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1 lakh foreigners to get free visa

The Union Ministry of Tourism marks World Tourism Day 2024 with an elaborate ceremony at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, graced by the presence of Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President of India, as the Chief Guest.



Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President of India, along with other dignitaries, at the lamp lighting ceremony in New Delhi on the World Tourism Day



The World Tourism Day ceremony was graced by the presence of **Jagdeep Dhankhar**, Vice President of India, and other dignitaries, such as **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Union Minister Culture & Tourism; **Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu**, Union Minister of Civil Aviation; and **Suresh**

Gopi, Minister of State for Tourism and Petroleum & Natural Gas. **Vidhyavathi**, Secretary, Tourism, Government of India, welcomed the guests and introduced the 5Ps of tourism: People, Place, Product, Planet, and Promotion. She emphasised that by embracing these 5Ps, India can achieve prosperity and peace, aligning with this year's theme—"Tourism & Peace".

Shekhawat highlighted the transformative power of tourism, saying, "Tourism is the sector that connects us all and bridges gaps between cultures and nations." He made several important announcements on the occasion.

Gratis visa

Shekhawat revealed a new initiative under the Ministry of Tourism's

'Chalo India' campaign, aimed at encouraging the global Indian diaspora to become ambassadors of 'Incredible India'. "To provide a fillip to the 'Chalo India' campaign, the

first 1,00,000 foreigners coming to India under this initiative will receive their visa on a gratis basis, with the Government of India waiving the visa fee," he announced.

Masterlist of destinations

To further bolster India's tourism infrastructure, Shekhawat announced the development of a Masterlist of destinations
Contd. on page 12 ▶

G20: India's tourism future?

India's G20 Presidency has sparked renewed interest in the nation's rich culture and heritage. The question is—has it laid a lasting foundation for tourism growth, or is there more work to be done?



Mit Bhatt
Managing Partner, The Grand Vacationist

“Interest in religious tourism has picked up substantially from both domestic and NRI audiences. Popular with them are Varanasi-Kashi Vishwanath corridor and Ganga aarti, Mahakal corridor, and Dwarka - there is an eagerness to experience the underwater sites when it begins, Char Dham, Temples in South. There is also interest in ancient temple complexes and ruins of Hampi, Ajanta & Ellora and other temples, thanks to the Incredible India campaigns around them. But overall, we still have a long way to go in upgrading infrastructure in and around these sites to attract guests in large numbers. The potential is huge provided all stakeholders come together to take advantage of it.”

Contd. on page 8 ▶

'MOT must up its game': VP

Speaking at World Tourism Day 2024, Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President of India, said that MOT must be in action 24x7 to reap the benefits of India's transformation into a leading global tourism destination.



Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President of India, emphasised the country's rich spiritual and cultural heritage, offering tourism opportunities year-round. As he noted, "India is a global tourism destination for all seasons."

Underscoring the role of tourism in fostering peace and economic development, he stressed, "Tourism contributes massively to peace. The entire world is yearning



Jagdeep Dhankhar
Vice President of India

for peace, and any conflagration anywhere is a pain for all. By con-

necting people, tourism serves as a powerful force for harmony and cultural exchange."

He highlighted the challenges the MOT and MoCA will face due to the industry's rapid growth. "The ministries will be going through a tough time ahead because tourism is booming, and you will have to be in action 24x7 to fully exploit the enormous potential of tourism in this country," he said. He praised the government's efforts to improve infrastructure. ▶

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Flight delays are a reality

One out of four flights gets delayed globally for more than 15 minutes, reveals data. To combat this inconvenience for the traveller, Collinson International has launched Smart Delay that offers lounge experience in the event of a flight delay.

Tourism needs more

World Tourism Day 2024 saw the Union Ministry of Tourism unveil some eye-catching initiatives—free visas for the first 100,000 foreign visitors and a Masterlist to develop key tourist destinations. On the surface, these announcements sound promising, but they might not be enough to create lasting impact.

While the focus on tourism as a catalyst for economic growth and peace is commendable, it's clear that India needs more than just quick fixes.

What we truly need are bold, transformative strategies that can elevate India to the forefront of global tourism. It's time for a concerted effort that goes beyond announcements and dives into substantial action, ensuring that India becomes a must-visit destination. Let's embrace the potential that tourism holds and make it a priority for the future. Otherwise, we are just spinning our wheels while the world moves ahead.

What's next after G20?

India's G20 Presidency shone a spotlight on our cultural gems, but has it truly set the stage for lasting tourism growth? While there was a flurry of activity around iconic sites and some infrastructure upgrades, the reality is more complex. Yes, the G20 brought attention to our rich heritage, but much of that feels like a temporary boost rather than a sustained effort.

There is undeniable interest in religious and cultural tourism, but our infrastructure remains lagging. Despite the excitement generated, significant gaps still exist. The government has focused on domestic tourism, but what about foreign travellers? We clearly need a reliable, long-term strategy instead of just temporary initiatives and quick fixes. The G20 was a moment to showcase India, but will it translate into sustained tourism growth? The jury is still out, and we must act decisively if we want to attract a global audience.

Hazel Jain

Collinson International recently at ITB India showcased its new product called Smart Delay, which allows the customers to go to a lounge across the world if there is a flight delay. The company owns and operates 'Priority Pass' with 1,500-plus lounges across the world.

Elaborating on their product, **Sumit Prakash**, Country Director, India and South Asia, Collinson International, said, "As per the insights that we have, one flight out of every four gets delayed globally for more than 15 minutes. As air travel increases, the congestion at airports increases, and flight delays have become a reality. That is why I think the proposition that we have devel-



Sumit Prakash
Country Director, India and South Asia,
Collinson International

recovery and we want to offer our unique travel experiences to these customers. The best way to reach them is through the travel agents. We are talking to many big players in the industry. As the affluence in India grows, the cus-

cial services brand per se, the experience that they provide to the customer has become more important than the real product."

Millennials spending US \$6,031 p.a. on travel

- Travel is one of the highest credit card spend categories for survey respondents in India, accounting for almost a third (27 per cent) of annual expenditure. Millennials in India spend the most on travel (US \$6,031 per annum) when compared to other generations.
- 93 per cent of Indian survey respondents agreed that travel rewards or benefits encourage credit card use for everyday spending and travel expenses, with more

(9 per cent) and airport transfers (7 per cent).

In fact, 90 per cent of respondents in India agreed that access to airport lounges is a travel benefit that they would expect on any credit card with an annual fee. About 89 per cent would consider switching to a new card if their payment card stopped offering airport lounge membership as a benefit, highlighting the impact of travel benefits on retention.

Additionally, 93 per cent of Indian respondents informed that they are more likely to use their payment cards for everyday spend and travel expenses if the cards offer travel-related rewards or benefits; suggesting an influence on cardholder engagement. Notably, 45 per cent of respondents ranked travel benefits as the most important when choosing to sign up for one credit card over another.



We are working towards having some of our own managed lounges as well, but that again is in the planning stage

oped, which is to offer lounge experience in the event of a flight delay, is definitely very relevant. We have the technology to track flights across the world and if there is a particular flight delay, we can trigger an automated lounge voucher for the customer who can walk in and enjoy the services of the lounge. We are looking at collaborating with both large and mid-sized travel agents in India for this."

The company works with multiple issuers and almost all the payment network across the world.

Highlighting India's travel potential, Prakash said, "India is experiencing tremendous travel

tomers become very aspirational. Travellers nowadays are looking for experiences."

The company has Priority Pass lounges, including 70-plus lounges in India. Some of these are managed and owned by its sister company, Airport Dimensions. "We are working towards having some of our own managed lounges as well, but that again is in the planning stage," he revealed.

Sharing some of Collinson's expert surveys in this field, he said, "As per our recent survey, 86 per cent of respondents said that they are actually looking for the experiences rather than the product itself. Nowadays, for any finan-

than half of the total survey respondents (52 per cent) having redeemed such rewards and benefits in the last six months.

- Demand for air travel grows from strength to strength with respondents in India making approximately six return trips a year.

Consumers in India are not just looking to travel more, but are also desiring enhanced experiences. When asked which travel perks they value most, 44 per cent of respondents ranked airport lounge access as their top travel-related credit card benefit – surpassing security fast-track

Sumit added, "As evidenced by the ever-increasing passenger numbers in India, consumers are increasingly more willing to spend on travel, and are demonstrating a strong preference for travel-related benefits that enhance their travel experiences. By integrating travel and airport related benefits and experiences – such as airport lounge access, security fast track, airport transfers, dining and more – into customer engagement and loyalty programmes, brands are able to level-up their customer value proposition, enhance customer satisfaction, differentiate from competition, and deliver measurable business impact."



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Tech critical to scale business

A new mix of travellers are showing a propensity to spend more specially on hyper-personalised travel, says Hari Ganapathy, Co-Founder, PickYourTrail, a Chennai-based travel technology start-up. The young entrepreneur also highlights trends that revolve around travelling for specific events, whether it is sports or music.



Hazel Jain

Chennai-based travel technology start-up PickYourTrail started with technology at the forefront. Hari Ganapathy, Co-Founder, PickYourTrail, says, "We knew that technology was critical to scale the business. So, right from creating the itinerary and pricing it, to the entire benefit of customisation, technology plays a strong role on our platform. Even in booking automation and post booking, we use technology across the entire spectrum of the vacation buying experience, even for simple things like on-ground support, flight delays, and weather."

