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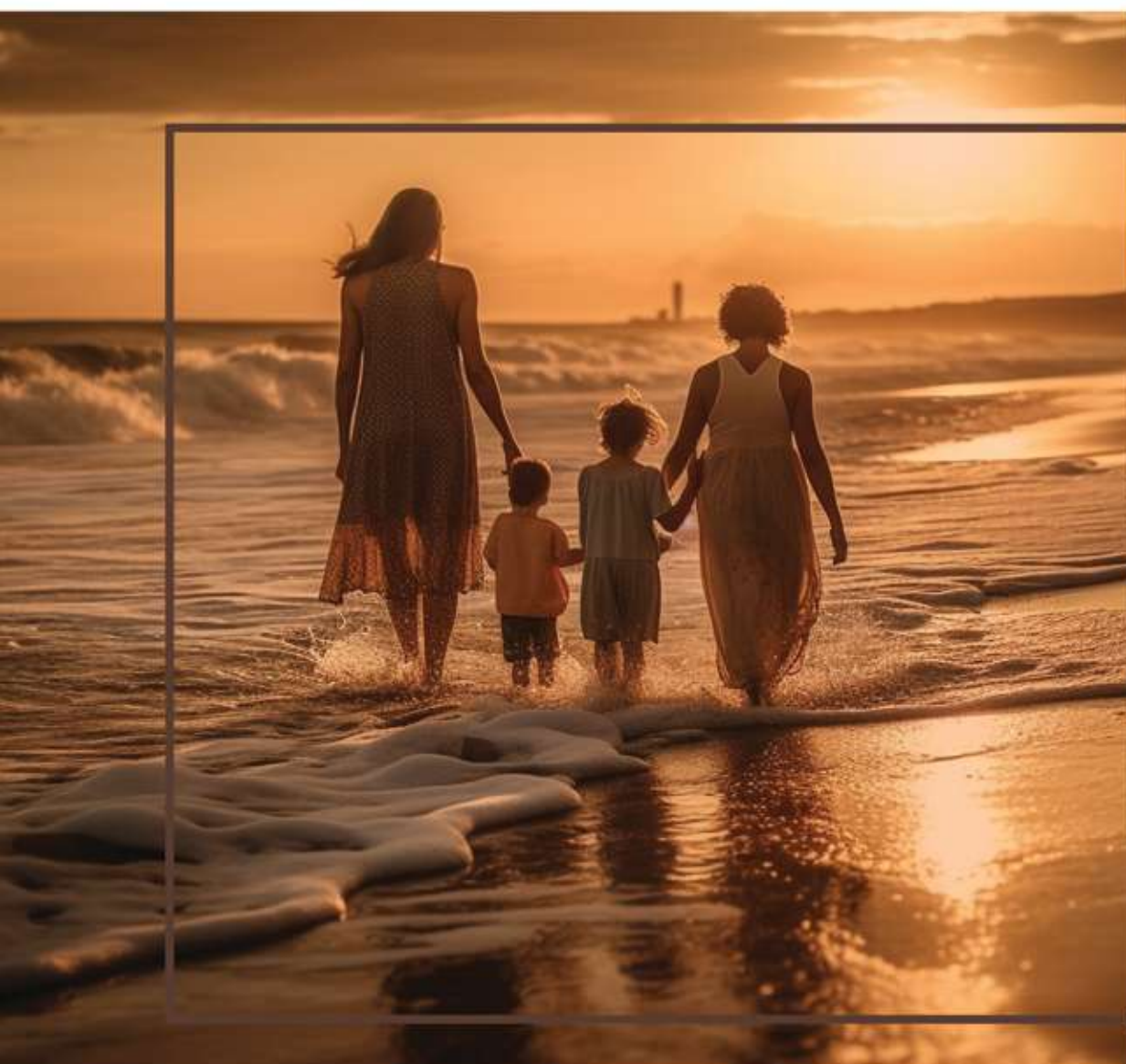
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# Destination revamp a priority

The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of IATO will be organised at WelcomHotel by ITC Hotels, Rama International, in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (Aurangabad) from 29 September to 2 October 2023. This year, the convention theme will be 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends', in line with the global focus on tourism.

Suhani Sood

**Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO, said that the 38<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention would focus on sustainability in in-



Rajiv Mehra  
President, IATO

bound. "Incredible India bounces back after COVID wrath, and G20 Presidency has put the spotlight on India. So, it is time to benefit from the opportunity and take inbound tourism to the next level, which makes this year's convention different and unique," he said.

Asked about the reason behind choosing 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends' as this year's convention theme, Mehra said, "The theme has been chosen as India focuses on responsible tourism leading to inclusive growth. Health, hygiene, safety and enriching destination development and experiential tourism are some of the emerging sustainable trends."

Sharing details about the con-



vention, Mehra said that the IATO convention will have the inaugural ceremony, business sessions on latest topics, states deliberating on their destinations, their booths depicting new features, the motivational talk, IATO Run, and last but not the least networking over luncheon.

"A focus point that we want to put across to government and industry this year is revamping tourism destinations, besides improving of market and promotional strategies, destinations, niche tourism areas, last mile connectivity, investment and coordination between tour operators and other

stakeholders," he said, sharing the programme details.

### Focus on inbound issues

This year, the tour operators' association would focus on several important issues such as in-

**A focus point that we want to put across to government and industry this year at the convention is revamping tourism destinations**

creased promotion and marketing by the central government, smooth connectivity, collaboration with tour operators and their incentives, and technology offering a boost to tourism.

"In the IATO convention, we will also discuss the problems being faced by foreign tourists in making fee payment for e-Tourist Visa online, issues faced by members on renewal/ fresh application for recognition on NIDHI Portal, problems faced by tourist transport operators in Maharashtra and Gujarat," Mehra said.

About the new taxation regime, under which the central government is making 20 per cent Tax Collection at Source (TCS) mandatory after a limit of ₹7 lakhs well effective from 1 October 2023, Mehra said, "This new taxation regime would put the onus of collection of tax on

the tour operators, for which tour operators neither have the capability nor the resources. The tax regime should foster ease of doing business, while with the new regime, it may work against its objective."

### Promotion of Aurangabad

When asked about how Aurangabad's projection as a tourist destination will change after the convention, he said, "I would not use the word 'change', as Aurangabad is already a famed heritage and religious tourism place with Ajanta and Ellora in vicinity. But yes, we will amplify awareness of Aurangabad's marketing and tourist places."

### Members can expect

- ❖ Inputs from business sessions and state presentations to aid their prospects and knowledge of destinations
- ❖ Post tours leading to the onsite marketing of key sites of Maharashtra Tourism
- ❖ Networking opportunities with the policy makers and other tourism stakeholders
- ❖ IATO Run and entertainment programmes

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# Delving into cruise tourism & ports

The IATO Annual Convention comes on the heels of a revival in inbound tourism in the country, which is slow but catching on. The three convention chairmen share their views on how the annual event will not only help the local travel agents in Aurangabad but also those attending it from various parts of India.



Hazel Jain

**Rajnish Kaistha**, Senior Vice President (VP), IATO, says there will be a session on cruise tourism and ports during the IATO Convention. "We have added this because cruise tourism in India is on the rise and various port authorities and the ministry are working towards improving it. This shall be an important take-away for the members. Of course, there are various other important sessions on various subjects and are important for our members," he says.

The convention will help in bringing more tourists to Aurangabad and in the process help local tourism and allied services. "There is also a session dedicated to Aurangabad which has two UNESCO heritage sites and we have not been able to showcase them much. I must say that Aurangabad tourism stakeholders have worked a lot behind the scenes and getting our 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention to Aurangabad. We are now very positive that tourism to Aurangabad is poised to grow and help local travel trade."

Under the leadership of its President, IATO has been working tirelessly for the success of this convention for the last couple of months. As the Chairman of the convention, Kaistha has had to do a lot of meticulous planning and groundwork. "We also received support from the Maharashtra government and even



**Rajnish Kaistha**  
Senior Vice President (VP)  
IATO



**Sanjay Razdan**  
Hony. Secretary  
IATO



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

**We have added cruise tourism session because it is on the rise in India and various port authorities and ministry are working towards improving it**

## Withdrawal of flights hits Aurangabad tourism

Kaistha says that tourism to Aurangabad has suffered a lot due to the withdrawal of domestic flights from Jaipur, Udaipur, Mumbai and Delhi in 1999. IATO's constant efforts to get the flights back to Aurangabad has finally started yielding results. The present airport has capacity to take in many more flights; it's under-utilised as of

**Historically, it has been the trend that wherever IATO Convention has been held, it increases the inflow of tourism to that area**

and art lovers. The caves are also an attraction for Buddhist tourists. "Aurangabad is poised to be a year-round destination with good weather, sitting at a height of 1,950 feet," he says.

Kaistha says Aurangabad is now destined for a revival. "Our convention shall get it both national and some international coverage. Lots of young IATO members

**Aurangabad almost stopped receiving international tourists. Now we see tourists returning, and with more connections, we will see a revival of tourism here**

request to the government is to get the UDAN flight scheme to Aurangabad from Udaipur and other nearby places and have a better rail connectivity," he says.

## Focus on sustainable trends

The theme of the convention this year is 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends'. IATO has planned many important business sessions on 30 Septem-

ber and 1 October, which shall be informative and educative. **Sanjay Razdan**, Hony. Secretary, IATO, says, "And not to be missed, after a hard day's work, is some amazing evening entertainment that

have been lined up." He has been involved, along with the President, VP and other Executive Committee members, in planning and implementation. He shall also be officiating in the convention as the Co-Chairman.

He believes that the convention will not just benefit the local travel agents but the entire town of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. There will be about 1,000 participants from all over India connected to travel, tourism and hospitality businesses. The convention will showcase the state of Maharashtra and Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar in particular.



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He says that since the IATO members are mainly into inbound tourism, they are the actual ambassadors of India when we talk of developing a particular destination. "I believe new itineraries can be created which, in turn, will result in bringing more and more people to Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. We request members to come and be part of this tourism festival," he adds.

## Expressway a big boon

**Jitendra Kejriwal**, Chairman – IATO Maharashtra and Dadra, Nagar Haveli & Daman Chapter, is gung-ho about the Mumbai-Nag-

pur expressway. "Today, the Mumbai to Nagpur expressway, which is being built, also connects other major cities like Aurangabad, Nashik, and Shirdi. Aurangabad used to be very popular among tourists. But then it almost stopped receiving international tourists for some reason, possibly because of lack of flights, and no easy availability of train tickets. Now we see tourists returning, and we hope with more connections, we will see a revival of tourism here."

His agency sends clients, both domestic and international, to Aurangabad. They are largely leisure tourists but there are also some pilgrims since Aurangabad has one of the jyotirlings. International clients are largely from the Middle East countries like Dubai and Saudi Arabia. The team has planned five post tours: two within Aurangabad, two to Nashik, and one to Shirdi and Shani Shingnapur. So far, more than 300 members have registered for the convention, but a lot of last-minute registrations are expected to boost the number up to 1,000.



the Leader of Opposition, Ambadas Danve, which has made it possible for us to organise this convention in Aurangabad and we look forward to its grand success," he adds.

now. Roads are also good and lots of hotels have come up in Aurangabad. Having two of the UNESCO heritage sites - Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves – the destination is a treasure trove for foreign tourists

who have not been to Aurangabad shall get to learn a lot from here and shall be able to market Aurangabad internationally during travel trade fairs and roadshows and include in their itineraries. My

ber and 1 October, which shall be informative and educative. **Sanjay Razdan**, Hony. Secretary, IATO, says, "And not to be missed, after a hard day's work, is some amazing evening entertainment that

tional tourism circuit with Ajanta & Ellora Caves as the main attractions. However, we are now trying to develop new destinations and itineraries to include more places of interest like the Lunar Crater,





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# Maha exchange of ideas

The IATO convention will provide a big platform for exchange of ideas between the private stakeholders and the government about the hurdles faced by Chhattapati Sambhajinagar tourism and what each party can do to revive and develop the region's lost glory. **THOU TALK** speaks to Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and important dignitaries to know their views.



