



TRAVTALK

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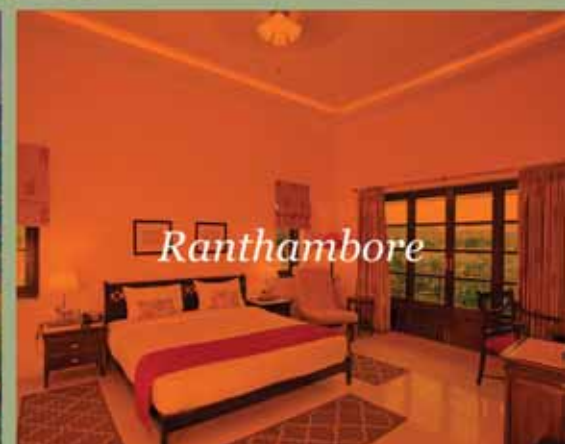
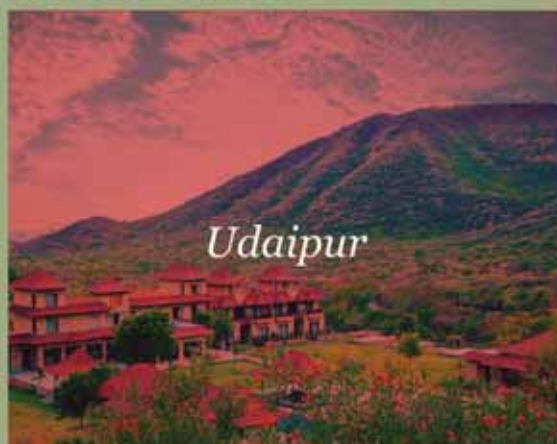


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Synergy is key to growth

IATO President and Chairman of the association's 35th Convention, **Pronab Sarkar** says that the programme this year will address the many issues plaguing the industry while showcasing West Bengal, the host state, as a lucrative MiCE tourism hub for inbound tourists.

 **Manas Dwivedi**

QWhat are your plans to make the convention a success?

As Chairman of the convention, my first endeavour would be to ensure proactive participation of our valued members. Participants can also look forward to a grand opening ceremony that will catapult Kolkata to being a sought-after city for MiCE tourism, as we continue to put West Bengal on the tourism roadmap; synergise business sessions; ensure the networking luncheon and dinners are an optimal mix of business, knowledge and entertainment; and that everything lines up to make the Convention a

memorable one. Around 1200 eminent delegates that shall comprise valued participants from the government of West Bengal, dignitaries from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, tourism authorities from participating State governments, eminent members of the media, and dedicated members of IATO would be expected this year to grace the congregation.

After 17 years, the IATO Convention has come to the City of Joy. The opening ceremony at Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, a world-class venue for such events, and the Convention itself would thus bring to the fore and showcase

Kolkata as a destination for MiCE tourism.

QWhat are your views on the theme and sessions during the Convention?

The theme of the Convention is, 'Is Tourism Thriving - Possibilities and Challenges'. Durga Puja will also be a major part of the theme this year. Sessions at the

for digital marketing, connectivity, synergy among eastern states for tourism promotion and marketing, charting out unexplored destinations, listening to the new generation of tourism professionals, the ticklish issues of taxation, as well as cruise tourism. Presentations by State governments and the ideas of Ministry of Tourism,

“The sessions will look at key niche areas for digital marketing, connectivity, synergy among eastern states for tourism promotion and marketing, charting out unexplored destinations, as well as cruise tourism”

Convention will address the challenges being faced by the industry, zeroing in on the opportunities that can boost tourism. The sessions will also look at key niche areas

Government of India, will form the core areas, while a motivational talk by a renowned personality would give the Convention an edge.

QHow different is the Convention going to be from previous ones?

Our expectations are realistic and shall fructify in witnessing a surge in the many segments of tourism in the state of West Bengal as well as the eastern region. The business sessions on September 13 and 14 are being organised at the ITC Royal Bengal, a hotel par excellence and apt for such conventions with its world-class venue and well-appointed facilities.

The aforesaid and the very facets of the Convention thus systematically differentiate it from other landmark IATO conventions. IATO welcomes one and all to this historic platform to

savour the essence of an all-abiding growth called tourism. 



The business sessions during the 35th Convention will focus on 'Traditional Business versus Current Demands', 'Scope of Cruise Tourism', 'Ideas for Millennials', 'Digital Marketing', 'Experiential Tourism' and other such relevant topics.



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Bengal needs better promotion

Debjit Dutta, Chairman, IATO West Bengal Chapter and Co-chairman, IATO Convention, talks about the positive impact of the Convention on Bengal tourism and the Eastern South Asia circuit being an advantage.



Manas Dwivedi

According to Debjit Dutta, Co-chairman, IATO Convention and Chairman, IATO - West Bengal Chapter, the State tourism and the private sector are looking forward to hosting the event in Kolkata after 17 years. "It will help us showcase the unique offerings of the State to all stakeholders of the industry all over India. The idea is to focus on national and the global promotions and I think, the IATO Convention is one of the best opportunities that any state or destination can get to draw the attention of industry stakeholders. We are thankful to the State government and we are working closely with them," he says.

Explaining how this year's Convention will be different



Debjit Dutta
Chairman, IATO - West Bengal Chapter
& Co-chairman, IATO Convention

from the rest, he adds, "Everything is planned in consultation with West Bengal Tourism, which shows their enthusiasm in organising the Convention. Atri Bhattacharya, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Government of West Bengal, has been the biggest support to us, and everything has been done under his supervision. We are working towards positioning Bengal as the

perfect travel destination, and all activities have been crafted keeping this objective in mind." Dutta also informs that some foreign tour operators from Bangladesh have been invited to attend the Convention.

According to him, the new Eastern South Asia circuit is the next big thing for eastern India, and Bengal will be

to take advantage of the shared border opportunities and create a tourism circuit beyond the border. This is going to be the circuit we will be selling in the next five years, and Bengal will be the gateway to it," he adds.

Dutta is also anticipating a 10-20 per cent growth in terms of delegate participation at the Convention this year. "We normally get 1000-1200

“We want to take advantage of the shared border opportunities and create a tourism circuit beyond the border”

the gateway for the circuit. "This is currently the biggest tourism opportunity for West Bengal. The circuit also comprises other eastern states along with sub-Himalayan neighbours of Bhutan and Bangladesh. We want

delegates every year at the Convention, but I believe, and sincerely hope, that there will be an increase of 10-20 per cent growth in terms of participation and more delegates will take part," he concludes.

'Tis the time for East India

Rajnish Kaistha, Honorary Joint Secretary, IATO and Co-chairman of the Convention, says that IATO will be promoting land, water and air connectivity to the East for the growth of inbound and domestic traffic.



Nisha Verma

It is after 17 years that IATO is returning to Kolkata for its Convention, and Rajnish Kaistha claims that this time they will be able to project West Bengal and the Northeast as niche and unexplored products.

"The interactive sessions at the Convention will share innovative and experiential travel ideas, while addressing cur-



Rajnish Kaistha
Honorary Joint Secretary, IATO and
Co-chairman, IATO Convention

“We are looking at promoting cruise tourism, more international flights coming to Guwahati and Dibrugarh, as well as over-land tourism from Myanmar and Thailand”

rent problems, their solutions, and what could be challenges in the future for the industry. We are expecting 1000-1200 delegates from different sectors. The business sessions, planned on current issues,

will be different in content and nature, as the problems faced by the industry are changing with time," he says.

Talking about the theme, Kaistha says that with Durga

Puja being the thematic emblem of IATO Convention this time, the idea is to let people know that there is more to West Bengal than just Kolkata and Darjeeling.

"The showcasing of lesser-known but high-value tourism areas will be good knowledge to take home. The various Fam tours covering unexplored regions around Kolkata shall provide first-hand information to members. Government of West Bengal wants to project a cleaner and more tourist-friendly Kolkata with this Convention," asserts Kaistha.

He claims that IATO has always been able to convey the industry's message to the authorities and that today, with the government giving priority to tourism, they expect them to be open to more recommendations.

Another highlight this year will be the IATO Run. Kaistha elaborates, "The route for the run has been chosen carefully, and takes you to heritage sites of Kolkata. The message is clear - we run to save and highlight our heritage."

Delegates can also look forward to an integration of the Northeast with the rest of the country for both inbound and outbound tourism. "We shall talk on pertinent issues faced by our fraternity and discuss well-crafted actions that need to be taken at both the State and Centre level. We are looking eastwards at promoting cruise tourism, seamless connectivity with more international flights coming into Guwahati and Dibrugarh, as well as over-land tourism from Myanmar and Thailand," he concludes.



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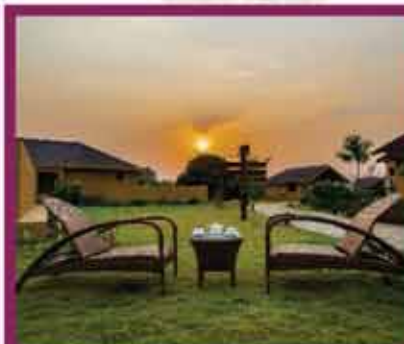
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Run with IATO

The IATO Run for Responsible Tourism will be organised on the last day of the Convention, on September 14.

