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MAY 2024, PAGES 60, ₹100 VOL. 05, ISSUE. 11



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Varun Malhotra
Publisher & CEO

Dear Readers,

We are excited to bring you an ATM special focusing on various events planned during the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai from 6th – 8th May 2024. Versatile Media is hosting yet another dazzling event at The Habtoor Palace on the 6th of May, 2024, where we will launch the MICE Coffee Table Book Cover. The event is being organised in partnership with VFS Global and QuadLabs. Unveiling of the cover will be done by Mr Atul Marwah, Chief Operating Officer – MENA, VFS Global and Mr Gaurav Chiripal, Founder & CEO, Quadlabs. The event will be a sneak peek into the Gravitas and Grandeur planned for the official Book Launch event, which will be held in Delhi soon. The event will witness the Industry stalwarts coming together to welcome updated information about MICE from all across the globe.

Dubai is known for its majestic cityscapes, crowded backstreets, relaxing beaches, and expansive deserts. With the glitterati and bling of Dubai, we delve into unexplored experiences. With this issue, we aim to explore new and fun things to do during the ATM in Dubai. We have laid out options for fun, leisure, adventure, and cuisine to help you experience the essence of Dubai. The feature indeed promises to mark a lot of ticks off your bucket list of Things to Do in Dubai.

As the travel industry is always thriving to bring up new and exciting opportunities with its events and exhibitions, Mr Daleep Singh, Deputy Director of Tourism, Rajasthan, predicts that this year's GITB will focus on destination weddings and tourism, transforming the exhibition venue into a glorious showcase of matrimonial splendour. The GITB, which is usually centred around MICE, will open many new doors for the audiences/ agents looking to expand the path of Wedding Destination options. This will give way to a new boom in the MICE and the Travel Industry.

Versatile Media always strives to introduce new initiatives to keep the industry intact. We uncover the stories of collaborations and acquisitions in the travel trade industry that reshape how we explore the world. Partnerships were forged, and businesses joined forces to create new possibilities for travellers everywhere.

Let the words carry you away, let your imagination soar, and may your adventures be forever inspired by the stories within. With boundless enthusiasm for exploration!

We value your feedback and suggestions, so please share them with us at varun@versatilemedia.in.

Happy reading!

Varun Malhotra

TravelScapes

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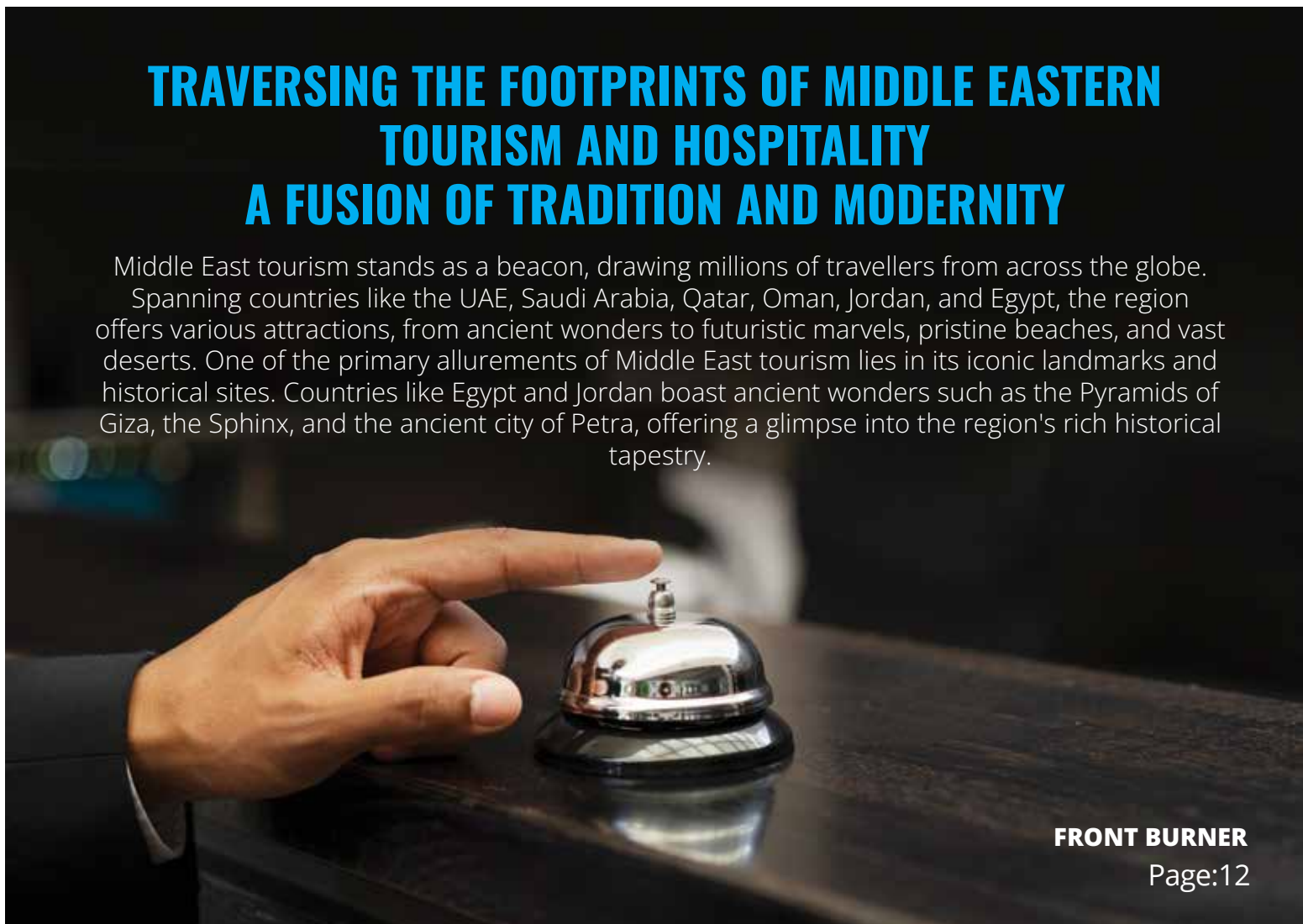
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Middle East tourism stands as a beacon, drawing millions of travellers from across the globe. Spanning countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, and Egypt, the region offers various attractions, from ancient wonders to futuristic marvels, pristine beaches, and vast deserts. One of the primary allurements of Middle East tourism lies in its iconic landmarks and historical sites. Countries like Egypt and Jordan boast ancient wonders such as the Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx, and the ancient city of Petra, offering a glimpse into the region's rich historical tapestry.



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Kerala introduces International Convention Centre in Veli

Thiruvananthapuram's prominent tourist destination, Veli tourist village, launched an International Convention Centre. Inaugurated by the tourism minister, P. A. Mohamed Riyas, this lakeside facility is built in a spanning area of 27,000 sq. ft., marking a milestone of the second phase of the village's infrastructural development. The inaugural function was honoured to also have Arya Rajendran, Mayor, Corporation; Ward Councillor, Clinus Rozario and Mr Manoj Kini, MD, KTIL.

The convention centre was built with a budget of Rs. 20 crores and incorporates premium features that adhere to global

benchmarks, elevating the state as a developing MICE tourism hub. Its first floor has a seating arrangement of approximately 750 attendees and incorporates a dining hall, with a capacity of around 300 guests. The parking complex of the centre can accommodate approximately 600 vehicles, ensuring ample parking availability.

The Veli tourist village is a favoured family trip destination and is an evolving hub for new attractions like the recently added miniature train which children love. The constant addition of new attractions in the tourist village is a key feature of the initial phase of infrastructure development.

India expands travel assistance service to J&K

India Assist announced the expansion of its Travel Assistance Services Franchise Model to the land of Jammu and Kashmir. Excelling in real-time travel assistance services, India Assist collaborated with key travel agents across prominent areas to provide seamless and reliable travel assistance to tourists and explorers. This franchise model ensures a memorable journey experience through the valleys and mountains of Kashmir.

Initiated in pivotal areas of Srinagar, Kupwara, Bandipora, Anant Nagar, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kulgam, and Baramulla, the expansion ensures that travellers can travel the cultural richness and mesmerizing beauty of Jammu and Kashmir. Harish Khatri, Founder and Managing Director of India Assist said, "Our mission has always been to provide unwavering support to travellers, ensuring their journeys are not only smooth but also enriched with local insights and assistance whenever needed. With this expansion, we aim to create a



seamless and immersive travel experience for those who choose to explore the breathtaking landscapes of Kashmir."

India Assist's franchise model enables local travel agents to provide their clients with access to real-time support, personalised assistance, and local expertise with a reliable support system. Becoming a beacon of hope for local businesses and travellers, this collaboration between India Assist and local travel partners redefines the way tourists explore the scenic wonders of the place.

Madhya Pradesh introduced floating jetties for cruise tourism

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and the Government of Gujarat to boost cruise tourism in Madhya Pradesh. The MoU was signed at the head office of the authority in Noida, by IWAI Chairman, Vijay Kumar, along with the Principal Secretary of the Tourism and Culture Department and the Managing Director of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Sheo Shekhar Shukla. The Managing Director of Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited, Mukesh Puri (IAS) (Retd.); and Udit Agarwal, Joint Managing Director of Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited.

The agreement stated that IWAI would provide two floating jetties each to Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The pontoons of M.P. were sent from Kolkata to Kukshi to be used as a cruise terminal. The State Tourism Board started this initiative to promote tourism in the state. The cruise will be operating from Ekatma Dham (Statue of Oneness) located at Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh



to the Statue of Unity located at Kevadiya, Gujarat. Its movement on the Narmada River between MP and Gujarat will be ensured without any hindrance.

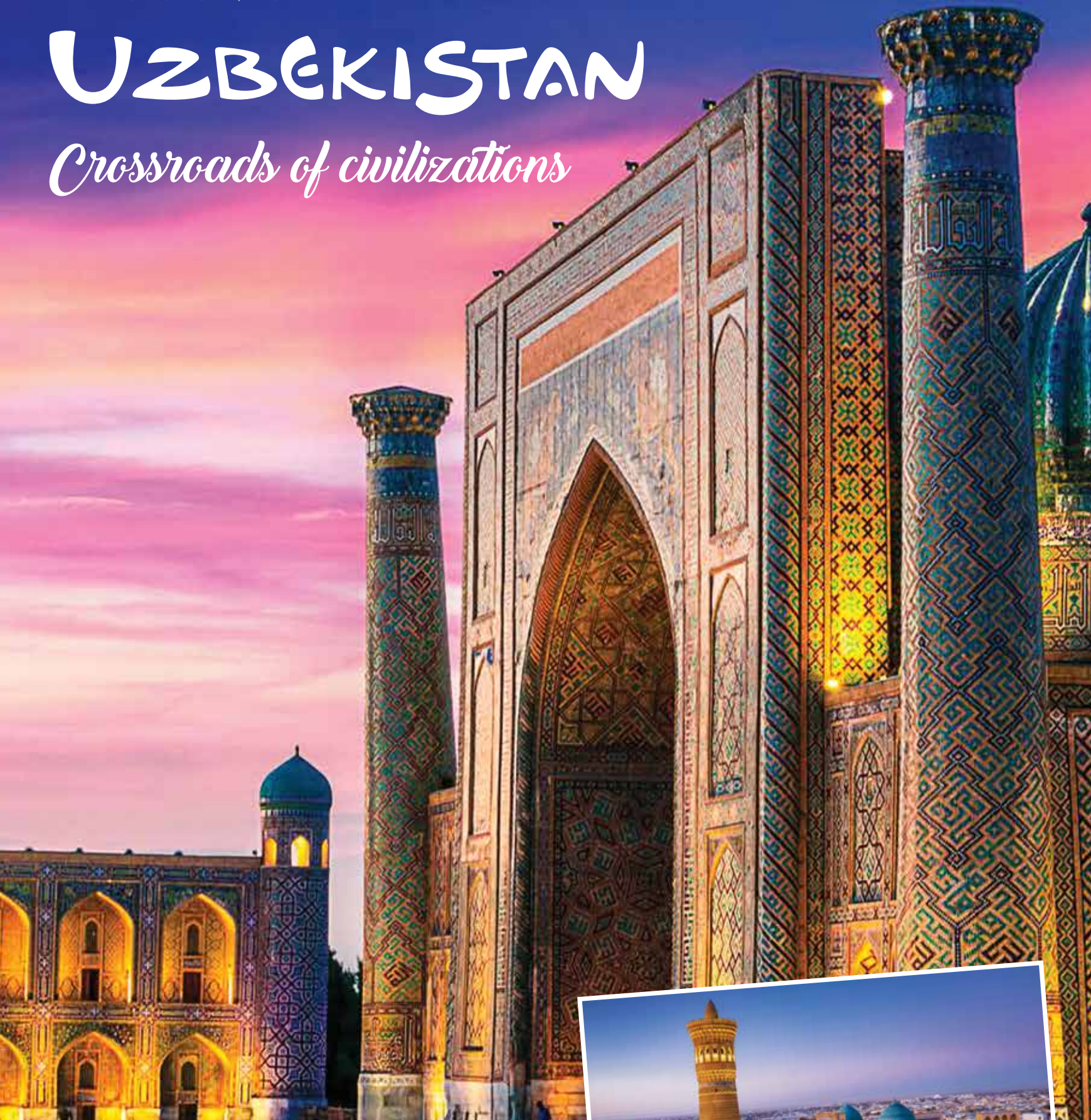
The state government will develop the necessary infrastructure and other facilities for enhancing cruise tourism, allowing travellers to enjoy local culture, traditions, cuisine, and lifestyle. Ensuring a comfortable and adventurous cruise journey, it will also offer picturesque landscapes of the Narmada River, covering a journey of 120 km.

Shukla, the Principal Secretary, said, "A total of 120 km of routes have been marked from the Statue of Unity in Kevadiya to

Chandankhedi, Kukshi. From Kukshi, tourists will be taken by road to the Statue of Oneness located at Omkareshwar. On the way, they will also be taken to visit Maheshwar, Mandleshwar, and Mandu." He also added that four jetties would be established for the journey, among which two will be established at Chandankhedi-Kukshi and Sakarja-Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh, and the other two will be at Hanfeshwar-Chota Udaipur and Statue of Unity-Kevadiya in Gujarat. The area will undergo economic development so that the widespread benefits will reach the local community.

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For more information, please contact:

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MEA allows Indians with Portuguese citizenship to apply for OCI cards

Residents of Goa and Daman & Diu can apply for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), which was rendered ineligible due to previous passport requirements. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced a memorandum that allows the Ministry of Home Affairs to accept a 'revocation certificate' as an alternative document in place of the 'surrender certificate'. Issued for individuals who had their passports revoked after acquiring Portuguese citizenship, this directive eases the OCI application process for many individuals.

After November 30, 2022, the MEA memorandum revoked the Goan passports who acquired Portuguese citizenship for "suppressing material information" about their foreign nationality, acquired as per Portuguese National Law. This issue also led to the ceasing of the issuance of surrender certificates by passport authorities, which are used for making ineligible OCI cards.



"PIAs have revoked passports (instead of issuing surrender certificates) of many Indian nationals hailing from erstwhile Portuguese territories in India (Goa, Daman & Diu), if the passport in question, was obtained after acquisition of Portuguese nationality/citizenship. Since a Surrender Certificate is one of the mandatory documents for obtaining an OCI Card, revocation of the passport has rendered them ineligible for obtaining an OCI Card," stated the Ministry of External Affairs.

Mizoram witnessed a tourist footfall of 1.96 lakhs in 2023

With minimal tourist footfall during the COVID-19 pandemic, Mizoram saw a surge in foreign tourists visiting the state. Over 1.96 lakh tourists visited Mizoram in 2023, among which around 1.93 lakhs were domestic and 3,435 were foreigners, stated the state tourism department. Americans topped the list of foreign tourists visiting this northeastern state, amounting to a whopping number of 1,162, adding that tourists from other countries like Japan, Canada, Israel, Australia, and the United Kingdom also visited the state last year. Mizoram's tourist footfall was over 2.22 lakhs in 2022-23 of which 2.18 lakhs were domestic and 3,551 were foreigners. It was 20,564 in 2020-2021 and 1.32 lakhs in 2021-22. The state has enforced a 'responsible' tourism

policy in August 2020, that encourages sustainable development strategy, skill development, strengthening institutional framework, and coordination. The policy is designed to eradicate poverty by focusing on making tourism a tool for village development and providing livelihood for the local population.

Foreigners earlier had to obtain a Protected Area Permit (PAP) from the Union Home Ministry to travel to Mizoram, but it is no longer required and has been suspended for all foreign tourists except those from China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Each foreigner is still required to report themselves at the Foreign Registration Office in Aizwal within 24 hours of their arrival in Mizoram.



Uttar Pradesh witnessed an increase in religious tourism

The onset of the 2024 summer vacations saw a significant rise in religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh and its religious cities - Varanasi, Mathura, and Ayodhya - before the festivals, Ram Navami and Navratri. Varanasi alone saw an influx of 95.63 lakh devotees in the month of March to visit the Kashi Vishwanath temple. More than two lakh people visited the newly constructed Ram Mandir and Hanumangarhi in Ayodhya. There was also a surge in the crowds before Holi in Mathura-Vrindavan.

Prakhar Mishra, Director of Tourism said, "We are expecting a significant surge of tourists prior to the festive season begins. The newly constructed Ram Lalla Temple, the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, and the Mathura-Vrindavan Corridor will not only attract tourists from all corners of the country but also significantly boost local markets, particularly those associated with the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative."

Also witnessing an increase in donations, the fiscal year 2023-24 saw an increase of 42.43% from the last year, reaching a donation amount of Rs. 83.34 crores. This surge was a result of the construction of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, reviving pilgrimage travel post-pandemic. Before the construction of the corridor, donations amounted to approximately INR 26 crores up to the fiscal year 2019-20.

