

Product expertise to drive visits

With strong recovery seen last year and sustained growth in 2023, Indian visitation to the UK is anticipated to reach pre-COVID levels by 2024. Destination Britain India 2023 is a testament to VisitBritain's commitment to boost numbers, fostering a dynamic and fruitful collaboration, says Lousie Bryce, Partnerships Director, VisitBritain.

TT Bureau

What inspired the idea for this event, and what are your expectations for it?
It is a real flagship moment for us, and it is wonderful to be bringing British suppliers back together with buyers to reconnect, do business and show our warm welcome. Our work with the travel trade in India is incredibly important—building product knowledge is crucial to selling British products and destinations—and it is fantastic to see new business being generated. It is also extremely valuable and timely to



Lousie Bryce
Partnerships Director
VisitBritain

hear from industry about the latest trends driving outbound travel from India.

What unique offerings are you presenting to travel agents in India this time?
Trade and business-to-business engagement are vital for our business to drive recovery and growth. Over the years, we have established strong connections in Delhi and are now extending and focussing our activity to Tier-II cities, holding training sessions for trade on UK destinations, educational trips, promoting new products and customised itineraries.

How do you anticipate Indian visitation to the UK will change in 2024, and what are your targets for the year?

We have seen strong recovery and growth in value from India—a record £764 million spending in 2022—exceeding 2019 levels. It

Trade and business-to-business engagement are vital for our business to drive recovery and growth

has continued into 2023 as well. The latest stats are Jan-June: spend a record £349 million, up 4 per cent vs. Jan-June 2019. Visits from India are forecast to recover to pre-COVID levels by 2024. The UK is the most popular destination in Europe for Indian travellers in 2022 and India is forecast to be a billion-pound visitor market for the UK by 2024.

How do you plan to engage the MICE and wedding segments?
Indian perceptions of the UK are very strong. They rank us 5th out of 60 nations for overall brand (2022 NBI). Perceptions of the UK's 'natural beauty' improved

six ranks in 2022, and sport by five ranks. Looking at the top activities Indian travellers are keen for their next trip. Visiting famous or iconic tourist attractions, experiencing coastal places and scenery, exploring local food and drink—Britain can cater for all.

Do you have any messages for the Indian travel trade?
Our work with the travel trade in India is incredibly important—building product knowledge is crucial to selling British destinations. Tourism is a major part of British trade—this flagship event supports us to boost visits across the seasons and across Britain.

Mono Britain itineraries promoting regions

VisitBritain's focus is to offer a premier experience to Indian visitors, integral to bolstering our competitive tourism landscape. With ongoing improvements in visa processing and a surge in Indian spending, the United Kingdom is aiming for a billion-pound tourism sector by 2024, avers Vishal Bhatia, Country Manager, India, VisitBritain.

TT Bureau

What key takeaways do you want Indian travel agents to gain from this event?
India is a significant market for the United Kingdom, demonstrating ongoing progress. Our aim is to provide a top-tier reception for visitors, and facilitating easy access to Britain plays a pivotal role in enhancing our competitive tourism offerings. Engaging in trade and business-to-business relationships is essential for our

enterprise in order to stimulate recovery and foster expansion. Throughout the years, we have cultivated robust ties in Delhi, and we are now expanding and concentrating our efforts on tier II cities.

Which itineraries would you recommend outside of London?
Drive growth outside London through regional gateways. Increase the number of Indian travellers visiting the vibrant cities of Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Edinburgh in the



Vishal Bhatia
Country Manager
India, VisitBritain

UK. Our aim is to enhance accessibility to regional England, with a particular focus on promoting ease of rail travel. By extending the duration of stays and diversifying itineraries, we seek to encourage more tourists to explore the regions. In January 2024, we will be hosting Indian media on a themed trip titled 'England's Year of the Coast' to South England and Wales.