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The IATO Run this year is expected to create much fanfare during the Convention in Kolkata. Unlike previous conventions, when the run used to take place on the first day of the event, it will be organised on the last day, on September 14.

P Vijayasathy, EC Member, IATO and Convener for the IATO Run, is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring that the Run be successful this year as well. "People from West Bengal Tourism, local members of IATO, the police, the security team, and the entire tourism fraternity is working as a team to make it successful," he says.

The objective of the Run is to promote responsible tourism which, claims Vijayasathy, can help Indians realise their



P Vijayasathy
EC Member, IATO and
Convener, IATO Run

responsibility towards nature and reduce its negative impact on the environment. "It generates greater economic benefits to the local people and makes a positive contribution to our cultural heritage," he adds.

This year, IATO has been working to showcase the heritage sites of the City of Joy in the course of the Run. 🇮🇳

Erco eyes Asia & SA

With another great year in the kitty for inbound business, Erco Travels is all set to tap the Asian and South African markets to ensure that next year, too, is as good as the others.

TT Bureau

Erco Travels is all set to promote aggressively in 2020 to expand its reach to markets that the company hasn't reached out to yet.

Elaborating on the game plan is Ravi Gosain, Managing Director, Erco Travels & Tourism Enterprises, who says, "We have been fortunate enough to have a great year for our inbound business compared to the industry average. We added some new clients in 2019 and enhanced our products, which helped us perform well for the second consecutive year. We will be on an aggressive promotion mode next year, however, our strategy will be similar to what we have been doing over the years by nurturing prospective travel agents and tour operators



Ravi Gosain
Managing Director
Erco Travels & Tourism Enterprises

to avoid unhealthy price wars and unnecessary competition." The company plans to explore the Asian and South African markets for inbound business. They also have another vertical, Tourism Enterprises, which represents worldwide DMCs in India and is picking up pace. "We have now invested in Dubai and Sri Lanka DMCs with local partners, whereas for Eu-

rope we have set up a 100 per cent owned DMC called Saffron World BV. We have also signed a DMC called GE Travel based in Baku, Azerbaijan, which will give us access to Central Asia," he shares.

Speaking of challenges he foresees, Gosain says, "Overall, when it comes

the government will look into this and tackle it effectively." To add to that, there are several countries competing with India to attract foreign tourists, especially through attractive marketing and visa relaxations, he shares. "I feel, there should be a calculated approach from decision makers. One of the most effective initiatives on these line has been the

“The reduction in e-Visa fee and introduction of long-term visas with multiple entries will bring a ray of hope”

to India as a tourism destination, it is still very hard to sell because of adverse publicity in the international media and misconceptions or little knowledge about India among foreigners. This makes it difficult to market our product but not impossible, and requires patience. I am sure

substantial reduction in e-Visa fee and introduction of long-term visas of one and five years with multiple entries. This will bring a ray of hope among foreign tour operators since the Indian visa fee was quite high and a huge barrier to visit India," he explains. 🇮🇳

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Book with Globe 360

Globe 360 DMC is soon going to launch its B2B reservation system that will eliminate the need to log on to different platforms for different products.



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To ensure that its travel partners experience ease and convenience while booking through Globe 360 DMC, the company is developing its own B2B reservation system that it will launch soon. This will allow its travel partners to book accommodation, sightseeing, as well as transfers for their clients under a single-window interface. Sharing this information is **Rajan Joshi**, Country



Rajan Joshi
Country Head Sales & Marketing
Globe 360 DMC

ences, events, city cruises, and fully bespoke ground services in countries where we have our own offices."

The company is also planning to launch a short-haul destination in Southeast Asia, soon. "We have observed that a lot of travellers choose to travel to short-haul destinations and a lot of partners have asked us if we can support them. As a result, we plan to launch a short-haul destination within Southeast Asia," Joshi adds. Other than that, he feels that Eastern Europe and Spain are the two most preferred long-haul destinations for most of his clients.

Speaking of growth, he says, "Though the majority of the business volume is coming from the India market, markets like Dubai, Sri Lanka, and Nepal have also contributed significantly." 🇮🇳

“This will allow Globe 360’s travel partners to book accommodation, sightseeing, as well as transfers for their clients under a single-window interface”

Head Sales & Marketing, Globe 360 DMC, who says, "The range of services offered by Globe 360 includes hotel and apartment reservations,

transfers, multilingual guides, car rentals, train tickets, city sightseeing tours, entrance tickets to tourist attractions, restaurant bookings, confer-

'New' is the way to go

For **Shoba Mohan**, Founder, RARE India, it is important to change with time and offer to tourists something that hasn't been spoken of before.



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Insisting that there is always something new and exciting at RARE, Shoba Mohan says that the narrative of experiences also needs to change with time. "While we are preparing for our Annual Showcase for April 2020, we are excited to upgrade our narrative by highlighting what we believe is the next level, since we began 'experiential' in 2004. Bespoke, curated stories have run their course. We have



Shoba Mohan
Founder
RARE India

“We have created a new design for the hospitality and tourism industry that is beyond necessity, and we believe this change is crucial”

created a new design for the hospitality and tourism industry that is beyond necessity, and we believe this change is crucial," adds Mohan.

Talking about their offerings for inbound guests, she shares, "We just upped our act and are re-training ourselves. We have a new route being passion-

ately promoted in the east with Glenburn Tea Estate, Glenburn Penthouse and The Rajbari Bawali. We have now extended to a new state for RARE – Odisha – with The Belgadia Palace and in the Trans Himalayas, we soar over the highest motorable pass to present a beautiful Himalayan retreat – Lchang Nang."

With time, Mohan stresses, RARE has evolved but remained the same at its core. "Each hotel of the community is the dream and vision of its owner and comes with a unique character that draws from its location, nature, and people around. That's why each hotel presents an opportunity to see a slice of real India," she adds.

Speaking of the significance of the IATO Convention, Mohan says that the event is important to meet like-minded people to create and uphold trends. 🇮🇳



Vishni Travel Marketing
Global Marketing Solutions for Indian Hotels & Tour Operators.

About Us

& How We Operate

Vishni Travel Marketing (a subsidiary of Druveniya Events Ltd) was formed with the intention of providing a truly global platform for boutique/small and mid-sized hotels and DMCs in India. When we say "truly global", we mean it. Last year we carried out marketing for our clients in the U.K., Europe, Canada, the U.S. and Australia and this year we will be adding Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, S.E. Asia, N.E. Asia and New Zealand. The only regions we don't cover are the Arctic and the Antarctic!

Our decades' worth of experience in the travel industry, especially the Indian market, made us realise that very few marketing companies provided world-wide exposure to Indian hotels. So, we decided to fill the vacuum! And, it's not just help with Marketing that we provide...

