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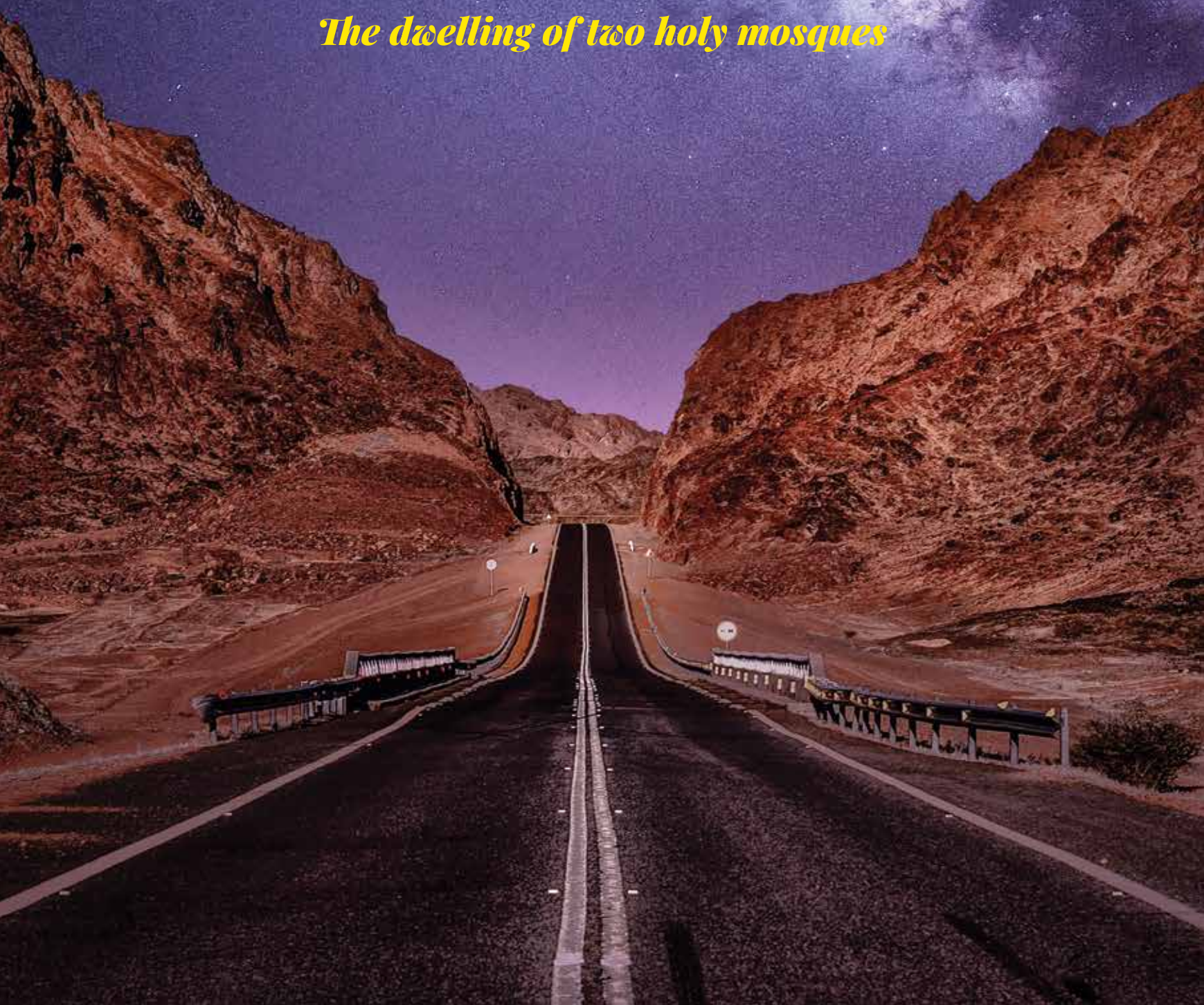
Travel Scapes

APRIL 2023, PAGES 64, ₹100

VOL. 11, ISSUE. 4

Saudi Arabia

The dwelling of two holy mosques





J A I S A L K O T
Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Varun Malhotra
Publisher & CEO

Dear Readers,

"Be the soaring bird never clipping your wings.." With five successful editions of VETA (Versatile Excellence Travel Awards) bridging the gap between the travel industry and Bollywood, TravelScapes proudly announces VETA Middle East on May 1, 2023, in Dubai to be graced by well-known faces of Bollywood. Crossing the borders, acknowledging and awarding the industry delegates with a taste of luxury will be an exhilarating experience. TravelScapes always stands by the belief of never limiting oneself and being out there exploring opportunities coming your way.

Moving across borders also allows the entire industry to know its whereabouts and make the strongest connections at one of the biggest travel trade award shows, Arabian Travel Market in Dubai from May 1, 2023, to May 4, 2023. Middle East has lately been the hub of leisure and MICE for travellers showcasing a plethora of innovations and advancements in the pipeline. Saudi Arabia seems to be a promising destination on the tourism front. TravelScapes has aggregated a few memorable and exceptional experiences to be savoured by Saudi Arabian visitors. This haven has everything for people finicky for photography, souls sucking on adrenaline junk, seekers of pilgrimage, and wanderers seeking escapades in nature. Speaking to the President of the Saudi Tourism Authority, we learned how the emirate has come a long way in creating its name globally. Other Middle Eastern emirates such as Qatar and Abu Dhabi have also been gearing up by launching new innovative campaigns for global recognition.

With airlines initiating new direct flights across the globe accelerating connectivity, outbound travel has become a cakewalk. Speaking of which, TravelScapes interacted with a few outbound players in the industry scrutinizing their share of expertise on the growth of the outbound tourism industry. The airlines industry surely seems to be on the go, strengthening connectivity domestically within the country as well. This will certainly aid the footfall for The Great India Travel Bazaar 2023, India's travel platform for Inbound Tourism. Receiving participation from tour operators from around the world and Indian exhibitors in abundance, Daleep Singh Rathore, Deputy Director, Department of Tourism of Rajasthan throws light on Rajasthan's tourism potential along with other states.

When we talk about other states, Gujarat is seen widening its scope with tourism. To showcase the same, we have successfully collated exquisite experiences from the state of Gujarat. Concurrently, increasing the traction to parts of Rajasthan and other states bolsters the hospitality industry's growth. On the whole, there's an upswing in the sojourns and economic potential of the country.

Share with us your valuable feedback and suggestions at

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Happy Reading!

Varun Malhotra

TravelScapes

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A confluence for leading B2B experts from the travel and tourism industry, The Great Indian Travel Bazaar is India's business networking platform for Inbound Tourism. It is organised by the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Government of Rajasthan, and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)



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Kerala plans big on STREET Hubs

The state government of Kerala plans to expand the STREET (sustainable, tangible, responsible, experiential, ethnic, tourism) Hub project for a better scope of responsible tourism with increased public participation. The government decided to transition the responsible tourism (RT) mission into a society.

The Tourism Minister, Mohamed Riyas, said that the design policy of STREET Hubs policy was complete. Based on the recommendations in the policy, the activities of responsible tourism would be further expanded. Responsible tourism would be used for bolstering the agri-tourism network.

Also, the minister expressed hope that tourism would grow into an important component in the state's sustainable development model. Small-scale entrepreneurship will be promoted through proposed women-friendly tourism initiatives.

He further added that the RT declaration at the global tourism summit organised in the month of February under the leadership of RT mission emphasised on various aspects the Kerala government looked forward to promote amongst the tourists. The promotion of small-scale entrepreneurs and development of women-friendly destinations along with reduction of waste, preservation of biodiversity were part of this initiative.

The tourism minister said that the government plans to build the state into a medical value tourism hub as a joint initiative of the health and tourism departments. Further, the development of medical tourism projects with public-private partnership are under consideration.

Helicopter ride begins in Jaipur for sight-seeing

Helicopter rides commenced from March 17, 2023 in Jaipur.

The locals and tourists get a chance to witness the beauty of Jaipur from the sky as well as the tourist destinations by helicopter. Prominent attractions including Nahargarh, Amer Fort, Jaigarh, Hawa Mahal, and Jalmahal were shown.

RTDC also started helicopter joy rides in Jaisalmer and Ajmer. After a decent response in the city, the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) plans to start it in other cities of the states including Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Sawai Madhopur.

The helicopter service would also begin for religious purposes. RTDC Chairman Dharmendra Rathore said that the helicopter journey begins from Shiv Vilas Hotel located in Kukas. The duration of the ride is five to seven minutes where different tourist attractions would be shown to people in order to build on the cultural and adventure aspect of the state.

Meghalaya International Film Festival commences in Shillong

The first film festival in Meghalaya commenced in Shillong on March 14, 2023. Meghalaya International Film Festival is a five-day event which kicked off in the State Central Library. The event was inaugurated by the Meghalaya Tourism Minister Paul Lyngdoh.

Paul said that Meghalaya is an abode of talents and creativity apart from being known as abode of clouds. The International Film Festival is a good opportunity to showcase the rich and innovative tourism potential basket of the state. The Minister emphasised on the fact that the government is committed to setting up state of the art cinema halls. This initiative will further boost the film

industry in the state.

Almost 40 films got screened in a span of five days across four different venues. An initiative of the Meghalaya Filmmakers' Association (MeFilma), Meghalaya International Film Festival was jointly organised by the filmmakers of the state in partnership with the tourism department. The closing ceremony took place on March 18, 2023 at the same venue.

The Film Festival aimed at establishing a film culture in the state especially among its young audience with actor Adil Hussain being the special guest. The festival attracted over 5,000 viewers from all across the country and neighboring countries.



Goa Govt to remove illegal touts who overcharge tourists

Goa government plans to remove illegal touts who overcharge tourists and bring a bad reputation to the tourism industry. The tourism department plans to regulate water sports activities in the coastal state. It stated its plans while addressing a gathering during the government's Prashasan Tumchya Dari (governance at your doorstep) program in Margao town.

The Minister of Tourism in Goa, Rohan Khaunte said "The state-run Goa Electronic Limited

was working towards providing technological solution for the industry like water sports, which would help in giving tourists a better experience".

He further said that some legislators tried to mislead water sports operators claiming that the state government wants to privatise their operations related to trade.

Rohan further assured that the trade would not be privatised and the initiative of removing touts would assist in making the tourism business profitable as well as attract tourists.

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MAY 1, 2023



Goa Tourism strengthens ties at ITB Berlin 2023

The Department of Tourism (DOT), Government of Goa participated in the Internationale Tourismus Börse (ITB) Berlin 2023, the travel trade show held in Berlin, Germany, from March 7-9, 2023. The Department had a clear objective at the trade fair to showcase the diversity of tourism options beyond the beaches and promote the state's unique culture, heritage, and natural beauty.

The Goa Pavilion at ITB Berlin 2023 received a notable visit and was inaugurated by Arvind Singh, Secretary of Tourism, Government of India, and the Ambassador of India to Germany, Harish Parvathaneni. Under the theme of 'Mastering Transformation,' the Goa Pavilion showcased its exuberant culture and promoted

its responsible tourism ethos to the global travel industry. The pavilion served as an excellent platform for promoting Goa's tourism offerings.

At ITB Berlin 2023, representatives from Goa Tourism engaged in a series of productive B2B meetings with travel agents and tour operators from Germany. The delegation also spoke with members of the press to promote Goa's wide range of tourism offerings and upcoming events. Among the topics discussed was the recent addition of the new airport at Mopa, which is expected to enhance connectivity to the region. Additionally, the delegation highlighted the importance of the upcoming G20 meetings and the Exposition of the sacred relics of St Francis Xavier.

Bir-Billing becomes best site for paragliding

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, said that Bir-Billing is the world's best site for paragliding and has gained international recognition.

"Bir would be promoted from the point of view of tourism and a proposal would be prepared soon to facilitate the better organization of paragliding competitions and land would be acquired around the landing site," Sukhu said.

"In the team category, Team Dev Pashakot Adventure took first place, with Team Caro Nepal coming in second and Team Nepal earning third place. Meanwhile, in the Indian National Open category, Sohan Thakur placed first, followed



by Kumar in second place and Chitra Singh in third. Among the women, Aditi Thakur earned the top spot, with Rita Shreshtha in second and Alisha Katoch in third. In the overall competition, Chitra Singh took first place, Bishal Thapa second and Aman Thapa third," he added.



3-day food festival held in Delhi

The Delhi government on March 10, 2023, inaugurated a three-day food festival here to promote tourism in the city and nurture the country's culinary heritage.

Foodies got a chance to relish mouth-watering gastronomical delights from across the world, including Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Australia, and China among others at the festival.

The 'Delhi Tourism Food Festival-2023' at Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium was inaugurated by newly appointed Tourism Minister Atishi.

Around 50 major restaurants and hotels participated in the festival.

"Delhi Tourism Food Festival was a part of several initiatives being taken by the Delhi government to promote

tourism in the national capital. The Delhi government under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal regularly organises such events to promote India's rich art and culture, and engage with other countries to learn about their cultures," Atishi said.

The minister said that the festival introduced people to various cultures of the world through food. The culinary extravaganza created awareness about International and Indian delicacies and provided visitors with an opportunity to gain knowledge on nutritional values and the preparation of food.

Cultural programmes and performances were also organised on all days to enthral the visitors.

Over 2 lacs registrations for Char Dham Yatra slated to start from April

More than 2 lakhs devotees have registered themselves for the Char Dham yatra which started from April 2023, an official of Uttarakhand government said.

The yatra begins on April 22 with the opening of the Yamunotri and Gangotri temples. Kedarnath is set to open on April 25 and Badrinath on April 27.

In a meeting chaired by Additional Chief Secretary Radha Raturi to review

preparations for the Yatra, Tourism Secretary Sachin Kurve said that apart from the designated website, pilgrims also have the option of registering through phone and WhatsApp.

More than 2.12 lakh devotees registered themselves for the Char Dham Yatra, Kurve said, adding a more transparent system has been implemented this time for the registration of helicopter services as well.



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Minister Meenakashi Lekhi flags off Bharat Gaurav Train

Meenakashi Lekhi, Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture, Government of India, flagged off Bharat Gaurav Train "North East Discovery: Beyond Guwahati". This is a designed tour to cover the North eastern states of India, from Delhi Safdarjung station.

On this occasion, Lekhi said that his train holds special significance as it is getting started on the eve of Chaitra Navratri. She then thanked Prime Minister for his vision and initiatives to improve Railways.

The train tour started its journey from Delhi Safdarjung railway station and it will cover Guwahati, Jorhat, Sivasagar and Kaziranga in Assam, Unakoti, Agartala and Udaipur in Tripura, Dimapur and Kohima in Nagaland as well as Shillong and Cherapunji in Meghalaya in 15 days tour.

With a time period spanning over 14 nights and 15 days, the first stop of this train is Guwahati. The tourists will get a chance to visit Kamakhya Temple followed by Umananda Temple and a sunset cruise on the Brahmaputra. This train will further depart on overnight journey and continue the journey ahead.

The modern Deluxe AC Tourist Train features including two fine dining restaurants, sensor based washroom functions, a contemporary kitchen, foot massager and a mini library. It has two types of accommodation viz. AC I and AC II along with security features like CCTV cameras.

The 2nd TWG to be held in Siliguri from April

The 2nd Tourism Working Group Meeting was held in Siliguri (West Bengal) from April 1 to April 3, 2023. Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, Government of India said that the five priorities of Tourism Working Group, including digitalisation, green tourism, and destination management were introduced in the 1st Tourism Working Group.

He said that the meeting was endorsed by all the G20 Members, invitee countries, and International Organizations. He said that during the second TWG meeting, all the G20 Members, invitee countries and International Organisations will be discussing deeper and broad aspects of the five priorities.

He further added that Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is hosting a side event on Adventure Tourism as a catalyst for achieving Sustainable Development Goals. A technical tour to Darjeeling has been planned during the 2nd TWG Meeting.

Gabriella Stowell (Vice President) from Adventure Tour One of the main attractions of the second TWG meeting will be the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) also known as 'Toy Train Ride'.

President Murmu opens Rashtrapati Nilayam in Secunderabad to the public

President Droupadi Murmu opened Rashtrapati Nilayam, one of the three presidential retreats, in Secunderabad to the public. This is the first time that the heritage building is being opened to the general public. Previously, people could visit only the gardens around it once a year for a limited time period.

During the tour of the Nilayam, public can view the building from inside, including the Presidential wing, and dining area; and can enjoy traditional cheriyal paintings of Telangana strolling through the underground tunnel

connecting the Nilayam kitchen to the dining hall.

Grom learning the history of the Rashtrapati Bhavan and Rashtrapati Nilayam, to knowing about the Constitution as well as getting a glimpse of the role and responsibilities of the President of India in the 'Knowledge Gallery', the experience is wholesome and helps build on to a person's intellect.

Further, visitors can explore the Jai Hind Ramp and Flag Post point as well as the Nature Trail on the premises of Rashtrapati Nilayam.



Gangotri Temple to open for devotees from April

The **Gangotri** Temple Committee announced that the temple doors would open for devotees from Akshaya Tritiya on April 22, 2023. More than 2.50 lakh devotees registered for Chardham Yatra.

For Kedarnath Dham, 1.39 lakh registrations and for Badrinath Dham, 1.14 lakh registrations have been made. The doors of Kedarnath Dham will open on April 25, 2023 and Badrinath Dham on April 27, 2023.