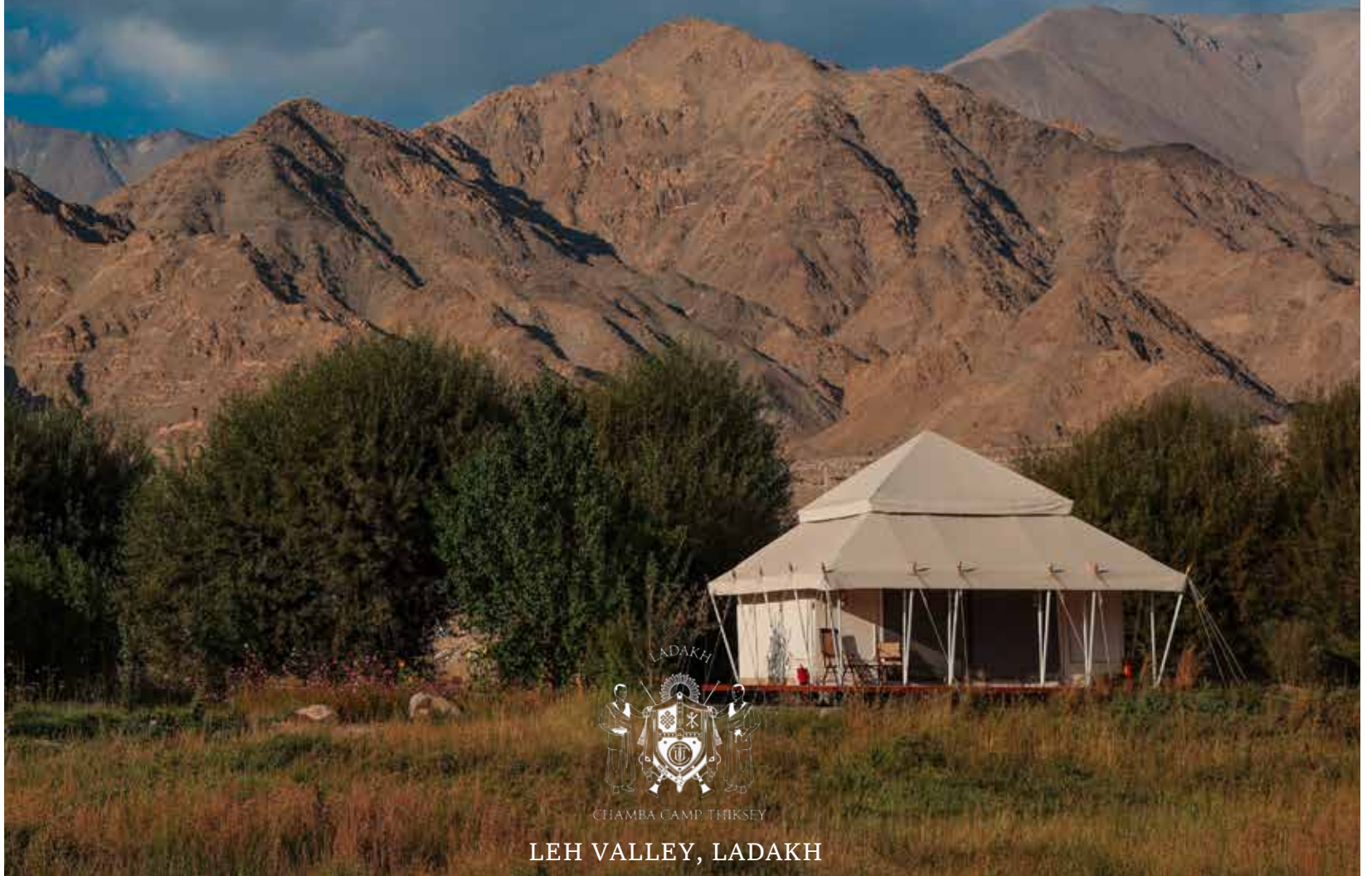
The footfall of the devotees also increased in the Ram Lalla airport, Ayodhya, attracting an influx of religious tourists from all over the country. "These projects will set new records in terms of tourist footfall, drawing visitors eager to explore the rich cultural and religious heritage of Uttar Pradesh," added Prakhar. These tourism initiatives, where tourism encourages cultural exchange and economic growth, envision a holistic transformation, fostering community development and empowerment. This unprecedented surge in religious tourism indicates a revival in pilgrimage travel post-pandemic, enduring spiritual fervour among devotees.

Prakhar talked about the enhanced connectivity and amenities provided by these developments to create a ripple effect in the local economy. This in turn leads to an increased demand for locally produced goods and services, in addition to generating a surge in employment opportunities.



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Leh-Manali National Highway reopens for vehicular traffic

The Border Roads

Organisation has reopened the 428-km Leh-Manali National Highway for vehicular traffic after a snow-clearance operation. The arterial road remained closed for 5 months due to heavy snowfall during winter. It was closed in November with the onset of winter and snow accumulation. The highway serves as an alternative route, connecting the Union Territory of Ladakh to the rest of the country through Himachal Pradesh.

“The entire snow clearance operation was executed by 111 Road Construction Company (RCC) and 753 Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) under Project HIMANK of BRO, in Ladakh region and 70 RCC and 38 BRTF under Project Deepak in Himachal Pradesh,” said a spokesperson.

This operation was completed by two snow clearance teams,



working simultaneously and in sync from two extremities. Comprising state-of-the-art machines and highly skilled manpower, Project Deepak commenced the operation from Manali to Sarchu (border of Ladakh and Himachal), while Project Himank worked on clearing the highway from Leh to Sarchu. They worked in extremely challenging weather conditions of high-altitude areas, battling snowstorms. The projects worked on negotiating four important passes, including the Baralacha La (15,910 ft.), Nakee La (15,547 ft.), Lachung La (16,616 ft.), and Tanglang La (17,482 ft.).

Lakhs of people register for Char Dham Yatra

Uttarakhand Chief Minister

Pushkar Singh Dhami said that around 16 lakh people registered for Char Dham Yatra. He added, “We have assessed and analysed all the arrangements. And whatever preparations were necessary, all the preparations have been done. Wherever there was a need for improvement, roads, transport systems, parking, hotels, dhabas, restaurants and police traffic systems all have been discussed. The number of pilgrims in the Yatra is increasing every year, so there should be a good Yatra.”

It was directed to officials to ensure proper arrangements for roads, drinking water, and electricity on travel routes during the Yatra. He also added that the security personnel deployed on the Yatra duty should be on alert mode and that the personnel should be given rest every six hours. Arrangements will also be made for the staying and sleeping of drivers coming on Yatra.

The Char Dham Yatra, or pilgrimage, is a tour of four holy sites – Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath, and Kedarnath. The high-altitude shrines usually remain closed for around six months (from October or November) every year and open in summer (April or May).



NGT issues notice on ‘harmful tourism activities’ in Satkosia

The National Green Tribunal (NGT)'s east zone bench in Kolkata issued notices to the central and state governments seeking a response to a petition filed by Biswajit Mohanty, secretary of the Wildlife Society of Orissa. The petition challenges “ongoing harmful tourism activities” inside the Satkosia Tiger Reserve and Satkosia Gorge, which is one of the largest river gorges in the state.

The chairperson of the National Wetland Committee, deputy director general of forests, integrated regional office, the chief secretary, additional chief secretary, forest and environment department, field director of Satkosia Tiger Reserve, chairperson of State

Wetland Authority, and chairman of Odisha Biodiversity Board, were among those issued notices.

The submissions were made virtually by Advocates Sankar Prasad Pani and Ashutosh Padhy on behalf of the petitioner. It claimed that tourism activities like the construction of tents and sheds in the ecological area will cause irreparable damage to the local environment and biodiversity. The petition states that there are over 16 cottage tents, seven with AC, set up at ‘Badmul Sand Resort’ where bonfires are lit at night and sand sports are organized. These activities, including music and dance, are extremely disturbing to the wildlife.

Puducherry tourism demands better parking infrastructure

Known for its French colonial heritage, Puducherry faces various traffic issues and vehicle congestion. Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, stakeholders in the Puducherry Tourism Department are demanding enhanced infrastructure for better parking and traffic decongestion. With the unfolding of the electoral process and voting for all 39 Lok Sabha seats, the rallying asks for a transformative change in the city's tourism landscape.

Antony, who works in hospitality services shared his personal experience regarding parking issues, “It is hard to find a proper place for vehicle parking.” The



increasing number of vehicles on the road adds to the existing congestion and pollution levels. These issues can be alleviated by putting in efforts like improvement of public transport services, promotion of alternative modes of transportation, and development of better road networks.

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TRAVERSING THE FOOTPRINTS OF MIDDLE EASTERN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY A FUSION OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Middle East tourism stands as a beacon, drawing millions of travellers from across the globe. Spanning countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, and Egypt, the region offers various attractions, from ancient wonders to futuristic marvels, pristine beaches, and vast deserts. One of the primary allurements of Middle East tourism lies in its iconic landmarks and historical sites.

Countries like Egypt and Jordan boast ancient wonders such as the Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx, and the ancient city of Petra, offering a glimpse into the region's rich historical tapestry.

Moreover, the Middle East showcases architectural prowess through modern marvels like the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the world's tallest building, and the iconic Burj Al Arab Hotel. These architectural feats symbolise the region's ambition and prosperity, attracting tourists eager to bask in their grandeur.

Beyond history and architecture, the Middle East beckons nature enthusiasts with its stunning coastlines, pristine beaches, and vast deserts. Activities like snorkelling, diving, camel treks, and dune bashing offer thrilling adventures amidst breathtaking landscapes.

Cultural immersion is another hallmark of Middle East tourism, where visitors can experience traditional Arabian hospitality, sample delectable cuisine, and explore bustling souks and markets. Festivals like the Dubai Shopping Festival and the Qatar National Day celebrations offer immersive experiences of the region's rich heritage.

Strategically located at a crossroads between continents, the Middle East is easily accessible via major airlines like Emirates, Qatar Airways, and Etihad Airways, ensuring seamless travel experiences for visitors. Despite challenges posed by political instability and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Middle East remains resilient, with initiatives like Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the UAE's Expo 2020 Dubai driving sustainable tourism development and economic growth. In tandem with Middle East tourism, the hospitality sector is a bastion of luxury and hospitality. Boasting opulent hotels, diverse accommodations, and world-class amenities, the industry caters to the needs of discerning travellers and business professionals alike. Luxury properties like those in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Riyadh epitomise grandeur and extravagance, while boutique hotels, resorts, and serviced apartments offer accommodation options for every preference and budget.

Driven by a booming tourism industry, the hospitality sector in the Middle East caters to both leisure and business travellers, with cities like Dubai and Doha serving as critical commercial hubs.

Characterised by innovation, excellence, and a skilled workforce, Middle Eastern hotels strive to enhance the guest experience through cutting-edge technology, personalised services, and unique amenities.

Despite challenges, the hospitality sector in the Middle East remains resilient and poised to thrive as the region continues to invest in tourism infrastructure and promote its unique attractions to a global audience.

By Aanchal Sachdeva





KHAMAS HOSPITALITY

TRAIL-BLAZES GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN EVOLVING MARKETS AND TIMES

Pawan Kachroo, Managing Director of Khamas Hospitality, focuses on the company's multifaceted approach to strategic growth, innovation, and sustainability within the hospitality sector. Established and headquartered in Dubai, Khamas Hospitality has evolved into one of the leading hotel management entities across the region, expanding its presence to Italy and England by 2019. With a strong foothold in the UAE market, Khamas Hospitality has launched multiple development projects and partnered with several 5-star hotels. In addition to direct hotel management, the company offers tailor-made services to the hospitality industry, including business strategy, concept development, and day-to-day operations management. A notable initiative is The Courtyard by Marriott, the first Marriott-branded project in the UAE, set to be completed by the end of 2023, offering hotel apartments, rooms, and a range of amenities in Jumeirah Village Circle. Through its commitment to excellence and innovation, Khamas Hospitality continues to set industry standards and redefine the hospitality landscape across diverse cultural landscapes, ensuring exceptional guest experiences and long-term success

By Aanchal Sachdeva

Strategic Vision and Adaptation

Khamas Hospitality's strategic decisions that propelled growth in new markets like Italy and England were grounded in understanding and leveraging global travel trends. We identified emerging preferences for sustainable and experiential travel, tailoring our services to meet these demands. Our focus on delivering culturally enriching experiences alongside luxury and comfort resonated well with the evolving global traveller, driving our success in these competitive markets.

Leadership in Crisis

In response to global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, Khamas Hospitality swiftly adapted operations to prioritise guest and staff safety. Our strategies included stringent hygiene protocols, flexible booking options, and innovative digital solutions for guest engagement. These measures showcased our agility and resilience, ensuring continuity and maintaining guest trust even during challenging times.

Innovative Practices

Under my leadership, Khamas Hospitality implemented various innovative practices, including AI-driven personalisation, efficient booking systems, and sustainable operational initiatives. These practices enhanced guest experiences, streamlined operations, and demonstrated our commitment to staying ahead of industry trends.

Sustainability Initiatives

Khamas Hospitality prioritises sustainability across operations and development projects. Our initiatives include eco-friendly practices, responsible sourcing, and community engagement to address environmental concerns. These efforts align with our belief that responsible tourism is essential for long-term success and stakeholder satisfaction.

Cultural Integration

Managing hospitality across diverse cultural landscapes requires a nuanced approach. At Khamas Hospitality, we invest in cultural training for our teams, customise services to local preferences, and ensure a seamless blend of international standards and regional flavours. This approach resonates well with local and international guests, enhancing their experience and satisfaction.

Future Development

Our upcoming development projects in the UAE align with Khamas Hospitality's long-term goals of excellence and sustainability. These projects focus on creating iconic destinations that offer unique experiences while contributing positively to the community and environment. Our vision includes leveraging technology, embracing sustainability, and delivering exceptional value to guests and stakeholders.

Challenges in Franchising

Franchising presents challenges in maintaining brand standards and consistency. At Khamas, we address these challenges through rigorous

franchise guidelines, comprehensive training for franchisees, and continuous quality control measures. Our focus on collaboration and support ensures that franchise properties uphold our brand's reputation and standards.

Personal Leadership Philosophy

My leadership philosophy emphasises vision-sharing, team empowerment, and a culture of excellence. I believe in inspiring and enabling my team to achieve our collective vision, fostering innovation, dedication, and guest-centricity. Over the years, my approach has evolved to adapt to changing market dynamics and prioritise sustainability and guest satisfaction.

Economic Fluctuations

Khamas Hospitality prepares for economic fluctuations by diversifying revenue streams, optimising costs, and monitoring market trends. Our proactive approach includes flexible pricing strategies, strategic partnerships, and continuous investment in guest experience enhancements to mitigate the impact of economic downturns.

Technology Integration

Khamas Hospitality has integrated new technologies to enhance guest experiences and operational efficiency. These include AI-driven personalisation, mobile check-in/check-out, and digital concierge services. Technology improves efficiency and enables personalised and seamless guest experiences, aligning with our commitment to excellence and innovation.

AL HABTOOR CITY HOTEL COLLECTION HOSTS LUXURIOUS VIRTUAL WALK IN MUMBAI

Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection hosts Luxurious Virtual Walk at Inorbit Mall in Mumbai, showcasing Al Habtoor Palace Dubai and V Hotel Dubai Curio Collection by Hilton



Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection treated visitors at Inorbit Mall, Malad, to a captivating Virtual Walk showcasing the lavish Al Habtoor Palace Dubai and V Hotel Dubai Curio Collection by Hilton. This innovative event, held from April 6-8, offered attendees an immersive glimpse into the unparalleled luxury of Dubai's most prestigious hotels.

Esteemed influencers from Mumbai, Roop Verma and Karishma Rawat, joined the event to capture and share their excitement ahead of their upcoming familiarisation trip to these grand hotels. As part of the activation, Roop and Karishma secured an exclusive opportunity for an all-inclusive luxurious three/four-night stay at Al Habtoor Palace Dubai and V Hotel Dubai Curio Collection by Hilton. Their experience will include tickets to the spectacular La Perle Dubai show, airport transfers, full-board meals, and access to all hotel amenities, promising a truly memorable stay.

Al Habtoor Palace Dubai, situated on the banks of the Dubai Water Canal, offers guests a haven of luxury and indulgence. The hotel boasts a supreme address in the city, complemented by the captivating water-based theatre production La Perle by Dragone. Guests are pampered

with best-in-class luxury, from boutique shopping to signature dining experiences, throughout their stay.

The V Hotel Dubai Curio Collection by Hilton captures the city's entrepreneurial spirit, serving as the headquarters for travellers seeking adventure. Creatively designed with a retro-futurism concept, the hotel sparks imaginations and empowers savvy travellers. As part of the Curio Collection by Hilton, it offers unique and rare experiences to world travellers.

Commenting on the significance of the mall activation event, Soufiane ElAllam, Complex Commercial Director, Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection, said, "We are delighted to have hosted this unique virtual walk-through event at Infinity Mall, Malad, offering the existing and prospective guests a glimpse of the exceptional hospitality and experiences awaiting international travellers from Mumbai and beyond. As we approach the summer holiday season, Al Habtoor Palace Dubai and V Hotel Dubai Curio Collection by Hilton stand as the ideal venues for travellers who seek bespoke luxury and unforgettable memories for their wedding, honeymoon, families, etc."





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RAJASTHAN

TOURISM'S FOCUS ON DESTINATION WEDDINGS WITH GITB 2024

As the curtains rise on the much-anticipated Great India Travel Bazaar (GITB) 2024, Rajasthan Tourism is poised to dazzle visitors with its vibrant culture, heritage, and hospitality. According to Daleep Singh Rathore, Deputy Director of Tourism, Govt of Rajasthan, this year's GITB focuses on destination weddings and tourism, transforming the exhibition venue into a glorious showcase of matrimonial splendour. Amidst the grandeur of Rajasthan's iconic landscapes and architectural marvels, the GITB exhibition venue will be adorned with the radiant hues of wedding festivities, exuding an aura of festivity and charm. State tourism boards, including Rajasthan Tourism, will embellish their booths with the opulent adornments of traditional wedding attire and jewellery, taking visitors through the rich cultural heritage of India.

Rajasthan's unwavering commitment to hospitality allows foreign buyers and wedding planners to board the Palace on Wheels from New Delhi to Jaipur, commencing on May 4. This symbolic voyage symbolises the fusion of tradition and modernity, offering a glimpse into the opulent allure of Rajasthan's wedding tourism offerings.

Complementing the GITB spectacle, the 'Wed in India' expo will unfold alongside, offering a kaleidoscopic panorama of wedding tourism. A collaborative effort between Rajasthan Tourism, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), and the Government of India (GOI), the 'Wed in India' expo will convene a congregation of domestic and international wedding planners, state tourism boards, and media houses promoting wedding tourism products.

From engaging panel discussions to illuminating case studies and an exclusive round-table session, the 'Wed in India' expo promises an immersive exploration of the evolving landscape of destination weddings. Set against Rajasthan's regal splendour, this conference catalyses innovation and collaboration, forging new pathways for future wedding tourism in India.

By Aanchal Sachdeva



Rajasthan tourism sector prepared to welcome international and domestic delegates amidst changing global travel preferences

GITB is one of the premier travel and tourism events, bringing together travel agents, tour operators, and hospitality industry players from all over the world. The event provides an opportunity to showcase Rajasthan's tourism potential and help establish it as a preferred destination for travellers globally.

The Department is working on a manifold approach. On one

side, the department focuses on promotion and marketing; on the other, it caters to the long-standing demand of the Tourism Trade. Rajasthan has established itself as a premier wedding destination with its rich cultural heritage, magnificent palaces and forts, vivid hues, and gracious hospitality. The state features a diverse array of heritage buildings, each offering a distinctive and captivating wedding theme, such as traditional Rajasthani, royal, or desert themes. It is noteworthy

that Rajasthan boasts a remarkable 75% of India's total heritage properties, and with attentive and well-trained staff, guests are assured a comfortable and delightful stay, complemented by the opportunity to savour the exquisite Rajasthani cuisine.

Efforts made by Rajasthan tourism department to promote lesser-known destinations or experiences within the state at GITB 2024

Thanks to its rich culture, history and architecture, Rajasthan has always been a popular tourist destination. Rajasthan has the potential to become a tourism magnet with the following prospects:

Unique Culture and Heritage: Rajasthan's culture and heritage are unique and unparalleled, with magnificent forts, palaces, and temples. The state's rich history, folklore, and art forms, such as puppetry, folk dances, and music, have always attracted tourists.

Rural Tourism: Rural tourism is an emerging trend in Rajasthan. Tourists can experience the rural way of life, including farming, handicrafts, and local cuisine. Homestays and farm stays in villages allow tourists to interact with locals and learn about their customs and traditions.