Technology has been a crucial part of PickYourTrail's deliverables, and its repeat and referral rates speak for the kind of service they are able to provide. "This is largely because of technology as the backbone as it eases customisation. When we



Hari Ganapathy
Co-Founder
PickYourTrail

started 10 years ago, there were limited options available in the market for travellers, and that is how we started PickYourTrail – to plan one's own trip and customising it. Today, we are seeing a trend where people are picking up itineraries that are efficiently curated," Ganapathy adds. This, he says, could be gourmet, it could be road trips, it could be chas-

ing the Northern Lights or going to Antarctica. "Wherever they see value in curation of a particular experience or a series of experiences. We are seeing good traction from all kinds of customer segments, be it young folks who love to party like the full moon party in Thailand to couples or families chasing short breaks. Sporting events are a great example for curation as well," he explains.

Through technology, its users can also change cities and routings, they can either take a train or take a flight. There are algorithms and machine learning algorithms that play a huge role in ensuring that even the item that is built by the customer is seamless and is as close to a hassle-free holiday as possible.

Indians being a sport

Sports tourism has really picked up in the last couple of years, and Ganapathy confirms this. "While cricket is still a big, we are seeing a

lot of traction for F1, tennis and football as well. People are travelling not just for the World Cups, but even for

We see music concerts also pick up. People are planning their entire holiday around a key event, be it sport or music

IPLs. Olympics, not so much, as it will still take some time to get popular in India as we win more medals," he says.

F1 is round the corner in Azerbaijan, which Ganapathy adds, has gained steady popularity among



Indian travellers. "There is also a bunch of F1s happening right now closer home. So, that is something that we are seeing good demand for. A new mix of travellers are having more propensity to spend. We see music concerts also pick up. For instance, the recent Taylor Swift shows were a huge attraction. People are planning their entire holiday around a key event, be it sport or music," he adds.

So, who are these travellers? "These are the travellers who have

kind of grown up on sporting events and have disposable income today. Internet is also creating the awareness around the Taylor Swift or the Coldplay concerts. Some bit of awareness and the disposable income rise is what is contributing to this trend, in my opinion. Obviously, supply is at its core and choosing the right vendor partner is critical. Travel has so many moving parts and getting the right partner and answering any kind of breaks that happened in a journey is crucial," he says. 🐦

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'25% of business is domestic travel'

Vishal Suri, MD, SOTC Travel, speaking at the 2nd edition of ITB India, highlighted India's rapidly evolving travel landscape, including its domestic travel. He paints a vivid picture of how the country's travel sector is poised for expansion, underpinned by strong domestic demand, a youthful population, and a developing infrastructure.

Hazel Jain

Is the domestic travel market still growing post pandemic?

We estimate that almost two-thirds of the spends or the number of trips is on domestic travel. Large travel companies like ours were earlier looking at domestic as only a small segment of the business, but today almost about 25 per cent of the business is domestic travel.



Vishal Suri
Managing Director
SOTC Travel

Why is that and what domestic segments are showing an uptick?

It is because of the launch of new airports, more trains like Vande Bharat, the infrastructure development on the roadways and more quality products coming in terms of hotels. Domestic is going to be a strong business. A significant part of domestic travel is still driven by spiritual or religious tourism, and for that we have a programme called 'Darshan Tours' where we have products like the homam, the

abhishekam and the entry into the temple. So, domestic is going to be significant as we go forward.

Tell us about the trend called 'micro' holidays.

Travellers in India are now travelling on impulses and occasions. It could be reunions, anniversaries or birthdays, or it could just be a long weekend where they just want to

recharge themselves. So, people in India are taking a trip every two months, which translates to almost about six or seven trips a year. This also shows no seasonality for travel anymore even for domestic travel. This is a 12-month business now. We have invested a lot of time and energy to build our portfolio around domestic packages, and a big part of our growth will come from the domestic travel segment.



Next decade promises to be transformative for India's travel industry, offering opportunities for growth and innovation

How much are Indians spending on holidays today?

According to published statistics, between 2019 and 2030, Indian travel expenditure is projected to grow by 173 per cent, reaching \$410 billion. India is set to become the fourth-largest global spender on tourism, with domestic travel making up two-thirds of this growth. The number of trips Indians will take domestically is expected to soar, while international

trips will also rise, with Indians travelling abroad more frequently for both leisure and business.

India has ambitions to become a major transit hub. Your thoughts?

With the given rate of expansion of airports and airlines, by 2025, India will have 220 airports, a sharp increase from 74 in 2014. Indian carriers like IndiGo and Air India are expanding their fleet. These developments, combined with regional

airlines serving smaller cities, will significantly enhance connectivity and bolster both domestic and inbound tourism. India's demographic, economic, and technological shifts are setting the stage for a travel revolution. The Indian travel market is poised for exponential growth. The next decade promises to be transformative for India's travel industry, offering immense opportunities for growth and innovation.

G20: Need for sustained efforts in infra

Contd. from page 5



Dharmendra Singh
Director
Plaisir Hospitality Services

“India's G20 Presidency has indeed brought about significant improvements to the country's monuments, especially in states visited by G20 delegates. The upgraded infrastructure and initiatives taken to build capacity for stakeholders have not only enhanced the overall experience but also showcased India's rich cultural heritage. The ASI's effort to illuminate 100 monuments with the G20 logo across India was a brilliant move, highlighting the country's historic treasures.”



Neil Patil
Founder
COO & CTO, Veena World

“I think that the G20 promotions certainly brought global attention to India's rich cultural heritage and historical monuments. The government made commendable efforts to restore and revitalise many historical sites as part of the G20 preparations, and this has been positively received by both domestic and international tourists. From our guests' feedback, the general sentiment is that maintenance at key sites has improved, with better facilities and cleaner surroundings.”



Manoj Saraf
Managing Director
Gainwell Travel

“Not much has changed since the time of G20. The summit was projected as a showcase event for India and the BJP government. More money was spent on publicity than on preservation and restoration of monuments. The government has been pushing for domestic tourism and MICE tourism within India but has not done enough to promote the country internationally. It is need of the hour the government take steps like abolition of TGS to bring more weddings and events to India.”



Pankaj Nagpal
Managing Director
Travstarz Global Group

“Although efforts were made to give facelift to some monuments during the G20 Summit, but it was more of a one-time wonder job, as successive governments have not taken the true potential of tourism in India seriously and today our monuments are a story of encroachment and neglect with ASI recently delisting 18 monuments. All the effort put in during the G20 should have been continued further to protect and restore our heritage and to attract more FTAs into India.”



Nitin Mittal
CEO
Hotel & Apartment

“As India assumed G20 Presidency, 100 Centrally-protected monuments, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites spread across the country were lit up for a week bearing the G20 logo, from the Red Fort in Delhi to Sanchi in MP. This initiative not only highlighted the cultural significance of these sites but also attracted more visitors, boosting local tourism. The increased footfall has not only boosted revenue but also created more job opportunities and supported the local economy.”



Khushvinder Sarna
Owner
The Federal Travels & Tours

“The G20 Summit significantly boosted the visibility and preservation of India's monuments and historical sites. Many sites underwent renovations and improvements in infrastructure to attract international visitors, enhancing the overall experience. Even post G20, increased government attention has led to better maintenance and security. Since the G20 event, we have seen a substantial increase in travel and tourism business.”

Compiled by TT Bureau

The hidden gems of Odisha

Odisha offers an incredible blend of culture, history, and natural beauty, leaving a lasting impression on the traveller. From stunning temples to golden beaches and vibrant festivals, this state is fast becoming one of India's most promising tourism hotspots.

Nisha Verma from Odisha

With a recent ₹812 crore budget allocation for tourism infrastructure, now is the perfect time to introduce your clients to the hidden gems of Odisha. The state has something to offer every type of traveller—whether they seek spiritual rejuvenation, historical exploration, or simply want to relax amidst nature. Here's a comprehensive guide to Odisha's key destinations that you can share with your clients to inspire their next journey.

Bhubaneswar – The gateway city

When planning an itinerary, Bhubaneswar is likely the first stop for your clients, thanks to its modern international airport and excellent connectivity. Known as the Temple City, this destination combines the ancient and the contemporary. With over 500 temples, your clients will be fascinated by the intricate architecture and religious significance.



iconic Sun Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Imagine your clients standing before this architectural wonder, basking in the first rays of sunlight that illuminate its intricate carvings. If they are interested in cultural festivals, suggest timing their visit with the Konark Dance Festival, where they can witness the grace of India's classical dance forms in the most inspiring setting. They might also

❖ Ramachandi Temple and its peaceful beach for a spiritual experience

If your clients enjoy history, they can explore the Kuruma Buddhist Site, which dates back to the 8th-9th centuries, or spend a tranquil evening at Astaranga Beach, famous for its stunning sunsets.

Puri – A spiritual sojourn

For clients seeking a spiritual journey, Puri should be on their radar. This ancient city is one of the four Dhams of Hinduism and is home to the famous Shree Jagannath Temple. Pilgrims from all over the world visit Puri to experience the unique traditions associated with Lord Jagannath.

Here's a pro tip—Time your client's visit with the Rath Yatra, one of the world's largest and most famous religious festivals. Not far from Puri is Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, ideal for nature lovers. It's a paradise for bird watchers, with migratory species arriving from as far as Siberia and Russia. Plus, spotting the playful Irrawaddy dolphins will surely be a highlight of their trip. The Swosti Chilika Resort is a unique eco-resort, situated next to Chilika lake, offering beautiful views while offering the quintessential hospitality and food experience of Odisha.