What key messages do you want to convey to the suppliers?
We have witnessed a robust re-

We have witnessed a robust resurgence and significant increase in value originating from India

surge and significant increase in value originating from India. In

2022 alone, an unprecedented amount of £764 million was spent, surpassing the levels seen in 2019. This positive growth trend has persisted into 2023. Notably, from January to June, a remarkable sum of £349 million was expended, reflecting a 4 per cent rise compared to January to June of 2019. Projections indicate that visitor numbers from India will fully recover to pre-COVID levels by 2024. Thus, it is anticipated that India will become a billion-pound market for tourism in the UK by the same year.

Extended stays, bespoke tours

As the dynamics of travel continue to evolve post-COVID, the United Kingdom remains a sought-after destination for Indian travellers. In this compilation of insights from industry experts, we explore the shifting preferences and emerging trends in the Indian travel market, shedding light on the diverse experiences and destinations that captivate the discerning Indian traveller.

“Indian clients look for value for money with some value-added services such as special rates for long stays, complimentary spa or dinner with a minimum 3/4 nights stay. Post-COVID, we have seen Indian clients spending more nights than usual



Anshu Tejuja
Managing Director
Ashoka Dream Holidays

“It is very easy to promote the United Kingdom as a destination for Indian travellers, with so many friends and family there, it is a popular choice. Using London as a hub, many people want to explore Ireland and Scotland. It would be great if agents could



Diana Bhagalia
Partner
7th Heaven Tours and Travels

“Indian clients, especially from Pune, are very specific about food requirements, while others choose luxurious stays based on their age and preference. The best part about the UK is the smooth processing of visas and around 6 months, 1 year and 10



Shalini Jain
Travel Curator
Click2Travel



Shravan Bhalla
Director
Highflyer

“The most distinctive aspect of Indian market is its incredible diversity in travel preferences. UK suppliers should be ready to cater to a variety of experiences. It is possible to tap into a larger segment of India as long as you are flexible. Some specific destinations we would like to promote are Edinburgh (Scotland), the Cotswolds (England), and many more.”



Sapna Rateria
Director
Cirrus Travels & Holidays

provide information on easily accessible destinations. Currently, we offer Scotland and would like to include Ireland.”

“Post-COVID, a discernible trend has emerged, wherein an increasing number of independent and solo travellers are ready to book in advance, allocate a significant budget, and explore destinations at their own pace. The clients seek offbeat places, with longer itineraries and self-drives gaining prominence. We specialise in curating and customising itineraries for our fully independent traveller clients in the UK.”



Nilesh Bhansali
Director
Devam Tours & Travels

years of visas. The UK has the most convenient transportation system and the connection from London is good.”

“With the fares being sky high and hotel inventory getting sold out, a good change is that Indians have started planning well in advance post-COVID. Especially in London and Europe, planning well in advance only ensures the visa process is smoother and flight fares and hotel availability are in check. Passengers are also more open to experimenting with destinations.”

“People have become more aware and conscious of the products and offerings, and are smart enough to find something out of them. The travel agents and operators should come up with fresh ideas for their itinerary. And now a days, every-



Sameer Karnani
Managing Director
Arunodaya Travels

“India is the world's fastest-growing outbound source market for most of the countries and the UK is not an exception. The UK is also among the favourite destinations for Indians due to exceptional hospitality and immersive experiences. A few aspects



Daxesh
Co-Founder
1497 Original Senses

“For the next few years, the target audience that VisitBritain needs to consider from the Indian market is all about the evolved and mature travellers. This kind of travellers look for exclusive and experience-based itinerary. Exclusives need not be



Kapil Malhotra
Director
Ekido Holiday Tours



Anshumi N Shah
Senior Manager
All Four Season Holidays

“The Indian market has changed drastically post-COVID. There is a huge demand for luxury travel and bespoke itineraries instead of the same old, monotonous itineraries. The duration of stays has become longer, so even itineraries are longer. Although London is a must-visit destination, now clients are asking for itineraries including York and Windermere, among others.”