**Ekanath Shinde**  
Chief Minister,  
Maharashtra

“ In a bid to promote pilgrimage tourism in the state we have approved over ₹440 crore to promote pilgrimage tourism in Maharashtra. We will conduct a digital mapping of the temples and shrines with large footfalls in the state and provide better facilities of accommodation and other amenities. ”



**Radhika Rastogi**  
Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture  
Affairs, Maharashtra Tourism

“ The ministry expects a lot of productive thinking and discussions at the convention. Maharashtra has a lot to offer to tourists even though we might be number five as per the Indian tourism statistics. But tourists are looking for newer options and this state has a wide variety of experiences that we can offer. ”



**Shraddha Joshi Sharma**  
Managing Director,  
Maharashtra Tourism Dev. Corp. (MTDC)

“ MTDC has resorts in various locations of Maharashtra, which showcases our strength. We have our resorts in Tadoba, near the Ajanta & Ellora caves, and other interesting tourist spots. We have also proposed agent visits to our resorts. By year-end, we'll also launch a convention centre in Nashik. ”



**BN Patil**  
Director, Directorate of Tourism  
Maharashtra

“ We expect that the convention will help boost tourism in Maharashtra, particularly Aurangabad. IATO has a large membership and we consider it as our investment partner in the sense that we are interested in inbound tourism. Our target is to increase inbound and increase tourists' stay in state. ”



**Ambadas Danve**  
Leader of Opposition  
Maharashtra

“ Our objective is to improve the economy of Aurangabad, and tourism into the city will help with that. This IATO convention will help us achieve this aim by bringing in more and more tourists after this event. We will even try to get the CMs of other states to visit us. I have met many of them in this regard. ”



**Chandrashekhar Jaiswal**  
General Manager  
MTDC

“ Our Aurangabad resort will soon be converted into an all-women managed facility as part of the Maharashtra tourism department's gender-inclusive policy titled 'Aai'. This will be the first fully women-operated tourist facility. This particular resort was chosen as it is a world heritage site. ”

Compiled by Hazel Jain

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# MTDC Responsible Tourism Programme and Gender in Tourism Initiative



MTDC launched its Responsible Tourism Programme i.e. Rethinking Tourism Post Pandemic in Maharashtra on a Global Platform of World Travel Market London on 7th November 2022. MTDC made its commitment towards executing Environmentally, Socially, Culturally & Economically Responsible Tourism in the state of Maharashtra. The programme was also launched in India while commemorating the occasion of MTDC's 48th Foundation Day.

## 1. MTDC Resort Based Activities

- Implementation of No Preservatives, No Additives, No Colours, No Artificial Flavours, No Ajinomoto MSG
- No Plastic, No Flex Policy & No Single Use Plastic
- Employment and tourism training for locals - Bhoomiputra strategy.
- Avoid misuse of water and take appropriate measures for water conservation
- Biodegradable Packaging

## 2. MTDC Community Outreach

- Tourist Camp for children with Autism
- Flamingo Fest at Navi Mumbai
- Mangroves Tours
- Microplastic Plogging
- Promotion of Locally Sourced food, Handicrafts and Products
- Responsible Tourism Street Plays

## 3. Launching: MTDC Responsible Traveler Programme

- Reduction of Carbon Footprint
- Environmental Conservation
- Reuse of Bed & Bath Linen
- Zero Waste Management
- Digital Payments

## 4. MTDC Collaboration with ICRT

- At WTM London, MTDC signed MoU with International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT)
- MTDC Responsible Tourism Clinic





# For responsible & inclusive tourism

The theme for this year's IATO Annual Convention is 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends', which has been chosen focusing on India's responsibility towards tourism and inclusive growth. With that in mind, IATO will discuss issues impacting the revival of inbound tourism in India at the Aurangabad convention.



Suhani Sood

In its 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, IATO will discuss, among other issues, the revival of inbound tourism. The association has chosen 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends' as the theme for this year's convention. The convention is expected to draw industry leaders, government officials, and tourism enthusiasts from across the country and around the world.

**Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO, said, "This year's theme has been chosen focusing on India's responsible tourism leading to inclusive growth. Health, hygiene, safety and enriching destination development and experiential tourism are some of emerging sustainable trends."

Raising the issue of inbound tourism, **Ravi Gosain**, Vice President, IATO, said, "It is very important to address inbound issues, as the inbound tourism is coming out very well after the pandemic setback. IATO in its annual convention will



**Rajiv Mehra**  
President  
IATO

specifically cover all important subjects in business sessions, such as government policies, relationship among stakeholders, use of technology in inbound tourism, and connectivity, which can help members to rebuild their businesses."

IATO has taken an initiative to bring IATO convention to a tier II city in the country. "It is in itself a great move to boost inbound tourism in Aurangabad and lesser-known areas of the region," said



**Ravi Gosain**  
Vice President  
IATO

**Viney Tyagi**, Director, (Hony. Joint Secretary), IATO.

Talking about an important challenge the Indian tourism sector is facing, Tyagi said, "Overseas marketing for Incredible India has come to a halt for some years now. For that, IATO will do deliberations with MOT's officials to organize roadshows in potential markets and participation of small tour operators in international trade fairs at subsidized fee. It is a very



**Viney Tyagi**  
Director, (Hony. Joint Secretary)  
IATO

serious issue because most of the mid/ small inbound tour operators are still striving hard to get inbound traffic to India."

**Sunil Mishra**, Hony. Treasurer, IATO, highlighted issues like sustainable tourism, infrastructure development, visa policies, tourist safety, and cultural preservation. "Enhancing India's tourism infrastructure is crucial to attracting and accommodating tourists. Discussions at the convention will foster



**Sunil Mishra**  
Hony. Treasurer  
IATO

development of airports, road networks, and accommodations to improve the overall travel experience," he said.

"Also, streamlining visa procedures and expanding e-visa options will also be on the agenda for IATO convention," he added.

## Tech to boost productivity

Gosain stressed on the use of technology in the sector. "Technology will help tourism providers not

only to boost their productivity but also enable them to grow their businesses manifolds. There are players who are using CRM for their operations, but only a few of them use it for sales and marketing using machine learning and artificial intelligence, data analysis to understand the behaviour of their customers and to project revenue based on previous years actual sales," he said. "These all can be done through automation using different technological tools available in the market. None of us can deny the power of social media in creating brand awareness, spreading product knowledge and lead generation. All these tools, if used under the supervision of an expert, can really bring positive changes to the organisational growth," he added.

## Collabs and marketing

Mishra also highlighted that effective marketing strategies are essential to showcase India's diverse offerings. "Experts will explore innovative marketing campaigns and collaborations to enhance the country's global appeal," he said. 📌

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# Putting sustainability into action

The IATO Annual Convention is set to be a pivotal event in the travel industry, with a profound focus on 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends'. The carefully chosen theme underscores the evolving landscape of the tourism sector in India. Executive Committee (EC) members of the association speak their minds to address the challenges of the industry.



EM Nejeeb

“The theme of the convention is Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends. The theme has been chosen as India focuses on Responsible Tourism leading to Inclusive Growth. Health, hygiene, safety and enriching destination development and experiential tourism are a concomitant of emerging sustainability trends. Incredible India bounces back after the wrath of COVID, G20 Presidency has put the spotlight on India, it is time to capitalize on the opportunity and take the Inbound Tourism to its glory of the past – these make this year's IATO convention different. Besides the theme, there will be a new flavour at the inaugural ceremony, the business sessions with the latest topics, States deliberating on their destinations and potential tourism benefits, their booths depicting new tourism features and the motivational talk, IATO Run, Networking Luncheons and Dinners providing business with pleasure. The focus points of the convention will be revamping of marketing and promotional strategies, destinations, niche tourism areas, last mile connectivity, investment in tourism infrastructure and coordination between the tour operators and the other stakeholders like the hotels and airlines in particular and the onsite marketing of tourism sites of Maharashtra through our well-crafted post tours. We would amplify the awareness of Aurangabad with the presence of our strong band of tour operators and their onsite marketing of Aurangabad tourist sites.”

“The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of IATO in Sambhajinagar places a strong emphasis on sustainability, aligning with India's climate objectives and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This convention recognizes the pivotal role played by the tourism industry in achieving these global goals. Tourism proves highly adaptable to the principles of social, environmental, and economic sustainability. It stands as one of the largest employers, offering a wide spectrum of employment and entrepreneurial prospects, spanning transportation, guiding services, accommodations, gastronomy, retail, and more. This diversity in opportunities accommodates individuals ranging from semi-skilled labourers to skilled professionals. Throughout the convention's business sessions, special attention will be directed towards fostering small, self-sustaining ventures, such as heritage hotels, homestays, lodges, and community-run properties.”



Ashok Dhoot

“This year's IATO Convention is centered around the theme of 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends', a carefully chosen focus selected after extensive deliberation by the Executive Committee. Out of 10 available options, this theme was deemed the most pertinent given the current circumstances. In the wake of COVID-19, inbound tourism has faced numerous challenges. Skyrocketing airfares have compounded these issues. Today, we distinguish between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic eras, as everything from customer expectations to booking preferences has evolved. IATO is committed to promoting Maharashtra, particularly Aurangabad. Despite flight connectivity challenges, IATO has arranged delegate pickups from nearby airports and railway stations. To accommodate the 1000+ delegates, German hangars have been erected. Over 400 rooms have been reserved across various hotels for delegate accommodation.”



Manoj Matta

“The 38<sup>th</sup> IATO Convention's theme 'Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends' strikes a chord with the evolving landscape of our industry. We have witnessed a transformation in travellers' preferences, shifting from conventional experiences to a hunger for meaningful, eco-conscious journeys. This shift is not a fleeting trend but a profound and lasting change that demands our unwavering attention and action. As we gear up for this convention, I find myself reflecting on my own travel company's practices. How can we reduce our environmental impact? How can we contribute to the well-being of the destinations we serve? These are questions that every travel professional should contemplate, building upon the work we have already undertaken in the past and continuing our journey toward sustainable growth in inbound tourism. In the spirit of the convention's theme, I urge us all to unite, transcending our roles as business owners.”



Harish Mathur



Deepak Kumar Bhatnagar

“Theme of 38<sup>th</sup> IATO Convention – Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable trends – is most apt, especially keeping in mind the post COVID era and also due to a lot of awareness across the globe about the importance of ensuring and adopting the sustainable practices, be it while staying in a hotel or travelling between the destination, as by doing so it will help to offset the carbon impact due to tourism. Today's clients are conscious and insisting that sustainable practices are ensured during their tour. Therefore, it is our responsibility to focus on the issue of sustainability in tourism and keeping that in mind, our business session have been curated, and we are sure members attending the convention would be able to carry back good knowledge about sustainable practices and it's importance for inbound tourism. Preparedness for the convention are in full swing and everything is set to welcome IATO delegates.”



Zia Siddiqui

“Inbound tourism serves as a pivotal sector, contributing significantly to a nation's foreign exchange earnings and bolstering employment opportunities. Every tourist arriving in India catalyzes the creation of approximately seven direct or indirect jobs, reflecting the substantial impact of this industry on the economy. Post-pandemic, there is a palpable sense of optimism within the tourism sector. India has already witnessed a remarkable recovery, with arrivals reaching 60 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels. The upcoming season appears promising, with a surge in inquiries from FITs and small groups. Industry stakeholders are confident that financial year 2023-24 will witness a complete resurgence, surpassing the pre-pandemic numbers. Furthermore, the global travellers community and governments are displaying heightened commitment to responsible tourism, prioritizing environmental conservation and sustainability.”



P. Vijayasathya

“The theme for the IATO Convention aligns seamlessly with the UN's declaration on sustainable tourism development. In recognition of the importance of sustainability in the tourism industry, the theme was carefully chosen as 'Inbound Tourism and Sustainable Trends'. This decision received the endorsement of not only the IATO Executive Committee but also garnered significant support from local authorities and politicians in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar. They exhibited a strong interest in the area's development and expressed a genuine desire to showcase the region's natural beauty and environmental assets to the entire country. Their enthusiastic support is particularly evident in their endorsement of the most extravagant event at the convention, the IATO Run for Responsible Tourism. The event promises a lineup of engaging and informative sessions. The delegates will certainly benefit from the same.”



