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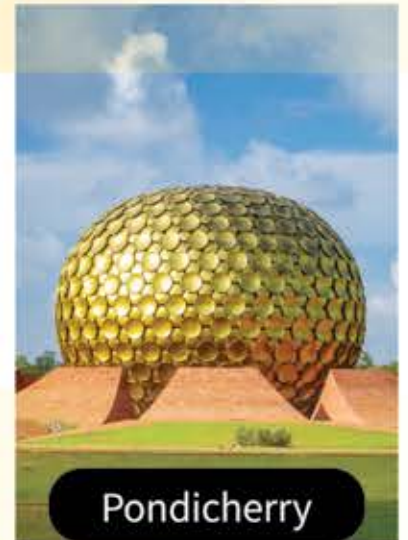
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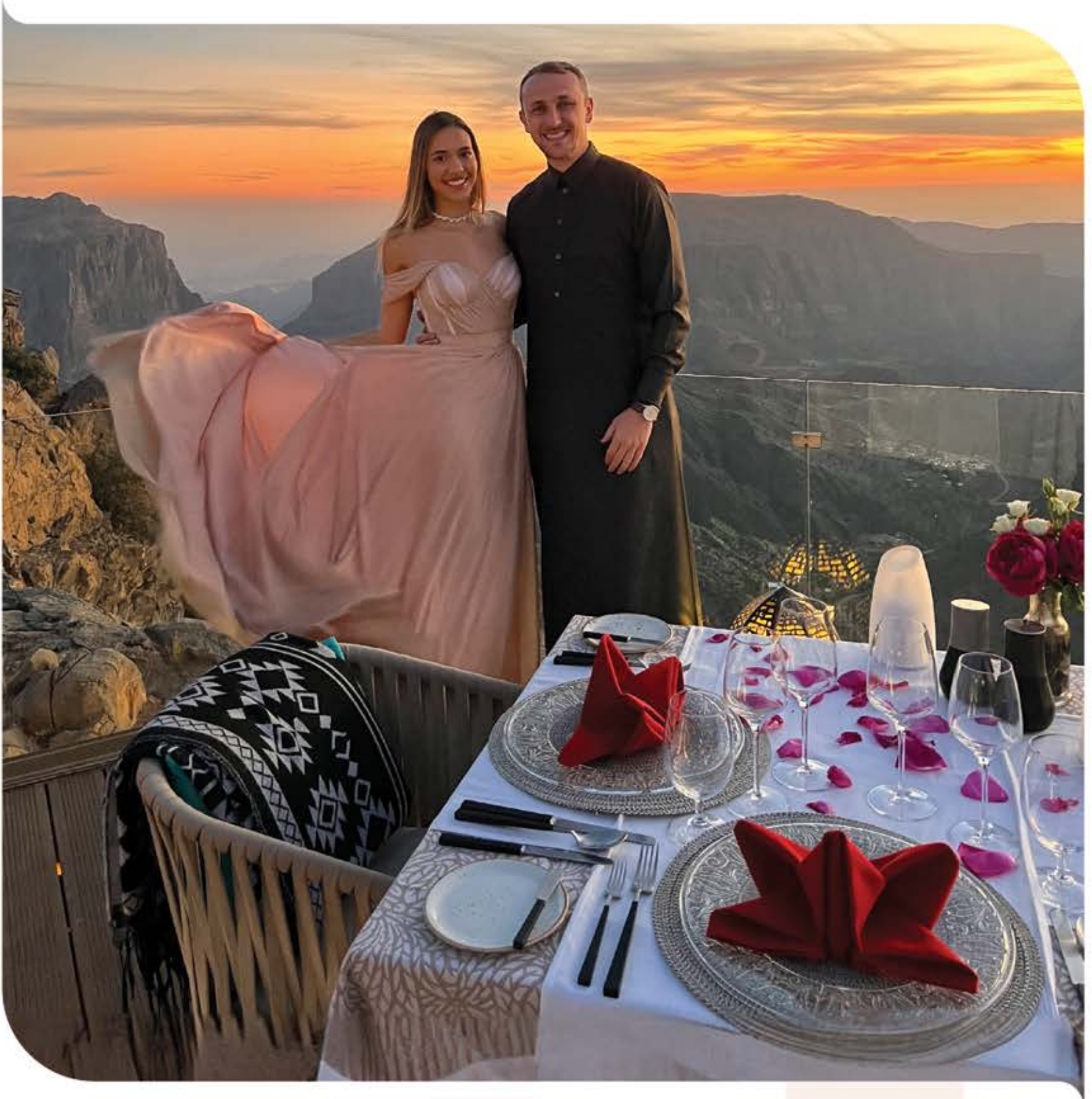
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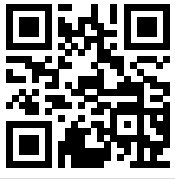
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## MOT eyes 10% pie in int'l market

India's travel and tourism GDP is expected to grow at an average of 7.1% annually over the next 10 years, according to WTTC. With the country's tourism sector expected to grow at 20% CAGR, the Union Ministry of Tourism aims to take the global market share to over 10% in the next five years.



**Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**  
Minister of Culture and Tourism  
Government of India

Janice Alyosius

India has experienced rapid development post-COVID, emerging as one of the world's fastest-growing countries. Elaborating on the achievement, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India, said, "India's development, its speed and scale, and its historical and cultural diversity—encompassing cuisine, culture,

gastronomy, and tourism—are drawing global attention. The attraction to India has significantly increased, opening a new window of opportunity and creating a pathway that will broaden global perspectives."

Shekhawat highlighted the evolving landscape of domestic tourism, saying that travel patterns are shifting. In domestic tourism, both short and long-distance

Given the growing opportunities in India, the country is set to become the largest tourism market in the world

travel experiences are evolving. This will change the direction of tourism. For example, the logistics of planning trips to various destinations like Mumbai or Udaipur are becoming increasingly complex, which requires new approaches to tourism planning and product development. "This is how the tourism landscape is changing. We need to adapt to these changes; otherwise, we risk falling behind in the market.

We must address the evolving needs of tourists by developing new products and destinations that align with current trends and perspectives," he said.

He added, "Given the growing opportunities in India, the country is set to become the largest tourism market in the world," Shekhawat said. He pointed out that with India's burgeoning middle class, the tourism sector

is expected to grow at a CAGR of 20 per cent. This growth could potentially lead to a five-fold increase in the number of tourists over the next 5-6 years."

## Incredible Indians to power tourism

Highlighting infrastructure development and cultural preservation, V Vidyavathi, Secretary, Tourism, shares valuable insights into the government's initiatives aimed at bolstering India's inbound tourism.

TT Bureau

India's tourism sector is at the cusp of a remarkable transformation. Over the past decade, significant strides have been made in infrastructure, with 1.5 lakh kilometres of roads laid and 57 new airports constructed, seamlessly connecting tourists to diverse destinations across the country. Highlighting infrastructure development, cultural preservation, and the importance of human experience,



**V Vidyavathi**  
Secretary, MOT, GoI

**V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of

India, urged travel agents and tour operators to embrace the growing potential of India's tourism landscape. "Travel in India is no longer what it was 10 or 15 years ago. The journey has become smoother, and accessibility to once-remote destinations has vastly improved," she said at the recently held Google Think Travel India 2024.

However, as much as the physical infrastructure matters,

Contd. on page 10 ▶

## GCC visitors spur Kerala tourism

Kerala's tourism sector is witnessing remarkable growth. Experts say the state's domestic tourism growth is boosted by increasing footfall from GCC countries seeking wellness and medical treatments.

Janice Alyosius

Kerala, known as 'God's Own Country', continues to thrive as a premier travel destination, buoyed by a resurgence in both domestic and international tourism. Key industry leaders reveal a multifaceted recovery, highlighting a blend of traditional attractions and emerging trends that are reshaping the state's tourism landscape. According to **VS Abdulkareem**, MD and CEO, Flycreative Online,



**VS Abdulkareem**  
MD and CEO, Flycreative Online

Kerala's domestic tourism has reached unprecedented levels.

"Domestic tourism is the highest in the last year in comparison with all other previous years' domestic flow. This surge is complemented by an increase in inbound tourism from GCC countries. The Arab community's deep-rooted connections with Keralites have translated into a growing influx of visitors seeking wellness, rejuvenation, and medical treatments in Kerala. There are a substantial number of Arabs coming for

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# Da Nang tops short-haul options

The destination is followed by Krabi and Mahe, highlighting the travel appetite among travellers for relaxation and sunshine, reveals Skyscanner's 'Travel Trends 2024' report. More than ever, travellers globally are seeking out cultural experiences.



TT Bureau



## How tourism catalysing peace?

Tourism is often celebrated for its economic benefits, but its real magic lies in how it brings people together. When we travel, we're not just visiting new places, we're stepping into new cultures, meeting people with different traditions, and seeing the world through their eyes. This simple act of experiencing life outside our own bubbles helps break down stereotypes and encourages empathy—two essential ingredients for peace.

With World Tourism Day on 27 September, it's the perfect time to recognise tourism's role in creating these vital connections. Beyond cultural exchange, tourism builds ties that transcend borders. When we support local businesses and communities, we foster economic relationships that can lead to stability and cooperation. In a way, tourism helps create a global community where respect and understanding thrive.

