually seen such a huge delegation down in Mumbai. So, it's a great opportunity for all us to meet new suppliers and learn about Spain.”



**Maitreyee Patel**  
Owner  
Pathfinders Holidays

clients. There are also a lot of products that have been showcased for the luxury market. It has been an interesting mix of new products that we saw.”

“I loved the format of the show. We were given a list of appointments in advance, so we were able to know who we were going to meet. It also gave us time to discuss this with our team and come up with informed queries and meet the exhibitors, who we really wanted to meet. I had an interesting meeting with someone from Bicester Village and it was good to know that there was one outlet in Spain.”



**Veneeta Rawat**  
Director  
Amazing Vacations

Spain itinerary for us is at least two weeks. At this show, I must highlight a new region called Galicia that I did not know existed. It sounds wonderful.”

“It was interesting to meet all the tourism boards present here, particularly of places we have not ever marketed in India, like Tenerife and north of Spain. It's important to understand that there is so much more to Spain than the usual itineraries that are being sold today. This is a great way to understand how we can send our clients to Spain again and again. It was also lovely to meet DMCs.”

Compiled by Hazel Jain



# Aurangabad longs for air linking

Radhika Rastogi, Principal Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of Maharashtra, explains how infrastructure has improved in Aurangabad in recent years, but there is a need for air connectivity to increase tourist footfall.


 Suhani Sood

**C**hhatrapati Sambhajnagar or Aurangabad is centrally and strategically located. It is a gateway to many important places. For example, Shirdi is a few hours away from Aurangabad; Bhandardara, a paradise for adventure lovers, is just 3 hours away, and Parbhani Village, home to 50 uniquely designed step walls, is located at a distance of 3 kms.

Aurangabad, known as the 'Cultural Capital of Maharashtra' due to its diverse culture, hosted the recent IATO Annual Convention. **Radhika Rastogi**, Principal Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of Maharashtra, when asked about how the convention will change



**Radhika Rastogi**  
Principal Secretary, Tourism Department  
Government of Maharashtra

  
**If you like to visit historic forts, engage in water sports, or wander in forests, coming to Aurangabad and Maharashtra is the best option**

tourism scenario in Aurangabad, said: "It (Aurangabad) is not only home to Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves, but also has Bibi Ka Maqbara, Panchmarhi, and several Buddhist caves, which are yet to be fully explored. Aurangabad will definitely get tourists and travellers after the IATO Convention." She added, "If you like to visit historic forts, engage in water sports, wander in forests, or relax in beaches, coming to Aurangabad and Maharashtra is the best option."

Rastogi said, "Such conventions bring all tourism stakeholders under one roof. Constant discussions and

dialogues have ironed out so many issues and challenges, which need to be addressed on a priority basis. Also, tour operators and travel agents will explore the place and include in their itineraries. IATO Convention benefits the region no matter how small or big the place is."


Rastogi explained how the hotel accommodation in the region is im-

proving. "The place has big 5-star brands like Taj, ITC, Airbnb, and local homestays in and around Ajanta and Ellora Caves. Aurangabad has enough hotels and accommodation options to handle influx of tourists," she informed. Another important aspect of tourism is connectivity. "In terms of connectivity, there is still one major gap which exists, the flight con-

nectivity. The flight timings from Mumbai are not that convenient and direct flights from places like Udaipur have been stopped. We are in talks with government and related authorities to restart flights. Leaving flight connectivity, we do have excellent road and rail network from Nagpur, Pune and Mumbai," he said. If you have seen Aurangabad, the



place speaks for itself. Bibi Ka Maqbara, or replica of Taj Mahal, is a beautiful attraction which has not been fully explored as of yet.

"A tourist can enjoy peace, solitude and diverse experience and at the same time avoid Taj Mahal rush," she said. 



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# Higher demand pushing hotel rates?

The hotel occupancy and rates have been constantly high for quite some time and continue to show an upward trend. While some feel it is cyclical nature of business at play, others believe that rates will wane out once investment starts pouring in. Industry's top professionals express their viewpoint on the factors that are contributing to the trend.



**Dilpreet Singh Bindra**  
Area Director, Ops, North India, Bhutan & Nepal and  
Franchise Operations, South Asia, Marriott International

“With a positive outlook for India over the coming 10 years, the market is now experiencing strong demand and constrained supply. There is a consensus that hotels will continue to see an increase in both occupancy rates and prices even if big international conferences have not yet completely resumed

after COVID. ADRs have increased compared to 2019, but there is still a sizable space for development, particularly when compared to rates in other worldwide areas. The attractiveness of a location and the experiences provided by hotels are more important to travelers than the simple cost. The expansion of resort portfolios, such as the 30 per cent rise seen at Marriott, highlights the significance of distinctive experiences in luring leisure travellers. In India, the growth of the hotel industry is being driven by a dual focus on Tier II and III sectors as well as a specific focus on the luxury market, especially in resort areas. The strategy focus of the sector is on signing premium assets, which reflects an alignment with shifting customer tastes.”



**Vikramjit Singh**  
President  
Lemon Tree Hotels

“Occupancy and rates will continue to grow for at least the next four years. Some of the factors that are contributing to the high growth are: Currently, India is mostly driven by domestic demand, and inbound arrivals have not recovered to the pre-COVID level. This is expected to change in the coming

years, with the government's focus on increasing FTAs; investor sentiments, both domestic and international, towards India are positive. Foreign investments with manufacturing units are being set up in different states, which will lead to higher travel needs; demand growth is surpassing supply growth, and as we have seen from the cycles of the past, this trend will continue for a few years until supply catches up; There is a boost in religious tourism, which is less impacted by the economic downturn. Kashi surpassed Goa in the number of tourists, and Ayodhya seems to be next. Hotel owners and operators are now strategically targeting these markets, where demand is high and increasing further.”



**Jaideep Dang**  
Managing Director  
Hotels and Hospitality Group, JLL India

“Occupancy rates are moving in line with seasonality experienced by the hotel sector in India. This is characterised by a strong Q1 (Jan to March) on the back of corporate travel followed by a dip in Q2 brought about by the reduction in corporate travel amidst extreme summer months and by summer vacations. We expect

occupancy levels to pick up during Q3, which is normally the shoulder months followed by an uptick in Q4, which is typically led by corporate travel, MICE and weddings. Although, there has been a significant growth in room inventory in the past 18 months, but we expect the supply over the next 3-4 year period to be comparatively slow. Demand on the other hand is expected to remain buoyant given the growth in Indian economy. We expect the hotels' performance to remain robust in the medium term. Development activity has witnessed an uptick in recent quarters as per data tracked by JLL. In H1 (Jan to June) 2023, there have been 127 new branded hotel signings comprising more than 11,500 rooms which is a 36 per cent Y-o-Y growth in new room inventory signed.”

“I see high occupancy and rates moving upward for another year. With no inventory adding up, it would still remain a sellers' market and we would continue to command rates. I see rate stabilisation happening once occupancies settle down. That would happen once outbound opens up completely.