Pritha Soni
Reservation Executive
Exclusive Travels

contributing to this mass flocking of tourists in the UK are travel, weddings, adventure and the high-end luxury trend.”

“Post-COVID, there have been so many changes. People want to spend more time at one place rather than hoping for an itinerary like they used to. They need self-driven holidays. They do not want to book excursions. They are spending more in hotels and higher categories of rooms. Beyond London, still Lake District and Scotland are more famous in our market.”



Kalpesh Bhutta
Owner & Proprietor
Harmony-Tours

expensive. So, destination tourism needs to bring in an increasing number of tier-II cities from all over the UK.”

“Celebrations with family groups and friends are now a big trend we see with respect to the Indian market in the UK. There are a lot of people who are only doing self-drive holidays in the UK. They like to hire a car and drive all over because it is right-hand drive with a valid Indian licence. So, that is a new trend I have been seeing for the last two or three years and will remain so for more years to come.”

Compiled by: TT Bureau

New way networking

The love of cricket saw the UK suppliers and Indian buyers come together to watch and cheer at the ICC World Cup Final match before the B2B meetings start the next day. It was a great opportunity for everyone to interact and network informally at the dinner sponsored by West Midlands Growth Company



A jovial evening of cheering



and engaging over sports



A soirée to remember



A panoply of UK offerings

Embark on an enchanting exploration of iconic destinations across England. Dive into the vibrancy of the West Midlands, discover the treasures of Royal Museums Greenwich, experience Rail Europe, and indulge in exceptional tours with Mountain Goat. Explore further with insights from key players shaping the tourism landscape in this captivating region...

“ Shakespeare’s England enchants with historic landmarks such as Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare. Embrace culture at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, and wander through charming market towns. We have adapted



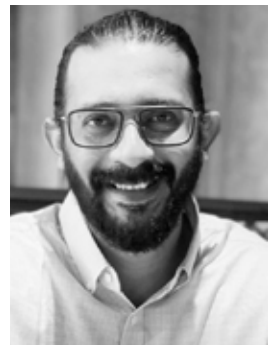
Becky Frall
Head, Tourism
West Midlands Growth Company

“ Royal Museums Greenwich has partnered with Smartify, to explore our sites. Visitors can use these even after the visit, giving them the opportunity to continue to explore our collections. Royal Museums Greenwich is also home to the Royal Observatory



Srijit Nair
General Manager EMEA & India
Rail Europe

“ Mountain Goat offers exceptional tours across Northern England. Small group tours take guests away from the crowds to view inspirational landscapes. Products include daily scheduled tours departing from Windermere, Keswick, Manchester, Liverpool,



Gaurav Seth
Head, Trade Sales, India Outbound
Merlin Entertainments Group



Victoria Zamudio-Senghera
Travel Trade & Business Development
Manager, Visit Shakespeare's England

to COVID by organising virtual tours to engage with international audiences, including India. ”

“ Since COVID, the West Midlands Growth Company has delivered first business and tourism programme to be aligned to the Commonwealth Games. With three weekly flights relaunching from Delhi to Birmingham, plus the first Kabaddi World Cup taking place in the West Midlands and 200,000 Indians living and working in the region, it is bustling with vibrant cities. ”



Andrea Larotella
Senior Travel Trade Manager, Royal
Museums Greenwich

and the Prime Meridian, the historic sailing ship Cutty Sark, the National Maritime Museum and the Queen’s House. ”

“ Rail Europe has launched a series of initiatives such as e-tickets for all issued tickets, enabling travel agents to book seat reservations for customers holding Eurail passes, among others. This caters to the demand for passholder fares, by requiring seat reservations for specific train itineraries. Recently, we launched revamped tech solutions called RailAPI, RailFlash, Rail-Portal, and RailLink. ”



Asia Connor
Mountain Goat Tours
Group Sales & Marketing Manager

Chester & York, private tours for small FIT groups or multiday tours across England, Scotland and Wales. ”

