

# TRAVEL turtle

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## Indonesia

A trip down the Island Country

✦ CONFESSIONS OF A  
TRAVELLING SHOPAHOLIC

✦ UTTARAKHAND:  
ON THE PATH TO ESCALATE  
TOURISM

✦ AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
WITH SHRI AJAY BHATT



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### EXCURSIONS FROM HANUWANTIYA







# Editor's Letter

**e**very issue we create is a work of art and there's nothing more rewarding for us when our readers react. It means they care, it means they feel a part of what we do, it means they are connected with us through our stories. Nothing gives me more pleasure than breaking this news to our readers that Travel Turtle won the award for the Best Travel Publication and Best Digital Travel Media at 36th IATO Annual Convention at The Leela Gandhinagar, Gujarat. In a short span of its existence, we are happy to see the extent of acceptance the industry has extended to us. Receiving an award is always special but more than the award, that feeling of ownership among the readers is what Travel Turtle has tried to achieve, which is reflected through their constant follow-ups for our new issue and their feedback on different stories. And, in the face of today's challenges, we continue to strive to deliver what you need in each and every issue, including this, our January 2022 issue.

The first issue of 2022 is all about our industry, its readers, indulging in an abundance of hope as we have been yet again hit by the 3rd pandemic wave, various industry leaders came together to motivate their industry members. After all, it's all about hope and determination in the face of adversity. MoT has been working tirelessly for the sector in these adversities, in an exclusive interview with Travel Turtle; Hon'ble Minister of State for Tourism, Ajay Bhatt tells that he has been standing like a rock with the sector.

Nestled between the Rhine and the foothills of the Taunus Mountains, Wiesbaden is a 'green oasis', so we went on to unravel the mysteries of Wiesbaden. Along with that, we explored the old world charms in Indonesia.

As we have always supported the ardent need of sustainability, in this issue we did some research on Uttarakhand's vibrant tourism policy, the developing infrastructure and its impact on 'reverse migration'.

We sincerely trust that you will have as much pleasure reading this edition of Travel Turtle as we enjoyed compiling this for you, our dear readers. Do share your feedback at [bharti@travelturtle.world](mailto:bharti@travelturtle.world).

With this first issue of 2022 we wish you a very Happy New Year.  
Happy Reading!

**Bharti Sharma**  
Editor

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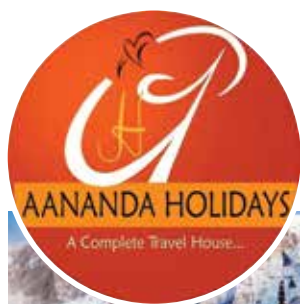
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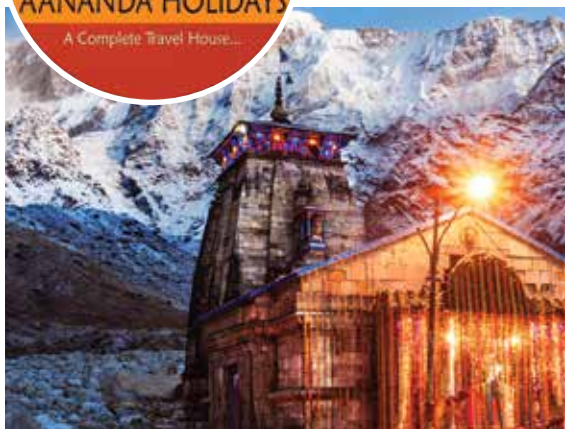
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Printed and Published by: Harish Chandra on behalf of Trouville Media & Communications Private Limited; Printed at Shree Ram Print O Pack, D 10/5 (Basement) Okhla Industrial Area Phase II, New Delhi 110020 ; Published at Plot No.1, 311, Vardhman Sunrise Plaza, Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi 110096.  
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# As India celebrates the 75th Independence Day, Let's revisit the incredible stories of courage and valour.

On the 75th anniversary of our independence, let's set out and explore those historic sites that stood witness to our freedom struggle and remember the countless sacrifices done by those who dedicated their lives and resources for the country.



#### Sabarmati Ashram, Gujarat

Home to Mahatma Gandhi and the ideology that set India free - non-violence.

#### Jallianwala Bagh Memorial, Punjab

This sacred pilgrimage site honours the fallen victims of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.

#### Cellular Jail National Memorial, Andaman

A former British prison, the Cellular Jail now serves as a shrine to the political dissidents it once imprisoned.

#### Red Fort, Delhi

On August 15, 1947, India's first Prime Minister hoisted the national flag at the Lahori Gate here.

#### INA Memorial, Imphal

Dedicated to the soldiers of the Indian National Army, it pays tribute to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the nation.

#### Jhansi Fort, Uttar Pradesh

The Fort stands as a tribute to the warrior queen Rani Lakshmbai who fought against the British.

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**12-15**  
**SHOPPING  
TOURISM**

CONFESSIONS  
OF A TRAVELLING  
SHOPAHOLIC

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**WRECKING  
BALL**

TRAVEL BOOSTER  
SHOT FOR THE TRADE

**44-47**  
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CONVENTION**

INSTILLING BUOYANCY  
AMONGST MEMBERS

**52-55**  
**ST. PATRICKS  
DAY**

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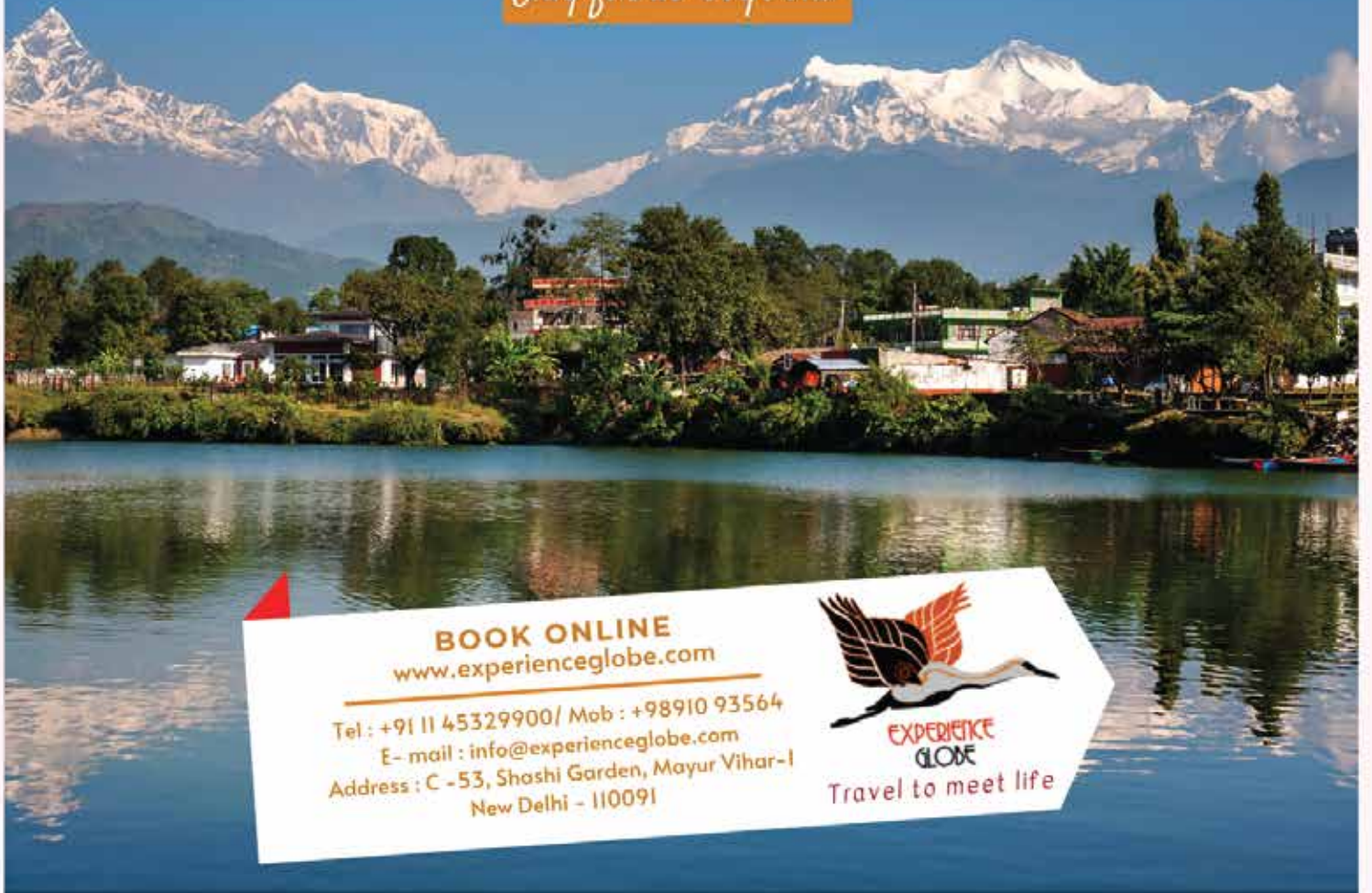




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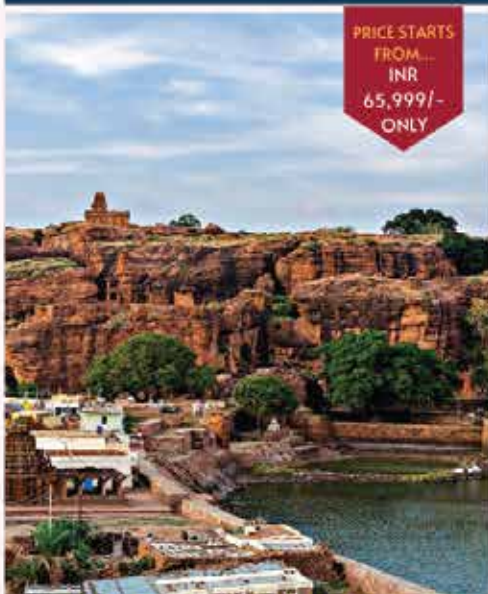
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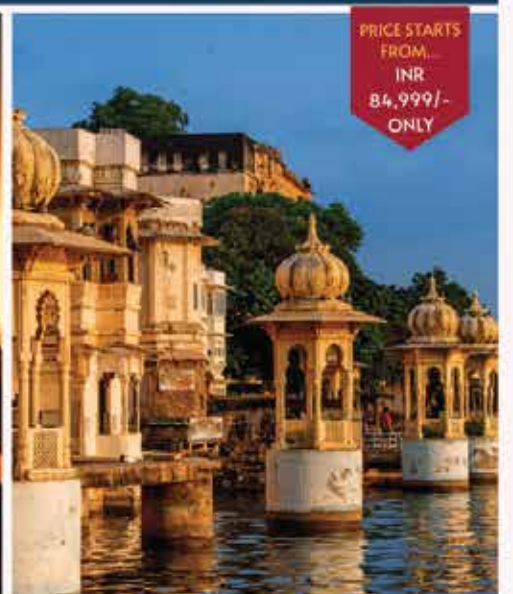
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## Air France-KLM and IndiGo to start codeshare agreement



Air France-KLM and IndiGo, India's leading carrier, are launching an extensive codeshare agreement. With this new partnership, Air France and KLM will offer their customers access to 25 new Indian destinations. From their hubs in Paris and Amsterdam, Air France and KLM already serve 4 destinations in India: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru. On departure from the Indian provinces, Air France and KLM will open up their global network of over 250 destinations to IndiGo customers, with more than 120 destinations in Europe and about 50 in the Americas. Subject to government approval, this cooperation will start in February 2022.