**Greesh Bindra**  
Vice President, Operations  
The Suryaa New Delhi

A backlog of visas and skyrocketing airfares are still affecting travel outside India. I see a strong inflow of foreign tourist arrivals this year between November 2023 and March 2024. Though the numbers are quite encouraging and satisfying, it appears that inbound tourism is expected to be back to pre-COVID levels by the last quarter of 2024. Major hotel chains such as Marriott International, IHG, RHG, IHCL and Oberoi hotels, among others, are signing deals to increase their inventory size in the country. Though demand is going to be buoyant for room additions, I do not see any new inventory size adding, at least in the Delhi NCR region for the next one year. The wedding business has helped hotels to maintain occupancies and high ADRs.”

“Although there are worries regarding rate stabilisation, the existing situation of hotel rates in India points to a stable and balanced hospitality business. The industry's resiliency in the face of economic changes is demonstrated by the average daily room rate (ADR), which has stayed stable. In addition to drawing tourists



**Nikhil Sharma**  
Market Managing Director  
Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resort

looking for trustworthy lodging alternatives, this stability shows how adaptable the sector is to shifting market dynamics. There are concerns regarding the appeal of international travel for Indian tourists as hotel charges in India grow. The world's largest middle class, which has enormous potential, offers a unique opportunity for both domestic and international travel. Growing disposable incomes enable this group to make a considerable contribution to the expansion of the tourist sector globally. The growth of hotels across all market categories is being driven by the hospitality sector's present performance, with the mid-segment receiving special attention. The future of this market sector appears to have bright potential.”

“High occupancy and rates are sustainable in the short term for the next one or two years. But in medium terms, with investment coming into the industry, high occupancy will take a slight dip. However, at the same time, since Indian economy continues to grow, it will not be a large dip. It will have an upward graph.



**Rakesh Mathur**  
Senior Hospitality &  
Tourism Professional

So, if not very high, the occupancy will continue to sustain a reasonable upward trajectory in the coming years. Rates are subjected to market conditions. When you have good occupancy, a good amount of investment also comes into the business. And when that happens, rates normally take a dip. This is a cyclical pattern of the market. Previously, there have been periods of highs and lows as well. Recently, the rates have been unusually high, and they are going to stabilise and come down in the next few years. As per my experience, this will last 2-3 years, or 5 years maximum. I do not think rates will stabilize. There will always be fluctuations because that is the nature of the market. The current performance is a natural phenomenon in the hospitality industry.”





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## Must-visit UNESCO World Heritage Sites in **MADHYA PRADESH**

From prehistoric caves to the era of Guptas, Rajputs, Marathas and Mughals, the landscape of Madhya Pradesh is a map depicting passage of time, embroidered with chronicles of the first men, mighty empires and cultural relics. Here are top places in the state as part of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites that you can't miss:

### **Bhimbetka Rock Shelters: The Man before Time**

An archaeological treasure that spans the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods, the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters lie nestled within the lush

green Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. Bearing witness to human evolution itself, the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters are a rare glimpse of man's ingenuity left

behind by our earliest ancestors. Showing evidences of human settlement, some of these natural caves in Bhimbetka have well-preserved prehistoric cave paintings with the earliest ones dating

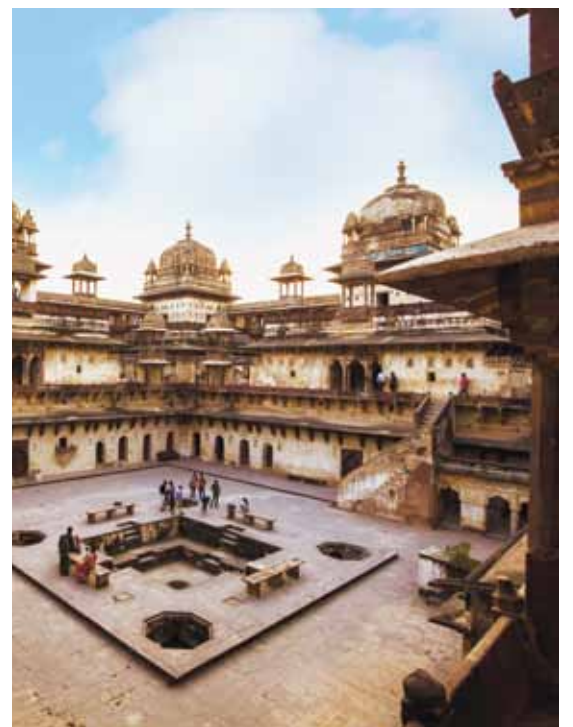
back to about 10,000 years old. From hunting, dancing and walking through forests to climbing trees and riding on horsebacks, elephants and chariots, these paintings are a record of man's



Bhimbetka rock paintings

**Bearing witness to human evolution itself, the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters are a rare glimpse of man's ingenuity left behind by our earliest ancestors**

cultural and social development in different eras. It is a treat for lovers of all things archaeological, artsy and mysterious. Only about 45 km away, Bhopal Railway Sta-



Jehangir Mahal, Orchha



**Sheo Shekhar Shukla**  
Principal Secretary (IAS), Department of  
Tourism & Culture, Government of Madhya  
Pradesh & Managing Director, Madhya  
Pradesh Tourism Board

“Madhya Pradesh is a realm of wonders that have been cherished by the world. Our state is home to some of the most treasured UNESCO World Heritage Sites, each a testament to human achievement and the grandeur of nature. Explore the intricate temples of Khajuraho, the stupas of Sanchi and the ancient caves of Bhimbetka, where history and culture intertwine. These sites are more than just landmarks; they are living chapters of our global heritage. Come, be a part of their story, and experience the pride of Madhya Pradesh in preserving these timeless legacies for generations to come.”





tion is the nearest railway station to Bhimbetka.

## Khajuraho: The Grandeur of Ancient India

Built between 950 AD and 1050 AD by the Chandela Dynasty in what is now the Chattarpur district of Madhya Pradesh, 'Khajuraho Group of Monuments' are a masterclass in balancing architectural splendour and sculptural elegance. These Nagara-style temples were built as symbolic expressions depicting various themes of meditation, social life, spiritual teachings and human relationships through art. Distinguished in three cluster groups, these temples are dedicated to Hinduism and Jainism

with 20 still standing today, out of the original 85 temples in the complex. The ornate Kandariya Mahadeva Temple, meaning "the Great God of the Cave", is the largest in the medieval temple group and is the finest example of ancient Indian art and craftsmanship. The Khajuraho temple complex is nearly 10 km off the National Highway 75, and about 50 km from the city of Chhatarpur. Khajuraho railway station is also about 5 km away from the main town.

## Sanchi Stupa: The Stories of the Old

Located in the small village of Sanchi on a hill near the capital city of Bhopal, Sanchi Stupa is



*Gwalior Fort*



### *The Great Stupa, Sanchi*

one of the oldest stone structures in India built during the Mauryan period by the great emperor Ashoka. An example of a unique architectural legacy and history, the iconic hemispherical edifice of the Sanchi Stupa has three elements - "Harmika".