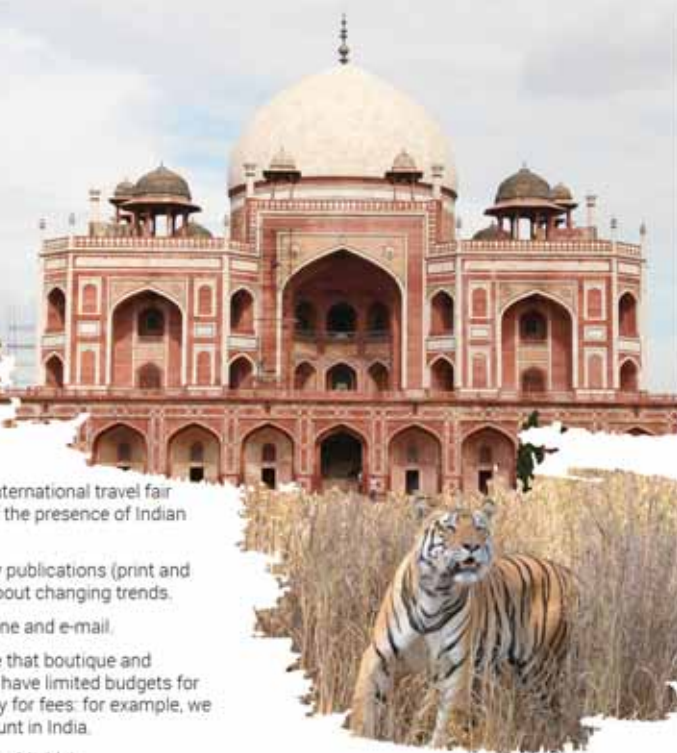
Why Choose Us

For Your Global Marketing Needs

1. Unlike some of our competitors, who are either not Indian and/or based in India, not only are we Indian but we also spend a considerable amount of time in India. Oh, and we speak Hindi.
2. Our relationships with international law firms and insurers - and our knowledge of best practices - allows us to provide, at NO extra cost, advice to our clients so as to help them avoid injuries to guests, breaches of contract.
3. We constantly monitor changing trends in the travel markets around the world and can advise our clients on adapting.
4. We regularly visit international travel fairs: last year, we visited the International Tourism & Travel Show in Montreal, the Conde Nast Luxury Travel Show in London and the World Travel Market in London while this year we visited the New York Times Travel Show in New York, the Boston Globe Adventure Travel Show and the L.A. Times Travel & Adventure Show in Los Angeles. Yeah, we sure do rack up the airmiles and frequent flyer points!
5. Our ever-increasing knowledge of the international travel fair circuit gives us first-hand knowledge of the presence of Indian hotels and DMCs at these fairs.
6. Similarly, we monitor the travel industry publications (print and web) and we have a pretty good idea about changing trends.
7. We're available 24-7-365/66, by telephone and e-mail.
8. **Our fees are reasonable:** we appreciate that boutique and small/medium-sized hotels and DMCs have limited budgets for Marketing and we adopt a flexible policy for fees: for example, we accept payment in Rupees, in our account in India.
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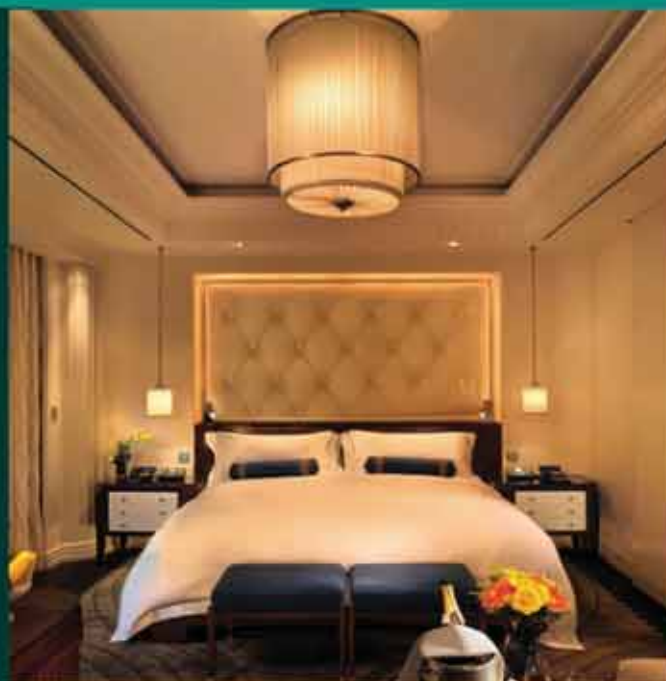
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Spare (some) time in Kolkata

A culture that is celebrated in every corner of the city and history that is evident in every bylane, Kolkata boasts of several places and experiences for the inquisitive traveller.

Kolkata's recorded history dates back as far as 1690, when the British East India Company arrived here. The city soon became the Company's trading post and India's capital under the British Raj from 1773-1911, its architecture a proof of that era. Make the most of your visit here by going beyond the tourist hotspots of Victoria Memorial and Fort William.



Craftsmanship at Kumartuli

Even if this is your first time visiting Kolkata, or West Bengal for that matter, you must surely have heard of its 10-day-long festival - Durga Puja, or seen the massive and intricate idols of the goddess. It is here in Kumartuli, a traditional potters' quarter in northern Kolkata, where these idols are built by expert artisans. A visit to Kumartuli will be the perfect start to understanding Bengali culture.



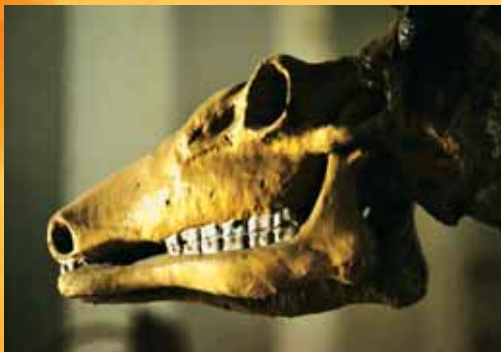
Kolkata Centre for Creativity

Kolkata Centre for Creativity is an interactive arts centre that opened in West Bengal's capital city last November. The 10,000 sqft gallery space hosts several curated exhibitions that depict the awe-inspiring works of artists of regional, national, and international repute. Visited by many an art connoisseur, the Centre brings together the modern and the traditional in a perfect setting.



A tram-ride into history

Etched in Kolkata's history is its tram, considered the oldest operating electric tram network in Asia. Kolkata is the only city in India that still offers you a tram ride on city streets. This mode of transport is inexpensive and slow, so you can truly enjoy the City of Joy as it passes by at its own pace. The tram connects several areas of Kolkata and you can get down any time, roam around, and get back on a while later.



Dinosaurs at Indian Museum

Founded in the 19th century in Park Street, Kolkata, Indian Museum is the earliest and the largest multipurpose museum in the Asia Pacific region. It boasts of a rare collection of antiques, armour and ornaments, fossils, skeletons, mummies, and paintings from the Mughal era.



Food beyond your imagination

Nothing beats the food of Kolkata! With a staggering number of street food stalls across all its quirky localities, the city is a foodie's paradise. Phuchkas, Kathi Rolls, Momos, Telebhaja, Fish Fry, Sondesh, Rosogulla, and ever-more mouth-watering dishes will keep your taste buds satiated. From North to South, Kolkata offers so many options for food that you'll be spoilt for choice!



History at South Park Street Cemetery

Located on Park Street, this cemetery has the tombs of Walter Landor Dickens (son of Charles Dickens), Captain Edward Cooke, and Maj General Charles Stuart among other notable figures. It also houses Grave 363, famous for having no name and just an epitaph that reads, "A virtuous mother (died 1825)." An early-evening walk in the cemetery will certainly take you closer to Kolkata's heart.



Explore India's only Chinatown

Kolkata's very own Chinatown is hidden in the quaint by-lanes of Tangra in the eastern part of the city. Characterised by Pagoda-like Chinese temples, age-old pastry shops, traditional beauty parlours, and mah-jong clubs, Chinatown has a distinct culture of its own. Kolkata's Chinatown, however, is perhaps more famous for its exceptional street food – a delicious fusion of Chinese and Indian cuisines.



Visit the Marble Palace

The Marble Palace in Kolkata recalls a time when 'Calcutta' was known for its opulence. The intricate architectural details are all arrayed in over 100 different types of marble, giving the palace its colloquial name. The spacious grounds also contain everything from a lake to a rock garden and even a zoo. From Victorian furniture and priceless sculptures, the Marble Palace is still a rich private residence, although tours are available.



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More resorts for Swosti

Swosti's recently-opened Swosti Chilika Resort has become a centre for MiCE and leisure in Odisha. The Group is now set to launch two beach resorts in the State, as it eyes three more locations.



TT Bureau

Swosti Group's most recent venture is Swosti Chilika Resort, which is an exclusive MiCE venue situated in one of the most pristine locations in the country - on the banks of Chilika Lake, the largest lake in the Northern Hemisphere. "Within a short span of time, Swosti Chilika Resort has earned a name as one of the best resorts in India. It is the perfect venue for planning conferences, meetings, corporate get-togethers, MiCE events, and other business gatherings," says JK Mohanty, Chairman & Managing Director, Swosti Group; Chairman, IATO Eastern Region and Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha.

The Group is now coming up with two beach resort projects, one at Gopalpur



JK Mohanty
Chairman & Managing Director, Swosti Group;
Chairman, IATO Eastern Region and Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha

on Sea and another in Puri, both in the State of Odisha. "We already have land in Puri and have acquired a patch of land at Gopalpur on Sea. Soon, Swosti Group will put up world-class luxury beach resorts at these places. We are also working on two resorts at Satapada and Bhitarkanika (popularly known as the Mini

Amazon of India). The Group is also looking to expand its hospitality business to Daringbadi and Belaghar," he shares.

Claiming that Swosti Group has been at the forefront of quality hospitality services in Odisha for more than three decades now, Mohanty shares, "From a stand-alone property to four full-fledged hotels, it has been a long and exciting journey for the Group. What has made this possible

"We are also working on two resorts at Satapada and Bhitarkanika, and looking to expand our hospitality business to Daringbadi and Belaghar"

is the unrelenting passion to extend excellent customer experiences. Hence, every aspect of service is designed with detailed insights, which

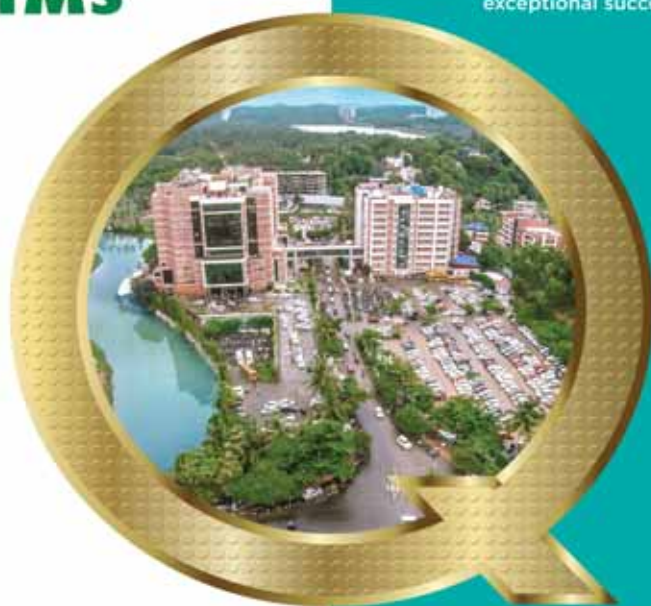


in turn resonates in the happy faces of customers. At Swosti Group, we are committed to making a difference every day, continually getting better

to keep ourselves on top. We strive to understand our client and guest needs by listening to their requirements and responding in a competent, accurate, and timely fashion."