The Rudraprayag district administration commences the preparations for the Chardham Yatra by clearing the snow at the Kedarnath Dham and the pedestrian routes of Kedarnath.

Previously, the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Council said that it would issue



tokens for darshan during the Chardham Yatra in Uttarakhand. It is one of the most popular Hindu pilgrimages in India and incorporates a tour of four holy sites -Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri nestled high up in the Himalayas. The high-altitude shrines remain shut for around six months every year.



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Outbound Tourism embarks a promising growth journey

The endemic has brought a sea of change in the travel industry with a landscape of opportunities for outbound tourism. The year 2023 seems poised for growth and looks very positive. Outbound tourism has been significantly impacted by the wave of innovative trends in the travel industry. From experiential and transformative travel to automation and bleisure trips, there is a lot to offer to travellers across the globe. With travellers' desire for new experiences, rapid global technological advancements, climate change, and other dynamics, the travel and tourism industry is constantly transforming. Outbound travellers look for unique experiences, which are also convenient at the same time. Hence, innovating and offering such experiences will help create and boost travel trends. The travel industry has been at the forefront of digital innovation and continues to be transformed at an exponential rate. Portraying a main story on Outbound Special, TravelScapes has collated ideas from the stalwarts of the industry for expansion of tourism.

By Chandni Chopra

NARESH RAWAL

VP, Sales and Marketing, Resort World Cruises

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

Fly-Cruise continues to be a popular vacation and travel choice for many outbound travellers from India. At Resorts World Cruises, the homeport of the Genting Dream in Singapore is a popular destination choice. As such, cities like Singapore are crowd pullers and many are drawn to the idea of extending their stay with a cruise vacation, which will enable them to visit neighbouring countries altogether. The Genting Dream offers the convenience of departing from Singapore with a series of 2- and 3-Night cruises to Penang, Kuala Lumpur and soon Phuket. We also just launched cruising from Hong Kong and Taiwan with the Resorts World One, which is also a popular city for Indian outbound travellers that will grow the Fly-Cruise segment.

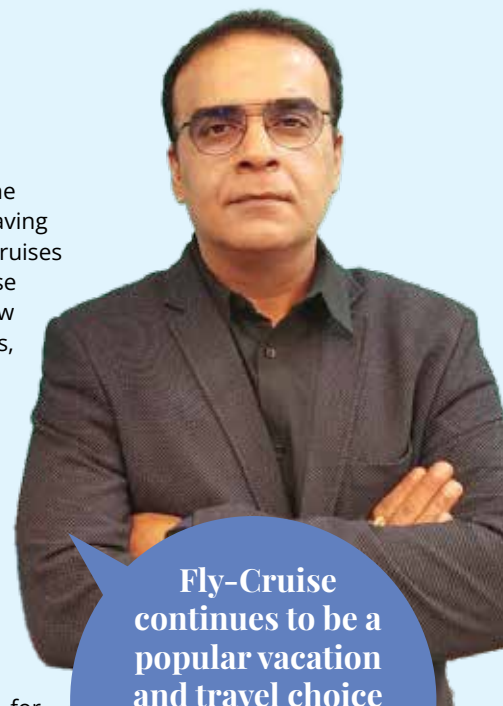
How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

We will continue to work closely with our travel trade partners to engage and equip them with the latest

updates on our cruise offerings to help boost the Fly-Cruise segment from India. These include having regular workshops for training, familiarisation cruises and marketing initiatives to support and increase awareness of Fly-Cruise. In addition, we will grow the overall trade by exploring new opportunities, be it in the B2B or B2C segment.

How is outbound tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

Outbound travellers are looking for unique experiences, which are also convenient at the same time. Hence, innovating and offering such experiences will help create and boost travel trends in India. Many are riding the wave of a Fly-Cruise holiday in which travellers can enjoy many different experiences in a single trip. Also, for cruise lines like ourselves, we strive to innovate and provide memorable offerings on the ship to enhance the travel experience, such as thematic events, special performances, personalised offerings and more.



Fly-Cruise continues to be a popular vacation and travel choice for many outbound travellers from India

Khun Siriges-A-Nong

Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

India has always been one of the most important and loved markets for Thailand. Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, India was the fastest-growing market to Thailand. In 2019 Thailand welcomed nearly 2 million Indians during that year with a growth of 25%.

In post-pandemic, we are positive that India will be one of the fastest rebound markets for tourism in Thailand as we aim to welcome 1.4 million Indian tourists in the year 2023.

For this year, TAT's marketing direction for the Indian market is to promote the amazing "New Chapters of Thailand" under "Visit Thailand Year 2023" which focuses on promoting new destinations and products suitable for Indian travellers.

Apart from our ongoing promotional strategies, we will also reach out to new segments of travellers like golfers, women travellers, senior citizen travellers and adventure enthusiasts as Thailand has something to offer every traveller.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

To engage with the Indian travel trade, Tourism Authority of Thailand New Delhi, has organised various networking events and destination presentations across North and East India, to educate travel agents and travel media about new destinations and activities in Thailand. At these events, the travel trade in each city gets an opportunity to meet and network with Thai hotel representatives and learn about their products.

TAT also organizes TTM (Thailand Travel Mart) every year. TTM is an annual B-to-B travel trade event that provides

an excellent platform for all participants, both sellers and buyers, to meet with current and potential business partners, as well as to reinforce their relationship with global travel specialists, introduce, update, and expand their businesses.

TAT India office (New Delhi & Mumbai) will be organizing the "Amazing Thailand Luxury Roadshow" in New Delhi and Mumbai in July 2023, to promote the high-end travel market from India.

We are also currently running the "Chalo Thailand" campaign with 5 top agents that sell and promote Thailand regularly.

How is outbound tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

Post the Covid pandemic, outbound tourism globally has had a keen focus on experiential travel along with importance given to sustainable tourism. Travellers now want to engage in new products, offerings and experiences that they can cherish while being mindful of their carbon footprint.

There is a growing demand for exploring products and destinations that are off the beaten path, which has given a rise to interest in visiting lesser-known destinations in Thailand.

Itineraries including local experiences and focused on appreciating the local environment are soon becoming popular, especially with millennial travellers.



We are positive that India will be one of the fastest rebound markets for tourism in Thailand

BAHRUZ ASGAROV

Deputy CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

Azerbaijan offers myriads of experiences for tourists. Our country especially attracts tourists from India with the availability of family-friendly activities both in the cities and outdoors, nightlife, availability of luxury travel and tasty cuisine.

When travelling with children, we are always concerned whether the chosen destination meets a list of our requirements. Not only should it be safe, but also entertaining for the children and adults. The good news is that Azerbaijan can satisfy all these needs by offering many benefits and fun activities for your precious family holidays. With 8 out of 11 climate zones, the best time to travel to Azerbaijan is anytime. The capital Baku is a vibrant cosmopolitan city that has both contemporary and ancient architecture, great nightlife and restaurants with delicious local food. It offers an endless list of entertaining, gastronomic and cultural experiences for travellers of all ages. Here you can merge into history by getting lost in the streets of the old town, stopping by great restaurants and tea houses, as well as filling your heart with joy from authentic shopping of Azerbaijani crafts, carpets and jewellery.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

Since the reopening of the borders, we have been focusing on the core markets

and reinforcing our collaborations with various partners. The strategic vision is to make Azerbaijan an accessible, sustainable and 'quality tourism' destination that offers unique experiences both to domestic and international tourists.

At Azerbaijan Tourism Board, we build a strategy and action plan for each target market country annually. India is currently among the place 5th among top ten countries visiting Azerbaijan. This year February we participated in OTM Mumbai and SATTE Delhi along with the roadshow event in Chennai and Ahmedabad in between the two mentioned exhibitions. The events held were very fruitful in terms of meetings and cooperation between the travel trade of Azerbaijan and India. In addition, we are planning to organise leisure and MICE familiarization trips for Indian travel agencies for better awareness of Azerbaijan.

How is outbound tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

We witness how outbound tourism is constantly evolving and adapting to innovative trends in the travel industry. These trends are

Our country especially attracts tourists from India with the availability of family-friendly activities both in the cities and outdoors



indeed driving the evolution of the travel trade across the globe. We would like to especially emphasize the sustainable and wellness tourism trends that have been winning over the hearts of all travellers.

Travellers are increasingly concerned about the impact of their trips on the environment and local communities. As a result, sustainable tourism has become a major trend in the industry. Sustainable tourism experiences have been a big part of ATB's strategy in a way to suit the expectations of modern travellers, as well as focusing on the preservation and reinforcement of the existing resources of Azerbaijan. One such project is Slow Food Travel (SFT), implemented to honour and preserve the age-old cooking methods and products that are in danger of extinction. The project was launched in 2021 in the northwest of Azerbaijan and will be expanded to the south of the country in 2023. Tourists can have this authentic experience, getting acquainted with about 60 local partners and their products, merging into the gastronomic experience and day-to-day life in Azerbaijan.

BAHRAIN TOURISM AND EXHIBITIONS AUTHORITY

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

India is one of the significant source markets for tourism globally, and Bahrain has emerged as a popular destination for Indian tourists over the years. One of the major crowd-puller for this destination is that it is the only island destination in the Middle East which makes it an exotic getaway for Indians.

Indian tourists are drawn to Bahrain for its lively shopping scene, which includes both sophisticated, state-of-the-art malls, traditional souqs, and Bahraini cuisine- a fusion of multiple cuisines. The Autumn Fair which is held annually offers attractive discounts and deals making it a must-visit for all shopaholics.

Indians are also attracted to the destination for the sustainable practices it has adopted.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

Bahrain is a well-known destination in the Indian market, and hence our focus will be to create a brand recall of Bahrain as the ideal MICE, leisure, and wedding destination. In order to maintain a strong growth trajectory in the upcoming months, our major focus will be on joint co-ops campaigns with different travel agents in the market.

The destination will also be promoted through various B2B and B2C activities like sales visits, training, multi-city roadshows, networking events, newsletters with destination updates, familiarization trips, a few exciting contests, celebrity/influencer engagements, and a hatful of other big promotional campaigns.

How is outbound tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

Outbound tourism has been significantly impacted by the wave of innovative trends in the travel industry. One of the biggest drivers of this change has been the rapid digital transformation that has taken place in recent years. Keeping in mind this trend, Bahrain as a destination has been taking initiatives to up its digital game. With its advanced technology and convenience-oriented approach, the new Passenger Terminal aims to put Bahrain International Airport (BIA) on the global aviation map alongside the world's leading smart airports.

Another trend that is shaping outbound tourism in Bahrain is the growing focus on sustainability. In the years, to come, the destination aims to continuously grow its eco-friendly tourism practices and preserve its natural environment, travellers can look forward to discovering more of the country's natural and cultural treasures with every visit to this majestic island destination.

PUNEET KUMAR

Director, South Asia and Middle East Tourism Board

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

India is one of the important emerging visitor source markets for Hong Kong. The HKTB continues to stay invested in India's outbound travel growth story for over two decades now. Over the years Hong Kong has attracted different segments of Indian leisure, meetings & incentive groups, and fly-cruise travellers.

We have identified a few probable long-term shifts impacting the future preference of travel among Indians and we are confident that new tourism opportunities, new tourism infrastructure, new experiences and products are well-positioned to excel and exceed our overseas visitors' expectations.

We are promoting Wellness and the Great Outdoors of Hong Kong to satiate their growing love for nature and doing nature-based activities, Arts in Hong Kong, and unique D-I-Y itineraries to help them self-explore and discover Hong Kong from a whole new perspective.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

Earlier this year, Hong Kong sent its biggest welcome to the world with its Hello Hong Kong Campaign which includes giving away 500,000 free round-trip airline tickets followed by 1



The HKTB continues to stay invested in India's outbound travel growth story for over two decades now

million "Hong Kong Goodies" visitor consumption vouchers will be given out, covering a complimentary welcome drink at participating bars, restaurants, and hotels, or a cash voucher to be redeemed in the transportation, culinary and retail sectors, as well as attractions.

To keep the audience excited we will engage with the travel trade fraternity all year round. Last month we staged large-scale trade outreach in India through a 2-city MICE Roadshow and at the Hong Kong Pavilion at SATTE 2023, with the objective of introducing the Hello Hong Kong Campaign, providing the latest updates about Hong Kong's new developments.

In the coming months, we are preparing to organise Hong Kong familiarisation trips for travel agents and tour operators to showcase Hong Kong's upgraded attractions, new hotels, and other tourism-related offerings, working with them to prepare lucrative itineraries for inbound travellers.

Additionally, we will also introduce an all-new online training program for our partner agents to educate themselves about the latest tourism experiences and products to sell the destination with confidence.



Alefiya Singh

Director, Iris Reps India Pvt Ltd

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

With travellers' desire for new experiences, rapid global technological advancements, climate change, and other dynamics, the travel and tourism industry is constantly transforming. There are still rising tourism trends that can help tour operators, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), and other industry suppliers to revamp their businesses and experience success as we get into the new normal.

From experiential and transformative travel to automation and Bleisure trips, there are new opportunities companies should focus on. There is a growing trend among millennials known as the "digital nomad" phenomenon. This is whereby online workers and freelancers adopt the lifestyle of travelling as they work.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

IRIS Reps believes in always pushing and promoting travel products that offer value and quality to our Indian clientele. For instance, we represent The Taraas Beach and Spa Resort along with Berjaya Tioman which is fairly different from what the usual market sells.

IRIS Reps believes in always pushing and promoting travel products that offer value and quality to our Indian clientele

Our efforts will continue to engage the travel trade in 2023 with such unique and experiential products and destinations by way of training programs, networking events, one-to-one meeting sessions, digital presence and trade roadshows.

How is outbound tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

The travel industry has been at the forefront of digital innovation and continues to be transformed at an exponential rate across the globe.

Digital disruptors like social media, mobile devices and accessible information enable destination marketers to engage with consumers and stakeholders on a larger scale than ever before.

To stay relevant, we need to change from a consumer model into a hosting model, from broadcast to engagement, and from marketing to management.

Sucheta Nagpal

Director and CEO, Travstarz Global Group

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

After 2 turbulent years which brought the travel trade to its knees, the year 2022 brought new hope for the travel trade and now 2023 looks very promising with the industry looking forward to the fast revival of travel be it revenge tourism, VFR travel, holiday & Leisure travel and most importantly Corporate Travel. India has always been a very large and important outbound market for various countries where we were among the top 3 source markets like Dubai, Thailand, Abu Dhabi etc. Now that most countries have removed or minimized Covid restrictions, the outbound market once again looks set for a good run ahead. We have seen a very strong revival in some of our less travelled destinations in the past with Turkey, Egypt, Bali and Vietnam getting high numbers over the past few months.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

For us at Travstarz, Tier 2 and Tier 3 have always been our strengths and our reach and acceptability in these markets have been very high even post-pandemic owing to the good relationships we built over the past 13+ years. These markets are now majorly driving growth and higher numbers for us from India and have been our

strong support base after reopening operations last year. Additionally, many Tourism Board Partners who had been working closely with us in the past for tapping these markets where we have a strong foothold are once again looking at joining hands with us for joint promotions in the B2B segment. All in all the year 2023 seems poised for growth and looks very positive.

How is Outbound Tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

The Indian Traveller has changed his thinking post-pandemic opting for better hotels and more aspirational destinations. The post-pandemic scenario has changed quite a bit for the travel industry with travellers now opting more for online bookings as many people have now gotten used to shopping online for most things. This will hurt offline small and medium-sized travel agents in some way. Having said that the market will always remain robust for travel agents who offer unique and niche products and not run-of-the-mill packages. This will require some out-of-the-box thinking by the travel agents to win back the confidence of the travellers to offline booking agents and will also result in better products coming to the market for the travellers and will provide an opportunity to the agents to earn better margins due to specialization.



India has always been a very large and important outbound market for various countries



CLAUDIA MATIAS

Director, Tourism de Portugal

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

Indian travellers are more open to different types of holidays, seeking out new destinations and longer stays. Safety plays a vital role and Portugal is well known for that, so solo travellers, and women solo travellers will be a tremendous opportunity. The Douro Valley was the first wine region in the world to be named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Participating in the grape harvest in September and October is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Wine lovers will enjoy the unique travels and experiences offered by Portugal's wine trails. From wine tours and tastings to wine cruises, wine and wellness, wine and golf, and winemaking, we have it all.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

Our activities in India are still very focused on building brand awareness of Portugal as a tourism destination as well as B2B activities to help trade partners understand the country better. Visit Portugal introduced 2022 a comprehensive e-learning course "Portugal Expert E-learning program." This course helps agents to understand the country in detail. The training is split into multiple modules to offer in-depth knowledge of everything a travel agent would need to market the destination. In addition, the training covers the specifics

and advantages of MICE and weddings in Portugal. After successfully completing the programme, the agents will be certified as destination experts. Portugal being a contrasting country has a product offer for all segments and we were able to capitalise in 2022 from leisure to MICE with confirmed incentives for 2023 and the first major Indian wedding which took place in Porto and the North region in 2022. Portugal was once again considered "Europe's Leading Tourism Destination", in the European edition of the 2022 World Travel Awards. We invite Indian travellers to discover Portugal and I'm positive our invite will be accepted from the interest we have been witnessing from the Indian market and the work we have been closely developing with our industry partners which keeps being a priority in 2023.