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# G20 & its fillip to India Tourism

India's G20 Presidency opened new possibilities and opportunities for India Tourism and the G20 meetings played a transformative role, revitalizing India's inbound tourism sector. IATO's regional heads from North, East, West, and South, share their insights on the strategies employed to harness the G20 potential for the benefit of local economies, the industry, and the nation.

“ The G20 meetings have proved to be a game-changer for India's inbound tourism, particularly in the aftermath of the devastating impact of COVID-19. The country required a significant boost in media coverage to signal that it was open for safe travel once again, and the G20 meetings provided just that. Holding these meetings at India's most iconic sites and cities has not only showcased the nation's cultural richness but also left an indelible mark on the delegates and media who attended. The memories of experiencing India's heritage and hospitality have been carried back, effectively painting India as an enticing destination for future travellers. The noticeable investments and enhancements made to the cities and sites that hosted the G20 meetings have yielded lasting improvements. For instance, Agra has undergone a remarkable transformation, becoming cleaner and more beautified since its role in hosting the G20 gathering. Furthermore, the ripple effect of these events has boosted revenue streams for numerous stakeholders within India's tourism industry. As visitors attending the G20 meetings explore other corners of the country, local economies have received a much-needed injection of income. This, in turn, has fostered job creation and encouraged the improvement of essential tourism infrastructure. In sum, the G20 meetings have acted as a catalyst for revitalizing India's tourism sector post-pandemic. The strategic location choices, along with the subsequent investments and improvements, have not only showcased India's grandeur but also reinvigorated local economies and ignited renewed interest in safe and enriching travel experiences across the nation. The Northern Region of IATO holds a unique distinction as being both the largest and most favoured by foreign visitors.”



**Sunil Gupta**  
Chairman, IATO Northern Region &  
Managing Director, Travel Bureau

“ India's G20 Presidency can be a game-changer for the tourism industry. India hosted more than 200 meetings in 59 destinations across the country. These meetings will put a spotlight on several lesser-known tourism destinations and heritage sites in the country, bringing them to the forefront of the global tourism map.

This increased visibility due to media coverage, which can create awareness and curiosity about India as a tourist destination, attracting potential tourists. It also provides an opportunity for India to expand inbound tourism with special emphasis on sustainable and adventure tourism. Further, various cultural and heritage sites of the country will be showcased to the visiting delegates and officials. This exposure can highlight the rich cultural heritage and diverse attractions of India, enticing tourists to explore these sites themselves. G20 brings together leaders and representatives from the world's largest economies, creating a platform for business and investment discussions. This can lead to increased foreign direct investment (FDI) and business collaborations, which, in turn, can result in more business travellers visiting India for meetings, conferences, and related activities. As Chairman of IATO Eastern Region, it has been my continuous endeavour to promote vast tourism potential of Odisha, as well as eastern region by closely interacting with all chapter chairmen of eastern region and following up the critical issues with the concerned government officials for the tourism growth. We organise regular meetings and workshops exclusively for IATO members in the eastern chapter. These gatherings provide opportunities for members to network, share insights, and discuss challenges and best practices. We also invite industry experts to conduct informative sessions on relevant topics.”



**J K Mohanty**  
Chairman IATO Eastern Region &  
CMD, Swosti Group

“ The IATO convention, to be organised at WelcomHotel by ITC Hotels Rama International in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar (Aurangabad) from 29 September to 2 October 2023, will definitely help in the revival of tourism in Aurangabad. The recently held G20 summit across

India and the IATO convention have much in common. India's G20 Presidency will definitely benefit India and its tourism sector in particular. The event has given us good exposure to the rest of the world. Many people were not aware of all the things India has to offer and the G20 Summit held in various locations in India has put a spotlight to those places. Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has really showcased India in a big way and the travel trade hopes to get more business – both domestic and inbound. With this convention too, a destination like Aurangabad will gain popularity. When I started travel business in the mid-1970s, most of the itineraries included Aurangabad as a two-night destination. But after the flights got cancelled between Aurangabad and Udaipur, we lost that connectivity and we had to remove it from itinerary. That was a huge jolt for inbound tourism, specially to that region. Therefore, I was very keen to have this convention in Aurangabad. I believe it is the tourism capital of Maharashtra. I have undertaken several important activities for our members in the region. We have increased our membership and spread more awareness about the association and how it can help them. Moreover, our four-chapter chairmen are now actively interacting with their respective government and ministry officials, which means they know what IATO is.”



**NS Rathor**  
Chairman  
IATO Western Region



**Sejo Jose**  
Chairman  
IATO Southern Region

“ India's G20 is truly a great marketing event for inbound tourism. The event was a gallery which showcased India to the world. Every part of India was showcased. All states hosted the G20 event, and I am sure this event would be talked about for the longest time. Southern region has been very active in promoting its

different regions. The Fam tours done along with Karnataka tourism has been a very big success. Delegation to Andaman made a good impact in promoting Andaman. The different travel marts like GTM brought many trade visitors to Kerala. Tamil Nadu government was busy building up infrastructure for tourism and issuing permissions.”

*Compiled by Janice Alysius*

## STIC Group celebrates 50 years



Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel Group, alongside Karan Singh, Former Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister, unveil the coffee table book at the Golden Jubilee Celebration of STIC Travel Group in New Delhi.



# World Travel Award Winner 2023



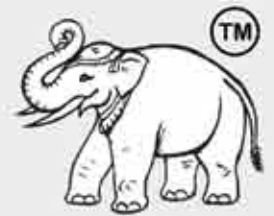
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**India's Leading Destination Management Company**



## Cholan Tours

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# Connectivity & infrastructure push

Over the years, connectivity and infrastructure development have played a critical role in transforming different states and their tourism potential. IATO State Chapter heads share progress in their respective domains in terms of new tourism developments that have been taking place in the last one year.



**Mahendra Singh**  
Co-Chairman  
IATO Rajasthan Chapter

“Connectivity and infrastructure development have played a significant role in promoting tourism in Rajasthan. The state is a popular tourist destination. Development of road networks, highways, and airports has made Rajasthan more accessible to tourists. The major cities like Jaipur, Udaipur and Jodhpur have well-connected airports, which has made it easier for tourists to reach these destinations. Improved infrastructure has led to establishment of tourist information centres, rest areas, clean public restrooms, and other amenities that enhance the overall travel experience. Infrastructure development in eco-tourism areas has facilitated wildlife tourism and boosted conservation efforts.”



**Umesh Kapur**  
Chairman  
IATO Chandigarh & Haryana Chapter

“Over the years, connectivity and infrastructure development has played a critical role in transforming Chandigarh. It is a well-planned city with modern architecture and urban design. Infrastructure and connectivity play crucial roles in the growth of any city, and Chandigarh is no exception. Connectivity and infrastructure improvements often attract tourists, contributing to the local economy through spending on accommodation, dining and sightseeing. The well-connected Chandigarh airport and transportation hubs play a significant role in the development of tourism and hospitality industry for Himachal and Haryana contributing to direct employment of the youth.”



**Narender Bhardwaj**  
Chairman  
IATO Himachal Pradesh Chapter

“Road connectivity was good before this monsoon. After that, connectivity is very poor. I request the central government to intervene in this, and especially National Highways Authority of India. Because of the connectivity now, tourism in Himachal is minimal. The number of buses coming to the state is countable. If we talk about the tourism policy, we need rail connectivity and air connectivity to enhance and boost tourism. The airport is very small and there are a limited flights. The roads have to be fixed by the government, as they are broken at many places and people are scared. Our CM must put out statements that HP is safe for tourists to lure them back.”

“We can showcase a gamut of products to tourists, but without connectivity everything will flounder. We need to have infrastructure in place and very good rail, road and air connectivity. All the major cities of Punjab have best luxury hotels and the state boasts very good road network with eateries on highways and roadside amenities for ages. However, now it has further improved with many new highway connectivity. The rail network has also improved with more options of trains and induction of fast trains like Tejas and Vande Bharat. As far as air connectivity is concerned, apart from domestic airports, Punjab has two international airports at Amritsar & Chandigarh.”



**Manmeet Singh**  
Chairman  
IATO Punjab Chapter

“Accessibility and facilities are the two most important aspects to take a destination to the next level in tourism, and in many ways above ‘attraction’. UP is the only state to have 5 international airports. Similarly, it is the only state that has embarked upon an ambitious last mile connectivity project through helicopters apart from the robust railways and bus network. At least 4 cities of UP have metro rail networks and Varanasi is about to experience an overhead cable car intra-city transport system. UP is already number one in the domestic tourist arrival and soon will beat other states to better its position in foreign tourist arrivals too.”



**Prateek Hira**  
Chairman  
IATO Uttar Pradesh Chapter

“Jammu & Kashmir has made progress by leaps and bounds in the growth of four tier tourism activity—domestic, foreign, inbound, MICE & adventure Tourism predominantly since infrastructure expansion from both govt. and private sector has improved such as excellent highway connectivity from Jammu to Kashmir and then to Ladakh making travel in this circuit quite relaxed. Adventure activities too have augmented in the state. Smart City projects taken by the govt. have given great appearance to Srinagar, Leh and Jammu City. G20 has facilitated us to stimulate inbound and all the IATO members are marketing Kashmir & Ladakh.”



**Nasir Shah**  
Chairman  
IATO Jammu & Kashmir Chapter



**Tsering Namgyal**  
Chairman  
IATO Ladakh Chapter

“Ladakh is one of the remotest tourist destinations in North India. Tourism is seasonal in nature and is the main economic activity in Ladakh, which is heavily dependent on connectivity and proper infrastructure. Over the last couple of years, air connectivity has improved but this year due to closure of Go First, arrivals went down by almost 50-60 per cent, compared to 2022 arrivals. Highway road infrastructure towards Manali and Kashmir have also improved and high number of tourists are taking the long road journey to Ladakh. Darcha-Padum-Kargil highway is also being widened, which will improve connectivity to Zaskar region as well as to Kargil.”



**Sunil Singh Rana**  
Chairman  
IATO Uttarakhand Chapter

“Connectivity and infrastructure development have played a pivotal role in transforming Uttarakhand. Improved road networks have not only enhanced accessibility to remote regions but have also boosted tourism, a significant contributor to the state's economy. The construction of highways and tunnels, such as the Char Dham project, has made pilgrimage sites like Badrinath and Kedarnath more accessible, leading to increased religious tourism. The construction of better highways and tunnels has reduced travel times, making daily commutes and intercity travel more efficient. The development of airports like Dehradun and Pantnagar has improved air connectivity, stimulating economic growth.”



**K. Ranga Reddy**  
Chairman – IATO Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Chapter

“Connectivity and infrastructure development have played a significant role in the growth and development of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Both states have made considerable progress in these areas, which has had several positive impacts on their economies and overall well-being. Economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, tourism and FDIs are some key ways in which connectivity and infrastructure development have benefitted both states, which have made efforts to balance regional development by investing in infrastructure projects. We are going to address these disparities. Also, environmental considerations and inclusivity are important.”



# Air India gets new brand identity

Air India has launched its new brand identity and aircraft livery. The new appearance has many fresh elements, which capture the essence of a bold new India and underlines its transformation into a national inspiration.



TT Bureau

Going with the vision to make Air India a world class airline, the company has brought in some changes to its brand identity and aircraft livery. The new look of the airline reimagines the iconic Indian window shape, historically used by Air India, into a gold window frame that becomes central to the new brand design system - symbolising a 'Window of Possibilities'. Air India's new logo - 'The Vista' - is inspired by the peak of the gold window frame, signifying



Campbell Wilson  
CEO & MD  
Air India

**Air India's new logo - 'The Vista' - signifies limitless possibilities, progressiveness, and the airline's bold, confident outlook for the future**

limitless possibilities, progressiveness, and the airline's bold, confident outlook for the future. Air India's brand new aircraft livery and design features a palette of deep red, aubergine, and gold highlights, as well as a chakra-inspired pattern.