He is happy that after 17 years, IATO is hosting its annual convention in eastern India which, he believes, will go a long way in promoting tourism to the region. "Tourism

in the eastern region needs adequate publicity of its rich potential through both electronic and print media. Even MOT's Incredible India campaign doesn't say much about the region, Odisha in particular. Most of the India Tourism offices abroad hardly have any tourism literature on Odisha. It would be great if MOT could give the State more support in terms of publicity."



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Spree plans 3 new hotels

Keshav Baljee, MD, Spree Hotels, reveals that they may soon open three hotels, possibly in cities that have connectivity to the ones they already operate in.



TT Bureau

Spree Hotels has been operating in India for the past nine years, with eight hotels currently running in Bengaluru, Delhi, Pune, Goa, Kochi, Coimbatore, and Chennai. "We are experts in operating hotels in the mid-market segment," claims Keshav Baljee, adding that they will be opening three more properties in the near future. These hotels will be located in regions that have



Keshav Baljee
Managing Director
Spree Hotels

“These hotels will be located in regions that have connectivity to cities that the Group already operates in, such as Mysuru, Ooty, and Lonavala”

connectivity to cities that the Group already operates in, such as Mysuru, Ooty, and Lonavala. "Additionally, we would like to be in newer micro markets in the

cities in which we already exist. We are a high-quality operator with highly rated, award-winning hotels across the group," he shares.

Spree Hotels is looking to tap both corporate and leisure markets, ensuring that guests have a comfortable experience at all its properties. "Properties under the Spree Hotels umbrella are safe and secure, with staff available 24x7 to ensure guests' safety. The Group ensures that state-of-the-art facilities are provided to guests to make their stay delightful," claims Baljee.

A major challenge they face, according to him, is communicating their offerings clearly and fairly to all guests. "We want to ensure that there is a positive experience for every guest, every time. This is something we continuously aspire to do," he adds.

Baljee is now keen to meet industry partners and enter into healthy, long-term associations with them at the IATO Convention. 📌

Trulyy opens in Bhimtal

Trulyy India has opened its 12th hotel, a 50-key property in Bhimtal, Uttarakhand. It is also expanding its existing room inventory in Rajasthan.



TT Bureau

With a focus on the mid-market segment in India as well as growing inbound traffic, Trulyy India is looking to expand its portfolio and offer tourists a wider variety of hotels to choose from. It currently has 11 hotels spread across Gujarat and Rajasthan, and its 12th hotel is coming up in Bhimtal, Uttarakhand. Sharing more details, Naresh Arora, Founder & Chief Executive



Naresh Arora
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Trulyy India

“This new hotel in Bhimtal will be operational by October 1 this year and will have 50 rooms, with world-class facilities for MICE”

Officer, Trulyy India, says, "This new hotel will be operational by October 1 this year, and will have 50 rooms. It will be a complete resort with a beautiful

location and world-class facilities for MICE."

With huge demand from both inbound and domestic travel-

lers, their Rajasthan hotels are seeing huge footfalls. "So, we are adding 50 more rooms in Jaisalmer, which currently has 57 rooms and it will be ready by end-October. We are a hotel chain that predominantly has hotels in Rajasthan with nine properties there. We are now looking to open a wellness resort in Rishikesh and are in discussions," he says.

Trulyy India also has two properties in Kumbhalgarh near Udaipur - one, a 60-room hotel and the other, a 27-room wildlife nature camp. Most of their hotels are in the luxury segment with seven to eight acres of land built like palaces and forts. As a result, their target audience is leisure and MICE travellers since all properties have MICE facilities. However, Arora says that they have also started hosting weddings as it is another growing segment. 📌

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GOLDEN HAND BRIDGE (DANANG - VIETNAM)

More 'Tales' for Terra

With a focus on leisure, wildlife and eco-tourism, Terra Tales has added some more names to its portfolio in keeping with Indians wanting to get closer to nature.



TT Bureau

Terra Tales is highly inclined towards the concept of responsible tourism as it is one of the key elements for sustainable tourism. Gita Chaudhry, Founder and Owner, Terra Tales, feels that her company promotes wildlife and eco-tourism with a perfect balance of comfort and safety. "These two fast-growing segments induce a strong sense of responsibility towards our ecology on the whole. We have been witnessing that the inclination of travellers, both domestic and from inbound markets, is leaning towards conservation of environment and we, as an eco-supporting company, promote such concepts in an enthusiastic and sincere manner."

Terra Tales' focus is primarily on the leisure, wildlife, wellness, and eco-tourism segments. Besides domestic markets, Chaudhry and her team have directed their focus and ener-



Gita Chaudhry
Founder and Owner
Terra Tales

gies to tap the European market, and they are gaining ground in a steady and firm manner. Terra Tales is growing in terms of its widening geographical base of clients, soaring team size, and robust processes. The great news is that the number of properties on board is also growing. Sharing more information on this, Chaudhry says, "Our drive to promote exquisite properties that breathe greenery continues, and we have recently added more select names to our

portfolio. Evolved and well-experimented strategies are employed to offer the highest quality to our clients in a refined fashion."

She adds that the company firmly believes that the conservation of environment is the topmost priority. "Many Indians now seek to witness nature from close quarters. Concern for the environment is gradually growing, and they are breaking away from the monotony of pure luxury and comforts to green experiences offered with comfort as an essential accessory," Chaudhry adds. 📌

New at Terra Tales

Nahar Retreat & Spa (Kotagiri)
Tendu Leaf Jungle Resort (Panna)
Ranthambore Mountain Valley Resort (Ranthambore)
The Neem (New Delhi)

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A cultural abode Manipur

Shirui Hill and its Lilies- Pic by Priyotik Ahoijam

From the remains of an erstwhile kingdom to innumerable festivals that celebrate a rich culture, Manipur is the perfect refuge for travellers from all walks of life.



Tangkhu Pipir

Manipur is strategically located in the Northeastern corner of India bordering Myanmar. Nestled at the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas, the state is considered to be the gateway to Southeast Asia. The serene beauty of the state, that India's first Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru once described as the 'Land of Jewels', leaves every traveller spellbound. Least touched and least discovered, the state is a promising tourist destination for adventure and nature lovers alike.



Pakhangba Temple, Kangla, Imphal - Pic by Thou Mangang

adventurous traveller willing to explore the unexplored.

Shree Govindajee Temple

Shree Govindajee Temple is another historic centre of the Vaishnavites in Manipur. It is a twin-domed temple which attracts a large number of devotees who participate in various devotional activities. Tourists are welcomed to come and join in the daily festivities at the historic Govindajee temple and other temples in and around Imphal city.



Celebrate festivals with the locals

Manipur is a land of festivals and almost every month, the people of Manipur get together to celebrate various festivals, which reflect the state's rich culture, tradition and religious practices. Yaoshang, Gaan Ngai, Cheiraoba, Lai-Haraoba, Kang, Heikru Hidongba, Kut and Lui Ngaini are just some of the festivals celebrated by different communities in the state. Manipur Sangai Festival, celebrated every year from November 21-30, is a major tourist attraction.



Govindaji Temple at Kangla



Khangkhui Cave, Ukhrul

Top things to do:

Loktak Lake and Keibul Lamjao

For any visitor, the principal attraction of the state is the Loktak Lake in Bishnupur district. It is a beautiful stretch of water resembling a miniature inland sea. A day spent at Loktak Lake is a lifetime of memories. Visitors can catch a bird's eye view of the lake

from Sendra. Fishermen living on the floating islands, called Phumdis, in floating huts known as Phumsangs, are unique sights of this lake. A part of the lake hosts the Keibul Lamjao National Park, which is home to the brow antlered deer – Sangai, only found in Manipur.

Kangla

A visit to Kangla at the heart of Imphal city unfolds the proud history of the erstwhile Asiatic Kingdom dating back to 33 AD. The British took over in 1891 and buried their influence on architecture. It is the quintessential symbol of the

state's culture and heritage. Today, Kangla has developed into a unique archaeological and heritage park. The Ima Market, which is counted as one of the largest women-only markets in Asia, is a stone's throw away from the western gate of Kangla.