"Anda" and "Chhatra". The dome-shaped "Anda" depicts the universe centered inside the mound. It is surrounded by "harmika" (square railing) representing the cosmic mountain held by a central pillar supporting a triple umbrella form called "Chhatra". It

symbolizes three jewels of Buddhism, including the Buddha, the Dharma (Teachings) and Sangha (Community). The structure is enclosed at four points by ornate ceremonial gateways, which act as canvases that hold detailed scenes depicting Buddhist stories. The Sanchi Stupa stands 54 feet tall, surrounded by many smaller stupas, monolithic pil-

is located by about 10 km from Vidisha district and roughly 50 km from Bhopal.

## Much more to Explore

Madhya Pradesh is an ancient land of wonders that still hides many secrets, myths and stories in its heart. But those who know how to hear its beguiling whispers find their way. The City of Joy Mandu, Orchha, marble rock formations of Bhedaghat-Lametaghat in Narmada valley and biodiversity-rich Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR) found their place in the UNESCO's tentative list of natural world heritage sites. Gwalior and Orchha are also being developed under the HUL (Historic Urban Landscape) project of UNESCO. But there are a lot more. Such natural and architectural marvels as the Orchha Fort Complex, Jahaz Mahal, Bhojeshwar temple, Islamnagar, Bateshwar Temple Complex, Gwalior Fort, Udayagiri Caves dot the vast landscape of the state, making it a visual and cerebral delight for history and art enthusiasts. 🏰



*Jahaz Mahal, Mandu*

Located near Bhopal, Sanchi Stupa is one of the oldest stone structures in India built during the Mauryan period by emperor Ashoka

lars, temples and monasteries. According to the UNESCO, it is the oldest Buddhist sanctuary in existence and finest example of aniconic arts and free-standing architecture. The Sanchi Stupa



# A world-class airline with Indian heart

Air India has taken several initiatives to enhance customer experience. It has been adding aircraft to expand its network globally while densifying the domestic service. With the unveiling of its new brand identity, the airline has taken off on its transformation journey called Vihaan.AI to become a world-class global airline with an Indian heart.

TT Bureau

Air India, India's national carrier, continues to solidify its position in the domestic and global aviation market with its recent expansion plans. The airline has announced several new routes and attractive fare sales, offering travellers exceptional travel experiences and expanded network.

These developments are part of Air India's commitment to enhance connectivity, frequency, and customer satisfaction across its fleet.

### Spreading wings

Air India has launched a non-stop service between Bengaluru and Singapore from 22 October 2023. The flight will operate four days a week on Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays. The new connection will lend a boost to tourism and trade in the two cities and help the leisure travellers, students, and business community.



Air India has also enhanced the frequency from Mumbai to Singapore from seven flights a week to 13 flights a week from 22 October 2023. With the increased frequency and commencement of service from Bengaluru, Air India is currently operating a total of 38 non-stop flights to Singapore per week from Delhi (14 flights), Mumbai (13 flights), Chennai (7 flights) and Bengaluru (4 flights) connecting the Merlion City. Air India also introduced a non-

stop service between Kolkata and Bangkok from 23 October 2023. The flight will have a two-class configuration of Economy and Business Class and operate six days a week from Monday to Saturday.

Air India also connected Kochi, the commercial hub of Kerala, with Doha, the Capital of Qatar, with a daily non-stop service from the same date. This new flight will fulfil the need of a convenient and

comfortable direct connection between the two cities.

### Air India opens mega warehouse facility in Delhi

Air India has commissioned a mega warehouse facility in Delhi to facilitate storage of over 1,000,000 engineering spares that are integral to maintenance, checks and repairs of its aircraft and ground support equipment, in a move that will further enhance Air India's fleet and operational

efficiency and strengthen India's expanding aviation ecosystem. Located in the proximity of Terminal 3, at the Cargo complex of Delhi Airport's Air Cargo Logistics division, the centralized warehouse sprawling in 54,000 sq. ft. (approx.), will significantly improve quick turnaround of the airline's flights operating out of Delhi.

### Ropes in Manish Malhotra for makeover of uniforms

Air India announced its partnership with celebrated fashion designer Manish Malhotra to design new uniforms for over 10,000 Air India employees on the frontline, including cabin crew, cockpit crew, ground and security staff. This is a further step in the manifestation of Air India's new global brand identity as part of its ongoing modernization programme. Air India expects to commence rolling out the new look for its uniformed employees by the end of 2023.

Air India's recent expansion in the domestic and global markets

demonstrates the airline's commitment to providing enhanced connectivity, frequency, and affordable fares to its passengers. With new routes, attractive sales, and a focus on customer satis-

The airline has announced several new routes and customer-centric initiatives to offer an exceptional travel experience

faction, the airline continues to strengthen its position as India's leading global carrier. As the airline augments its fleet with new aircraft, travellers can expect new destinations and improved services in the future.

# India fastest-growing market for Melia

Melia Hotels International, a Spanish hotel chain, recently conducted a multi-city roadshow across India, including Mumbai and New Delhi. The events were attended by key spokespersons from across the international portfolio to give travel agents a glimpse of the brand's latest global news, including exclusive updates and the exciting launches and plans of Melia Group.





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# Rezlive zooms in on tier II, III cities

Sharing broad plans for the India market, Jaal Shah, Founder of Rezlive.com and Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group, says that tier II, III cities is where his focus lies right now and the company is keen on connecting with travel agents here in order to expand the business to business network.



Hazel Jain

Launched in 2007, Rezlive.com today has its presence across India in terms of its travel agent network. And while it is constantly connected with leading travel agencies, the focus is now also on tier II and III cities in India.

Sharing more about the company plans, **Jaal Shah**, Founder of Rezlive.com and Group MD, Travel Designer Group, says, "That is something we are on a constant hunt for. We want to add more agents onboard from these cities that used to be accessible only via trade shows at one time. But now we are sending our people into these cities, for physical sales, and recruiting people in these cities, and doing events here. I am glad that some tourism bodies and trade associations have also started their networking events in these tier II and III cities cities, which



**Jaal Shah**  
Founder of Rezlive.com and Group MD,  
Travel Designer Group

gives us an opportunity to meet and interact with them. This is going to be our strategy for the next few years."

#### Competitive landscape

India has become a competitive and crowded market in terms of the B2B online portals, Shah says. "What is really good about this is that

most of them are home-grown Indian companies. There have been some new entrants in the market and the existing players have strengthened their position. India as a market has also evolved wherein people want to book online more, and post-COVID the search has converted

**India has become a competitive market in terms of B2B online portals. What is really good about this is that most of them are home-grown Indian companies**

ed to growth of lots of companies such as ours where travel agents started looking at online



medium, one, as an information medium, and two, as a transaction medium," he adds.

The traditional DMCs, which used to dominate the Indian market for some of these destinations, faced a lot of problems pre and post-COVID.