Campbell Wilson, CEO & MD, Air India, said, "Our transformative new brand reflects an ambition to make Air India a world class airline serving guests from around the globe, and that represents a new India proudly on the global stage. The new Air India is bold, confident, and vibrant, but also warm and deeply rooted to its rich history and traditions that make Indian hospitality a global benchmark for standards in service."

The new brand identity has been designed in partnership with the brand transformation company, FutureBrand. It combines Air India's glorious past with its drive to aim for excellence and innovate for the future, creating a stand-out brand design for a premium global airline with an Indian heart. "Colours, patterns, shapes and how they come together and what

they represent matter, but our actions speak so much louder. We are amid a total transformation to reimagine the role of India's flagship airline," Wilson said.

The airline is making significant investments to elevate its service and to strengthen its position as the preferred airline for travellers flying to, from, and within India:

Confirmed historic purchase agreements to acquire 470 aircraft from Airbus and Boeing at US\$70 billion. Also, adding 39 aircraft - 14 widebody and 25 narrow body - on lease, some of which have started joining its fleet.

A US\$400 million programme to refurbish interiors of its existing



aircraft commences mid-2024. By March 2024, nearly 30 per cent of the airline's widebody fleet will be upgraded and over the next two-and-a-half years its entire long-haul fleet will be reborn.



The palace where Maharana Pratap was coronated in 1572. Lovingly restored over 7 years, the original art work, murals, mirror work and paintings adorn the walls and ceilings of the rooms and suites.  
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# Chapters laud infra thrust

► Contd. from page 14



**S Mahalingaiah**  
Chairman  
IATO Karnataka Chapter

“Bangaluru, the capital city has world class airport, one of the busiest airports in India. All major cities in India are connected to it. Apart from this, Mysore, Mangalore, Hubli, Belagavi are also well connected now from various cities, which is helping in getting more domestic tourists to Karnataka from all gateway points. New airports are under construction and the recently built Shivamogga airport is going to be the gateway for Malenadu region. We have excellent rail connections to Karnataka, which is also helping us in getting more tourists, especially domestic. Karnataka's infrastructure has improved a lot for last 10 years. We have more and more quality hotels in Mysore, Coorg, Chikmagalur, Hampi, Badamai, Bijapur, apart from our national parks.”



**James Kodianthara**  
Chairman – IATO Kerala and  
Lakshadweep Chapter

“As far as Kerala is concerned, connectivity from various markets, like Gujarat, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bangalore, is conducive to the growth of domestic tourism in the state. Post-pandemic, there is quick transformation amongst the tour operators, transport operators, hoteliers, etc., which has put tourism back on track with the pre-pandemic times. 2022-23 would be the first year when we will know how the post-pandemic era has really taken shape. From April to September, it is the season for domestic movement. We also foresee a good season between September and March. We could even go up to the pre-pandemic mark and even more. Lakshadweep is connected, but infrastructure isn't as good for various reasons.”



**Pandian K.**  
Chairman  
IATO Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry Chapter

“Tamil Nadu's regional connection and infrastructure has greatly increased after the implementation of the Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) regional connectivity scheme. People value this initiative so much because it eventually allows them to establish strong connectivity between small, medium, and large cities of the state via air transport, which is critical for overall infrastructure development. Tamil Nadu is doing excellent in terms of tourism, and has been getting the highest number of foreign tourists in the country. It not only a preferred religious destination, owing to its various temples, but attracts tourists for various other sites and experiences. The state also attracts a large number of medical value tourists.”

“Enhanced digital connectivity, with projects like the Chennai Andaman Nicobar Islands Submarine Cable (CANI-SMC) have significantly improved digital connectivity between the islands and mainland India. This has resulted in faster and reliable internet services, benefiting residents, businesses, and tourism sector. Strong internet connectivity has a direct impact on tourism industry. It facilitates online bookings, communication, and access to information for travellers. This improved connectivity has the potential to attract more tourists and enhance overall experience. The inauguration of new airport along with a runway enhancement, at a cost of ₹1,000 cr is a significant connectivity achievement.”



**Mohammad H Jadwet**  
Chairman  
IATO Andaman & Nicobar Chapter

“In Bihar and Jharkhand, infrastructure development is very good. All the national highways and state highways are excellent, and we are aiming to make them world-class. With respect to air connectivity Gaya (Bihar) is the only international airport. From next month, it will directly connect with Myanmar, Bhutan, and Thailand via scheduled flights, and via chartered from Vietnam and Singapore. The states are serious about the safety of travellers. Domestic travel is booming due to good condition of roads. In Patna, we have water sports in Ganges. Our new airport Darbhanga is doing well and we have domestic flights from all major cities. Both states are doing very good in infrastructure and connectivity.”



**Sushil Kumar Singh**  
Chairman  
IATO Bihar & Jharkhand Chapter

“Due to improved road and air connectivity, Odisha is fast emerging as an attractive destination for both international and domestic tourists. International flights are directly operating from Bhubaneswar to cities like Bangkok, Dubai & Singapore and international connectivity has opened up new opportunities for the travel trade. With aggressive marketing campaigns and International roadshows we are trying to woo the foreign tourists from Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore to promote Buddhist circuit. As part of UDAN scheme, Bhubaneswar is connected to interiors of Odisha. Air connectivity to Utkela, Jhar-suguda, etc. has provided us a new opportunity to promote lesser-known destination of Odisha.”



**Gagan Sarangi**  
Chairman  
IATO, Odisha



**Debjit Dutta**  
Chairman  
IATO West Bengal Chapter

“Bengal's allure lies in its unparalleled geographical location. With its optimal location, Bengal is poised to become a connectivity hub linking Eastern India and the sub-Himalayan eastern neighbours – Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. This cross-border linkage envisions a future where Eastern South Asia melds

with the broader Pacific expanse, catalysing a new era of inbound travel that invigorates the state and the entire region. Key to this endeavour is the understanding that seamless connectivity highlights the feasibility of inbound tourism. Enhancing road and rail networks not only within Bengal but also across neighbouring states and nations paves the way for comprehensive exploration, unlocking the region's full potential.”



**Deepak Gupta**  
Chairman  
IATO Sikkim & North Bengal Chapter

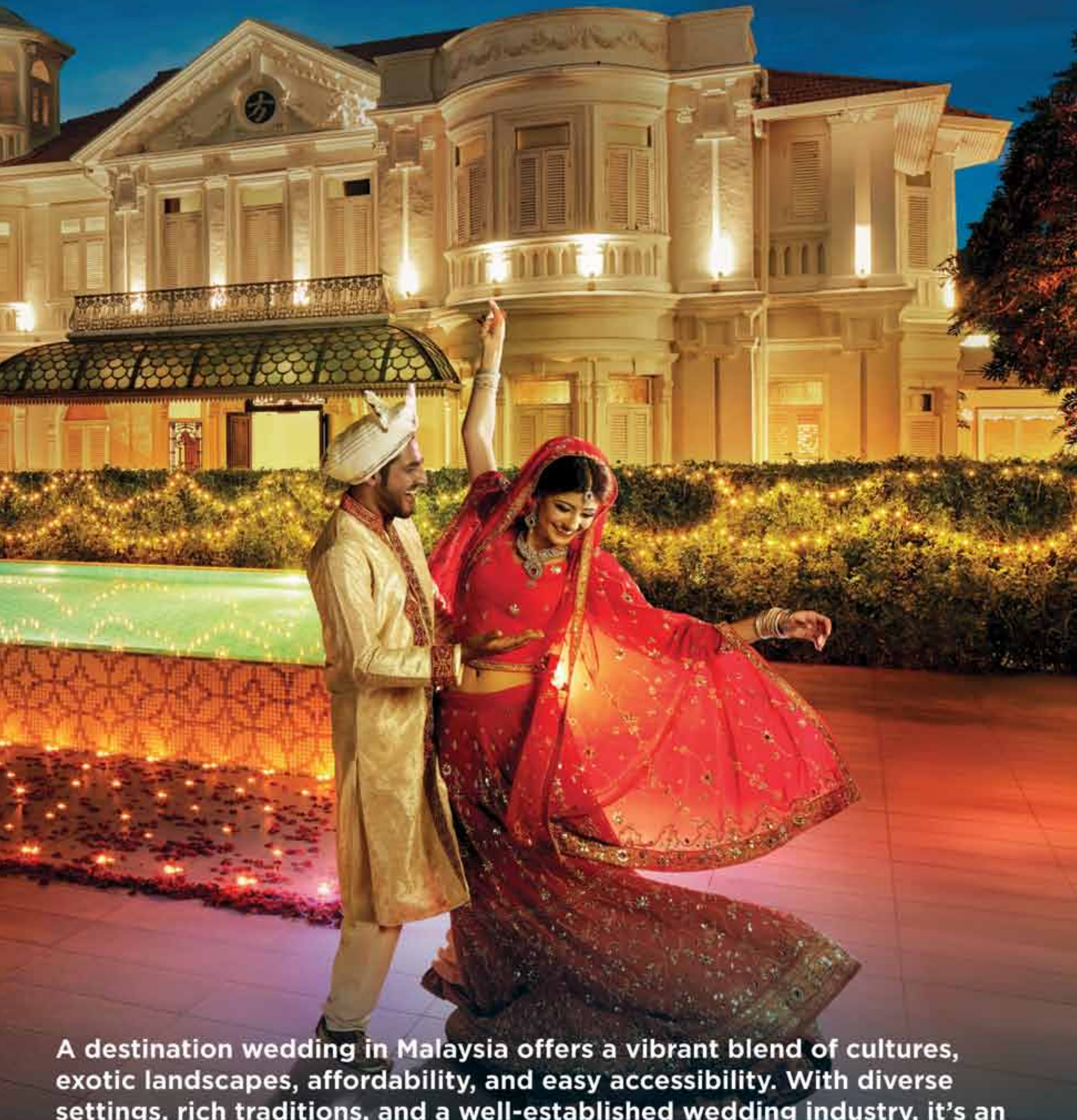
“Connectivity and infrastructure development is the pivotal need of any state. Sikkim and North Bengal are no different. It has made the two states closer. Now, direct flights have started from Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. These are all key markets for Sikkim and North Bengal. On the contrary, new breed of agencies have come up, that are following the practice of buying the bulk from the airlines. This has led to rise in airfare. Now, passengers have an option to go to Dubai, Singapore, Bangkok etc. People will stop coming to these two states if this practice continues. This is one issue we need to highlight, and aviation authority will have to make new rules.”



**Namgyal P Sherpa**  
Chairman  
IATO Sikkim

“The development of infrastructure and improvement of connectivity has certainly enhanced the flow of tourism traffic in Sikkim. With the rapid growth of tourists, especially from the mid-1990's, a wide spread of luxury and deluxe hotels came up in and around Gangtok and other places like Pelling, Namchi, Lachung and Lachen. The same is the case with Ravangla, Martam, Tashiding, Yuksom, Uttarey and Pakyong. Under the policy of eco-tourism, luxury and basic homestays have come up in most of the villages connected with motorable roads even in remote areas. Now Gangtok has star-rated hotels casinos and spas. The state government has developed existing tourist sightseeing points as well.”





A destination wedding in Malaysia offers a vibrant blend of cultures, exotic landscapes, affordability, and easy accessibility. With diverse settings, rich traditions, and a well-established wedding industry, it's an ideal choice for an unforgettable Indian wedding experience.