Escape to the green hills

Head to Ukhrul district and enjoy the company of the locals—the brave and colourful Tangkhul tribe. It is situated 40 miles away from Imphal city and is famous for its Shirui Lily – a species of lily found nowhere else in the world other than the Shirui Hill range. The Dzuko track in Senapati and the Bunning track in Tamenglong also offer a challenge to the intrepid



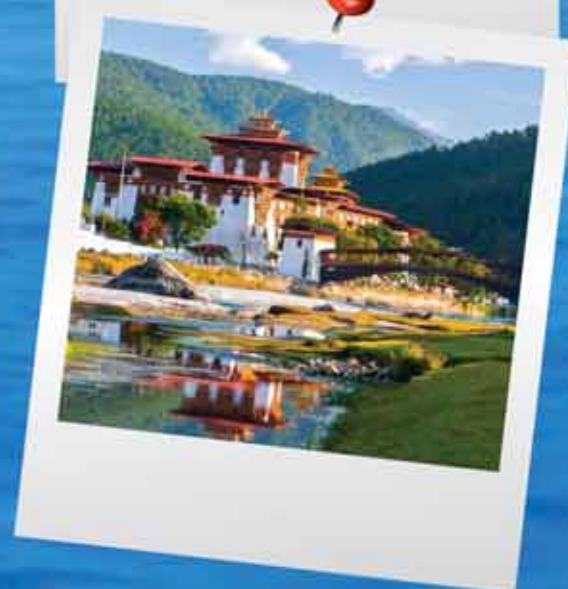
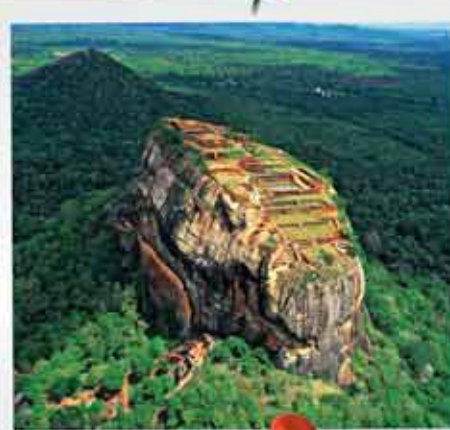
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East it is for MAYFAIR!



TT Bureau

MAYFAIR recently came up with its latest property in Raipur, making its foray into the state of Chhattisgarh. Souvagya Mohapatra, Executive Director, MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts, says, "In August, we opened our 11th resort, MAYFAIR Lake Resort, in Raipur. With 124 rooms, it is the perfect wedding and MICE destination spread across 13 acres along the banks of Jhanjh Lake. The resort boasts of huge banqueting facilities, a spa, as well as premium food and beverage outlets."

MICE & weddings

The Group is now planning a few more properties in the eastern region. Mohapatra informs that they have already acquired 1000 acres of New Chumta Tea Garden in Siliguri. "Work has already begun and this will be the first resort of the country promoting tea tourism. It is expected to be operational by mid-2020 with 150-plus rooms, huge banqueting areas, multi-cuisine restaurants, and an exclusive spa," he shares.



Souvagya Mohapatra
Executive Director
MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts

"We have entered into special rate contracts with inbound tour operators and they support us regularly"

MAYFAIR is also adding 25 more rooms at its Gangtok property by December this year, which will help it cater to both MICE and wedding segments. "We also plan to open a five-star deluxe property in Kolkata for which we have already started the work. This will have 250 keys to attract the MICE and wedding segments besides inbound, corporate, and leisure travellers," Mohapatra informs.

He claims that their properties in Bhubaneswar, Puri, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Gangtok, and Goa already attract inbound tourists in large numbers. "We have entered into special rate contracts with inbound tour operators and they support us regularly. Our Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Gangtok resorts have libraries with a rare, historical collection of books and DVDs. These libraries are extensively used by inbound tourists, and we are constantly

upgrading our services and adding more facilities. We do organise Darjeeling Tea tasting sessions for inbound groups at both our Darjeeling and Kalimpong properties," he says.

With all of MAYFAIR's properties said to be well-equipped for the wedding and MICE segments, Mohapatra says that they have state-of-the-art conference and banquet halls



MAYFAIR Spa Resort & Casino, Gangtok



MAYFAIR Darjeeling

with inbuilt generation-next audio-visual facilities. "The halls can be divided into equal parts to cater to conferences and conventions. We have our presence in exotic locations and are well-equipped for destination weddings. The grandeur of the properties as well as multiple indoor and outdoor venues make all our resorts ideal wedding destinations. Keeping in view guest requirements, we have designed wedding packages coupled with accommodation, meals, décor, spa, and bridal

make-up to attract customers," he adds.

Green to the core

With their motto - Stay with us, Stay with nature - all MAYFAIR properties have a lot of greenery around. "We also promote local art and craft at each of our properties, with unique artefacts placed all around. One of our biggest USPs is the size of the rooms and bathrooms. Our base category rooms at all locations are spacious and have balconies overlooking a

beautiful landscape or water bodies. We offer international cuisines in our restaurants and the personalised services of our team members make the stay memorable for each and every guest," Mohapatra says.

As he looks forward to the IATO Convention, he says that the Association must "advise the government to formulate a uniform industry-friendly tourism policy, which will boost the hospitality and travel trade sector."



MAYFAIR Hideaway Spa Resort, Goa



MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort, Kalimpong



MAYFAIR Convention, Bhubaneswar

MAYFAIR LAKE RESORT, RAIPUR

The Perfect New Luxury and Wedding Destination in Central India!



MAYFAIR Lake Resort is the brand new property from MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts: a perfect luxury destination for a wonderful getaway with excellent banqueting space and options. It is truly an ideal property for a lavish destination wedding or a luxury getaway. It is located amid lush greenery and overlooks the gorgeous Jhangh Lake. MAYFAIR Lake Resort offers lavish luxury accommodation, great banqueting and event space, world class facilities and some of the finest restaurants in Raipur. It is located at a very convenient distance from the airport and the railway station. The various categories of accommodation spread across 124 rooms here including an opulent Villa with 2 bedrooms and drawing rooms, lavish Deluxe Suites, delightful Spa Suites and luxurious well-appointed Deluxe Rooms that come laden with the choicest of amenities. These will mostly be all either lake facing or canal facing with lovely pleasing views making for a wonderful setting for a dream wedding.

Facilities at MAYFAIR Lake Resort include a stunning swimming pool with an exciting Rain Dance Area near it, an outdoor Kid's Play Area as well as an indoor Kid's Play Room, a Travel Desk, a Library, and a well-equipped fitness centre. There is also a gorgeous looking MAYFAIR Spa with Couple Rooms, Therapy Rooms, a Unisex Salon and even a Bridal Room offering an array of holistic wellness treatments. In dining options, "Tea Pot" which is the all-day multi-cuisine restaurant and "Mamma Mia" serves Mexican & Italian delicacies along-with bakery products. Other dining options will include a lounge bar, a quite Scottish

bar (Baron & Baroness), a poolside bar with live grill and a jungle themed cafe.

MAYFAIR Lake Resort has excellent banqueting facilities including a sprawling open-air lawn space of 94,000 square feet with a fixed stage and a gate which would be perfect for hosting luxury weddings or large conferences. MAYFAIR Ballroom has 9000 square feet of indoor space which can be further divided into separate sections according to the requirement of the guests. Right in the middle of the resort, there is a large open air courtyard – Angan where entertaining functions and performances can be held for a luxury wedding for residential guests. To add to these, there are also meeting rooms and board rooms for smaller meetings. All these event venue spaces can be gorgeously incorporated into serving as wedding venue spaces. The overall design of the decor for the wedding can be designed according to needs of the guests.

The ambiance of this superb property makes it immediately endearing with a host of spaces which can be utilised in such a way that they all become an integral part of a wedding to be remembered for a long time. The setting overlooking the lake - home to some exquisite sunrises and sunsets - makes it a truly magical place where to have a dream destination wedding. Add to this the world class facilities, the superior level of hospitality and service as well as the luxurious surroundings makes MAYFAIR Lake Resort, Raipur the perfect destination wedding venue as well as the perfect luxury getaway!

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Colours of Navratri in GUJARAT

Navratri, in Gujarat, is a time for celebration when the whole State comes alive for nine whole days and nights with vibrant colours, as people indulge in the 'dandiya' dance.



Though the festival of Navratri is well-known and celebrated all over India, there's a reason why its mere mention invariably draws one's mind to the State of Gujarat. Nowhere else in India, or the world for that matter, does one get to witness the transformation of every street in into a bustling carnival and a vivid aesthetic masterpiece encompassing various art forms, from music to dance and vibrant textile designs, putting even the most happening discotheques of the country to shame.

The energy and vibe that the State radiates during these nine days or rather a nine night-long fiesta is absolutely utopic. The nine nights are also broken up into sections of three; the first is for Durga, the goddess who destroyed an evil force and who destroys human impurities; the second is for Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity; the third is for Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and art.

Every year, thousands of tourists flock to Gujarat during the event to soak in the festive spirit. The Department of Tourism, Government of Gujarat, makes special arrangements to further enhance the experi-

ence that they take back. The major centres for this are Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, and other large cities of the State apart from village-level celebrations. This year, the State of Gujarat, under the supervision of the Department of Tourism, will be hosting the much-awaited Navratri Festival from September 29 to October 7.

The highlight of the Navratri celebrations in Gujarat is the traditional dance form, Garba, which flows in every Gujarati's blood. People come out in large numbers with their 'dandia sticks' at night to participate in this delightful activity, dressed in the most radiant and colourful traditional



outfits. Authentic Gujarati food is also relished by all at the various food stalls that spring up all over the State.