How is outbound tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

VisitPortugal has been highlighting the importance of having a strategy and the need for the sector to focus on protecting the planet, setting an example of how it is possible to have better tourism for a better planet, in the purpose of welcoming, respecting differences, and in people. With tourists, giving them the best experience possible, with our citizens, so that they understand the value of tourism; and also in our workers, so that they know that tourism is a career for life. Our network of twelve Turismo de Portugal tourism schools plays a vital role in having a 90% graduate employment rate.

Our activities in India are still very focused on building brand awareness of Portugal as a tourism destination

MANOJ SINGH

Country Head India, Norwegian Cruise Lines

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

India is incredibly important for Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) – both as a source market and a destination. Indian guests love freestyle cruising, a concept pioneered by NCL, where our guests choose when and where they want to dine on the ship, what they'd like to wear and the sort of entertainment they want to enjoy. There's no schedule for them to follow but their own! This is truly modern cruising, which is why the concept continues to resonate so well with our Indian guests.

Indian guests also prefer to travel in groups – whether with family, friends or larger affiliate groups and NCL offers them the ultimate holiday experience. Aboard our ships, families can reconnect and recharge. Our port-rich itineraries allow them to enjoy every destination together. Cruises are becoming popular among Indian groups and families with 8 in 10 urban Indian families who are planning to travel internationally, considering a cruise holiday in the next 12 months, according to a recent survey conducted by Hansa Research on behalf of NCL. Our fleet of innovative ships has something for all families– be it our onboard racetrack to Broadway entertainment and fine dining event spaces that are ideal for milestone moments amongst larger, multi-generational families.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2022?

As part of our 'Partners First' philosophy, we're doubling down on our investment in the travel trade, developing tools and resources that will help travel partners maximise their selling potential. We currently have two platforms for trade partners- Book-A-BDM and Norwegian Central Asia along with a dedicated Partners First Facebook Group for our agents in the region. Book-A-BDM enables travel agents and tour operators to seamlessly communicate with NCL's regional Business Development Managers (BDMs). Through this platform, travel agents can book a 30-minute personal session with their BDMs either telephonically, via Zoom or through in-person meetings.

How is Outbound Tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of the travel trade across the globe?

We, at NCL, are continuing to invest in our consumer marketing in India to help inspire and enable travellers to get in touch with their travel agents to plan their cruise holidays. We're constantly promoting our range of destinations and itineraries offered by our 18 ships, including our game-changing brand-new Prima Class.

Our top priority in 2023 is showcasing the second of six new Prima Class vessels (Norwegian Viva) to Indian guests.

With consumers looking for sustainable options to travel, we are showcasing our commitment to contributing to the transition to a low-carbon economy keeping sustainability at the heart of all our initiatives.

India is important for NCL, both as source market and a destination

LUBAINA SHEERAZI

CEO & Co-founder, BRANDit

Considering India as one of the important source markets globally, what are the major crowd pullers for Indian tourists keeping in mind the current trends?

Wellness breaks, solo travel, and short trips emerged as travel trends in 2022. Furthermore, there is an increase in group bookings, sustainable travel, and new experiences, which have become the top influencing factors in 2023. Longer vacations are making a comeback as countries open up completely.

Indian travellers are seeking value for money against the experiences they gather. Indian travellers are inquisitive and seek out more experiential getaways. They are also becoming more conscious of their carbon footprint, leading them to choose more environmentally friendly travel options. Travellers are more interested in experiences than in destinations. The approach of affordability-first, experience-first, planet-first, and wellness-first is gaining popularity among travellers and should be considered when catering to the Indian market.

How are you planning to engage with the travel trade fraternity in 2023?

We successfully kickstarted 2023 with a series of travel trade events including OTM, SATTE, and others, representing various tourism boards and hospitality brands. We have also hosted a number of trade and networking events,

roadshows, webinars, trainings et al across various cities for several brands we represent including Qatar, Seychelles, Thailand, The Residence by Cenizaro, Safari Trails, among others. In the coming months, we intend to invest more in such events and activations with a focus on leisure, MICE, and celebrations, as well as leverage various platforms, trade shows, and media relations.

How is Outbound Tourism riding the wave of innovative trends for the evolution of travel trade across the globe?

With all restrictions lifted in countries around the world, Indians are more likely to return to booking longer vacations. Another area of interest that picked up in 2022 was wellness, as everyone recognises the importance of well-being and has begun to prioritise it. In 2023, the wellness tourism industry will continue to grow.

Additionally, the Indian consumer is increasingly interested in new experiences rather than simply ticking off countries on their bucket-list. The idea is to engage in meaningful experiences of the destination, such as culture, people, events, and one-of-a-kind excursions.

If the recovery of travel following the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that travel demand is extremely resilient. While one's travel interests may shift, one thing remains constant: Travel.

Indian travellers are seeking value for money against the experiences they gather

REUNITING INDIA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY WITH THE GREAT INDIA TRAVEL BAZAAR

RAJASTHAN TOURISM IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE ECONOMIC GROWTH POTENTIAL LED BY THE GREAT INDIA TRAVEL BAZAAR (GITB) 2023



Bringing the world together! Great India Travel Bazaar organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) is a global platform for international and Indian tour operators to discuss business opportunities and collaborate. Leveraging a platform to connect and build relationships, **Daleep Singh Rathore, Deputy Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan** throws light on the opportunity to showcase Rajasthan's tourism potential and help establish it as a premium destination for travellers globally

By *Aanchal Sachdeva*

What prospects make Rajasthan become a tourism magnet with the numbers of visitors marginally rising after Covid-19?

Rajasthan has always been a popular destination for tourists, thanks to its rich culture, history, and architecture. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the tourism industry globally, Rajasthan still 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.

Adventure Tourism: Rajasthan is known for its desert landscapes, which offer an array of adventure activities such as

camel safaris, hot air balloon rides, and dune bashing. The state also has wildlife sanctuaries and national parks where tourists can spot tigers, leopards, and other endangered species.

Religious Tourism: Rajasthan has several religious sites that attract devotees from all over the world. The holy city of Pushkar, famous for its Brahma Temple and the annual Pushkar Camel Fair, is a significant pilgrimage site for Hindus. Ajmer Sharif Dargah, a Sufi shrine, attracts both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Wellness Tourism: Rajasthan is also an excellent destination for wellness tourism. The state has several Ayurveda and yoga centres that offer rejuvenating treatments and therapies.

Rural Tourism: Rural tourism is an emerging trend in Rajasthan, where 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.

Festivals and Fairs: Rajasthan is famous for its colourful festivals and fairs such as the Jaipur Literature Festival, the Desert Festival, and the Teej Festival. These events showcase the state's art, culture, and culinary traditions and attract a significant number of tourists.

What different and exquisite experiences will be witnessed by domestic and international tourists? How closely are you working with the tour operators to increase the footfall of tourists?

Domestic and international tourists can expect a plethora of unique and exquisite experiences when they visit our state. Rajasthan is home to some of the most magnificent forts, palaces, and temples in India, and our cultural and heritage tours offer tourists a glimpse into the state's rich history and art forms.

Adventure tourism is another exciting



We are committed to working towards making Rajasthan one of the top tourist destinations globally and providing tourists with unforgettable experiences that will keep them coming back for more

experience that tourists can enjoy in Rajasthan, with hot air balloon rides, dune bashing, and camel safaris in the desert landscapes. Wildlife enthusiasts can explore the state's national parks and sanctuaries, which are home to tigers, leopards, and other exotic species.

Religious tourism is also an essential aspect of tourism in Rajasthan, with significant pilgrimage sites like Pushkar, Ajmer Sharif Dargah, and several Jain temples. Wellness tourism is also an emerging trend, with Ayurveda and yoga centres offering rejuvenating treatments and therapies.

Rural tourism is a unique and offbeat experience that allows tourists to immerse themselves in the local way of life, including farming, handicrafts, and local cuisine. Rajasthan's vibrant festivals and fairs, such as the Jaipur Literature Festival, the Desert Festival, and the Teej Festival, also offer a glimpse into the state's art, culture, and culinary traditions.

We are working closely with tour operators to increase the footfall of tourists in Rajasthan. We have launched several initiatives to promote tourism in the state, including roadshows, Travel Marts, online promotions, tie-ups with travel agents and airlines etc. We are also working on improving infrastructure, connectivity, and safety measures to ensure that tourists have a memorable and hassle-free experience when they visit Rajasthan.

How is the Government supporting Rajasthan Tourism aiding it to level up its game on a global level?

The government is taking several measures to support tourism in Rajasthan and help the state level up its game on a global level. Some of these measures include:

Promotion and marketing: The government is actively promoting tourism in Rajasthan through various marketing and promotional campaigns. We are also participating in international travel fairs and exhibitions to showcase the state's tourism potential to a global audience.

Policy support: The government is providing policy support to the tourism industry by simplifying regulations, offering tax incentives, and streamlining the licensing process for tourism-related businesses.

Skill development: The government is investing in the skill development of tourism industry workers and offering training programs to improve their skills and provide better services to tourists.

Safety and security: The government is taking measures to ensure the safety and security of tourists by deploying police personnel and increasing surveillance in tourist areas.

All these initiatives are aimed at improving the overall tourism infrastructure in Rajasthan, promoting the state's tourism potential globally, and enhancing the overall experience of tourists visiting the state. We are committed to working towards making Rajasthan one of the top tourist destinations globally and providing tourists with unforgettable experiences that will keep them coming back for more.

There will be a modest increase in the footfall of tourists due to Great India Travel Bazaar 2023 driving growth of the hospitality sector. What is your vision for the economic growth led by GITB 2023 for Rajasthan Tourism or Jaipur specifically?

GITB is one of the premier travel and tourism events that brings 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.

In addition to generating tourism revenue, GITB 2023 is also helpful in creating numerous employment opportunities and supporting local businesses. The hospitality industry will be a significant beneficiary of this event, with

increased demand for hotel rooms, food and beverage, and other related services.

Jaipur, as the host city for GITB 2023, stands to benefit significantly from the event. The influx of tourists will boost the local economy, providing a boost to businesses in the city. 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) 2023 for the tourism industry in Rajasthan.

Overall, our vision is to make Rajasthan and Jaipur one of the top tourist destinations globally, generating significant employment opportunities and boosting the local economy. We are committed to working with stakeholders in the tourism industry to ensure that the benefits of such initiatives are realized to the fullest extent possible.

What opportunities will the GITB 2023 lay forward for its exhibitors/partners this year?

We believe that the Great India Travel Bazaar (GITB) 2023 will provide numerous opportunities for exhibitors and partners to showcase their products and services to a global audience.

GITB 2023 is expected to attract participants from over 60 countries, providing an excellent platform for exhibitors and partners to network with other players in the tourism industry, meet potential clients, generate business leads, and explore new market opportunities.

Participation in GITB 2023 can also help exhibitors and partners build their brands and establish themselves as leaders in the tourism industry. The event will feature several sessions on the latest industry trends and best practices, providing valuable insights that can help improve products and services.

Overall, GITB 2023 presents a unique opportunity for exhibitors and partners to connect with potential clients, generate business leads, and showcase their products and services to a global audience. We encourage all stakeholders in the tourism industry to participate in the event and take advantage of the numerous opportunities it provides.

What are the expected numbers of participation this year in the GITB with the exhibitors excited to showcase their products?

We are expecting more than 300 participants to come forward to participate and showcase their products this year at GITB.

Are there any inaugural sessions/panel discussions planned? Whom are the key speakers highlighting some key subject interests at the GITB 2023?

No panel discussions are planned during the GITB, only B2B meetings would be organised during the GITB this year.

UTTAR PRADESH

A POTENTIAL DRIVER OF TOURISM EMPOWERMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

As affirmed by **Mukesh Kumar Meshram, Principal Secretary of Tourism & Culture at Indian Administrative Service (IAS) - Government of Uttar Pradesh**, the state shows anticipated commitment towards the economic upturn of the country on a larger scale in 2023

By *Aanchal Sachdeva*



Boom in construction of facilities

Uttar Pradesh has developed a lot of infrastructure in the last six years. We have developed six major expressways, and many more expressways are coming up as now they are under construction. We have also developed a lot of airports. New airports are also in the pipeline including international airports. Lucknow, Varanasi, Kushinagar, Jewar and Ayodhya, all have international airports. More airports are under construction and they will be functional and operational very soon. We have several domestic airports. Some of them are under development, but soon they will also be functional. Heliports are also being developed through PPP (with private support).

Ayodhya- A promising Venture

More than 30 hotels have been already registered in Ayodhya. In 2025, we will be organising Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj after a gap of 144 years. We will certainly be needing at least 40,000 accommodation units. Throughout the Mahakumbh period, we are expecting 400 million people would visit and for them, we will need accommodation facilities, parking facilities, public amenities and seamless smooth travel. Ayodhya is open to tourists. It's only the temple construction going on in full swing. We are expecting it to be in its shape before 2024, other developments will simultaneously follow.

We have four-lane wide roads connecting Prayagraj to Ayodhya, further connecting Vindhyavasini and Varanasi. From Lucknow to Rai Bareilly to Prayagraj the wide roads are under construction.

Concoction of creation and innovation

We have to grow rural tourism to offer natural

sights, bolstering the growth of eco-tourism in the state. We have different kinds of forts and palaces in the Bundelkhand area which are unexplored and untapped so far giving a boost to heritage tourism. As far as natural tourism is concerned, we have plenty of reservoirs, dams and lakes. We also have new eco-tourism sites coming up, Amangarh Tiger Reserve is one of them. In the Bijnor district, the new Corbett National Park is coming up. Secondly, Rani Fort in the Chitrakoot Bundelkhand area.

New Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy

The latest UP Tourism Policy encompassing different kinds of units under one umbrella. Any kind of activity related to tourism will be covered, be it caravan tourism, light and sound show, museums, wellness tourism, hotels, tents, or cruising. What we are offering someone who wants to develop Metaverse or use artificial intelligence, or some kind of innovation digitally, we will support them financially.

We are in a way open to inviting people and supporting them financially to execute innovative digital advancements to promote tourism.

Upsurge of inbound tourism via Uttar Pradesh

Now things have settled and people have started moving out to different tourist destinations. As per my observation, they are coming out of their houses in big numbers with family, friends, and with relatives. Recently I was in Dubai, where I observed that all the malls and tourist attractions were full of tourists. So, now the fear of Covid has already gone and people just want to experience different kinds of places. Hence, I would like to highlight that Uttar Pradesh has a treasure where we can showcase different kinds of places where tourists can have different

kinds of experiences. Uttar Pradesh can offer spiritual tourism destinations, natural sites, cultural sites, as well as various monuments, right from the Taj Mahal to Jhansi Fort. UP also has a variety of religious sites such as Kashi Vishwanath Temple, and Gorakhnath Temple. Additionally, related to Buddhism, there are 500 million Buddhist followers across the world, out of which we have succeeded in attracting just 0.5 million so far. And I see a lot of potential to multiply it. If we succeed in multiplying it by 10 times, it would certainly be a success because every inbound tourist brings revenue as well as employment to the country. In this context, our honourable Prime Minister has rightly emphasised three Ts- Technology, Trade and Tourism as tourism can boost a lot many things. It also adds a certain value to our economy.

Uttar Pradesh proving to be an immersive opportunity

I am a firm believer of the fact that the whole world is a book containing lots of knowledge. It has a treasure of experiences and it's up to you, how you want to grab it. This is a lifetime opportunity, which you can gain and every destination is like a chapter of that book. So, the more you visit the sites more you learn and the more you go out, the more you gain experience. Further, you will be able to impart knowledge to your upcoming generation, friends and relatives about the places you have visited. That is why tourism is like learning the whole world. It de-stresses you. It makes you knowledgeable. It connects you with the culture. It connects you with the people. We say "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", the whole world is my own family. Tourism is the activity which is translated through it.

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GITB 2023

The Pedestal of Brand Building

A confluence for leading B2B experts from the travel and tourism industry, The Great Indian Travel Bazaar is India's business networking platform for Inbound Tourism. It is organised by the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Government of Rajasthan, and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). With participation from more than 280 foreign tour operators from all across the globe, the platform incorporates more than 290 Indian Exhibitors to showcase their products. Encompassing a host of opportunities for businesses, the two-day event taking place from April 23 to April 25, 2023, at Jaipur will comprise around 11,000 business meetings between Indian sellers and foreign buyers. Further, one can witness more than 300 booths of Destination Management Companies, State Tourism Boards, and Hotels demonstrating their products to the attendees. The experience isn't limited to stalls and meetings, companies will get a chance to build their brand through information inaugural sessions in the presence of media of government officials. It will be followed by networking dinners and cocktails providing a holistic experience. With the GITB imminent, TravelScapes asked the renowned hoteliers to express their views on this networking opportunity and provide an outlook on the whole event

By Mansi Yadav



GITA CHAUDHRY
FOUNDER & OWNER, TERRA TALES

Future plan to maximize footfall and enhance collaborations

What we showcase and what we offer to determine and decide how customers would respond to our offerings. Our company has kept the highest standards and the satisfaction of our customers is always at the centre stage. I will be working on this by reaching

out to the customers who have availed of our services earlier and had incredible experiences. We will not only offer them the best as ever but will take references as well. The strategy works wonders provided positive word of mouth is taking rounds for you.