Key experiences in Puri:

- ❖ The Jagannath Temple, a must-visit for spiritual tourists
- ❖ A serene boat ride on Chilika Lake to explore its wildlife
- ❖ Kalijai Temple on Chilika, offering a peaceful and picturesque spiritual retreat



What to highlight for your clients:

- ❖ The Lingaraj Temple is an architectural marvel and one of the oldest temples in the city of Bhubaneswar
- ❖ Rajarani Temple and Dhauligiri Hills, rich in history and culture
- ❖ Hirapur and its famous Chausath Yogini Temple, an ancient site dedicated to the worship of goddess yoginis

enjoy the International Sand Art Festival at Chandrabhaga Beach, a perfect stop for those who appreciate both art and nature.

Must-see attractions in Konark:

- ❖ Chandrabhaga Beach, where clients can relax and enjoy activities like sunbathing or a scenic walk
- ❖ The Archaeological Museum for history buffs

For those who enjoy shopping, Bhubaneswar is known for its exquisite silver filigree work, pattachitra paintings, and metalwork—perfect souvenirs for clients who love art. The city also offers a fantastic culinary experience, ranging from fresh seafood to local vegetarian delicacies. You can suggest a stay at Swosti Premium for a luxurious experience.

Konark – A cultural centre

Konark is a name your clients will likely recognise, especially for its



For those who enjoy shopping, Bhubaneswar is known for its exquisite silver filigree work, and pattachitra paintings

Cuttack – A commercial hub

Cuttack, once the capital of Odisha, is now the cultural heartbeat of the state and a place where your clients can experience festivals, crafts, and authentic Odisha culture. Whether it's the Baliyatra Festival, celebrating ancient trade links, or Durga Puja, Cuttack is the place to witness Odisha's vibrant traditions. Cuttack is also known as the Silver City, thanks to its world-renowned silver filigree craftsmanship. For shoppers, Cuttack offers an array of traditional handloom products and intricate handicrafts.

Paradeep – A coastal haven

Paradeep or Paradip, located at the confluence of the Mahanadi River and the Bay of Bengal, is another offbeat destination for clients seeking peace and relaxation. The beach here offers a serene escape with clear waters and golden sands. If your clients enjoy marine activities, this is a fantastic place for swimming, sunbathing, or taking long coastal walks.

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'Agents key to ensuring smooth visa'

VFS Global is transforming the visa application landscape with its focus on technology and collaboration. Yummi Talwar, Chief Operating Officer for South Asia, VFS Global, shares insights on rising outbound travel demand, digital innovations, and how the company is working with agents to streamline the visa process for Indian travellers.



India has experienced a significant surge in visa applications as outbound travel demand continues to rise. At the heart of this process are travel agents, who play a vital role in guiding their clients through visa applications. Highlighting their strong collaboration with the travel agent community, **Yummi Talwar**, Chief Operating Officer for South Asia, VFS Global, says, "We have partnered with industry bodies like TAAI, TAFI, and ETAA to keep agents informed about the latest visa requirements. Earlier this year, we conducted a 12-city roadshow to engage with over 1,200 travel agents, addressing their concerns and updating them on our services."

To further equip agents for managing visa applications, VFS Global provides regular updates and in-



Yummi Talwar
Chief Operating Officer
South Asia, VFS Global

sights via email. "We continuously share the latest visa information from the 52 client governments we work with, allowing agents to offer accurate advice to their clients," Talwar explains. She also advises agents to encourage their clients to apply well in advance, considering different processing timelines across embassies.

VFS Global values the feedback it receives from travel agents and maintains open communication to ensure the visa process remains seamless. "We engage with agents at the local level, addressing region-specific challenges and tailoring solutions," says Talwar, adding that, "By working closely with agents, VFS Global ensures that operational issues are quickly and effectively resolved."

India's growing outbound travel demand is also reflected in the surge in visa applications. "We processed more applications between January and June 2024 than in pre-pandemic 2019, surpassing volumes by 2 per cent. Additionally, there was an 11 per cent year-on-year growth compared to 2023," Talwar reveals. Popular destinations include Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, the USA, and the UK.

The demand for the Visa At Your Doorstep (VAYD) service has also increased dramatically, with bookings in India growing five-fold compared to 2019. "This reflects

Over the last 12 years, we have developed 16 digital solutions that streamline the visa process, making it more secure and efficient

the convenience travellers seek," says Talwar, adding that, "We offer VAYD for 16 countries, ensuring seamless and flexible options for visa submission."

VFS Global is continually enhancing efficiency and customer experience by integrating technology into the visa process.

"Our approach involves digitising key steps, such as our Appointment Management System, where applicants can upload documents for pre-verification, reducing their time at visa centres," Talwar explains.

To further secure the process, VFS Global uses facial recognition technology to curb appointment misuse and prevent fraudulent bookings. "By preventing misuse of appointment slots and verifying applicants through real-time photo capture, we ensure the process is secure and efficient," Talwar says.

Visa rejections remain a concern for many travellers. While VFS Global handles the administrative side of visa applications, Talwar

emphasises, "We do not make visa decisions—that is the role of embassies and consulates. However, we guide applicants to ensure their documentation is complete." She urges applicants to carefully review checklists provided by client governments to avoid delays or rejections.

Looking ahead, Talwar acknowledges the growing prominence of e-visas and digital visa solutions. "VFS Global has been at the forefront of the digital shift, and we are excited about the possibilities ahead. Over the last 12 years, we have developed 16 digital solutions that streamline the visa process, making it more secure and efficient." As travel patterns evolve and the world embraces digitalisation, VFS Global remains committed to leading the charge in visa innovations, ensuring that the process is fast, reliable, and secure.

Mélange 2024 impresses Mumbai

Mélange 2024, organised recently at Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai for over two days, saw an overwhelming response from exhibitors, visitors, and invitees alike. It was announced at the event that the MTF team – Pradeep Saboo, Sameer Karnani and Rajat Bagaria – will be back for Mélange 2025 on 20-21 September 2025 at NESCO Goregaon.



Turkish delight for Indian travellers

Some Indian buyers, who recently visited Türkiye to gain a deeper understanding of its diverse cultural experiences, luxurious accommodations, and warm hospitality, express renewed excitement to sell the destination. **TRAVELTALK** speaks to a few key Indian buyers and Turkish sellers to find out if they think India is a good fit for the destination and vice versa.



Adil Karim
Director, FlyCreative Online & Executive Committee Member, OTOAI

“Türkiye, as a destination, has been growing in India year-on-year because of its diverse offerings and culture. It understands tourism and tourists and also because of easy accessibility and connectivity. Türkiye is a country with rich, ancient history. It has a lot of places with historical importance, be it religious or culture.”



Refail Ekberov
Managing Director
Sab Tour DMC

“We mainly sell hotels in Antalya, Istanbul, Capadocia and the Kuşadası. At the same time, we are doing the round complete Türkiye every year. Compared to last year, we have received more clients from India. We get a lot of leisure and MICE groups. Usually guests from India visit in the spring and in autumn, which is March-June.”



Riaz Munshi
National President, OTOAI & Managing Director, N Chirag Travels

“Türkiye has its advantages – easy visas, direct flights and not too far from India. During the summer, people face issues with getting visas of various countries. When they choose to come to Türkiye, they get visas easily. Within Türkiye also, there are many destinations to explore like Izmir, an unexplored town.”



Duygu Kuskulu
Managing Partner
Tay Istanbul DMC

“We have been working with the India market for over 20 years now. So, I have had the great opportunity to observe how it has grown for us. We are doing a lot of FIT and leisure groups, as well as destination weddings. I feel that the India market works in a circle. When FITs visit, they do a destination wedding for their child.”



Param Mehta
Chief Operating Officer
Trans Globe Travels

“We send a good number of clients to Türkiye, primarily for leisure. We have also seen a growing number of couples choosing it for their honeymoons. Additionally, many of our corporate clients travel to Türkiye, especially Istanbul, to attend exhibitions and trade shows. Türkiye also has good potential for dealer incentive trips.”



Rıza Elibol
General Manager
Swissôtel Büyük Efes, Izmir

“The Indian market is a dynamic and expanding market, showing considerable growth potential in key Turkish cities. This trend is also evident in Izmir, where Swissôtel Büyük Efes, is eager to welcome more Indian guests. We cater to a diverse clientele, including families, corporates, FITs, and MICE groups.”

Compiled by Hazel Jain

Eiffel Tower beckons India

Patrick Branco Ruivo, MD, Eiffel Tower, met key stakeholders in Mumbai, as well as renowned Bollywood production houses, to understand the Indian market's requirements, as they aim to double the percentage of Indian visitors by 2026. They will also work in collaboration with Atout France India on various initiatives on this market.





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Mysuru unveils its 'hidden gems'

The 'Discover Mysuru' Bloggers Meet 2024, hosted by the MOT, Bengaluru Office, and Karnataka Tourism Department, just before the Dussehra festival, aimed to spotlight not only the city of Mysuru, but also the offbeat destinations surrounding it.



Amita Pandey from Mysuru

Mysuru, a city renowned for its royal heritage, beckons travellers eager to experience the vibrant culture of Karnataka. This October, as the city transforms into a glittering spectacle for the Dussehra festivities, it is time to explore not just Mysuru but the offbeat wonders surrounding it.