The Department of Tourism, Government of Gujarat, has partnered with a number of trusted travel agencies to offer tourists extremely attractive travel packages and to provide

a wider range of offerings to visitors in addition to the schemes offered by the Department itself. Vadodara is considered the cultural capital of Gujarat, and the most sought-after location for celebrating Navratri. Try to visit at least one village *garba*, too, for a range of experiences.

Experience India through trains

The Rail Journeys has done the biggest pre-purchase of inventory with RTDC recently, and holds the largest inventory of Palace on Wheels till 2021 at the moment.

 **TT Bureau**

The Rail Journeys has recently made the biggest pre-purchase of inventory with Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) for Palace on Wheels until 2021. Arun Kundu, Director, The Rail Journeys, says that it is a product with class and standard that is of very high value. “It is this very experience that appeals to

our foreign buyers as it allows them a lot of ‘me’ time while letting them explore different sights each day, off and on the train,” he explains.

Agents, adds Kundu, must also understand that it is a seven-day continuous journey on board a train and so, effectively, a hotel on wheels allowing guests to explore different destinations and offering myriad experienc-

“The countries that we are putting emphasis on are Europe, the Far East, Americas, Latin America, & South Africa”

es. Having spent many years in the industry understanding the DNA of rail tourism puts The Rail Journeys at an advantageous position. “We want to build a bridge between expectations and delivery for buyers, and make them understand that in India, ‘luxury’ is not associated with cost but is the culmination of dreams,” he adds. The company is presently working on maximising its inventory and pre-purchase

with other luxury trains as well, so that it can decide the price point and provide value to buyers and markets where cost remains a constraint in choosing other experiences over luxury rail holidays. “We are also keen on running a luxury train when Indian Railways will look at private partnerships in this segment. The countries that we are putting emphasis on are Europe,



Arun Kundu
Director
The Rail Journeys

the Far East, Americas, Latin America, and South Africa,” Kundu shares.

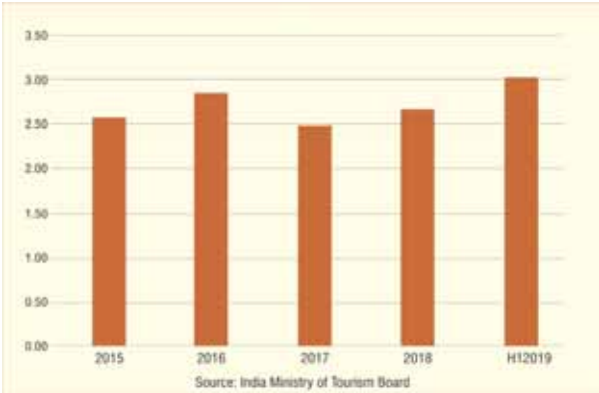
How to get more Chinese tourists

Chinese travellers’ changing preferences show that many now value experiences over obligatory visits to landmarks and are more willing to spend on high-quality accommodation, local dining, and cultural activities.

A recent report by China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI) - a leading independent research institute for consulting, research, information, training, and quality assessment relating to the Chinese outbound tourism market - reveals that in the first half of 2019, a y-o-y increase of 21 per cent in Chinese arrivals to India was recorded, reaching a historical high at three per cent of total Indian arrivals during the period.

For India, it can be expected that given a successful branding strategy, the high-end market will see a stronger than average growth, especially if suitable touristic products are offered in fields like health, nature, and special interest which are unique for India. Compared to package group Chinese tourists, free individual travellers (FITs) and customised travel visitors are mostly wealthier upper-middle-class Chinese visitors who have already gained more experiences in outbound travel. Many FITs and customised travel visitors thus have the potential to stay longer at each location, disperse wider, avoid peak seasons and crowded attractions, while at the same time still purchase tourism services and activities.

Market share of Chinese travellers for total Indian incoming market 2015-H1 2019



| | India | Sri Lanka | Nepal | Cambodia | South Africa |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| Visa regulation | e-Visa | Visa exemption (from August 1, 2019) | e-Visa | Visa-on-arrival | In-person interview for visa application |
| Price level in comparison to China | Equivalent to China's third tier cities | Equivalent to China's second/third tier cities | Equivalent to China's third/fourth tier cities | Equivalent to China's first and second tier cities | Equivalent to or even more than the first-tier cities in China |
| Main market segments (target group) | Families, friends, individuals | Families, couples | Friends, individuals | Families, couples, friends | Families, friends |
| Main activities | Sightseeing, culture learning, outdoor activities, religious activities | Sightseeing, ocean, honeymoon | Sightseeing, culture learning, outdoor activities | Sightseeing, nature, beach, Buddhism | Sightseeing, wildlife, outdoor activities |
| Main reasons to visit | Leisure, business | Leisure, business | Leisure, business | Leisure, business | Leisure, business |
| Main reasons not to visit | Poor public security, bad sanitation, disordered tourism services, inconvenient transportation | Terror attack, inconvenient transportation, low efficiency | Unstable / inadequate material supply, bad sanitation / medical service, language barrier | Language barrier, unstable material supply, pollution, inconvenient transportation | Poor public security, violent attacks, difficult visa application |

What is India competing with?

After evaluating visa policies, flight connections, destination images and tourism resources, COTRI identified Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia, and South Africa as some of India’s typical competitors in seeking the lucrative Chinese outbound travel market share. The main reason, however, to visit either of the five nations remained the same – leisure and business travel. According to the COTRI study, while Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Nepal were found to be similar to India in terms of distance, culture and tourism resources, South Africa and India were found to be similar in terms of official language (English), wildlife parks, with both nations being members of BRICS that China is also part of.

Chinese Arrivals to India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia, and South Africa 2015-2018



Source: China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI)

'Welcom-ready' weddings

With four openings scheduled in the coming months as either resort-style or heritage properties, WelcomHeritage is all set to target the wedding segment and the curious traveller.



TT Bureau

WelcomHeritage has recently come up with its second property in Jaisalmer — Kalyan Bhawan — the former home of Maharawal Jawahir Singh, the ruler of Jaisalmer. The old mansion had to be revamped to make it contemporary for today's guest, reveals **Sanjeev K Nayar**, MIH, General Manager, WelcomHeritage. "Presently, we have 34 operational

in Udaipurwadi, the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, will hopefully be launched this month. The third property, Mount Valley, has been planned as a resort in Ranthambore in the foothills of the Aravalli range, while Badi Kothi will be a heritage property in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. It was built in 1897 during the Mughal era, with a monumental façade and exquisite stone carvings. We are hopeful that these two properties will be



Sanjeev K Nayar
MIH, General Manager
WelcomHeritage

offer experiences rather than a normal hotel stay, and introduce them to true Indian heritage. "Local food and traditional dances interest travellers. India is a vast country with a diverse culture. Each destination offers something different and we endeavour to showcase the rich cultural and traditional brilliance of the region, thus promising an experience that is as diverse as the country," he adds.



WH Mandir Palace, Jaisalmer

The group is also looking to tap the burgeoning wedding segment. "India has huge potential for travel and tourism, which in turn gives us ample opportunities. This year as well, we hope to register a remarkable growth both in terms of

business as well as expansions," shares Nayar.

WelcomHeritage is also targeting an audience that loves to travel and explore new things, and is not looking for just a hotel. "Each of our hotels is different from the other and especially in a heritage property, no

two rooms are identical. That is our USP," he claims. While its properties receive a horde of inbound leisure travellers and conventional MICE groups, there has been a rise in travellers on a holiday with the family or those attending alumni reunions, he says.

“Each destination offers something different and we endeavour to showcase the rich cultural and traditional brilliance of the region”

properties and four new ones in the pipeline. Tadoba Van-yavillas Resort & Spa, in the forest reserve of Tadoba near Nagpur and Inderpura Resort

flagged in the coming months," he shares.

For foreign guests, Nayar claims, their properties

Bespoke hospitality

Hotel Park Ocean in Jaipur has managed to win clients, simply by listening to their partners to create bespoke itineraries for each market.



TT Bureau

Hotel Park Ocean in Jaipur is located in the heart of the city at Sikar Road. Its plush and spacious interiors take the zing up a notch. Based on bookings, Hotel Park Ocean focuses on the leisure market from Asia, the Middle East, CIS nations, and European countries.

Sharing more details, **Sandeep Jain**, Managing Director, Hotel Park Ocean,



Sandeep Jain
Managing Director
Hotel Park Ocean

flexibility they offer. "We work very closely with them in order to understand their business requirements, especially market-specific requirements as there may be different business needs from different regions such as the European market, the Far East, and the GCC market. We then design market-specific, tailor-made packages with our travel partners," Jain explains.

Hotel Park Ocean is aggressively tapping markets on a global level by attending all travel trade exhibitions in India and abroad. It also conducts tactical promotions from time to time. It has a dedicated sales team to approach the market, with sales offices in key metro cities like New Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai.

"Our success story is based on our guest experience and our team is committed to deliver memorable experiences," Jain adds.

“We design tailor-made packages for different business needs from different regions such as Europe, the Far East, and the GCC”

says, "We also organise business networking events and familiarisation trips to update the trade about our product. In order to meet the expectations of our business partners and

enhance the guest experience, we upgrade our product on a regular basis."