It's not just about ticking destinations on a map. When done right, tourism can be a powerful tool for social good. It creates jobs, supports local economies, and even helps rebuild communities in post-conflict regions. By travelling responsibly, we contribute to this larger movement, promoting peace and sustainability along the way.

At its core, tourism is about people. Whether through shared meals, conversations with locals, or exploring new landscapes, these moments bring us closer together. And in today's world, that's exactly what we need—a bit more understanding, a bit more connection, and a whole lot of more peace.

So, as we mark World Tourism Day, let's remember that we're not just service providers for tourists, we're part of something bigger—an ongoing journey toward a more peaceful and united world.

Indian travellers have an appetite for short-haul travel, with six out of the top 10 trending destinations close by cities, reveals 'Travel Trends 2024', a report by Skyscanner.

Famous for its beaches, Da Nang comes out on top. Travellers are also searching for Krabi and Mahe, highlighting the appetite for relaxation and sunshine. Far-flung destinations remain popular for Indian travellers too, with Osaka and Auckland trending. As a top foodie destination, Japan continues to make a comeback after reopening last year.

The report has identified seven travel trends for 2024 - four culture-led travel vibes, including Gig tripping, Main character energy, Budget bougie foodies and Destination Zzzz, and three behaviour-led travel types, including Analogue adventurers, Celebration vacationers and Luxe-for-less seekers. More than ever, travellers globally in 2024 are seeking out cultural experiences. While value for money is still top of mind, travellers are more than ever letting culture drive their decision making. From gig trippers wanting to be moved by music to analogue adventurers turning away from the 'always on', 41 per cent of travellers globally are being drawn to the overall vibe of a destination.

### Hyper-personalised experiences

Travel is being attached more closely to identity, with purpose and meaning embedded into decisions and immersion being increasingly important, whether within a community of fans, our cultural exploration or within ourselves. As well as digital fatigue, people want hyper-personalised experiences to feel they are travelling with intention, not just to get out of the country.

Among the top three factors driving the choice in holiday destination for 2024 are food (71 per cent), culture (65 per cent) and weather (65 per cent). When it comes to the most popular activities to do on holiday, culture is high on the agenda for Indian travellers, with shopping (49 per cent), historical tours (45 per cent) and sampling local food (38 per cent) scoring highly.

### Value for money

Value for money remains a key factor for Indian travellers, with the cost of the flight (26 per cent) and attractions (18 per cent) being the biggest factors determining the destination. However, 63 per cent of Indian travellers have budgeted to spend more on travel in 2024 compared to 2023, while 25 per cent will spend the same. Only 7 per cent said they will spend less.

### Gig tripping

With some superstars announcing big international tours, there is more interest than ever in travelling abroad to catch a show - especially if tickets can be found cheaper and a no-frills airline can get you there. About 37 per cent of Indian travellers - let's call them superfans - would fly short haul to see their favourite artist live, with 20 per cent saying they would fly long haul. About 44 per cent of Indian travellers said they plan to attend a gig, music concert or festival at home in 2024. This rises to 48 per cent of 25-to-34-year-olds. But a huge 79 per cent would consider a singalong overseas instead in 2024 if it would help them save money.

### Budget bougie foodies

Food and travel have always been intrinsically linked. In fact, 59 per cent of Indian travellers have booked a destination purely on a specific restaurant they want to visit. While a further 33 per cent say it's something they would like to do. Eating the local cuisine and trying authentic food is the most popular activity for Indian travellers when they are abroad, with 38 per

cent preferring it to anything else. Interestingly, the research shows that Indian travellers believe fine dining is out of their price range. They estimate a fine dining experience to cost ₹5,599 per person on average while planning to spend ₹5,509 per meal per person on holiday. The good news is that

**Far-flung destinations remain popular for Indian travellers too, with Osaka and Auckland trending**

more and more cities are offering great value eateries that don't sacrifice quality to make the foodie dream a reality.

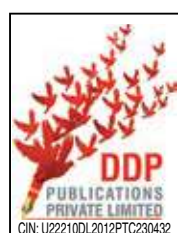
### Destination Zzzz

Sleep tourism is a growing trend in a world that feels busier and harder to switch off from. In the last few years, the number of people searching online for sleep retreats (and asking what they are) has increased. At the same time, people are becoming more interested in their sleep health. In fact, 85 per cent of Indian travellers are more mindful of their sleep health today compared to a few years ago, and a fifth (20 per cent) of Indian travellers say sleeping is one of the main activities for their next holiday.

## The most buzzing places in 2024

These are the top 10 destinations for Indian travellers with the biggest year-on-year increase in searches.

1. **Da Nang, Vietnam** +1141% search increase
2. **Almaty, Kazakhstan** +501% search increase
3. **Baku, Azerbaijan** +438% search increase
4. **Osaka, Japan** +435% search increase
5. **Hanoi, Vietnam** +396% search increase
6. **Krabi, Thailand** +390% search increase
7. **Budapest, Hungary** +371% search increase
8. **Mahe Island, Seychellers** +356% search increase
9. **Auckland, New Zealand** +329% search increase
10. **Vienna, Austria** +316% search increase



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# Swosti Puri to host next year's IATO meet

The 39<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention, held recently in Bhopal, witnessed record-breaking attendance of more than 1,200 delegates, who enjoyed the charm of destinations in and around the city. After successful organisation of this year's convention, the association's focus now shifts to Puri in Odisha for next year's convention.

Janice Alyosius

The 39<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention, held in Bhopal from 29 August to 2 September, proved to be a standout event, with more than 1,200 delegates attending the event. Sharing his views on the convention, which mainly aimed to promote Madhya Pradesh as a tourism destination, **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO, said, "This overwhelming response was unexpected. I would have been happy with 1,000 delegates, but this is a record number. Enthusiasm among the attendees was evident, with many experiencing Bhopal for the first time. They never expected Bhopal to be such a nice, clean city. The first impression has been excellent."

This year's convention saw record-breaking attendance, with over 1,200 delegates, including invitees, speakers, and their spouses. The



**Rajiv Mehra**  
President  
IATO



**JK Mohanty**  
Chairman & Managing Director  
Swosti Group

convention featured 10 familiarisation trips, engaging approximately 325 delegates, who were taken to various tourism sites in and around Bhopal to get first-hand experiences. The IATO President assured the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh about the convention's benefits, which, he said, would become visible within six to eight months. Mehra also highlighted the initia-

tives announced by the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). "I am grateful to Puneet Chhatwal for making those announcements. It was a very kind gesture from IHCL. With these incentives, we will be able to attract clients to this segment of hotels."

IHCL has announced five new initiatives to bolster the hospitality sec-

tor, which include increase in commissions for agents from 10 per cent to 12.5 per cent, inclusion of

and individual hotels. I am hopeful that this will yield positive results in the long run," he said, emphasising

Swosti Group, said, "Our new high-rise property in Puri, the first of its kind approved by the government, offers stunning sea



breakfast in hotel rates, permission to cancel FITs in business hotels with 48-hour notice, and in leisure and palace hotels with 7-day notice, and exclusive travel discount for IATO members. Mehra said that the initiatives like including breakfast in hotel rates would enhance tourism and drive more business to India. Mehra also spoke about the synergy between the hospitality and tourism sectors. "I am already contracting with about 13 hotel chains

ing that the evolving partnership between hotels and tour operators is crucial to generating business. The convention also set the stage for next year's IATO convention. "The convention will take place at the newly opened Swosti Premium Beach Resorts Puri. The dates will be decided in the next couple of months," Mehra said.

Informing about their new luxury hotel in Puri, **JK Mohanty**, CMD,

**The convention will take place at the newly opened Swosti hotel in Puri. The dates will be decided in the next couple of months**

views from every room and sets a new standard with its five-star amenities. From the elegant lobby to the beach hut and infinite swimming pool, this property is poised to be a game-changer in the hospitality business at Puri."

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Mysuru Travel Association President seeks state government support for local agents, enhance tourism

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India to climb from sixth to fourth position in global tourism spending by 2029, says Vishal Suri, SOTC India

# ₹812 cr budget to drive Odisha infra

Odisha is set to turn a new page in reviving its tourism as the state government works towards channelling a budget of ₹812 crore into developing the state as a top destination for both domestic and international tourists. Pravati Parida, Deputy Chief Minister and Tourism Minister, Government of Odisha, shares details.

*Nisha Verma*

**P**ravati Parida, Deputy Chief Minister and Tourism Minister, Government of Odisha, says the state government has ambitious plans to enhance tourism offerings of Odisha, focusing on eco-tourism, spiritual corridors, and international outreach. "Odisha's tourism landscape is on the brink of a major transformation, powered by the substantial ₹812 crore budget," she informs.

**Promoting state's heritage**

Parida highlighted Odisha's abundant natural and cultural assets, which form the cornerstone of the state's tourism strategy. The government is focusing on developing spiritual corridors that connect key religious sites, such as the Jagannath Temple in Puri, the Sun Temple in Konark, and Bhubaneswar's Lingaraj Temple. "We are creating spiritual corridors to link our most important heritage sites," she says, emphasising the potential

to attract both pilgrims and history enthusiasts. Additionally, Odisha's Buddhist corridor, which includes sites like Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, and Udayagiri, is being expanded to draw in scholars and tourists interested in Buddhist culture. Parida noted that these initiatives are designed to tap into Odisha's rich heritage, making it accessible to a broader audience.