To shine a spotlight on Mysuru's lesser-known gems, the Ministry of Tourism, Bengaluru Office, in collaboration with the Department of Karnataka Tourism, hosted the 'Discover Mysuru' Bloggers Meet 2024. The event brought together key stakeholders to showcase the city's rich, often overlooked treasures—revealing corners of Mysuru that remain hidden from the usual Karnataka itineraries. Notably, Mysuru has been recently identified for tourism development under Swadesh Darshan 2.0. Speaking about the meet, **Venkatesan Dhattareyan**, Regional Director (South), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (GoI), said, "With this tour, we aim to showcase the unknown and untold stories of Mysore, almost



Members of the 'Discover Mysuru' Bloggers Meet 2024 at a site in Mysuru

every street, every place around. Mysore in itself is a living museum for any tourist."

Highlighting three major attractions that inspire a traveller to Mysuru, **Mohamed Farouk**, Director, Ministry of Tourism, Bengaluru Office, GoI, said, "One, the heritage of Mysore is scintillating enough. It is one district in the state of Karnataka that has more to offer in terms of heritage and culture. It is also famous as a yoga capital of South India. Finally, Mysore is also known for its cuisine. So, if I have to highlight three important things, it is heritage, yoga, and authentic cuisine."

Places of interest & activities
Formerly called Mysore State, Kar-

nataka has long recognised Mysuru as a jewel in its tourism crown. Each year, around 3.5 million trav-

ellers are drawn to this city, tucked among stunning landscapes just waiting to be discovered. Here are a few must-see attractions to add to your itinerary:

Each year, 3.5 mn travellers are drawn to this city, tucked among stunning landscapes just waiting to be discovered

Bandipura Tiger Reserve: Nestled in the scenic embrace of the towering Western Ghats along the Mysore-Ooty highway, Bandipur Tiger Reserve is home to over 140 tigers.

Temples: Mysuru boasts countless shrines, including 120-foot-tall Nanjundeswara Temple in Nanjanagudu, 13th-century Chennakesava Temple in Somanathapura and Chamundeshwari Temple, perched atop Chamundi Hills, just 13 km from Mysuru.

Mysore Palace: The crown jewel of Mysuru, the Mysore Palace, offers travellers an unforgettable glimpse into royal grandeur.

New launches mark



Contd. from page 5

Tourism Destinations for Development that will prioritise key tourist sites for focused development over the next three years. "This list will be created in convergence with various ministries—Culture, Civil Aviation, Railways, Road Transport & Highways, and Ports, Shipping, and Waterways. The aim is to work together with States and Union Territories to develop these destinations," he said. He further emphasised the importance of private sector participation, saying, "The Masterlist will be publicly available to allow private sector players to plan their investment pipelines and complement the government's efforts."

Incredible India Content Hub & Digital Portal

One of the major highlights of the event was the launch of the Incredible India Content Hub by the Vice President of India. Hosted on the newly revamped Incredible India Digital Portal, this platform provides a comprehensive repository of high-quality tourism content, including 5,000 images, videos, and brochures. Shekhawat noted, "The

Incredible India Content Hub will make it easier for travel trade professionals worldwide to access all they need to promote India's tour-

A masterlist of destinations will prioritise key tourist sites for focused development by govt over the next three years

ism potential." The revamped portal offers travellers essential information, from planning and booking to their return journey.

Paryatan Mitra & Paryatan Didi
Shekhawat introduced the Paryatan Mitra and Paryatan Didi initiatives, which aim to enhance tourist experiences by training locals as ambassadors and storytellers of their destinations. "We are provid-

ing tourism-related training to those who engage with tourists at key destinations. They will act as friendly guides and proud ambassadors, ensuring that every tourist has a memorable experience," Shekhawat said. The pilot phase is being implemented in six destinations, including Orchha (Madhya Pradesh), Gandikota (Andhra Pradesh), and Bodh Gaya (Bihar).

MoUs with hospitality chains

Another significant moment was the signing of MoUs between MOT and eight leading hospitality groups, such as Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), Marriott International, and Radisson Hotels. "These partnerships will help us go global with Indian hospitality and ensure that we skill India for the world," Shekhawat explained. The initiative will facilitate mentorship, faculty development, and institutional growth at Central Institutes of Hotel Management (CIHMs).

Best Tourism Villages

The ministry also announced the winners of the Best Tourism Villages Competition 2024. Out of

991 applications, 36 villages were recognised across eight categories. Shekhawat emphasised, "This competition showcases the incredible diversity and cultural richness of our rural tourism landscape, which is a crucial part of Incredible India."

Handbook for States

In an effort to standardise the tourism industry, Shekhawat announced the launch of a handbook for States and UTs that encourages them to grant industry status to the tourism and hospitality sectors. "This handbook will detail the benefits of granting industry status, inspiring states to take this crucial step for the growth of tourism and hospitality," he said.

Tourist feedback mechanism

MOT has also introduced a new feedback mechanism for tourists, allowing them to rate their experiences at various tourist attractions through QR codes placed at airports and railway stations. "This real-time feedback system will allow us to address issues proactively and gather valuable data to continuously improve tourism services," he said.

A perfect venue for all things MICE

Romie Dutt, Executive Director, Aamby Valley City and Hotel Sahara Star, highlights key points of why Hotel Sahara Star makes for a perfect for all things MICE, whether it is a corporate event or a wedding. The property also aligns with the vision of eco-conscious events and implements energy-efficient infrastructure throughout the hotel.



What makes Hotel Sahara Star a great venue for MICE?

Hotel Sahara Star is undoubtedly the ideal venue for MICE events, offering an unbeatable combination of location, amenities, and expertise. Its strategic location near Mumbai's domestic airport ensures convenience for both domestic and international travellers. With over 100,000 square feet of versatile banquet space, including our pillarless ballrooms and the exclusive Presidential Boardroom, we cater to a wide range of events, from intimate board meetings to large-scale corporate conferences and exhibitions.

Our magnificent tropical lagoon adds a tranquil atmosphere, providing the perfect backdrop for delegates to unwind between sessions. Our in-house team of dedicated event professionals works



Romie Dutt
Executive Director
Aamby Valley City and Hotel Sahara Star

wedding is tailor-made to suit the couple's preferences.

We offer 354 guest rooms, including 25 suites, providing ample space for wedding guests to stay and celebrate together. Our hotel features multiple banquet venues for smaller wedding functions and a magnificent tropical lagoon, which serves as a popular spot for pre-wedding photoshoots.

client expectations. Their deep understanding of the market and client needs allows us to create personalised experiences, from coordinating logistics to organising customised itineraries. We work closely with these partners to provide tailored solutions for their clients and build long-term relationships that benefit both sides.

We have a number of B2B engagements planned for this year. Fam

Sustainability in MICE not only meets the growing demand for green practices but also enhances the overall experience



feedback and explore collaborations. Our team actively participates in major industry events.

Are you getting a lot of inquiries/ bookings from smaller cities as well?

Yes, there has been a noticeable increase in inquiries and bookings from smaller cities. This is largely due to the rise of a growing aspirational class in these regions who are seeking luxury experiences for their weddings, corporate events and celebrations. The allure of Mumbai's status as a financial hub and Sahara Star's reputation for hosting grand, memorable events have made us a top choice for clients from smaller cities.

Please share your perspective on the importance of sustainability for hotels such as yours when it comes to MICE.

Businesses today prioritise eco-conscious events and we align with this vision by implementing energy-efficient infrastructure, waste management systems and using locally sourced ingredients. Our shift to paperless options, pa-

per cups ensures that we minimise our environmental footprint while still offering luxurious experiences. Sustainability in MICE not only

Weddings are a significant focus at Sahara Star, especially considering their cultural importance in India

meets the growing demand for green practices but also enhances the overall experience.

Technology has become indispensable in the modern hospitality landscape, particularly for MICE events. It plays a pivotal role in enhancing guest experiences, ensuring seamless operations and meeting the growing demand

for efficient, engaging and interactive events.

We have invested in cutting-edge solutions to ensure that every event runs smoothly and effectively. This includes high-speed internet connectivity, which is critical for both small and large-scale events and advanced audio-visual equipment that delivers exceptional presentations and broadcasts.

One of the most significant advantages of incorporating technology is the ability to host multi-location events with live streaming and real-time interaction between global attendees. This feature has become particularly important with the rise of hybrid events, where participants can engage both in person and virtually, making it easier to bridge geographical gaps and include wider audiences. Technology helps us provide world-class event experiences, positioning us as a top venue in the MICE sector while ensuring we remain adaptable to future trends and innovations. ↓



closely with corporates and event planners to bring their vision to life, ensuring every detail is meticulously handled, from organising grand seminars to smaller incentive programmes. We ensure a seamless execution of events with customised services that elevate the experience for our clients.

Are weddings also a big focus segment for you? If yes, why?

Absolutely. Weddings are a significant focus at Sahara Star, especially considering their cultural importance in India. Indian weddings are emotional, grand celebrations that bring families together, and we recognise the need for perfection in every detail. Whether it's an intimate gathering or a grand affair, our team of wedding specialists ensures every

Additionally, our outdoor pool venue is a favourite spot for mehendi. We also provide a variety of amenities, including a recreational space for kids, a 7,000 sq ft gym for fitness enthusiasts, and a private preview theatre where families can come together and enjoy glimpses of their beautiful weddings. Our salon caters to all the wedding grooming needs, while our spa provides the perfect setting for post-wedding relaxation.

How important are travel agents and event planners/ MICE agents for you?