## TBO.com files draft papers to raise ₹2,100 crore via IPO

The IPO consists of a fresh issue of Rs 900 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 1,200 crore by its existing shareholders and promoters. The proceeds from the fresh issue will be used for the company's growth, strengthening of its platform by adding new buyers and suppliers, for strategic acquisitions and investments towards inorganic growth. Axis Capital, Credit Suisse Securities India, Jefferies India, and JM Financials are the book running lead managers to the issue.

TBO is a global travel technology company focused on providing a range of travel services to its buyers (travel agents, TMCs, Super Apps and tour operators) across the world. The company have also constituted a stellar board of independent directors.



## Phuket remains open for Indian travellers

Thailand's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) ordered a temporary suspension of the Thailand Pass for all new TEST&GO and Sandbox applications (except Phuket Sandbox), effective from 22 December 2021, citing the rising number of Omicron variant cases in the country.

However, travellers can travel to Thailand via Phuket. Phuket remains open for Indian travellers under the Phuket Sandbox scheme. Under this program, travellers will only need to do a PCR test and wait in the hotel until the result is received. If tested negative, they can then move around in Phuket. The second RT PCR test will be done on the 5-6th day post which they can travel to other parts of Thailand after completing seven days of stay in Phuket (No Quarantine required) or return to their home country within 7 days.





## ***SITE Global- India chapter appoints Barun Gupta as President***

Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), India-chapter dedicated to the incentive travel industry, has elected Barun Gupta, Director of Sales and Marketing, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, as the new President for the next one year (2022-2023). Barun will replace Nitin Sachdeva as President who has now been nominated as the SITE Global Board of Directors representing the Asia region.

In Barun's words, "As a leader of Site India Chapter, I will put forth my efforts to develop a community of Incentive travel specialists in India by focusing on skill development in our trade. Further, as a team together we will pivot to develop India as a source market for global incentive travel. I am also looking forward to expanding the network of Site in SAARC region and work towards adaptive recovery of the travel industry."



## ***Parvada Bungalows launches Parvada Rural Stays, Uttarakhand***

If you are excited about a homestay experience, don't limit yourselves to one homestay ....take in 500 plus acres of the village and 700 plus acres of forest as your experience. The heart of India lies in her villages and Parvada Rural Stays provides this authentic experience. If you're concerned about sacrificing your comforts, don't be. The homestay owners are all trained and without compromising on the authentic experience, they will surprise and delight.

Village Parvada is positioning itself as a rural stay experience, with currently 1 homestay in each of the 4 categories. (Luxury/Gold/Silver and Bronze). Parvada Bungalows (luxury) boutique cottages are nestled into the verdant fields and orchards and are built in traditional style to weather the different seasons.

Kaaphal Homestay (Gold) is located on the edge of the forest and is home to the local village head. Chandra's Homestay (Silver) is a short but exhilarating walk uphill. She is a fabulous cook and keeps a very clean homestay. Lucky Homestay (Bronze) is hosted by the very charming lady of the house Deepu.

## ***TAAI discusses challenges faced by travel trade regarding Issuance of visas with VFS***

TAAI joined hands with VFS to organise an interactive session for members of the Northern Region; including Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand chapters on 15th December 2021. The meeting was initiated by Punjab Chairman Rtn. Gurjeet Singh Sekhon under the leadership of President Jyoti Mayal & witnessed the active participation of Devesh Kumar Agarwal, Chairman - Visa & Allied Services Council, Neeraj Malhotra, Chairman - Northern Region; Syed Mohammad Akhlaq, Chairman, UPUK; Harraj Singh Sidhu, Chairman, Chandigarh.

The objective was to listen, understand, and seek VFS support to address the challenges faced by the travel trade fraternity. With the world opening in a phase-wise manner and wooing travellers, it is imperative to discuss how TAAI members and VFS may facilitate the smooth issuance of visas with the support of foreign missions.







## ***InterContinental marks 75 years of pioneering luxury travel***

InterContinental Hotels & Resorts has become synonymous with bold exploration, travel and cultural discovery, having pioneered luxury travel in emerging and well-loved destinations for the past 75 years. This year, as the brand toasts its diamond anniversary, it invites guests to celebrate the joy of travel and rediscover InterContinental hotels and resorts around the world. From now until April 2022, guests can enjoy an exciting lineup of limited-time offers ranging from sparkling anniversary celebrations to exhilarating stay experiences. As part of the 75th-anniversary initiative and IHG's Journey to Tomorrow commitment, InterContinental Hotels & Resorts will also donate US\$75,000 to Water.org, supporting 15,000 people to gain access to clean water through sustainable, locally owned and run projects.

Guests can recognise personal milestones with a range of anniversary packages. The 75th Anniversary Package will be available at select hotels and includes a personalized refreshment experience for two; for those looking for incomparable experiences, the InterContinental Diamond Stay Packages offer varied and carefully curated once-in-a-lifetime luxury moments across hand-picked InterContinental hotels.

## ***Leisure Hotels Group unveils 'Atman', a boutique Resort in Dharamshala***

Leisure Hotels Group an experiential resort chain in Northern India having the largest number of properties in Uttarakhand announced the launch of its 29th property 'Atman', a premium resort at Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. The opening of 'Atman' marks the group's second property in this quaint hill town and the third property in Himachal Pradesh. The group also has presence in Uttar Pradesh & Goa. Atman is a sustainable resort, built in the local Himachali Kath-Kuni style of architecture with locally sourced materials. The resort is spread across 4 acres, with 18 premium rooms that overlook pristine green meadows of the Kangra valley.

Vibhas Prasad, Director, Leisure Hotels Group said, "This is just another step towards the Group's endeavour to model sustainable properties in ecological locations. Dharamshala is one of the popular tourist destinations, just a stone's throw away from Mcleodganj and often cited as 'Little Lhasa of India'. The destination is strife with Tibetan art, craft and vibrant colours.



## ***WelcomHeritage launches WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa in the Leopard country of Rajasthan***

Keeping on the regality of the rustic charm and state-of-the-art hospitality, WelcomHeritage brings you the newest addition - WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort and Spa in the Jawai region of Rajasthan. The property, spread across 20 acres of private estate housing the roaring wild; a homeland for leopards, is located at the quaint village called Bera, district Pali, Rajasthan.

The property is situated far away from civilization, on an expanse of untouched land, surrounded by rolling hillocks which is a signature to the area. There are a host of engagements developed inside the property like a swimming pool, clubhouse, gymnasium, a grand Spa, Nature walks and a host of other activities. The Spa offers a host of treatments with a balance of both eastern and western curative therapies to recondition.



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LIVE WIRE

# SHOPPING TOURISM: CONFESSIONS OF A TRAVELLING SHOPAHOLIC

From the most appealing ingredient of a travel itinerary to a determinant factor in zeroing in on a destination, shopping is an important component of the overall travel experience and, in fact, in some cases, it's the dominating travel motivation.

- Bharti Sharma



A weekend break to London's Christmas markets, discovering the boutiques along the Avenue des Champs Elysées, buying that special gift at Singapore airport duty-free shop or discovering the bustling night markets of downtown Hong Kong, shopping for pleasure is no longer a purely incidental activity to dip into while travelling for leisure. Today, for millions of tourists it represents the principal – or one of the principal motivations for travelling.

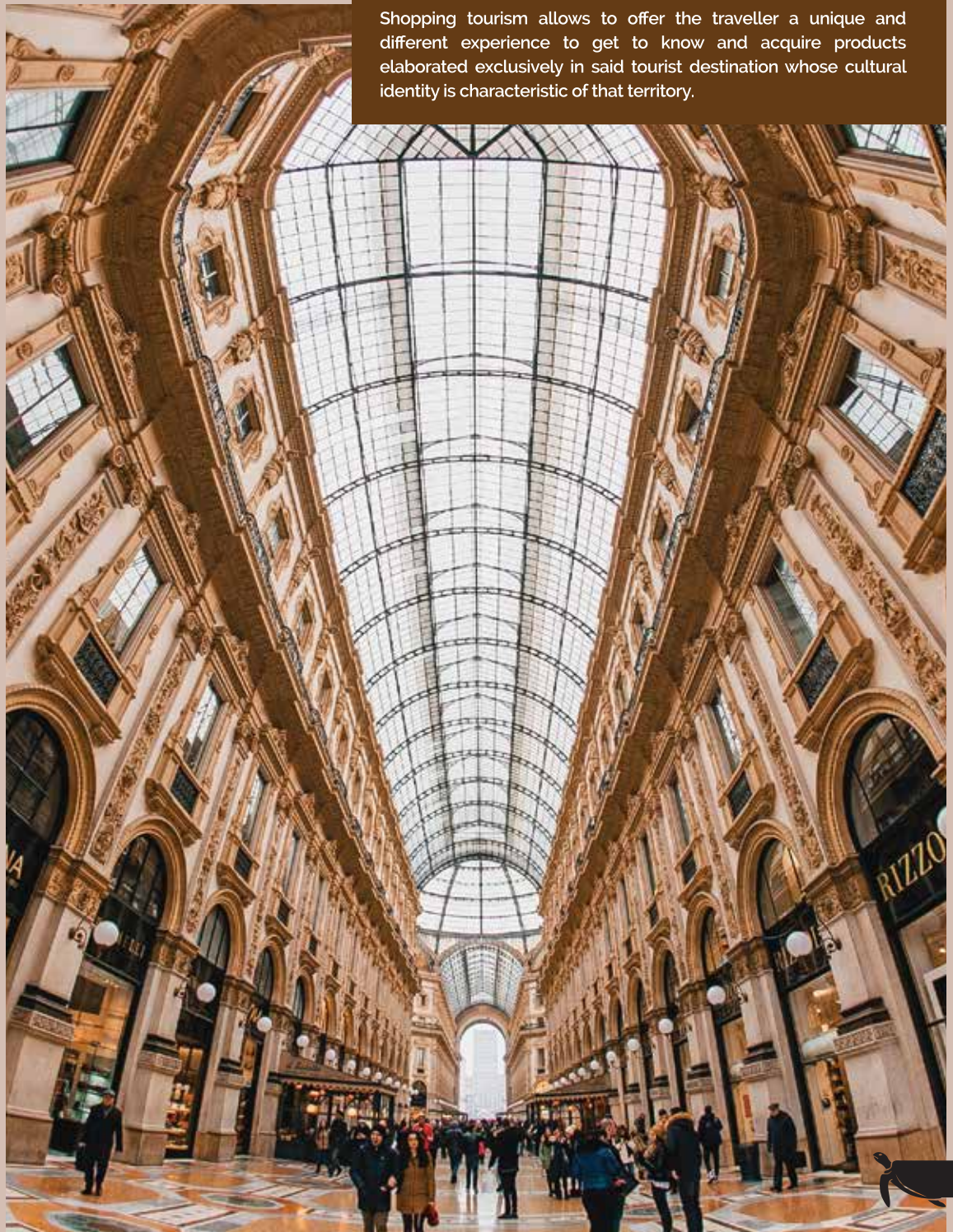
Lost in the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul or strolling through the Bicester Village Shopping Complex, destinations didn't waste much time in recognising the potential opportunity they can leverage from this old-new market style by developing authentic and unique shopping experiences. It's something that adds value to a destination's touristic charm while reinforcing, and even, defining their tourism brand and positioning. Are the days of enticing people with 'what to see' is a thing of the past? Are travellers now looking for 'what to do' while making their destination choice? Perhaps the answer to becoming a destination of choice now lies in the quality of its retail offerings.