**Focus on eco-tourism**

Odisha's rich biodiversity also offers significant potential for eco-tourism, a sector in which the government is heavily investing. "We are planning eco-friendly stays and eco-tourism projects in Bhitarkanika, Deomali, Similipal, and Konark," Parida explains. The aim is to develop homestay facilities and eco-lodges that cater to nature-loving tourists, researchers, and young travellers.

A substantial portion of the ₹812 crore budget is dedicated to enhancing these eco-tourism initia-



**Pravati Parida**  
Deputy Chief Minister and Tourism Minister, Government of Odisha

tives. "This budget reflects our commitment to developing Odisha as a hub for sustainable tourism," Parida emphasises. However, she acknowledges the lack of high-quality hotels in some areas. "It is a challenge that the government is addressing through planned infrastructure development," she says.

**Attracting foreign tourists**

Highlighting the efforts for attract-

ing international tourists, she said, "Odisha's tourism department is engaging with international consulates and organising roadshows in cities like Dubai, Singapore, and Berlin to boost awareness about Odisha's offerings." Roadshows, trade fairs, and international collaborations are part of this strategy. "We are working closely with foreign consulates and tour operators to promote Odisha as a prime destination," Parida says. She also emphasised the importance of improving infrastructure to accommodate and attract foreign visitors.

**Festivals & wellness tourism**

Odisha's vibrant festivals, such as the Konark Dance Festival and the Puri Rath Yatra, already attract thousands of visitors. However, Parida stresses the need to ensure that tourists stay longer and explore more of what Odisha has to offer. "We are creating detailed itineraries to encourage tourists to stay in Odisha for 2-3 days more and explore different attractions," she

says. Wellness tourism is another area of focus. Odisha plans to develop health and wellness centres in scenic locations where tourists can meditate and practice yoga.

**We (Odisha Govt) are planning eco-friendly stays and eco-tourism projects in Bhitarkanika, Deomali, Similipal, and Konark**

**Road ahead**

Looking ahead, she is confident about Odisha's tourism future. "Tourism is a key sector for Odisha's economic growth. We are open to tie-ups with private players and working hard to attract foreign investments," she concludes.

# 'Balitrip' showcases new destinations

With an aim to showcase the new offerings from Bali, Balitrip unveiled its four-city India sales mission that travelled to Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Indore and New Delhi. Led by Dheeraj Ranjan Kumarr, Founder Director, PT Balitrip Wisata, from India, the show saw participation from 17 partners from Bali, including hotels and restaurants.





# DG Tourism thrusts on model code

Adoption of responsible practices, capacity building, and a model code of conduct is need of the hour to position India on the world tourism map and make it the most preferred destination among foreign tourists, says Mugdha Sinha, Director General, MOT, Government of India.

Surbhi Sharma

In keeping with the Indian tourism industry's objective of positioning India as a global tourism hub, the Union Ministry of Tourism has outlined in its policy the central principle of 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. It shows the government's commitment to ensure that every tourist in India is physically invigorated, mentally rejuvenated, culturally enriched and spiritually elevated.

In an interaction with **Mugdha Sinha**, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, emphasised the importance of responsible tourism while stressing on the need for capacity building, enhancing aviation sector services, streamlining visa procedures, adopting model code of conduct and ethics, and improving connectivity to lesser-known destinations to make India more accessible and appealing to foreign visitors.



**Mugdha Sinha**  
Director General, Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

## Responsible tourism

Talking about the key measures that should be taken to promote responsible tourism, Sinha said, "Responsible tourism begins with the civic sense and defines how we interact with others, extending beyond just visitors. Promoting civic sense from an early age will enhance our reputation, both domestically and globally. By

embedding these values into our education system and encouraging widespread discussion, we can significantly improve India's image as a welcoming destination for everyone, including foreign tourists."

Commenting on capacity building that plays a pivotal role in the development process, Sinha said that it is crucial to equip local stakeholders with the skills and knowledge required for sustainable tourism management. "Achieving this involves targeted training programmes, partnership with international experts, and fostering a culture of continuous learning within the industry," she suggested. Additionally, enhancing aviation sector facilities is also vital. "Upgrading airports, streamlining visa procedures, and improving connectivity to lesser-known destinations will make India more accessible and appealing to foreign visitors."

## Model code of conduct & ethics

Giving insights into improving facilities for foreign tourists, she stressed the need for a model code of conduct. "For me, the model code of conduct represents a unified vision. Not only

**Promoting civic sense from an early age (among citizens) will enhance our reputation, both domestically and globally**

the code of conduct but we need code of best practices and code of ethics for ensuring ethical practices and promoting sustainable growth in the tourism industry," she said.



# Indians look for Swiss pass

Christian Schoch, Director India, Switzerland Tourism, is happy to share that there has been an uptick in sales of Swiss Travel Pass in the India market, particularly the eight-day pass, which also means that Indians are staying longer in the destination.

Hazel Jain

The newly appointed India Director for Switzerland Tourism, **Christian Schoch**, is well-versed with the Indian market but keen on learning more about Indian travellers from the trade partners. Schoch, who met quite a few agents during his welcome dinner at the Consul General's residence in Mumbai, reveals that moving ahead Switzerland Tourism plans to explore tier I and II Indian cities. "We already focus on the metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bengaluru. But now we also want to focus on tier II and III cities in India because we see a lot of potential in these markets – not just in terms of tourist numbers but also training. We want to support the tour operators all over India and encourage them to learn more about Switzerland," he shares.

## Evolving Indian travellers

Last year, Switzerland saw a huge jump in visitor numbers as compared to the year before. Schoch expresses hope that the



**Christian Schoch**  
Director India  
Switzerland Tourism

visitor numbers will return to the pre-pandemic level, which were around 800,000 to 870,000 hotel overnights from Indian guests in Switzerland. "We see a change in the profile of Indian guests travelling to Switzerland today. We see more experienced travellers, who are more interested in outdoor sports and adventure activities, such as skiing, hiking, biking, paragliding and speed boat. And, of course, there is the extended season, so we promote autumn and winter season also, which is

in even higher demand by the Indian guests," he shares. Schoch adds that not just activities, but the local food culture also interests them now. "Switzerland offers a wide range of vegan and vegetarian food, and we see an increase in demand for culinary experiences in Switzerland. We have many Indian restaurants, and this is an added value for our Indian guests. Indian guests, especially in their 30s and 40s, want to teach their kids skiing and I think Switzerland is a great place to learn skiing, as we have a lot of ski resorts. We see high demand for skiing from the Indian guests," he shares.

Schoch says that the destination now sees more FITs, bigger family groups, as well as friends and solo travellers. "Of course, groups are still important for us. But we see a slight shift from group travellers into FIT travellers. We also see a higher demand for luxury travel. More and more hotels are investing in the Indian market because they see an increase in bookings from Indian guests. We also see higher demand for MICE, especial-

ly incentive groups. They want to explore Switzerland on their own by boat, train or bus," he says.

India is among the top three markets in terms of daily expenditure in Switzerland, which is more than 300 Swiss Francs per day. "We see this expenditure towards

**India is among the top three markets in terms of daily expenditure in Switzerland, which is more than 300 Swiss Francs per day**

accommodation, in adventure and in food. The top two are the GCC market and China. We also see an uptick in sales of Swiss Travel Pass. This year, we saw an increase of 22 per cent from January to June," Schoch says.

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# MOT's 100-day programme takes off

Indiatourism has been making an effort to map a few chosen destinations as a pilot project and create a bank of tourism assets at these places to make them friendlier for tourists. Dr Sagnik Chowdhury, Deputy Director General and Regional Director (West & Central India), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, sheds lights on the government's 100-day programme.



Hazel Jain

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) under the government's 100-day programme has decided to make India's tourism destinations friendlier for tourists. Under a pilot project, seven destinations across the country have been identified for this purpose. These destinations are Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir, Jodhpur in Rajasthan, Aizawl in Mizoram, Bodh Gaya in Bihar, Orchha in Madhya Pradesh, Gandikota in Andhra Pradesh and Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Guest of Honour at the India Travel Awards 2024, held recently in Mumbai, **Dr Sagnik Chowdhury**, Deputy Director General and Regional Director (West & Central India), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "Our primary motive across these seven destinations is to identify and map stakeholders, different types of



**Dr Sagnik Chowdhury**  
Deputy Director General and Regional Director (West & Central India), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

stakeholders who can be then trained, not only in the trade that they practice, but also give them training about certain trades that they can pick up. This is for people who are not introduced to the tourism field yet in these destinations."

Simultaneously, MOT is also trying to map all the tourism assets that these places have. These could be

tourism products in terms of natural heritage and cultural heritage, which could be tangible or intangible. "We are trying to map all of these and create a bank of tourism assets at these places. We are also trying to look at new tourism products and identify them. For this purpose, the ministry is working closely with the state governments, not only to deliver in a time-bound manner, but once found successful, this model to be replicated in over 1,000 destinations across the country in the months to come," he explained.

This seems like an intense project. In the west central region, Orchha is the place that has been selected for the prototype. "For mobilisation of youth and women, the programme is called 'Paryatan Mitra' and the 'Paryatan Didi' project, wherein we are trying to bring more and more people on the organised mainstream tourism platform by enabling them, by building their capacity, by skilling them and then

also mapping the various tourism products where they can be found useful and where they could contribute with whatever skill sets and aptitude they have."