Travel agents, event planners, and MICE agents are essential partners for Sahara Star. They bring in business, especially for group bookings and corporate events, and help us align our services with

trips and hotel inspections are an integral part of our strategy. We also host quarterly event planner meets where we engage with our partners to discuss trends, gather



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Bringing Kerala closer to agents

FlyCreative recently hosted a familiarisation trip to Kerala for 19 travel agents from all over India. The focus was not only to showcase stellar hotel properties but also to highlight different regions of Kerala that they can promote to their clients. The trip served to enhance the awareness about the state's versatile facets and diverse accommodation options.





Green, Clean, and Safe Madhya Pradesh

A Traveller's Paradise

Are you looking for a destination that blends natural beauty, rich heritage, and security? Madhya Pradesh, the green, clean, and safe Heart of India, has it all. From wildlife safaris and spiritual pilgrimages to cultural exploration and adventure, this state offers a wealth of experiences.

Madhya Pradesh is a haven for nature lovers, with lush greenery, vast national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. With a large forest cover of 94,689 square kilometres, the state's commitment to conservation is evident in its efforts to preserve natural resources

and promote sustainable tourism. As the 'Tiger State of India', it is home to 785 tigers, alongside significant populations of leopards, vultures, and gharials. Also known as the 'Cheetah State', Madhya Pradesh has 11 national parks, 7 tiger reserves, and 24 wildlife sanctuaries. Additionally, it is recognised as the 'Gharial State', with a thriving population of 2,400 gharials. The state's commitment to conservation is evident in its expansive forest cover and sustainable tourism efforts.

Madhya Pradesh is often referred to as the 'Paternal Home of Rivers', given the many rivers

that flow through it. The state's landscapes are shaped by rivers like the Narmada, Betwa, Tapti and Chambal. The hill station of Pachmarhi, nestled in the Satpura Range, offers a mix of stunning landscapes, verdant forests, and a refreshing climate.

Madhya Pradesh has also earned a reputation as one of India's cleanest states, with cities like Indore and Bhopal consistently ranking among the top in the country. In 2023, the state was named the cleanest in India for the second consecutive year, according to the Swachh Survekshan Awards. Indore and Bhopal have garnered



national and international recognition for their outstanding cleanliness and hygiene efforts, consistently ranking among the cleanest cities in India.

Safety is a top priority, especially for women travellers. The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board's initiatives ensure women feel secure, with thousands receiving training in tourism and self-defence. Women are empowered and actively contribute to the state's vibrant tourism sector.

The Safe Tourist Destination for Women initiative by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is a sig-

The state's commitment to conservation is evident in its expansive forest cover and sustainable tourism efforts

nificant step toward ensuring that women feel secure at tourist destinations. Under this programme, 10,000 women are being trained

and connected to the tourism service sector, while 40,000 women and girls are receiving self-defence training. The state has taken significant measures to create a secure environment by empowering local women to take on leadership roles within the tourism industry. From driving safaris to guiding treks, women are at the forefront of delivering exceptional experiences.

Madhya Pradesh invites you to discover its green, clean, and safe environment. Whether you seek adventure, relaxation, or cultural immersion, this eco-friendly destination has a lot to offer for everyone.



Tourism News

- India's inbound arrivals lag at 90% of 2019 levels; forex earnings surge by 23% in H1 2024: CRISIL
- Tourism Minister stresses the need for tourism policies to focus on inclusion and resilience, in line with India's 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' theme
- Switzerland Tourism CEO says Indian travellers now visiting the destination throughout the year
- Madhya Pradesh Launches states First Women-Run 'Handloom Cafe' in Prapur
- UP government to reimburse 50% fee to tour operators with GSTC certification, aims to promote sustainability
- Need to frame strategies, decongest popular tourist sites: Suman Billa, Additional Secretary, MOT
- Kerala Tourism to organise 'tribal cultural festival' in Wayanad

India developing its own aircraft: MoCA

The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation is in the process of creating a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which will work on the development of an indigenous commercial aircraft, announced KR Naidu, Civil Aviation Minister, GoI, at the Global Aviation and Air Cargo Summit 2024, organised by the PHDCCI in New Delhi recently.

Surbhi Sharma

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) organised the 10th edition of Global Aviation and Air Cargo Summit at PHD House in New Delhi recently. The summit, themed 'Skies of Change-Shaping a New Futuristic Aviation Ecosystem', showcased the latest developments shaping the aviation sector of India and discussed new strategies for business growth. It also aimed to address the transformative shifts and explore innovative strategies for a sustainable, efficient, and forward-looking aviation and air cargo landscape to achieve India's aspirations of becoming a global hub and leader.

KR Naidu, Civil Aviation Minister, Government of India, was the Chief Guest at the event, which saw participation from various industry stakeholders.



KR Naidu
Civil Aviation Minister
Government of India

'Make in India' aircraft

Addressing the summit, Naidu said India is moving ahead with its plans to develop an indigenous commercial aircraft. "The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation is in the process of creating a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). All the stakeholders, including government entities, as well as private sector companies, will work together for five years to

overcome the challenges associated with the development of an indigenous aircraft," he said.

Adhering to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat agenda, the Lok Sabha passed the Bhartiya Vayuyam Vidheyak Bill 2024, which includes regulations for aircraft design and manufacture.

Stakeholders' involvement

Offering gratitude to the PHDCCI for bringing together experts from the aviation sector, air cargo sector, and other verticals of civil aviation, at the summit, he said, "By working together, we can address the challenges, seize opportunities and ensure sustainable development of the aviation industry. Indian aviation sector today is at a transformative crossroads marked by rapid growth and forward-looking vision under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As one of the fastest growing aviation sectors in the world, India has

witnessed a remarkable change in passenger traffic, cargo movement and overall connectivity in the last 10 years." The whole

By working together, we can address the challenges, seize opportunities and ensure sustainable development of aviation industry

concept of Gati Shakti is utilising the advantages of each sector and trying to bring everything together. "That is where the industry must come up with innovative ideas and solutions," the minister told the stakeholders, while assuring them that his ministry will help

them out by creating the right infrastructure and bringing the right policies. Naidu said, "It's high time that we must move into the idea of having our own freight corridors, freight carriers, at least between the metro cities domestically, so that there is a network created in terms of air cargo. Hence, we want all the private players also to come in, to have these solutions in terms of technology, or in terms of infrastructure."

Industry growth

Talking about the industry growth, Naidu highlighted the increasing number of airports in the country. "In 2014, we had 74 airports, which have now grown to a staggering number of 157. Our domestic air passenger growth has also risen from 67 million in 2014 to 152 million in 2023 and the fleet size, which was around 400 flights for the Indian carriers in 2014, has surged to more than 700," he said.

Rajasthan to roll out 'Tourism Unit Policy'

The 4th Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart 2024, organised recently in Jaipur, showcased the state's rich cultural heritage and provided a platform for the stakeholders to network and discuss travel trends. Diya Kumari, Deputy Chief Minister, Rajasthan, announced that the new state tourism policy will be introduced soon.

Surbhi Sharma from Jaipur

The 4th edition of Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM), aiming to promote domestic and rural tourism, concluded in Jaipur recently. The three-day mart, jointly organised by the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) and the Rajasthan Tourism Department, with active participation from the Central Tourism Department, aimed to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Rajasthan and the state's capability to host Weddings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events (WICE). More than 200 stalls and 600 hotels exhibited their products and services at the mart, which saw participation from 1,300 buyers and 7,000 guests.

Diya Kumari, Deputy Chief Minister, Rajasthan and the Chief Guest for the event, inaugurated the exhibition and spoke about the new tourism opportunities. "RDTM underscores our ongoing efforts to promote tourism in Rajasthan,



Diya Kumari
Deputy Chief Minister
Rajasthan

given the immense potential the state holds. We are focusing on improving facilities and infrastructure to enhance tourism. Policies and plans are being developed with new dimensions in mind to ensure that no obstacle hinders those wanting to develop tourism in the state. Special plans for senior citizens are also underway to make their travel experience simpler and safer. Additionally, we are working on incorporating

AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality) technologies in the tourism sector," she said.

Need to work together

Pledging to make Rajasthan a top tourism destination in the world again, Diya Kumari said, "Together, with your suggestions, and with your help, we will again make Rajasthan the number one destination in the world. The way PM Narendra Modi go out of his way to promote India, all of us have

RDTM 2024 underscores our ongoing efforts to promote tourism in Rajasthan, given the immense potential the state holds



Diya Kumari, Deputy Chief Minister, Rajasthan and the Chief Guest, at the lamp lighting ceremony of RDTM 2024

the responsibility to do the same. Because together we will bring change in the field of tourism."

Stressing that all the stakeholders need to work together to make it happen, she further said, "The tourism department of Rajasthan government is the facilitator, making it easier for industry people to do business and bring business in our state. That environment needs

to be easier, needs to be more friendly and we need to work on this together as there is so much yet to be done."

Tourism Unit Policy

Addressing the gathering, she said, "Our Tourism Unit Policy is all set to be rolled out soon. We will also see how we can promote more of rural tourism. We are also thinking of organising roadshows

overseas, and for that we need your involvement. We are planning to do a lot more in the future."

'Rising Rajasthan' Global Investment Summit 2024

She said that the 'Rising Rajasthan' Global Investment Summit 2024 will be organised from 9-11 December in Rajasthan, aiming to get more tourism investment, which will create jobs and improve economy.

Bintan eyes MICE, sports events

With VFS Global as its India representative, Indonesia's Bintan Resorts is expecting to ride the wave of sporting events to attract more Indians. This will be alongside the mainstay segments of leisure, MICE and weddings. With easy visas and its own airport coming up by 2027, the destination could really take off with the India market.