Rajasthan, spreading across the area of 3,42,000 sq km across the north-west zone, brings the ultimate wilderness across its distinct reserves and sanctuaries. Every year, thousands of nature lovers oomph for this unique landscape once ruled by the royal Rajputs.

Observing Rajasthan wildlife is encountering several mammals and birds living in sovereignty at various sanctuaries and reserves.

Rajasthan is the largest state in India in terms of area. It has tremendous wilderness richness. If we talk about sand dunes or deserted land, the regions are simply limitless. On the other hand, the same land also boasts rich semi-evergreen forests, which simply

“

Rajasthan's tourism department is committed to providing every tourist with an unforgettable experience encompassing art, creativity, culture, and cuisine

provide the perfect home for variant animal species.

The vast size and latitudinal variations (1700 m above the sea level) have brought the varied vegetations, contrasting the barren or dry scrub grasslands of deserts and the dry deciduous thorn forests of the oldest Aravali Hills to the wet marshlands of Bharatpur. Rajasthan wildlife tour is a benevolent experience as it lets you steep deep into the lush foliage of the significant sanctuaries and wildlife reserves, which is heaven for the royal tigers along with the abundance of species like leopards, village dogs, assess, calves and goats. Above all, the Rajasthan wildlife tourism brings the ultimate sighting of thousands of species of birds including the migratory one.

Innovative tourism products or initiatives to be highlighted at GITB 2024 to cater to evolving traveller demand of experiential tourism

Rajasthan's tourism department is committed to providing every tourist with an unforgettable experience encompassing art, creativity, culture, and cuisine. The department is continuously working towards this goal. In this regard, MICE tourism is a sector that combines tourism and business,

providing tourists with the pleasure of sightseeing while also being suitable for the state. The meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) Market is one of the fastest-growing segments in the travel trade. Trends indicate that travel agents, tour operators, hotel companies, and cruise companies are all eyeing the Rajasthan MICE market as one with great potential for future growth. The sheer size of this market and its tremendous capacity make it both significant and lucrative. Rajasthan is not only about an aristocratic ambience; it makes business sense, too. The State offers unparalleled luxury in heritage accommodation, great sightseeing and entertainment, and famed traditional hospitality. Moreover, a good tourism infrastructure provides connectivity, transportation, convention receptions, banquets and gourmet facilities. Rajasthan offers a wide choice of convention centres. You can choose from well-connected cities like Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur to small venues, which could be historical or even wildlife sanctuaries, depending on your liking. Interesting venues with suitable facilities and proper management. All technical requirements are looked into along with professional services. Main centres like Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur are air-linked, while the other venues are easily accessible by rail and road. Looking into the potential of MICE, the state government, in its Budget 2023-24 Rajasthan Government announced that MICE centres for international-level conventions and exhibitions would be set up in Jaipur, Udaipur and Ajmer, which have gained fame as wedding destinations across the country.

Rajasthan Tourism incorporates eco-friendly practices and community engagement initiatives into its tourism strategies

Rajasthan Tourism actively integrates sustainability and responsible tourism into its strategies, particularly in preparation for GITB 2024. The department promotes eco-friendly practices such as waste management, water conservation, and renewable energy adoption in hotels and tourist sites. Community engagement initiatives involve local communities in tourism planning and development, ensuring their voices are heard and benefits are shared.

The Tourism Department and stakeholders are collaborating to promote reduce, recycle, and reuse practices here.

We promote our efforts to minimise the environmental impact of tourism, preserve Rajasthan's natural and cultural heritage, and enhance the overall tourism experience. Through these initiatives, Rajasthan demonstrates its commitment to sustainable tourism practices and responsible travel.

Rajasthan Tourism's fundamental goals and aspirations for GITB 2024, and the department envisioning the event contributing to the long-term growth and sustainability

GITB is a platform which offers business opportunities to Indian travel trade and foreign tour operators to interact and arrive at real business during the event. The event is also significant in that we must constantly evaluate ourselves concerning world development and move forward according to the global demand of tourists. This event exemplifies effective coordination between the state government, FICCI and travel trade partners. Rajasthan has a distinct identity in the tourism sector, with an influx of tourists annually. The Department is committed to providing a safe and comfortable environment for tourists and extending all support to the tourism Industry. This has resulted in a fast revival of the state industry.

In addition to generating tourism revenue, GITB 2024 will also help create numerous employment opportunities and support local businesses. The hospitality industry will significantly benefit from this event, with increased demand for hotel rooms, food and beverage, and other related services. Furthermore, the increased exposure of Jaipur to the global tourism market will help establish the city as a premier tourist destination and encourage further investment in the tourism infrastructure. We are optimistic about the economic growth potential led by the Great India Travel Bazaar (GITB) 2024 for the tourism industry in Rajasthan.

MADHYA PRADESH

TOURISM'S SUSTAINABLE APPROACH BALANCING GROWTH AND PRESERVATION

By Aanchal Sachdeva



Jal Mahotsav, Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival, Chanderi Festival and Kuno Forest Festival provide an array of exciting land, air and water adventure activities where adventure aficionados can be a part of these thrilling experiences. The prospect of Sky diving in Ujjain & Khajuraho, River Rafting in Orchha and Scuba Diving in Sailani Islands have added the new dimensions to the tourism scene of MP. Wildlife safaris, monsoon marathons and all season trekking opportunities provide an year round possibility of adventure sports in the Heart of Incredible India.

Madhya Pradesh Tourism plans to capitalise on wellness tourism, cultural tourism, and culinary tourism

Madhya Pradesh is swiftly adapting to emerging travel trends, making it a hotspot for tourists seeking experiences beyond the ordinary. Embracing the allure of wellness, culinary delights, and tribal heritage, the state offers a mosaic of experiences for travellers. Home to over 40 distinct tribes such as Bhil, Gond, Kol, and Korku, among others, MP exemplifies harmonious coexistence. This unique blend of tribal communities presents a promising landscape for Tribal Tourism in the region. Visitors are offered a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in the traditions and lifestyles of these indigenous groups, fostering a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage. Culinary enthusiasts flock to MP enticed by its diverse gastronomic offerings. From the flavoursome Malwa cuisine to the delectable Nimar and Baghelkhand specialties, the state tantalises taste buds with a plethora of options. Each region boasts its own distinct culinary identity, including the sumptuous Gwalior and Bundelkhand cuisines, drawing food lovers from far and wide.

In line with the growing emphasis on wellness, MP is actively promoting wellness tourism initiatives. The introduction of Home-stays, Gram Stays, and Farm Stays provides travellers with immersive experiences in serene rural settings. Over 300 home-stays have been established across 40 villages in MP, allowing visitors to not only explore the picturesque landscapes but also to partake in the daily lives of their tribal hosts.

Madhya Pradesh Tourism adapts its marketing strategies and campaigns to

target solo travellers, millennials, or luxury travellers

Madhya Pradesh often hailed as a paradise for travellers seeking unique experiences, stands as a testament to India's rich cultural and natural heritage. This diverse state boasts a myriad of attractions catering to the discerning tastes of all types of travellers. With its expansive and varied landscape, captivating festivals, abundant wildlife, and ancient heritage sites, MP presents itself as a multi-specialty destination. Whether one seeks the tranquility of pristine landscapes, the thrill of wildlife safaris, or the awe-inspiring remnants of prehistoric civilisations, MP offers something to satiate every traveler's appetite for exploration.

Recognising the importance of catering to specific traveller interests, MP Tourism has strategically developed a range of niche tourism products. From wildlife sanctuaries teeming with rare species to heritage sites steeped in history, the state showcases its rich biodiversity and cultural heritage. Culinary enthusiasts can indulge in a gastronomic journey through MP's diverse cuisines, while spiritual seekers find solace in the state's sacred landmarks and pilgrimage sites. Moreover, MP is now poised to welcome luxury travellers with open arms, as it introduces world-class hospitality services. With the arrival of top-notch hospitality providers, the state aims to elevate the travel experience for those seeking luxury and exclusivity.

Madhya Pradesh Tourism expands tourism offerings, boosting visitor numbers, and maximising the socio-economic benefits

Madhya Pradesh Tourism aims to diversify its offerings by promoting lesser-known destinations alongside popular ones with the help of PPP (Public Private Partnership) model leveraging digital platforms for widespread visibility. Strategic partnerships with other government departments, ministries, stakeholders and local communities will enhance visitor experiences. Sustainable tourism practices will be emphasised to preserve the state's natural and cultural heritage while ensuring economic benefits trickle down to local residents through skill development and job creation initiatives. Development of new circuits and itineraries is another initiative to escalate visitor experiences.

Madhya Pradesh Tourism addresses the issue of over tourism in popular tourist destinations

Madhya Pradesh as a tourist destination is synonymous with peaceful lifestyle and cultural authenticity. MP is one of the largest states geographically and the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board encourages sustainability and balance within the state. Major monuments, temples and sites are not only one of the cleanest tourist destinations of the country but they are also very well regulated by the government. This includes promoting alternative destinations, and diversifying tourism offerings to spread visitors across different attractions. Engaging local but trained communities in crowd management. The space and infrastructural management stands as a testament to the remarkable work done by MP Tourism. We are also encouraging responsible travel behaviour among tourists, such as respecting local customs and traditions, minimising waste, and supporting local businesses and artisans. Education and awareness campaigns helping raise awareness about the impacts of over-tourism and promote sustainable tourism practices.

Growing popularity of adventure tourism and outdoor activities

Madhya Pradesh always captivated tourists by its immaculate wildlife, nature and spirituality but with the rigorous efforts of MP Tourism, the state has emerged as a hotspot for Adventure activities. All major festivals of MP including the

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Lores of Rajasthan

Where Architecture meets History

Rajasthan, the land of Kings, paints a true picture of Indian heritage, culture, colours, and stories. 'The incredible state of India' is full of attractions that cannot be covered in one trip. There is so much to see, hear, experience, and taste in this state, which stands on top of thousands of tales of the past, stories of people, their faith and beliefs, and wonders of architecture. Due to geographic and historical reasons, this land was constantly exposed to wars, giving rise to tales of courage, royalty, and traditions. Rajasthan has always been a land of striking features, including deserts and mountains, man-made lakes and lush green countryside, grand havelis and temples, jungles and colorful towns, and much more. If you love listening to ghost stories or reliving historical narratives, then you'll love the experiences that TravelScapes has assembled for your next trip

By Tanya Agarwalla



Witness Rajasthan like you have never before. Relive Rajasthan through its folk tales.





Walk the footprints of former royal hunters

Ranthambore National Park and Tiger Reserve, a major national park in India, was once a private game reserve of the Royal House of Jaipur. To date, it houses a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the 10th-century Ranthambore Fort. Home to the majestic Royal Bengal Tiger, along with other wildlife and around 300 bird species, Ranthambore adds a natural charm to its noble history. The Lord Ganesha temple located in the fort complex used to be the recipient of thousands of letters that the families of battlefield warriors wrote and addressed to them.

Get ready to feel the goosebumps

Bhangarh Fort, known as the most haunted place in India, lies at the edge of the Sariska Tiger Reserve in the Alwar district of Rajasthan. Following stories of the occult, this fort provides an intoxicating mix of history and folklore. You can see the ruins of an entire town while admiring the immense planning of the fort complex. The other unfathomable haunting legend lies in the ruins of the Kuldhara Village, located at a distance of 18 km from Jaisalmer. Also known as the Ghost Town, this village was abandoned in the 1800s by all its people and the nearby 84 villages.



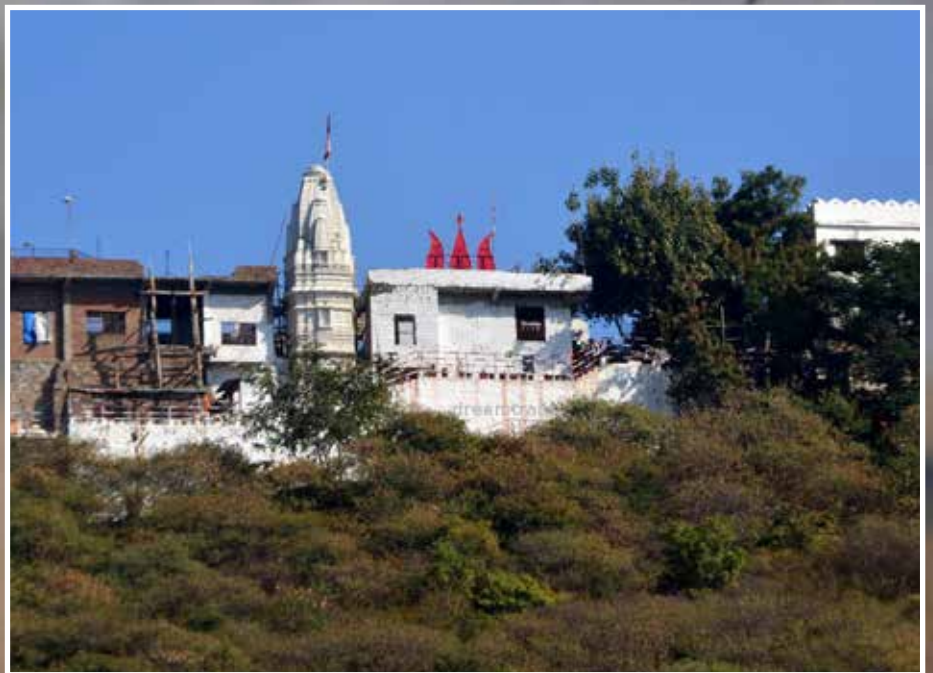


Glimmer in the shine of Khazana Mahal

Experience the historical grandeur of India with this Museum of Gems and Jewellery, located in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Housed in the stunning realms of a 100-year-old heritage Haveli, set in Aravalli hills, Khazana Mahal takes you through the journey of the rich legacy of the gem industry in Jaipur with its luxurious cinema hall, the Darbaar Hall, Indian bridal accessories, jewellery from Bollywood, a diamond section, and exhibition of the replica of the famous Kohinoor diamond and a piece of a real shooting star.

Reignite your faith in eccentric ways

Karni Mata Temple is the most visited tourist attraction in Bikaner and is known for its humongous population of 25000+ rats. These creatures are believed to be the reincarnation of Goddess Durga and are held specifically sacred. Tourists who visit the temple also bring milk, sweets, and other offerings. The other famous temple, the Neemach Mata Temple, is also known as 'Udaipur's Vaishno Devi' and is situated at the top of a hill. This hidden pilgrimage site is dedicated to Goddess Neemach Mata and offers a panoramic view of Udaipur's scenic landscape. Visitors can choose to trek or climb approximately 900 stairs to reach the temple.



Relive the past occurrences

Known as the 'Jallianwala Bagh of Rajasthan,' Mangadh Dham is a pious place of faith for the tribals of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh. Surrounded by scattered forests, this part of the Aravalli hills tells the stories of valour and sacrifices. The Mangadh Hill Massacre took place in the Banswara district over 110 years ago, marking the story of the sacrifice of the lives of 1500 tribal devotees and the brutality of British colonisers. Banswara also has rare species of large wishing trees, Kalpa Vriksha, in a pair (Raja-Rani), which are said to fulfill the wishes of people.

BLINKBRAND SOLUTIONS BRINGS DATA-DRIVEN INNOVATION IN INDIA'S TOURISM MARKET

TravelScapes delves into the inspiration and journey behind the inception of BlinkBrand Solutions, guided by its core values of empathy, trust, and collaboration through the lens of Noel Saxena, CEO & Co-founder of BlinkBrand Solutions

By Aanchal Sachdeva

Can you share the inspiration behind founding Blink Brand Solutions and how your team's passion for travel influences the company's approach to solving problems in the tourism and hospitality industry?

Despite being there in tourism marketing and representation business for almost a decade and half, none of us were ever ready to what we encountered in 2020-21 when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. While we witnessed the resilience of the travel and tourism sector, we also realised that our destination and other supplier partners needed in-market push, marketing and promotion, reconnection with trade and industry that went beyond the professional mandate.

We also discovered that global clients were actively seeking a strategic partner capable of guiding them through the complexities of the Indian market with data-backed, actionable strategies to leverage on the growing potential of India. Now those were desperate times and we were repeatedly being approached for India market insights and strategies by our destination partners and overseas tourism suppliers in order to put the best foot forward and help redevelop the market. And hence we saw an opening and towards mid-2022 was born Blink Brand Solutions.

Some of our key core values are 'empathy' and 'trust' and since Blink's foray less than two years ago these values have stood us such good stead that we are today serving over half a dozen country, region and embassy clients. We have also recently signed Taiwan Tourism Administration as their India Representative office and drive their Marketing and Public Relation initiatives in India.

Offering a comprehensive range of services, both contractual and ad-hoc, our primary goal is to introduce newer destinations to India while enhancing the prospects of our travel partners.

Your vast industry experience allows you to tailor market-specific strategies for destinations. Can you explain how Blink Brand Solutions has successfully adapted strategies to cater to diverse target audiences and competitive landscapes?

What differentiates us is our emphasis on statistical and data-driven insights to help develop a marketing plan and other market



activation activities. In other words, we understand the importance of data, cultural nuances and local market insights, which influence our strategic approach to cater to the needs of our partners and craft tailored strategies to suit the distinct requirements.

We leverage real-time data, market trends, consumer behavior insights, and competitive landscape analysis to develop customized solutions that resonate with our clients and their diverse target audiences.

Since its establishment, BBS has risen to prominence as a leading consulting firm in India, distinguished for its innovative approaches, compelling storytelling, and data-driven solutions. Our track record speaks volumes, as we consistently deliver tangible results for our clients.

Blink Brand Solutions is committed to being the best custodians of brand stories through reliable, empanelled partners. Could you elaborate on how these partnerships deliver transparent and dedicated consumer activations?

We value relationships with our reliable partners and thus to uphold the integrity they ensure transparency and dedicated tangible results aligning with our core values and commitment to delivering exceptional experiences for our clients. Through close collaboration, we ensure that brand messages are conveyed authentically and resonate with consumers. We ensure that our clients stand out

and thrive in competitive markets.

Looking ahead, what are the key trends and opportunities you foresee in the tourism and hospitality industry, and how is Blink Brand Solutions prepared to innovate and adapt to meet the evolving needs of clients and travellers?

Just look at the growth fundamentals. Not many know that 2023 was a record year for overseas departures from India. Whereas the global recovery for 2023 is still at around 88 percent, India has bested its peak pre-Covid 2019 departures by over 1.3 percent crossing 27 million departures for the first time in 2023 itself. Furthermore, our forecast is strong double-digit growth over the next decade making India the second largest outbound travel market behind China by 2035. Now that's the size of the opportunity!

And with our innovative approaches, compelling storytelling, and most importantly, the data-driven strategic solutions and ability to leverage and curate modern cutting-edge technology solutions, Blink is ready to deliver on our global partners' expectation out of us and out of India market.

Anything significant you want readers to know about Blink Brand Solutions?

Yes indeed! There are two critical aspects to the way we function. First, Blink is the first and only data-driven 'marketplace' in the travel and tourism space where we leverage technology and monetize data to bring value to our clients in the complex market of India in order to help them make profitable decisions and build equity and numbers. The power of our data monetisation coupled with in-depth research and insights to build a strategic robust plan for our clients is our key USP.