## Programme has flexibility

Dr Chowdhury said, "We are giving FOSTAC training to food handlers in various wayside amenities, restaurants, eateries, and hotels across the region. We are focusing on various people who are not otherwise certified. There is a lot of potential in these places and that is how they have been selected as the prototypes. It is, however, important to understand that the programme does not end in 100 days. In fact, we are only creating a prototype, we are only creating a platform based on which we are going to build further. Thousands of more destinations are going to come up in the following months based on the model that will be exercised during this prototype building."

## Sustainability and stakeholders

Hoteliers and tour operators can be great drivers of sustainability, Dr Chowdhury said. "In order to leave the legacy, that we have en-

communities resilient to all kinds of change. Destinations, as well as tour operators and travel agents, can also participate in sustainability initiatives. It is with this idea that stakeholders across the board, tour operators, travel agents, hoteliers, tourist transport operators, adventure tour operators, can all be major stakeholders in the green initiative that the ministry has launched its 'Travel for LIFE' campaign where life signifies lifestyle for environment," he added.

Let us look at a small microcosm – let's talk about tourist transport operators. "It is extremely important that their vehicles comply with the latest sustainable norms, possibly they could be electric vehicles, and possibly make the place eco-friendly in terms of plastic use. We need to be pervasively active and that is where all our stakeholders come in. They build that ecosystem wherein we can make our environment safer and better," he said.

**MOT is trying to map all the tourism assets (at identified destinations). These could be tourism products with heritage value**

joyed for years, for our children, it is important to look at sustainability not only from the point of environmental sustainability but also social, cultural and community-based sustainability. In fact, it is extremely important for us to make our com-

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## 'Indians powering tourism'

▶ Contd. from page 5

Vidyavathi emphasised that the heart of Indian tourism is its people—the human element that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation cannot replace.

"Tourism is about experience, and it's the human element that defines that experience. A monument without a story is just a structure. It's the people who bring these experiences to life," she said.

A central theme of Vidyavathi's vision is the creation of a tourism assets bank—a comprehensive inventory of both tangible and intangible tourism assets that resonate with the unique experiences different destinations offer. Whether it's the biryani of Hyderabad, the beaches of Goa, or the spiritual aura of Varanasi, each destination has its own narrative, and she believes these stories should be cultivated into tourism offerings.

"We want to go beyond just promoting monuments. India's food, culture, and traditions are equally vital to the tourism experience. It's time to bring these intangible heritage elements into the forefront of our tourism products," she suggested.

This push towards experiential travel is backed by data, as the ministry maps 22 touchpoints along the tourism value chain, focusing on enhancing travellers' experiences at every stage—from arrival to accommodation and from local cuisine to cultural immersion. Moreover, the ministry's 'Incredible India by Incred-

**Whether it's the biryani of Hyderabad, the beaches of Goa, or the spiritual aura of Varanasi, each destination has its own narrative**

ible Indians' initiative focuses on empowering local communities and building a welcoming, service-oriented workforce. "When a local person thanks you for visiting their country, it leaves an indelible impression. We want every Indian involved in tourism to embody this warmth and hospitality, creating unforgettable experiences for visitors," said Vidyavathi.

For travel agents and tour operators, these initiatives present a golden opportunity. With the ministry actively developing new destinations, improving infrastructure, and focusing on creating immersive experiences, there has never been a better time to promote India as a top global destination. "Tourism in India thrives when the private sector thrives. We are in this together," she stressed, encouraging the industry to leverage digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Google to tell India's many stories.

In her closing remarks, Vidyavathi called on the industry to continue playing a pivotal role in showcasing India's incredible diversity, history, and charm to the world.

"Incredible India cannot exist without Incredible Indians—and that includes everyone who is the backbone of this journey," she said.

With the ministry's commitment to innovation and cultural preservation, the future of Indian tourism looks brighter than ever. Now is the time to act, as the world looks toward India for its next unforgettable adventure.

# Tourism: Catalyst for fostering peace

Tourism can play a vital role as a catalyst for fostering peace and understanding between nations and cultures and in supporting reconciliation processes. Keeping with this year's theme for World Tourism Day - Tourism and Peace.

**TRAVTALK** speaks to industry leaders on how tourism stands for respect, friendship, and peace.



TT Bureau

Tourism is clearly linked to the building blocks of peace - such as social justice, human rights, economic equity, sustainable development, and broad-based democracy with the capability of non-violent conflict resolution. Tourism's biggest strength, besides being an economic powerhouse, is to bring people together in non-adversarial circumstances. Tourism has the potential to contribute to peace in many ways and these need to be appropriately explored and assessed. Tourism as an instrument for peace needs to be peace sensitive and needs to be understood from both - the suppliers and consumer's side - not as an isolated peace strategy, but as part of social transformation towards a culture of peace.

**Julia Simpson**, President & CEO, WTTC, says, "Travel and tour-



**Julia Simpson**  
President & CEO  
WTTC

**Let's harness the transformative power of travel to build a more peaceful and interconnected world**



**Basmah Al-Mayman**  
Regional Director for the Middle East  
UN Tourism

**Pursuit of peace is a continuing effort, and its progress through tourism diplomacy is more relevant than ever**

ism is a powerful force for global peace and understanding. As they say travel broadens the mind, fostering respect for different cultures. During natural disasters and conflict our sector keeps air routes, and hotels open. Economic growth lifts people out of poverty and provides work to millions. Today, as we celebrate World Tourism Day, let's harness the transformative power of travel to build a more peaceful, interconnected world."

A peace-sensitive tourism is aware of the economic and social forces, and thus social responsibility. It aims to contribute within the limits of the opportunities but aware of the power of alliances to the democratisation of society, of international relations and of the world system as such. Moreover, tourism provides a fertile ground for innovation and entrepreneurship. By encouraging creative solutions and new business models, tourism can

drive economic growth and provide unique opportunities for young talent. Supporting entrepreneurial initiatives in tourism can lead to sustainable development and create

**WORLD TOURISM DAY 2024** | **TOURISM AND PEACE**

platforms for innovative peacebuilding strategies. The future of tourism lies in the hands of young people.

**Basmah Al-Mayman**, Regional Director for the Middle East, UN Tourism, says, "The pursuit of peace is a continuing endeavour, and its progress through tourism diplomacy is more relevant than ever. Tourism can play a vital role as a catalyst for fostering peace and understanding between nations and cultures and in supporting rec-

onciliation, tolerance, and acknowledgement of the rights of others. Reflecting the harmonious correlation between tourism and peace, tourism flourishes where peace

prevails, and peace is promoted and driven among nations through tourism. The official celebrations of the World Tourism Day, which will take place in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 27 September 2024, will be our chance to raise our collective voice and make clear that tourism stands for respect, friendship and, above all, peace. This year's theme is 'Tourism and Peace'. It puts a strong accent on tourism's unique potential as an instrument for mutual understanding and peace."



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# 'Tourism is the agent for peace'

The economic aspect of tourism has been well established but its impact goes far beyond the economic benefits and it is worthwhile to look at tourism as a social force vis-a-vis the travel and tourism industry and how we can use it to establish a culture of peace. With the World Tourism Day approaching, industry leaders share their viewpoint on the topic with **TRAVTALK**.



**Rajiv Mehra**  
President  
IATO

“Tourism is a powerful tool for promoting peace and international understanding by encouraging cultural exchange, economic cooperation, and mutual respect. Through exposure to different

“Tourism plays a significant role in promoting peace and international understanding by fostering cross-cultural exchanges and empathy. When people travel, they encounter diverse cultures, traditions, and perspectives, which can help break down stereotypes and reduce prejudice. This exposure encourages mutual respect and appreciation among different nationalities. Additionally, tourism often supports local economies.”



**Dr Sagnik Chowdhury**  
Deputy DG & Regional Director  
(West & Central India), MOT, Gol

cultures, tourism reduces stereotypes and fosters empathy, while interactions between tourists and locals build personal links that transcend national boundaries.”



**Ajay Prakash**  
Global President, IIPT  
& National President, TAFI

“Tourism plays a vital role in promoting peace and international understanding. It allows people from different countries to meet, learn about each other's cultures, and build friendships. This helps break

“Peace is a prerequisite for the success of tourism, but the converse is equally true; tourism can also be a powerful force to foster peace, and that is the mission of IIPT – to spread greater awareness of the power of Tourism as a Tool for Peace. As stakeholders, we need to build sustainability, sensitivity and responsibility into our core business practices. We must prepare our travellers and ourselves to make the change.”



**Himanshu Patil**  
Director  
Kesari Tours

down stereotypes and prejudices. When tourists and locals interact, they build personal links that go beyond politics, fostering a sense of global community.”



**Harjit Singh**  
Founder  
Travel Twist

“Tourism plays a crucial role in promoting peace and international understanding by bridging cultural divides and fostering mutual respect. Through travel, people experience different cultures firsthand, gaining insight into diverse values, traditions, and lifestyles. Additionally, tourism fosters dialogue and cooperation between nations, often necessitating joint efforts in infrastructure, security, and cultural exchange.”