### Gold-mine for economy

Travel and shopping have been widely recognised for their symbiotic relationship in generating income for the economy. Shopping has become one of the most stimulating activities while travelling and it contributes a hefty share to the global tourism economy. It dominates the share graph of a tourists' expenditure, representing a significant source of income for national economies both directly and through the numerous routes to other sectors in the economy. This development reflects the growing interest in and increased demand for Vienna as a destination among the opulent visitors from Russia, the Arab countries and Asia, concluding from their swelling numbers in the recent years. This is attributable not only to the recent strong economic upswing in these countries, but also to the prevalent



Shopping tourism allows to offer the traveller a unique and different experience to get to know and acquire products elaborated exclusively in said tourist destination whose cultural identity is characteristic of that territory.







In the advanced and emerging economies, the development of Shopping Tourism is a main phenomenon for managers of tourism policies.

custom of bringing home gifts in these cultures, especially in Asia. Though the list of articles in demand is exhausting, the demand for watches, jewelry and fashion articles top the list.

### Shopping as an experience

The evolution of tourists has ensued evolved tourism activities; one of the most enjoyable leisure activities engaged by tourists is shopping. Shopping is not only a pretentious activity to get daily essentials, but it has become one of the most enjoyable leisure activities and vital activities engaged in by tourists while travelling, be it on a vacation or off-shore for work.

### It's a steal for tourism boards/ tourism campaigns

In 2014, UNWTO came out with the

first 'Global Report on Shopping Tourism' which identified shopping as a major influence on tourism trends globally. As most tourists nowadays are motivated to travel for shopping purposes, the bulletin discussed several tourism destinations that have worked hard in highlighting the shopping campaigns and festivals as part of their marketing strategies. Marketers and destination management organisations perpetually came out with their shopping campaigns to lure tourists to the destination. In response to these activities, travel agencies also create various travel packages to fulfill the tourists leisure pursuit, among others is shopping. This includes the increasing trends of tourists seeking enjoyable and memorable moments. Although some of them may not actually purchase the products, they still consider shopping as leisure activity while travelling. As shopping activities continue to flourish in the

tourism industry, it also gives a significant impact to the economic, psychological and social conditions. Some of the examples are:

- 'Shopping by Paris' campaign for 2014 includes a package offering visitors a 10 per cent reduction in over 270 stores for a set period. The 'Tourisme en Ville' programme also aims to draw visitors to other cities, thus lengthening visitors' stay in the country and spreading the economic impact of tourism spending beyond the capital.
- Spain ranked second in the world for receipts from tourism spending in 2012. City tourism and shopping were themes promoted in the latest 'I need Spain' promotion campaign. Global Blue estimates that a total of US\$1.1 billion was spent on shopping in the country by visitors from outside the EU with 48 per cent and 31 per cent of expenditure made in Barcelona and Madrid respectively.
- Malaysia has done much to promote shopping tourism, including the

creation of the Malaysian Mega Sales Carnival. The Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival, a campaign featuring special events and programmes designed to raise the country's profile among international audiences. It provides a major contribution to the government's target to receive 36 million tourist arrivals and RM 168 billion in receipts by 2020.

### Rallying the troops

Most tourist travel itineraries nowadays are considered incomplete unless adequate provision for shopping activities are calibrated. One of the most prevalent practices that has stood the test of time is tourists seeking souvenirs as a remembrance of their vacation/trip, things that will make them recall their travelling experience. The significance of shopping activities has been extensively published from the perspective of demand and supply







## LIVE WIRE

The increase of the tourist flow and of the spending generated by Shopping Tourism is proportional to the increase of profit of the tourism industry

of tourism. The tourists are attracted to visit the tourism destination for the purpose of shopping as well as the tourism destination, in turn, develop to become a major shopping tourism destination. Shopping has become one of the most important world-wide activities.

### The domino effect

Various shopping dedicated locales focus on several key areas including but not restricted to attracting visitors, creation of tourism products, efficient use of tourism attractions and the quality of infrastructure. But, alongside these, recent trends have also witnessed increased consideration being given to community involvement in tourism as well as local socio-economic well-being and the promotion of employment being emphasized upon. The aim is to position the destination as a comprehensive value-added shopping tourism through innovative experiences in shopping tourism. At the same time, it aims to promote the integration of companies and individuals from different areas in the value chain of tourism and its surroundings (artisans, agriculture, leather, footwear, design, automotive, among others), while stimulating the creation of employment and new

opportunities based on the promotion of high value-added shopping tourism and local development.

### Celebrating shopping? Why not?

In various countries around the world, the weightage and significance of shopping can be deduced from the fact that they have full-fledged Shopping Festivals! These events can go on for days or even weeks, and it's not just the big chain stores offering sale prices, there's massive discounts, giveaways, competitions and entertainment that caters to all age groups and shoppers from small boutiques to the massive chain stores! So if you're keen to bag a bargain off-shore, take an empty suitcase (or two!), head to these five fantastic locations and get ready to shop til you drop!



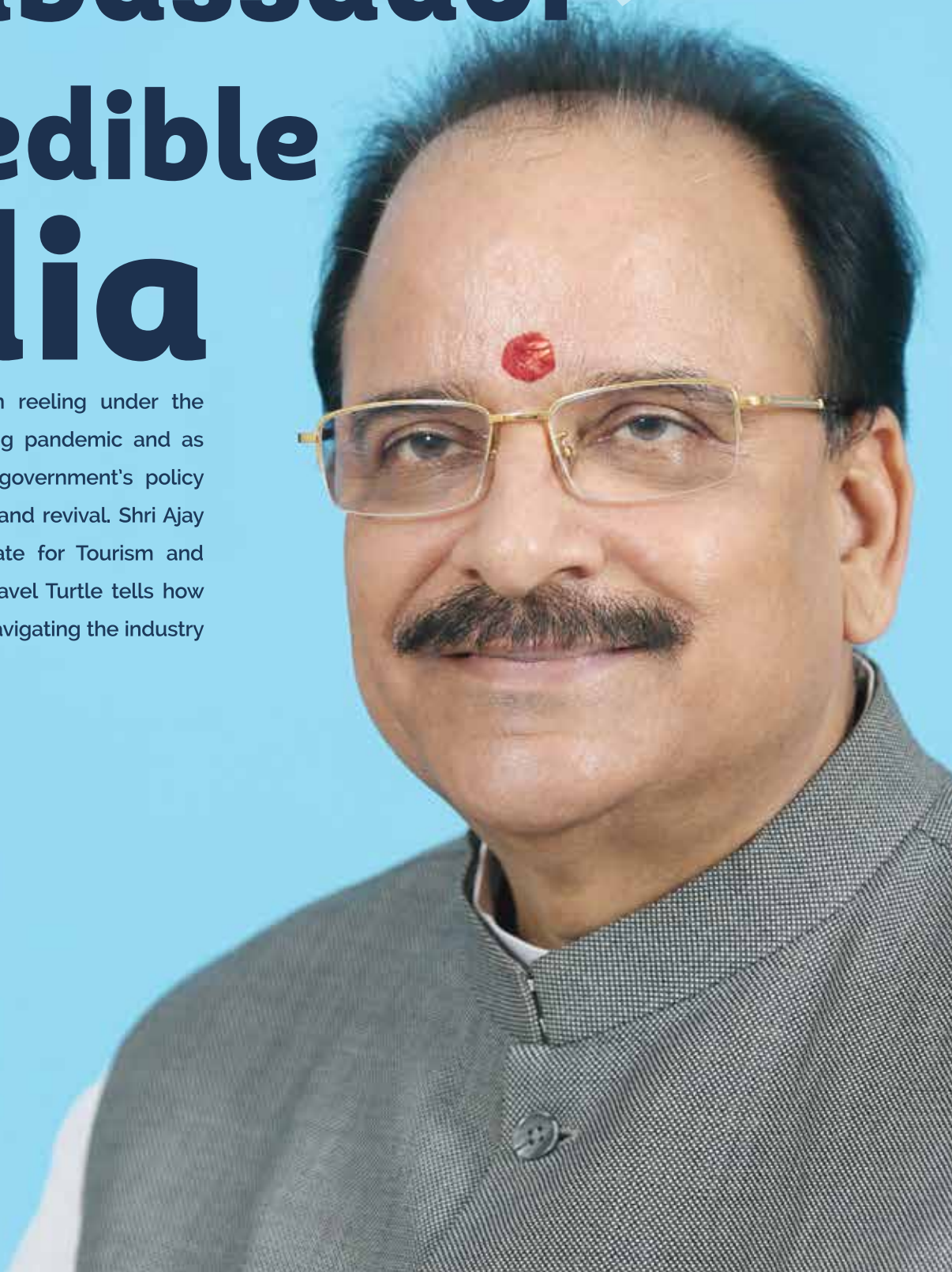


Every tour operator is the

# “Brand Ambassador” of Incredible India

The tourism sector has been reeling under the severe ambush of the ongoing pandemic and as such is in dire need of the government's policy interventions for their survival and revival. Shri Ajay Bhatt, Hon'ble Minister of State for Tourism and Defence in tête-à-tête with Travel Turtle tells how the government will assist in navigating the industry into a favourable position.