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**Chennai:** 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Vijaya Tower, 4 Kodambakkam High Road, Nagumbakka, Chennai- 600034, +91-44-45068080



# Infrastructure helping destinations

Contd. from page 16



**H Radhakrishna Sharma**  
State In-charge  
IATO Manipur

Connectivity, especially air connectivity, has played a major role in boosting the tourism in Manipur. Now the capital city Imphal can be reached any day from almost any part of India— be it North, East, West or South. Improved connectivity and infrastructure development has made the city more accessible to the tourists. And the increase in tourist footfall has brought opportunities for generating more employment. If not for the present crisis, Manipur would have been one of the major destinations in the itinerary of tourists who plan to visit North East. ”



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

Aurangabad as we know is a huge heritage city with UNESCO sites. This region is best connected by roads, but the options for flights is also good. Today, Aurangabad has multiple flights from Mumbai per day. This has improved our business with our clients finding easy flights into Aurangabad. Today we have three flights from Mumbai – one from Air India and two from indigo. Today, the Mumbai to Nagpur expressway that is being built also connects other major cities like Aurangabad, Nashik, and Shirdi. These are all huge tourism destinations. ”



**Mahendra Pratap Singh**  
Chairman IATO Madhya Pradesh &  
Chhattisgarh Chapter

Improved connectivity and infrastructure have significantly bolstered the tourism sector in Madhya Pradesh. We now have upgraded road network, expanded airports, and improved rail connectivity. Well-maintained roads and transportation options have made it easier for tourists to access remote and offbeat attractions. This has led to the discovery of lesser-known destinations. Enhanced connectivity to Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Panna, Satpura, and Kuno National Parks has led to a surge in wildlife tourism. ”

Goa now has a brand new Greenfield airport. The Mopa Goa (GOX) is the state of the art private airport and the second airport in Goa. Goa's connectivity to various Indian cities is a positive sign for the state. Also, connectivity to international destinations is also under process, which will bring in more foreign tourists to Goa from various parts of the globe. Goa's local roads have also been broadened and traffic lights and traffic cameras have been installed for smooth and safe driving in Goa. Some of the bus terminals have also been upgraded and some are under process. New helipads have been also constructed by the Goa government to promote helicopter rides in Goa. There are plans to construct amusement parks near Mopa Airport. Overall, there is a lot of infrastructure development taking place in last few years and more is in the pipeline. ”



**Martin Joseph Thypodath**  
Chairman IATO  
Goa Chapter

Tourism in Gujarat has improved a lot due to improved connectivity and infrastructure. Statue of Unity in Kevadia is a man-made destination, which did not have proper roads to access and did not even have a railway station. But the government's efforts turned around this destination for tourism. This includes getting approachable road and making the railway station there, which connects it to major cities. The introduction of Vande Bharat trains between Ahmedabad and Mumbai, which takes hardly 5.30 hours to cover the distance between the two destinations, helps a lot of tourists. Dwarka always sees a lot of tourists coming from South India, so the new flight connectivity from Hyderabad and Bengaluru to Jamnagar has made it easy for tourists to reach Dwarka, and from there they can complete the tour of Porbandar, Somnath, and Sasan. ”



**Randhirsingh Vaghela**  
Chairman  
IATO Gujarat & Diu Chapter

Compiled by Suhani Sood

## Charters are easy to sell for trade

Although charter air services have been doing extremely well, travel agencies and tour operators are still hesitant in offering private charter to their clients. This is because of many reasons, and Foresee Aviation is leaving no stone unturned to work towards solving this problem.

Majority of inbound tourists visiting India utilise the services of the Indian DMCs or travel agencies or tour operators via their agents in their countries. When we met majority of these Indian agents, we found that surprisingly a larger number of these companies do not offer private jet charter services to their foreign agents. Probing further, we found out that there are few reasons for this hesitance:

- ❖ Lack of product knowledge
- ❖ Insecurity about losing existing business
- ❖ Lack of proper studies regarding the stature of the end guests
- ❖ Not open towards introducing a new product to their portfolio, and
- ❖ Myth that private charter is an expensive proposition



As an organisation which has been dealing with DMCs, travel agents and tour operators for over a decade now, we at Foresee Aviation took up this challenge to train these partners on various aspects of private aircraft charter services. Under this training module, we briefed the inbound team of travel agencies on various

types of aircraft and helicopters, their bases and per hour rates, airport handling charges and most importantly how the entire process of charter query to execution works.

We also provided opportunities to the Indian agents to experience private charters, which made things

simpler for them to sell charter services to their foreign counterparts. Lastly, we also introduced them with various airports and unmanned airfields. Surprisingly, there were some airstrips closer to the destinations, which the Indian agents were unaware of like Sirohi, Keshod, Ranthambore, Umaria, and Gondia.

These efforts on our parts fetched impressive results where a large chunk of travels agents started

28% of our travel agents' business comes from small and medium travel agencies. Primary reason for this is their aggressive marketing

promoting charters and also, the conversion rates increased. Interestingly, about 28 per cent of our travel agents' business comes from

small and medium travel agencies. Primary reason for this figure is their aggressive marketing approach in promoting private charters amongst their foreign agents. Our aim is to train travel agents across all parts of India interested in promoting private air charters.



**Santosh Sharma**  
CEO, Foresee Aviation  
and Founder, BookMyJet

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





# South Tourism

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## Why South Tourism?



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- Unrivalled local knowledge about destinations in South India.



## South Tourism



the Complete Tour Planner for South India



# Doyen of Indian hospitality

The Swosti Group of Hotels attracts a lot of domestic and inbound tourists every year for a variety of events. The group, catering to leisure, weddings and major MICE events from across the Eastern region of the country, looks to expand its assortment of properties to encourage tourism flow into the state of Odisha.



TT Bureau

Swosti Group, one of the popular hospitality and travel companies of Eastern India and a pioneer in the trade since 1981, boasts of more than 300 luxury rooms, and one of the largest convention centres in the region. **JK Mohanty**, Chairman

and Managing Director, Swosti Group, says, "We have been constantly endeavouring to provide world-class hospitality services. With its excellent services with human touch and professionalized services, Swosti Group is able to attract a large number of domestic as well as inbound travellers from South-East Asian countries."

Swosti has been catering to leisure, weddings and major MICE events from across the Eastern region of the country. Apart from that, there has been a significant number of NRI destination weddings at the Swosti Chilika Resort, Mohanty shares. "As far as MICE is concerned, the Swosti Group has become the epicentre



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

The tagline of the Swosti Group is "Once Our Guests, Forever Our Friends", a testimony to the hospitality services that they offer to their strong corporate clientele,

**With its excellent services, Swosti Group is able to attract a large number of domestic as well as inbound travellers from SE Asian countries**

We are providing periodic training to our staff and managers to impart quality service, hygiene, impart human values and professional leadership through our Hotel Management Institute, Swosti Institute of Management & Social Studies (SIMSS)," Mohanty adds.

The brand is also committed to contributing towards the development of Odisha as a premier tourist destination, and its plans for expansion include developing major tourist spots in the state through their properties. "We plan to have resorts in various tourist destinations like Puri, Gopalpur-on-Sea, Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, and Satpada. Swosti Group has already acquired land at these destinations. Construction work is also already in full swing at the land of Lord Jagannath, Puri, where we are coming up with a 5-star luxury resort, Swosti Premium Beach Resort, by the end of 2023," he shares.



of MICE business in the state of Odisha with the largest convention hall (Chankya) at Swosti Premium Bhubaneswar, and Swosti Chilika Resort, which is an exclusive MICE venue on the banks of the Chilika Lake. The resort is the perfect venue for planning your conferences, meetings, corporate get-togethers, MICE events or other business meetings," he says.

and other guests. They also specialise providing travellers with a customised and professional service for wellness, leisure, or weddings. "We at Swosti Group are giving utmost importance to provide professionalized attention to our valued guests.

## 'Curated packages to clients key'

Cholan Tours, a Destination Management Company (DMC) headquartered in Trichy, Tamil Nadu, with branches across India, offers tailor-made tour packages to clients in the country. Pandian Kumaravel, Managing Director, Cholan Tours, shares his views on travel trends, collaboration with partners, and IATO Annual Convention.



TT Bureau

Cholan Tours, a Destination Management Company (DMC) headquartered in Trichy, Tamil Nadu, with branches across India, has built a "solid" brand value by offering tailor-made tour packages to clients in the country focusing on culture, nature and wildlife, beaches, cuisine, art, or any combination of these and more.

Pandian Kumaravel, Managing Director, Cholan Tours, says, "We provide complete travel solutions by offering hotel accommodation throughout India, houseboats and homestays, car rental, domestic air tickets, railway e-tickets and tourist guide services anywhere in India. Our comprehensive product knowledge and contacts in the region translate directly into benefits and added value for clients."

"We are a MOT (Ministry of Tourism) approved tour operator. Even during the pandemic, we sustained



**Pandian Kumaravel**  
Managing Director  
Cholan Tours

**Cholan Tours' comprehensive product knowledge and contacts in the region translate directly into benefits and added value for clients**

and retained offices at strategic locations and managed to hold the staff," he adds.

At the World Travel Awards, Cholan Tours won 'India's Leading Destination Management Company 2023' honour.

**'IATO convention is eye-opener'**  
Talking about the IATO annual convention, Kumaravel says that the convention is close to his heart, as "it is all about learning new strategies, unique ideas, and networking". "I always take away many learnings with me like new business strategies, unique ideas, gaining knowledge about destinations, government schemes related to travel and tourism, and about new hotel openings," he says.

"We meet new members, get to know their expertise and opportunity to exchange business ideas. I have always learned valuable lessons, particularly in IATO business sessions organised during conven-



tion wherein industry veterans are invited to speak. Every year IATO convention becomes an eye-opener for me."

**Convention best place for trade**  
About their engagement and collaboration with travel trade, Kumaravel says that the convention is the best place to meet fellow tour operators from various cities across India. "IATO has created an excellent platform for us to attain

expertise and establish a connection between us for a future business exchange. We attend sessions together wherein we spend quality time, discuss challenges and find a workable, practical solution," he shares.

**Promoting to right clientele**  
Talking about the promotional activities and marketing campaigns of the company, Kumaravel mentioned that they send

newsletters to agents with whom they work. "We exchange information about local destinations to enable them to promote the destinations to appropriate clientele," he says.

Stressing on the importance of advertising, he says, "We do advertise our services in travel journals and magazines during meetings/conventions for greater visibility in the industry."



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**DAY 03**  
BHUBANESWAR - UGRATARA  
TARATARINI - GOPALPUR

DURATION

7 NIGHTS

8 DAYS

**PLACES COVERED :**  
BHUBANESWAR - BIRAJA  
TARATARINI - GOPALPUR  
PURI - KONARK  
BHUBANESWAR

**DAY 04**  
GOPALPUR- NARAYANI TEMPLE  
HAGABATI TEMPLE - CHILIKA LAKE

**DAY 05**  
PURI- KONARK - KAKATPUR  
CHAURASI - BHUBANESWAR

**DAY 06**  
BHUBANESWAR - CHARCHIKA  
SARALA TEMPLE

**DAY 07**  
BHUBANESWAR DEPARTURE TRANSFER.



**BIRAJA TEMPLE**



**TARA TARINI**



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# Malaysia eyes tier II, III Indian cities

Tourism Malaysia has long regarded India as their crucial tourism market. Manoharan Periasamy, Senior Director of the International Promotion Division, Asia/ Africa, Malaysia Tourism, shares insights into their strategies and future plans to enhance the Indian travel experience.



Janice Alyosius

India has long been a priority market for Tourism Malaysia, and they have been diligently working to attract Indian tourists to the enchanting destination.

Talking about their future plans to enhance the travel experience for Indian visitors, **Manoharan Periasamy**, Senior Director, International Promotion Division, Asia/ Africa, Malaysia Tourism, said that Tourism Malaysia is not only focusing on leisure tourists but also on niche products.

"India has been our priority market for so long, even prior to the pandemic. Tourism Malaysia is not only focusing on leisure tourists coming from this country but also focusing on niche products like destination wedding, golfing, filming destination, medical and education tourism. We believe that India has checked all the boxes in these products that we have to offer. Besides promoting Malaysia

to the major cities, we are also focusing on tier II and tier III cities in India," he said.

Periasamy anticipates a gradual return of Indian travellers to Malaysia. "Pre-pandemic, Indians would stay for around 7 days on an average in Malaysia. Post-pandemic, the number of arrivals to Malaysia is on the right track to be where it was before. So, we are looking forward to seeing the average stay increase gradually. We are aggressively promoting new destinations among the Indians like Desaru Coast, Gembox Nilai, the Borneo side of Malaysia, Homestay and Kampungstay," he said.