Hazel Jain from Bintan

Abdul Wahab, Chief Operating Officer, Bintan Resorts, is confident that India market will return to favour Bintan Resorts soon, based on a survey it conducted, along with VFS Global – its recently-appointed representative in India. He provides updates on island developments and plans to grow numbers from India.

"We are excited to partner with VFS Global to introduce the beauty and charm of Bintan Island to the Indian market," says Wahab. "This collaboration will elevate Bintan's status as a must-visit destination for Indian tourists. We look forward to offering them exceptional experiences that only Bintan Island can provide," he adds.

Promotions will include focusing on digital and social media platforms, B2B sales, and organising



Abdul Wahab
Chief Operating Officer
Bintan Resorts

workshops and familiarisation trips. A major initiative will be working closely with the travel trade partner friends, which both partners have cultivated over the years, to promote the island to their clients. "Sports tourism is one of the things we want to focus on. This means mass sports, such as marathons, triathlons, Iron Man, bicycle race,

and, of course, golf. We want to offer what Singapore does not. These large sporting events cannot be done in Singapore, but Bintan is perfect for them. You can ride a bi-

The new airport (in Indonesia) will be privately owned by Bintan Resorts. We have an MoU with Indonesia's national airline Garuda

cycle for 100 kilometre and not see one traffic light!" Wahab explains.

Hotels and airport coming up

The focus is also on developing hotel inventory. Bintan Resorts has



Ahdi Muqstith, S.IP-Wakil Bupati, Bintan & GB Srithar, Head of Tourism Services, VFS Global

about 2,800 hotel keys right now, including Four Points by Sheraton Bintan, Lagoi Bay that opened last February; Indigo and Holiday Inn are ready, and Mövenpick will open by end of the year. This will translate to about 1,200 keys. As the master developer, Bintan Resorts' plan is to add another 3,000-4,000 keys in the next three to four years. "We are building 10 more hotels. With that Bintan Resorts can be called as an international resort. These will also be perfect venues for ex-

hibitions. Besides hotels, we are also building our airport. We hope that the airport, the convention centre and 3,000 more rooms will be ready by 2027," Wahab says.

"The airport will be privately owned by our company owned by Bintan Resorts but we will fly international. We have an MoU with Indonesia's national airline Garuda. We are also in talks with IndiGo, and have MoUs with Japan Airlines, Korean Air and Lufthansa. We hope that by 2027, all these flights start landing in Bintan," he adds.

Currently, one can take a one-hour ferry from Singapore to Bintan. But this is limited to 12 ferries per day. "If these 12 ferries are supplemented by our international airport, we can easily welcome 5,000-6,000 arrivals per day," he opines.

Good to know

The island has been gazetted by the Indonesian government for sports tourism over the past decade, and events like the Bintan Triathlon and Gran Fondo are already attracting visitors. Beyond triathlons, Bintan offers a range of water sports like parasailing and paragliding, waterskiing and jetskiing, surfing and windsurfing, scuba and snorkelling.

VFS re-introduces Bintan to India market

Bintan Resorts in Indonesia has partnered with VFS Global to promote its exciting offerings in the India market. The MoU was signed between the two in Bintan on 29 August in presence of GB Srithar, Head of Tourism, VFS Global and Abdul Wahab, COO, Bintan Resorts. The partnership aims to position Bintan as a 2-3 night destination along with Singapore.



TTE 2024 highlights Madurai's potential

The Tamil Nadu Travel Expo 2024 concluded successfully in Madurai, drawing a significant number of visitors from both domestic and international buyers. Held at IDA Scudder Auditorium, the unique event was a collaborative effort between the private sector and the government, aimed at promoting the state's tourism potential.

 Nisha Verma from Madurai

The first edition of Tamil Nadu Travel Expo (TTE) 2024 saw key organisations like the South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), and Travel Club Madurai joining hands to highlight Tamil Nadu's rich religious and cultural heritage.

The event was held in Madurai, a departure from the usual host city of Chennai for such events, giving attendees an opportunity to explore the city's hospitality and convention facilities. Renowned for the Meenakshi Amman Temple, Madurai provided a fitting setting to showcase Tamil Nadu's tourism treasures. Commenting on the choice of venue, **Venkatesan Dhattareyan**, Regional Director - South, Indiatourism, said, "Madurai was chosen because it is the heartland of Tamil Nadu,



Dignitaries at the lamp lighting ceremony to kickstart the Tamil Nadu Travel Expo 2024

easily accessible to various tourism attractions, and yet has not seen many large-scale events. This allowed us to offer a marketplace for sellers and buyers to explore business opportunities."

Dhattareyan emphasised the importance of broadening the focus of Tamil Nadu's tourism industry,


"Traditionally, most traffic has been concentrated in the northern parts of the state, like Chennai, Mahabalipuram, and Kanchipuram. The idea behind this event was to bring suppliers from all over Tamil Nadu and introduce buyers to the lesser-known tourism destinations," he said. He also highlighted the significance

of private sector involvement in the expo. "This is purely a B2B event, and it's exciting to see the private industry take responsibility for promoting the destination. The Tamil Nadu Travel Expo may be in its early stages, but it has the potential to grow into a platform like the Kerala Travel Mart (KTM)," he said.

Sundar Singharam, Director of Operations, SIHRA, reinforced Dhattareyan's sentiment, stating that the TTE model is designed to be self-sustaining. "Of course, we have had great support from both the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Government of India, but we wanted this mart to stand on its own. The moment we proposed the idea to Travel Club members and other stakeholders, the response was overwhelming. Every slot was filled immediately, with over 200 rooms in Madurai promised for the event," he said. The event also served as a platform to address Tamil Nadu's declining position in India's tourism rankings. "Tamil Nadu was organically number one in inbound and domestic arrivals, but we have slipped to third position," said Singharam, adding that, "Other states have become aggressive in their promotions. This expo aims to reinvigorate our tourism marketing efforts."

Vikram Cotah, Chief Executive Officer, GRT Hotels and Chairperson, CII Southern Council Tourism Panel, expressed similar view. "States like Kerala and Karnataka have been attracting a larger number of tourists because of their consistent mar-


Known for the Meenakshi Amman Temple, Madurai had the right set-up to showcase Tamil Nadu's tourism treasures

keting efforts. We wanted to bring TTE to Madurai, right in the heart of Tamil Nadu, so that tours could extend to other beautiful parts of the state."

25k business engagements @ITB India

The three-day B2B trade show, held in Mumbai from 11-13 September, concluded successfully with over 600 top-tier Indian and global buyers. Alongside MICE Show India, Travel Tech India, and ITB India Conference, ITB India 2024 saw fruitful business tie-ups. ITB India 2025 will take place from 2-4 September 2025 at the Jio World Convention Centre.



Balitrip Wisata unveils new packages

Balitrip Wisata, one of the top Indian DMCs to Bali, successfully concluded its 4-city India roadshows covering Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Indore and New Delhi. During the roadshow, which covered the West and North India, the DMC unveiled new packages encompassing East Bali and announced plans to include North Bali in its itineraries.



TT Bureau

Balitrip Wisata, one of the top Indian DMCs to Bali with head office in New Delhi and branch offices across India, recently organised a four-city India roadshow, which covered Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Indore and New Delhi. The roadshow aimed to offer high-quality services to customers and satisfy expectations of clients with personalised and innovative solutions.



Dheeraj Ranjan Kumar
Director
Balitrip Wisata

The DMC has deployed a local team in India to understand the requirements and expectations of Indian guests. **Dheeraj Ranjan Kumar**, Director, Balitrip Wisata, said, "As a DMC, we clearly understand that it's not just about buying and selling and doing a business. We feel that it is our objective and responsibility to educate the travel agencies across India about the products, services and destination. We always drive in conduct-

ing sales mission, roadshows and all other training programmes we have for the travel agencies across India." In all, 15 hospitality partners from Bali, including hotel partners, villa, restaurant and activity owners came to take part in the roadshow to get the first-hand experience.

Good news for Indians

Sharing a good news about visas

to Indians, Kumar said, "Visa is not a problem for Indians visiting Indonesia, as currently it has visa-on-arrival, and one can have visa online with just a click."

Overall, 15 partners from Bali, including hotel partners, villa, restaurant and activity owners came to take part in the roadshow

He added that Indonesian government has decided to waive off the visa for Indians, which should come into effect by November, to further boost tourism. When asked if there was a dearth of good



DMCs to sell destinations, Ranjan said it was not the lack of DMCs but the lack of awareness about them. DMCs should come forward to introduce themselves into the market, not only as a seller of a product, but also indulge in training programmes and marketing awareness, he suggested.

New offerings

Unveiling their plans to upsell Bali through interesting packages,

Ranjan said, "We have launched itineraries for East Bali named 'Explore the unexplored in Bali' after witnessing a huge demand from the market seeking something new. There are also plans to include North Bali in the itineraries."

New portal soon

DMC business is an offline business, but its digitalisation is key, noted Ranjan, adding that they are going to launch a dynamic portal in

the next three months, which will allow the travel agencies across India to book their packages, flights and hotels online.