- Bharti Sharma





## INDIAN SAGA

When the government announced the appointment of two additional ministers to handle specific issues and promote tourism in order to enhance the overall perception, the trade welcomed the decision with open arms. The consideration, in a way also showcased the govt's determination to help the sector prevail through its policymaking. With a fresh sense of optimism, Shri Ajay Bhatt, in a very short span of time is well-versed and acquainted with the industry, its ongoing situation and thus, has been working tirelessly to give it the stature it deserves.

### ***Inbound will start gradually***

The travel industry has been in deep distress for over 19 months now and with the new variant Omicron, the industry already on ventilator is once again cornered and in a dilemma on how to keep their businesses afloat. "It is understood that the new Covid-19 variant Omicron has raised concerns across the globe and every sector, especially the tourism fraternity is worried about its impact. However, few experts have stated that though the new variant Omicron is highly infectious, it may not cause severe illness to people and is not expected to be as deadly as the first and second wave of Covid-19 pandemic," tells Shri Ajay Bhatt.

Emphasising the importance of vaccination drive and its effect on tourism, he adds, "The fact that more than half of India's adult population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and over 85 per cent of the adult population in India has at least been administered the first dose is a silver lining. Keeping these facts in mind, we are very hopeful that once the International flights are operational, inbound tourism will slowly start with caution and will be back on track at pre-pandemic levels, soon."

### ***Great opportunities for 'Incredible India'***

A renewed focus from the government on promoting domestic travel through infrastructure support,

focused marketing campaigns and robust public-private partnership is expected to go a long way in restoring the health of the tourism sector. Shri Ajay Bhatt feels that focus on growth-oriented measures, economic reforms and inclusive growth is critical in bringing a Covid-battered economy back on track. He shares, "As you are aware that there has been a surge in the number of domestic tourists post-second wave of Covid-19 and almost all tourist destinations, such as Goa, Jaisalmer, Kullu, Shimla, Dharamshala, etc. are swarmed with domestic tourists. And we are very hopeful that once the International flights get operational, inbound tourism will also take place with time."

### ***MoT got it all covered***

As the travel sector does not expect the market to revive anytime soon, the government has announced the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 3.0 in March last year to support eligible Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and business enterprises in meeting their operational liabilities and restarting their businesses. The scope of the scheme was augmented to cover business enterprises in hospitality, travel and tourism and leisure and sporting sectors. Shri Ajay Bhatt asserts, "With an aim to incentivise stakeholders in the tourism industry, the guidelines for the scheme of Market Development Assistance (MDA) for providing financial support to stakeholders for the promotion of Domestic Tourism have been modified to enhance the scope and reach of the scheme, so as to provide maximum benefits to the stakeholders."





## INDIAN SAGA

### *The stimulus for the grieving sector*

The travel and tourism industry has been perpetually forwarding many requests for its sustenance such as large scale policy initiatives to boost tourism, special incentives for infrastructure development, GST reduction and special stimulus packages that can help the industry to move faster on the path to recovery. Taking these demands into consideration, the govt has worked in tandem with other ministers to revive the sector, sharing some initiatives and packages Shri Ajay Bhatt tells, "In June 2021, the government announced a stimulus package to boost diverse sectors of economy affected by COVID-19 pandemic and provide an impetus for growth and employment measures. Loan up to Rs. 10 lakh each may be availed by MoT approved tour operators/travel agents/tourist transport operators. Loan up to Rs. 1 lakh each may be availed by RLGs/IITGs approved by MoT and tourist guides approved by State Govt. UT Administration. The scheme has been made operational through NCGTC, guidelines available on NCGTC website."

He further tells, "The Government has launched the Loan Guarantee Scheme for the Covid Affected Tourism Service Sector (LGSCATSS) facilitating collateral-free loans to eligible borrowers, tax relief has also been extended from various regulatory compliances under Income Tax Act, Companies Act and GST Act for a varying period in the wake of COVID-19 crisis to ensure business continuity and survival, RBI extended moratorium on term loans till 31st December 2020 and other such steps have been taken by the Government to revive the tourism sector."

### *Standing with the trade like a rock*

One of the foremost priorities is to strategise a path for recovery of international and domestic tourism including business travel and get the industry under the concurrent list. The 'power of collective' will accelerate recovery, and help the sector rise together. "Each tour operator is like a Brand Ambassador of the Incredible India brand and for tourism in the country. The theme of the recently concluded IATO convention- "Brand India – The Road to Recovery" itself displayed the dedication and commitment of the tourism service providers of the country. The tourism fraternity in the country has a lot of expectations from the association and the government is standing by your side in these hard times," concludes Shri Ajay Bhatt.







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## A trip down the Island Country

# Indonesia

The perfect destination for travellers looking for peace, excitement and a little swim between the fishes, the country of islands is a paradise for the beach lovers.

- Tripti Jain







The island country of Indonesia consists of over 17000 islands scattered across beautiful pastures, catering to a variety of flora and fauna with tit bits of wildlife and locals that win your hearts instantly. The greatest natural phenomenon in the world, has an island in every corner and is a bliss to the eyes. Including Sumatra, Sulawesi, Java and parts of Borneo and New Guinea, Indonesia is the home to volcanoes with treks and jungles with breath-taking solace. Not to forget the favourite destination for honeymooners these days – Bali, an island that has all the glitz and glam including the serene touch of the clouds hovering over beaches and scattered island villas.

### Reaching the edge of the beach

A day drenched in the salty water of the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean with margaritas followed by a relaxing massage by professionals that declutter your knots to the tee is the perfect vacay experience. The best time to travel to Indonesia is during the dry season! From May to September the days are hot, dry, and there's not a rain cloud in sight. You'll have excellent weather for

scuba diving, hiking, and lazy days at the beach. A flight to Jakarta or Bali is the best way to start the journey in moving frames.

As a traveller in Indonesia, this country offers endless exploration and diversity. One can travel to destination that will brighten up your mood and expose your senses to a holiday that creates a mark. Modern cities and areas like Jakarta and Bali to remote areas with some of the world's last great adventure like Komodo National Park, the country of islands has it all!

### Cities that top the list

Indonesia is a hub for island lovers, but the most unique part about this country is the amount of adventure, treks, and all sorts of interesting roldex it offers.

#### Gili Islands -

A trio of picture-perfect islands that string their way out between Lombok and Bali in the middle of the Nusa Tenggara archipelago, the Gilis are often hailed as the most quintessential tropical spots on the planet. The two smaller islands, Gili Air and GiliMeno, are secluded and laid-back; places where the occasional bamboo Eco lodge hides in the mangroves and stretches of shell-spotted sand down to a sea of aquamarine blue. Its ramshackle







bars are built of driftwood, and pulse with the energy of backpackers from all over the globe. By day, they sizzle off their hangovers on the pearly beaches, or hit the seas in search of rare turtles. By night, they guzzle beers and buckets and party till dawn.

### **Bali -**

A place that really needs no introduction, Bali has long been a mecca for travellers eager to experience the mysterious east, and while the influx of Aussies and Brits have taken over spots like Kuta in the south, there does remain pockets of the earthy and aga (ancient) Bali. The jungle-shrouded town of Ubud in the heart of the regency; a place of cascading rice paddies and crumbling Hindu shrines now taken over by crab-eating macaques provides the travellers with a unique experience. In the north you will find the great volcanos of Kintamani, to watch the sunrise overlooking Lombok isle in the east. You could also just surf and party your days away on the beaches of Bukit and Nusa

Dua. Apart from all the fun activities that Bali has instore, the most mesmerising is swimming amongst the fishes.

### **Komodo-**

Sun-baked Komodo is a wild and inhospitable place. Isolated between the cobalt seas and corals of the Lesser Sunda chain, it's known as the home of the world's largest living lizard: the aptly-named Komodo dragon. However, that great stalking beast is just one of the attractions, and today travellers come to witness the rugged hills and dust-caked backcountry as it tumbles down to pink-hued beaches and shore waters laden with rays, sea turtles, pygmy seahorses and rainbowfish.







### Sit back and relax

Ever thought of a wellness retreat in Indonesia? One from which you return rejuvenated, feeling healthier, happier, and fitter? Spending a few days in this invigorating hideaway will give you the chance to catch your breath and give something back to your body. Pass your time meditating by a beach, taking yoga classes as the sun sets, feasting on organic and delectable Indonesian food, and indulging in traditional massage treatments to emerge relaxed, revived, and ready to hit the road again.

With a peace-loving outlook, a glorious coastline, and the perfect atmosphere to heal, Indonesia is the place to set about some serious self-restoring and initiating your own holistic wellness. Be it buried in the countryside next to the river Ayung, or tucked away in the hills beyond Ubud- the settings combine healthy cooking workshops and luxurious days of herbal scrubs, wraps and massages that will surely be something to make your soul sing.



### Here for the food!

Food is more than survival. With it, we make friends, court lovers, and count our blessings. Food is one of the most powerful connective tools we have. We build our bonds with friends and family over dinners, we go to restaurants on dates, we prepare food for others and with others. This particular aspect of food- the community that comes with it- is especially revered in Indonesia.

The way food is served in Indonesia is unique. The most characteristic aspect of Indonesian culture is that meals are always consumed in company. Indonesia and Indonesian cuisine is a melting pot of culinary influences and ingredients.

## FACTS TO KNOW

- Indonesia is home to over 100 endangered animals.
- The world's biggest flower is found in Indonesia.
- The country is a home to over 700 different languages and dialects.
- Indonesia is the hottest spot on the Pacific Ring of Fire





**1) What is great about Indonesia that makes it so worthwhile visiting?**

As a country with a tropical climate, Indonesia is blessed with many wonderful stretches of natural beauty. From Sabang to Merauke, this beauty spreads throughout Indonesia with its unique cultural diversity.

Having stopovers in myriad places in Indonesia is what makes this country a wonderful place to visit. The beauty of scenic natural landscapes blended with various unique cultures of its people. Enjoy the untouched beaches, mountains, lakes, and many more pleasing destinations as well as the magnificent city skylines throughout the country. Indonesia is a wonderful country that is blessed with an infinite number of destinations waiting to be explored. However, there are some places that are famously adored worldwide for offering tons of exciting attractions and distinctive cultural philosophies. Overall, we are proud to say that Indonesia can offer various destinations, which will provide memorable experiences for your precious time of adventures.