He adds that travel partners prefer them because of the

Maximising hotel sales

The BingoForge App can be customised for the entire hotel sales operation with the intention of maximising revenue for the sales department.



TT Bureau

Launched in February 2017, BingoForge is a unique solution developed to help the hotel sales team maximise conversions. Armed with more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, **Zubin Bilimoria**, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, BingoForge, created this solutions-oriented App to help hotels maximise distribution. During his tenure in the



Zubin Bilimoria
Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder
BingoForge

“This tool has an informative MIS and users can create their own dashboard. Our clients have recorded almost 25-26 per cent growth in sales revenue after using it”

hospitality industry, Bilimoria realised that there was no real tool available for the sales team to drive up revenues. "That is why we decided to develop this CRM that

automates the entire sales process for the team. Today, we have not just international hotel chains but also stand-alone properties that use this product," he says.

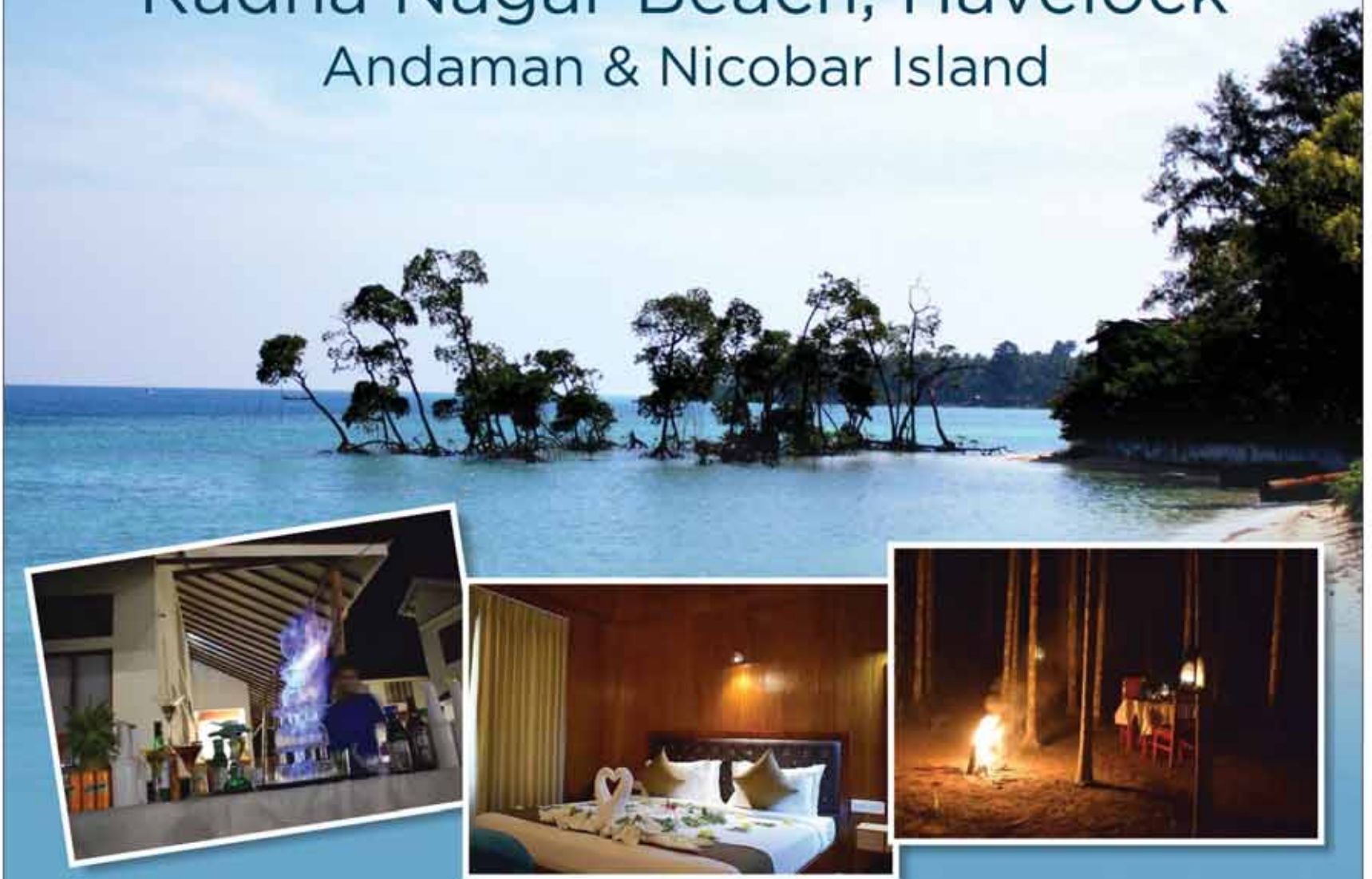
Their unique proposition is that the team behind this tool comes with immense domain expertise which enables them to understand the pain points of the hotel sales personnel. "We don't price this tool based on the number of users, but base it on the number of properties, so it is not an expensive investment," Bilimoria adds.

This sales CRM takes care of daily sales reports, tracks proposals, and even has a strong follow-up action. He explains further and says, "This tool has an informative MIS and users can create their own dashboard. Our clients have recorded almost 25-26 per cent growth in sales revenue after using it," Bilimoria claims.

The company also launched the BingoVale App in July, which is a valet parking App used by the valet staff of a hotel.

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Sail around the Northeast

Jungle Travels India (JTI Group) is now offering new experiences in the Northeast on-board its premium 12-cabin vessel near Majuli and a single-cabin houseboat on the Brahmaputra.

TT Bureau

Jungle Travels India, or the JTI Group, has some premium offerings for those who are keen on sending their clients to the Northeast for some exclusive experiences. Its vessel, ABN Charaidew-I, is a heritage boat with 12 air-conditioned cabins, all with en-suite facilities such as a saloon, a dining room, and a sundeck with comfortable lounge chairs stationed

ABN Charaidew-I

A heritage boat with two double-bedded and 10 twin bedded and air-conditioned cabins, all on the upper deck.

MV Rudra Singha

A single-cabin houseboat for cruising on Brahmaputra River. The cabin is 121 sqft and has double or twin occupancy.



Ashish Phookan
Managing Director
JTI Group

near the great Majuli Island in Assam. This serves as a comfortable stay on-board a floating home for travellers while they visit Majuli Island.

This little-known remote island is known for the monastic neo-Vaishnavite communities, the archaeological sites of the erstwhile Ahom capital – Sibsagar, the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary which is where one

can see the only apes in India, and the great tea estates of Jorhat.

Sharing some more information on the company's exclusive offerings is Ashish Phookan, Managing Director, JTI Group, who says, "We also have a houseboat, MV Rudra Singha, which is a single-cabin, air-conditioned houseboat for private and exclusive leisure cruising on Brahmaputra River, supported by a fine crew of five offering personalised services to our guests."

That's not all! The company is building its second houseboat for expedition-style cruises on the Brahmaputra, which will be operated under the brand JTI Adventure. This new boat will have two cabins and a lounge area, which will be able to host five people in air-conditioned

comfort, a kitchen serving freshly-cooked meals, and a sundeck to enjoy the scenery while sailing the great river.

"As the houseboat with powerful engines will mainly be operated in winter months, we can host up to 10 people with tents. The houseboat will operate on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra in

“Our activity offerings for the inbound market include soft adventure tours, wildlife and birding tours, cultural tours in Northeast India, and river cruises on both the Ganga and the Brahmaputra”

Assam, providing access to the less-explored tribal areas along the banks of the river, with highlights such as Pani Dihing Bird Sanctuary and

Dibru Saikhowa National Park. Almost all shore excursions to the rural landscape of Assam will be on bicycles carried aboard the houseboat," Phookan adds.

Under the brand JTI Adventure, the company operates a range of soft adventure programmes across Northeastern states, including

boat and cycling tours, as well as hiking and trekking tours led by its experienced and professionally trained local guides and tour leaders.

"Our activity offerings for the inbound market include soft adventure tours; wildlife and birding tours; cultural tours in Northeast India; and river cruises on both the Ganga and the Brahmaputra on a fleet of four cruise vessels exploring the length and breadth of the rivers, making stops to take our visitors to destinations along the way," he says.

Phookan adds that their traditional markets are Europe, with particular focus on the UK, as well as Australia, Japan and North America.

"We feel that the demand for better services and unique experiences bodes well for our Northeastern region, as this will push existing facilities to provide better services and bring about future infrastructure that would facilitate travel," he opines.

India-Vietnam traffic to rise

With the new Vietjet Air and IndiGo flights connecting New Delhi and Kolkata respectively to Vietnam, Lac Hong Voyages is certain that the traffic between the two countries will shoot up.