BaliTrip Wisata's 10 years

Going ahead, he said, BaliTrip Wisata is going to complete a decade in the business. "We will celebrate 10-year journey in 2025. We have planned a huge marketing activity, including organisation of roadshows twice a year." ↓

A guide to compute GST correctly

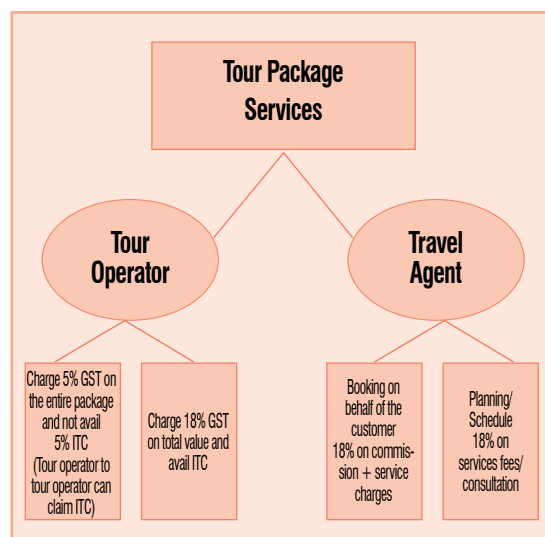
Chartered Accountant and expert on travel agent accountancy, Manish Gadia, shares comprehensive guidelines on how they must calculate GST when they are billing their clients. This article delves into the various facets of GST as it pertains to travel agents, ranging from billing practices to Input Tax Credit (ITC) utilisation.

GST is a destination-based consumption tax levied on the supply of goods and services. The GST rates are structured into different slabs ranging from 5 per cent to 28 per cent, with specific exemptions and lower rates for essential services.

Tour operator with tour packages: Many travel services are bundled into comprehensive packages that include multiple components, such as flights, hotels, transfers, visa, meals and sightseeing. Here total booking is done by the tour operator and

various other counterparts like airlines and hotels.

Tour operator with individual services: The tour operator only facilitates the transaction and helps traveller to identify various suppliers as per their requirements and arrange for its booking. Payment flow goes straight away from actual traveller to end service provider and tour operator only charges for its service portion from traveller. This means, where travellers purchase one or two specific services without opting for a bundled package, travel agents bill these services separately.



per cent CGST + 2.5 per cent SGST/ UTGST if it is intra-state supply and for the sale of packages if following conditions are met:

❖ Input Tax Credit on services availed by the entity will not be available. However, Input Tax Credit on the services taken from other tour operators are allowed.

❖ The entity shall indicate in its invoice that the amount charged is gross amount and inclusive of charges of accommodation and transportation.

However, Tour operators can-

❖ Not claim ITC on services like tickets purchased from airlines, railways, cab service

or other transportation providers, hotel accommodations including meals, or any office expenses incurred such as rent and stationery.

❖ Claim ITC on tour packages purchased from other tour operators.

On the other hand, the entity may charge GST at the rate of 18 per cent IGST or 9 per cent CGST + 9 per cent SGST/ UTGST on the total amount as per the type of transaction. In that case, the entity will be eligible to take all Input Tax Credit like rent, professional fee, lease line and telephone on the services that the entity acquired for providing the underlined services i.e. Tour Operating. Following are some examples on which travel agents can claim ITC on various inputs including:

providers, including on rent a cab service.

❖ GST paid on hotel accommodations booked for customers including meals.

❖ GST paid on tour packages bought from tour operators.

❖ GST paid on office expenses, such as rent and stationery used for providing services.



Manish Gadia
is a practising Chartered Accountant

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

SAC Code for Tour Package along with GST Rate

Explanation	SAC Code	GST rate
Sale of Tour Packages	998552	5%

the total fees charged shall include his margin. So, the Tour Operator becomes service provider, and in turn, he receives services from

As per above mentioned heading (in box) 998552, the rate of GST would be 5 per cent IGST if it is interstate supply or 2.5

EVENT TALK		
OCTOBER 2024		
Date	Event	Time
2-4	Magical Kenya Travel Expo 2024	10:00 am
4-6	India Hospitality & Tourism Expo 2024	9:00 am
8-10	IMEX America 2024	9:00 am
8	Oman Tourism Sales Mission-Goa	10:00 am
9	Singapore Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
10	Oman Tourism Sales Mission-Pune	10:00 am
15	Conztruct 2024	4:00 pm
15-16	GPS-Kochi	10:00 am
16-18	FHRAI Convention	10:00 am
17-19	India Travel Mart 2024-Varanasi	9:00 am
22-23	Travel & Tourism Fair - Patna 2024	9:00 am
23-25	ITB Asia	10:00 am
NOVEMBER 2024		
5-7	WTM London	9:30 am
11	Arabian Cargo Awards	10:00 am
12	Arabian Travel Awards	10:00 am
18	JNTO Roadshow-Delhi	10:30 am
20	JNTO Roadshow-Bangalore	10:30 am
20-22	VisitBritain Roadshow-Bangalore	10:00 am
22	JNTO Roadshow-Mumbai	10:30 am

WTM focus on tech challenges

The Technology Track sessions at this year's World Travel Market London, spread over three days, is set to shine a spotlight on the persistent challenges that travellers face when searching, shopping, booking, and paying for their journeys.

TT Bureau

The Technology Track sessions at this year's World Travel Market London – to be held at ExCeL London from 5-7 November – will focus on how sellers and suppliers of travel can address the ongoing problems travellers face when they search, shop, book, and pay for their trips. At this year's event, technology sessions are scheduled across the three days, with the Technology Summit taking place from 10 am to 1.15 pm on the opening day (Tuesday, 5 November) on the Purple Stage.

The programme for this part of the Technology Track has been planned by WTM's recently appointed technology advisor **Timothy O'Neil-Dunne**, currently Principal at T2Impact, an analysis and consulting firm that specialises in aviation, travel, and leisure.

The session includes a fireside chat with **Alfonso Paredes**, President of Expedia Group's Private Label Solutions business. He is



responsible for the B2B side of the business, which gives companies the ability to sell travel via access to Expedia Group's technology and supply.

Paredes will lead a session centred on the importance of the customer's digital experience and offer his view on user challenges and the future intersection between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and loyalty schemes. There will also be quick-fire sessions examining the specific customer experience dynamics by region

There will also be quick-fire sessions examining the specific customer experience dynamics by region and by vertical

and by vertical, concluding with a panel discussion that promises a no-holds-barred debate around

how effectively, or not, the industry engages with the traveller. The Tech Track also features a start-up competition, scheduled for Tuesday afternoon.

O'Neil-Dunne said, "I'm delighted that WTM London has given me the opportunity to try something different, and we have decided to tackle head-on one of my industry bugbears; despite all this tech, why do sellers and suppliers make it so difficult for the traveller to find what they want, buy our products, and experience what we offer."

RDTM 2024 flaunts its WICE prowess

The Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart 2024 concluded in Jaipur recently, with a promise to bring bigger and better event next year. This year's event, themed 'Wedding, Incentive, Conference, and Event', aimed to promote domestic tourism, showcasing Rajasthan's capability to host Weddings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events (WICE).

Surbhi Sharma from Jaipur

The 4th Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM), organised by the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) and the Rajasthan Tourism Department, with active participation from the Central Ministry of Tourism, concluded in Jaipur recently. The event, themed 'Weddings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events (WICE)', aimed to promote domestic tourism, showcasing Rajasthan's capability to host the four segments. More than 200 stalls and 600 hotels exhibited their products and services at the mart, which saw participation from 1,300 buyers and 7,000 guests.

Diya Kumari, Deputy Chief Minister, Rajasthan and the Chief Guest, inaugurated the event, attended by eminent personalities, including **Ravi Jain**, Secretary, Tourism, Art,



Kuldeep Singh Chandela
Senior Vice President
FHTR



RK Bhati
Assistant Director General
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India



Anand K Tripathi
Additional Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan



Tarun Kumar Bansal
President
HRAR & Joint Secretary FHTR

Literature, Culture, and Archaeology; **Kuldeep Singh Chandela**, Senior Vice President, FHTR; **Bhim Singh**, President, FHTR and **Onkar Singh Lakhawat**, Chairman, Rajasthan Heritage Authority.

Speaking at the event, Chandela said, "RDTM brought together all the stakeholders in the tourism

sector under one roof. While promoting rural tourism and new destinations, the event emphasised the enormous potential of MICE and wedding tourism. Various tourism stakeholders discussed new plans to enhance Rajasthan's tourism while committing to providing a rich and safe experience for tourists visiting the state."

Sharing the association's agenda, Chandela shared, "The FHTR delegation will promote Rajasthan tourism at IFTM Top Resa in Paris. In collaboration with the Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO), a Fam tour would be flagged off on 16 September from Jaipur to tourist spots like Mandawa, Jodhpur, Pushkar, Bundi, Ranthambore, and

Kumbhalgarh. The RDTM 2025 will be organised on an even larger and more impressive scale."

RK Bhati, Assistant Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "We are here to participate in the RDTM to create awareness about tourism and about tourism products of Rajas-

than among the domestic travellers." Sharing his viewpoint, **Anand K Tripathi**, Additional Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, said, "Events like RDTM is a platform that provides

While promoting new destinations, the event emphasised the enormous potential of MICE and wedding tourism

opportunities for domestic travel agents and tour operators from across the country." **Tarun Kumar Bansal**, President, HRAR & Joint Secretary, FHTR, drew attention towards the roadblocks.

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Exhibitor enquiries:

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MOVEMENTS

HYATT

New Delhi

Hyatt announced that **SUNJAE SHARMA**, Managing Director for India and Southwest Asia, has been appointed Chairperson of the ASSOCHAM National Council on Travel & Tourism for 2024. In the new role, Sharma will work closely with ASSOCHAM to address the industry's pressing challenges and drive growth, fostering a stronger and more resilient travel and tourism sector. With over 30-year experience in the hospitality industry, Sharma's appointment marks a key milestone for ASSOCHAM, as it continues to drive India's growth trajectory. He will play a pivotal role in advancing ASSOCHAM's policy advocacy.



MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Bangkok, Thailand

Marriott International, Inc. appoints **DEBDYUTI 'DEV' DASGUPTA** as General Manager of Khao Lak Marriott Beach Resort & Spa, the beautiful new seafront retreat which is set to open its doors in the fourth quarter of 2024, marking the debut of the flagship Marriott Hotels brand in Khao Lak. Dev is a talented hotelier who joins the new resort following his previous role as General Manager of Courtyard by Marriott Bangkok. He has transitioned into the GM's position following a successful career in the fields of financial management, auditing, compliance and accounting, with almost two decades of global executive experience.



FCM TRAVEL ASIA

Singapore

FCM Travel Asia has appointed **GURSHEEL DHILLON** as the Head of Marketing. Dhillon, a seasoned marketer and communicator, has been overseeing Public Relations and Communications across six key markets in Asia. She was awarded the Global Corporate Marketer of the Year by the ASX-listed Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) in her first year with the business, securing over 800 media features. She has successfully driven FCM's narrative in Asia, contributing to growing the brand's presence across both trade and mainstream media titles while working closely with key stakeholders.



AKASA AIR

Mumbai

Akasa Air has appointed **SEJAL HARIBHAKTI MODY** as its Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), effective 9 September 2024. In her new role, Mody will lead the airline's human resources strategy, driving organisational and functional transformation, enterprise performance and talent management, and leadership development, while ensuring a strong focus on employee experience and culture. With a career spanning over 20 years, she brings a wealth of experience in human resources, organisational change, and talent strategy across industries, including FMCG, media and consulting.



TRIPJACK

New Delhi

TripJack has appointed **SUBHODEEP BHATTACHARYA** as the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). In the new role, he will be spearheading a comprehensive HR transformation, guiding the organisation towards new heights of growth and innovation. Bhattacharya brings with him a wealth of experience from his previous role as Head of HR at DreamSetGo by Dream Sports. Prior to that, he held senior HR positions at TransUnion CIBIL as the Head of Business HR and Talent Acquisition, and at Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Funds as the Head of Corporate HR. His career journey began with Larsen & Toubro.



CONRAD MALDIVES RANGALI ISLAND

India

Conrad Maldives Rangali Island has appointed **AMIT KUMAR PRASAD** as the Director of Food and Beverage. With over 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Prasad brings a deep understanding of food and beverage management, pre-opening expertise, and a strong track record of enhancing guest experiences and driving operational excellence. In his new role, he will oversee the comprehensive repositioning of the resort's food and beverage outlets. His responsibilities will include managing dining operations and enhancing the overall guest dining experience.



SAROVAR HOTELS

Gurugram

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **UMEISH YADAV** as the General Manager - Development at the Corporate Office in Gurugram. Yadav brings a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry, encompassing hotel operations, strategic planning, brand enhancement and revenue optimisation. Having worked with prestigious hospitality brands, such as Taj Hotels, Aman Resorts and Best Western Hotels, he possesses a deep understanding of the industry and a proven track record of success. His diverse experience equips him to play a pivotal role in supporting Sarovar's strategic growth interests.



LYFE HOTELS AND RESORTS BHUBANESWAR

Bhubaneswar

Lyfe Hotels Bhubaneswar appoints **BIBEKANANDA MISHRA** as the Executive Assistant Manager. With over two decades of experience in the luxury hospitality sector, Mishra brings a wealth of expertise to the new role. He is known for his contributions to F&B concept development, brand enhancement, revenue optimisation, guest experience creation, and strategic planning and execution. Prior to this, he served as the General Manager at Pramod Hotels and Resorts. His experience spans several key roles, including F&B Manager and Assistant GM - F&B Operations at Mayfair Lagoon Bhubaneswar.



SOFITEL MUMBAI BKC

Mumbai

Sofitel Mumbai BKC has appointed **BJORN FERNANDES** as the Director of Sales & Marketing. He has more than 17 years of experience in the world of hospitality. Prior to this, Fernandes held the prestigious role of Director of Sales & Marketing at Taj North Goa, where he spearheaded the sales, marketing, and PR efforts for Taj Fort Aguada and Taj Holiday Village. His vast experience also includes his leadership at The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake and Marriott Executive Apartments. He has an MBA in Marketing from MET Bandra and a Bachelor's Degree in Management Studies from MMK College.



TRAVELBULLZ

New Delhi

TravelBullz has appointed **KHUN JATNIPIS SMAKRATTHAGIT** (Annie) as Regional Director - Asia, based in the Bangkok office. In her new role, she will oversee sourcing and relationship management with the supply chain in Asia. All sourcing teams in Asia will report to her as she leads the Asia business, further consolidating TravelBullz's core operations. Annie holds a degree in Hotel Management from Vancouver, and has completed an advanced course in Hotel Revenue Management from Cornell University. With over 21 years of experience, Annie has worked with renowned hotel brands.



TOURISM MALAYSIA

Chennai

Tourism Malaysia has appointed **SYED ANWAR** as the Marketing Officer for the Chennai office, effective 2 September 2024. Anwar, who previously served as Assistant Marketing Officer at Tourism Malaysia's Chennai office, was selected for the position after a thorough interview process. His innovative approach and effective marketing strategies have made a significant impact, leading to his new role where he will continue to contribute to the growth of Tourism Malaysia's initiatives in the region. He has demonstrated outstanding capabilities in strategic planning, market analysis, and campaign management.



HYATT CENTRIC BALLYGUNGE KOLKATA

Kolkata

Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata appoints **PRASANTA NANDI** as the Food & Beverage Manager. Nandi has about 14 years of impressive repertoire of knowledge in food and beverage industry. He brings to the table immaculate grooming standards, etiquettes, and a wealth of expertise in sales and marketing, beverage contracting, and team building. He has enjoyed an exponential career growth with top tier hospitality brands since completing his Bachelor in Hotel Management from Subhas Bose Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata. He has worked with prestigious brands, such as Marriott and Sheraton Grand Bangalore.



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Nok Air adds Mumbai to network

Nok Air, Thailand's premium budget airline, has identified Mumbai as a key destination in its expansion strategy for India. Beginning 28 October, the airline plans to start new flights to Mumbai, reveals Ranon Viputsiri, Chief Commercial Officer, Nok Air.

 Janice Alyosius

Thailand's Nok Air plans to expand its India operations with the launch of eight weekly flights from Mumbai to Bangkok, effective 28 October this year. Nok Air began its Hyderabad operations on 21 February last year and flies four times a week to its hub Don Mueang in Bangkok. The airline aims to enhance its capacity, targeting a monthly total of over 13,000 seats and an average load factor exceeding 80 per cent.

India's growing importance for Nok Air

Emphasising on the significance of India market for Nok Air, Ranon Viputsiri, Chief Commercial Officer, Nok Air, said, "India is a large market compared to many other countries, and there is substantial demand for travel from India to Thailand." Currently, Nok Air operates four weekly flights between Hyderabad and Bangkok's Don Mueang Inter-



national Airport, with schedules that accommodate both leisure and business travellers. "The flight timings work well for both inbound and outbound traffic and offer great connectivity through Thailand's gateway - Bangkok and more destinations, including Phuket, Krabi, and Chiang Mai," he added.

Nok Air operates with a capacity of 6,400 seats per month and a year-to-date average load factor of 78 per cent. "While the market is smaller compared to Mumbai, we are seeing steady growth, and we expect continued positive traction as awareness of the route increases," Viputsiri said.

Why Mumbai?

Nok Air has ambitious plans for expansion in India. "Mumbai, being a key business and leisure hub, presents significant growth potential, and with strategic pricing and targeted marketing campaigns, we are confident about

maintaining strong performance," he added.

Tailoring products

Talking about the airline's product offerings for Indian travellers, Viputsiri highlighted Nok Air's evolution from a low-cost carrier to a premium budget

Viputsiri said that Nok Air strives to provide a "true Thai cultural experience onboard", offering spacious legroom and unique in-flight activities, such as giveaways and surprise events. By the end of the month, the airline will also launch complimentary in-flight entertainment, aligning with its slogan, "We Fly Smiles".

Creating awareness


Viputsiri acknowledged the need for targeted marketing to raise awareness among Indian travellers. "As we launch Mumbai, we will focus on building brand recognition, both in India and Thailand to encourage outbound and inbound traffic," he said.

Tapping into MICE market

India's growing MICE market is another area of focus for Nok Air. "MICE is a significant market for us in India. We work closely with partners in sectors like hotels, restaurants, and tourism to meet the needs of MICE travellers," Viputsiri explained.

Looking ahead

Given the current demand, upcoming route expansions, and the airline's dual focus on passenger and cargo traffic, Nok Air projects an overall average load factor of 80 per cent across its Indian network for the coming year, with plans to expand to additional gateways in India. ↴


This new route will increase Nok Air's monthly capacity to over 13,000 seats, with an expected average load factor exceeding 80% throughout the year

airline. "We offer various fare types, such as Nok X-tra and Nok Max. Our most popular option, Nok Max, includes 30 kg of checked in baggage, seat selection, and a hot meal," he said. In Nok X-tra, Nok Air stands out as the only airline offering a complimentary snack box and a water bottle, free of charge. The airline provides spacious legroom with wide seats, along with a 20 kg checked baggage allowance and the option for advanced seat selection.



Ranon Viputsiri
Chief Commercial Officer, Nok Air

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8

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