“As you travel, you connect with people and form lasting friendships, fostering personal bonds that transcend race, religion, and language. This broadens your horizons, allowing you to view the world through



**Meha Vashi**  
Director  
Nivalink Holidays

a wider lens. Exposure to diverse cultures helps you see the world as one, and yourself as a global citizen, rather than through a narrow 'them versus us' mindset.”



**Dharmendra Singh**  
Director, Plaisir Hospitality Services & Chairman, Maharashtra Chapter, ADTOI

“Tourism can contribute to peace by generating income and creating jobs, thereby reducing poverty and inequality. However, it's crucial to ensure that tourism is developed and managed sustainably, respecting

“Tourism plays a vital role in spreading the message of love and peace globally; India through its rich cultural heritage, architectural marvels, flora and fauna, multi-lingual society, multi-religious and cultural fabric. It's an example for the world with 140 crore people, so many religions, different languages and eating habits but people living in harmony. Tourists from all over the globe visit India to have their once in a lifetime experience.”



**Sapneal Rao**  
Founder & CEO  
SSR Travel Solutions

local environments and traditions. By doing so, tourism can become a powerful tool for promoting peace and cooperation among countries, contributing to a more harmonious world.”



**Sonia Karnani**  
Executive Director  
Arunodaya Travels

“Hotels are unique spaces where guests from diverse backgrounds gather, allowing for a convergence of different ideas and a way to create connections. Thus, tourism is crucial in promoting peace and fostering inter-

“In this age of social media, we have transformed our planet into a global village, and tourism has emerged as a vital force for uniting people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, promoting a more peaceful and cohesive global society. All travelers while planning their travel, whether for business or pleasure, look for tourist-friendly country with political stability and correct attitude to interact.”



**Nitin Pathak**  
General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square

national understanding. By providing a welcoming environment, hoteliers can facilitate meaningful interactions between guests, leading to a cross-cultural communication and understanding.”



**Shilendran M**  
Vice President  
CGH Earth

“The very fundamental of tourism is learning a new culture and learning more about the human life beyond one's community. This exposure enables us to be aware of the fact that we have a diverse community, and the beauty of our planet is this diversity of culture, flora and fauna. Tourism encourages us to respect each other and live in harmony. At CGH Earth we believe travel is a transformational experience.”

“At Aamaghathi Wildlife Resort, tourism is not just an opportunity for relaxation but a powerful catalyst for promoting peace and understanding. When guests from diverse backgrounds converge in the serene surroundings



**Gaurav Mudgal**  
Director of Commercial  
Aamaghathi Resort

of Ranthambore, they engage in more than just wildlife exploration; they participate in a global dialogue that fosters mutual respect and cultural exchange.”

Contd. on page 18 ▶

# Taj bonanza for IATO members

Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) unveils a series of strategic initiatives to enhance collaboration between the hospitality and tourism sectors. The announcements, made by the MD & CEO, Puneet Chhatwal, underscore IHCL's commitment to driving growth and innovation, ensuring a unified approach that benefits both sectors and enhances the overall experience for travellers.



Janice Alysius

**Puneet Chhatwal**, Managing Director and CEO, Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), was honoured with the Hall of Fame award at the 39<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention, held recently at the Taj Lakefront in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. In his opening speech, Chhatwal emphasised the pride and honour IHCL takes in hosting the event at their property. "We are deeply humbled as Taj has been recognised as India's Strongest Brand across sectors for the fourth time, and as the World's Strongest Hotel Brand for the third time. This exceptional achievement underscores our century-old legacy of excellence, innovation, and pioneering spirit. It is a true reflection of the enduring trust of our guests and the unwavering dedication of our colleagues. We remain committed to setting global benchmarks



**Puneet Chhatwal**  
MD & CEO  
Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL)

and showcasing Indian hospitality to the world," he said.

Chhatwal also emphasised the need for unity within the industry. He recalled how the hospitality sector was challenged to "think a little differently" by Homa Mistry (CEO of Trail Blazer Tours India) in one of the panel discussions at the previous IATO Annual Con-

vention, which led to the creation of a code allowing direct bookings, a practice that has since become widely adopted. "The rest is history because others followed, and it's still working well today," Chhatwal noted.

Chhatwal unveiled five new initiatives on the occasion, aimed at benefiting members of the IATO. He said IHCL will increase commission from 10 per cent to 12.5 per cent for IATO members. Additionally, Chhatwal introduced inclusive rates. "The rates will no longer be on the European Plan (EP) but on the Continental Plan (CP), which means they will be inclusive of breakfast," he said.

To provide greater flexibility for IATO members, Chhatwal said, "At Indian Hotels, we will allow you to cancel FITs in business hotels with 48-hour notice, and for leisure and palace hotels with 7-day notice."



ised manner to promote inbound tourism to India," he said.

He also highlighted IHCL's recent investments in the state mentioning the renovation of the Taj Usha



**This exceptional achievement (for IHCL) underscores our century-old legacy of excellence, innovation, and pioneering spirit**

He also announced an exclusive travel discount for IATO members, offering a 25 per cent rebate on the best available rate at IHCL properties worldwide. "My only request is that nobody should misuse this; please use it for yourselves only," he emphasised.

Lastly, Chhatwal pledged to boost inbound tourism, announcing a significant commit-

ment of ₹20 crore over the next three years. "We are committing to spending ₹20 crore over the next three years on various international events, including the ATM in Dubai, WTM in London, and IMEX in Frankfurt, among others. We will host cocktail evenings where you can also invite your guests—something we have always done, and now we will execute it in a more organ-

Kiran Palace, Gwalior, and the upgrade of the Taj Lakefront, Bhopal from Vivanta to Taj. "We are doing great, and I think very soon we will have over 25 hotels in operation in Madhya Pradesh," he said.

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# India: a significant market for Türkiye

Turkish Airlines is working closely with the Indian government to increase the number of flights between Türkiye and India, says Ümit Develi, Vice President of Asia & Far East, Turkish Airlines. The airline is also promoting Istanbul as a major connecting hub between Europe, Asia, and Africa, which will provide Indian passengers seamless connectivity to destinations even beyond Türkiye.



Hazel Jain

## What kind of potential does the India market offer to Turkish Airlines?

We understand that India's aviation sector is growing, and airlines are expanding their routes to meet the demand for international travel. Turkish Airlines is working closely with the Indian government to potentially increase the number of flights between Türkiye and India. Currently, we operate 14 weekly flights, but we are aiming to offer more options for travellers. Noteworthy collaborations include our codeshare partnership with IndiGo in India. Turkish Airlines and IndiGo together provide significant connectivity between India and Türkiye. Approximately 50 per cent of the traffic routed through Istanbul on these flights extends to various other destinations beyond Istanbul. We are also evaluating the possibility of increasing flight frequencies soon.



**Ümit Develi**  
Vice President of Asia & Far East  
Turkish Airlines

## What kind of load factors do you see right now and how do you plan to increase this?

As part of our ongoing codeshare agreements, we are broadening our coverage to encompass additional routes. Passengers can now access many routes in India, such as Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai via Delhi and Mumbai. Türkiye sits at the

optimum location for Indian passengers to connect them to other destinations. Our collaboration with IndiGo offers more options to Indians travelling to America and Europe. Additionally, through our collaboration, IndiGo has added new international routes to cities like Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, and several US cities via Istanbul. This expansion means more options for business and leisure travellers.

## Are you looking at adding new flights to routes doing well?

We are certainly looking to expand our network in India. We are currently operating 14 weekly flights under the existing bilateral agreement between Türkiye and India. However, given the untapped potential and rising demand for air travel between two countries, as well as Indian guests' desire to travel abroad, we continuously evaluate increases in flight frequencies and possibilities of new routes. Our immediate focus is on

achieving the frequencies. Once granted, we plan to explore new routes and increasing frequencies on routes that are performing well.

## Indian travellers are increasingly choosing Turkish Airlines for their journeys to long-haul destinations, including the United States

The current bilateral agreement does allow us to add routes.

## What do you think about destinations beyond Türkiye?

Istanbul plays a major connecting hub between Europe, Asia, and Africa. This strategic location en-

ables us to offer connectivity for passengers travelling to and from India, providing seamless connections to destinations beyond Türkiye for long-haul destinations, including the US.

## How are you promoting Türkiye as a destination?

Promoting Türkiye as a destination is a priority for us. We work closely with travel agents in India, particularly through our collaboration with the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI). By organising familiarisation tours and providing comprehensive training, we ensure that Indian travel agents have the firsthand experience and knowl-

edge needed to promote Türkiye effectively. This partnership enhances our reach and helps foster deeper cultural exchanges and enriching travel experiences for Indian tourists.

## How do you work with travel agents in India?

India has become a significant market for the Turkish tourism sector, with a consistent increase in Indian tourists annually. Our partnership with OTOAI enhances the connection between India and Türkiye. The recent familiarisation tour, organised in collaboration with the tourism board, aimed to strengthen partnerships within the Indian travel trade fraternity.

## 'Stopover in Istanbul' programme

This enables travellers flying with Turkish Airlines to explore Istanbul during their layovers. It offers free accommodation in select partner hotels that will allow the passengers to have a mini vacation during long layovers. Passengers with a layover period of at least 20 hours are eligible to participate in the programme.