"I think the overall acceptability of the online companies and the people who believe can book via people like us has only increased the idea that it's growing where we started taking back the shares from those DMCs and doing more transactions online. For India, two things are important for us to know because a lot of agencies have kind of reallocated themselves. We saw a complete change of real estate where people have moved geography and changed their offices. So, first to establish connect there have

been a lot of changes with regard to the manpower in India because of COVID. For us, the first thing was to reach out to a maximum number of agents, re-establish and regroup on how we used to work and connect with travel agents, and at the same time we started looking at more cities to expand our reach because suddenly these Indian cities started having more flights – not only internationally but also domestically, which has opened a new market for some of these travel agents," Shah says.

#### New destinations exciting

For Rezlive.com, reaching out to these travel agents via various routes was important. So, it organised its own events and started participating extensively in all roadshows, platforms and trade shows. "We started working closely with tourism boards. In fact, we just concluded a fantastic three-city roadshow of Abu Dhabi in India. This provided us with

good networking opportunities to showcase Abu Dhabi to agents in India. Such activities have only been increasing and we are trying to encash and be part of these activities," Shah says.

He also highlights that some new and interesting destinations that were unheard of in the old days in India are taking over. "Destinations like Vietnam. Today, Ahmedabad has two flights into Vietnam – into Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Such low-cost connections have not only allowed people to travel more but made travel to such destinations more affordable. We see now that there are flights opened between north India into Georgia and that's going to drive some tourism. We are looking at Air Asia expanding base in India. So, the outbound travel from India is constantly changing and I think it's becoming more affordable with more options available to travellers."

# Punjab's rich culture on display

With the aim of showing colours of tourism and hospitality to the travel trade, the Punjab government organised a tourism summit from 11-13 September 2023 in Amity University, Mohali. The event saw presence of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, official of the state tourism department, and exhibitors and buyers from the state and different regions of India.





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# Cuba welcomes Indian trade partners

MGM Muthu Hotels welcomed Indian agents to take a glimpse of Cuba at Destinos Gaviota in Cayo Guillermo and interact with service providers from across the country. Travel trade from across the world explored the country and its various locations after the event as well. Destinos Gaviota Tourism Fair was held from 18-22 October in Cayo Paredón, Cuba.





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# Griffon promotes Cyprus Airways

Griffon Aviation, part of Griffon Group, is bringing a new destination closer to the Indian travellers by promoting Cyprus Airways. It flies Dubai to Larnaca – the capital of Cyprus – which makes it an easy one-stop destination from India. Griffon will be selling tickets out of India from November onwards for Diwali holidays.



Hazel Jain

**Vivek Jain**, Managing Director, Griffon Travels, Griffon Holidays and Griffon Cruises, is excited to announce a new collaboration that will offer Indian travellers a novel international destination – Cyprus.

“We have signed up with Cyprus Airways, the national airline of Cyprus, which flies from Dubai to Larnaca and from Larnaca to all key ports of Europe. We will be selling tickets out of India with interline agreements with other airlines into Dubai. So, Cy-



**Vivek Jain**  
Managing Director, Griffon Travels  
Griffon Holidays and Griffon Cruises

prus will be the new destination because we will have easy access to it from India,” Jain says.

Griffon sells B2B holidays, as well as cruises, particularly European cruise lines. It also represents airlines in the Indian market. Jain adds, “We will start bookings from November onwards just in time for Diwali holidays. It is a year-round destination and perfect for MICE and honeymooners. We also work with Louis Hotels, part of the Louis Group, which is one of the biggest hotel chains in Cyprus. So, we will promote all-inclusive packages to the travel trade.”

## European cruising picking up

Cruising suffered a setback after the pandemic. But since then, there has been a total change, says Jain.

“People now have a renewed confidence in cruising. It has picked up this season, and 2024 also looks encouraging. We specialise in cruising in Europe – the

Baltics, the Mediterranean, Aegean Sea and the Red Sea. We see good bookings for popular itineraries, including the West Med and the Greek islands; they sell round the year,” he adds.

**We will start bookings from November onwards just in time for Diwali holidays. It is a year-round destination and perfect for MICE and honeymooners**

Griffon has now introduced fantastic sailings out of Southampton on Cunard, going up to the Northern Lights and on to West Med, Lisbon, and Canary Islands and down to Barcelona. “In India, generally short programmes sell more which is 3-4

## Cunard reactivates India market

**Giorgia Cappabianca**, Business Development & International Sales Manager, Cunard, was in India recently to meet key travel trade in Mumbai and New Delhi. Sharing details on how India is performing, she says, “We are developing the India market with the help of Griffon. We want to strengthen our presence and market share in this market. Post-COVID, we are looking at targeting more and more younger travellers in the 40-50 age group. Currently, we have three Queen ships

– Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary II, and Queen Victoria. Next summer we will launch Queen Anne. We already have the first group from India boarding Queen Elizabeth from Barcelona for a 7-night itinerary this October. What we see is that Indian travellers visit to Europe for maybe 10-14 days and then combine that with a cruise.”



**Giorgia Cappabianca**  
Business Development & International  
Sales Manager, Cunard

night. Major demand is from major cities in India, but even smaller metros and tertiary cities are beginning to show interest now. Having said that, we also sell seven and 9-night itineraries, which passengers opt for their individual holidays. We also have 14 and 20-day itiner-

aries, but at the moment they are not popular in India,” Jain says.

Griffon Group now also promotes sailings which do round-the-world cruises that have a calling on Mumbai port, and Jain is trying to promote those for 2024-25. 🇮🇳



# KTO shows MICE offerings to trade

The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) recently organised a MICE roadshow in Mumbai showcasing diverse offerings for business events and corporate travel in Korea. The event brought together key players from the tourism and hospitality industry, featuring participation from seven DMCs, two airlines, one Regional Tourism Organization and one shopping representative.