Further, we will be collaborating with some selected inbound

“Events like GITB undoubtedly open gateways to form great and mutually beneficial associations. I would be doing it as well in some selected categories especially to do with heritage properties

destinations and other players from the travel industry to offer what leave our customers and clients in awe. We all have our own set of abilities, experiences, and expertise and an integrated approach is a must to offer the best to the customers and clients and we will be working on it with absolute prudence and passion.

Vision for GITB 2023

A lot has changed during the post-pandemic situation and we can witness new trends, refined products, and different approaches in the travel industry. I would like to gather detailed information and insights about products showcased at GITB. I will keep a close tab on

domestic as well as overseas exhibitors and their offerings. Such events undoubtedly open gateways to form great and mutually beneficial associations and I would be doing it as well in some selected categories especially to do with heritage properties.

Moreover, I will certainly form an understanding with genuine players from the travel fraternity to participate in selected upcoming events to gain greater insights and better mileage in all respects.



VIDHU GUPTA
GENERAL MANAGER, ANANTA
HOTELS AND RESORTS PUSHKAR

Future plan to maximize footfall and enhance collaborations

It starts with participating in Fam Tours and more inbound shows like GITB to enhance reach in the market. The showcase of the property along with hosting Fam in different properties is also a source to generate the business followed

by social media activation offering the best rates and visibility of the brand in the market to attract inbound guests. Further, there are in-house activities for the inbound guests including live demos for cooking.

Vision for GITB 2023

The vision includes participating in the event and going with the group stall where the positioning of the group can be increased. Also, GITB will be the best platform to collaborate with FTO and travel agents in order to make them understand the level of the product and service standards.

“GITB will be the best platform to collaborate with FTO and travel agents in order to make them understand the level of the product and service standards



S.P. JAIN
CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING
DIRECTOR, PRIDE HOTELS GROUP

Future plan to maximize footfall and enhance collaborations

The inbound travel segment is staging a significant revival currently. The government has announced a target of 80 new airports by 2025 which in turn will be a major boost to the tourism and hospitality sector as

the demand for rooms will increase manifold.

The number of new hotel signings is seeing a significant increase as compared to the previous years. The growth in room supply is likely to increase to meet the growing demand of the inflow of tourists, primarily

“We aim to ensure an enjoyable and safe experience for all travellers and strive to increase the visibility of India's rich heritage and culture

in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Pride Hotels Group has a presence in around 51 great locations with 5,075 rooms, 102 restaurants, 134 banquets, lawns, and conference halls.

Vision for GITB 2023

We aim to ensure an enjoyable and safe experience for all travellers and strive to increase the visibility of India's rich heritage and culture. We also want to make sure that travellers can access the best deals and discounts, while also having access to quality services and amenities. We believe in leveraging technology to make the travel industry more efficient, cost-effective, and secure.

Moreover, we are looking forward to collaborating with the travel fraternity through virtual meet-ups, webinars, and other networking events. Further, we are actively forming partnerships with as many networking partners as possible. We prioritize our relationships with them and take measures to ensure a healthy business environment.

Also, a few events have already been done and we are considering participating in more, such as OTM, ITB India, TTF, HICSA, WHO Expo, IHE, and others.



ABINASH MANGHANI
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
WELCOMHERITAGE HOTELS

Future plan to maximize footfall and enhance collaborations

The traditional themes of culture and history, religion, and nature-based travel continue to rule India's inbound tourism sector.

As the volume of international travel increases, so are how travellers research, plan, book,

and enjoy their journey. Technology has a significant impact, especially if it continues to develop at an accelerated rate and society keeps

progressing and accepting new lifestyles.

Hotels that want to increase their profitability as a result of the expansion of foreign tourism must secure bookings from abroad. The methods for drawing more tourists from abroad include the use of social media sites like Instagram and Facebook that determine the nation of origin of followers, along with other relevant data.

Further, we make sure to advertise on the regional OTAs and independent travel websites used by the travellers we wish to reach. Travel blogs and websites have a vast audience. We often host a variety of travel bloggers and influencers to review our hotels and resorts since they help us get publicity in their country and outside. In addition to concentrating on optimising the website for domestic visitors, we also hope to enhance traffic from foreign visitors by making the website multilingual.

Partnering with tour operators is one of the key marketing techniques used by any hotel to acquire offline reservations. These tour companies frequently receive inquiries from sizable groups of tourists from all over the world who are eager to learn more about any place.

Before making a reservation, international visitors want to look through reviews and pictures as well. We concentrate on gathering as many positive evaluations as possible, responding to the negative ones, and resolving them in order to avoid receiving similar feedback in the future.

In addition to the aforementioned, one of the brand's primary initiatives this year is to represent the collection of hotels and resorts at various travel fairs and marts (domestic and international), including GITB, ITB, WTM, PATA, IATO etc.

Vision for GITB 2023

Over the years, GITB has solidified its position as a top business networking platform for all parties involved in the travel and hospitality sectors, generating new business prospects. India as a tourist destination would undoubtedly benefit from GITB by showcasing its undiscovered attractions and riches to potential customers, attracting more visitors in the years to come. We are also hopeful that we will receive a fair portion of the market for our properties.

Inbound tourists make up the majority of our market because we concentrate on offering experiences and showcasing heritage. We are also in the process of advertising all of our hotels in well-known geographic areas including the United States, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and the East through the publication of our destinations in

“We want to concentrate on exhibiting the brand at several travel fairs and marts, commencing with GITB & Tres FY 2023–24 as these exhibitions have numerous advantages for businesses, particularly inbound

related brochures and tour itineraries promoted by local DMCs in these areas.

By partnering with eminent operators who specialise in promoting local destinations by providing them with incentives and alluring offers, we also place a strong emphasis on the enormous potential of domestic travel.

Also, as already stated, we want to concentrate on exhibiting the brand at several travel fairs and marts, commencing with GITB & Tres FY 2023–24 as these exhibitions have numerous advantages for businesses, particularly inbound. They provide you with the possibility to make sales and obtain qualified leads too.

ASEGO

GOES BEYOND BOUNDARIES

The word travel has a different connotation for everybody. For some, it is an opportunity to explore new places while for others it is just a break from their monotonous schedules. However, for a majority of Indians, the idea of travelling has become more of a calmativ for bustling lives of people with gaining new experiences. All these and much more have obliged Asego to think beyond the given and bring about a new face to providing global assistance. In conversation with TravelScapes, Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO, of Asego, shares his key thoughts on the vision and mission for travellers across the globe in 2023

By Chandni Chopra

What is the vision of Asego in 2023?

With the recent proliferation in insurance awareness backed by the radical upward trajectory in terms of tech developments, I feel that 2023 will be a year of digitalisation, with travellers seeking relevant assistance and insurance services for their trips. Therefore, our focus this year will be to further strengthen our position as innovators in the travel protection domain and enhance our global assistance capabilities to boost confidence amongst travellers with crucial services such as doctor-on-call, family protection and 24x7 emergency medical assistance.

We have also introduced some new age covers such as gadget protection, cruise cover, extreme adventure sports cover and more for millennials pursuing unexplored travel experiences in their fast-paced lives.

Furthermore, we seek to create a new benchmark in the travel ancillary services industry in India by optimising the way we offer products and reaching out to all travellers—not just the ones who claim. We aspire to be the 'trusted partner' for most travel agents in India and help them metamorphose travel insurance from a commodity to a 'must-have'.

What are the major problems faced by the travellers and what initiatives does Asego undertake to eliminate them?

Eventualities such as missed/delayed flights and hotel/flight cancellations are at times inevitable when it comes to travel. Along with cancellations, we have recently witnessed a huge spike in newer travel risks such as loss and damage of gadgets, cyber security issues, identity theft, credit/debit card fraud and several more amongst travellers.

Asego has been working tirelessly to identify and mitigate these risks with comprehensive travel assistance and insurance solutions. Our bouquet of offerings not only takes care of medical emergencies but also provides exclusive pre-departure covers. Further, our carefully curated standalone products offer travellers an opportunity to customise their protection plans as per their needs and preferences, rather than opting for a plain vanilla travel insurance product.

Keeping in mind the current market trends, what sort of global

assistance does Asego provide to its customers?

Asego's services are not just limited to facilitating claims processes but also provide real-time assistance services to travellers. Our services include 24x7 global medical assistance, roadside assistance, family protection and concierge assistance, along with insurance. During these unprecedented times, we also provide doctor-on-call services, support during baggage loss, and missed flights, advice on COVID-19 protocols in different countries and other related services.

Furthermore, we provide medical service-related referrals to customers requiring hospitals, clinics, chemists, diagnostic centres, etc. This is not just for the traveller but also for their family back home.

Lots of travel insurance brands are coming up in the market. What makes you stand out amongst the rest?

Asego is the leading dedicated provider of Travel Assistance and Insurance in India and has been servicing our partners in the travel industry for over 23 years now across retail, corporate and e-commerce segments. Our business focus has been only on travelling, resulting in incomparable product innovations, assistance services capabilities and tech advancements providing us with an edge.

Fast track claims support: Our travel assistance and insurance products are powered by 24/7 fast track claims support and expert teams present across the globe ensure that the travellers are fully protected, no matter where they are.

Customisable protection plans: Our bouquet of travel assistance services and new-age bundled products have always been customer favourites. Nevertheless, we realised that tailoring offerings at a micro level are the need of the hour. We are now offering an array of relevant standalone products, such as emergency OPD expenses, quarantine cancellations, cruise cover, and flight delay/interruption covers, pertinent to the current scenario. Asego has been leveraging these tech capabilities to create a specialised system for our partners.

Today, we understand travel risks and hence can create a customised user experience, enabling our partners to offer the right protection plan to their customers.



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FAITH thanks PM for boosting national economy

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), the national tourism policy body expressed its sincere thanks to the Honourable PM for stressing the importance of tourism during a post-budget webinar and offering valuable suggestions to all stakeholders to putting tourism development on a mission mode- a term generally used for most critical infrastructure projects. Also, the board of directors of FAITH wishes to assure the PM that as an important industry body they were geared to fulfil his vision to put India on the global tourism map.

"FAITH wishes to reaffirm to the PM that we have taken his message and we would partner with MOT to put India the most sought-after tourist destination. While we are on it, would request the tourism ministry to revive and raise the budget for promoting India abroad. Also would urge the government to comprehensively look at lowering the GST on the entire Hospitality sector as high taxation makes India an expensive tourist destination vis a vis Sri Lanka, Thailand and other neighbouring South East countries. No gain saying that every percentage reduction in taxation has a 10 times higher multiplier impact on the growth of the overall leisure and tourism sector" says Nakul Anand, Chairman FAITH.

Manisha Saxena appointed Director General of Tourism

Manisha Saxena is appointed as the Director General of Tourism in the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, according to an order issued on March 4, 2023. Saxena is an IAS officer (1996 batch) of the Arunachal Pradesh-Mizoram-Goa-Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre.

She is currently serving in the Government of Mizoram as Principal Secretary of Tourism and has also previously served there as the Secretary (Tourism). Hailing from Delhi and an alumnus of Lady Shriram College of Women, she also has a past tenure of serving as Principal Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi from November 2016 to July 2022. She is also an alumnus of Lady Shriram College of Women.

Uttarakhand Tourism signs MoU with THSC to upskill tourism stakeholders

The **Uttarakhand** Tourism Department inked an MoU (memorandum of understanding) with the THSC, a sector skill council under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), to upskill and reskill people enhancing tourism products and services in the state.

The MoU was signed by Rajan Bahadur, Chief Executive Officer, of THSC, and Poonam Chand, Additional Director, of Uttarakhand Tourism in the presence of State Tourism Minister Satpal Maharaj.

As per the MoU, THSC will deliver training on tourism and hospitality skills to over 4000 people across 13 districts in the State. Intended at upskilling and reskilling stakeholders, training will be imparted to cab drivers, guest house owners, dhaba owners and

tourist guides, Commenting on the MoU, Maharaj said, "Uttarakhand is known for its warm hospitality both domestically and internationally. This collaboration will start a new chapter in our hospitality by offering training to individuals working in the tourism sector. It will give visitors a sense of belonging and entice them to return to Uttarakhand repeatedly if taxi drivers, owners of guest houses and dhabas, and tourist guides here greet visitors from abroad in their language and offer guidance for the duration of their stay. Additionally, this partnership would enable tourists to get a closer view of Uttarakhand's culture and natural beauty. This collaboration will encourage intercultural exchange while simultaneously promoting self-employment."

MOT organises country's first Global Tourism Investors' Summit

Ministry of Tourism organised a roundtable interaction with heads of mission in New Delhi on March 23, 2023, as a run-up to the first Global Tourism Investor's Summit.

As an initiative under India's G20 Presidency, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India shall be organizing the country's first Global Tourism Investors' Summit (GTIS) in New Delhi from 17-19 May 2023.

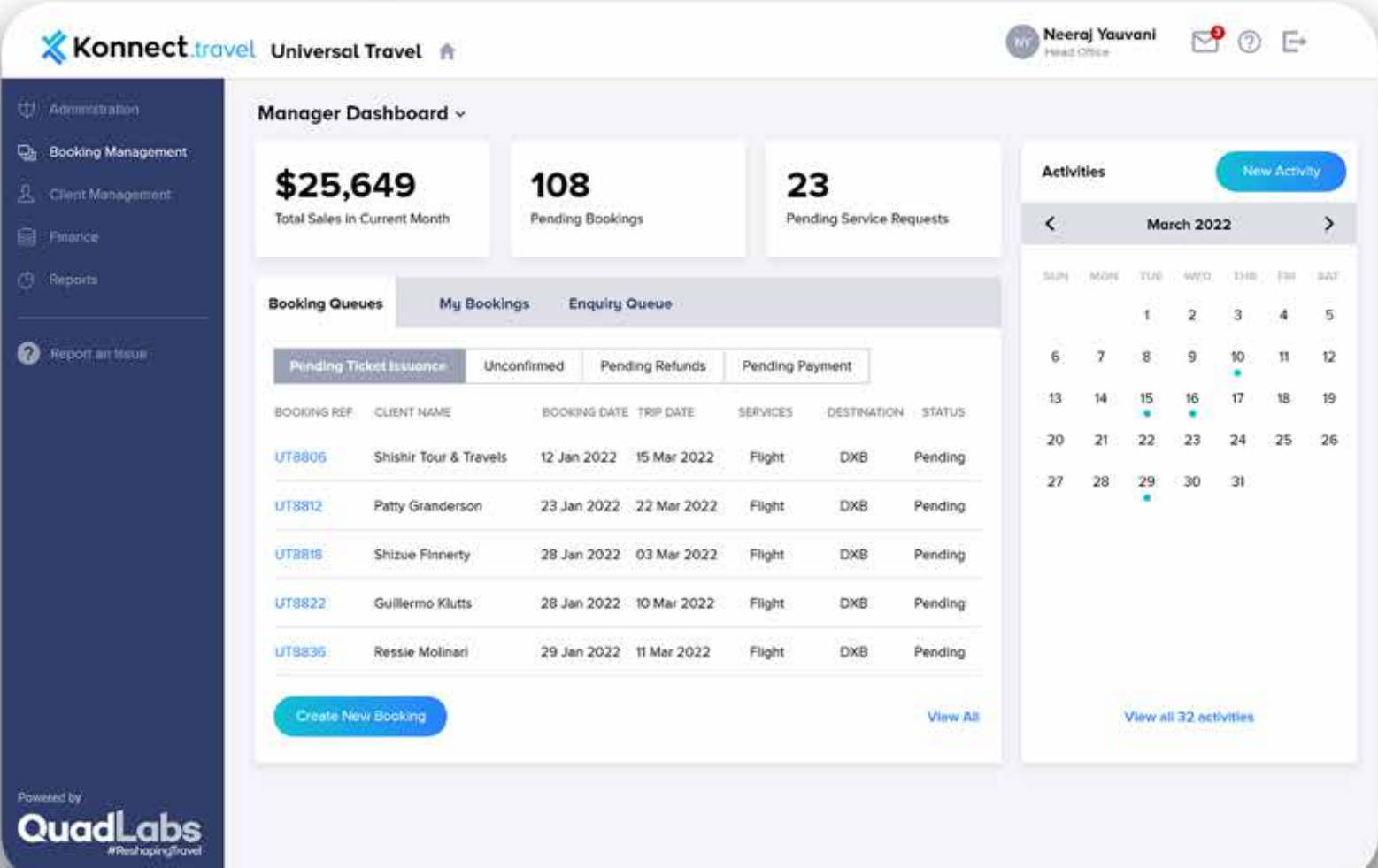
The Roundtable Interaction with Heads of Missions was chaired by Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and DONER. While addressing the Heads of the Missions at Vigyan Bhawan today, Shri Reddy remarked that guided by the Vision of the Prime Minister, tourism development and promotion is being undertaken in Mission Mode by the Government. He also stated that the current



investment landscape of the country makes it an appropriate destination for investment in various sub-sectors of the Indian tourism industry such as Hospitality & Lodging, Wellness tourism, Adventure tourism, Eco-Tourism, Rural Tourism and others. The Minister thanked all the participating Missions for attending the Roundtable Interaction and invited them to actively participate in the forthcoming Investors Summit and be a part of India's growth and development in the tourism sector.