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18	Oman Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
19-20	GPS-Kolkata	10:00 am
20-22	Tamil Nadu Travel Expo 2024	10:00 am
21-22	India Travel Mart Amritsar 2024	9:00 am
22-24	African Travel Market 2024	9:00 am
25-26	GPS-Lucknow	10:00 am
26	Abu Dhabi Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
26-29	Kerala Travel Mart	10:00 am
27	World Tourism Day 2024	Full day
30	TAAI Elections	10:00 am

### OCTOBER 2024

4-6	India Hospitality & Tourism Expo 2024	9:00 am
8	Israel Tourism Webinar	12:00 pm
8-10	IMEX America 2024	9:00 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

# Reduce tax to boost MICE: NIMA

Shedding light on NIMA's role in fostering growth and collaboration within India's MICE industry, Nitin Mittal, Coordinator-South, NIMA, says the platform is dedicated to MICE agents and offers a supportive environment for professionals to connect, learn, and thrive.



Surbhi Sharma

The Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) distinguishes itself from other industry associations by its persistent focus on supporting MICE agents across India. Unlike organisations that prioritise strategic planning, NIMA is committed to providing hands-on assistance and guidance to agents, regardless of their location or size.

Elaborating on the network's functions, **Nitin Mittal**, Coordinator-South, NIMA, said, "Through a vibrant community of members, NIMA facilitates knowledge sharing, networking opportunities, and problem-solving. Members can actively participate in discussions, seek advice, and collaborate on projects without the fear of self-promotion. This unique culture of cooperation fosters a sense of fellowship and mutual support among NIMA's members." Talking about the recent initiatives started by the association, Mittal



**Nitin Mittal**  
Coordinator-South  
NIMA

said, "To bridge the gap between academia and industry, NIMA has taken notable strides, such as forging partnerships with educational institutions like Garden City University in Bangkok, offering students valuable opportunities for internships, training, and career development."

Furthermore, NIMA has been actively involved in delivering guest lectures at various educational institutions, sharing its expertise and insights with aspiring tour-

ism professionals. By providing students with practical exposure to the industry, NIMA aims to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed, Mittal said.

## Advocacy for industry growth

NIMA has been outspoken in advocating for policies that support the MICE industry's growth in India. "The association has consistently called for the rationalisation of TCS (tax collected at source) and a reduction in GST rates on tourism products. While these demands have not been fully met by the government's side, NIMA remains optimistic about the future and continues to advocate for measures that can benefit the industry," Mittal said.

Highlighting that NIMA's commitment towards its members is evident in its efforts to provide a supportive and collaborative environment, Mittal said, "As the MICE industry continues to evolve, NIMA's role as a catalyst for growth and innovation

will become increasingly important. Sustaining a solid sense of community and providing valuable resources, NIMA has well-positioned itself to shape the future of India's MICE industry," he added.

## As the MICE industry continues to evolve, NIMA's role as a catalyst for growth and innovation will become increasingly important

## Growing membership

NIMA had adopted a conservative approach to membership, resulting in a smaller membership base in the past. However, it has recently expanded its membership by more than 25 per cent.

# FlyCreative promotes its OTA portal

The travel consolidator recently conducted an educational trip for its agent partners – to reconnect with old partners and re-educate new agents and highlight new destinations in Kerala. The intention was also to underline the fact that FlyCreative Online is now also an OTA with its own online B2B booking agent, informs Adl Karim, Director, FlyCreative Online.



Harshal Ashar

FlyCreative Online recently organised a familiarisation tour to Kerala for its travel partners to showcase its offerings, particularly for MICE. Adl Karim, Director, FlyCreative Online, who led the delegation, said, "We had 19 travel agents coming from cities like Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Delhi and Mumbai this time. The main idea behind organising this trip was to reconnect with them because we have been a consistent DMC who used to offer such familiarisation trips every six months in order to rejuvenate and educate our agent partners."

This was the first familiarisation tour by FlyCreative since COVID-19. Apart from the idea of reconnecting with old partners, the aim was to re-educate new agents and highlight new destinations in Kerala. Speaking about the itinerary, Karim said, "The itinerary this time was a



**Adl Karim**  
Director  
FlyCreative Online

little different from the standard itineraries. This time we included Ashtamudi, Varkala and Athirapalli, which are some new destinations for our partners and I'm sure this will help in selling it in a little different way to their clients."

#### Domestic market booming

India is growing and so is India's domestic tourism market, Karim

said. "Most of the hotels here are full. That shows the potential of domestic tourism, and we are sure, with the experiences and the offerings that this destination has, growth will come indigenously, returns will come indigenously except for some natural disasters that are happening. So, if that is under control, I think the destination will grow and the DMCs will also have good returns," he added.

FlyCreative has been focusing on MICE movements and that has been its forte, especially for a destination like Kerala "because the corporates are looking for activities that can be offered, and Kerala is a destination which gives you different experiences". Karim explained, "We have got hill stations, we have got backwaters, we have got beaches, we have got wildlife, so there are different experiences and activities that can be offered to clients. So, that is the area that we are focusing on."



#### FlyCreative an OTA

Karim underlined the fact that FlyCreative Online is not just a South India DMC; it is an OTA. "We are one of the consolidators in the OTA space and we have this new booking engine which we have launched for our B2B partners, which is our focus, and we will be expanding on that front. Many agent partners in the industry know us as a South India DMC but that is just one of the verticals we have. Our main business is consolidation with a

mid-size consolidator in the airline space. We are now entering into the OTA segment, and we have our own online B2B booking agent which we launched last year. We are expanding our footprints to all cities in India and increasing our sales force," he informed.

They have multiple products in one basket - air, hotels, travel insurance, buses, holiday packages, making it a convenient mode of offering its services to its agent

partners. "It's already live; the soft launch was done last year and now we are marketing it. It's an updated booking agent which offers all different kind of features. We have features in the air vertical from NDC fares, special FD fares, everything included. On top of that, we have got our South India DMC standard packages included as well, so if an agent partner prefers a certain itinerary all the details are online. So, we do not have to e-mail back and forth," he said. 📧

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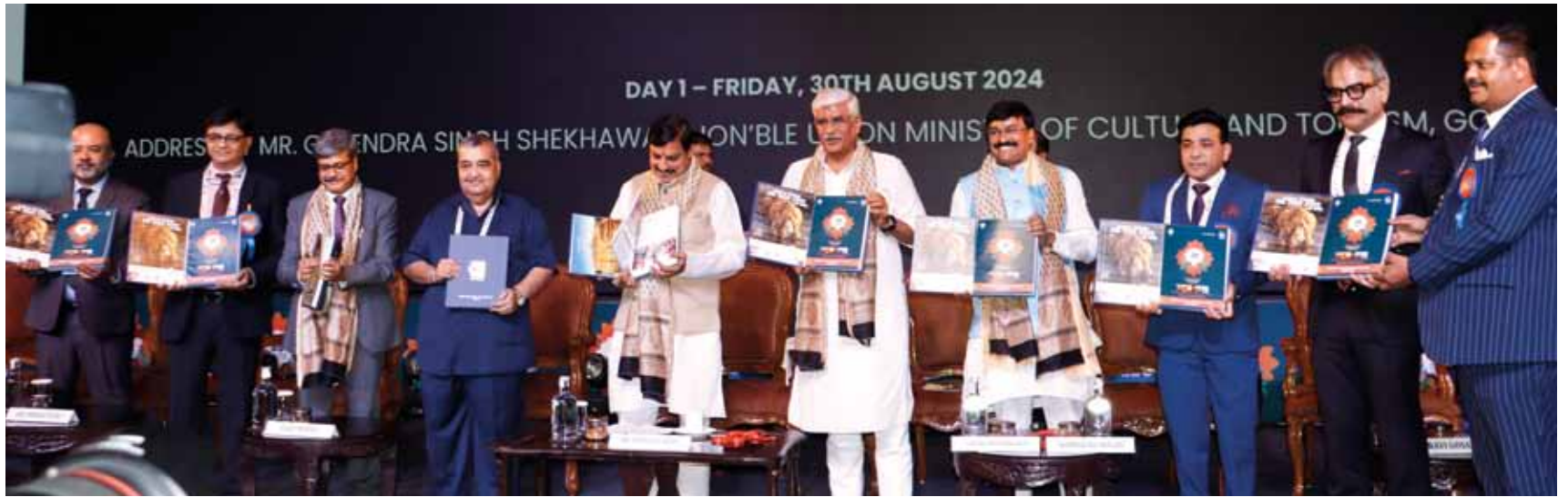
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# 1,200 delegates @IATO convention

The 39<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention, held recently in Bhopal, witnessed a record participation of 1,200 members from across the country. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism and Dr Mohan Yadav, CM, Madhya Pradesh, inaugurated the three-day event, which aimed to boost inbound tourism in the state, as well as in the country.





# Elevating tourism with smart solutions

Taiwan is transforming tourism with cutting-edge innovations. Smart cities, high-speed rail, and interactive museums enhance travel, blending technology with cultural richness. The island's advanced infrastructure and incentive programmes make it a premier destination for both leisure and MICE events. Leading the way are Taiwan's smart cities, with Taipei at the forefront.



TT Bureau

Taiwan, home to the world's largest semiconductor foundry, is not only a global technology powerhouse but also a rapidly evolving destination where cutting-edge technology enhances every aspect of the travel experience.