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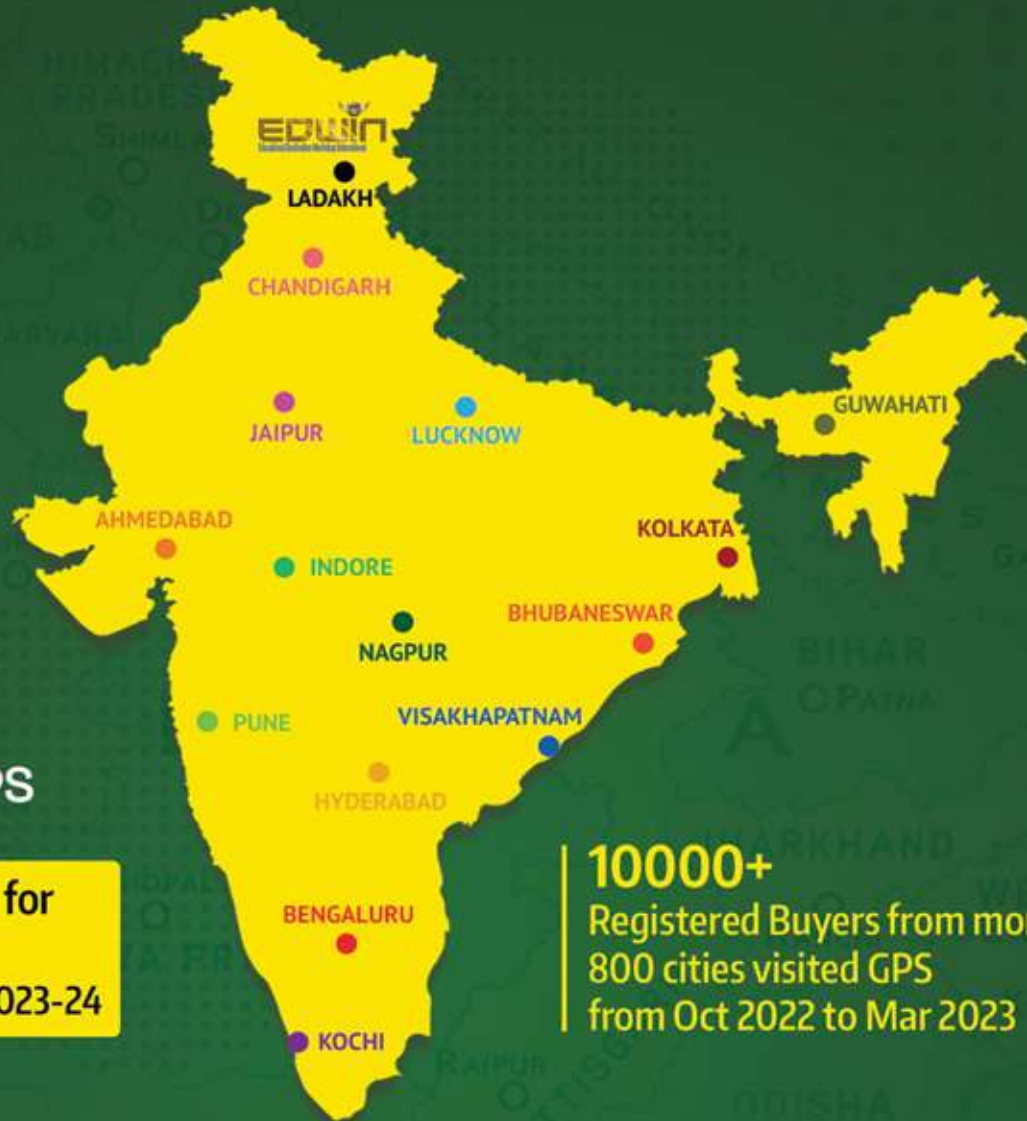
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# Spain's 3-city show begins in Delhi

The three-city Spanish Travel Experience India 2023, organised by the Tourism Office of Spain in India, gave key members of the travel trade a chance to meet and forge lasting relationships with more than 20 Spanish exhibitors. The show travelled to Delhi, Bengaluru and finally Mumbai, which included a myriad mix of DMCs, tourism boards, hotel groups and others.





Takhat Shri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib



# Bihar's Sikh Legacy: Where Spirituality Finds a Home

Bihar, a state of many cultures, has connections with Sikhism. The state has many historical gurdwaras and religious sites, such as Takhat Shri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib, marking the birthplace of 10th Sikh Guru Shri Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj, Gurudwara Bal Leela—where Guru Shri Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj spent his childhood—Gurudwara Guru ka Bagh—the area was where Guru Shri Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj used to play as child—Gurudwara Handi Sahib, Patna—a lady devotee served Guru Shri Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj a *handi* of *khichri*, and Prakash Punj, a newly built Sikh museum showcasing the life of Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj. These revered places resonate with the teachings of Sikhism, fostering values of equality, righteousness, and spirituality. Bihar's commitment to preserving this spiritual heritage is evident through its efforts to create a Sikh heritage circuit, offering both tourists and devotees an enriching experience. Explore the Sikh heritage and spirituality that Bihar has to offer.



Gurudwara Bal Leela



Gurudwara Guru ka Bagh



Gurudwara Handi Sahib, Patna



Prakash Punj



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# Spanish show concludes in Mumbai





# 65 packages to glorify WB attractions

R Arjun, Managing Director, West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation reveals how the state has developed 65 new packages to glorify attractions and is doubling up religious tourism to attract tourists with different interests.



Suhani Sood

With an aim to make West Bengal a preferred tourist and investment destinations, the state government is enhancing infrastructure, connectivity, and promoting integrated tourism constantly. Durga Puja festivities give an altogether different colour to the state's tourism activities. Emphasizing on the importance of the festival, **R Arjun**, Managing Director, West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation, said that Durga Puja was declared as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' by UNESCO in 2021. "As a result of that grant, the state has generated a lot of excitement and attracted flocks of tourists to the state during the fes-

mart and we were amazed by the questions we received for Kolkata, Darjeeling, Siliguri and unexplored destinations as well." He said West Bengal will be diamond sponsor for the next IATO convention.

## Travel trade

About their offerings, he said, "We will be introducing tourist packages on the lines of 2-days, 1-night/ 3-day 2-night. Sunderban packages,

Jhargram tourist package, as it is surrounded by forests, nature and splendid destinations. We also have hill tourism in a big way like Darjeeling and Siliguri. We will send these packages to all travel agents."

## Religious tourists double up

Arjun said, "We have developed 65 tour packages to cover and glorify important attractions in WB. We have doubled up religious tourism,

covering various genres, Buddhist, Hindu temples like Kalighat Kali Temple, Dakshineswar Kali Temple, and Belur Math."

## Integrated tourism

The state is focusing on different tourism products like nature based tourism (Sunderbans Delta, tea plantations, coastline tourism, mountain tourism, and river tourism), cultural tourism (festival tourism, cuisine



tourism, film tourism, rural tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism), and contemporary tourism (shopping tourism, convention tourism,

leisure and amusement parks tourism, medical tourism, rail tourism, sports tourism, and special tourism zones) to remain competitive. 📌



**R Arjun**  
Managing Director, West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation



**As a result of that grant (by UNESCO), the state has generated a lot of excitement and attracted flocks of tourists to the state during the festivities**

ivities. We also have rolled out three new packages for visiting Durga Pandals," Arjun said. "The state is also revamping historically important places like Kolkata, Hoogly, Darjeeling, and Siliguri, which are already famous, but need integrated tourism," he added.

## Diamond sponsor for next IATO

Arjun attended the recent IATO Annual Convention for the first time. Sharing his experience at the event, he said, "All the arrangements from inaugural function to panel discussions, from travel mart to warming hospitality, were excellent. West Bengal also had a stall in the trade



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# 'Technology to transform events'

Dinesh Rai, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi, in an exclusive interview with **TRAVTALK**, shares knowledge about the use of technological advancements in wedding and MICE sectors, scope of development in both the sectors, and how technology makes execution and planning of events in the industries different.



In a world that is increasingly reliant on digital solutions, various industries are incorporating technology to adapt to changing times and provide better experiences to their clients. As technology continues to evolve, we can expect even more innovative uses. Sharing his experience on how the wedding and MICE industries are leveraging technology, **Dinesh Rai**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi, says, "The wedding industry and the MICE industry have recognised the potential of technology to make events more efficient, engaging, and secure. The wedding industry, for instance, has embraced virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to offer couples immersive experiences, enabling virtual venue tours and even AR-based costume fittings. Wedding planning apps have streamlined the organisational aspects like guest list management. Drones are used to capture breathtaking aerial shots."