The other aspect is our emphasis on collaboration where we chip in with our 'marketplace' resources and services to other tourism sales, marketing, representation companies and well as destinations and NTOs and suppliers such as Hotels and DMCS, etc. for their networking, roadshows, or something as simple as hotel or venue buying for their events, etc. One of our key philosophies and company values is collaboration and not competition where we also work for companies of our ilk.

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NCL announces new culinary experiences

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) unveiled new culinary and beverage experiences debuting aboard Norwegian Aqua. The innovator in global cruise travel, NCL, has committed to delivering an ultimate vacation experience with its first next-evolution vessel of the expanded Prima Plus Class, commenced in April 2025. Norwegian Aqua will include three new culinary experiences – NCL’s Thai-speciality restaurant, Sukhothai; an upscaled wine bar, Swirl Wine Bar; and the brand’s first eatery with a dedicated full plant-based menu, Planterie. David J. Herrera, president of Norwegian Cruise Line, said, “Expanding on our award-winning food and beverage program, we’re looking forward to bringing new concepts to life



aboard Norwegian Aqua while continuing to deliver on the variety of available offerings and value that NCL delivers.” The creative minds of Studio DADO have also enhanced the cruise’s restaurants and lounges, which were previously debuted on the Prima Class. The Commodore Room, the ship’s main complimentary dining room, boast a sea-inspired luxurious and rustic design.

AVIAREPS celebrates its 30 years of business

AVIAREPS, founded in Munich in 1994, celebrated its 30th anniversary at the world’s leading travel trade show, ITB Berlin, in April. Serving a variety of brands, including tourism, hospitality, aviation, lifestyle, and more, AVIAREPS continues with its ambition to help airlines and destinations grow their businesses. It expanded its network to 69 offices across 65 countries worldwide. The brand has made its name as the world’s leading company in marketing, communications, and international sales.

Michael Gaebler, Chairman and Founder of AVIAREPS, felt elated on celebrating the 30th anniversary of AVIAREPS and said, “30 Years of AVIAREPS! What a great journey with the most exceptional and wonderful colleagues and



partners! In the beginning, AVIAREPS came to life as a solution for airlines, destinations, and hospitality brands to better expand their corporate footprint and reach into global markets. Today AVIAREPS is entrusted with and acts on behalf of an increasing number of brands. We have expanded from aviation, destinations and hospitality brands to a wide variety of business fields, including mobility, lifestyle, retail, tourism attractions, trade promotion, and food and beverage.”

IRIS Reps launches NOOE Resort in Maldives



IRIS Reps, the outbound representation company and announced the launch of a resort in Maldives, NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi. This exquisite property is situated in the tropical paradise of the “Vaavu Atoll” in Maldives, providing breathtaking views of the landscape. It offers the ultimate holistic and romantic escape with its 72 villas spread across an area of 3 hectares. If travelling by speed boat, the resort’s convenient location allows you to reach Male City and international airport in 75

minutes, whereas it would take 25 minutes by seaplane. The five food and beverage outlets in the resort along with a Kids club, Th-āri by Mandara Spa, a Dive & Watersports Centre, and a Boutique Shop offer a range of curated treatment options. Alefiya Singh, founder and director of IRIS Reps, expressed her confidence in promoting NOOE as the epitome of luxury in the Indian market and stated, “The Maldives has always been known as a bucket list destination for travellers across the globe, so what better place to launch a new lifestyle brand that promotes a balanced holiday than the place everyone dreams of visiting.” NOOE offers curated travel experiences with themed buffets, Japanese-inspired dining, live-action stations, the Pool Bar, and an overwater restaurant.

Holiday Bazaar launches Wild Whispers DMC

Holiday Bazaar is a noteworthy tour operator and launched its latest venture, Wild Whispers, a specially curated destination management company (DMC). With 3+ decades of expertise in creating tailor-made travel experiences across Kenya, Holiday Bazaar is set to showcase its signature safari experiences to the global audience. Wild Whispers, Kenya’s leading luxury DMC, plays a pivotal role in the curation of luxury safari adventures to offer travellers unrivalled exploration of the destination’s natural offerings. Aman Shah, CEO of Wild Whispers – Nairobi, talks about the launch, “We are thrilled to begin the luxury safari showcase to travellers from across the world as a prominent DMC label under the aegis of Holiday Bazaar. At Wild

Whispers, we are dedicated to crafting immersive journeys that celebrate the radiance of Kenya’s wilderness.” Offering a range of bespoke signature experiences, like gorilla trekking, private guided safaris, bush breakfasts, helicopter safaris, and more, Wild Whispers ensures best-in-class hospitality to travellers. With a mindfully curated network of partner luxury resorts, the DMC allows visitors to immerse themselves in Kenya’s beauty of panoramic landscape and wildlife. Holiday Bazaar commits to personalised travel planning and local expertise, ensuring customized journeys through Wild Whispers. Showcasing the best of Kenya, Holiday Bazaar promises unforgettable experiences with its grasslands and pristine beaches.



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IATO announces 39th Annual Convention to be held in Bhopal

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) signed an MoU with MP Tourism last year in October to explore the possibility to host a convention in 2024. The IATO delegation team invited and requested the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Mohan Yadav, to inaugurate the convention on August 30, 2024.

Scheduled to be held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, from August 30 to September 2, 2024, the convention will witness an annual mega gathering with participation of about 20 state tourism departments and 900 – 1,000 travel and tourism industry stakeholders. The delegation team led by Rajiv Mehra, President; Ravi Gosain, Vice President; and Mahendra Pratap Singh, Chairman of IATO Madhya Pradesh Chapter, also met Sheo Shekhar Shukla, IAS, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Managing Director and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Bhopal to get his consent and finalise other details related to the convention.

The IATO Convention will be supported by the Government of Madhya Pradesh and will mark a significant milestone in the tourism industry, strengthening ties between the state and IATO. Rajiv Mehra, President of IATO said that the association is delighted to host the convention in MP after 9 years and said, "With the support from Madhya Pradesh Tourism, 39th IATO Annual Convention is going to be held with great pomp and show."

Promoting state tourism through its large membership base pan India, the IATO convention will include various events/activities like business sessions, social functions, tourism mart, cultural evening, marketing innovation competition, Run for Responsible Tourism, and more. It would allow various states and tourism stakeholders to showcase their products. "IATO conventions are considered as one of the best platforms by the state governments to promote, Inbound, Domestic, MICE and Adventure Tourism and other facets of Niche Tourism to the delegates who are the ultimate promoters of tourism to those destinations," said Rajiv Mehra.

Amadeus partners with British Airways for next-gen tech

British Airways partnered with Amadeus to use next-generation technology to deliver an agile and improved customer service. The airways selected Amadeus Nevio, a new portfolio of modular solutions built on open and AI technology, to deliver the airline's strategic goals. Marking a milestone in the aviation industry, this agreement ensures use of dynamic Offers and Orders.

The partners collaborated on the design Nevio's Offer and Order capabilities to meet the needs of modern airline retailers, enabling the airways to be at the forefront of retailing transformation. The platform is built around IATA Offer and Order principles to use the benefits of latest advances in artificial intelligence. Nevio's Offer suite will incorporate

dynamic products and bundles and the suite of Digital Experience tools will ensure a user-friendly booking experience and servicing, including disruption. Dynamic Offer Pricing was given out to enable real-time contextual pricing options based on marketplace dynamics.

Maheer Koubaa, Executive Vice President Travel Unit and Managing Director EMEA, Amadeus, was elated about the partnership and stated, "We see Amadeus' partnership with British Airways as truly transformative. We've been working closely with British Airways for more than 20 years and we're delighted that the airline has once again agreed to be a driver customer to shape the future of the aviation industry."

ATOAI's introduces an Adventure Guide Training Program

Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) launched its Adventure Guide Training Program to enhance the quality of adventure tourism experiences in India. Designed in collaboration with the Hanifl Centre and Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF), it aims to equip industry professionals with top-tier skills and knowledge.

The program ran for four days in three batches, from April 10-21, 2024, and attracted participants from diverse regions, including Kerala, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and West Bengal. This technical efficient initiative emphasized on responsible tourism practices, cultural sensitivity, and environmental stewardship.

The program was led by

seasoned experts from Hanifl Centre, covering a curriculum of adventure guiding essentials, risk management, sustainability, leadership, and environmental conservation. The program included various activities, including theoretical sessions, field exercises, and hands-on workshops while awarding the participants with internationally recognized certificates in WFA, EAI, CPR, and LNT Awareness. Ajeet Bajaj, President of ATOAI, expressed his elation and stated, "The Adventure Guide Training Program is pivotal in our mission to elevate adventure tourism standards in India. By equipping guides with essential skills and fostering a professional mindset, we are not only ensuring the safety of adventure tourists but also advancing the industry sustainability."





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Cordelia Cruises brings forth Cruise Control 5.0

Cordelia Cruises by Waterways Leisure Tourism Pvt. Ltd. launched a holiday event, Cruise Control 5.0. Scheduled to take place from May 11-13, 2024, the event will be graced by unforgettable live performances by the renowned rapper and songwriter, King, along with the popular DJ Chetas. Making everyone dance to his dynamic beats, DJ Chetas will be joined by other acclaimed music talents, including Sagar Wali Qawwali by Sagar Bhatia.

Visitors can experience the ultimate entertainment extravaganza aboard the MV Empress with an electrifying voyage. The cruise will be departing from Mumbai, and this two-night sailing spectacle can be the perfect summer holiday event, offering an ultimate party atmosphere. Visitors can enjoy dancing under the open sky and experience the magic of Cruise Control 5.0 with spectacular views of the vast ocean expanse.

True to its name, Cordelia Cruises aims



to promote and drive cruise culture in India by offering luxurious and immersive experiences for families. Catering to the Indian audience, the experiences are designed to be stylish, luxurious, and most importantly, inherently Indian. The cruise will take the visitors on a voyage that is beyond ordinary with lavish accommodations, exquisite dining, exciting entertainment, and more.



QuadLabs appoints Iain Andrew as Chairman

Iain Andrew joined QuadLabs board as the Chairman and non-executive director on April 25, 2024. Inspirational and visionary, Iain brings with him a wealth of broad-level experience to the company. Excelling in aviation, retail, and travel management, he has vast experience of working with globally recognised brands like TUI, Thomas Cook Business Travel, American Express, dnata and NEOM and the Saudi Tourist Authority.

Embodying exceptional leadership qualities, Iain's has a background in working as a chartered accountant overseeing mergers and acquisitions and as a Chief Technology Officer spearheading change management initiatives. His extensive Middle East expertise will prove instrumental in QuadLab's ambitious growth strategy, making it one of the leading Travel and Expense management companies. Gaurav Chiripal, CEO of QuadLabs welcomed Iain to the board and believes that his expertise in business strategy, acquisitions, and investor relations will be profitable to QuadLabs in its strategic planning phase.

Celestyal Cruises appoints STIC Travel Group as its GSA for India

STIC Travel Group has been appointed as the General Sales Agent for Celestyal Cruises in India. With immediate effect, STIC Travel Group will market, distribute, fulfil, and represent both dynamic and performed travel packages for Celestyal and offer cruise-only services across India.

Celestyal Cruises opted to collaborate with STIC Travel Group due to the strategic importance of the Indian market and its considerable growth potential. This partnership is expected to facilitate accelerated growth in the region while expanding the reach of touring products to a broader audience, leveraging STIC Travel Group's robust distribution and technology platforms.

With extensive experience integrating cruise and tour services, STIC Travel Group is well-equipped to provide comprehensive support, including sales and marketing activities and local language service centres. Marios Polydorou, Vice President of Business



Development at Celestyal Cruises, expressed confidence in STIC Travel Group's expertise, highlighting their decades-long experience in the cruise segment.

Isha Goyal, Executive Director & CEO of STIC Travel Group, expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration, emphasising their commitment to leveraging their extensive network, market knowledge, and sales expertise to support Celestyal Cruises effectively. The partnership aims to strengthen Celestyal's presence in India and enhance the overall cruising experience for travellers in the region.

ICPB announces Leadership changes

In a meeting on April 10, 2024, the Governing Board of the India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) made significant announcements regarding leadership changes. Following the resignation of Madan Kak from the position of Honorary Secretary-cum-Honorary Treasurer, the Board has nominated Chander Mansharamani to assume the role of Honorary Secretary and Saurabh Bhargava to take over as Honorary Treasurer. These nominations are effective until further elections are held to fill the positions permanently. Mansharamani and Bhargava bring their expertise and dedication to their respective roles, aiming to effectively uphold the organisation's mission and objectives. The new office bearers of ICPB, Amaresh Tiwari, Vice Chairman; Chander Mansharamani, Honorary Secretary; and Saurabh Bhargava, Honorary Treasurer, are all readily available for any queries or correspondence regarding their roles.



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California unveils "Ultimate Playground" Global Brand Platform for travellers

California, renowned for its stunning landscapes and vibrant culture, is unveiling a new brand platform aimed at welcoming travellers to the Ultimate Playground. Grounded in research from the National Institute for Play (NIFP), this initiative encourages visitors to embark on a journey of fun and free-spirited exploration, offering a myriad of experiences tailored to every traveller's preferences.

The launch of the "Let's Play" global campaign marks California's first brand evolution in over a decade. Designed to inspire both domestic and international travellers, the Ultimate Playground platform celebrates the state's playful lifestyle and diverse offerings, inviting visitors to indulge in a range of adventures, from hiking and road trips to beach relaxation and wine tasting.

Caroline Beteta, President and CEO of Visit California, emphasised the unique appeal of California as the Ultimate Playground destination.

"California's playful lifestyle, combined with our abundance of experiences, create something no other destination can claim," she said. "The power of play is scientifically proven, and it's time for travellers to rediscover joy and embrace the playful spirit of California."

Research conducted by Visit California and scholarly works form the foundation of this playful brand identity. Studies reveal that most consumers prioritise incorporating play into their lives, with vacation being a prime opportunity for relaxation and enjoyment. Wunderman Thompson Intelligence's research underscores the importance of joy and fun in people's lives, with an overwhelming majority seeking experiences that bring them



happiness and inspiration.

The NIFP, dedicated to studying the scientific knowledge of play behaviour, emphasises the essential role of play in promoting physical, mental, and social well-being. Its recent study, "The Power of Play: Losing and Finding Ourselves through Everyday Play," highlights the urgent need for play in combating anxiety, depression, and hopelessness.

According to the NIFP, travel is a gateway to play, allowing travellers to embrace new experiences and create lasting memories. The Ultimate Playground campaign, launched by Visit California, aims to capture the essence of play through a 30-second television spot titled "Let's Play." This integrated campaign, supported by a budget of \$32.8 million, will air across critical markets, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, the U.K., Australia, and China.

In addition to the campaign, VisitCalifornia.com features a quiz allowing travellers to identify their "play style" and discover activities and destinations in California that align with their preferences. The platform recognises eight distinct play styles, each grounded in decades of research, emphasising the inherent human need for play.

As travellers seek opportunities for joy and inspiration, California stands ready to welcome them to the Ultimate Playground, where every experience invites them to play and discover. With its diverse landscapes, vibrant culture, and endless possibilities for adventure, California promises travellers an unforgettable journey filled with fun and excitement.



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WYNDHAM HOTELS & RESORTS

MAPS STRATEGIC GROWTH PLANS FOR THE EURASIAN MARKET



Dimitris Manikis, President of EMEA, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, shares valuable insights into the strategic direction and plans of one of the world's leading hotel brands. With an illustrious career spanning over three decades in the hospitality industry, Manikis brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his role, driving growth and innovation across diverse markets. Manikis proposes strategic initiatives to propel Wyndham Hotels & Resorts' growth and enhance its brand presence in the Eurasian market. He highlights his commitment to innovation and dedication to providing exceptional hospitality experiences in the dynamic Eurasian market. He also brings about unique strengths that set Wyndham apart from its competitors and how the company plans to capitalise on these strengths to maintain its leadership position

By Aanchal Sachdeva

What strategic initiatives do you plan to implement to drive growth and enhance the brand's presence in the market?

We have devised strategic initiatives focused on expansion, diversification, and talent development to drive growth and enhance Wyndham Hotels & Resorts' presence in the Eurasian market. Firstly, we aim to expand our upper-scale brands across the region while selectively placing our mid-market portfolio in tier I, II, and III cities.

In the Indian subcontinent, where we already operate 61 hotels (including Wyndham, Wyndham Garden Ramada, Ramada Encore, Howard Johnson, Hawthorn Suites, Days Hotel, and Trademark Collection), we will further bolster our presence through a robust development pipeline. We will offer diverse options to our business partners and hotel owners. We are committed to prioritising skill development initiatives and fostering partnerships with academic institutions.

Our annual scholarship program for two deserving students from the Christel House school is a testament to our commitment to nurturing talent. By implementing these strategic initiatives, we aim to drive growth, diversify our offerings, and nurture talent, enhancing Wyndham Hotels & Resorts' brand presence and relevance in the Eurasian market.

What do you believe sets Wyndham Hotels & Resorts apart from its competitors, and how do you plan to capitalise on these strengths?

In 2023 (compared to 2022), there was a remarkable 15.3% increase in Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR), accompanied by an 8.6% rise in occupancy rates (Occ) and a substantial 6.1% surge in Average Daily Rate (ADR). These figures underscore Wyndham's ability to attract guests and optimise revenue streams effectively.

Our dedication to design excellence, technological advancement, and guest satisfaction ensures that we not only meet but exceed modern travellers' expectations

One of Wyndham's key differentiators is its growing presence in the Indian subcontinent. With 61 operational hotels housing more than 5,419 rooms and an additional 40 hotels with over 3,731 rooms in development, Wyndham has established its presence in 38 cities across India and 40 cities throughout Eurasia. Moreover, Wyndham plans to open nearly 40 more hotels in the coming years. Wyndham's diverse portfolio of brands (including Wyndham, Ramada by Wyndham, Ramada Encore by Wyndham, Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham, Howard Johnson by Wyndham, Days Inn by Wyndham, and Trademark Collection by Wyndham) ensures that it can cater to various traveller preferences across different market segments in key destinations such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Udaipur, Jaipur, Amritsar, Varanasi, Colombo and Kathmandu, along with a focus on Nepal.

Furthermore, Wyndham promotes inclusivity and equal access to education through scholarship opportunities for meritorious students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

What trends do you foresee shaping the future of the hospitality industry, and how are Wyndham Hotels & Resorts positioned to adapt to these changes?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming

increasingly prevalent, streamlining processes and enhancing guest experiences. Augmented Reality (AR) is also emerging as a tool to improve guest experiences, offering interactive elements and virtual tours. Moreover, personalisation in the digital age is crucial, as guests expect tailored services and recommendations.

Leveraging AI, we can optimise operations, personalise guest interactions, and anticipate needs. Embracing sustainability initiatives aligns with our commitment to responsible tourism, reducing environmental impact while meeting guest expectations. Incorporating AR into our offerings can provide immersive experiences, from virtual room tours to interactive concierge services. Additionally, Wyndham's focus on mobile technology enables seamless bookings, check-ins, and communication, enhancing guest convenience.

What measures do you intend to implement to ensure that Wyndham Hotels & Resorts remains at the forefront of innovation and adapts quickly to emerging trends in technology, design, and guest services?