As the island embraces innovation, it leverages its technological advancements to make travel more seamless and enjoyable, making Taiwan an increasingly

attractive destination for both leisure and business travellers.

Leading the way are Taiwan's smart cities, with Taipei at the forefront. These cities are equipped with intelligent transportation systems, smart street lighting, and widespread Wi-Fi, ensuring visitors can easily navigate and explore. This tech-savvy environment is particularly beneficial for MICE events, providing both organisers and travellers with state-of-the-art facilities and real-time data man-

agement to enhance the overall experience. Another standout feature of Taiwan's high-tech landscape is its high-speed rail system. This impressive network



**As the island embraces innovation, it leverages its tech advancements to make travel more seamless and enjoyable**

allows travellers to journey from the northern tip to the southern end of the island in just 96 minutes. This efficient and cost-effective option facilitates quick and easy travel between major



destinations, making it ideal for leisure and business travellers.

Adding to Taiwan's technological appeal are its interactive museums. The National Palace Museum in Taipei, for instance, leverages Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) to offer immersive tours that bring ancient artefacts to life. These

tech-enhanced experiences provide visitors with a deeper understanding of Taiwan's rich cultural heritage while integrating modern innovations. The island offers a compelling blend of futuristic experiences and cultural richness, along with its lucrative incentive programmes, making it a unique and attractive destination for travellers and MICE events.

As Taiwan continues to innovate, it stands as a beacon of progress in Asia. By merging its technological leadership with its deep cultural roots, Taiwan offers a travel experience that is both futuristic and authentically rich. The island's unparalleled facilities for MICE events, combined with lucrative incentive programmes, position it as a prime destination for MICE tourism.

## Industry pins hopes on KTM 2024

► Contd. from page 5

rejuvenation, wellness, and treatment," he said, adding that their extended stays for treatments often include family vacations, further boosting the state's tourism. Despite facing natural calamities annually, Kerala's lush green landscapes and tropical climate continue to attract tourists. "The greenery is increasing in Kerala

**Despite facing natural calamities annually, Kerala's lush green landscapes and tropical climate continue to attract tourists**

because of the even summer rain happening," AbdulKareem observes, highlighting that the state is now more beautiful than ever, drawing visitors with its enhanced natural beauty.

### Emerging trends

The tourism landscape in Kerala



**EM Najeeb**  
Chairman & Managing Director  
Air Travel Enterprise Group

is evolving with new trends. **A Thambi Mathew**, Managing Director, Mathew Voyages, points out a shift from group travel to a focus on individual and experience-based travel.

"People are increasingly looking for unique experiences; experience has become a luxury. Tourists are now seeking immersive cultural experiences, walking tours, and activities beyond traditional itineraries," Mathew noted. He recommends that states increase promotional activities and digital marketing support to enhance Kerala's visibility in international markets.



**Sejo Jose**  
Managing Director  
Marvel Tours

**Jibran Asif**, Director, ABAD Hotels and Resorts, highlights the robust growth of the Kerala Travel Mart, which is becoming a significant event for the tourism industry. "We are expecting around 55,000 appointments, with approximately 350 stalls and 1,200 buyers attending," he reveals.

**Sejo Jose**, MD, Marvel Tours, observes new trends such as the rise of villa concepts and specialised tourism. "The villa concepts are attracting many high-net-worth tourists who seek personalised services similar to those offered by five-star hotels," Jose explains. Additionally, there is a



**A Thambi Mathew**  
Managing Director  
Mathew Voyages

growing interest in agriculture, cuisine, and architectural tourism, reflecting a broader range of experiences that Kerala now offers.

**Sharath MS**, Regional Director, Sales and Marketing, The Leela Kovalam and The Leela Ashtamudi, emphasises Kerala's unique appeal through its natural beauty and heritage.

"Kerala stands out as one of the most pioneering states in Indian tourism. For over four decades, Kerala has been at the forefront of attracting tourists, particularly from Europe, the Middle East, and Russia, drawn by both our lei-



**Jibran Asif**  
Director  
ABAD Hotels and Resorts

sure offerings and our renowned Ayurveda services," he says.

### Future prospects

**EM Najeeb**, CMD, Air Travel Enterprise (ATE) Group, underscores Kerala's resilience in the face of adversities. Despite facing multiple crises, including natural disasters and pandemics, Kerala's tourism sector has shown remarkable recovery and adaptability. "Kerala is coming back," Najeeb affirms, praising the industry's ongoing support and optimism.

Najeeb also highlighted Kerala's innovation and adaptability. "Ker-



**Sharath MS**  
Regional Director, Sales and Marketing  
The Leela Kovalam and The Leela Ashtamudi

ala continues to diversify its offerings and embrace new trends. The state has recently been recognised for its excellence in digital marketing by Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), which underscores our commitment to staying at the forefront of tourism promotion," he said.

Looking ahead, Najeeb expressed optimism about Kerala's future. "Domestic tourism is performing exceptionally well, and international travel is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. We are hopeful that by next year, we will reach the tourism figures we saw in 2019," he concluded.

# OPPORTUNITY




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# Madurai set to host TTE 2024

The Southern India Hotel and Restaurant Association (SIHRA), winner of the 'Most Promising Regional Association' award at the India Travel Awards this year, is all set to launch the Tamil Nadu Travel Expo (TTE) in Madurai from 20 to 22 September.



Surbhi Sharma

The Southern India Hotel and Restaurant Association (SIHRA) is emerging as a glimmer of hope in a landscape where the hospitality industry faces plentiful challenges. The association's unwavering commitment to the hospitality sector made it win the 'Most Promising Regional Association' award at the India Travel Awards 2024. Expressing gratitude for the honour, **Sundar Singaram**, Director - Operations, SIHRA, said, "Since 1951, SIHRA has been a remarkable organisation. Under the leadership of K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA, we continue to move forward, providing the best possible support to our members and hoteliers in Southern India."



**Sundar Singaram**  
Director - Operations  
SIHRA

**Tamil Nadu Travel Expo**  
SIHRA is organising the Tamil Nadu Travel Expo (TTE) in Madurai from 20 to 22 September 2024, in collaboration with Travel Club, Madurai and Confederation of In-

dian Industry (CII), along with support from the Department of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu, and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The event will be hosting 250 potential buyers from India and neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, with an aim to enhance the visibility of Tamil Nadu's tourism potential and attract more visitors to the state.

Singaram said, "To enhance the revenue of its member hotels, SIHRA is actively involved in promoting tourism and connecting hotels with vendors and suppliers. We have organised travel expos to attract more visitors to the region and facilitated business-to-business (B2B) meetings between hoteliers and suppliers. Addition-



ally, we have simplified the membership process and offered various benefits to encourage more hotels to join the association." He said, "Under the leadership of K Syama Raju, we have recognised the industry's pressing issues, particularly the acute shortage of manpower in the hospitality sector and the need for increased business generation through innovative solutions."

SIHRA has also partnered with the Tamil Nadu government to establish skill development centres in rural areas, providing free training and job placement guarantees to aspiring hospitality professionals.



**The event will be hosting 250 potential buyers from India and neighbouring countries, including Malaysia and Singapore**

### A growing community

Highlighting SIHRA's efforts, which have led to growth in membership, Singaram said, "We have witnessed a 30 per cent increase in membership, with a substantial portion of new members coming from tier II and III cities."

# Peace must for tourism promotion

Contd. from page 12

“At Evoke Experiences, we see tourism as a powerful catalyst for peace and understanding. By offering unique glamping experiences and promoting lesser-known destinations in India like Dholavira, we enable travellers to engage



**Sanjay Bhhalla**  
Vice President - Business  
Development, Balitrip Wisata

“We believe that our properties across India offer more than just a comfortable stay; they provide our guests with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the local cultures of different Indian states. As the first point of contact for many inter-



**Ashish Vohra**  
Founder & CEO  
Onora Hospitality

“More than anything else, travel gives you exposure to various cultures, religions and thought processes and it fosters better understanding of each other. A lot of times, we are unable to fathom why people from different cultures and religions react in different ways to the same situation. But when you travel to other countries, you get an insight into their customs, food and religion.”



**Bhavik Sheth**  
COO  
Evoke Experiences

in meaningful cultural exchanges that foster respect and appreciation between diverse communities. Tourism creates opportunities for dialogue and collaboration.”

“Tourism, often envisioned as a mere pursuit of leisure and relaxation, possesses a far more profound potential. It can serve as a catalyst for fostering peace and understanding. By breaking down cultural barriers, promoting empathy, tourism can create a more harmonious world. At its core, tourism facilitates cultural exchange. Travellers immerse themselves in diverse traditions, customs, and perspectives.”



**Sarbendra Sarkar**  
Founder & MD  
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

national travellers visiting India for the first time, we take pride in bringing India to the world through Indian Heritage concept 'Atithi Devo Bhava' to treat guests.”

Compiled by TT Bureau

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# MOVEMENTS

## INDIATOURISM VARANASI, MOT, GOVT OF INDIA

Varanasi

**PAWAS PRASOON** has joined as the Assistant Director at Indiatourism Varanasi, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Prasoan is an alumnus of Sainik School Tilaiya, Banaras Hindu University and Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management Bhubaneswar (IITTM Bhubaneswar), all of them acclaimed academic institutions of the country. He was also handpicked by the United Nations for the prestigious Masters in Tourism programme conducted by its study centre at Rome in Italy. Prior to this, he was posted at Delhi, Jaipur, Agra and Arunachal Pradesh offices of the ministry. He brings with him rich experience.