Emphasising on collaboration with the Indian travel trade, Periasamy said, "In the past years, Tourism Malaysia has always worked closely with the Indian tourism fraternity, and we plan to continue to do so in the future. We constantly have our joint promotions, organising B2B programmes, and participating in trade shows



**Manoharan Periasamy**  
Senior Director, International Promotion Division, Asia/ Africa, Malaysia Tourism

and seminars with Indian travel agents, TV stations and airlines, be it Indian-based or Malaysian-based. By having these, we want to make sure Malaysia is always on top of the potential Indian tourists as a preferred destination."

Highlighting tourism Malaysia's new developments and attractions that have been introduced to specifically capture the inter-

est of Indian travellers, Periasamy revealed, "We have identified destination weddings and filming in Malaysia as key areas for growth, given India's vibrant film industry."

They are also promoting home-stays and kampungstays to provide Indian travellers with an authentic local experience.

In terms of connectivity, as of September 2023, there are nearly 170 weekly flights between India and Malaysia, with approximately 32,000 seats available. Airlines are continuously introducing new routes and resuming old ones to improve connectivity between the two countries.

Emphasising on the priority segments, Periasamy said, "All segments are equally important to us but other than the existing tourist destinations, destination wedding, golfing, filming destination, medical and education tourism, home-stays and kampungstays are the new niche segments that we are

looking at right now to entice more and more Indians to Malaysia. We are looking at the tier I, tier II and tier III cities, as they have more spending power and have the interest to travel."

**As of September 2023, there are nearly 170 weekly flights between India and Malaysia, with approximately 32,000 seats available**

Sharing insights into their recent initiatives to bolster Indian tourist arrivals, Periasamy said, "We just concluded our second roadshow to six tier II and tier III cities in India in August 2023. It is the continuation of the first roadshow that was held in May 2023, as we saw the

potential sales generated by our Malaysian sellers. It is a good sign for us to continue our promotions aggressively in India through our offices in New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. In the pre-pandemic, Malaysia has welcomed close to 750,000 Indian tourists and, of course, we want to beat the arrival numbers the soonest possible. As of 2022, we welcomed around 325,000 tourists and we believe, with all the campaigns that we have done so far, we are targeting to have around 426,000 arrivals in 2023. Yet, we are still optimistic that the final figure can reach north of 500,000 tourists."

Emphasising on the events and promotional activities in the pipeline, Periasamy shared, "Lots of other events and happenings to cater to Indian tourists will be rolled out, especially as we are gearing towards the Visit Malaysia campaign. More special promotions will be aggressively done with all parties in the tourism industry in Malaysia and India." 🐦

## Blend of royalty & heritage

Gogunda Palace, an 'oasis' situated strategically close to Udaipur city, along with other major tourist attractions like Kumbalgarh Fort, Ranakpur Temple, and Nathdwara, brings a plethora of unique and authentic experiences for the heritage traveller seeking to explore history and regional flavours.



TT Bureau

Nestled in a small village in Rajasthan, Gogunda Palace is a 456-year-old authentic palace where Maharana Pratap, erstwhile king of Mewar, was coronated. It is an oasis in the countryside and strategically close to Udaipur city, along with major tourist attractions like Kumbalgarh Fort, Ranakpur Temple, and Nathdwara.

**Hiral Shah**, Head of Marketing and Sales, Gogunda Palace, says, "Many of the rooms and suites have the original art work, murals, mirror work, and carvings adorning its walls and ceilings. Each of the rooms and suites are unique, as these were the residential rooms of the royal family. Each room and suite is unique in decor and furniture. For those who enjoy architecture and culture, there is so much to explore and savour around the palace, as it is an example of traditional Mewari architecture."



**Hiral Shah**  
Head of Marketing and Sales  
Gogunda Palace

The property is ideal for intimate celebrations like small weddings, with 40 rooms that can accommodate up to 100 guests. Gogunda Palace also offers a variety of cuisine to cater to the guests, with food ranging from authentic Rajasthani cuisine to North Indian and Continental. They also offer customizable menus with regional cuisine to make it a unique and special event experience for the

guests. Shah says, "From the Temple Courtyard, which still houses the original temple of the royal family, to the Neem Garden and Champa Lawns, there are several spaces where events with 25-500 guests can be organised."

**From the Temple Courtyard to the Neem Garden and Champa Lawns, there are several spaces where events with 25-500 guests can be organised**

We have terraces for sundowners in the evening and an indoor space lending itself to late night parties as well. The large open spaces also allow flexibility of different set-ups that can be styled and curated as per the guests' preferences."



The Gogunda Palace's USP is the experiential tourism that they offer to guests. "We have curated some new experiences for guests to enjoy both in and around the palace. There are cooking classes with our chef to learn royal recipes, a heritage

walk around the palace, Royal Hi Tea, Sundowners at the Terrace, and a romantic dinner under the stars in one of our lawns, among others. Around the palace, we offer visits to the local farms and potters, a vintage car ride around the village, and a jeep safari in the

Aravalli Hills is also available. We are always looking at adding new experiences and activities in and around the palace, so there will always be something to see and do for those that wish to explore the beautiful state of Rajasthan," he concludes. 🐦





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# Creating island experiences

With more than three decades of experience in organising customized tour packages for travellers from around the world, Destination Management Company ABH Tourism takes care of the travellers' dream vacation by providing them with memorable experiences, says Zia Siddiqui, Director, ABH Tourism.



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ABH Tourism is one of the leading Destination Management Company (DMC) in the Andaman & Nicobar Island, which specializes in organising group tours for domestic and in-bound travellers to the beautiful and exciting islands. The DMC also takes care of the travellers' dream vacation by providing them with memorable experiences.

"With 35+ years of experience in organising a customized special tour packages for travellers from around the world, we have one focus and that is simply to make a trip the experience of a lifetime giving best deals," says **Zia Siddiqui**, Director, ABH Tourism.

"The DMC knows what is essential for creating a perfect trip. With fascinating destinations, expert guides, premium accommodations and travel – not to mention competitive prices; we strive to tick all the boxes to create the



**Zia Siddiqui**  
Director  
ABH Tourism

most unique and authentic travelling experiences," he adds. "Our main priority, apart from giving lifetime experiences to clients, is to assist micro, small, and medium tour operators, so that they can maximise their business on the basis of guest experience/feedback. We are not at all in the race of undercutting, nor we prefer our B2B partner to practice it. Our services are our strength," he further informs.

Sharing achievements of ABH Tourism, Siddiqui said that the organization has handled more than one lakh travellers in the Andaman & Nicobar Island in last 22 years, giving positive reaction towards customized special packages.

**With fascinating destinations, & expert guides, we (ABH Tourism) strive to tick all the boxes to create unique and authentic travelling experiences**

ABH will be re-branded soon as 'The Alliance', A Consortium of Global DMCs.

"By the end 2024, we would be having the DMCs in 10 countries in Southeast Asia. With this devel-



opment, marketing is now taken over by Abdullah and Salman. The young team of professional and experience will take the company to the next level. I will continue to guide but my major focus would be on development of DMC and our hotel division i.e. Alliance Hotels & Resorts," he says.

The DMC provides expertise for the Andaman & Nicobar Islands only. Shortly, they are going to operate outbound tourism for Goa, Maldives, Bhutan, Northeast, Karnataka, and Uttarakhand.

## Unique Selling Points of the DMC

- ❖ **Unique itineraries:** They allow traveller to discover the essence of a new culture at its home, whilst travelling in comfort and style with like-minded travellers. Our tours are delicately designed to include must-see sights, authentic culture, history and adventure, with enough freedom and flexibility to discover on one's own terms as well.
- ❖ **Unforgettable Adventures:** We hand-select the accommodation used on our tours, which must meet our strict standards of quality in terms of comfort, convenience, and style. While each destination and region have its authentic style and different quality standards, we ensure that the tourists get the best accommodation around for the best price.
- ❖ **Sustainability:** Together with our guests, we strive to make a positive impact on local people and economies, respecting the local culture, environment, social fabric and customs; encouraging respectful and meaningful cross-cultural exchange.

# High on sustainable practices

CGH Earth is continuing its motto of following sustainable practices and aspires to create a tourism experience that is based on sharing responsibility for the planet. The brand advocates Earth-friendly luxury holidays, which make a holistic bond with the travellers and create awareness for sustainable travel practices.



TT Bureau

CGH Earth is a transformative wellness and tourism brand bringing in positive change not just for travellers but also for the environment, and the community. The brand is high on sustainable practices and aspires to create a tourism experience that is based on sharing responsibility for the planet. **Michael Dominic**, MD and CEO, CGH Earth, says, "As sustainability and being responsible to the planet while choosing a holiday has become very relevant in the recent past, CGH Earth is often a role model to share experiences, learnings, and benefits."

There is wide range of sustainability practices that CGH Earth has incorporated, along with their hospitality services, across all their properties. "Waste management of biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste is a combination of reduction and recycling at our properties. All food waste is processed through a biogas plant



**Michael Dominic**  
MD and CEO  
CGH Earth

that serves as cooking fuel, and the residual slurry is used as manure for organic cultivation. Paper waste is recycled into envelopes for inter-departmental use and at other properties of the hotel chain. Old cloth refuse and bed linen are donated to local bodies," he says.

CGH Earth's wellness resort in Gokarna, SwaSwara has three large rainwater harvesting ponds

that store up to 25 million litres of rainwater to meet the daily water need of the property. "SwaSwara does not draw water from outside its campus and does not drain out wastewater from its premises. Grey water from the washrooms

**All food waste is processed through a biogas plant that serves as cooking fuel, and the residual slurry is used as manure for organic cultivation**

and wastewater from the kitchens is collected and filtered before it is fed into the polishing chamber. After secondary treatment, the recycled water is used for irrigating the 4 acres of farmland where paddy and vegetables are cultivat-



ed for use in the kitchen," he adds. Across the board for CGH properties, 100 per cent (49,000 litres/day) of the wastewater generated on-site is treated in anaerobic sewage treatment plants. Another property, Spice Village, has been able to go 75 per cent off the government electric grid and depends on solar renewable energy.

Dominic also talks about the latest offering from CGH Earth, their Lockhart Bungalow in Munnar. "CGH Earth has partnered with HML's Harrison's Heritage to introduce a whole new experience to our guests—a mesmerizing Tea Plantation retreat located in the famed Lockhart Estate in Munnar. Among the

three colonial bungalows on the estate, we are opening doors at the Lockhart Bungalow, a three-bedroom bungalow built in the early 1940s. It's an ideal holiday for those wanting to get away from the hurried lives of the urban jungle and lose themselves in the slow-paced life of the idyllic Munnar hill," he says.





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# Makruzz committed to green tourism

Makruzz Passenger Ferry Division, offering maritime travel experiences, has plans to expand its fleet and improve connectivity to more destinations within the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. 'Additionally, we are exploring eco-friendly initiatives to minimize our environmental footprint,' says Mohamad H Jadwet, Director, Makruzz.



**M**akruzz Passenger Ferry Division, a subsidiary of Mak Logistics, is a pioneering and distinguished entity in the maritime travel industry. The division is committed to offering safe, luxurious, and sustainable maritime travel experiences while contributing to the prosperity of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. **Mohamad H Jadwet**, Director, Makruzz, says, "We are continuously striving to enhance our services. We have plans to expand our fleet and improve connectivity to more destinations within the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Additionally, we are exploring eco-friendly initiatives to minimize our environmental footprint."

The division offers a comprehensive support to keep travel partners well-informed about their services, and the unique attractions of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. This ensures that the partners can



**Mohamad H Jadwet**  
Director  
Makruzz

provide accurate and up to date information to their clients, which enhances customer satisfaction. Jadwet says, "We have also developed a user-friendly online portal and mobile application exclusively for travel agents, allowing them to book tickets seamlessly and access real-time information. This portal simplifies the booking process, making it more efficient for our valued travel partners."

## IATO evolves travellers' expectations

Talking about the IATO's contribution to their business, Jadwet says, "The IATO convention is an invaluable platform for networking, collaboration, and staying updated with industry trends. This conven-

## Makruzz offers a comprehensive support to keep travel partners well-informed about their services, and the attractions of the Andaman & Nicobar

tion is instrumental in gaining insights into emerging travel trends and evolving travellers' expectations. It enables us to connect with travel professionals, foster



partnerships and discuss potential collaborations. By participating in the convention, the division can share offerings with a wider audience and ensure services align with the dynamic needs of travellers. In a rapidly changing industry, the IATO convention provides us with the knowledge and connections needed to thrive and deliver exceptional travel experiences."