We implement measures that integrate design, technology, and guest services seamlessly to ensure Wyndham Hotels & Resorts remains innovative and adaptable to emerging trends. In design, we embrace minimalism, focusing on essential amenities while eliminating excess. Our colour palettes and spatial harmony enhance the guest experience, ensuring every aspect of our properties reflects contemporary desires.

Regarding technology, we leverage cloud-based, mobile-first solutions to enhance operational efficiency for our franchisees. Collaborating with IDS Next, a leading hotel software provider, we're revolutionising loyalty enrolment, making it more convenient and efficient for guests across India to join Wyndham Rewards.

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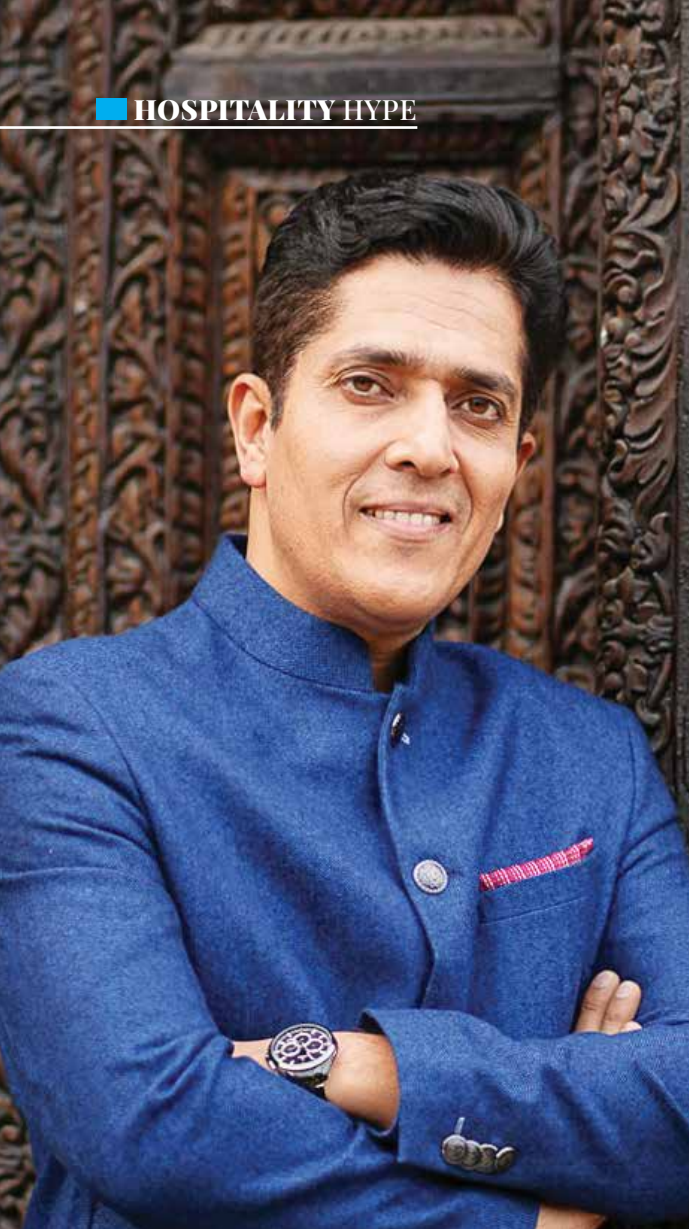


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FAIRMONT JAIPUR

ELEVATES LUXURY AND CULTURAL IMMERSION IN RAJASTHAN'S HOSPITALITY LANDSCAPE

Rajat Sethi, the General Manager of Fairmont Jaipur, is at the helm of one of Rajasthan's most distinguished hospitality landmarks. Fairmont Jaipur, renowned for its architectural grandeur and immersive guest experiences, stands as a testament to luxury and regal hospitality. As part of the esteemed Fairmont Hotels group, known for hosting celebrities, royalty, and iconic historic events, Fairmont Jaipur embodies the epitome of luxurious accommodations in sought-after destinations

By Aanchal Sachdeva

Leadership style and approach to align with the unique characteristics and demands of the new location

As a leader, I have consistently thrived in diverse hospitality environments. I am energised by the move to Jaipur and have conducted thorough research on the city's culture, social norms, and expectations. My strategy involves empowering our talented team members to utilise their local knowledge and connections, fostering a collaborative and dynamic work environment. We aim to integrate local customs and traditions into our workplace culture, creating a strong sense of belonging for both our team and guests.

Fairmont Jaipur attracts guests from diverse cultural backgrounds

At Fairmont Jaipur, we are dedicated to providing an inclusive and enriching experience for our global guests while celebrating Rajasthan's vibrant heritage. We prioritise cultural sensitivity through diversity and inclusion training for our staff, ensuring they are well-versed with our history and traditions. Personalised touches, such as gathering guest preferences prior to arrival further enhances the guest experience. Through showcasing local art and music and hosting themed cultural events, we aim to foster genuine connections and unforgettable memories for our guests while maintaining an inclusive atmosphere.

Fairmont Jaipur as a preferred choice for destination weddings and special events

To further enhance Fairmont Jaipur's reputation as a premier destination for weddings and special events, we are dedicated to expanding and enriching our offerings while maintaining exceptional

service and luxury. Our vision involves crafting bespoke wedding packages tailored to diverse cultural preferences and themes, ensuring meticulous planning and flawless execution. At Fairmont Jaipur, we have recently opened additional event venue called 'Zui' inspired from the Mughal architecture in Shamiyana style. Our seasoned team of event planners collaborates closely with clients to transform their vision into reality, from stunning venue decorations to curated culinary experiences. Continuous training programs empower our staff to deliver personalised and attentive service, meeting the unique needs of each event.

Strategies to drive business growth and market positioning for Fairmont Jaipur

Fairmont Jaipur is the leading wedding destination in Rajasthan. To maximise wedding bookings during peak seasons and auspicious months, we offer competitive wedding rates and tailored wedding packages that accumulate benefits for our guests. Moreover, we have introduced the MICE Package for the executive teams from prestigious organisations such as YPO and EPO to cater to their specific event needs.

During the summer months we drive curated packages aimed at boosting transient demand. These packages are thoughtfully designed to offer unique experiences and value-added services, making Fairmont Jaipur an attractive destination for leisure travellers who is looking for a memorable summer getaway. Each package is crafted to highlight the best of our facilities, services, and local attractions, ensuring an unforgettable stay for our guests.

Fairmont Jaipur's architectural grandeur and immersive guest experiences

Fairmont Jaipur is known for its exquisite architecture, rich cultural experiences, and exceptional royal hospitality. At Fairmont Jaipur, we strategically aim to elevate guest experiences by curating immersive cultural activities, including traditional music performances, craft workshops, and culinary demonstrations showcasing Rajasthani cuisine. Alongside architectural tours and engagement with local artisans, guests can indulge in rejuvenating spa treatments at Ruhab Spa, personalised to each guest's Zodiac Sign, and culinary escapades at Zia, Zoya, and Anjum, offering global flavours and authentic teas with panoramic views of the Aravalli hills. Collaborating with local artisans, Fairmont Jaipur also endeavours to create bespoke products reflecting Rajasthan's essence, thus fostering sustainability initiatives, and providing guests with exceptional, culturally enriching experiences that celebrate heritage, craftsmanship, and holistic well-being. Our signature experience, "Journey to Discovery," will offer architectural tours, providing insights into the property's historical significance and the region's craftsmanship. Through these endeavours, Fairmont Jaipur seeks to provide guests with exceptional, culturally enriching experiences, elevating its appeal further.

Fairmont Jaipur is an unconditional all-inclusive package presents an exquisite blend of upscale dining, live entertainment, premium spirits, and luxurious accommodations, all within a warm and inviting ambiance immersed in the vibrant heart of Rajasthani culture.



RAJASTHAN

- Hotel Park Ocean Jaipur
- Anuraga Palace Ranthambore
- BambooSaa Resort & Spa Udaipur
- BambooSaa Mulberry Resort Pushkar

KHAJURAHO

- Hotel Chandela, Khajuraho

VARANASI

- Shree Shivay Experiential Dining
- Hotel Broadway

MUSSOORIE

- Oyster Villa Barlowganj
- The Hillcrest, Camels Back Road

GOA

- Regent Laguna Anjuna, North Goa

KERALA

- The Travancore heritage Trivandrum
- Blue jelly Luxury Houseboat Alleppey
- Vibe Resort Munnar

PUDUCHERRY

- Le Pondy Beach Resort

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Fortune Hotels launches its debut property in Nepal

ITC's hotel group member, Fortune Hotels, announced its international debut with the inauguration of its first hotel - Fortune Resort & Wellness Spa Bhaktapur. Nestled amidst the serene Bhaktapur hills, the resort has solidified its position as a leading hospitality brand in the region. This tranquil resort marks the hotel chain's first international footprint outside India, setting new benchmarks in the hospitality sector.

Samir MC, Managing Director of Fortune Hotels, expressed his delight over the launch and said, "At the onset of the new financial



year 2024-25, we are pleased to announce our international debut in the captivating Kingdom of Nepal with the launch of Fortune Resort & Wellness Spa Bhaktapur. This is a significant milestone in our 'beyond borders' expansion strategy, especially as we have envisioned our presence in South Asia and proximal markets."

The hotel offers a range of wellness facilities and services, including relaxing treatment rooms, sauna and steam rooms, naturopathy, and spa massages, and soulful culinary delights for food enthusiasts. The all-vegetarian food soiree with multi-cuisine delicacies provides a perfect setting to unwind with spirits, wines, and beers.

With a spread of an area of over 8,000 sq. ft. of event spaces and over 11,000 sq. ft. of stunning swimming pool area and deck, the resort has also pegged itself as a potential wedding destination.

Kempinski expands in China by debuting the Bristoria brand

Kempinski Group expands in China's Jiangsu province with the debut of the Bristoria brand, alongside an ultra-luxury lakeside Kempinski hotel in Yangzhou Economic Development Zone. It plans to open two spectacular properties in Yangzhou, 32 years after opening the company's first luxury hotel in China. This duo of Kempinski and Bristoria hotels will bring best-in-class hospitality with a European touch when the project is complete in 2025.

This agreement was signed by Kempinski Hotel Group with a wholly-owned subsidiary of Yangzhou Economic and Technological Development Zone Culture and Tourism Group Co., Ltd. It focuses on three main sectors - tourism economy, cultural media, and modern agriculture.

René Nijhof, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Kempinski Hotels S.A. said, "This new signing reinforces our reputation



as a trusted and respected business partner in China and further enhances the Kempinski footprint in Jiangsu Province, where we have operated hotels in Suzhou and Nanjing since 2008 and 2019 respectively."

The lakeside Kempinski Hotel Yangzhou Nuoyuan will be set in a collection of classical Chinese buildings and will provide a stylish base.

Fairmont Jaipur celebrates Earth Day with sustainability

Committed to maintaining sustainable practices in its hospitality operations, the flagship luxury property of the hotel chain in India, Fairmont Jaipur, celebrated Earth Day with its sustainable practices. Standing at the forefront of sustainable hospitality, the hotel has set a new standard for eco-friendly hospitality by reducing food wastage and pollution.

They have employed Orbisk's innovative image-capturing technology and rigorous food-safety protocols to streamline food wastage calculations. Its kitchen uses a "first-in, first-out" inventory system that uses ingredients efficiently and helps minimize spoilage. Its sustainable practices also include responsible sourcing of seasonal



and local ingredients to decrease the carbon footprint.

The on-site Organic Waste Converter (OWC) machine at the hotel efficiently transforms biodegradable food waste into nutrient-rich manure, fostering sustainable agriculture practices.

"Celebrating Earth Day is not just about one day of action; it's about embodying sustainability every day in everything we do," says Rajat Sethi, General Manager, Fairmont Jaipur.

Welcomhotel launches property in Hamsa, Manali

ITC Hotels announced the launch of a new property, Welcomhotel, in Hamsa, Manali. Adding the newest premier mountain resort to its collection of three Welcomhotel properties in Himachal Pradesh, the brand continues with its impressive growth trajectory.

The resort is located at a well-planned four-acre apple orchard in the north of Manali town, offering a scenic 360-degree view of the Himalayan landscape. It brings a mountain charm to the visitors with its 46 well-appointed rooms and suites, inclusive of 7 expansive all-weather villas. Anil Chadha,

Divisional Chief Executive, ITC Hotels talks about the growing inventory of Brand Welcomhotel, "Domestic tourism continues to grow at a steady pace. At ITC Hotels we recognise this trend and endeavour to provide various destination experiences to our guests. We are confident that Welcomhotel Hamsa, Manali will further fortify our presence in Himachal Pradesh. With such great tourism interest in the state, I believe guests will enjoy their stay at this aesthetically designed resort that showcases incredible beauty in spring and snow."



jüSTa Hollow Oak debuts in Mussoorie

Onora Hospitality's luxury brand, jüSTa Hotels & Resorts, announced the opening of its latest property, jüSTa Hollow Oak, in Mussoorie. Providing a blend of historical and picturesque aesthetics, it allows the visitors to get a majestic view of the Mussoorie's scenic backdrop. After thriving in Corbett, Mukhteshwar, and Rishikesh; Mussoorie marks the fourth destination in Uttarakhand for the brand.

Ashish Vohra, Founder & CEO of Onora Hospitality, states, "jüSTa Hollow Oak's opening in Mussoorie is a key addition to our collection, designed to offer guests a place to escape the city's pace. We aim to provide an environment that offers relaxation and a connection with the natural



surroundings." Equipped with all the modern amenities, jüSTa Hollow Oak has 16 forest-view rooms in 3 categories - 2 Superior Rooms, 12 Premium Rooms, and 2 Junior Suites; all with private balconies. The rooms use warm earthy tones and rich wooden furnishings for a rich and inviting ambiance.

Vohra adds, "At jüSTa Hollow Oak, we have embraced the concept of personalised hospitality to cater to each guest's unique preferences."



Wyndham unveils its growth for 2023 across EMEA

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has shown expansive growth across Europe, Eurasia, Middle East, and Africa in 2023. The company with 25 brands and approximately 9,200 hotels has announced its full-year results for the year 2023. The highlights include the introduction of 9 brands into new countries, the signing of 107 franchise agreements, and opening of 87 hotels, and the addition of 9,500 rooms.

Inspired by the OwnerFirst approach of franchising, the company aims to strengthen

its reputation through the region and its commitment to delivering success for owners and franchisees. It now has an overall of 639 hotels throughout EMEA, inclusive of 12 managed ones, representing over 88,000 rooms across 15 brands with a pipeline of over 150 hotels.

The Wyndham Advantage is a combination of the world's best marketing, distribution, and other resources, building an investment of more than \$275 million in innovative technology over the past 5 years.

Six Senses Residences Dubai, the tallest residential tower

Six Senses Residences Dubai Marina will be launched as the world's tallest residential tower, engineered with integrated wellness. Six Senses, part of the IHG Hotels & Resorts luxury and lifestyle portfolio, has joined hands with the Select Group, a renowned real estate developer headquartered in Dubai, signing an agreement to launch the residential tower. This 122-storey building will be designed with a holistic approach, inculcating wellness-centric and community-enhancing infrastructure elements to encourage a positive concept of health.

This residential tower will be located in Dubai Marina and will incorporate 251 residences, ranging from 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom residences, 4-bedroom half-floor penthouses, 4-bedroom duplex sky mansions, and 5-bedroom triplex sky mansions. The infrastructure is layered with a suite of amenities and occupies a total area of 61,250 sq. ft, spreading across four levels.

This successful partnership already launched the award-winning Six Senses Residences the Palm, Dubai, which will house the Six Senses Place, UAE's first wellness and social club.



Abad Hotels sees a 14% revenue growth with AxisRooms

Abad Hotels and Resorts registered a significant revenue spike of 14% in 2023 compared to 2022. Aided by the real-time distribution capabilities of AxisRooms Channel Manager solutions, the revenue growth of the company resulted from 10% more OTA sales in 2023 compared to 2022.

Abad Hotels and Resorts wanted to sell more rooms via OTAs but could not achieve the same without a Channel Manager. It was inefficient and error-prone to manually update rates and availability across 7

OTAs. This led to overbooking and unhappy guests. AxisRooms Channel Manager, Manzoor A R, Corporate Manager – Sales & Marketing Abad Hotels and Resorts said, "As a contemporary and growing hotel group, selling more on leading OTAs has always been our #1 priority. That's why we wanted the best Channel Manager to ensure efficient and real-time distribution. This led us to adopt AxisRooms in 2012. Since then, over the last decade, we can say that we have grown together."





Shangri-La Muscat welcomes destination weddings

Shangri-La Muscat, located between the magnificent Hajar Mountains and the Gulf of Oman, sets itself up as the newest destination for Indian destination weddings. Boasting grand architecture, inspired by the history of old Muscat, Shangri-La provides a perfect backdrop of regal and picturesque landscape. The grand foyer of Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah provides a modern and distinct outlook for traditional Indian rituals and celebrations.

The 124-hectare property is surrounded by beaches and features two distinctive wings - Al Waha and Al Bandar - to accommodate the guests for various events. Its multi-functional venues ensure a lavish celebration with the

timeless elegance of its grand Barr Al Jissah Ballroom, adorned with crystal chandeliers. The ballroom can easily accommodate up to 850 guests for a large sangeet or formal reception.

Make a grand Bollywood-type entry with Shangri-La Muscat's exclusive arrival choices. You can choose from a collection of over 30 classic cars or opt for an arrival via a helicopter. The resort's staff takes pride in their Omani hospitality, offering support and guidance throughout the event. With an array of 14 restaurants, bars, and beachside lounges, Shangri-La Muscat brings your regal wedding fantasies to life with a curated menu for a delectable wedding feast.

Preferred Hotels & Resorts enhances global portfolio

Between January 1 and March 31, 2024, Preferred Hotels & Resorts expanded its global portfolio by adding 15 new member properties. From the serene wilderness of Nepal to the vibrant heart of Split, Croatia, each property offers unique experiences to inspire travellers. Notable additions include CordeValle in San Martin, California, offering luxury retreat amidst the Santa Cruz Mountains, and Farol Hotel in Cascais, Portugal, blending historic charm with modern luxury along the Estoril Coast. The Himalayan Wildlife Sanctuary in Chitwan, Nepal, provides a luxurious safari experience.

Hotel Mousai Cancun - A

Tafer Resort, set to launch, promises an elevated all-inclusive experience in Cancun. Additionally, Hotel Ambassador Split in Croatia offers contemporary elegance and personalised service.

Lindsey Ueberroth, CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, expressed pride in welcoming the properties, highlighting the commitment to offering distinctive experiences.



Opening of ZiP by Spree Hotels Bella Heights in McLeod Ganj

Spree Hospitality, a subsidiary of EaseMyTrip, launched its newest property, ZiP by Spree Hotels Bella Heights, in McLeod Ganj, Himachal Pradesh. Nestled in the quiet and serene Himalayan Mountains, this luxurious retreat is located just 100 metres away from the revered Dalai Lama Monastery.

Each of the rooms of the hotel is thoughtfully designed with modern amenities, providing a comfortable and memorable stay experience for all the visitors. Its rooftop restaurant, Treat, offers panoramic views of the breathtaking mountain landscape. The hotel also features a dedicated yoga room and a well-equipped gymnasium, Energize, for visitors to rejuvenate their mind and body.