On the other hand, the MICE industry has adopted technology in a variety of ways. Event management software has revolutionized event planning, providing solutions for ticketing, registration, and participant engagement. Artificial intelligence (AI) plays a pivotal role in personalizing attendee experiences through and extending networking opportunities.

Rai says that hybrid events have gained prominence, allowing participants to join remotely, enhancing inclusivity and accessibility. Facial recognition technology streamlines registration and enhances security. AR apps at conferences provide interactive experiences with floor maps and exhibitor information, while data analytics offer insights into attendee behaviour and feedback, facilitating data-driven decision-making.

These technological advancements in both the industries not only improve operational efficiency but



**Dinesh Rai**  
General Manager  
Crowne Plaza Kochi

also enhance the overall experience for couples, clients, and attendees, marking a significant shift towards more innovative, inclusive, and engaging events.

#### Kochi - an events hub?

Talking about Crowne Plaza Kochi, Rai says that its strategic location

complemented by a well-connected international airport and major transport infrastructure makes it an ideal destination for a wide array of events. For the MICE industry, Kochi offers diverse event venues, including modern convention centres, and its natural beauty, with serene backwaters and coastal charm, adds a unique touch to conferences and exhibitions. Additionally, the city's rich cultural heritage can be integrated into MICE events, providing delegates with a memorable experience. On the wedding front, Kochi's scenic wedding venues, cultural experiences, make it a perfect choice for destination weddings. The city's international appeal and welcoming atmosphere ensure an inclusive and accessible experience for the guests.

As Kochi continues to evolve and adapt to the changing demands of these industries, it is poised to become an increasingly popular destination for both business events and weddings, Rai adds.

#### New developments

Amid the pandemic, Crowne Plaza Kochi has capitalised on the circumstances to embark on an extensive refurbishment endeavour. "This strong dedication to enhancement reached its pinnacle with the

Asian progressive restaurant named Zoka, which is again city's most talked about restaurant and loved by the crowd for its Teppanyaki grill specialties," he informs. Beyond gastronomic innovation, the hotel broadened its horizons to accommodate larger gatherings like meetings and weddings.

**Wedding and MICE industries have recognised the potential of technology to make events more efficient, engaging, and secure**

#### Wedding trends

Sharing his views on emerging trends in the wedding industry, he mentioned that there is a shift towards more intimate and personalized weddings. Second, sustainability and eco-friendly weddings are gaining traction, with an emphasis on reducing waste and environmental impact. Third, technology has become integral, with live streaming, virtual invitations, and digital wedding planning tools becoming the norm. Finally, inclusivity and diversity are on the rise, with a focus on representing different cultures, traditions, and backgrounds in weddings, reflecting the modern, multi-cultural society.

## Exploring beautiful city of Minsk

Kazin DMC recently conducted its maiden familiarisation trip to Minsk, the Capital to Belarus. Five key agents pan India were invited to explore the new destination. The trip was organised with the support of Belavia airline - which operates direct flights between Delhi and Minsk - Minsk Marriott Hotel, Hotel Hilton Double Tree and The Basilian.







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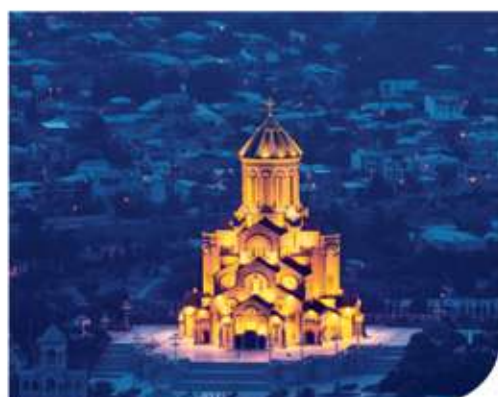
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# Delhi hosts global travel leaders

Over 1,000 delegates, including 159 sellers from 92 organisations and 15 destinations, along with 196 buyers from 191 organisations and 38 source markets, attended the 46<sup>th</sup> edition of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Travel Mart 2023 (PTM 2023), hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in New Delhi recently.







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1	Experience Kissimmee Webinar	11:00 am
2-3	CAPA Asia Aviation Summit & Sustainability Awards- Kuala Lumpur	8:00 am
3-4	Holiday Expo-Visakhapatnam 2023	9:00 am
3-5	India Travel Mart Dehradun 2023	9:00 am
3-6	Taipei International Travel Fair 2023	10:00 am
6-8	WTM	9:30 am
7-9	Penang International Travel Exchange Show 2023	9:00 am
13	Belgium Travel Expo 2023	9:00 am
16-17	UNWTO International Conference on Accessible Tourism 2023	10:00 am
16-19	Peru Travel Mart 2023	10:00 am
19-21	VisitBritain Roadshow- Delhi	10:00 am
20-22	Qatar Travel Mart 2023	9:00 am
21	Czech Travel Market 2023	9:00 am
22-23	GPS- Kolkata	10:00 am
24-27	OTOAI Convention	10:00 am
24-26	India International Travel Mart Pune 2023	11:00 am

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# Going beyond forts & palaces

Making a humble beginning 23 years ago, Erco Travels' clientele has grown to over 8,000 international guest base annually. The extensive experience of the TMC adds to the quality, style and exclusivity of all services that it offers.



Suhani Sood

Erco Travels is a leading inbound Travel Management Company (TMC) approved by the Union Ministry of Tourism. The 23-year-old company is on a "mission to sell Indian culture beyond forts and palaces" to tourists from across the globe.

"Our focus is on offering experience to clients, rather than just selling a regular tour. We are selling Indian culture and promoting India beyond forts and palaces, aiming to demonstrate true India to clients," says **Anurag Rathore**, Vice President, Erco Travels.

The company's forte lies in personalized and customized service, luxurious accommodation at attractive prices and informed guidance. With a humble beginning in the first few years of its operations, the company's clientele has grown impressively to over 8,000 international guest base annually. The extensive experience of the travel business adds to the quality, style and



**Anurag Rathore**  
Vice President  
Erco Travels

exclusivity of all services that the company offers.

Erco Travels has a wide network of regional and associate offices throughout the sub-continent, including Nepal, Dubai, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Maldives, besides having two main offices in Mumbai and Goa. "If a traveller is coming to India for the first time, the person is bound to visit Golden Triangle, Varanasi, and hills. So, our packages will be customized

according to that. Each nationality varies, for example, Americans prefer not to go deep into culture, while Europeans love to indulge

deep into the culture. Asians are keen on clicking pictures for memories just like Indians," he shares.

Elaborating on the company's business, Rathore informs, "Our major business comes from Europe, and we try our best to attend all fairs like ITB Berlin, WTM London, BIT Milan, Top Resa France, and TTG Rimini. We also visit our partners regularly, along with participation in roadshows organized by MOT and organizations from time to time." Asked about what is the importance of travel trade to Erco Travels, Rathore says, "It is our bread and butter from last 25 years."