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108
Pending Bookings

23
Pending Service Requests

Booking Queues | My Bookings | Enquiry Queue

BOOKING REF.	CLIENT NAME	BOOKING DATE	TRIP DATE	SERVICES	DESTINATION	STATUS
UT8806	Shishir Tour & Travels	12 Jan 2022	15 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8812	Patty Granderson	23 Jan 2022	22 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8818	Shizue Finnerty	28 Jan 2022	03 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8822	Guillermo Klutts	28 Jan 2022	10 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8836	Ressie Molinari	29 Jan 2022	11 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending

Activities | New Activity

March 2022

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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Thomas Cook and SOTC Travel partner with Vistara

Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel partnered with Vistara for the Club Vistara program. This program will benefit the customers by providing them with Club Vistara Points on Vistara Getaways. It will also help achieve memorable experiences for the consumer. With every INR 100 spent on Vistara Getaways Holidays, the traveller will get 8 CV points.

The companies announced an offer where Club Vistara members can avail of a flat discount of INR 4000 on a purchase of Vistara Getaways holidays started from March 18, 2023. On the other hand, the CV points earned are on land-only components (sightseeing, accommodation, and transfers). The points will be credited to the member's account within 60 days post-travel.

Members can redeem the CV points by opting for award flights across Vistara and partner network, upgrading their cabin class or towards partial payment of a Vistara flight.

Vistara Getaways designed



and built by Thomas Cook and SOTC Travel is powered by a cutting-edge technology platform. It provides consumers with dynamic inventory and ready-to-book holidays. Each Vistara Getaways comes with flights, sightseeing experiences, transfers, value-to-premium hotel stays, visas and a dedicated concierge service.

The smooth digital interface encourages customers by providing them speedy and convenient service with the additional benefit of support from the companies' holiday experts.

WelcomHeritage collaborates with SunFuel to install EV charging stations

WelcomHeritage Hotels, a joint venture of Jodhana Heritage Resorts Pvt. Ltd. and ITC Ltd. partnered with SunFuel Electric, an EV charging player to install charging stations across its hotels in India and promote sustainability. On March 15, 2023, an agreement was signed between Abinash Manghani, CEO of WelcomHeritage and Gul Panag, Co-Founder at SunFuel.

SunFuel Electric's Founder & CEO Sudhir Nayak said that destination charging is a significant pillar among the 3 pillars of EV Charging, i.e., Highway Charging, City Charging, and Destination Charging. The adoption of high-end electric vehicles in India could be done when luxury hotels and resorts



are equipped with a smooth Destination Charging experience.

Travellers can drive electric vehicles to WelcomHeritage Parv Vilas Resort & Spa in Solan, Himachal Pradesh. WelcomHeritage Hotels aim to cover the popular driving holiday route that runs through Himachal Pradesh, from Chandigarh via Kasauli and Solan to Shimla and promotes sustainability as well as responsible travel.

IATO Delegation invites the CM of Maharashtra to 38th IATO Convention

IATO team led by Rajiv Mehra, President and Ravi Gosain, Vice President met the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Eknath Shinde, Leader of Opposition of Maharashtra Legislative Council, Ambadas Danve and Minister of Tourism of Maharashtra, Mangal Prabhatji Lodha in Mumbai in order to invite them for the 38th IATO Annual Convention scheduled to be held in Sambhajinagar in September.

The Chief Minister assured support from his office as well as from the Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra Government for the convention. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed before the meeting between the President of IATO and Saurabh Vijay, Principal Secretary Tourism Department, Government of Maharashtra in the presence of Ambadas Danve and Mangal Prabhatji Lodha.

Moreover, the IATO delegation also invited Rahul Nalurekar,



Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly to the convention. Other prominent people that were a part of the IATO delegation include N.S. Rathore, Chairman, of IATO Western Region, Sunit Kothari, Chairman, of the Civil Aviation Committee & Public Relations Committee, ATDF and Jaswant Singh, President, of Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation (ATDF).

Rajiv Mehra believes that the 38th IATO Convention is going to be huge with the collective support from the Directorate of Tourism, District Planning & Development Council (DPDC), Aurangabad, Govt. of Maharashtra and District Administration, Sambhajinagar, 38th IATO Annual Convention.

SanKash collaborates with Radisson Gurugram

SanKash collaborated with Radisson Gurugram to launch the initiative of Marry Now Pay Later, which will help the guests in managing their wedding finances. The company plans to disburse INR 100 crore in FY'24 to lighten the burden of the consumer and let them plan their dream wedding accordingly.

Since, post-pandemic people started opting for flexible, pay-over-time payment choices, this initiative would assist in planning weddings accordingly. Radisson

Gurugram, Udyog Vihar features 200 rooms with 35000 sq. feet of elegant lawns and four banqueting spaces. The future plans include expanding this initiative to other Radisson hotels in Agra and Rajasthan.

Further, SanKash aims to capture 0.1 per cent of the market share with the 'Marry Now Pay Later' initiative. The credit option ranges up to INR 25 lakhs in value which can be spread over a time span of 12 months with 6 months being a no-cost EMI option.



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Assam Govt. signs MoU with Flybig

Assam Government signed an MoU with Big Charter Private Limited (Flybig) in order to promote intra-state connectivity and facilitate services in the non-UDAN area. The regional airline, Flybig will operate flights between Guwahati-Silchar-Guwahati and Guwahati-Dibrugarh-Guwahati on a day-to-day basis. This initiative will align with the Centre's UDAN scheme with the state government operating flights under viability gap funding.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma by Assam Tourism Development Corporation Managing Director Kumar Padma Pani Bora and Flybig Director Sanjay Natavarlal Mandavia. Further, the number of flights operating



on a daily basis will increase adding a new dimension to the existing intra-state air connectivity dynamics.

Moreover, the services will give assured connectivity as well as price as it has been decided to keep a check on the pricing with the maximum price fixed at INR 4000. The new services will add momentum to Kumbhirgram airport at Silchar, and Mohanbari airport at Dibrugarh. Also, the intra-state flight services are a part of the state government's budget proposal.

Global Destinations celebrates 15th Anniversary

Global Destinations, pioneers of travel representation in India and today renowned, as a top travel marketing firm in the industry, is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. The company has grown to be one among India's largest and most reputed destination representation companies. They have for a decade and a half been facilitating both their partners - international stakeholders and clients - the Indian travel fraternity to further develop and establish business growth in the international tourism arena.

Global Destinations is Pranav Kapadia's brainchild, bringing him over 30 years of sales and marketing experience in the travel industry. Established in the year 2008, the Head

Office is in Mumbai, followed by a competitive pan-India presence. In 2022, Global Destinations expanded further by announcing the launch of their luxury representation vertical, 'Wanderlust - Bespoke by Global Destinations', with a keen focus on luxurious and captivating travel brands and experiences.

As a highly experienced and very energetic tourism solution provider, Global Destinations prides itself on offering top-quality service to an ever-growing, very discerning customer base. They aim to bring newer global tourism products to an Indian audience and, simultaneously, be of the best assistance to the Indian Travel Trade.

World leaders to shape the future of sustainable tourism at ATM 2023

Travel professionals and policymakers from across the globe will explore how the tourism sector is 'Working Towards Net Zero' at the 30th edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM), which will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from May 1 to May 4, 2023.

The four-day event will feature over 150 speakers across 63 sessions, as policymakers and industry figures from around the world outline how they are working to drive decarbonisation within the sector. Ministers from the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Jordan,

Jamaica and Spain will join a host of senior figures from the private sector to showcase sustainable innovations, share knowledge and best practice, and explore opportunities and challenges along the road to net zero.

Exhibitor participation in ATM 2023 will be 27% higher than last year, with growth across all show sectors. These include regional upticks for the Middle East (15.1% larger), Europe (30.9% larger), Asia (18.6% larger) and Africa (44.7% larger), as well as representation from Travel Tech and hotels, which has expanded by 57.9% and 23.5%, respectively.



Thomas Cook India inks an agreement to set up Forex outlets at Goa Airport

Thomas Cook (India) Limited, India's leading omnichannel travel services company, inaugurated new Forex outlets at the new Manohar International Airport - at Mopa, Goa. The Company has won a 5-year contract for setting up and operating 4 foreign exchange counters at the new Goa Airport. This expands Thomas Cook India's forex network/consumer access in Goa to 6 outlets: 2 branches and 4 airport outlets. In addition, the company operates 25 airport counters across India, Sri Lanka and Mauritius.

In an initiative to ensure safe, seamless and convenient merchant payments, Thomas Cook's Goa airport counters will empower foreign nationals from G20 nations and NRIs, with UPI-enabled Indian Rupee transactions on arrival. Travellers can then access their INR wallet to ensure smooth and secure digital payments across millions of merchant establishments equipped with the UPI QR facility pan India. The prepaid payment product is issued by Pine Labs under the PPI authorisation obtained from RBI.

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Gujarat

DELVE INTO ICONIC
HERITAGE SITES

By Chandni Chopra



Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad, also known as the 'Manchester of India' is an apt weekend destination for tourists who want to unwind themselves amidst nature and capture the beautiful essence of Gujarat. Ahmedabad is western India's most vibrant city known for its cotton industries mushrooming into the cities and its cotton products burgeoning across India. The best tourist places in Ahmedabad offer a plethora of attractions such as – a known shopping destination for fabrics, an exciting and pleasing vista of flora and fauna, an essence of authentic Gujarati cuisine and an amalgamation of architecture.

Located on the western coast of India, Gujarat is a popular destination of tourists interest that has grown substantially. A very successful series of ad campaigns with Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan and the addition of the Statue of Unity has changed this though. The city actually has a very interesting and extensive history that can be traced all the way back to the Harappan Civilization. The legacy of city's heritage includes remarkable architecture, temples, palaces and mansions, and handicrafts. The state also has some rare wildlife and many bird-watching sites



Dwarka

An ancient Indian city located in Devbhoomi of Gujarat, Dwarka is one of the most religiously significant places to visit in Gujarat. This city is especially famous for the Hindu legends that circulate it. The temples located here further attract pilgrims from across the country. It is synonymous with the Dwarka Kingdom. Dwarka is also revered for its proximity to the Arabian sea and the beauty of its coastline. The towering and colourful temples located here play a unique attraction to tourists from all around the world.

Gir National Park

Gir National Park is a wildlife sanctuary known in the world for not only being one of the few known habitats of the Asiatic lion but also for the efforts taken here to prevent the majestic species from getting extinct. This is the only place on the planet, besides Africa, where you can spot the rare species. The park has a unique landscape made up of hills, plateaus, sharp ridges, and portions of 7 major rivers of the region like Datardi, Hiran and Raval. One of the best places to see in Gujarat, it houses hundreds of species of flora, fauna and more.



Statue of Unity

The Statue of Unity stands at a height of almost 790 ft. and is the tallest statue in the world that is visible from space making it one of the must-visit places in Gujarat! Visitors are allowed to go up to the viewing gallery which is located near the chest height of 500 ft around Satpura and Vindhya ranges. There exists a museum here that has over 2000 pictures from the life of Sardar Patel. A beautiful 'Valley of Flowers', a 17-kilometre-long patch of flowers is quite a treat to the eyes. Don't miss to attend the sound and light laser show, conducted in the evening, under the stars each day that bathes the statue in millions of colours.



Rann of Kutch

Known as the world's largest salt desert, Rann of Kutch is one of the most famous tourist places to visit in Kutch. It has lured the movie directors into shooting this beautifully vast desert. It can be seen in movies like in Magadheera, Ramleela and many more. Taking in the beauty here on a full moon night is an overwhelming experience. Also famous for the Rann Utsav held every year from November to February.



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STEERING STEADILY TOWARDS SUCCESS



AN EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION WITH NOPPARAT AUMPA (KAI), GENERAL MANAGER OF BANYAN TREE BANGKOK

To run a company in any vertical, it is very important to understand the current dynamics of growth of the company in the coming years. At the epicentre of this is the General Manager of Banyan Tree Bangkok, a diverse first female leader responsible for developing strategies and driving success. We spoke to Nopparat Aumpa (Kai), Senior Assistant Vice President General Manager of Banyan Tree Bangkok, a brilliant manager having broader leadership skills with reflex grasp of business fundamentals

By Chandni Chopra

How do you feel being the first female General Manager of Banyan Tree Hotels?

Well, I feel proud in the way that shows that our company believes in diversity. You know, we believe in people's development. I'm a first trial project that groomed the local to be the leader, top leader of the company. And now I had been around the world with the company for 26 years since 1996 and now I'm a senior assistant vice president and general manager. So I have opened about twelve hotels around the world.

With Eco- Tourism taking the lead in the hospitality industry, what initiatives does the Banyan Tree Group has taken in this direction?

Our brand focusses on sustainability. Since day one when I joined the company, our share woman has always taught us how to make sure that we live our life with sustainability. She took the lead and eliminated all the plastic we even thought of the initiative to use all the organic products. We even buy things from the local community helping in the development of the local community.

“

We create the destinations and help people having memorable experiences during their stay

How important is providing customized guest experiences for you?

We are the brands that look forward to create memorable experiences. We create the destinations and help people having memorable experiences during their stay. All our associates have been booming in understanding the purpose of guest visits and creating a lifetime experience for them.

What are the crowd-puller initiatives that Banyan Tree has taken for 2023?

We just create two things for Banyan Tree Bangkok. Of course, the most famous one is a vertical, open air rooftop, restaurant

which is on the 61st floor. This location is made perfect destination for everyone. Not only that, we just launched another dining destination, Saffron Cruise. Our cruise is different from others because we have a kitchen on the board. The idea is to have a rooftop experience in the open air. And Mandela is also another fire dining for people who like to sit inside as they have a grass curve which gives a surreal effect of the nature outside and the food is a high signature in the restaurant.

What are the new destinations in the pipeline that Banyan Tree has planned for 2023?

Well, we are expanding a lot. In 1994 we might have had only three, or four hotels but now this year, we even being a young company have already about 55 hotels around the world so we expanded as an Asian brand. We grew up around the world and the last property that we just opened two continental hotels is in Kyoto- Dawa and Karia. We are going to have Banyan Tree in Kyoto also. But the most important that I have planned to open Banyan Tree Al- Ula in Saudi Arabia by November, 2023.

An aerial photograph of a city at dusk. The sky is a mix of blue and orange. In the foreground, there's a large, modern building complex with a central tower that has a golden sphere on top. The ground is covered in snow, and there are some trees. The city extends into the distance with many other buildings.

MEET IN
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Minor Hotels announces launches of its first Avani Branded Property

Poised to bring laid-back luxury to the shores of the Baa Atoll, Minor Hotels' Avani brand makes its Maldives debut with the opening of Avani+ Fares Maldives Resort on April 1, 2023. Set on the natural tropical island of Fares at the western edge of this famous heart-shaped atoll, the 176-key resort will be Minor's sixth property in the country, strengthening the company's position as a key player in the Indian Ocean destination.

Answering global demand for competitively priced escapes without compromise, the new upscale resort launches with enticing opening offers set to shake up the Baa Atoll's hospitality landscape. From Avani Beach Studios from USD 650 per night and Four Bedroom Beach Pavillions from USD 2,800 per night, vibrant couples, honeymooners, families and groups of friends can reconnect and spend quality time together.

Reachable within 35 minutes of Velana International Airport, the new-build resort unlocks paradise with multiple accommodation options, from beach pool villas and four-bedroom beach pavilions to expansive three-bedroom overwater villas that fan out across the island's turquoise bay. Avani+ Fares Maldives Resort has been designed to welcome group getaways and memorable multigenerational family stays with two, three and four-bedroom beach pavilions, and two and three-bedroom over-water villas.

Lemon Tree Hotels signs two new properties in Dapoli, Maharashtra

Lemon Tree Hotels announced two new signings in Maharashtra - Lemon Tree Hotel, Dapoli and Keys Lite by Lemon Tree Hotels, Sylvan, Dapoli.

Both the properties are expected to be operational by October 2023 and shall be managed by Carnation Hotels, a wholly-owned subsidiary and the management arm of Lemon Tree Hotels.

Lemon Tree Hotel, Dapoli will feature 50 well-appointed rooms, a restaurant, a bar, banquet spaces, a swimming pool, a fitness centre and other public areas.

Keys Lite by Lemon Tree Hotels Sylvan will feature 20 well-appointed rooms, a restaurant, banquet lawns, a swimming pool, indoor and outdoor games facilities and other public areas.

Banyan Tree Group announces first property in Spain

Banyan Tree Group, a multi-branded independent hospitality groups, has signed an MOU with La Quinta Real Estate Group to open Angsana Real de la Quinta Benahavis Marbella resort and residences in 2026. Located in the charming Mediterranean town of Benahavis near Marbella, the development will include a hotel, branded residences, apartments and commercial spaces. The property will mark the Group's debut in Spain.

Perched at the top of a hill and nestled inside the 200-hectare Real de La Quinta residential community, Angsana Real de la Quinta Benahavis Marbella will command expansive views over the rolling hills below and the blue Alboran sea. Modern and fluid interior designs, meanwhile, find cues

in the resort's architecture and honour the sense of retreat into the beautiful, wooded slopes of the Sierra de las Nieves. Ample windows provide expansive views and an open feel, while social spaces dotted with orange trees and water features promote social gatherings in a courtyard-style setting that reflects both Angsana's essence of treasuring each moment and the destination's Andalusian soul.