## Incentivizing travel trade

Jadwet says, "To incentivize our travel trade partners, we periodically offer rewards and incentives to top-performing agents, demonstrating our appreciation for their ongoing support and partnership. At Makruzz Passenger Ferry Division, we consider our collaboration with the travel trade industry to be a cornerstone of our success."

The company has established partnerships with more than 800 travel agents. "These partnerships enable us to reach a wider audience. To foster mutually beneficial relationships, we offer competitive commission structures to our travel partners. Our transparent and equitable commission policies make us a preferred choice for travel agents," he says.

# Udaan's biz dreams in Northeast

Udaan Hotels & Resorts has covered a long journey since its debut in Siliguri in 2011. With over 800 people engaged in the group's business in Siliguri and Northeast India, it is a great set-up in terms of development of local economy, says Ajay Kumar Wadhawan, Executive Director, AIR iQ and Udaan Hotels & Resorts.



**A**IR iQ and Udaan Hotels & Resorts traces its journey in travel and hospitality business to 2011. Informing about the group's journey, **Ajay Kumar Wadhawan**, Executive Director, AIR iQ and Udaan Hotels & Resorts, says, "The passion of two MDs, Nishi Kant Agarwal and Sashi Kant Agarwal, towards the tourism industry enabled them to set up business in Siliguri. With more than 800 people engaged in group's business in Siliguri and Northeast India, it is definitely a great setup in terms of development of local economy, and opportunity for local population too."

## B2B fixed departure online solution

Wadhawan considers the group's leading B2B fixed departure online solution, airiq.in, as a blessing. "It is indeed a blessing for all the different profiles of tour operators and agents particularly selling the tickets combining them with the



**Ajay Kumar Wadhawan**  
Executive Director  
AIR iQ and Udaan Hotels & Resorts

land arrangements for their customers," he says. "AIR iQ sells more than 250 routes on this platform and has more than 50,000 agents registered. AIR iQ did a business of more than ₹1,000 cores in 2022-23, he adds.

## B2B online national FIT portal

With humongous success of the B2B fixed departure online solution, Air iQ has launched a new B2B online national FIT portal



'airiqonline.in'. With their existing strength, they have been very successful in creating a better distribution network of more than 5,000 agents.

## With humongous success of the B2B fixed departure online solution, Air iQ has launched a new B2B online national FIT portal 'airiqonline.in'

## Udaan Hotels & Resorts

Talking about the group's third vertical, Udaan Hotels & Resorts, Wadhawan says, "We are a popu-



lar boutique hotel and resort chain in West Bengal and Sikkim Hills with nine operational hotels in Darjeeling, Gangtok, Pelling, and Siliguri." The group has expansion plans. "Eight resorts are to be launched by the year-end, and 30 properties by the end of 2025," he says. "We are not expanding ourselves to the rest of India as of

now, as we plan to open properties here, which will help in boosting local economies and tourism opportunities," he adds.

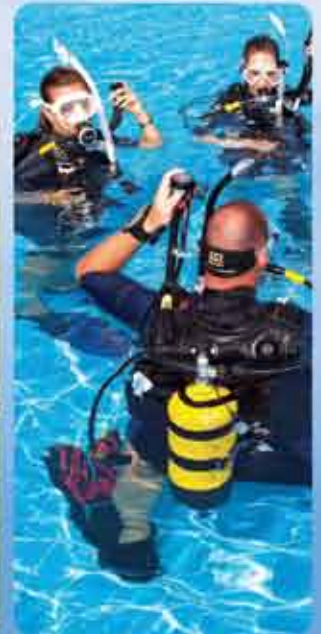
## IATO's role commendable

Talking about the forthcoming IATO Convention in Aurangabad, Wadhawan says, "IATO convention is going to be extremely helpful to

us, as we will be able to exhibit our strength of providing special airfares to industry colleagues, particularly inbound tour operators. Also, we will also be able to showcase our strength in hospitality." He also underlined the importance of travel partners. "We have a vast distribution network (of agents) across the country," he informs.



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# Kerala district portals revamped

The 14 District Tourism Promotion Councils in Kerala have got revamped websites, which offer easy access to information on various tourism products in an attractive manner.



**P A Mohamed Riyas**, Tourism Minister, Kerala, has launched the new DTPC website packed with information and images. He said that with the advent of social media, it is vital to draw on cutting-edge technologies while developing and updating online platforms providing tourism information.

The updated DTPC websites are stacked with a lot of information on diverse attractions awaiting the visitors across Kerala. These websites are designed in a highly attractive manner, enabling tourists to effortlessly navigate through them, for choosing the places they want to visit and make use of facilities available in each location, said the minister.

"In an age when the fast-paced growth of IT has a great influence on people, identifying its possibilities is vital to the growth of Kerala's Tourism sector. So, updating and upgrading technological platforms like websites using most modern



**P A Mohamed Riyas**  
Tourism Minister  
Kerala

technology is vital for promotion of tourism in the state," he added.

Kerala Tourism has revamped its websites after 20 years, showcasing the distinct features of each of the 14 districts to the world. Riyas added, "This also reflects the efforts of the State Tourism Department to adapt itself to the global transformations. DTPCs form an important branch of the Tourism Department. The revamped websites will enable

each district's tourism activities to be coordinated in a better way. Apart from providing details regarding each district's tourist locales, the website also makes navigation easier for the tourists."

**In an age when the fast-paced growth of IT has a great influence on people, identifying its possibilities is vital to the growth of Kerala Tourism**

The minister has also urged the secretaries of 14 DTPCs to add more details on websites regarding events and places of cultural and historical significance, besides highlighting the Keralites' hospitality and communal harmony to attract more visitors.

# An Honoris Causa for Mohanty

JK Mohanty, CMD, Swosti Group & Chairman, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha, has been conferred with the Degree of Letters (Honoris Causa) by KIIT, a deemed to be university.



**JK Mohanty**, CMD, Swosti Group & Chairman, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha, was conferred with the Degree of Doctor of Letters (Honoris Causa), at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation of KIIT, a deemed to be university. His Excellency Governor of Odisha, **Sri Ganeshi Lal** presented the degree to Mohanty at a function organised on 19 August 2023.



JK Mohanty (second from right) receives the degree at the KIIT convocation

Mohanty also holds the position of Chairman for the Eastern Region of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). He has worked in close cooperation with the state government of Odisha, as well as the Government of India to develop and promote the tourism and hospitality sectors of Odisha for the past 42 years. The Swosti Group of Hotels, Resorts, Travels, Hospitality Education was established by Mohanty in 1981, and has turned out to be one of the leading brands, not only in the Eastern region but also across the country. Since 1991, Mohanty has

also been singlehandedly responsible for promoting Odisha as a tourist destination internationally, by conducting multiple roadshows across many European countries. The degree honours the sheer dedication and resolve of Mohanty to highlight the state of Odisha as a spot on the global tourism map.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohanty said, "I feel a great sense of fulfilment and gratitude to Lord Jagannath, blessings of my parents, family members, friends and

well-wishers and to Dr Achyuta Samanta for recognising my dedication and contribution in the field of tourism. This recognition not only boosts my motivation but also serves as a reminder of the responsibility I have to continue working towards the betterment of the Odisha tourism and towards all my employees who are responsible for my achievement." The award is a recognition to his immeasurable contribution to the tourism and hospitality industries of the state.

# Experience Aurangabad year round

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (Aurangabad) has the potential to be a year-round destination for tourism, says Jaswant Singh, Convention Coordinator, IATO. He shares his views on how the upcoming IATO Annual Convention can be a game-changer, not just for the destination, but also for the local travel trade and hotels.



**Jaswant Singh**, Convention Coordinator, IATO and President, Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation (ATDF), believes that Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, better known as Aurangabad, is the gateway city to the First World Heritage Monuments of India before the Taj Mahal, and is the Tourism Capital of Maharashtra. Unfortunately, it has not been marketed well.

"We at Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation have been working on a four-point agenda since its inception to ensure that it becomes a year-round destination and not remain a seasonal destination. One of the items on the agenda was to get IATO to conduct their convention in this city. We have noticed that many tour operators and members of IATO have been promoting this destination but had never visited personally," he says.



**Jaswant Singh**  
Convention Coordinator, IATO and President,  
Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation

**We have noticed that many tour operators and members of IATO have been promoting this destination but had never visited personally**

This convention, he adds, will give all the members a first-hand glimpse of the city and the prestigious monuments nearby. "Agents who are already promoting the city will see the changes in the city and those who were not promoting will have an additional destination to sell, thereby increasing the stay of a tourist into Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nager and giving a chance to the local tour operators to earn more," he further adds.

There are many repeat visitors to our country, which is a sort of continent in itself, Singh says. "Our country changes every 100 kms, be it cuisine, language, attire, or culture. Hence, offering new destinations like Aurangabad to repeat guests will be an additional attraction to them. I am sure this convention will be a game changer for the Aurangabad travel trade. Usually, tier II cities are underestimated but convincing IATO and getting them all they required from our



side made them more comfortable in accepting the challenge to do the convention in a tiered city like Aurangabad."

## Changes are needed

Tourism can be the backbone for a destination like Aurangabad. "In my opinion, by getting the IATO convention and its members to Aurangabad, we have won half the battle. The other

half is packaging and marketing it well. I am sure the members

## Greenfield industrial smart city

The Aurangabad Industrial City (AURIC) is a greenfield industrial smart city over an area of 10,000 acres in Aurangabad. It is a part of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Project (DMIC), which is planned for developing an industrial zone spanning six states between Delhi and Mumbai. A land of hidden wonders, Aurangabad has a plethora of heritage monuments like Ajanta and Ellora caves, Deogiri or Daulatabad fort, Bibi Ka Maqbara, Panchakki Pitalkhora Caves, and Lonar crater.



# Radisson strides forth with accessibility

India has witnessed significant growth in the travel and hospitality industry in the recent years. The Radisson Hotel Group (RHG) remains a leader in hospitality business in the country for both domestic and inbound market. The brand shares the significant factors that assist them for the same.



TT Bureau

The Radisson Hotel Group has completed 25 years in India as a premium brand of hotels, catering to a wide range of guests, both within the domestic and inbound markets. India has witnessed significant growth in the travel and hospitality industry in the recent years, with a 23 per cent year on year increase in the inbound tourism sector. **Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director & Area Senior Vice President - South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, says, "This growth is connected to various factors, including the country hosting events like the G20 and World Cup this year. During the G20, we were honoured to host delegates at some of our key hotels located across India, while actively leveraging our presence in Tier II and Tier III locations."

The RHG properties are strategically located within three to four hours of drive from major airports



**Zubin Saxena**  
Managing Director & Area Senior Vice President - South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

and popular tourist destinations in India, giving their properties an added advantage of accessibility and convenience. This becomes attractive for inbound tourists, and also proves to be a popular choice for domestic guests. "At RHG, we maintain a balanced focus on various events, catering to the diverse needs of travellers in the Indian market. While weddings tend to

follow seasonal trends in the Indian market, MICE and leisure events are consistently in demand throughout the year," says Saxena.

To drive up business in their properties, RHG also engages in offering travel agents a range of enticing incentives. "These in-

**This growth (in inbound travel) is connected to various factors, including the country hosting events like the G20 and World Cup this year**

clude competitive commissions, productivity-linked bonuses, and opportunities for Fam trips to experience our properties firsthand. We



also reward planners with Radisson Reward Bonus Points and occasionally provide them with stay upgrades. To express our gratitude for their loyalty, we host Key Client Appreciation Events and Key Client Entertainment opportunities, which help to strengthen our partnership and encouraging them to continue

promoting our hotels. These incentives are specifically designed to enhance collaboration and drive bookings," Saxena shares.