**2) Indonesia has been developing a lot of experience based activities for the travellers. Apart from its magnificent culture, what do you want to showcase to the travellers?**

Statistically, the main purpose of international tourists visiting Indonesia is to find the uniqueness of the culture. Indonesia is the complete country to offer any attraction; culture, nature as man-made as well. Apart from its magnificent culture, tourists can also enjoy the variety of natural beauty of Indonesia. In addition to Bali, which was already known, we have 5 Super Priority Destinations (Lake Toba, Borobudur, Mandalika, Labuan Bajo, and Likupang) that we've been actively promoting.

As we all know, tourism industries worldwide were poorly affected because of the pandemic, and Bali is no exception as most of the local's livelihoods depend on the tourism sector. Therefore, we will promote Bali with the #ItsTimeforBali campaign. Through this campaign, we would like to tell the world that Bali is ready to welcome you back to



**Ibu Nia Niscaya**

Deputy Marketing at Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy/Tourism and Creative Economy Agency, Republic of Indonesia

the island of God with new guidelines and new experiences you can explore as soon as possible. Besides the beauty of the scenery that has been mentioned in every destination, tourists should try its famous culinary delights. You must visit and taste the experience there at least once in your lifetime.

**3) What experiences and activities are planned for the comprehensive growth of the tourism sector?**

Indonesia is currently prioritising the safety and comfort of tourists during their visit to Indonesia. Therefore, MoTCE keeps on the utmost efforts to accelerate tourism recovery by accelerating three main programs:

- Accelerating Vaccination for tourism and creative workers and society in destination. As of January 6, 2022, at least 115,55 Million (55,48 per cent) Indonesian citizens are fully vaccinated.

- Accelerating CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety and Environmental Sustainability) Certification End to End through #InDOnesiaCARE (I DO CARE) campaign. MoTCE has established a partnership with the Indonesian National Standard (Badan Standar Nasional/ BSN) to create the CHSE standardization for the tourism industry. As of 30 December 2022, the number of certified tourism industry has reached 11,986 in 34 provinces and 403 cities/regencies.

- Destination Readiness and integration with 'Peduli Lindungi (PL)' application. MoTCE encourages all tourists and industries to use PL application as tourists' tracing and tracking systems.

**4) What new initiatives and strategies are in place to boost Indonesia amongst the travel trade in India?**

Against this new reality, we need to remain resilient and optimistic. Indonesia, especially Bali has opened the international flights and welcomed international tourists starting October 14, 2021. The opening will be done gradually while improving the destination readiness to welcome tourists back.

Specifically for the Indian market, MoTCE is initiating various strategies to increase Indian tourists since it is one of our biggest international markets. MoTCE is working hand in hand with the government, wholesalers, travel agent and other related industries to inspire Indian tourists through campaign #InDOnesiaCare, #ItsTimeforBali and #WonderfulJourney by being present through online and offline.

In 2022, Indonesia will present in South Asia's Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) in India to promote Indonesian tourism and update during the event. In this chance, Indonesia becomes one of the Partner Countries at SATTE 2022. We will occupy booth

number C50 for the Indonesian Pavilion and a business meeting area. We hope that our participation in this year's SATTE can be a breath of fresh air for both Indonesia and India's tourism industries. Indian tourists who look forward to visiting Indonesia and are eager to start their version of the #ItsTimeforBali journey are highly recommended to come to the SATTE 2022 to find their dream destination.

In addition, regarding connectivity, MoTCE cooperates with the Ministry of Health Republic of Indonesia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Indonesia, and Ministry of Transportation Republic of Indonesia to gain the ease of direct connectivity such as chartered flight.

**5) What are the top five inbound tourism markets for Indonesia? Do you see the dynamics changing post the pandemic?**

Prior to Covid-19 pandemic, Malaysia, China, Singapore, Australia, and India ranked in the Top 5 (five) international arrivals to Indonesia. Along with the pandemic, the market and trend has totally changed. Almost every country over the world relies on domestic tourists. By the time, Indonesia starts to present in the international market by online activities through webinar and digital publication on keeping its existence on an international level. We have various considerations for determining the market in our target, such as covid - 19 status, returning home policy, vaccination rate and the accessibility as well.

While preparing the destination readiness, Indonesia keeps its presence in the market with the utmost efforts, since the trend has shown that tourists will look for safe and comfortable destinations, especially those implementing health protocols. The need to travel with less interaction with many people or not being in a crowd is also one of the new trends in travel.

In response, the tourism industries have begun to provide exclusive tour package services or mini-groups to feel safer and minimize the potential for virus transmission while on vacation. In line with this, the chosen destination also tends to be close to the nuances of nature.



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# TRAVEL BOOSTER SHOT FROM THE TRADE

As the sector necessitates a gentler and meaningful recovery process, here's a much-needed confidence booster for the travel sector.

- Bharti Sharma





## WRECKING BALL

The entire travel and hospitality value chain displayed exemplary synergy and concurrence during the pandemic, which has given us all the required vigour and resilience to brave the storm. The sector, despite the limited support from the government is witnessing a decent overall recovery with the plummeting second wave of the devastating pandemic. Although, the recovery graph for most stakeholders was still inconsistent. A renewed and durable focus is the need of the hour in order to rehabilitate the tourism sector. Let's hear out what our fraternity has to suggest to their fellow partners and their biggest learning from the past 2 years...



**Priyanka Nijhawan,**  
Director, Representations-  
Nijhawan Group

### Keeping the essential lifeline of tourism intact

Once again, we're welcoming the new year saturated with apprehensions in the air. However, optimism is the key to sustaining through troubled times and Priyanka rightly shares, "The whole world is eyeing at the India market and there is no denying the fact that it has become the most potential market for the brands. With the passing of time, we have evolved ourselves and our business while staying optimistic. Indian travellers give us confidence, as they are the most resilient and the world knows it."

#### Suggestions:

Stay ahead of the curve: The entire lockdown, our teams at Nijhawan's were engaged in educating its partners about the existing and new products which we represent.

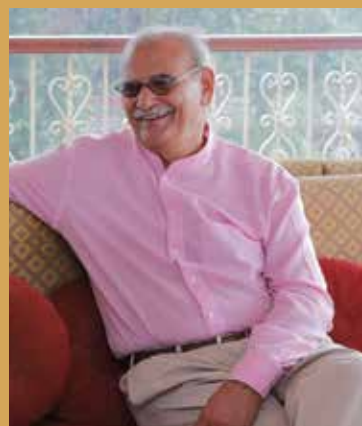
Our hotels in Maldives and Dubai have received great numbers of tourists. It's because we turned the crisis into an opportunity to interact with our partners like never before. We are therefore working closely with our partners to usher a positive sentiment towards travel.

Be affirmative and strong: Even in the most unconstructive situation, one should never lose hope. Just like every dark cloud has a silver lining, with our resilience, we will deal with the situation and bounce back.

#### Learnings:

- More technology advancements: This can help businesses to streamline their processes, or even automate processes that would traditionally require active human involvement.

- Travelling is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity: Travel today is no longer a luxury but something consumers love to engage in as it provides a respite from the monotony of their regular lives. Millennials have also played a significant role in this paradigm shift. They love to travel and are also passionate about new destinations and experiences.



**Raj Singh**  
Founder & Chairman – Group,  
Antara Luxury River Cruises  
& Heritage River Journeys.

### Pandemic has reiterated the pertinence of trust and reliability in people

Antara Luxury River Cruises see even greater interest in the unique experiences of their sailings which celebrate joy and life. Raj Singh shares, "This year Antarawill give privileged access to mythologies and monuments forgotten in time, set amidst pristine wild vistas where travellers don't usually visit, in boutique handcrafted accommodations offering gourmet gastronomy and immersive activities. All are welcome to join us sailing off the beaten path to explore untouched landscapes, with unmatched hospitality onboard, for unforgettable memories of a lifetime."

#### Suggestions:

Focus on innovation: During this challenging time we have continued to innovate and regularly sail our ships, build new ships, curate new itineraries, and launched the world's first journeys visiting Sundarbans National Park, Europe on the Ganges, Glorious Ganges, Bhitarkanika National Park and the 27 river journey - the longest river cruise in the world.

#### Learnings:

- The present crisis has reiterated the importance of trust and reliability in people, in our lives and the marques we choose. Luxury cruising is not just the provision of a photogenic room with fine dining, it is the kaleidoscope of local transformative engagement at every level.

- We have learned that the rich stories and mythologies of our journeys, along with the onboard activities and expert interactions, all set in unique cultural and environmental locales, lead to a lasting legacy of enrichment and transformation of perceptions and regeneration of our guests, our communities, and our landscapes.



**Abinash Manghani,**  
CEO, WelcomHeritage

### Mobile is now the new passport from 'Reservations to Check-Out'

In 2022 WelcomHeritage looks forward to continuing expanding its footprint and business. "We will be adding new properties to our existing portfolio as a part of our strategic expansion plans," tells Abinash. WelcomHeritage aims to expand its horizon in the South and North-eastern region of the country and as of now have a few properties for evaluation this year. These properties will help the brand mark its presence across the length and breadth of India.

#### Suggestions:

- To improve traveller's confidence:





At WelcomHeritage, we have ensured every possible way for our guests to have a comfortable and safe experience. The unique feature about WelcomHeritage Hotels is that we are uniquely positioned and offer a "Safe Haven" during COVID times. Our properties and destinations together offer travellers a naturally safe experience – they are smaller properties with few rooms, built-in larger areas, and a large expanse ensuring social distancing.

- To commit to building a more resilient and inclusive tourism sector, leveraging renewed interest in sustainability: Sustainable Tourism is the need of the hour. Sustainability today is not just to protect the environment alone but is a much broader connotation that includes various aspects of the region such as social, cultural and economic which is why all the hospitality partners should jointly make tourism more sustainable as a long-term goal in order to emerge out of this pandemic stronger.

**Learnings:**

- The biggest learning from the past two years for the travel industry would be to accelerate digital transformation. Without a doubt technology has now become a buzzword in the Travel industry; Airlines, Airports, Hotels are catching up to frontline technologies that were considered arcane merely a year ago.
- It is expected that employees can work from anywhere and have access to technology since Covid can cause acute disruptions to a work schedule.



**Rajan Sehgal**  
President, India Golf Tourism Association and Co-Chairman, PHD Chamber of Commerce

**Every movie has a short interval to refresh yourself for the later part**

This pandemic is an experience no one has ever faced and it's highly unpredictable in nature. Rajan seconds it as he mentions, "You must have seen so many announcements about resuming of travel, medical requirements but nature keeps changing them every fortnight." Planning his strategies for the year ahead with an optimistic outlook, he tells, "As far as 2022 is concerned, I think till April it's difficult to predict but as I have been telling on various forums instead of living in fear, it's better to be self-sufficient, multi-skilled, collaborate and control your spending."