**The company's forte lies in personalized and customized service, luxurious accommodation at attractive prices and informed guidance**

## Services offered by the company

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**Conferences & Incentives:** Being a corporate, if you want to plan your next meeting in Indian sub-continent, or want to offer your staff an incentive, the company is fully equipped to customize things.

# Macao emphasises on MICE trait

**Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes**, Director, Macao Government Tourism Office, highlights significance of Indian outbound travel market and discusses Macao's offerings, including MICE facilities and luxury experiences. She emphasises on Macao's potential for MICE and invites luxury travellers to experience its hotels and unique offerings.



Janice Alyosius

**Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes**, Director, Macao Government Tourism Office, expressed her delight in being back at the PATA Travel Mart in India. "My first PATA Travel Mart was in 1993 in New Delhi. And so, I am glad to be back. And I am very happy to see a lot of developments ever since. We are happy to see a lot of buyers and sellers still coming back to the travel market," Fernandes said.

Talking about the PATA Travel Mart, Fernandes said, "This mart serves as an invaluable B2B platform where buyers and sellers can connect and engage with each other. Many of these individuals we do not get the chance to meet in our day-to-day basis. Therefore, we are trying make use of this particular platform in making new friends, understanding where travel business is getting and what are the new trends, and also trying to really see



**Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes**  
Director  
Macao Government Tourism Office

how we can put together buyers and sellers in order that they can really do business together."

One of the key aspects, Fernandes highlighted, was the significance of the Indian outbound travel market. "India has always been a very good outbound travel market for many countries. And we used to

receive quite a few Indian travellers. COVID has really hampered our industry," she said.

She further added, "It is good to be back in India because Indian travellers are coming back (to Macao) in big numbers. So, we also



**India has always been a very good outbound travel market for many countries. And we used to receive quite a few Indian travellers**

want to come back and let Indian friends and travellers understand more about what Macao has to offer nowadays. It has been three years, there has been a lot of new



things, new developments, new hotels and new attractions in Macao. So, we are here to say welcome back to Macao."

From a business perspective, Fernandes discussed the potential of the Indian market for MICE. "When we look at the Indian market, we are looking at many different perspectives, MICE is a very important component, we understand that many Indian companies are looking at going overseas for their

MICE events, and we do have very good facilities for MICE not only for conventions and exhibitions but incentive as well. So, we are here to promote this segment," she said. Fernandes also extended an invitation to luxury travellers from India emphasizing on the excellence of Macao's hotels and their unique experiences.

Highlighting the connectivity issue, she said, "While we currently do not offer direct flights to India,

accessing Macao is convenient via flights to Hong Kong. We have introduced a new service connecting Macao to Hong Kong International Airport. Upon arrival in Hong Kong, there is no need for customs clearance. You can easily purchase a bus ticket that includes luggage handling, and before you know it, you will find yourself in Macao. The only customs and immigration clearance required for your journey will be in Macao."





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# MOVEMENTS

## CATHAY

India & Sri Lanka

Cathay, the Hong Kong-based premium travel lifestyle brand, has appointed **VINOD VISWANATHAN** as Regional Head of Corporate for South Asia, Middle East & Africa (SAMEA). In his new role, Vinod will drive Cathay's business growth and profitability within SAMEA. With over 15 years of experience in aviation, corporate travel and global distribution, Viswanathan has held senior roles such as Head of Sales and Marketing - India and South Asia at Air Mauritius, in addition to roles with Flight Centre Travel Group, British Airways, Oman Air, and Travelport.



**TALHA SHAIKH** has been appointed by Cathay as the Regional Head of Trade for India & Sri Lanka. He will be responsible for identifying new business opportunities and strategically optimizing revenue across the company's channel partners in India and Sri Lanka. He brings to the table over 16 years of diverse experience in Aviation Sales, Marketing, and Operations. Over the last 13 years at Cathay, Shaikh has showcased exceptional domain knowledge and analytical skills essential for driving new business opportunities in India and Sri Lanka.



## VIRGIN ATLANTIC

India

Virgin Atlantic has appointed **SHIVANI SINGH DEO** as Country Manager – India. She will take the new role from 1 January 2024. Shivani has represented the company for the past eight years in the role of Marketing and Communications Manager. Prior to joining Virgin Atlantic, Deo's career included international market exposure across industries including retail, media, and lifestyle. She will lead the company's commercial strategy in India, as it grows India network further in 2024 with the launch of a daily London Heathrow to Bengaluru service from 31 March 2024.



## IATA

Mumbai

**RITAM SAHA** will take over as the Assistant Director, Passenger & Cargo Services, India, Nepal & Bhutan for IATA, effective 1 November 2023. He is based in Mumbai. He was earlier the Manager, Passenger & Cargo Services - India, Nepal & Bhutan. With this promotion, he will be managing the Passenger and Cargo businesses, optimize growth of the Billing & Settlement Plan (BSP) in India, Nepal & Bhutan; look after Cargo Accounts Settlement Systems (CASS) (Export & Import), and Passenger & Cargo stakeholder facilitation with various IATA governance groups. He has been with IATA since January 2019.



## NOVOTEL CHENNAI OMR

Chennai

**VINEESH KURUP** has been appointed as General Manager of Novotel & ibis Chennai OMR and Novotel Chennai Sipcot. Vineesh brings with him over 14 years of hospitality experience following a six-year tenure with the Indian Army. He began his journey with Accor in 2009 as the Security Manager for the pre-opening phase of ibis Pune Viman Nagar. His interest and dedication led him to advance to Front Office Manager thereafter. In 2011, he became General Manager, successfully launching Formule 1 Pune Hinjewadi, followed by Formule 1 Pune Pimpri in 2014. Vineesh took on the pre-opening General Manager role for ibis Chennai Sipcot in 2015.



**NIKHIL MALHOTRA** has been appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing, Novotel & ibis Chennai OMR and Novotel Chennai Sipcot. Malhotra brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of Sales and Marketing. He was the Director of Sales at ibis New Delhi Airport and ibis Jaipur Civil Lines. He has worked previously with Hyatt Hotels Corporation, The Zuri Hotels, Aila Hotels and The Leela, apart from his prior time in Accor with Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences and leading sales at ibis Kolkata Rajarhat. OMR stands for Old Mahabalipuram Road, a transport corridor in Chennai City.



## THE CLARIDGES

New Delhi

The Claridges New Delhi has appointed **HEMENDRA SINGH KUSHALGARH** as the new General Manager. With an illustrious career spanning over two decades, Kushalgarh brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the role. He is an Indian hospitality industry veteran with a steadfast dedication to providing unparalleled service and stellar guest experiences. In addition to his core responsibilities at The Claridges New Delhi, he plays an important senior role at Claridges Collection, designated as the Vice President - Operations for the entity. With focused dedication to upholding the best standards of excellence at the Delhi property and with the group.



## PRIDE HOTELS GROUP

Mumbai

Pride Hotels Group has appointed **JAYESH WADHER** as the Corporate Human Resource Manager. Wadher brings to the table an exceptional track record spanning over two decades in Human Resources within the hospitality sector. Prior to this, he served in notable positions across several esteemed hotel chains. Most recently, he was part of Accor Group of Hotels. His extensive experience also includes tenures at The Lalit Mumbai, Radisson Blu Resort, Novotel Goa, The Deltin Hotel, and Pan India Paryatan. Wadher began his career in 2005 as a Human Resource Executive with Royal Palms, Mumbai.



## DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON PUNE

Pune

Double Tree by Hilton Pune has appointed **KARISHMA SINGH** as Finance Manager. In her new role, she will be supporting the hotel with her financial prowess. She is excited to take this role after a decade of experience with renowned hotels, including Radisson, Marriot, and Hilton to mention a few. She also aims to set new goals and create new benchmarks with her expertise in accounts and taxation mystery, fund alchemy, cost command, licensing expertise, hedge fund wizardry, budget orchestration, forecasting and audit excellence. She holds an MBA in Finance from Dr Ambedkar College of Nagpur University.



## TALKing People

**PRAVEER KOCHHAR**, Co-founder, Kogo Tech Labs, says, "Ladakh and the Himalayas, in general, as cliché as it might sound, are places where I have lived for the last few years, around 1.5-2 years. I can't go back enough and feel tiny in front of the mighty Himalayas."



I think it's the space that the mountains give you to just breathe that feels amazing. Just last month, I had a bike ride through Zaskar Valley, as well as to Upper Mustang in Nepal. Internationally, I love New Zealand. I have family there, and I think the landscapes, the sunsets, and the people are great. Next on my list is Arunachal."

**NEETI SHARMA**, Chief Operating Officer, Intrepid Marketing, while discussing her day beyond work and highlighting how she unwinds, says, "Reading a good book, spending time with my family and meditating are my main mantras to destress on a hectic day. I also enjoy travelling. One of my favourite destinations in India is Kerala for its beauty and cuisine. So far, internationally it's Azerbaijan for the potpourri of experiences it has to offer - from its culture, cuisine, history, architecture, and, of course, its people. My next holiday, however, will be to Amari Raava Maldives soon."



**JAY KANTAWALA**, Chairman, TAFI Western India Chapter, says, "My favourite holiday destination spans the globe, each offering a unique and captivating experience. Kumarakom in Kerala, with its serene backwaters and lush landscapes, provides a tranquil escape. Ladakh's breathtaking landscapes and rugged beauty beckon to the adventurous soul. The Greek Islands offer a sun-kissed haven of ancient history and vibrant culture. And Switzerland, with its pristine Alpine scenery, is a year-round playground for outdoor enthusiasts. These destinations hold a special place in my heart for their diversity."





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# ‘We are working on visa issue’

Visa issues are affecting inbound tourism to Spain from India. José María Ridao, Ambassador, Embassy of Spain, New Delhi, says they are awaiting the Indian ministry's approval to open a new consulate general in Bengaluru.

Sara Haque

Spain is one of the most popular Schengen destinations for Indian tourists. With a vast market for outbound tourism in the country, the only issue is the documentation process, especially visa. José María Ridao, Ambassador, Embassy of Spain, New Delhi, said, “India is a country with a transitioning economy. It’s a big, beautiful country, and you have almost 200 million people ready to travel. The problem arises because all the established rules of travel to Schengen countries are for the old India, not the India in transition. And that’s where comes in the problem with visas. In order to handle this problem, since it is a huge problem for all European countries, we have the possibility of thinking about some changes in national policies.”

He added, “Speaking about Spain, we are trying to open a new consulate general in Bengaluru. We are waiting for the green light from the Indian ministry. We facilitated the opening of a consulate general in Barcelona, we communicated it to them in August, and now we are waiting for their approval here. The second thing is that we have improved our infrastructure of the visa section and the consulate section here in Delhi. We segregated the visa section to a new building. We are increasing the number of people working for the visas. We are rethinking the procedures to give more visas. Regardless, Spain is one of the fastest countries to issue visas, and the bottleneck is not receiving visas but presenting the documents for the visas. Here in Delhi we have had meetings with the European ambassadors and the European Union, and one of the issues that we have raised as rotatory presidency of the EU is precisely the question of visas. Visas are not a common policy in



Europe, but we have to resolve this situation because I insist India is facing a dual situation. The only thing I can say is that we are fully engaged in improving the system, and it’s always a pleasure for us to receive Indian people. We just need some time on revamping the entire system.”

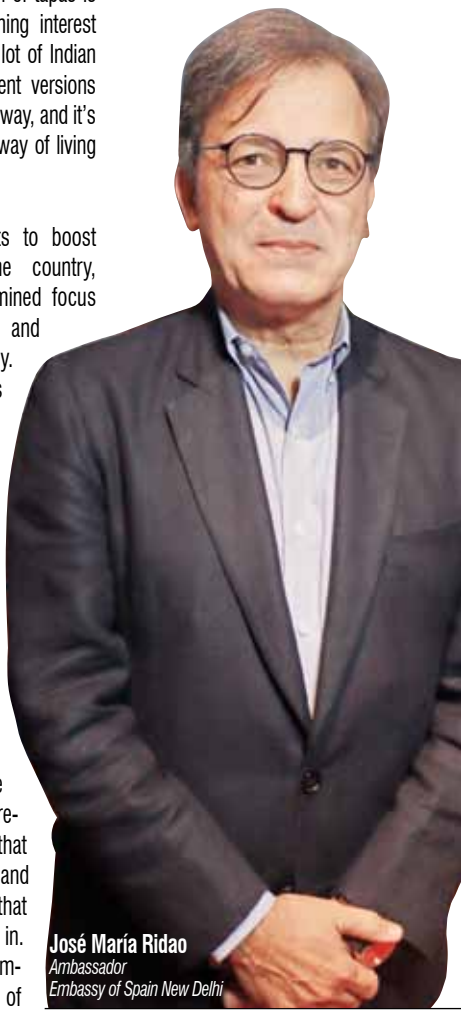
**The problem arises because all the established rules of travel to Schengen countries are for the old India, not the India in transition**

Spain offers a diverse range of experiences for Indian travellers — starting from landscapes, to cultural festivities, to gastronomy. Especially for the culinary delights, there are options galore for the Indian tourists. Ridao said, “The gastronomy of Spain is very diverse. There have already been some agreements between Indian institutions who cater to tourism and gastronomy and their Spanish counterparts. We have a pro-

gramme to bring chefs from India to Spain, so as to know more about Spanish gastronomy, and interpret Spanish food using Indian ingredients, which is very exciting. The Spanish tradition of tapas is also something gaining interest in India. We have a lot of Indian chefs making different versions of tapas in an Indian way, and it’s not just food, it’s a way of living and experience.”

Within these efforts to boost tourism within the country, Spain has a determined focus on sustainability and green economy. “Green economy is our priority. That is because Spain depends on all its markets for energy, and we have to improve our system in order to be more efficient, while respecting the environment. Respecting the environment is very important because we are trying to preserve the space that people are living in, and preserve the space that tourists are coming in. Therefore, we are aiming at conservation of

natural landscapes. All the hotels and other institutions are doing their best to not be aggressive to the landscape. They are trying to be coherent to the environment they are in,” he said.



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