In addition to 90 nature-integrated guestrooms and suites circling an oasis courtyard, the hotel will also feature three dining venues, including all-day dining, signature and pool bar and grill concepts; meeting spaces; spa and kids' club; adult and family pools; and a wedding amphitheatre.



Accor marks International Women's Day With Commitment To Equality

In celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8, 2023, Accor, an international hotel operator reiterated its long-standing commitment to ensuring gender equality, wage parity and protecting women's rights in every aspect of its business.

IWD has been marked for over a century, but more work is still required to create a gender equal world, free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination. The theme of this year's event is #EmbraceEquality - a concept that underscores Accor's operations and underpins its future strategy and direction.

Accor has ambitious equality targets, which will see women account for 40% of its global Executive Committee members by 2025 (up from 32% in 2022), 40% of Accor's General Managers being women by 2025 (compared to 31% at present), and 45% of female representation on the company's Management Committees by 2025 (up from 39% in 2022). Today 42% of Accor's Heartists® around the world are women, although this figure rises to 50% in countries such as Thailand and Vietnam. The company firmly believes when female employees are empowered to achieve their goals, the entire business thrives.

WorldHotels Collection announces expansion globally

WorldHotels Collection announces the expansion of its hotel offerings in prominent travel destinations across Asia and Europe with five new properties. The highlights of these additions to the portfolio include the introduction of the Crafted collection in Spain, the launch of the brand in Greece, a new Elite collection hotel in Amsterdam, and a new hotel in Tokyo.

With these hotels onboarded, the WorldHotels portfolio aims to grow by 40-50 hotels in 2023. Ron Pohl, the President of WorldHotels said that the brand has been experiencing

robust momentum due to the addition of properties all across the world in its portfolio. The brand believes in providing authentic, unique experiences with the highest levels of amenities and service.

The Sofraga Palacio, Spain, Crafted collection features a 4-star hotel with 27 luxurious bedrooms and suites. This in historical city of Avila was a part of the extensive restoration of the original 16th-century Palacio. Further, the Luxury Suites Amsterdam, Netherlands, Elite collection is the first WorldHotels Elite collection hotel in the city.



Marriott opens doors with first hotel in Vietnam

Danang Marriott Resort & Spa opened its doors on Vietnam's central coast, offering fantastic facilities for family vacations, seafront escapes, and unforgettable events overlooking the ocean. Located on Non Nuoc Beach, close to downtown Danang, this retreat made debut late last year. People can relax and enjoy their wine with other delicacies.

The resort offers a diverse range of facilities that help to soak up the relaxing ambience. With five infinity pools, including a kid's pool, Quan Spa, a foot massage

area, beauty salon, sauna and Jacuzzi, the resort provides every facility possible.

Further, it incorporates a fitness center ideal for workouts, the kid's club will inspire youngsters, and explorers get to rent bicycles to uncover the local area, including the beautiful Marble Mountains.

Danang Marriott Resort & Spa's 200 spacious rooms are blessed with Indochine architecture featuring contemporary interiors, 24-hour room service and views of the glistening sea.



Radisson Hotel Group strengthens presence in Saudi Arabia

Radisson Hotel Group announced the opening of its eighth hotel in Riyadh. Radisson Blu Hotel, Riyadh Convention & Exhibition Center is a new addition to the portfolio in the capital of Saudi Arabia.

The hotel aims to attract leisure and business travellers looking for a sophisticated place while enjoying luxurious stay. Additional destination include massive skyscrapers, vast shopping malls, and cultural offerings, including the King Abd al-Aziz Historical Centre, and the National Museum.

Radisson Blu Hotel, Riyadh Convention & Exhibition Center features 223 rooms designed with spectacular views of Riyadh. The highlight of the hotel is

the double-volume lobby that welcomes guests from the city's fast-paced life. The design elements of the hotel are the breathtaking entrance to the decor in the rooms which impart a feeling of modern luxury.

Moreover, this hotel offers two food and beverage venues. The Al Diriyah Restaurant and Lounge features an international menu with local touches along with a variety of coffees from Camel Step, a local roastery. On the other hand, the Terrace restaurant located on the second floor is the perfect spot for people who want to enjoy a night out with gourmet and BBQ comfort foods while watching sports on big screen.

Six Senses Rome marks launch of brand's hotel in Italy

A calm retreat nestled in the heart of the Eternal City, Six Senses Rome opened its doors in the historical Palazzo Salviati Cesi Mellini on March 16, 2023. This milestone marks the completed development of the humongous façade of the adjacent San Marcello al Corso Church. It is the first sustainability project sponsored by the hotel.

Francesca Tozzi, General Manager of Six Senses Rome said that it gives the team immense joy to open the first urban property of Six Senses in Italy. From

presence of Travertine local stone to Cocciopesto on the walls, the reverential nod to Roman traditions can be seen throughout the hotel's 96 guest rooms. Some feature the classic Triclinium-style marble seating on the terraces.

Moreover, a sanctuary of wellness, Six Senses Spa Rome offers a 60-minute Roman bathing circuit which is an innovative take on the historic ancient ritual. Treatments that range signature body massages to personalised facials performed by experts give a calming sensation.

Jumeirah Bali unveils Ocean Villa near Dreamland Beach

An exclusive all-villa resort perched on the top of a wind-swept cliff in Uluwatu. Jumeirah Bali expanded its collection of luxury accommodations with the inclusion of a two-bedroom Ocean Villa. It gives views of the ocean and access to the Dreamland Beach. Surrounded by greenery on three sides, the 860-square metre luxury space helps the guests to achieve meditative stillness of Javanese-inspired interiors blended with the energy of the ocean that can be witnessed from the villa terrace. In front of the villa lies Dreamland Beach, inviting holidaymakers to enjoy its wide-open spaces and swimmer-friendly waters.



The villa's interior connects with the ocean and the sky. On the other hand, the minimalist outdoor deck lets the ocean panorama do the talking. Further, the villa offers a diverse range of exclusive amenities, including 24/7 room service, gourmet canapés, and seasonal fruits. High-speed Wi-Fi, resort activities, top-notch quality gym, space for yoga and meditation are some other features offered by the property.

Hilton signs DoubleTree by Hilton Nagpur

Hilton announced the bringing of fast-growing upscale hotel brand to The Orange City with DoubleTree by Hilton Nagpur. Signing with Infrastructure Private Limited and Abhijit Realtors, the announcement marks the entry of DoubleTree in Nagpur. The property is scheduled to open in early 2026, the hotel will provide contemporary accommodations and amenities, along with innovative food and beverage experiences to business and leisure travellers.

Navjit Ahluwalia, Senior Vice President and Country Head, India, Hilton, said that Hilton

is deeply committed to meeting the different guest requirements in a flourishing city like Nagpur and expanding the footprint in India. The brand aims to welcome more guests by providing contemporary accommodations and amenities, together with the classic DoubleTree chocolate chip cookies.

The 135-room hotel will feature the brand's modern architecture large wedding and social event spaces with state-of-the-art technology and a host of food and beverage options. DoubleTree by Hilton Nagpur will be located at the junction of Airport and Wardha Roads.

The Clarks Hotels & Resorts expands footprints in Goa & Srilanka

The Clarks Hotels & Resorts launched Villas & Suites by The Clarks in order to cater to the niche segment. They opened two villas in Sri Lanka and Goa. Both the properties are well furnished with all the modern amenities along with a breathtaking view. The group plans to achieve 10 more villas by the end of 2023.

Located in Kandy, perched atop "The Coconut Hill", Albatross Villas & Suites is in proximity to an 18-hole Golf course with beautiful views of the hills and the Victoria reservoir. Centrally located, and in proximity to the Pallekelle International Cricket Stadium, the resort is visited by many renowned international golfers, business tycoons, celebrities, and international test cricketers.

This property incorporates eight modern rooms segregated into three categories – The Tee off Suite, The Royal Albatross Suite, and Deluxe Rooms catering to guests from all across the world. The Royal Albatross Suite provides a wide-span view of the popular Hanguranketha, Hunnasgiriya, Galaha and Piduruthalagala mountain ranges.

Rahul Deb Banerjee, Vice President of The Clarks Hotels & Resorts said that the strategy is to expand nationally and internationally. With presence in almost every art of India, the aim is to open more properties internationally. The focus is to be price conscious and provide value for money to the travellers.



IHG to expand portfolio in Saudi Arabia

IHG Hotels & Resorts announced the signing of a Management Agreement with Mohammed Bin Salman Nonprofit City for Hotel Indigo. The hotel will be located next to the City's Al Mishraq Zone and perform as a living laboratory where social life and innovation will thrive, as well as creativity will blend with science and technology. It is set to open in 2025. Hotel Indigo builds on the brand's portfolio and strategy to plan various developments that align with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 tourism strategy.

The signing of Hotel Indigo in Mohammed Bin Salman Nonprofit City comes from a fact that it is the first non-profit

city of its kind, an attraction for youth, local and international institutions supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and future leaders.

Guests will be able to witness and enjoy the city's cultural experiences by using a vibrant main street as part of the city's 15-minute planning concept, with connections to cultural offerings as well as fine dining restaurants.

David Henry, Chief Executive Officer of City, said that IHG choosing the city for another hotel offering aligns with the aim to provide a range of services that align with the focus of being youth-oriented. of Culture will supervise the inclusion of Saudi artwork in the hotel.



उत्तर प्रदेश

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SUSTAINING INDIA FOR BEING PRIME SOURCE MARKET

Outbound tourism in India has come a long way. People today prefer to take a holiday abroad over travelling within the nation owing to the lovely attractions and cost-effective packages and offerings. With ever evolving progression of travel overseas, **Alhasan Aldabbagh, APAC President at Saudi Tourism Authority** outlines his thoughts on the vital role of India for Saudi Arabia elucidating the attractions and entertainment that the country has to offer for Indian travellers

By Chandni Chopra

How do you view India as a source market?

India is a key source market for Saudi and is currently making significant investments in marketing and branding campaigns that specifically target the Indian market. With immense potential, we hope to see India become a leading source market by 2030. This, in turn, will play a vital role in achieving the goal of attracting 100 million global visits by the same year.

Moreover, the increasing trade relations between Saudi and India have also led to the development of strong business and tourism ties between the two countries. This has resulted in the establishment of several travel and tour operators who provide customized travel packages and tour services for travellers visiting both countries.

We aim to attract over two million visits from Indian tourists by the end of this year, and we plan to utilize the popularity of Bollywood, football, and cricket icons to draw visitors to Saudi.

Brief us about Saudi Arabia and elucidate its major tourist attractions.

Saudi is a unique destination that is waiting to be discovered – we are constantly growing to become bigger and offer new experiences for travellers. From adventure, culture, heritage, and nature, we have so much to offer to travellers from China. Saudi is rapidly becoming the region's emerging entertainment hub, hosting large sporting events from the Diriyah E-prix and the Formula 1 in Jeddah.

For those looking for culture and heritage, Saudi is home to 10,000+ archaeological sites and 6 UNESCO World Heritage sites including Jeddah's historical district Al Balad and Hegra in AlUla.

On the outskirts of Riyadh, Diriyah's Bujairi Terrace, which opened in December, is home to 21 brands including four Michelin-starred restaurants, Bruni, Tatel, Hakkasan, and Long

Chim. Foodies will also embark on a culinary journey, with a plethora of gastronomic options from around the world. From the elegant award-winning Japanese restaurant Okku in Riyadh, coastal Jeddah seafood, and authentic Saudi cuisine at Suhail in AlUla's Old Town, the culinary scene thrives in Saudi, with a diverse range of gourmet restaurants to be found.

What are the current marketing initiatives undertaken by Saudi Arabia Tourism to woo Indian travellers?

We are happy to share the news that last month we opened 9 Tasheer VFS offices across India to increase the accessibility and connectivity for Indian travellers to enter Saudi.

For ease of access for the Indian traveller to Saudi, we also offer a 96 hrs stopover visa when Indian visitors fly via Saudia airline and avail of a 1-night complimentary hotel stay, which makes Saudi more accessible than ever. The Stopover Visa is open to all leisure, business and religious travellers travelling on SAUDIA and flynas. Furthermore, the permit will be issued in just three minutes!

In 2023, we are witnessing an increase in preference among travellers towards immersive and culturally rich experiences with extensive itineraries. Among one the critical factors driving this unique trend is the availability of direct connections to popular and exciting destinations.

How do you see Saudi Arabia's Tourism evolving in the coming years?

In line with Vision 2030, Saudi's tourism industry continues to grow and evolve, offering increasingly unique experiences. Several new developments have been launched and we are the region's emerging leisure and entertainment hub. We are particularly proud to host the world's largest dance music festival, MDL Beast, as well as

major sporting events such as the Formula One, WWE Crown Jewel, and Super Cups. In addition, we offer a range of unique experiences throughout the year, including the Saudi Seasons and the largest lifestyle festival, Riyadh Seasons.

There are a growing number of experiences where travellers can curate their tailor-made journeys including a helicopter ride over AIU accompanied by a stay in the recently opened exquisite Banyan Tree.

Saudi continues to grow through its tourism development, aligned with Vision 2030. Several developments promise even more unique and lavish experiences to come, including a soft opening this year, the Red Sea has a total of 12 hospitality brands now confirmed and signed with international hotel brands to operate resorts in the first phase of development

Can you highlight the ease of access for Indian travellers to enter the country?

With several airlines operating direct flights between the major cities of both countries, travellers can opt for quick and convenient commutes to reach their destinations.

We have worked closely with our airline partners to expand seat capacity and offer more convenient travel options. Our efforts have been successful, as we have increased our weekly seat capacity from 50,000 last year to 72,000 this year. We are proud to collaborate with eight direct carriers and ten indirect carriers to provide various options for our passengers. With this wide range of airlines, travellers can easily reach their destination from different parts of the world and connect to more remote areas within our region. Our airline partnerships also allow us to offer competitive fares and promotions, so our visitors can make the most out of their travel budget. Overall, we are committed to providing a seamless travel experience that is both comfortable and convenient for our visitors.

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AWARDED BEST LEISURE & MICE RESORT 2018 (INDIA TRAVEL AWARDS-NORTH)

Qasr Al Watan hosts senior Emirati citizens

Qasr Al Watan welcomed more than 90 senior Emirati citizens on March 20 to March 21, 2023, to experience a day at The Palace of the Nation and explore the history, traditions and journey of the UAE. This initiative falls in line with the UAE's wider commitment to collaborative social responsibility.

Further, this also helps to support and engage senior citizens in the community. The visitors got the opportunity to explore the Palace's stunning architecture, where the traditional Arabian art and Islamic geometrical patterns along with intricate designs and rare artefacts were the highlights of their visit.

The visitors were also shown the art sculptures by Mattar Bin Lahej, 'The Power of Words', reflecting a quote by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Qasr Al Watan's special visitors were introduced to a glimpse of the UAE's future by the tour guides highlighting their contribution towards the country's rich legacy. The tour also gave them an insight into the UAE's system of governance and the multiple open exhibits showcasing the nation's founding fathers.

Further, the seniors socialised with each other over lunch at Al Fowala followed by a leisure walk in the Palace Gardens where they got a chance to enjoy the weather with a stunning fountain view and the views of Abu Dhabi Skyline.



Vietnam government to ease visa requirements

Vietnam's government is planning to ease the visa requirements with the aim to attract foreign tourists. The country faces difficulty in attracting international travellers due to the strict visa policies imposed during the pandemic. These strict measures led to less than 3.7 million foreign visitors in 2020, which is a decline compared to the 18 million recorded in 2019.

Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh asked his cabinet to review the policies regarding immigration procedures, like increasing the duration of stays for foreign tourists with reasonable fees, offering more visa waivers, and expanding the country's e-visa program.

Further, the current rules regarding the visa policies include offering e-visas to 80 nations, visitors from nine ASEAN countries can stay visa-free for a period of 30 days, and visa waivers to visitors from 13 nations with 11 in Europe and two in Asia where people can stay in the country for 15 days.

The proposal discussed in the meeting includes a relaxed visa policy to attract international tourists and an increase in the length of the stay to 45 days. Vietnam plans to attract eight million foreign tourists in 2023. This target can be achieved if the visa policies are relaxed because the tourists will have an easier time getting visas and exploring the country's beauty.



China to reopen borders to tourists since closure in 2020

China said that it will reopen its borders to foreign tourists for the first time in three years since the COVID-19 pandemic. This was done by restoring the issuance of all types of visas from March 15, 2023.

The removal of this cross-border control measure imposed for protection against COVID-19 comes after victory over the surge in the virus as said by the authorities. Further, the boost to the tourism sector will aid in establishing a US\$17 trillion

economy that experienced one of its slowest rates of growth.

Certain locations like the southern tourist island of Hainan in China required no visas before the pandemic. Those will revert to visa-free entry.

Moreover, foreigners holding visas issued before Mar 28, 2020, and within their validity dates will be able to enter China. The policy will also allow for the resumption of visa-free travel for tourists arriving on cruise ships to Shanghai.