Following such growth, the brand has significant expansion plans for India. "By 2025, we aim to double our presence in the country with

the addition of approximately 150 hotels and resorts. We have signed our first Radisson Collection property in Hyderabad, set to be operational by 2026. We also have 12 hotels in the pipeline across India, including cities like Raipur, Jamshedpur, Vadodara, and Chandrapur," he adds

# Chill and thrill in the Himalayas

Kailash Expeditions India, a Destination Management Company for Indian Himalayas and Bhutan, is now coming up with new winter products where it will offer guests experience -40 degrees Centigrade temperature in Ladakh, but with a centrally heated hotel and climate-controlled fleet of cars. A truly luxurious experience!



Hazel Jain

Kailash Expeditions India is a DMC for Indian Himalayas and Bhutan, and it creates immersive experiences in Ladakh, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Bhutan. It is headquartered in Ladakh and Kashmir with subsidiary offices in 12 states of the country. Sharing details about the company, **Dorjay Namgyal Bilupa**, Creative Director for Holidays & Experiences, Kailash Expeditions India, says, "No one knows the Himalayas better than we do, our ancestors have walked the mountains and sailed the rivers for their livelihood."

Putting emphasis on 'responsible' tourism, Bilupa says, "We are a responsible travel company working strictly on eco conscious work model, which is community driven and has value for money."

He shares details of how business has been this year. "Yes, business is back. We have made



**Dorjay Namgyal Bilupa**  
Creative Director for Holidays & Experiences, Kailash Expeditions India

**We have partnered with lots of lodges and winters hotels to give immersive winter experiences, festivals and more outdoors experiences**

small growth in inbound business but big in domestic movement. The segments that are doing well for us is the corporate sector and the family travel," he says.

Kailash Expeditions India has recently come up with its new geodesic domes (a hemispherical thin-shell structure based on a geodesic polyhedron) as well as the Ladakh Wildlife Safari Lodge in Matho Village. "With our new accommodation, we are giving top-notch service to our agents, both in summers for leisure and for adventure in the winters. We are also coming up with new winter products where we will make our guests experience -40 degrees Centigrade in Ladakh, but with a centrally heated hotel and climate-controlled fleet of cars. We will give winter outdoor experiences where one can bask in the Himalayan sun, experience the frozen lakes and hike up to villages to spot wildlife like snow leopard, lynx, Tibetan ass, Ibex, blue sheep and lots of birds," he shares.



Bilupa is looking forward to a terrific inbound, as well as domestic movement in the second half of 2023. "We have partnered with lots of lodges and winters hotels to give immersive winter experiences, festivals and definitely more outdoors experiences. For our travel agent partners, we are organising two FAM trips, one in September and one in October. It

will be a week-long tour in Ladakh and Kashmir," he adds.

Naming the cities that are great source markets for him, Bilupa says that Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Lucknow, and Rajasthan are the best source markets. "It's the best season after COVID, but we

are looking forward to a terrific season ahead in 2023 end and 2024. I want to inform all the travel agents who operate in Ladakh, Kashmir, Himachal, Sikkim and Bhutan to take a note of our products at [team2kailashexpeditions.com](https://team2kailashexpeditions.com) and support our new endeavours in promoting holidays in the Indian Himalayas and Bhutan," he concludes



# IATO gives new zeal to Aurangabad

The IATO convention has the potential to revive tourism in Aurangabad, both domestic as well as international. **TRAVTALKS** speaks to four local members who are excited about what the big-ticket event can do to their city and the region. They emphasize on the need for promotion and better connectivity to the destination.



Hazel Jain

The 38<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention holds significant potential for travel agencies in Aurangabad. It will bring them networking opportunities with a diverse range of stakeholders, including tour operators, travel agents, government officials, and industry experts, who will attend the event. The convention will feature keynote speakers, panel discussions, and workshops that focus on emerging trends and best practices in inbound tourism and sustainable travel. Attending these sessions can provide valuable insights and knowledge to the local members about the latest industry developments.

**Mohammed Ilyas**, Director, Alfa India Tours & Travels, will take advantage of the convention to learn from other participants, including industry leaders and experts. "By attending sessions on emerging trends, market shifts, and customer preferences, we can adapt our offerings to meet the evolving demands of travellers. Aurangabad has the opportunity to position itself as a sus-



**Mohammed Ilyas**  
Director  
Alfa India Tours & Travels

Attending sessions on emerging trends, market shifts, and customer preferences, we can adapt our offerings to meet the evolving demands of travellers



**Umesh Namdev Jadhav**  
Academician and  
authorised tour guide

Some organisations like the ATDF have taken initiatives to set the trend of 'City first-Tourism first' and not the interest of organisation or individuals



**Syed Saleemuddin**  
Director  
Aurangabad Transport Syndicate

But they (monuments in the city of Aurangabad) are being ignored by our stakeholders due to poor flight connection with other parts of the country



**Muntajib Ahmed Qureshi**  
Director  
Aurangabad Transport & Travel India

Most of the agents visiting Aurangabad will be here for the first time, even though they have been promoting this destination to clients for past many years

**Saleemuddin**, Director, Aurangabad Transport Syndicate. "But they are being ignored by our stakeholders due to poor flight connection with other parts of the country. Except for a few direct flight connections from Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad and Bengaluru, Aurangabad is not easily accessible from other cities. After this convention, all major travel agents who promote India will have an opportunity to witness these monuments and marvellous UNESCO World Heritage sites in person. They will definitely have an upper edge in promoting our Ajanta and Ellora caves. Also, with the new Samrud-dhi Mahamarg expressway coming up, the connectivity with Nashik, Shirdi and Nagpur has become better and has reduced the travel time from Aurangabad," he says.

## Golden period

Long-time agents like him have seen the golden period of Aurangabad tourism - from 1960s to late 1990s. **Muntajib Ahmed Qureshi**, Director, Aurangabad Transport & Travel India, says that Aurangabad is being neglected by the local and state authorities, but the upcoming IATO convention will be the biggest-ever travel agent and tour operator meet that the city will see. "Most of the agents visiting Aurangabad will be here for the first time, even though they have been promoting this destination to their clients for past many years. The agents and operators will get an experience that they can share with their clients," he says.

## Neglected monuments

The city has some of the best monuments in the world, says **Syed**

easier for travellers to access Aurangabad, Ilyas believes. "Developing well-maintained and accessible pathways to heritage sites and natural attractions can ensure a seamless experience for tourists. We can also collaborate with marketing experts and agencies to create effective promotional campaigns that highlight the city's diverse attractions and experiences. We need to leverage digital platforms, social media, and travel websites to reach a wider audience and showcase Aurangabad's offerings," he adds.

Sharing his perspective on the tourism in Aurangabad, **Umesh Namdev Jadhav**, academician and authorised tour guide, says that cordial relations among ministries, government departments, travel agents, tour operators, hoteliers, airlines, transporters, guides and locals contribute to the branding of a tourist destination. "Some organisations like the Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation (ATDF) have taken initiatives to set the trend of 'City first-Tourism

first' and not the interest of organisation or individuals. Expectation from this convention is that IATO members will put a collective effort to develop a new tourist circuit in India connecting with Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar," he says.

## Needs infrastructure enhancements

Continued improvement in transport infrastructure, including better road connectivity, railway services, and air connectivity, can make it

ganising Fam trips to Aurangabad, allowing fellow tour operators to experience the destination firsthand. They can also collaborate with local stakeholders, including hoteliers, to offer special packages exclusively to IATO members and their clients. They can also share best practices and success stories that have effectively developed their tourism industry," he says.


Beyond historical sites, Aurangabad can develop niche tourism offerings, such as cultural festivals,



tainable destination. By promoting eco-friendly practices, community engagement, and responsible tourism, the city can attract travellers who are increasingly conscious of their environmental impact. As a stakeholder invested in the development of tourism in Aurangabad, there are several things that can help us. IATO members can offer training and capacity-building programmes to local businesses, guides, and service providers for enhancing the quality of services. The members can contribute by or-

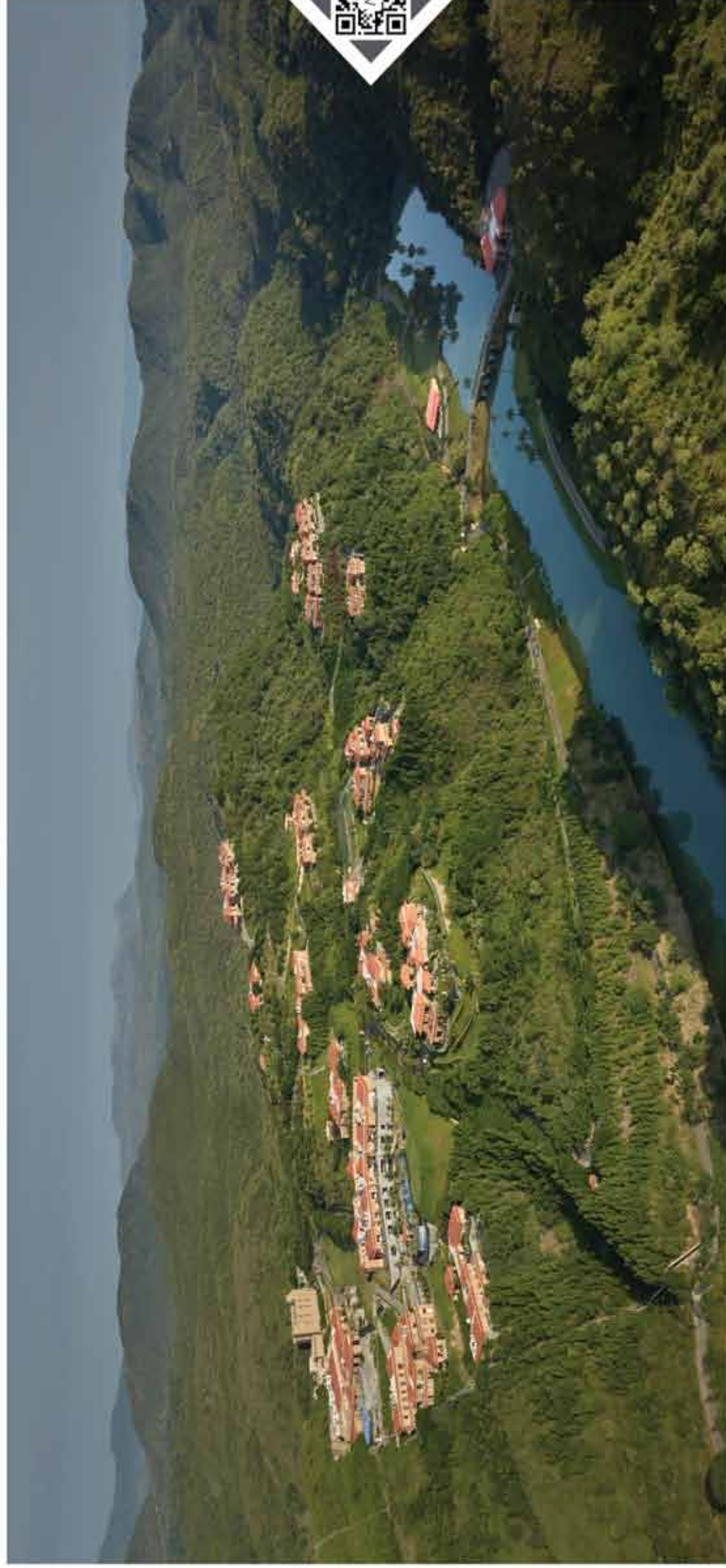
## DID YOU Know?

Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nager (Aurangabad), besides being a tourist destination, has several universities of Indian knowledge and philosophies like Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain. The region is blessed with unique architectural style of rock-cut hewn cave temples, the well-preserved Ajanta caves from 2nd century BC, recognised as the first UNESCO World Heritage Site of India. Ellora cave number 16 is the largest man-made monolithic structure known to human beings, the unconquered fort of Devgiri (Daulatabad), Bibi ka Maqbara, a marvel of medieval engineering, Panchakki, and Lonar crater. A stargazing facility was inaugurated earlier this year at the famed Ajanta viewpoint in Aurangabad. The facility, near the World Heritage site, is being managed by Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). Tourists can see a wide array of stars using telescopes. It has trained two youths to act as guides. The stargazing facility will be open from 6 pm every day for two to three hours.

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