Sagar Khurana, Executive Vice President of Spree Hospitality,



said, "We are delighted to introduce ZiP by Spree Hotels Bella Heights to the vibrant hospitality landscape of McLeod Ganj. With our commitment to providing exceptional service and unforgettable experiences, we look forward to welcoming guests and creating cherished memories in the lap of the Himalayas."

Cheval Collection partners with Global Hotel Alliance

Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) expands its award-winning loyalty program, GHA DISCOVERY with Cheval Collection, an award-winning hospitality group. Cheval Collection currently possesses 13 luxury residences with over 800 apartments in London, Edinburgh and Dubai, and aims to help GHA expand in the same locations with luxury serviced apartments.

Scheduled for integration later this year, 26 million members of GHA DISCOVERY will receive several benefits, like member rates, room upgrades, and the ability to spend a transparent rewards currency - DISCOVERY Dollars (D\$) - by Cheval

Collection.

Chris Hartley, CEO of GHA talks about Cheval's dedication to providing its guests with premium service, "We are thrilled to announce the addition of Cheval Collection to our alliance, marking our first venture into serviced apartments. Travellers are seeking larger accommodation options and now they can enjoy recognition and rewards across a greater selection of properties and destinations, including Edinburgh which we are excited to add."

Cheval Collection residences offer unique apartments for brief business trips and extended holidays.





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Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2024 scheduled in Jamaica

The 42nd staging of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)'s Caribbean Travel Marketplace will be taking place at the Montego Bay Convention Centre. Scheduled to be hosted by Jamaica from May 20-23, 2024, the event will feature new additions and three main components - the Business of Tourism (The Caribbean Travel Forum on May 20), the Marketing of Tourism (CHTA Travel Marketplace May 21-22) and the Community of Tourism (Responsible Tourism Day on May 23). This pioneering event aims to put particular emphasis on benefitting local Jamaican communities, and also providing a chance for the participants to engage in different activities. The Jamaican Tourism Board (JTB) is Jamaica's national tourism agency and has received prominent global recognition, ranking Jamaica as the best destination to visit globally. Nicola Madden-Greig, President of CHTA, spoke about the tremendous potential of the MICE market at a press briefing at the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), "We have expanded to target buyers from Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia. We will also have for the first time a complete stand-alone MICE itinerary with 20 meeting



planners attending the first-ever CHTA Caribbean MICE exchange." She pointed out the potential of generating revenue of more than US\$900 billion worldwide in 2023, which is expected to be doubled by 2032.

Providing the tourism suppliers with a chance of meeting face to face with wholesalers from around the world, Caribbean Travel Marketplace's main objective is for suppliers and buyers to conduct negotiations that benefit the region. Scheduled for May 23 in Jamaica, CHTA aims to introduce the first-ever Marketplace Responsible Tourism Day to promote sustainable tourism initiatives.

Miral collaborates with the Khalifa Fund for enterprise development

Miral, Abu Dhabi's creator of immersive destinations and experiences, partners with the Khalifa Fund to support local entrepreneurs for the second consecutive year. It aims to promote Enterprise Development at the Yas Bay Waterfront's 'Waterfront Nights' market, which serves as an ideal platform for local businesses to promote their offerings.

Running from March 22, the market currently showcases 20 small businesses and artisans, 10 of which are being supported by the Khalifa Fund. HE Alia Al Mazraouie, CEO of Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development, and Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi, Group CEO of Miral, highlighted their strong partnership and paid a visit to the market. At the event, they extended their support to entrepreneurs, learning more about their local businesses and product offerings.

'Waterfront Nights' market 2024 includes homegrown brands funded by Khalifa Fund, including IV Perfume, Sada Oud and FAE Oud & Perfumes, along with Glaza Collection,



Manout Tailoring, and Boomah Café. This free-to-enter market taking place at the arena plaza in front of Etihad Arena, daily extending till the end of the joyous occasion of Eid Al Fitr, will be graced by enchanting lights and traditional Ramadan decorations. Guests can also enjoy live performances by traditional qanun and oud players along with a vast selection of board games for attendees to enjoy quality time with their friends and family. The addition of a children's craft corner enables the children to try their hands at making paper lanterns.



Abu Dhabi Comedy Week at Yas Island in May

Yas Island is hosting the Abu Dhabi Comedy Week at Etihad Arena, starting from May 18-26, 2024. Geared up to host the funniest star-studded lineup for non-stop entertainment, the capital's first-ever comedy festival announced new additions to the lineup, including the award-winning comedy legend Dave Chappelle, and other household names like Aziz Ansari, Tom Segura, and Jo Koy. The comedic heavyweights to join the lineup include Tommy Tiernan, Kevin Bridges, Andrew Santino, Bobby Lee, Andrew Schulz, and Bassem Youssef & Maz Jobrani.

Chris Tucker, the Hollywood comedy superstar, will make his return to Abu Dhabi after 10 years for a late performance following Tom Segura on May 25, 2024. Guests can get access to exclusive hotel and ticket packages offering event tickets, accommodation, shuttle services, and complimentary access to Yas Beach. Bookings for the event will start on April 19 to promote the perfect staycation on Yas Island.

Guaranteeing a week full of laughter and wit, Abu Dhabi Comedy Week will be lined up with several comedy legends and fresh faces. The event will be organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism with Abu Dhabi and Miral in partnership with Live Nation Middle East, Blu Blood, Theory Eleven Entertainment, and GME Events.

The schedule for the Abu Dhabi Comedy Week line-up will include performances by Aziz Ansari on May 18, Tommy Tiernan and Kevin Bridges on May 19, Andrew Santino and Bobby Lee on May 21, Andrew Schulz on May 22, Dave Chappelle on May 23, Bassem Youssef and Maz Jobrani on May 24, Tom Segura and Chris Tucker on May 25, followed by an ending performance by Jo Koy on May 26.

GNTO participates in the 50th German Travel Mart, Chemnitz

The 50th Germany Travel Mart (GMT) took place in Chemnitz, the cultural heart of Germany, from April 21-23, 2024. The German National Tourist Office (GNTO), India, announced its participation in the convention and its engagement in the Pre-Convention Tour along with the main event. PCT started on April 17 in a celebration of half a century of successful tourism exchange along with the enduring partnership in the travel industry.

A select group of trade professionals and media personnel from India undertook an enchanting journey through Germany's towns and cities, experiencing firsthand the rich German heritage. Focusing especially on UNESCO sites and the 'Feel Good' initiative, the delegation's Pre-Convention Tour aimed to encourage visitors to immerse themselves in and celebrate Germany's local culture.

Celebrating a milestone of 50 years, GMT 2024 focused on the themes of sustainability and eco-friendly travel. The main event of the convention was to promote train travel as a prime mode of sustainable travel, showcasing Germany's commitment to environmental stewardship. The German National Tourist Office, India, promoted its belief that sustainable travel is beneficial for the planet. The sustainable travel options also enhance



the overall travel experience by allowing deeper connections with the destinations.

The Germany Travel Mart promised to give an experiential journey for Indian media and travel agents, with sustainability as the prime focus. Offering a unique blend of cultural immersion and business network opportunities, the convention made a step to encourage participants to explore Germany's green initiatives and offerings under the umbrella of responsible tourism.

Romit Theophilus, Director of Marketing & Sales Office – India at the GNTO expressed his thoughts about completing 50 years of GMT, "As we mark the 50th anniversary of

the Germany Travel Mart, we are not just celebrating the legacy of this prestigious event but also paving the way for a future where travel is more sustainable, immersive, and culturally enriching. This year, from the vibrant city of Chemnitz, we invite our Indian partners to explore Germany's treasures through our themes of UNESCO and Feel Good, and to embrace the joy of slow travel and the luxury of longer stays."

The guests discovered the myriad ways of Germany's beliefs and sustainable and culturally rich travel at the landmark event of GMT 2024.

Thailand boosts its economy with soft power elements

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and its partners have launched an engaging activity, named 'ASEAN + India Shoppers in Thailand,' to promote the Thai economy by encouraging ASEAN and Indian tourists to vote for their favourite Thai soft-power element. Taking place from April 29 to June 15, 2024, the project will gift its participants shopping vouchers and special privileges, worth 500 Baht to 3,000 Baht each.

TAT Governor, Thapanee Kiatphaibool, expressed his enthusiasm about promoting ASEAN as a single tourism destination. Passport holders of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, and India can easily log on to their website to vote for Thailand's rich cultural resources and use the voucher to purchase

authentic Thai fashion and lifestyle products.

"We have designed the online quiz and the gift voucher redemption process to be easy and inclusive for ASEAN and Indian tourists, and we hope that they will take this opportunity to support Thai brands and products while exploring the influences of Thai soft power in tourism," Thapanee said.

Boosting sales and raising awareness for Thai products, the project supports the government's soft power promotion policy. It will also showcase Thailand's soft power through participating stores of King Power Corporation, King Power Click (FIRSTER), Multiply by Eight (X8), Central Group, Tops Market, Big C Supercenter, Good Goods, and Erb.

The project participation of around 5,000 guests to help generate about 131 million Baht



in tourism revenue. The 'ASEAN + India Shoppers in Thailand' activity encourages spending by tourists from India and ASEAN to promote short-haul tourism and stimulate travel. The gifted vouchers and privileges can be used in the participating stores in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, Chon Buri, Udon Thani, Ubon Ratchathani, Songkhla, and Nakhon Ratchasima for shopping for local Thai aromatics, accessories, fashion

clothes, and beverages.

The geographical proximity of the countries makes it easier to travel to Thailand, as ASEAN tourists are not required to obtain a visa to enter Thailand, whereas, Indian tourists can take advantage of the current temporary 30-day visa-free entry. Thailand is expecting the number of visitor arrivals from India to reach 1.7 million, while the ASEAN tourists to bypass 10 million this year.

Bhutan government lifts mandatory travel insurance

Bhutan decided to withdraw the mandatory travel insurance requirement introduced initially during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was done to ensure coverage for unforeseen emergencies related to medical expenses because of the pandemic. As the situation and travel restrictions got better, the Bhutan government lifted the mandatory requirement to enhance tourism accessibility.

As confirmed by the Department of Tourism, Bhutan, the decision ensured immediate relief for travellers, enabling a smoother visa

processing procedure for a seamless travel experience. Although the requirement of mandatory travel insurance has been lifted, the Department of Tourism recommended that tourists still get travel insurance as a precautionary measure for emergencies during international travel.

Bhutan, being a popular destination for Indian travellers, has steadily rebounded in the tourism industry post-pandemic. The country has implemented robust safety measures and protocols, providing a welcoming and hassle-free travel experience for tourists. This announcement offers a simplified visa processing process for Indian tourists planning to travel to Bhutan. Opening its borders to international tourists, Bhutan stands as a beacon of natural beauty with its cultural richness and majestic landscapes.



Kalba City announced the launch of Hanging Gardens

Sharjah announced the grand opening of the latest destination offering, the Hanging Gardens, in Kalba City. Sprawled over an impressive 1.6 million square feet area, this botanical area towers 281 metres above sea level and boasts around 100,000 trees. Abuzz with excitement, the Hanging Gardens offer an exceptional experience of beauty and leisure for residents and tourists, both.

Designed for people from all age groups, this newest addition includes dedicated features like mountain climbing routes, children's play zones, and an

expansive skaters' arena covering an area of 24,000 square feet. It also allows visitors to embark on a journey via an 820-metre excursion train track through the various garden attractions. Fitness enthusiasts can also make the most of the park using its 760-metre running track, offering an enchanting backdrop of nature for outdoor workouts.

The central part of the garden accommodates a culinary masterpiece, The Central Restaurant, offering a seating of up to 215 guests. It promises an unforgettable dining experience, amidst greenery and waterfalls.



Red Sea becomes certified Dark Sky Reserve

Setting new sustainability standards for protecting dark skies, Red Sea Global started an initiative to combat light pollution and preserve the natural beauty of UAE's desert landscape. Certified as the Middle East's first Dark Sky Reserve, the Red Sea sets new sustainable benchmarks in responsible hospitality practices, regeneration, and sustainability to preserve the pristine dark skies and thriving ecosystems.

This initiative helps safeguard the region's night skies, which are largely untouched by light pollution, by using innovative lighting strategies. Red Sea's commitment reflects its deep-rooted cultural reverence for the stars. The Red Sea's collaboration with DarkSky International recognises the region's intrinsic connection between the night sky and



heritage, paying homage to ancient nomadic traditions that relied on celestial navigation.

Luxury resorts like the newly-opened Six Senses Southern Dunes and St. Regis Red Sea Resort use state-of-the-art lighting controls to ensure minimal light emission. These systems provide a luxurious environment for guests to explore the property after dark. The use of programmable digital lighting and astronomical timers enables resorts to adapt to seasonal changes, protect the surrounding wildlife habitats, and reduce light pollution.

Portugal's foreign tourism records best first quarter

Tourism is a key factor in Portugal's economy and records an all-high number of foreign tourists visiting Portugal, surpassing three million in January-March. The National Statistics Institute (INE) recorded a jump of 10.6 per cent in the number of foreign visitors in the first quarter from the same period of 2023, which was a record year for Portugal tourism.

Known for its beaches, golf courses, and historic sites, Portugal's economy is linked to travel revenues accounting for 15 per cent of the gross domestic product in the country. Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, global tourism is set to record 2 per cent more international tourist arrivals than in 2019. The INE said that these results were boosted by the Easter holiday period, spread over March and



April this year.

The international tourist arrival was concentrated only in April last year, whereas it saw a surge of 1.4 million guests entering Portugal in March, 2024. This was recorded with the neighbouring Spaniards accounting for the largest share of arrivals, followed by visitors from Britain and the United States.



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QUADLABS CELEBRATES 2000 CUSTOMERS MILESTONE ON KONNECT.TRAVEL PLATFORM

QuadLabs proudly announces a significant achievement, welcoming its 2000th customer to the Konnect.travel platform. This milestone underscores QuadLabs' commitment to delivering cutting-edge technology solutions to the travel industry.

Since its inception, Konnect.travel has redefined travel management by offering

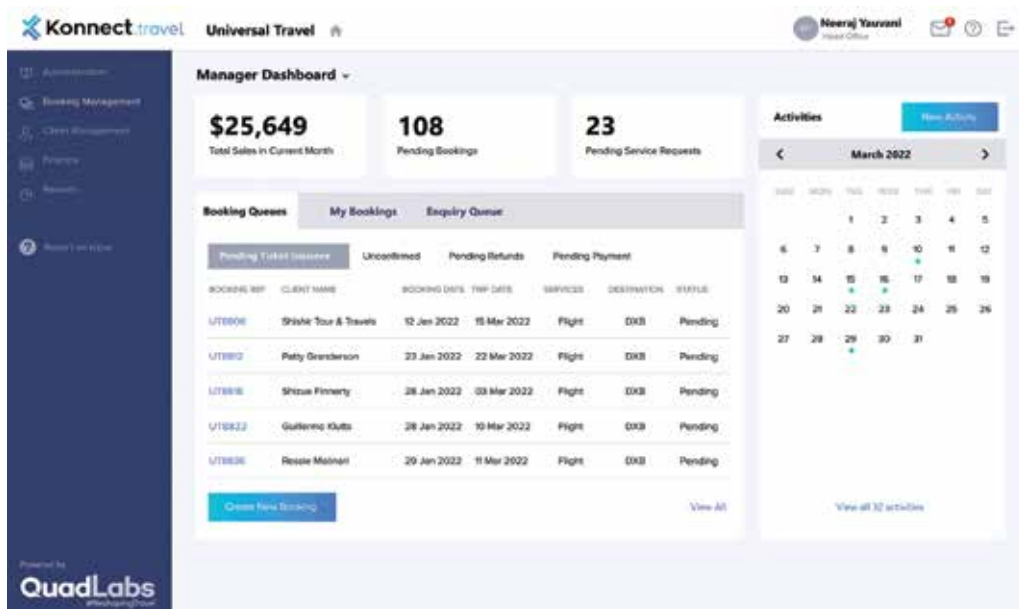
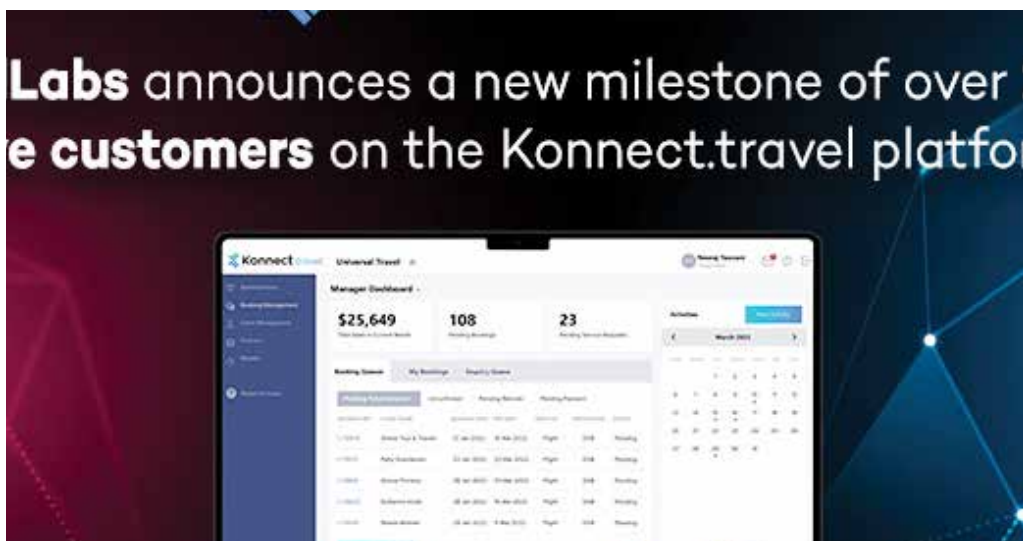
comprehensive CRM and mid-back-office solutions. The platform's intuitive interface enables travel agencies to streamline operations, enhance client relationships, and optimise revenue. With features like post-booking management, workflow automation, and financial accounting systems, Konnect.travel empowers agencies to manage

bookings, payments, and client interactions efficiently, enhancing their competitiveness in the dynamic travel landscape.

A key highlight of Konnect.travel's success lies in its customisable solution for enterprise customers, significantly improving contact centre operations. By focusing on efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the platform has consistently delivered substantial savings to clients, with an average 25% reduction in contact centre expenditures and increased resource efficiency.

Richard Roberts, CCO of QuadLabs, expressed pride in achieving this milestone, attributing it to the hard work and dedication of the team, as well as the trust and support of valued customers. He reiterated QuadLabs' commitment to delivering innovative solutions that empower travel businesses to thrive in today's dynamic market.

CEO Gaurav Chiripal emphasised QuadLabs' goal of empowering travel businesses with the necessary tools for success. By continuously innovating and refining their offerings, QuadLabs enables clients to stay ahead and deliver exceptional customer experiences. He expressed excitement about reaching this milestone and looked forward to expanding their reach and impact in the industry.



About QuadLabs
 QuadLabs is a leading provider of Leisure & Corporate travel solutions, offering a comprehensive suite of products and services to streamline travel booking, expense management, and policy compliance. With a commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction, QuadLabs mission is to empower travel companies to optimise their travel operations and achieve greater efficiency and cost savings.