Canada to extend Canada-Ukraine authorisation for emergency travel

The Government of Canada will extend the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) for the people of Ukraine until July 15, 2023. Current CUAET holders could travel to Canada until March 31, 2024, and the people present in Canada can extend or adjust their temporary status, with no fees.

Ukrainians and their family members will still get access to settlement services, including one-time tax-free financial support and access to emergency accommodation for up to two weeks as required after arrival in Canada.

Moreover, the people of Ukraine get the option to extend their visitor status, study and work



permit. Additionally, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) give priority processing for all CUAET applications. When submitting biometrics, CUAET participants are not required to pay fees.

The federal government offers CUAET participants a one-time non-taxable benefit of \$3,000 each per adult as well as an extra \$1,500 for each child under 17.



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Germany set to launch the countrywide transport ticket

Germany is set to launch its nationwide transport ticket starting in May 2023. It would allow people to commute on its regional rail, trams, metro, and buses for EUR 49 (INR 4,345) a month. The pass is a follow-up to the European country's popular EUR 9 (INR 798) transport ticket. The previous pass was launched in 2022 and sold about 50 million passes.

The new pass got a green light in the German Bundestag. It is aimed at getting travellers to choose greener forms of commute. The pass is called a Deutschland ticket. Unlike its predecessor, which lasted three months, this ticket will be a permanent feature. The annual cost of the scheme is about EUR 3 billion (INR 26,587 crore). It will be jointly funded by the state and federal governments.

Also, the pass would be beneficial for students at German universities. They can have access to the Deutschland ticket by paying an upgrade from their subsidised semester ticket. With a subscription model, the transport ticket in Germany will be available in a digital form that can be cancelled before the 10th of each month.



Saudi Arabia puts up award winning show in ITB Berlin

Saudi Arabia witnessed unprecedented success at the world's leading travel trade show, ITB Berlin, with its award-winning stand and signing of strategic partnership agreements with some of the world's leading industry players.

Celebrating the incredible success of its inaugural participation, Saudi unlocked new opportunities for growth with global and European partners.

The Saudi stand was recognized for its world-class presence, taking home the awards for both 'best exhibitor' for Best of the Best with criteria focused on attractiveness, authenticity and benefits for trade visitors and 'best exhibitor' for the Near/Middle East for its five senses experience, metaverse and sustainable catering.

Saudi achieved incredible commercial engagement with partners focused on the European and German markets, signing 11 strategic partnership agreements with some of the world's largest travel companies and top vertically integrated German operators including Expedia, FTI, DER Touristik, Hotel Beds and others.

As part of Saudi's participation, Saudi Tourism Minister Ahmed Al-Khateeb met major travel trade entities such as TUI, and FTI and welcomed Ministers, Presidents, CEOs and global tourism leaders from the UNWTO and WTTC to the Saudi stand.



Discover Qatar launches tours to view whale sharks

Discover Qatar announced that the second edition of its 'Whale Sharks in Qatar' tours will begin on May 18 and run until the end of August.

Daily tours and private charters can be booked exclusively through the Discover Qatar and Qatar Airways Holidays online platforms.

The once-in-a-lifetime experience departs every Thursday to Sunday for eight hours on a 40-seater catamaran and starts from USD 249 per person. Nature enthusiasts can also avail of private charters on a luxury yacht with a capacity of up to 16 guests. Both tours include an expert guide, with Wi-Fi,

refreshments, and breakfast and lunch provided.

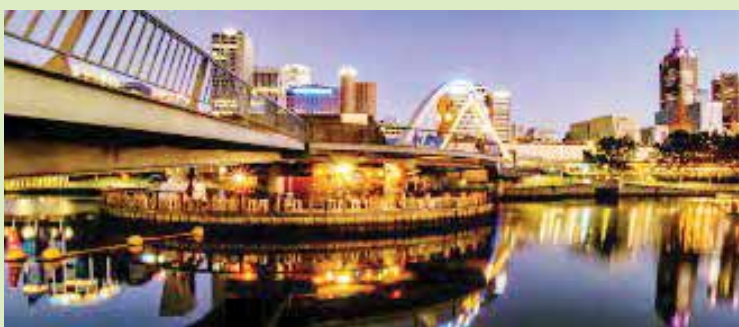
Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Akbar Al Baker said, "Our second edition of the exclusive 'Whale Sharks in Qatar' tours, offered through Discover Qatar, presents an unmissable opportunity for nature lovers to witness and interact with the grand and gentle creatures of the sea. We are proud to call Qatar a home to one of the largest congregations of Whale Sharks in the world, and remain committed to being the leading destination to connect people from all over the world with such fascinating marine life."

Abu Dhabi gears up to launch Ramadan campaign

Abu Dhabi Retail has been innovating to create the most majestic experiences and incredible surprises with its citywide Layali Ramadan campaign from March 17 to April 30, 2023.

Residents and tourists could expect access to limited-edition products and new-to-the-region experiences highlighting the best of the beauty, retail, and culinary moments. Boasting the most exciting range of things to do in the city, this Ramadan in Abu Dhabi have been unlike any other.

Abu Dhabi Retail will be partnered exclusively with globally recognised brands, like Fendi, Charlotte Tilbury, and many more, to offer promotions that are limited to the city. With the aim to enable the industry, and engage with the community, Abu Dhabi Retail brought a modern twist to the traditional celebrations associated with this holy month. Activating over 25 malls, and more than 3,500 stores citywide, guests got unique chances to partake in a series of exciting events, and some of the most incredible offers in the UAE.



Melbourne Convention Bureau debuts in India

The Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) is looking forward to establishing a connection in India with corporate entities and travel trade partners. MCB, the agency responsible to secure business events for Melbourne and regional Victoria, is paying a visit to the cities of Mumbai, Bengaluru, and New Delhi in order to meet with tour operators, OTAs and corporate entities. This will help understand their requirements and meet the needs of their India clients.

Further, the agency representing MCB in India is Beautiful Planet. Joanna Garrie, Director Corporate Meetings, and Incentives, MCB, said that the company witnessed organic growth from India and

an increase in demand for incentives travel to Melbourne.

MCB is currently focusing on the three metro cities due to their existing connectivity to Melbourne. The company will be offering insight about their incentive programme to the corporate and trade sector.

Garrie added that there's an incentive programme for corporates to offset the cost of hosting 150 (or above) pax for a minimum stay of three nights. This will aid in bringing down the cost of the tour.

Moreover, FAM trips for corporate and trade partners will be organised along with participation in ATE (Australian Tourism Exchange) with the aim to meet Indian operators hosting large groups.

STB brings leaders together discussing MICE segments

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) brought some of the leading minds together in the lifestyle and tourism industries, to share their opinions on the rapidly-changing market at its 'Cruise & MICE Conclaves' thought-leadership conferences in Mumbai.

With more than 250 attendees from the business world came together to get cutting-edge insights through a panel discussion, keynote address and product sharing sessions. It helped them learn more about harnessing data to effectively understand and engage young Indian consumers, power of technology in revolutionising MICE travel, and reimagining cruise travel to tap into diverse consumer segments.

The forums featured a storied line-up of industry experts leading the change across the hospitality and tourism including Sukumar Verma, Managing Director, Informa Markets Singapore; Sneha Choksi, Senior Business Development Associate, Tirun Travel Marketing; and Diksha Batra, Assistant Vice President, Resorts World Cruises.

Moreover, the sessions focused on the changing consumer preferences which prompted the industry to respond and reimagine tourism experiences to stay ahead and keep up with trends. Experts in the cruise industry highlighted the importance of creating experiences that align with the preferences of young travellers, deploying innovation and technology in the process.

New Zealand Tourism celebrates its 20 year anniversary

New Zealand Tourism Board celebrated its 20th year anniversary in India through frontline networking events and training workshops in Delhi and Mumbai. The attendees comprised of the travel trade fraternity, airline partners, media and other prominent stakeholders.

A 20-member delegation participated in the frontline training with 200 travel sellers across Delhi and Mumbai. The delegation included a mix of Regional Tourism Organisations, hotels, attractions, airports and airlines from New Zealand with a focus to connect with Indian travel trade. Also, the delegation shared the latest destination information and diverse experiences in New Zealand



to attract Indian travellers as India approaches its peak travel season which coincides with New Zealand's autumn and winter.

Angela Blair, GM International, Tourism New Zealand, said that with India being one of their priority markets, it's a delight to celebrate 20 years of Tourism New Zealand. This celebration was also a way to thank the trade partners for their contribution.

Azerbaijan drops requirement of Covid Passport for incoming travellers

From March 28, 2023, foreign citizens would no longer be required to present Covid passport for entry into Azerbaijan. The decision was made in recognition of the declining number of Covid-19 cases, and is expected to make travel easier for those wishing to visit Azerbaijan.

Travellers to Azerbaijan are still advised to follow all recommended health guidelines for their own safety. The government also encourages visitors to get vaccinated before traveling, but this is no longer a requirement for entry.

Azerbaijan has been successful in managing the Covid-19 pandemic, with a low number of cases and a high vaccination rate. This decision to no longer require Covid passports is a positive step forward for Azerbaijan's tourism industry. Azerbaijan has been investing heavily in its tourism industry in recent years, with the goal of becoming a leading travel destination in the region. The needs of today's travellers are met by the availability of a wide range of modern amenities, such as world-class hotels, restaurants, and shopping centres.

Saudi Arabia

THE DWELLING OF TWO HOLY MOSQUES



Saudi Arabia is popularly known for its diverse landscape, rich history, vibrant heritage, delectable cuisines, grand cultural events and vast deserts, which makes it worth adding to every traveller's bucket list. Top tourist places to visit in Saudi Arabia present a perfect amalgamation of the old and new. As a result, this Middle East country attracts a large number of visitors annually, be it pilgrims, photography enthusiasts, nature aficionados history lovers as well as adventure freaks. From the azure blue waters of the Red Sea and majestic forts to soul-stirring mosques to wonderful museums, Saudi Arabia is home to an innumerable range of attractive tourist spots

By Chandni Chopra

Mecca

The holy city of Mecca is considered to be the spiritual center of Islam because it was where the Prophet Mohammed is said to have received his first revelations in the early 7th century. It's a place where Muslims from all over the world come together every year at Hajj, which lasts for nearly two weeks. Saudi Arabia tourist attractions have one major destination people can't get enough of Mecca. For Muslims all over the world, Mecca is the centre of Muslim life and home to both Islam's holiest mosque and a variety of fascinating sights within its walls. It's considered one of the three holy cities in Islam.



King Fahd's Fountain

The fountain was donated to the city of Jeddah by King Fahd and hence the name. It is a Guinness Book of World Records holder as the largest fountain in the world and is visible throughout the vicinity of Jeddah. The fountain is of significance in the Arabic world as it is built in the shape of a makhbara or an incense burner which holds special importance in the religious world of Islam. The fountain is lit by 500 high-light LEDs.



Riyadh

Riyadh is the capital of Saudi Arabia, nestled in the heart of the Arabian Desert surrounded by rocky mountains and a vast expanse of barren deserts. Riyadh is the only modern city in Saudi Arabia. This city is one of those places that will never cease to inspire you with beauty and admiration for its culture alone. It is an important centre for oil production, refining and petrochemical industries, but it also contains many wonderful green spaces, expansive parks, and beautiful gardens. The Al Balad District is probably the most renowned part of Riyadh district and is also home to some of the most popular malls in Riyadh.



Medina

Medina is one of the places to visit in Saudi Arabia that is popular for a mosque is considered to be one of the holiest sites in Islam. Medina is located on the outskirts of big cities like Riyadh and Jeddah. The city has a long history dating back to the time when Prophet Mohammed migrated there from Mecca near 622 CE. Medina is one of Islam's holiest cities and the birthplace of Islam which was also once nicknamed the "City of Light." The city is a historical treasure trove of antiquities.



Dammam Corniche

The Dammam Corniche is a famous recreational destination in Saudi Arabia and is undoubtedly the top attraction in the city. People often come to the corniche in the summer to enjoy the cool breeze as temperatures can get very high in the area. In addition, the sea breeze can get cold in the winter months making it a perfect place for evening bonfires. The area has many cafes, food trucks, bookstores, carnival rides, manicured gardens, and a family-friendly atmosphere. Families can be seen enjoying an evening walk or simply watching seagulls dive into the blue waters of the Persian Gulf while enjoying a cup of Arabic coffee.



Al Shallal Theme Park

Al Shallal Theme Park, the largest theme park in the Middle East, is considered one of the best tourist attractions in Saudi Arabia. The park is located on the west coast of Saudi Arabia, near Al-Khobar city. It has a total area of 54000 square meters and houses more than 40 attractions, including roller coasters and water rides. In addition to tourists from across the globe, it also attracts many Saudis for a day out.

Jeddah

Jeddah is a coastal city in the Hijaz region of Saudi Arabia, located on the coast of the Red Sea. It has been historically one of the country's cultural and commercial hubs. The city is notable for being one of three major seaports in the Persian Gulf region. It is an oasis zone surrounded by desert constantly seeking water to sustain its growth. It is also home to many wonders that are worth visiting with kids or even by yourself. One can ride the Aerial Tramway to enjoy 360-degree views of Jeddah and visit the Wadi Jana Forest Park with its natural springs.



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VietJet celebrates Holi with attractive promotional offers for Indian travellers

VietJet announced a special promotional offer for Indian travellers celebrating Holi. Starting at just INR 6K, passengers travelling between September 6 to December 9, 2023, could avail of this special offering during the Holi festival window of March 3 to March 9, 2023. The offers were available on the official website of Vietjet.

Operating direct routes from Mumbai, New Delhi and Ahmedabad to Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi and Da Nang in Vietnam, VietJet expanded its current portfolio, to include Melbourne and Sydney within their operating routes. Additionally, passengers can also travel via VietJet to Bali, Thailand, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

VietJet's recent expansion of its flight network is enabling the carrier to better connect and serve the rise in demand for both leisure and business travel. Contributing to economic and trade development between the two countries, VietJet caters to the needs of its Indian customers on priority. Offering special inflight meals with a variety of dishes, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, these are served by a dedicated and friendly cabin crew as well as other services.

New Air Corridors to boost Israel's Airline Industry

The recent decision by Saudi Arabia and Oman to allow Israeli civilian overflights is a significant regional development that is already having a positive impact on the Israeli airline industry. Flights from Israel to the Far East will be much shorter as a result of the new air corridor, allowing airlines to offer more direct and efficient routes.

El Al's decision to fly over Saudi Arabia and Oman en route to Thailand is a historic moment for the Israeli national carrier, cutting the flight time from Tel Aviv to Bangkok from about ten and a half hours to just eight.

El Al is expected to re-launch its route to India, which were closed during the pandemic.

Israir has also announced its interest in opening a route of just five hours of flight time to India.

Overall, the new air corridor over Saudi Arabia and Oman is a boon to the Israeli airline industry, and it is expected to spur growth and innovation in the region's aviation sector. The two-and-a-half-hour reduction in flight times from Israel to the Far East will also shorten flights on Israeli carriers to India, Sri Lanka, and Australia, among other destinations. This will certainly increase tourism and business travel to and from Israel.

Malaysia Airlines signs 5-year deal with IBS Software

Malaysia Airlines Berhad (MAB) signs a five-year deal to migrate its crew management systems to IBS Software's cloud-based platform, iFlight Crew, to further automate and upgrade its aviation operations with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning benefits.

IBS Software has a longstanding partnership of over 10 years with MAB and will continue to support the company's journey revolutionising its flight operations with solutions including iFlight Crew Tracking, Manpower Planning, AD OPT Pairing and Rostering Optimiser. These functions aim to improve employee productivity in automating situational awareness and decision-making, and facilitate seamless data flow between ops and crew tracking functions, to significantly improve disruption recovery.

Ahmad Luqman Mohd Azmi, Chief Executive Officer of Airlines at Malaysia Aviation Group says: "Malaysia Airlines and IBS Software have a long history of working together since 2009. Having experienced their commitment to digital transformation to optimise operations for over ten years, we're looking forward to continuing this journey to enhance crew wellbeing, boost cost-savings and upgrade our crew management systems."

Jitendra Sindhwani, President and Head of Global Sales & Marketing, at IBS Software says: "Crew planning and optimisation are central to any airline's operations, cost management, and customer service delivery. Malaysia Airlines is a valued partner, and we are thrilled to work together to take their crew management solutions and strategies to new heights."



Vistara starts flight between Mumbai and Mauritius

Vistara on March 26, 2023 started direct, 5x weekly flights between Mumbai and Mauritius, its officials said.

Mauritius is the 15th international destination, and the first in Africa, that Vistara has added to its growing network. The airline has deployed its recently inducted A321LR aircraft with a three-class configuration, as it becomes the only carrier to offer customers the choice of Premium Economy cabin in addition to Business and Economy Class, on this route.

Vinod Kannan, chief executive officer, Vistara, said, "We are delighted to take India's finest airline to Africa, as we launch operations to Mauritius. The long-standing relations and strong trade ties between the two countries, in addition to the growing tourism potential of the destination, make it a perfect fit in our network. We are confident that customers will appreciate having the option of experiencing Vistara's product and services on this sector."