“ For Merlin Entertainments, we have over 30 attractions in the UK. While our London attractions such as London Eye are favourites among Indian travellers, we have also introduced a few more attractions. These include the historic Warwick Castle, with over 1,000 years of history and interactive shows; Cadbury World, where you can experience everything chocolate; and LEGOLAND Windsor. ”

“ We have introduced some amazing experiences for our visitors from India at Lords, which feature an exclusive chance to handle and view some of the renowned Indian artefacts in the museum. We have launched bespoke experiences with former cricketing legends,



Mary Jane Brett
Customer Development Manager, Johnnie
Walker Princes Street & Scotland Distilleries

“ The Tower of London unveiled several new displays this year. The Jewel House, which shares the history of the Crown Jewels in the coronation year, opened in May, and another at Hampton Court Palace for South Asian WW1 objects. A rare pin badge linked to



Jennifer Cormack
Director, Sales & Marketing
Windermere Lake Cruises

“ Travellers today are willing to spend more to immerse themselves in completely new destinations, cultures, and experiences, and they are most excited about doing things they would usually never do. Keeping in mind the environment and clients’ requirements, we are more



Suzie Gildon
Strategic Account Sales Manager
Merlin Entertainments



Dinesh Selvaraj
Tours & Museum Manager
Lord's Cricket Ground

allowing guests to enjoy a walk to the outfield and eating in the same room where the cricketing greats have dined. ”

“ Johnnie Walker Princes Street opened in 2021. The Explorers’ Bothy whisky bar is stocked with 150 different whiskies as is 1820 cocktail bar, where drinks are paired with a carefully curated menu. It contains an experiential retail space where shoppers can select from rare whiskies. It even offers a changing toilet for visitors and non-visitors alike, as well as a British Sign Language tasting. ”



Ann Wilson
Head, Sales
Historic Royal Palaces

activist Sophia Duleep Singh forms part of the display at Hampton Court Palace that opened recently. ”

“ At Windermere Lake Cruises, we offer highly flexible working conditions with no cancellation or amendment fees. Our fleet consists of 17 different vessels, providing 100 departures each day. We cater to tourists with private hiring options, addressing all dietary requirements with onboard catering. We also offer free coach parking, complemented by scenic views from every cruise. ”



Jasmeet Kaur
Executive Director
European DMC

focussed on promoting ecotourism destinations, eco-friendly accommodations, and National Wildlife Parks. ”

“ Merlin attractions are constantly innovating and improving the guest experience. One of the biggest projects for 2023 was the launch of a haunted house ride at Alton Towers Resort, ‘The Curse at Alton Manor,’ and ‘Legend of the Trebuchet,’ bringing history to life at Warwick Castle. Through state-of-the-art technology, Merlin consistently delivers unforgettable experiences. ”

Compiled by: TT Bureau



Agenda

Monday, 20 November 2023

- | | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| 07:30 – 08:30 | – | Breakfast at leisure |
| 08:45 | – | Supplier desk set-up |
| 09:00 | – | Welcome and India market update |
| 09:40 – 11:10 | – | One-to-one meetings |
| 11:10 – 11:20 | – | Coffee break |
| 11:20 – 12:30 | – | One-to-one meetings |
| 12:30 – 14:00 | – | Lunch |
| 14:00 – 15:10 | – | One-to-one meetings |
| 15:10 – 15:20 | – | Coffee break |
| 15:20 – 17:30 | – | One-to-one meetings |
| 19:30 – 22:30 | – | Reception Dinner
(Sponsored by Virgin Atlantic) |

Tuesday, 21 November 2023

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|---------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 07:30 – 09:30 | – | Breakfast at leisure |
| | – | Buyers to depart
For UK suppliers |
| 09:45 – 11:10 | – | Free flow meetings |
| 11:10 – 11:20 | – | Coffee break |
| 11:20 – 12:30 | – | Free flow meetings |
| 12:30 – 14:00 | – | Lunch |
| 14:00 – 16:00 | – | Free flow meetings |
| 16:00 | – | Closing remarks |