Untrodden Path of **Dubai** Marvels

10 things to include in your bucket list while visiting the ATM 2024

If you're visiting the annual travel and tourism convention, the Arabian Travel Market 2024 in Dubai, taking place from May 6-9, 2024, make sure to keep some days handy to delve into the experiences that remain unexplored. Keep your bucket list aside and fill your days with uncharted memorable experiences. Nestled with innovation and exploration, Dubai is known for its majestic cityscapes, crowded backstreets, relaxing beaches, and expansive deserts. Most commonly visited places include Burj Al Arab – the Eiffel Tower of Dubai, Burj Khalifa – the tallest building in the world, Madinat Jumeirah – an interpretation of traditional Arab village, the quirky Jumeirah beach, the dancing Dubai fountain, and more. TravelScapes brings you the lesser-known escapes of the Middle East.

By Tanya Agarwalla





DUBAI FOOD FESTIVAL 2024

Calories are sure to take a front seat with the vibrant and luxurious Dubai Food Festival, which is taking place from April 19 to May 12, 2024. Filled with authentic local cuisines, fine dining, and curated food menus, highlights of the festival include the Dubai Restaurant Week from April 26 to May 12 and the debut of Chefs Menu from May 1 to 12. This month-long food expedition is bound to keep you full with delightful gourmet dishes, unique dining events, live entertainment, and foodie experiences like guided food tours and cooking masterclasses.



DUBAI MIRACLE GARDEN

Fill your senses with this exotic, vibrant, and aromatic floral display. Dubai Miracle Garden is the world's largest natural flower garden, with millions of colorful flowers in bloom across a 72,000 sqm park. Full of quirky attractions and flower arrangements, the things not to miss in the garden include petal castles, full-size houses, a heart-shaped pathway, a 'floating lady' dressed in exotic blooms, street performances, and the stunning Butterfly Garden, housing around 15,000 butterflies in ten custom-built domes. This illuminated park offers dazzling nightscape views and nature-inspired installations.



GLOBETROTTER



LA PERLE BY DRAGONE

A theatrical masterpiece, La Perle by Dragone, is Dubai's first permanent show combining state-of-the-art technology and daring choreographed stunts. This aqua-acrobatics show is 90 minutes long and provides a 270-degree angle of view for perfect sighting from all seats. Created by Franco Dragone, one of the original creators of Cirque de Soleil, the story of Le Perle pays homage to UAE's pearl diving history in an awe-inspiring style. Full of immersive performances, this magical show takes place on an aquatic stage where 65 acrobats perform daring stunts, including fearless motorcycle tricks, death-defying dives, and aerial acrobatics.

EXPLORE THE NIGHT SKY WITH ASTRONOMERS

If you are a fellow space enthusiast or a passionate stargazer, Dubai Astronomy Group is your rescue. At the forefront of astronomy in the region, the group's calendar is packed with exciting events and workshops, as well as outdoor observations during key astronomical occurrences. It regularly collaborates with the government and other organisations on futuristic and educational projects. It also includes an on-site library, café, an 'Astro Academy', and the UAE's largest public observatory. A desert can provide the best front-row seats for stargazing, accompanied by a cold breeze and silence enveloping your surroundings.



DINING ON THE SANDS

Make the most of your Middle East visit with this unique and refreshing dining experience, relaxing on a hammock surrounded by the quiet and serene desert at Sonara Camp. Specially curated to give you a taste of the Arabian desert, this eco-friendly desert dining experience is lined with live entertainment like fire shows and dance performances, chic lighting, a special menu curated by the French chef Frank Sanna, and engaging activities like drumming, archery, and sand-boarding. It also provides a historical insight into Dubai's Bedouin tribes.

PARAMOTOR DESERT ADVENTURE

To satisfy your adrenaline rush, Skydive Dubai Desert Campus, an Emirati-led company, is the go-to place for all your flying experiences. Designed for everyone, including first-timers, Skydive takes you through the whole process, including a demonstration before setting foot on a plane. Seasoned divers can opt for more professional practices like solo skydiving, tandem skydiving, and flight school. Highly qualified and world-renowned instructors teach you multiple forms and the talented videographers take a video of your jump, documenting your unforgettable experience.



HOT AIR BALLOON

Spend your day floating 4,000 ft. above the Arabian desert in a hot air balloon tour. Bask in the sun's embrace and get a chance to spot herds of Arabian oryx and gazelles roaming free across the stunning city expanse. As the longest-operating hot air balloon company in the city, Balloon Adventures Dubai ensures that you enjoy one-of-a-kind aerial adventure. It starts at sunrise and is followed by a serene hour-long flight, gliding over the striking Hajar mountains and the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve.



DESERT SAFARI

Desert safari is the essence of your Dubai trip! It is one of the most popular things to do, this activity is an exciting way to see Dubai's majestic deserts and native wildlife. Dubai desert safaris offer plenty of options and add-ons like nature tours, astronomy, hot air balloons, and more. You get picked up from your hotel by a guide and driver in a 4x4 vehicle and head out of the city towards the sands. Two of the top providers of desert safaris are Platinum Heritage and Arabian Adventures.



DUBAI FESTIVALS

Dubai is packed with interesting and unique festivals in May, keeping people engaged in exciting activities. The World Art Dubai is taking place from May 2-5, 2024, at Dubai World Trade Center and is the largest affordable retail art fair that exhibits more than 4,000 works from 300+ international galleries and artists. Whereas, the Dubai Esports and Games Festival (DEF), taking place from April 19 to May 5, is designed for tech-driven enthusiasts. For those in the gaming industry, DEF provides an array of exciting events and tournaments, along with food stalls, cosplay events, and insightful talk sessions.



SOUQ

All that Dubai is known for can be found in its souqs, which are Arab markets or marketplaces, just like a bazaar. Spread all over the city, Dubai's traditional and modern souqs include wide passageways of gold, spices, perfumes, fabrics, and more. Known as the 'city of gold', Dubai has made its name with its gold and spice souqs, where arrays of glittering gold and colorful spices line your sight. The Deira's Perfume Souk on Sikkat Al Khali Street is also a famous trading spot, well known for everything scented, from essential oils to incense sticks and exotic traditional oud.





TRENDS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HOSPITALITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO OPEN ATM'S NEW 'FUTURE STAGE'

Recent data from global research companies indicates a bright future for the GCC hospitality industry, with insights from Deloitte and STR demonstrating sustained growth as tourism continues to be a key priority for regional governments. The upcoming edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM), a premier global event in travel and tourism, will serve as a pivotal gathering for hospitality stakeholders when it takes place from May 6 to 9 at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

According to Deloitte, Dubai is leading the regional hospitality markets with a strong outlook for 2024. The city now offers more hotel rooms than significant capitals such as London, New York City, and Bangkok, boasting a hotel room capacity of over 150,000. Data from the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) shows that the city welcomed 17.15 million overnight visitors during 2023, with the average length of stay also increasing. According to Deloitte, occupancy peaked at 88% in February.

In the region, STR figures show that Riyadh is leading the way in hotel supply growth, offering an additional 28,465 rooms, a 134% increase. Meanwhile, Doha has doubled its hotel inventory over the past decade, supplying 39,968 rooms.

"As the hospitality landscape in the GCC region continues to evolve, the data paints a compelling picture of growth and opportunity. ATM 2024 will feature a wide range of hospitality brands from around the world, and we are pleased to report that there has been a 21% increase in exhibition space dedicated to hotel brands this year, demonstrating strong interest and demand," said Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market.

Curtis added, "IHG Resorts is the official hotel partner for ATM 2024, and this year's edition is set to welcome back some of the most

respected brands in the hospitality industry, including Four Seasons Hotels, Rosewood Hotels and Resorts, and the Shangri-La Group. It's worth noting that the number of hospitality brands showcased at ATM has increased by 12% with a good selection of well-known international and regional brands. With so many world-class brands in attendance across all categories of luxury, upper-midscale, and midscale, ATM 2024 promises an enriching experience for all attending."

Several new European hotel brands, including Ethno Belek in Turkey and Buff Medical Resort in Germany, will exhibit at ATM for the first time. European Voyages, which specialises in tours, transfers, and private jets, will also mark its debut appearance. There has been a notable surge in exhibitor participation from Italy and Turkey, reflecting a growing interest from these regions in reaching the lucrative Middle East tourism market.

Attendees at ATM 2024 will learn the latest trends from hospitality industry leaders during a series of summits and panel discussions throughout the week. These include the "Frameworks for Tourism Investment" session, which will mark the beginning of the highly-anticipated ATM Market Insights Summit. Presented by Guy Hutchinson, President, Middle East and Africa, Hilton; Basmah Al-Mayman, Regional Director Middle East, UNWTO; and Jan Gerrit Koechling, Partner Dubai, UAE of Roland Berger, this session will take place on the event's main stage, the Global Stage. Attendees can expect to gain invaluable insights on how to cater to new markets, maintain market share and identify new business opportunities.

Elsewhere, the 'Trends Shaping the Future of Hospitality in the Middle East' session will officially open ATM's new 'Future Stage', formerly the Travel Tech Stage. Providing

critical updates on the hospitality industry, upcoming trends and current challenges facing the sector, the session will feature senior regional representatives from IHG Hotels & Resorts, Marriot International, Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, Rotana Hotel Management Corporation PJSC and Banyan Tree Dubai along with hospitality experts from Mastercard and Silkhaus.

"As the Middle East continues its impressive strides forward in the global tourism landscape, IHG Hotels & Resorts is honoured and proud to be a strategic partner to multiple governments, tourism investors, industry stakeholders, and our customers across the region. As the official Hotel Partner of the Arabian Travel Market 2024, we look forward to engaging with industry leaders, peers, and colleagues. ATM remains an unrivalled platform for dialogue, debate, networking, and knowledge-sharing as the regional industry's legacy travel trade event," said Haitham Mattar, Managing Director, India, Middle East & Africa, IHG.

The 31st edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) will focus on the theme: Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship. This year's event will feature a broad portfolio of exhibitors from aviation, accommodation, hospitality, attractions, technology, and more. ATM 2024 will explore how innovators in travel and tourism are working to attract more significant funding further to increase the sector's overall contribution to global GDP.

Held in conjunction with Dubai World Trade Centre, ATM 2024's strategic partners include the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Destination Partner; Emirates, Official Airline Partner; IHG Hotels & Resorts, Official Hotel Partner; Al Rais Travel, Official DMC Partner. STA is the Global Travel Partner for ATM 2024.

UTTAR PRADESH TRAVEL MART 2024, A RESOUNDING SUCCESS IN PROMOTING TOURISM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE



The grand inauguration of the sixth edition of the Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart (UPTM) occurred on Thursday at the Baba Gambir Nath Auditorium in Gorakhpur in collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). This five-day event, which began on April 25, concluded on April 29.

Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath's advisor, Avanish Kr. Awasthi lit the ceremonial lamp to inaugurate the UPTM2024. In his address, Avanish Awasthi discussed the efforts made by the Uttar Pradesh Government to promote tourism and their fruitful outcomes. He stated, "It was the result of the government's meaningful efforts that the daily influx of spiritual tourists to Kashi and Ayodhya continuously set world records. Highlighting the increasing popularity of spiritual tourism in Uttar Pradesh, he expressed hope that the next Kumbh Mela in 2025 would witness a gathering of a record 35 crore devotees for the holy dip in Prayagraj."

Prakhar Mishra, Director of the Tourism Department, delivered the opening speech, emphasising the development of eco-tourism in Uttar Pradesh.

Isha Priya, Special Secretary – Department of Tourism GoUP, shed light on the department's achievements and all the plans. She also gave a presentation on destinations in UP.

Rajiv Mehra, President of IATO, spoke about IATO's role in tourism development in the state, expressing commitment to collaborate with FICCI and the Department of Tourism in UP to leverage the benefits of tourism. He praised the efforts of FICCI and UP Tourism in taking the state to the next level in tourism.

Finally, Anil Dhingra, Commissioner - Gorakhpur Division, Uttar Pradesh Government, delivered a speech on tourism development in the Gorakhpur division, highlighting the immense potential of the division and how the tourism department put efforts into development.

After the inaugural session, Prateek Hira, Chairman of the FICCI State Tourism Committee and a stalwart in the tourism industry expressed his thoughts on FICCI's commitment to tourism development. He extended gratitude to the event's attendees and government officials. Hira highlighted the economic significance of tourism development and commended the Uttar Pradesh government's proactive stance in promoting tourism. He emphasised the need for collaboration among stakeholders to realise the true potential of tourism in the state. Hira stressed the importance of stakeholder cooperation to exploit Uttar Pradesh's tourism capacity fully. He praised efforts to enhance security and safety in order to make Uttar Pradesh an attractive destination for travellers. With confidence, he announced that Uttar Pradesh had not only transformed but had become a symbol of hospitality, encouraging everyone to experience the state's hospitality firsthand.

On April 26, Durga Shankar Mishra, Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, was the chief guest at the valedictory session. The Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, Mukesh Meshram, was also present and provided an overview of the exhibition area and discussed "Tourism Department's Strategy and Future Plan" at the UPTM.

"Last year, the footfall in Uttar Pradesh was 48 crores of domestic tourists. It's not a distant

dream to expect over 100 crore domestic tourists in the coming year. The latest developments in the state of Uttar Pradesh are so visible, we just have to move a step ahead in terms of promotions and marketing of the state leading to international tourists willing to visit Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh is a treasure trove of heritage," said Durga Shankar Mishra, Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh.

"After a gap of about three years, we are reorganising UPTM to showcase its roots to Vedic civilisation, Budhha, spirituality, and river Ganges flowing through 27 state districts. We have developed a variety of policies and different destinations. Also, we are certain that our initiative, The Buddhist Circuit, will drive tourists to visit the state in increasing numbers," said Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, Mukesh Meshram.

On April 27, tour operators were sent on excursion trips to three major tourism circuits. Three teams of tour operators were sent to the Gorakhpur-Varanasi-Sarnath-Kaushambi-Prayagraj, Gorakhpur-Shravasti-Kapilvastu-Lucknow, and Gorakhpur-Sant Kabir Nagar-Ayodhya-Lucknow circuits.

The UPTM 2024 was a significant initiative to promote the tourism industry in Uttar Pradesh and establish the state as a prime destination for both domestic and international tourists. The arrival of foreign tourists brought in foreign currency, while domestic tourism created employment opportunities.

The efforts made by the government of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had yielded results. By the end of 2022, Uttar Pradesh had ranked first in the country with 32 crore domestic tourists. By the end of 2023, this number had increased to 38 crore. Uttar Pradesh currently ranked fifth in India.

STORIES FROM THE SKIES

As the world celebrates World Pilot's Day, we bring you a glimpse into the lives of extraordinary aviators soaring the skies with IndiGo Airlines.

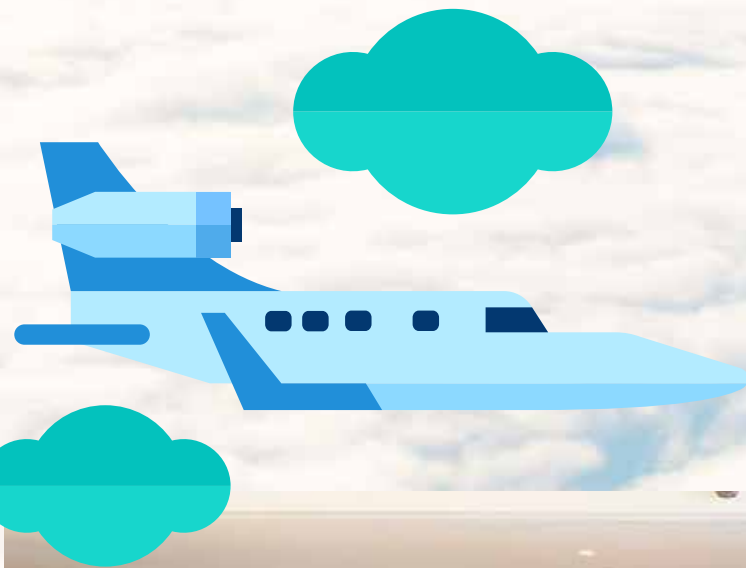
Capt. Jaigovinda Chakravarthi Patchava

Born and raised in the serene coastal town of Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, Capt. Jaigovinda Chakravarthi Patchava's journey to the cockpit is a testament to unwavering determination and steadfast resolve. Growing up with a childhood dream of exploring the world from the skies, Jaigovinda was inspired by the twinkling lights among the stars and the selfless dedication of his parents—a doctor father and a homemaker mother. Despite facing skepticism and limited knowledge of aviation within his family, Jaigovinda's passion for flight remained undeterred. A pivotal moment in Jaigovinda's journey occurred during a school trip to the Air Force station in Dundigal, where he had the unforgettable experience of sitting in a Kiran aircraft cockpit. This encounter further ignited his passion for aviation and solidified his resolve to pursue a career in the skies. Undeterred by the challenges he faced, Jaigovinda joined the prestigious Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi (iGRUA), where he excelled and was honoured with the 'Best Pilot' award by the cabinet minister of Civil Aviation. After patiently waiting and working as a ground instructor in Ahmedabad and Gondia, Jaigovinda persevered when he secured his dream job as an airline pilot with IndiGo in 2015. Today, he inspires others with his dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to excellence.



The Puri Family

For the Puri family, aviation is more than just a profession—it's a legacy passed down through generations. Capt. Sandeep Puri, a distinguished veteran of the Indian Air Force, leads the family with over four decades of aviation experience. His illustrious career includes serving the nation during the Kargil War as the Commanding Officer (CO) of the Jaguar Squadron, where he was decorated with the Vashist Seva Medal for his exemplary service. Following in their father's footsteps, Capt. Sandeep's children, First Officer Saurabh Puri and First Officer Aastha Puri, proudly carry the family tradition of flying high. Growing up amidst the sights and sounds of aviation, they developed a deep-rooted passion for flight, inspired by their father's dedication and commitment to the skies. Together, the Puri family navigates the skies with grace and skill, creating cherished memories amidst the challenges and joys of their shared profession. Their story is a testament to the bonds forged through a love of aviation and the enduring spirit of familial unity.





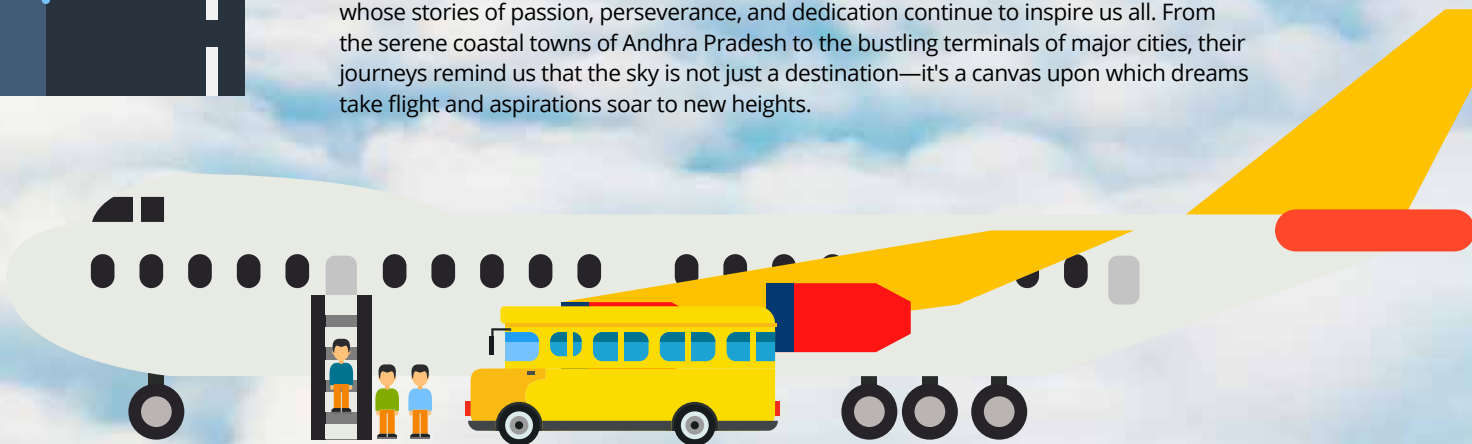
Capt. Rajiv Battish

With over 45 years of flying experience, Capt. Rajiv Battish is a seasoned pilot whose journey from military service to civil aviation is nothing short of remarkable. Having served in the Indian Air Force for over 25 years, Capt. Battish's expertise spans a wide range of aircraft, including fighters, helicopters, and transport planes. After transitioning to civil aviation, Capt. Battish joined IndiGo Airlines in 2011, bringing with him a wealth of knowledge and experience. As one of the most experienced pilots at IndiGo, he continues to inspire generations of aviators with his dedication to safety, excellence, and professionalism.