**Suggestions:**

- Learn as much as you can and collaborate with experts from the travel industry so whatever travel-related business you get, you are equipped to cater.
- Travel and tourism is a very vast industry and is just not limited to air/hotel or car bookings.

**Learnings:**

- Respect nature: Safe and Responsible Tourism should be the way ahead.
- Every movie has a short interval to refresh yourself for the later part: Treat this as a short interval and bounce back to enjoy the wonderful travel, tourism and hospitality industry.



**Vineet Gopal**  
Joint Secretary OTOAI & Director Engee Holidays

**Need of uniformity in policies**

Vineet is very optimistic and hopeful that 2022 will be the year of travel and businesses will get back on track. He feels it is actually time for all tour operators, travel agents and travel professionals to come out of hibernation and get ready to seize every opportunity. Justifying his optimism, he states, "It is because of previous year statistics, despite the dangerous second wave when the whole nation experienced many casualties many destinations such as Maldives, Dubai, France etc. have seen Indian tourist arrivals." "As per ICRA report Hotel industry will recover faster than expected post-Covid 2.0 and the revenues are expected to improve by 85-90 per cent sequentially in Q2 FY2022," mentions Vineet. He further shares, "It is also true that the Omicron virus has stalled tourism again which gained momentum earlier, but I think India will be over with this third wave of Omicron virus by end of March 2022 and tourism sector will bounce back from April 2022."

**Suggestions:**

- Open commercial flights: This will help bring the cost down and also

help in evading overcrowding as travellers will book flights as per their choice when they'll have options at their disposal.

- Most importantly global aviation policy: There has to be one standard uniform policy/ SOP for COVID at airports for traveller arrivals.

**Learnings:**

- COVID is here to stay, we cannot afford to put our guards down. COVID SOP and COVID appropriate behaviour has to be followed without exceptions. No economy, especially the tourism industry can afford another lockdown.
- Running a profitable business is the only way to stay afloat and only then can one take care of colleagues and business. Information and knowledge will play a very important role in future as agents who can provide the right information and knowledge will have better chances to close deals.



**Yeishan Goel**  
Chief Executive, Travel & Hospitality Representation Services

**Allow yourself the flexibility and agility in the thought-action process**

Segmenting the business astutely, focusing on clearly identifiable business goals and segments for the current growth in those segmented areas will take centre stage in 2022, versus trying to capture a larger opportunity pool with medium to





## WRECKING BALL

long-term return on investment. Yeishan feels that we are likely to witness some predictable trends emerging across different areas for this year. He says, "Administrations and governments globally will refrain from making pre-emptive decisions around tourism, and move forward in the direction of more rationalised travel restrictions based on actual pre-identified informative threat assessments that allow tourism windows to remain open, albeit in pockets and bubbles even if not universally."

In India, 70 per cent of adults have been fully inoculated. Yeishan emphasises on the fact that 'vaccination normalcy' will continue to be the way of life ahead with more people getting vaccinated, boosters being introduced and younger generations getting included in vaccination drives.

### Suggestions:

- Flexibility in approach and adopting short-term goals with clear accountability and revenue focus will yield favourable outcomes for tourism stakeholders in the year ahead.
- A consistent focus on shifting our outlook and favouring collaboration over competition is the need of the hour. Businesses world over will have to look beyond their immediate competitive landscape and adapt with a wider collaborative approach amongst different stakeholders.

### Learnings:

- A key learning that has reinforced itself in the last two years for me has been the need to stay sharp with a wide-angle lens while gathering pertinent information that enables effective decision making, while also allowing yourself the leeway to pivot, amend short term strategy as much or as frequently.
- Perhaps more pivotal has been the importance of high impact communication and moving forward with your partners, friends, clients and teams together. In this time where people have largely worked remotely from home, focusing on mental well-being, staying positive and having a collectively robust optimistic outlook for the future has become more significant than ever before.



Vinayak Koul  
Honorary Secretary, ATOAI

### Need to focus on growth-oriented measures, economic reforms and inclusive growth

With turbulent trends, the sector expects further streamlining of regulations in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry, to spur greater demand amongst domestic and international travellers. Vinayak, very specifically emphasises on the need for synchronised regulations. He says, "There is a need for focused marketing urging people to travel responsibly and with responsible service providers. Being proactive towards the changes on the ground and ever-evolving state & national travel advisories and guidelines have become very important."

### Suggestions:

- More marketing overall
- Focused vertical-wise marketing

### Learnings:

- We all have accepted and learnt that COVID is here to stay for some time and we have to carry on with operating tours with it around.
- Most of us have adopted and learnt how to operate tours as safely as possible with COVID around.







**Pradeep Saboo**  
Managing Director,  
Guideline Travels

### Now is the last turn before the finish line

Pradeep believes that 2022 looks and promises to be the year of revival! However, we're probably at the last roadblock to overcome which has presented itself as the year has begun. Once this is over the remainder of the year will be full of positive opportunities.

#### Suggestions:

Focus: It's important for us to stay focused and not be deterred by the cancellations or the hiccups that we are currently facing. We have overcome the major downturn and now is the last turn before the finish line. So, stay focussed.

#### Plan your finances:

We all should plan our future spending and costs in order to be sustainable. We should try and cut down the unnecessary expenses and rebuild the business reserves which might have got exhausted in the efforts of staying afloat during the pandemic in the last two years.

#### Learnings:

Pandemic has been a great teacher. To some, it taught to pivot for survival while to me it taught that you first need to have reasonable business margins to survive in the long run, cover your costs and make a profit to build for the future.



**Darshan Maheshwari,**  
Country Manager  
India & GCC, The Travel  
Corporation

### Every business needs a scalable and efficient contingency plan

With rising global vaccination rates and travel lanes opening up, 2021 had been a year of hope as we forged ahead, underpinned by our resilience and positivity. Just like all of us Darshan is excited about 2022 and perceives it as a year of opportunities. He says, "It is a time for us to reinvent and be nimble in order to adapt and thrive in this new normal. We strive to innovate with our product offerings and inspire our guests to keep their travel dreams alive with our suite of brands in The Travel Corporation. There is a huge pent-up demand to travel, and we are ready to be the trusty partner for our guests to travel with confidence as they take to the skies again."

#### Suggestions:

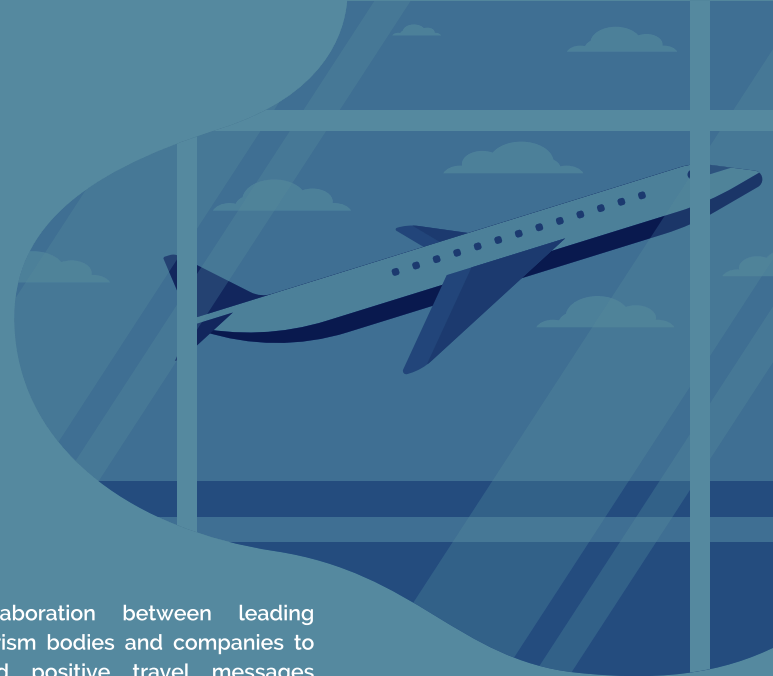
• I hope that the government can consider establishing bilateral tourism lanes with multiple countries, similar to Singapore's policy on Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL), where there is seamless inflow and outflow of tourists between the participating countries, with safety regulations in place.

#### Communications:

Collaboration between leading tourism bodies and companies to seed positive travel messages through marketing campaigns and make travel happen again.

#### Learnings:

- There is a good in every evil: There's no doubt that the pandemic has impacted the world economically and ethically. However, it has also brought about higher mindfulness on the value of relationships, nature, freedom to travel and above all, self-care.
- Expect the unexpected: Every business needs a scalable and efficient contingency plan to steer through any crisis. This contingency plan can help mitigate business disruptions and ensure business sustainability; waiting out the storm.





# TRAVEL turtle

**bags awards for  
'Best Travel Publicaton' & 'Best Travel Digital Media'  
at IATO Convention**



Awards are always special and are a reciprocation of the efforts and hardwork that goes into creating something worth appreciating. Travel Turtle, within a year of its existence, won the awards for Best Travel Publication and Best Digital Travel Media at 36th IATO Annual Convention at The Leela Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Travel Turtle would like to thank its readers for their support, loyalty and love they've showered upon the magazine. Our readers have embraced this as part of the community in a very short time and thus, we owe this accomplishment to you all. We're on our unrelenting quest to improve with every issue and our readers inspire us to dig deeper, research on trends and current travel updates globally, to deliver out-of-the-box content and insights that are essential, pronto to survive the storm.







## **Cygnett:** A brand that emphasises on customer's preferences

Barnali Sarkar, Director, Corporate Affairs, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts has always aimed at bringing the best hospitality at an affordable cost. Her versatile approach towards building a brand known for its spectacular hospitality, impressive offerings, and quality services has created a niche market for Cygnett. She has always been the woman behind the scene, but has played a major role in the expansion of the brand that is incredibly commendable.

- Sudipta Saha





## Feel the heat

The Post-Covid era has changed the dynamics of the market and doing business, in such a scenario, Barnali Sarkar chooses to stay optimistic and chalks out the plan for this competitive market. The pandemic has transformed the entire travel and tourism industry, the competition is very much prevalent, sharing on the same, Barnali Sarkar says, "Hospitality business environment is ever-changing. Our brand promises to match it, catering to the changing needs/preferences of travellers. Our hospitality ethos reflects Indianness in every way while being global in terms of service to address travellers' demands from any part of the world. We ensure travellers, business or leisure, get what they aspire for ie, a comfortable and hospitable stay." Further, she adds, "We have inked more than ten management contracts in the country in the last two months, and the same number is under the final stages of negotiations. The trend will continue to be there next quarter as well. We believe 2022 will be even better with a higher share of occupancies and Rev Par, wherein now the dominance has been towards the leisure sector."