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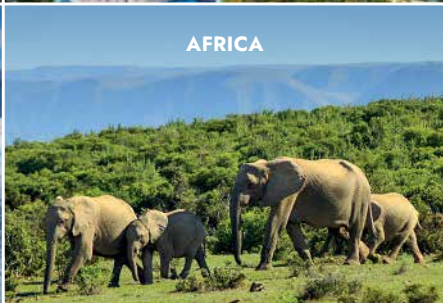
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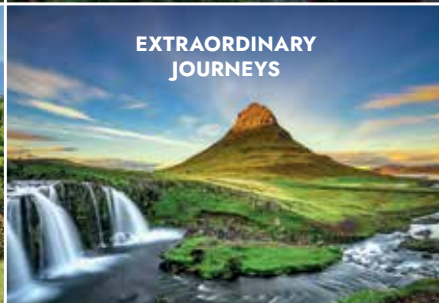
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ITA Airways enhances connections from Brazil - Italy

ITA Airways increased its São Paulo - Rome Fiumicino direct flight in order to meet the expected increase in demand. The airlines plans to add four weekly frequencies to its daily connections between Italy and Brazil, starting from August 2023.

The Airways' frequencies from São Paulo will be operated with the Airbus A330. It will depart on Monday, Tuesday Thursday, and Sunday at 7:00 pm and land at Rome Fiumicino at 11:45 am, local time. The new flights from Rome will operate departing at 9:40 am and arriving in São Paulo at 5:00 pm, on Monday, Tuesday Thursday, and Sunday.

Further, the evidence of the company's strong investment in the Brazilian market reflects on

the introduction of additional frequencies in the direct connection from São Paulo to Rome Fiumicino. It will allow ITA Airways to strengthen its expansion in South America. From being a destination for Italian travellers to having the largest population of Italian origin, it's a destination accessible via Rome.

In order to support the increase in flight schedules between Italy and Brazil and reinforce awareness of the brand, ITA Airways plans to launch a multi-channel advertising campaign that will run in São Paulo. The campaign will be displayed on digital billboards in subway stations and shopping malls as well as online.



AirAsia integrates the new pilot flight duty logbook

AirAsia India collaborated with the aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to integrate the pilot's flight duty logbook from its crew management system to the eGCA platform. The eGCA platform provides connectivity and end-to-end solutions with regional offices to improve accountability and transparency across all functions of DGCA.

This initiative is a part of DGCA's digitisation program. It will help eliminate the need for pilots to

hand-fill their flight and simulator duties, carried out during their careers in physical logbooks. Conventionally, as per the MOCA's Aircraft Rule, 1937 (67A), pilots were required to update their pilot logbooks in physical logbooks.

However, with the integration of eGCA's logbook API (Application Program Interface), the whole process will now be easy, digitised, user-friendly, and sustainable. Also, the eGCA platform provides 298 services.



Mumbai International Airport witnesses air traffic

Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) witnessed soaring demand for air traffic. CSMIA surpassed the pre-covid passenger mark, indicating a strong demand for air travel through Mumbai. The rise in passenger volume is due to the growing demand for leisure travel as other segments of travel with 75% domestic passenger traffic.

CSMIA catered to around 4.5 million passengers in January. With the same enthusiasm and continuous momentum, CSMIA hosted over 4 million passengers across 24,292 flights. This number is 57% higher when compared to February 2022 flight movements. As compared to the overall passenger movement, the

airport witnessed approx. 25% international passenger and 75% domestic passenger traffic.

Moreover, with 3.9 million passenger traffic recorded in Feb 2020, the airport achieved a 2% growth over the levels before COVID. The civil aviation ministry commented that Indian Aviation reaches new heights as domestic aviation operations witness an increase with the highest ever post-Covid passenger movement.

The increase in air passenger movement is a positive sign implying the nation's trust and rising confidence in the safety standards as well as improved customer experience by CSMIA and the aviation industry.

Jazeera Airways operated an all-female crew flight on Women's Day

To commemorate International Women's Day 2023, Jazeera Airways operated the first flight with an all-female deck and cabin crew of eight members including the co-pilot and pilot.

The A320neo carrying 172 passengers flew from Kuwait to Riyadh. This sets an important example of motivating diversity, women empowerment, and gender parity in a predominantly male-oriented industry.

Further, this initiative by Jazeera Airways also contributes to the #EmbraceEquity motto of International Women's

Day this year. Rohit Ramachandran, CEO of Jazeera Airways, said that Jazeera believes in giving equality and valuing the perspectives of its employees because that creates a stronger, more innovative, and successful organisation.

The CEO mentioned that the year started with the launching of two new destinations followed by this initiative on Women's Day. He mentioned that though an all-female crew as a part of Women's Day was a historic moment, it was another day at work for these hard-working women.

Banyan Tree Group engages with the Travel Trade Fraternity organising a roadshow in Delhi



Singapore Changi Airport bagged World's Best Airport Award

Singapore Changi Airport voted as the World's Best Airport at the Skytrax World Airport Awards. This is the 12th time Changi Airport bagged this prestigious accolade. In addition to the World's Best Airport Award, Singapore Changi Airport garnered awards for the Best Airport for Leisure Amenities, World's Best Airport Dining, and Best Airport in Asia.

The Skytrax World Airport Awards reflect the views of airport customers. Every year, respondents of more than 60 nationalities take

part in a global customer satisfaction survey to assess customer service and facilities across more than 550 airports. The World Airport Awards are independent of airport input and funded by Skytrax.

Currently, Changi Airport is linked to 16 Indian cities, including major hubs such as Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi and Hyderabad, with 7 airlines (Air India Express, IndiGo, Air India, DrukAir, Scoot, Vistara and Singapore Airlines) providing about 241 weekly services.



IndiGo expands 6E network to 103 destinations

IndiGo commenced direct flights from Nashik making it the 7th domestic and 103rd overall destination in the 6E network. The airline operated the first direct flights between Nashik-Ahmedabad, Nashik-Goa, and Nashik-Nagpur. Nashik is the 7th destination on the 6E network in Maharashtra. It will increase intra-state and inter-state accessibility, while promoting tourism, trade, and mobility through these connections.

Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales at IndiGo said that this launch of operations from Nashik connects India's golden

triangle to a host of domestic and international locations through the 6E network. The company aims to promote commerce, tourism, and boost economic growth in the region by enhancing accessibility to Nashik famous for its rich history.

He further added that inclusion of these direct flights in our summer schedule will offer choices to tourists visiting India's wine capital, Nashik, and professionals travelling to the prominent industrial hub for automobile companies. IndiGo believes in providing courteous, on-time, hassle-free, and cost-effective travel experiences.

Air India announces partnership with Salesforce

Air India announced a partnership with Salesforce on March 14, 2023 to transform its customer service. The airline will be able to improve the customer experience at all important touch points, including on the ground, online, and in the air, through the partnership.

By working with Salesforce, it would get artificial intelligence-assisted tools and consistent data platform. With the implementation of Salesforce technology, the airline will be able to track customer interactions across its mobile app, website, contact centre, social media, chatbot, email, and other channels, providing a single point of contact for both customer issues.

Additionally, it will provide Air India's customer care staff and automated systems the capacity to respond proactively to problems as well as follow them through to resolution with the help of artificial intelligence technologies. The airline would get a unified customer data platform that enables Air India to deeply understand its consumer base.

As a part of its transition plan, Air India aims to enhance its domestic market share from 8-9% to at least 30% over the next five years, while also growing its operations internationally. It further placed a historic order for 470 aircraft, with the deal being valued at USD 70 billion on list price.



flydubai touches down in Milan Bergamo

flydubai, the Dubai-based airline, touched down in Milan Bergamo Airport (BGY) to a water cannon salute and warm welcome by the airport officials. This marks the beginning of flydubai's five times weekly operations in the city, growing its network in Italy to four points including Naples, Catania, and Pisa.

Emirates will codeshare on these routes and the flights will operate from Terminal 3 at Dubai International Airport (DXB). Hence, offering travellers seamless connections through Dubai's international aviation hub.

Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai,

said, "We are pleased to see our network in Italy grow to four points since our first entry to the market in 2018 with the start of flights to Catania. There is a large demand for travel from Dubai and the region and our flights to Milan-Bergamo, as well as the other points in Italy, will give passengers the opportunity to enjoy convenient direct operations to some of Italy's most attractive regions."

Emilio Bellingardi, Managing Director of SACBO, said, "The start of flydubai's operations is of great importance as it further expands Milan Bergamo Airport's network and offers direct access to Dubai International Airport."

One Above's First Fam Trip to Georgia

One Above organised its first FAM trip to Georgia for trade partners from Mumbai. The idea was to showcase Georgia, besides being one of the most economical European countries it has many aspects that an Indian Traveller will enjoy. Georgia has a welcoming culture,

excellent transportation options, incredible mountains, seaside resorts, churches, historical sites, wineries and quaint cafés. The agents covered Tbilisi, Kazbegi tour, Mtskheta, and Tsinandali in their itinerary and were overwhelmed by Georgian hospitality.



Accor exhibits successfully in Mumbai and Delhi

An excellent Accor Showcase was held in Mumbai & Delhi in early March 2023. The Mumbai event was on March 1, 2023 at Novotel Mumbai, Juhu Beach and Delhi was on March 3, 2023, at Pullman New Delhi, Aerocity. 0 Accor offers a comprehensive accommodation solution with its 42 well-established brands worldwide, from economy to Uber luxury and sfrom India to over 110 countries across the globe, Accor brands are well-known for their world-class hospitality. There were more than 65 international

and domestic hotels to thank the Indian clients for their support in 2022. Some of the prominent destinations that were present were Switzerland, Egypt, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Maldives, Mauritius, Thailand, Singapore, Bahrain, Vietnam and Indonesia. India hotels from almost all the destinations were present at the show.

Both events were attended by more than 1000 key clients participation including day and evening events in Delhi and Mumbai. The clients are from all the key segments like

leisure, MICE, wedding planners, corporates, tourism boards, honeymoon organisers and more.. The feedback from the clients and the participating hotels was really exciting. Accor has showcased its comprehensive F&B strength and has offered finger-licking food with many Indian and International cuisines.

The event was also participated by almost all the key Airlines who have co-sponsored over 20 returns tickets to the clients including domestic and International sectors.





A 'treasury' of adventure activities: Gandhisagar Floating Festival

The **Gandhi Sagar Dam**, one of the four major dams which are built around the famous Chambal River hosts the newly emerged, and Asia's first floating festival, the Gandhisagar floating festival. It houses one of the most undiscovered Wild Life Sanctuaries of Central India, the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary. The festival commenced during February with the tent city being continued till the end of April and the adventure activities till the end of July.

For adventure lovers, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has introduced Asia's first ever floating festival in Mandsaur. An innovative floating festival that will feature land, air, and water-based adventure activities.

The Floating Festival is an excellent getaway for nature enthusiasts allowing them to enjoy and relax from the hustle-bustle of the city life. The festival includes a floating market, floating stage, boat spa, boat safari and live music. Many mind-boggling adventure activities will be organized alongside the Gandhi Sagar reservoir. Gandhi Sagar showcases a very prominent wildlife sanctuary situated on the northern boundary of Mandsaur and Neemuch in Madhya Pradesh.

Further, the wildlife sanctuary is spread over an area of more than 300 square kilometres adjoining Rajasthan. Chambal River passes through the sanctuary dividing it into two parts: eastern part is in the Mandsaur district and the western part, which is in the Neemuch district.

The sanctuary is open to visit throughout the year except monsoon months, and offers a varied terrain of wooded hills – the forest being dry, mixed and deciduous- and flat grasslands around Gandhi Sagar dam submergence; it offers abundant opportunities of sighting a variety of wildlife.

Moreover, the diverse tree species found in the Sanctuary are Kardhai, Salai, Dhawda, Khair, Tendu, Palash etc. The predominant species of animals which inhabit the sanctuary are the deer, of which the most easily sighted are the chinkara or Indian Gazelle, Nilgai and Sambar. In

addition, the Indian leopard, Langur, Indian wild dog, Peacock, Otter, and Mugger crocodile are omnipresent in the forests of central India.

The MP Tourism Board also aims to promote and establish new tourist destination by strategically planning fairs and festivals around a potential location and work on other factors that influence tourist footfall. After the massive success of Jal Mahotsav (Hanuwantiya), Mandu Utsav and Gandhisagar floating festival at Mandsaur, MP Tourism is set to lease out other locations for the conduction of adventure and recreational activities which include Bargi, Chanderi, and Orchha.





ON THE MOVE



NILESH NAIK

APPOINTED AT: DoubleTree Hilton Goa
PROMOTED TO: Associate Director of Sales
 DoubleTree by Hilton Goa-Panaji welcomed Nilesh Naik as an Associate Director of Sales. Nilesh brings over 8+ years of experience in the hospitality industry. Previously, his work experience includes working in various sales and marketing roles in prominent hotels across India. He exhibits great expertise for establishing and retaining long-term relationships with consumers. Nilesh will play a prominent role in driving the hotel's sales and marketing initiatives as well as ensuring consumer satisfaction.



MEGHNA TRIVEDY

APPOINTED AT : Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru
PROMOTED TO: Director of PR & Communications
 Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru announced the appointment of Meghna Trivedy as the Director of PR & Communications. She will be responsible for leading the team and deriving financial gains through innovative branding strategies and leveraging corporate potential. Meghna believes that effective communication helps to build strong connections personally and professionally. Previously, she has worked with The Park, The Leela, Movenpick, and Marriott with an experience of around 14 years.



VIJAY KRISHNAN

APPOINTED AT: Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels
PROMOTED TO: Vice President of Operations for South India
 Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels appointed Vijay Krishnan as the Vice President of Operations for South India. Krishnan has worked for brands such as The Oberoi (Trident), Hyatt International (Alila), The Starwood Hotels (Le Meridien & Design hotels), A Relais and Chateaux Golf Hotel (Windsor Golf Hotel & Country Club). With an experience of 25 years, he is known for his innovative thinking and expertise in strategising growth blueprints.



ABHISHEK MUKHERJEE

APPOINTED AT: Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata
PROMOTED TO: Director of Sales
 Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata appointed Abhishek Mukherjee as Director of Sales. Mukherjee brings with him vast knowledge and in-depth understanding of the hospitality sales and marketing. He has a vast experience of 13 years, and will be in charge of overseeing and providing guidance to the hotel's sales team in engaging with other teams to implement successful strategies. Mukherjee is a goal-oriented individual with the ability to create a collaborative work environment.



POONAM NATASHA

APPOINTED AT: The Den Bengaluru
PROMOTED TO: Marketing & Communication Manager
 The Den Bengaluru appointed Poonam Natasha as the Marketing & Communication Manager. With a keen eye for developing and executing successful marketing campaigns, she can manage multiple projects simultaneously. Her extensive background adds on to her expertise in product and brand management. Poonam completed her MBA in Global Fashion Media from the International Fashion Academy (IFA Paris) with a Diploma in Fashion Designing.



RAAJAN ANAND

APPOINTED AT: Mukut Hotels & Resorts
PROMOTED TO: Head of Sales & Marketing
 Raajan Anand joined as Marketing & Sales Head, Pan India at Mukut Hotels and Resorts, Delhi. Mukut Hotels has two resorts, Winsome Resorts Corbett & Sitara International Manali. Previously, he worked with Infinity Wildlife Resorts. With an experience of more than 25 years in hospitality business, he incorporates the ability of vast trade network & skills. Raajan would be responsible for adding more avenues, building alliances & partnerships, branding, expansion, and revenue management.



RAJ K THAKUR

APPOINTED AT: Ramada by Wyndham
PROMOTED TO: General Manager
 The Ramada by Wyndham at Railway Road, Katra announced the appointment of Raj K Thakur as the General Manager for the hotel. Thakur will be responsible for manpower, hotel operations, sales, consumer satisfaction, budgeting, employee's recruitment, training, loyalty programme and audit. He previously served as Hotel Group at Fortune Inn Riviera based in Jammu, J&K, General Manager for Fortune Park Hotel P Ltd member ITC's, responsible for operations including F&B supervision, and employees' recruitment.



SHIBANI MALHOTRA

APPOINTED AT: Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark
PROMOTED TO: General Manager
 Shibani Malhotra appointed as the General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark. With over 20 years of experience with Marriott International, Shibani held different leadership positions within the company. She started as a prominent member of the pre-opening team with Renaissance Hotel & Convention Centre and Marriott Executive Apartments in Mumbai. Further, Shibani opened the first conversion hotel for Marriott in India in 2006.



SAI KUMAR P

APPOINTED AT: Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach & The Bheemili Resort
PROMOTED TO: Talent & Culture Manager
 The Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach and The Bheemili Resort managed by Accor hotel appointed Sai Kumar P as Talent & Culture Manager. He brings with him an extensive range of experience and knowledge with an experience of 6 years in the industry. Sai Kumar will be responsible for overseeing the overall functions of human resources. He will work with the cluster general manager and the team to ensure that the hotel retains passionate people.



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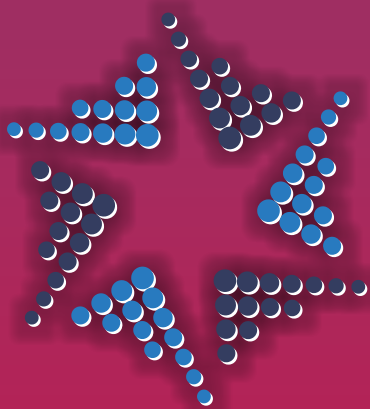
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