Capt. Mandeep Priyakant Patel

Capt. Mandeep Priyakant Patel's journey to the skies is one of resilience, determination, and unwavering positivity. Initially a freelance pilot in the US, she returned to India to gain commercial airline experience, seeking to broaden her horizons and pursue her passion for flying. However, tragedy struck when she lost her husband 12 years ago, leaving her to balance the roles of breadwinner, daughter, mother, and homemaker. Despite facing immense adversity, Capt. Mandeep has risen above challenges to become an accomplished pilot and mother, embodying the essence of perseverance and resilience. Her remarkable journey serves as an inspiration to all who hear her story, reminding us of the power of the human spirit to overcome even the greatest of obstacles. As we celebrate World Pilot's Day, let's salute these extraordinary aviators of IndiGo Airlines, whose stories of passion, perseverance, and dedication continue to inspire us all. From the serene coastal towns of Andhra Pradesh to the bustling terminals of major cities, their journeys remind us that the sky is not just a destination—it's a canvas upon which dreams take flight and aspirations soar to new heights.



Shariq Baig

At just 19 years old, Shariq Baig is the youngest pilot at IndiGo, representing the next generation of aviation talent. Hailing from Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, Shariq's journey from schoolboy dreams to cockpit reality is a testament to ambition and perseverance. Inspired by Air Force officers during his school days, Shariq pursued his dream of aviation with unwavering determination and support from his family. Today, Shariq's passion for flying knows no bounds as he navigates the skies with skill and precision, proving that age is no barrier to achieving one's dreams in the world of aviation.

CREATING A GLOBAL SYMPHONY, AIR INDIA LAUNCHES ITS NEW SIGNATURE TRACK 'INDIA TAKES FLIGHT'

Air India, launched its signature track to define its sonic identity, 'India Takes Flight'. It reflects the sound of a bold, vibrant, and confident India.

Air India's new brand track is a jugalbandi (musical collaboration), composed by recent Grammy-winner and acclaimed musician Shankar Mahadevan, with renowned percussionist and composer Taufiq Qureshi, celebrated lyricist and writer Prasoon Joshi, and London's revered Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. This collaborative effort was performed by 40 celebrated artists.

It embodies a timeless Indian classical raga, Raga Yaman, which is known to effortlessly captivate the hearts and minds of audiences. Air India also onboarded the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to create an experience which resonates across cultures as a warm invitation to India. The music acts as a homeward melody welcoming Indians from around the world.

"We wanted to create a melody that embodied the Indian spirit. We also wanted to capture a universality that brings people together. This musical odyssey accomplishes it expertly, and as the country's flag-bearer, we are proud to carry this to the world," said Sunil Suresh, Head of Marketing, Air India.

The adaptations of the sonic brand identity will be progressively rolled out by Air India across the guests' journeys, starting from digital touchpoints and marketing campaigns to airport lounges and in-flight boarding music.

Early in 2024, Air India teamed up with Bharatbala, Prasoon Joshi, and Shankar Mahadevan to launch its Safety Video and create a cinematographic audio-visual for in-flight safety. The music in the safety video is also a part of the signature brand sonic identity.

The Indian airline has also started the rollout of its new global brand identity



across guest touchpoints and welcomed its first Airbus A350 aircraft in the new livery. It has launched a new consumer-facing website and mobile app, in addition to a new collection of uniforms for cabin and cockpit crew, which is designed by the Indian celebrity couturier, Manish Malhotra.



FLY91 announces maiden flights from Goa to Agatti

FLY91 announced the commencement of maiden flights from Goa to Agatti and Jalgaon, offering direct connectivity to Goa's vibrant destinations from Goa's Manohar International Airport. Started from April 18, 2024, the first flight to Agatti departed at 7:10 am and reached Agatti Island Airport at 8:50 am, whereas the return flight departed at 9:20 am and landed at the Mopa Airport of Goa at 11:10 am.

FLY91 offers affordable Goa-Agatti flights at a starting fare of Rs. 4,391, whereas the Goa - Jalgaon - Goa and Hyderabad-Jalgaon-Hyderabad flights start from Rs. 1,991. This historic milestone was celebrated with a cake-cutting ceremony at Agatti



with staff and passengers.

Manoj Chacko, MD and CEO at FLY91 said, "The new routes reflect FLY91's commitment to affordable and convenient air travel, opening doors to explore the untouched beauty of destinations across the country. We are committed to enhance last mile connectivity in India by constantly adding new cities and routes which provide easier and faster access to people to commute."

IndiGo introduced 30 Firm Airbus A350-900 aircraft to its fleet

IndiGo enters the wide-body space by introducing the 30 Firm Airbus A350-900 aircraft to its fleet, defining its future of becoming a global aviation player. As India's most preferred airline, IndiGo has been successfully building its position since its inception in 2006.

It agreed to place an order for 30 Firm A350-900 aircraft, which is powered by Rolls Royce's Trent XWB engine. The efficiency of the engine coupled with the aircraft's mission capability enables IndiGo to further expand its network and connect Indian metros to the world. With the new aircraft, IndiGo embarks on a new journey of addressing the rapidly evolving needs of the Indian customer and our nation.

Pieter Elbers, CEO of IndiGo, stated, "For IndiGo, after successfully pioneering the Indian skies with an unprecedented journey, its fleet of 30 Airbus A350-900 aircraft will allow IndiGo to embark on its next phase of becoming one of the leading global aviation players. At IndiGo, we take pride in being India's preferred airline and for offering connectivity to our customers, in and with India. This reaffirms IndiGo's belief in, and commitment to, the growth of India, and in our strategic partnership with Airbus."



Air India and BIAL to enhance international connectivity

Air India (along with other Tata Group airlines – AIX and Vistara) and Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) entered into an agreement to boost international connectivity via Bangalore by developing the city as the premier aviation hub for Southern India. Marking a significant milestone in the Indian aviation industry, this agreement aims to enhance international connectivity, passenger experience, and operational efficiency over the next five years.

The plan includes enhancing the network and strengthening the group's presence at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, by establishing a dedicated domestic lounge in the T2 domestic area for premium customers of Tata Group Airlines, Air India, and Vistara. Campbell Wilson, Managing Director and CEO of Air India talked about the relationship between Air India and BIAL, "Airline-airport synergy is key to elevated customer experience and efficient operations, while Bengaluru is



highly attractive as an origin and destination market as well as a connecting hub. We are therefore delighted to be strengthening our relationship with BIAL with a view to developing a greater presence at the airport, expanding air connectivity as well as building a major MRO centre."

Hari Marar, Managing Director and CEO of Bangalore International Airport Limited talks about the growing demands of direct long-haul routes between Southern and Central India, "This collaboration aligns perfectly with the Ministry of Civil Aviation's vision of developing Indian airports as hubs, reflecting our commitment to enhancing the passenger experience."

Air Arabia Egypt commenced direct flights to Istanbul

Air Arabia Egypt marked its first non-stop flight from Cairo International Airport to Sabiha Gökçen International Airport in Istanbul on April 6, 2024. The new direct flights will connect Cairo to Istanbul with a frequency of three weekly flights.

The first flight was greeted with a welcome ceremony and a traditional water cannon salute at Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, upon its arrival. The flight schedule of three in a week will provide travellers with affordable and convenient options to explore the local attractions of Istanbul.

The airline currently operates a fleet of Airbus A320 and A321 neo-LR aircraft, featuring a cabin configuration of a more



generous seat-pitch compared to any economy cabin. It is the best-selling single-aisle aircraft in the world with a modern outlook. It is equipped with a free in-flight streaming service, SkyTime, which allows passengers to stream entertainment on their devices. It also offers a delectable variety of affordable delicacies between meals and snacks from the on-board 'SkyCafe' menu.



Passenger traffic lifts 30% revenue of private airports

For the fiscal year 2024, an expected increase of 10% in passenger traffic, combined with hikes in capital expenditure (capex)-linked tariff and rising non-aeronautical revenue per passenger, resulted in a revenue lift of around 30% for leading private airport operators.

According to a CRISIL Ratings study of 10 private airports, accounting for an estimated 60% of overall passenger traffic, the rising revenue will restore debt cover servicing to around 1.4 times, taking it to the pre-pandemic level. During this period, airports had dipped into their cash reserve to service debt.

With a rise in passenger volume, airports are expected to see an increase in both aeronautical and non-aeronautical revenue. Around two-thirds of the revenue increase is expected to come from aeronautical sources (~45% growth on-year), including fees collected from passengers, airlines, and cargo operators. The remaining one-third of the revenue will be driven by non-aeronautical sources (~15% growth on-year), including retail, advertising, lounge, and duty-free shops.

CSMIA records a significant 16% rise in passenger traffic

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) saw a surge of 16% in passenger traffic, welcoming over 52.8 million passengers this FY 2023-24, with 26+ million passengers in arrivals and 26.7 million passengers in departures. It also accommodated 324,972 ATMs, recording a 12% year-on-year growth rate compared to the last year 2022-23 (290,387 ATMs). With an increase in global connectivity, CSMIA processed a total of more than 40.7 million bags, marking a 31% upsurge compared to FY 2022-23 (31 million).

CSMIA marked its

presence as a premier travel hub of efficiency and excellence in the aviation industry, seeing an upsurge in both domestic and international passenger traffic. The months of November and December 2023 were especially extraordinary for CSMIA as it achieved its highest-ever single-day Air Traffic Movements (ATMs) of 1,032 on November 11, 2023; whereas, December 2023 saw its highest monthly traffic ever, marking an increase of 13% with a remarkable count of 4.89 million passengers.



Saudia collaborates with Accenture for AI platform

As a part of a 2-year plan to revolutionise the travel industry, Saudia launched the beta version of an innovative digital platform, the Travel Companion (TC), powered by advanced artificial intelligence. Working in collaboration with global professional services firm Accenture, TC embraces digital innovations to redefine the standards of digital travel.

It provides search results from trusted sources and utilises image-supported responses to offer personalised and tailored solutions that meet individual preferences. This comprehensive platform acts

as a one-stop solution for users to book concierge services like transportation, hotels, attractions, restaurants, and various activities. TC ensures a smooth operation by establishing seamless connections with transportation platforms and various train companies. The next stages of the beta version of this digital platform will introduce additional features like voice command and digital payment solutions. Accessible via a telecom e-SIM card enabled by Saudia, users on the Travel Companion can enjoy global access without relying on other internet providers.



Vietjet opened direct flights from Ho Chi Minh City to Xi'an

Expanding its reach and network, Vietjet, announced the commencement of direct non-stop flights between Ho Chi Minh City and Xi'an (China). As Vietnam's leading new-age carrier, Vietjet is the first airline to operate a direct route from Vietnam to the ancient capital of Xi'an, shortening the distance and travel time between the two destinations.

It started operating on April 29, 2024, and offers discounted ticket prices to fly from India to Vietnam (**), allowing them to book tickets as low as INR 5,555 all-in (*) every Friday until December 31. This offer is available to the entire international flight network on their website and the Vietjet Air mobile app. The new route from Ho Chi Minh City to Xi'an will have flights departing every



Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday; whereas, the four return flights will operate every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Vietjet is the largest operator between India and Vietnam, currently operating 29 weekly round-trip flights with routes connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Kochi to Vietnam. It also operates most flights connecting Australia and Vietnam with seven direct routes from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide to Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.



Finnair announced weekly frequencies to Japan and Dallas

Updating its traffic program for winter 2024 and summer 2025, Finnair adds weekly frequencies to Japan, Dallas, and Kirkenes, Norway. Starting daily flights to Dallas from winter 2024 onwards, Finnair is making it a year-round daily service, ensuring smooth connections of passengers with American Airlines' extensive network.

The airline will increase its weekly frequencies to both Tokyo Haneda and Tokyo Narita, Japan, adding a weekly frequency to Nagoya. Introducing a new destination of Kirkenes, in Northern

Norway, Finnair will add a route to it in the summer of 2025.

The route will be operated with a 68-seater ATR aircraft, flying from Helsinki via Ivalo three times a week. It will cater to Finnish and international travellers who want to explore the town and its experiences, including the famous Hurtigruten cruise that sails to and from Kirkenes.

Ole Orvér, CCO at Finnair said, "We are delighted to introduce a destination that further strengthens our already extensive network in the Arctic region."

SriLankan Airlines integrated AMOS NewGen MRO System

SriLankan Airlines transformed aircraft maintenance with the integration of the newly-developed next-generation ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solution, AMOS. Designed for aircraft engineering and MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul) management, the platform automates the monitoring and coordination of aircraft maintenance. Swiss-AS aims to boost the airlines' engineering productivity, maintain quality, and reduce costs in its MRO operations. "SriLankan Engineering is excited to collaborate with Swiss-AS and adopt the groundbreaking AMOS NewGen MRO System. The integration took several months to complete, given the complexities of transitioning data from our legacy system to



the advanced AMOS platform," stated Head of Engineering at SriLankan Airlines, Arjuna Kapugeekiyana. Including multiple sophisticated features and data visualisation functionalities, AMOS enables precise inventory management and cost-effective practices. The platform can be used for making accurate calculations and scheduling maintenance work to effectively manage aircraft maintenance limits.

BLR Airport records the highest passenger traffic and cargo volume

Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru (KIAB / BLR Airport) recorded its highest passenger traffic and cargo volume in FY 2023-24. Throughout the year, a total of 37.53 million passengers travelled through the airport's terminals, of which 32.86 million were domestic passengers and 4.67 million were international travellers. The record of cargo moved through the BLR airport reached a remarkable number of 439,524 metric tonnes. Satyaki Raghunath, Chief

Operating Officer at Bangalore International Airport Limited said, "As we reflect on the past financial year, it's been a landmark period with the highest passenger and cargo figures ever recorded in our airport's history. We've also seen an increase in the number of airlines as well as destinations we connect to. Our position as the No.1 Airport for processing perishable cargo for the third consecutive year highlights our steadfast commitment to advancing cargo development facilities."



Uzbekistan Airways initiates flights from Bom to Tashkent

Uzbekistan Airways launched its first direct flight from Mumbai to Tashkent on April 2, 2024. Sardor Rustambaev, Hon'ble Ambassador in the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, New Delhi and Vijay Kalantri, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Uzbekistan marked this historic moment with their presence. Flying twice a week, the flights will operate every Tuesday and Saturday, from Mumbai to Tashkent.



The airline has been operating regular flights to New Delhi and is currently operating daily flights to Tashkent with

onward connections to the Middle East, USA, Europe, and all of Central Asia. The deployed A320 Neo aircraft promotes trade and tourism with better connectivity on the Mumbai route. The need for a direct flight between the two destinations is spurred by the growing trade and commerce between the countries.

ON THE MOVE



GAURAV APTE

APPOINTED AT: Crowne Plaza, Gurugram
PROMOTED TO: Area General Manager – South West Asia
Crowne Plaza, Gurugram, announces Gaurav Apte as the new Area General Manager for South West Asia (SWA) and General Manager of the hotel. With 23 years of experience in hospitality, Gaurav's dedication ensures elevated guest experiences. Having worked with Marriott International, his passion for excellence enables continued business success.



SAMEER MEHRA

APPOINTED AT: The MRS Group of Hotels
PROMOTED TO: Chief Commercial Officer
Sameer Mehra assumes the role of Chief Commercial Officer at The MRS Group of Hotels, aiming to drive the group's expansion. He has previously worked with Hilton Worldwide, Standard International in Thailand, and Marriott International, bringing his extensive experience to solidify the group's presence in the hospitality industry.



MEDHA TIWARI

APPOINTED AT: BWH Hotels
PROMOTED TO: Head of Sales & Marketing - India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh
BWH Hotels welcomes Medha Tiwari as the Head of Sales & Marketing for the regions of India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. She brings over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, having worked with renowned brands like Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, ITC, Lalit Hotels, Interstate Hotels, and The Park Hotels.



PALAK SHAH

APPOINTED AT: Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts
PROMOTED TO: Vice President of Sales
Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts announces the appointment of Palak Shah as its Vice President of Sales. With 24 years of experience, especially in India and Southwest Asia, Palak will lead the hotel's strategic sales initiatives, focusing mainly on accelerating growth in key source markets.



JEAN-MARIE LE GALL

APPOINTED AT: The Woodward, Geneva
PROMOTED TO: General Manager
Oetker Collection is pleased to announce the appointment of Jean-Marie Le Gall as General Manager of The Woodward, Geneva. Having worked as General Manager for Hotel Fouquet's Paris, Le Gall has worked extensively on expanding his skills in cross-functional team management, economic analysis, total quality management, and project planning.



DEBALINA DUTTAGUPTA

APPOINTED AT: JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa
PROMOTED TO: Room Division Manager
Debalina Duttgupta has been elevated to the position of Room Division Manager for JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa. She has over 13 years of experience, working for The Raintree Annasalai, Chennai; Marriott Hotels & Resorts Whitefield, Bangalore; and Sheraton Grand, Bangalore.



AJAY MEHTANI

APPOINTED AT: TreeHouse Hotels & Resort
PROMOTED TO: Partner
Ajay Mehtani is appointed to the newly-created role of Partner at TreeHouse Hotels & Resort, New Delhi. His experience of more than 30 years across investment, hospitality, strategy, technology, growth, and brand development helps with the brand's growth and expansion in India and South Asia. He has also held leadership positions with renowned companies.



BINAY KUMAR SINGH

APPOINTED AT: Four Seasons Hotel
PROMOTED TO: Director of Sales
The Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru welcomes Binay Kumar Singh as the Director of Sales. Having an experience of over 18 years in the hospitality sector, Binay brings with him a wealth of knowledge and a passion for delivering unparalleled guest experiences and excellent service to define the Four Seasons standards.



EMANUELA SETTERBERG DI VIVO

APPOINTED AT: The Vineta Hotel, Palm Beach
PROMOTED TO: Managing Director
Emanuela Setterberg Di Vivo assumes the role of Managing Director at The Vineta Hotel, the first North American Masterpiece Hotel of the Oetker Collection. With over 28 years of experience in the luxury global hospitality industry, Emanuela started her role on April 22, 2024, and has previously worked for various international luxury hotel brands.

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