TT Bureau

Lac Hong Voyages, one of the leading tour operators in Vietnam and the parent company of JTR Events & Marketing, is hopeful that the three new flights connecting India to Vietnam will increase traffic between the two countries. Speaking about this is Robert Tan, Executive Director, JTR Events & Marketing, who says, "We are pleased to hear that Vietjet Air will resume its flight from India to Vietnam and that IndiGo is also flying to Hanoi in Vietnam. We have noticed that the Indian government has taken steps to ease visa application for foreigners



Robert Tan
Executive Director
JTR Events & Marketing

and make it more flexible to increase tourist arrivals. Likewise, we have already had several bookings from India and also from Vietnam to India, which our agency (Lac

Hong Voyages) is pushing – not just for the Buddhist circuit but other segments as well. It is advisable for the Indian tourism department to now get more aggressive in their marketing, since airlines are expecting more traffic from the leisure, corporate business, and MiGE segments."

“Some of the cities that work well for us are New Delhi and Mumbai; even the Buddhist sectors hold potential for us”

Vietjet will launch Delhi-Ho Chi Minh City as a four-times-a-week operation, from December 6 this year and the Delhi-Hanoi route will start as thrice-weekly from December 7, 2019. Meanwhile, IndiGo will start daily flights from Kolkata to Hanoi with effect from October 3, 2019.

Tan says that business from India to Vietnam, Cambodia,

and Myanmar has improved a lot over the last two years due to visitors for Hinduism and Buddhist circuits that include temples and pagodas. "Moreover, there is a vast outbound opportunity for India for wellness tourism, with so many spas in this region. It is the same for the

India market to Vietnam as we now have a variety of Indian restaurants to cater to Indian tastes. It will now become more convenient to travel around Vietnam as some Indian travellers look for beaches, caves, and UNESCO World Heritage sites," he adds.

According to him, Vietnamese travellers who visit India are

IndiGo daily flights from Kolkata

| Sector | Departure | Arrival |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| Kolkata – Hanoi | 12:40 | 16:55 |
| Hanoi – Kolkata | 17:55 | 19:20 |

Flight to begin w.e.f. October 3, 2019

looking to attend trade fairs as well as indulge in leisure and culture tourism and travel in trains. There is also a rise in family travel with easy visa entry into India. For JTR, India has huge potential.

"India is a complete destination as it has a lot to offer in terms of history, culture, nature, mountains, beaches, etc. It is a one-stop destination. Some of the cities that work well for us are New Delhi and Mumbai - the main gateway cities in India for some Asian airlines. Even the

Buddhist sectors hold potential for us," Tan shares.

JTR Events & Marketing focuses on various destinations in this region such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand. Established in February 2004, this tour operator conducts outbound as well as inbound tours. It is also a wholesale tour operator offering ticketing, sightseeing, corporate, tour packages, leisure and luxury travel, as well as MiGE.

Vietjet Air flights are now online

| Sector | Days | Departure | Arrival |
|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| DEL - SGN | 1,3,5,7 | 23:50 | 06:10 |
| SGN - DEL | 1,3,5,7 | 19:00 | 22:50 |
| DEL - HAN | 2,4,6 | 23:50 | 05:20 |
| HAN - DEL | 2,4,6 | 19:10 | 22:50 |

DEL-SGN and DEL-HAN to begin w.e.f. December 6 and 7, respectively

Did you know, according to IATA's 20-year air passenger forecast, growth in frequency of air travel of the average citizen will occur in emerging markets. While India will rank second at a 10 per cent growth, Vietnam will rank fourth at an eight per cent increase.

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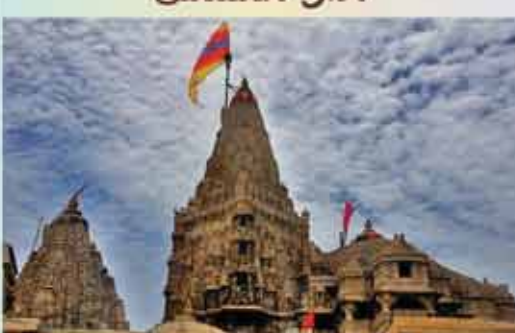
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Sigh of relief for eTV fee

The recent announcement by Ministry of Home Affairs of a reduction in e-Tourist Visa fee has been applauded by the trade. The fraternity is now awaiting other steps that will truly help achieve the numbers the country desires.



Suresh Perival
Managing Director
Clubside Tours and Travels

“We welcome this move by the government, as it will definitely help in attracting a larger number of foreign tourists to the country. We would also like to bring to the fore that airline connectivity is a major challenge for tourists visiting eastern India, which currently has no direct connectivity with Europe, and is a big deterrent. We hope that this issue is resolved soon. That said, bringing the 35th IATO Convention to Kolkata provides an opportunity to all members of IATO to experience this region during the post-tours and interact with the operators. The Convention should help improve the share of inbound tourist arrivals to the East.”



Himanshu Agashiwala
Managing Director
Columbus Travels & Services

“We have monuments where the entry fee is very high and a shortage of guides ends up in the tourist paying even more. Training of guides is also a must. The government should come out with tourism-oriented taxes. Maintaining of sites and infrastructure is still a problem, and with the slow progress of infrastructure development and high costs, India becomes an uncompetitive destination when compared to neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka and Thailand. The government must give subsidies and incentives to investors in the tourism and hospitality industries. The government must look into these areas of concern.”



VS Abdul Kareem
Founder & Chairman
Creative Tours & Travels

“While a reduction in visa fee for foreign arrivals will benefit the country in terms of numbers, I feel, the government should instead waive it altogether for a certain period of time – something on the lines of what Thailand and other countries have done to attract more tourists and increase the tourist flow. IATO should take a lead for this effectively with the department of tourism to make it happen. The Association must also campaign with it by conducting conventions abroad to attract more and more inbound traffic. A review of the policy regarding conducting of conventions outside India will help.”



Rajat Bagaria
Managing Director
Shrishti Tours & Travels

“Though we welcome the move, only reducing the visa fee doesn't hit the bull's eye. Our Prime Minister is our greatest brand ambassador and is spreading awareness about India, which needs to be supported by a strong tourism marketing campaign. We should have this in all forms, like print, digital, social media, etc. We must engage renowned personalities such as actors, sportspersons, business personalities, singers, etc., to talk about India and appear in these campaigns. Furthermore, we need to project India as a safe destination and provide a safe and efficient infrastructure to all visitors.”



Elina Satapathy
Partner
Seven Sisters Holidays

“Reduction of the visa fee is a welcome step. It would impact the tourist inflow in a positive way. Certain other follow-up steps are also the need of the hour, such as improving infrastructure, spreading awareness, taking capacity-building measures at key destinations and last but not the least, undertaking vigorous promotional activities abroad. I would also like to see more importance being given to smaller states such as Manipur, which have huge tourism potential that is yet to be explored properly. The bigger states are already doing well and it would be great if IATO could promote the smaller ones as well.”



Sarabjit Singh
Managing Director
Travelite (India)

“Visa fee reduction is a good move by the government, but something we were compelled to do because all other nations either reduced or waived their visa fee altogether, taking business away from India. That said, to increase the numbers, we need to address all issues that have accumulated over time. Several issues have been brought to the notice of the government but have either not been taken forward or have been diluted somehow and changed the result. Today, India has a negative image that cannot be wished away, so we need to be more focused and consistent for a longer time.”



Sanjay Mehta
Chief Executive Officer
Trans Globe Travels

“The government needs to take other steps as well to improve foreign tourist numbers, by developing infrastructure; improving transportation; maintaining cleanliness; preserving nature, art and culture; and increasing connectivity to important places. We must also try and attract tourists throughout the year and not just for a few months a year; provide a faster internet connection; make food available at all tourist spots; educate tourists about the local culture, traditions, and history of a place; and maintain a high level of safety and security for foreign tourists while developing non-traditional segments such as trekking, winter sports, etc. We must also look to exploit the tourism resource of the Himalayas and the vast coastline with sandy beaches and wildlife to attract more tourists and to lengthen their period of stay in the country.”



Munish Abrol
Chairman and Director
Incredible Voyages

“It is a good move by the government, however, I feel that the visa fee for tourists should be completely abolished for the next two years. The Incredible India 2.0 campaign should be aggressively and professionally implemented. The SEPC policy for tour operators should be enhanced to 10 per cent instead of a reduced five per cent, and to be extended permanently so that the pricing of our products can be done well in advance to make our destination more attractive and competitive. Facilities at ASI monuments should be privatised for better upkeep and maintenance. Also, Ministry of Tourism should take the lead in banning plastic products at hotels and in ancillary industries, ensuring that India has the least carbon footprint per tourist. An effective media campaign, like that for the 'Swachh Bharat Mission', by MOT will greatly help in this regard.”



Liju Mathew
Managing Director
JEL Tours

“The visa fee had to be reduced to achieve the target of doubling the arrival of foreign tourists by 2020. Major movements such as incentive tours, group travel, school groups, corporates, etc., tend to be very sensitive to visa fee, considering that India's inbound tourists are mainly from Italy, France, Germany, the UAE, Japan, China, the UK, USA, and Canada. We also need to take up concrete measures to improve tours to India. We need a consistent game plan for packaging and showcasing India to the world, with innovative ideas such as Digital India. Also, we need to fill the gap in terms of tax consistency, a tourist-friendly environment and infrastructure, air and transport facilities, as well as a strategy to incorporate major influencers in travel and tourism as partners.”

Inputs by IT Bureau



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