## Spreading the wings

Barnali Sarkar has always managed to escape the limelight but her determined approach and ability to think out-of-the-box has blessed Cygnett with abundance of success. Cygnett, today is a brand and gradually it seems to wider its reach with the upcoming

properties nationally and internationally. Speaking on the upcoming properties, she mentions, "We are actively working to open 100+ hotels across 75+ cities in India and will operate in over six international locations within the next five years. Looking into the year 2022, it looks promising we will capitalise on the pre-signed properties which were due to open in 2021, cumulatively we see a growth of 10 plus property under Cygnett Umbrella. The experience we had so far has made us look forward to adding 6000+ keys by 2026, which is also going to push our plan to benchmark 'Cygnetture Service & Experiences in the industry'."

Cygnett has emerged as a brand that values customers' preferences and promises to offer the best services to the travellers. "We have built Cygnett Hotels and Resorts as a brand that is progressive in every sense. The hospitality business environment is ever-changing. Our brand promises to match it, catering to the changing needs/preferences of travellers. We are a brand that understands a traveler's aspiration for a comfortable and hospitable stay. Cygnett is bringing India to the World through the Indian concept of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' meaning 'Guest is God'. We draw inspiration from its many diverse and colourful cultures and strive to bring to life our ancient belief 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' which means The World is One Family. We honor Indian traditions through the flavours of various Indian cuisines served at our restaurants. Our strengths lie in having both an Indian and a global

outlook. We have transformed Cygnett from the hotel group into an aggrandized hospitality group with a new ecosystem of Cygnetture experience," adds Barnali Sarkar.

## Venturing in tier II & III markets

Tier II and III cities have turned up as a very optimistic market for every player and Cygnett too has ventured into the market. Barnali's admiration for her work and a vision to bring the superlative experience to travellers has enabled the brand to slowly and gradually penetrate in these markets which are not unexplored but untapped. "We are rapidly expanding our presence in India. Our majority of operations are in Tier II & III cities. We focus on this segment because these markets miss the presence of Branded chains. We plan to capture as many cities in this segment. We at Cygnett acknowledge the untouched beauty of the Northeast. We have a presence in 5 of the 7 sisters states of India, having operations running in Bongaigaon, Guwahati, and Gangtok. Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, and Yang Yang are also in our pipeline."

## Optimistic 2022

Barnali Sarkar is a buoyant woman with a positive attitude; her contribution and perseverance to the success of Cygnett are commendable. She has diligently been observing the market scenario and the post COVID travel which gave a boost to domestic travel was a sign of optimism for her. She adds, "Tourism was mainly driven by

domestic circuits and a few destinations, and leisure did extremely well. People preferred to travel to an isolated destination and where safety protocols were followed. Mostly the travel was focussed on relaxation, to get rid of boredom and having safety measures in place. To sum it up, I would say staycation pulled up the occupancy. We expect a V-shape recovery for the hotel industry as we see a rise in ARR as well as occupancy percentage this year. We forecast that business hotels will do well and we expect the banquet business to be really good which will be instrumental in picking up pace. We expect 80 per cent recovery of pre-Covid times."

Further, she adds, "In 2022, we expect the travel and hospitality sector doing much better than the previous two years. With vaccination percentage high for India, domestic travel is going to be the base for good business. I expect better occupancy more so because business travel will increase. It is expected that by April 2022 international travel will be back. I also expect better ADRs this year which will drive RevPAR growth. I would like the business to be back to similar lines as it was in 2019, but it is very difficult to ascertain now whether we will reach that level when new variants of Covid-19 still lurking around. However, by the second quarter of 2022, we will be in a position to assess how 2022 can be for the industry. I hope that there is no further pandemic wave which will allow the travel cycling to roll at full momentum and give hospitality the much-needed boost to balance losses faced."





# Uttarakhand

on the path to escalate tourism and reverse migration with infrastructure

A state paving its way for the prime agenda; 'development', tourism policies and infrastructure that can attract its people back to their native land.

- Harish Chandra





It was almost two decades ago when the state of Uttarakhand was carved out, stocked with things nobody could detach; untouched nature, the warmest and hospitable people and heritage. One would always mention the state as one of the newest addition to India's demography but on the contrary, the state finds its mention in ancient mythology as a part of the Kuru and the Panchal kingdoms (mahajanpads) during the Vedic age. In Hindu mythology also, Uttarakhand has been recognised as a part of the famed Kedarkhand (Now Garhwal) and Manaskhand (Kumaon). It is also believed that the famous sage Vyas composed the epic 'Mahabharata' in Uttarakhand.

**Development in full swing**

The state is undergoing a complete overhaul, with development touching almost all the sectors and new avenues being experimented with, to attract more and more tourists. A few significant projects that will boost the tourism sectors are:

- Char Dham Railway Project: The Railway connectivity to Char Dham sites is one of the most anticipated projects not only for the locals but for millions of Hindu devotees from across the country. This will link the Char Dham by rail connectivity making the journey much more safe, comfortable, economical, eco-friendly and all-weather. The Kedarnath and Badrinath railway connectivity will take off from Karnaprayag railway station, which is a part of the 125 kilometres long Rishikesh – Karnaprayag new broad gauge rail line project which is in full swing. The existing Doiwala railway station will serve as the kick-off point for railway connectivity to Gangotri and Yamunotri.

- Char Dham all-weather road: The all-weather Char Dham road would connect the four holy sites; Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath. The project launched in 2016, is in the final stages of completion and should be up and running for public use this year i.e., 2022. The INR 12,000 crore project would not only boost tourism in Uttarakhand but would also get the

state global recognition, thus pitching Uttarakhand as a much sought-after tourist destination.

- International Terminal at Airport in Dehradun: The Airport Authority of India has passed the long-term pending proposal for the construction of an International Terminal at the Jolly Grant Airport in Dehradun. An International terminal was inevitably required to counter the transportation hassles faced by foreign tourists as well as for the accelerating growth of the state. The International Terminal is supposed to rake in a budget of 346.23 crores solely for its construction. Govt has also announced 18 new heli-routes to connect high-altitude areas of Uttarakhand, in addition to three new air routes on Dehradun - Pithoragarh Pithoragarh - Hindon and Pantnagar-Pithoragarh sectors.

**Investor's paradise**

With a comprehensive state tourism policy that was first formed in the year 2018, Uttarakhand aims to tap the state's vast potential for eco-tourism, wellness as well as adventure tourism. The policy has been put to test and has yielded results in opening up newer avenues for the stakeholders to come and invest in the state infrastructure. The Investors Summit which was held in Dehradun in the year 2018 witnessed about 140 memorandum of understanding (MoU's) worth Rs 15,000 crore with the state government. The summit saw huge participation of foreign and Indian investors and was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Uttarakhand's single-window clearance system, which is an online integrated enabling platform for new and existing industries to avail required licenses/approvals and NOC's during their respective stage of investment lifecycle i.e., intent to invest, pre-establishment, pre-operations and post-operation stages.

**Reverse migration**

The same tourism policy which has helped the state to reinforce its tourism sector is also shouldering the responsibility for facilitating reverse migration. The idea was to

get its people back to their land and create ample entrepreneurship avenues for the local youth in the tourism sector.



Vikal Kulshreshtha

Vikal Kulshreshtha, Director, Hotel Kailash Residency, Guptkashi, Rudraprayag asks, "If the major population is residing out of state, then for whom this development is being done? He further adds, "Moving to the cities is neither a long-term nor a sustainable solution for the people of Uttarakhand. There has been recent evidence that those who migrated for employment to nearby towns and cities are slowly looking to make their way back to their hometowns or villages. Covid-19 era has also forced them to return to the state, the government is trying to convince them to stay on and rebuild their lives there."



Abhishek Ahluwalia

"As it is majorly believed that youth and waters of hill states are not useful for its home state, unfortunately, that's true with Uttarakhand too," believes Abhishek Ahluwalia, Founder & CEO, Diamond Hospitalities, Haridwar. He further

shares, "As migration is one the major problem due to this some villages are turning into ghost villages. This situation can definitely be reversed, as there are not many issues with human skills, and Uttarakhand state is blessed with immense natural beauty and hub of pilgrimage, adventure activities, ample forest area. The main lacking part is infrastructure, if govt with some sincere long vision improves on infrastructure, then surely we would be able to address the serious issue of migration.

**The solution**

As there are innumerable opportunities in the form of nature-based tourism including wildlife tourism, camping, rafting, trekking, hiking, mountaineering etc, thus, a lot o opportunities can be explore in this sector.



Hari Singh

"At present most of these activities are restricted to a few destinations such as Corbett National Park and Valley of Flowers though there is unlimited scope for its expansion to other areas, particularly in the hill districts, where it would boost socio-economic development and generate livelihoods for the local people, thus helping in mitigating out-migration," believes Hari Singh, Managing Director, Banyan Retreat, Corbett National Park.





***The rumble strip***

Considering the rapid economic progress of the state and a generous number of tourists being attracted to the state, some major decision-making needs to be done in terms of marketing the destination. The level of development in the state needs to be complemented by an equivalent proportion of consumers as well. Lack of marketing campaigns means lack of visibility, which is acting as a speed-breaker for the State. Since marketing is a slow process and demands continuous hammering in order to develop brand recall among the patrons, it will take a while for Uttarakhand to entice the number of travellers the state deserves. The state needs to invest and strategise in this department from the word go, especially in the current scenario when counterparts are leaving no stone unturned to entice tourists to their state.