## SAYAJI HOTELS

Kolhapur

Sayaji Hotels promotes **MUKESH KUMAR RAKSHIT** to the position of General Manager at Sayaji Kolhapur. With over 18 years of experience in hotel operations and a stellar track record in the hospitality industry, Rakshit is set to bring a new level of excellence to the Kolhapur property. Prior to this, Rakshit worked as Director of Operations at the same property, where he demonstrated exceptional leadership and strategic acumen. He has served in managerial positions at prestigious hotels, such as HHI and Sayaji Hotels in Pune. In his new role, Rakshit will focus on further enhancing the guest experience at Sayaji Kolhapur.



## UDMAN HOTELS & RESORT

New Delhi

Udman Hotels & Resorts has appointed **VAIBHAV VERMA** as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). With an illustrious career spanning over 28 years, Verma brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and insight aligned with Udman's vision for the future. He will play a pivotal role in steering the brand to the next phase of strategic growth, which includes an ambitious expansion plan to increase the portfolio from 7 boutique and luxury hotels to 50 within the next five years. His career includes pivotal roles with prestigious brands. His most recent role was as Chief Revenue Officer at juSTA Hotels and Resorts.



## SUMI YASHSHREE HOTELS & RESORTS

Siliguri

Sumi Yashshree Hotels & Resorts has appointed **PINAK RANJAN GUHA** as the General Manager Sales & Marketing. With over 28 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Guha brings extensive knowledge and expertise to the role. Prior to this, he was associated with Mayfair Hotels & Resorts, where he spearheaded the Kolkata Sales Team driving exceptional results. Guha's career has also included roles with Kumarakom Lake Resort, Quality Inn Golden Park, Central Hotel & The HHI Group. In his new role, Pinak will be responsible for overseeing and leading a dynamic team at Sumi Yashshree Hotels & Resorts.



## THE WESTIN GURGAON

New Delhi

The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi, and The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa have promoted **NEHA ALMAL** to the role of Multi Property Director of Quality. With a distinguished career spanning over 14 years in the hospitality industry, Almal has been a vital force behind maintaining operational excellence and upholding the highest standards of guest satisfaction. In her new role, she will spearhead the implementation of quality initiatives across both properties. Her passion for quality, combined with her deep understanding of operational standards, positions her to drive improvement and elevate guest experiences.



## EXPOINN SUITES AND CONVENTION

Greater Noida

Expolnn Suites and Convention has appointed **ANUJ RAJAWAT** as the Cluster Director of Finance. With an impressive track record spanning over 10 years in managerial finance, Rajawat brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the organisation. Prior to this, Rajawat served as the Assistant Director of Finance at Hyatt Regency Delhi for over two years, where his strategic decision-making and management skills contributed to the organisation's financial success significantly. He also led audit teams at M/s Manish Goyal & Associates for nearly 11 years.



## COLLINSON INTERNATIONAL

London

Collinson International, owner and operator of Priority Pass, has appointed **FABIO DE GRAZIA** as the Chief Product Officer. De Grazia joins Collinson International after eight years at Visa where he was Vice President and Head of Product and Solutions for the MENA region. During this tenure, he spearheaded the modernisation of Visa's product offerings, achieving significant revenue growth and operational efficiency. De Grazia is a highly accomplished banking and payments executive with a distinguished career and a proven track record of driving growth.



## THE FERN HOTELS & RESORTS

Mumbai

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has appointed **PRITAM GUHA** as the Cluster Director of Sales in Ahmedabad. In his new role, Guha will oversee the sales operations of five properties of the company across Gujarat. With a proven track record in the hospitality industry, Guha brings a wealth of experience and strategic insight to his new position. His primary focus will be on expanding the corporate market, enhancing MICE movements, and developing new market segments within Gujarat. His previous experience includes key positions with leading hospitality groups such as ITC Hotels and Sarovar Hotels.



Expolnn Suites and Convention has appointed **SONAM NAGAR** as the Senior People and Culture Manager. With over 13 years of experience in the hospitality and education sectors, Nagar brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the organisation. Having worked with renowned organisations, such as Accor, IHG, SAMHI, and Barque Hotels, Nagar has honed her skills in talent acquisition, end-to-end recruitments (volume & mid-senior level), employee retention, onboarding processes, policy formulation and implementation, payroll and compliance management.



Collinson International has appointed **MARCO PERA** as the Chief Technology and Data Officer. Pera transitioned from his role as Senior Vice President for Data, Platforms, and Technology, one he has held since joining Collinson International in July 2023. Pera is a seasoned technology and data executive with over 24 years of experience. In his new role, he will look to manage and evolve Collinson International's platform ecosystem and advance how data and intelligence are used. The appointments underscore company's commitment to integrating product, technology, and data.



## NOVOTEL MUMBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mumbai

Novotel Mumbai International Airport appoints **TEJAS CHANDPURE** as the Director of Talent and Culture. Chandpure brings with him a wealth of experience in human resources, particularly in talent management and employee relations, having successfully led HR operations for various prestigious brands. In his new position, Chandpure's key responsibilities will include aligning the HR strategy with the overall business goals and contributing to the property's long-term success. He has over 14 years of experience, Tejas holds a PG in Business Administration - HR from Symbiosis University, Pune, and a BMS from Mumbai University.



Expolnn Suites & Convention appoints **BHAWNA WADHWANI** as the Associate Director of Sales. Wadhvani has more than 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry and a proven track record in sales and customer service. Prior to this, she served as the Associate Director of Sales at Hyatt Centric Janakpuri New Delhi for nearly two years, where she played a pivotal role in driving sales growth. She also held leadership positions at Hyatt Place Gurgaon and Hyatt Hotels Corporation and contributed to the organisations' success.



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# Bintan keen to tap tier II, III cities

Indonesia's Bintan Resorts has partnered with VFS Global with an aim to enhance the visibility and appeal of Bintan Island among Indians. GB Srithar, Head of Tourism Services at VFS Global, shares an outline of the strategy.



Hazel Jain

Leveraging VFS Global's extensive network across India in all major and secondary cities, along with its strong connections with businesses, and corporate entities, the partnership between Bintan Resorts and VFS Global is expected to boost tourism from India to Bintan Island in the Riau Islands Province of Indonesia. The partnership will launch a targeted campaign in major Indian cities, aiming to position Bintan as a prime destination alongside Singapore, says **GB Srithar**, Head of Tourism Services, VFS Global.

This will be through an innovative dual-destination strategy. "Of immediate priority is to re-introduce Bintan island's offerings to the Indian audiences and socialise them to the sheer convenience of hopping on to the island from Singapore," he says, adding that the Indian market presents a promising

ising opportunity for Bintan's tourism sector, as India was Singapore's third-largest source of visitors in 2019, with approximately 1.4 million travellers. Singapore concluded 2023 with 1.08 million Indian visitors. Bintan Island plans to entice and welcome a significant share of travellers to Singapore.

Promotions will focus on digital platforms, B2B sales, and organising workshops and familiarisation trips for travel trade partners. "By positioning Bintan Resorts

**By positioning Bintan Resorts as a complementary destination to Singapore, we aim to attract a double-digit share of the Indian visitors**

as a complementary destination to Singapore, accessible by an easy 60-minute ferry ride from the city-state, we aim to attract a double-digit share of these Indian visitors in the coming years," Srithar adds.

The reintroducing of Bintan Resorts will not be limited to the key metros but across India, including the secondary cities. "Our priority is to tap travellers coming to Singapore from India for a two, three and even four nights in Bintan Resorts. Singapore is now connected to about 16-17 cities directly. These cities will be our priority. However, our strategy is to engage travellers even in the



tier cities like Kochi, Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Indore or Rajkot, who can fly to these connected cities. So, it is a hub and spoke model," he adds.

### Tapping tier cities

After 14 years in the Indian market, Srithar has observed a significant trend - the emergence of secondary cities as key players in outbound travel. "With India's economy growing at nearly 8 per cent annually, infrastructure development, including new airports, has made travel more accessible. As a result, middle and upper-middle-income travellers, already accustomed to domestic flights, are now venturing inter-

nationally, driven by their desire for new experiences. They are now experienced travellers. The proliferation of mobile phones and diverse content has further fuelled this trend," says Srithar.

He predicts a surge in outbound travel from India and its secondary markets over the next decade, emphasising the need to engage and educate travel trade partners through regular information sessions and outreach efforts, and encouraging them to share new destinations and experiences with their clients. "We need to engage our travel trade partners and strengthen our outreach with them," he suggests.

### Good to know

Bintan Resorts is an integrated beach resort destination that is host to 19 independent beach resorts, four designer golf courses, as well as an ever-expanding range of recreational facilities and attractions. It covers the entire northern coast of Bintan Island and is located just 60 minutes away via a catamaran ferry ride from Singapore. Bintan's attractions include family-friendly resorts, adrenaline-pumping adventures, as well as enticing culinary experiences and great venues for events, such as weddings, and MICE. Bintan Resort Cakrawala (BRC) is the operational arm of Bintan Resorts International which master plans and manages Bintan Resorts.



GB Srithar  
Head of Tourism Services, VFS Global

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