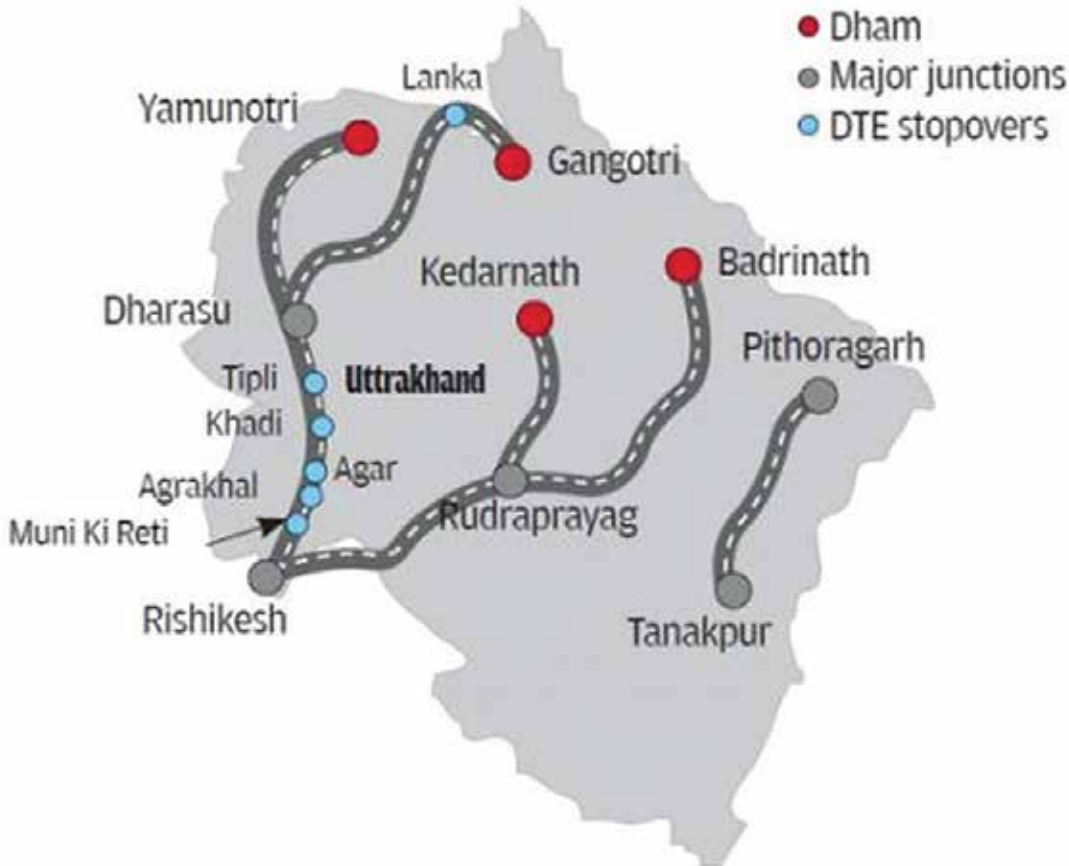
Ravi Gosain

Being the president of a pioneer tourism association which has members having their roots in Uttarakhand working in the Tourism sector, all over India, Ravi Gosain, President, UTPA (Uttarakhand Tourism Professionals Association) and VP- IATO feels, "The tourism development or investment in tourism infrastructure needs to be done simultaneously with the overall infrastructure development so that when all this work is completed there would be a ground prepped for local entrepreneurship, employment generation, receiving tourist and expecting overall growth of the region."





# Proposed Char Dham highway



## More infrastructure?

Uttarakhand is home to some of the most spectacular yet humble homestays for the travellers, but what it requires along with homestays is the presence of varied hospitality brands. Hospitality brands add to the aura of a destination and also aids in attracting HNI's, which are generally inclined towards reputed hospitality brands for their vacation accommodation preferences and the absence of brands deter them from opting for such destination.

Sustainability is the 'Key'

The frequency and intensity of natural disasters are rising at an alarming rate in the state. As much as there is a need for development, it has to be carried out in the most sustainable manner so the basic conservation principles are not disrupted. Be it forest fires during peak summer months, or landslides and floods during the monsoons, frequent disasters like these act as negative publicity for the destination resulting in dissuading tourists from choosing the destination for their vacations. Thus, sustainable development and conservation need to be adopted as a thumb rule for any development policy being introduced.





# Wiesbaden

**What was a sensational discovery of the Romans 2, 000 years ago, is still considered a 'hot tip' today.**

**- INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA**

*Picture Credit: GNT0*



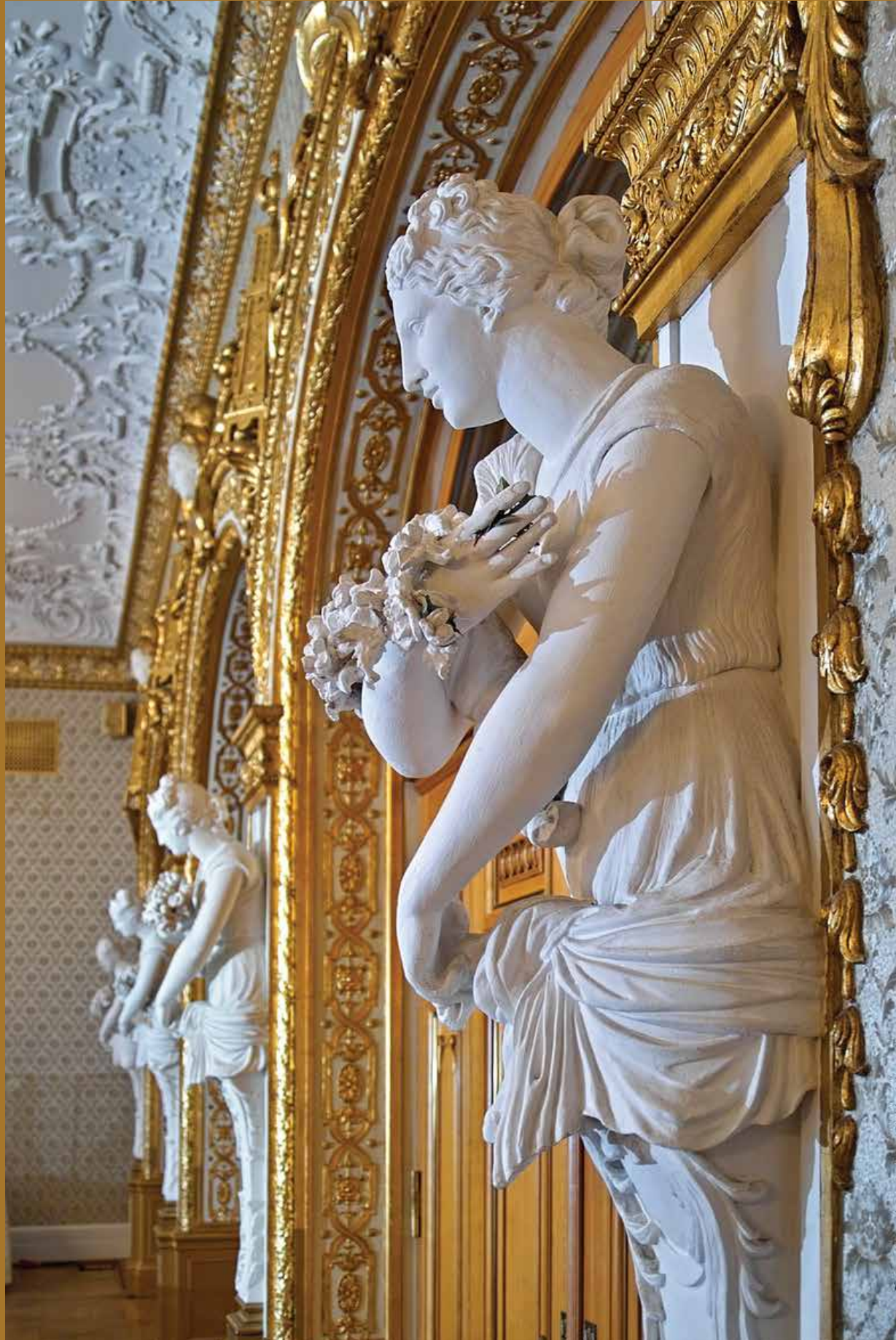


Welcome to Wiesbaden, Hessen's grand old capital. In the year 40 AD, the Romans erected a border fort as a military stronghold, whose central location and the beneficial, curative powers of some 26 springs promoted the rapid growth of a civilian settlement and the development of a spa culture. By the 13th Century, the city had advanced to become a royal court and imperial symbol, and in the 18th Century, it prospered under the aegis of the Dukes of Nassau. At the end of the Nassau era in 1866 and during the Prussian occupation, Kaiser Wilhelm 11 and Carl von Ibell, the Lord Mayor, laid the foundations for a large city. Since then, it's never looked back.

Nestled between the Rhine and the foothills of the Taunus Mountains, Wiesbaden is still a 'green oasis', its Mediterranean climate and its residents' 'savor vivre' giving it the title 'Northern Nice'. Villas and houses - landmarks in romantic Classicism and Art Nouveau - shape the city's contours, and its flair has been an inspiration to artists and composers Brahms and Wagner and the Expressionist painter, Alexey von Jewlensky.

Wellness is the city's major attraction. All roads lead to the Kaiser-Friedrich-Therme, an oasis of well-being, a historic thermal bath heated by a hot spring, featuring an Irish-Roman Bath, a contemporary sauna landscape, and several therapies using natural treatment methods. Visitors flock here to sample the curative waters of the 26 hot springs at the Kochbrunnen Fountain at Kranzplatz, the city's symbol. Also famous is the Kaiser-Friedrich-Therme near the Kochbrunnen.

Visitors stroll along the famous antiques street, the Taunusstrasse, through elegant malls, and especially, along the magnificent Wilhelmstrasse. They come here to taste the local specialty, 'Sekt' (German champagne) and Riesling, and to try their luck at the casino, and also enjoy a bit of 'dolce vita' in street cafes.







Take a city walking or sight-seeing tour. Between half-timbered houses and cobble-stone streets, small shops and boutiques try to seduce visitors with their trifles or treasures. Once encircled by a city wall, the Altstadt (Old Town) sprawls between Webergasse, Langgasse and Kirchgasse, Friedrichstrasse and Wilhelmstrasse. One passes narrow twisted alleys lined with houses dating back to the 18th and 19th Centuries and ends up at the Baker's Fountain in Grabenstrasse. Then there's the oldest preserved townhouse at Wagemannstrasse. The row of houses between these two streets is the heart of the historic quarter, locally known as the 'Schiffchen' or 'Little Ship'. The focal point of the Old Town is the Schlossplatz (Palace Square), which holds a bi-weekly farmers' market. 'A jewel among film theatres' is how Wiesbaden-born director Volker Schlöndorff described the Caligari Cinema that was recently awarded the 2018 Hessen Culture Prize. The cinema makes the history of film accessible to modern audiences.

The Exground Film Festival is one of Germany's most important independent cinema events. Head for Neroberg Hill and ride on the Nerobergbahn funicular rail carriage. This unique rail artifact has run from the base station, across a viaduct, to the top station at a height of 245 metres since 1888, the era of Kaiser Wilhelm. It connects the Nerotal valley with Neroberg Hill, travelling 440 metres and overcoming a 25 per cent gradient. This is wine territory, featuring one of Germany's few city vineyards, run by Kloster Eberbach. Lunch at Opelbad Restaurant whose highlight is the outdoor, hill-perched, heritage-listed swimming pool surrounded by forests and vineyards, offering stunning views over the city's rooftops. Minutes away is the Russian Church on Neroberg Hill, one of the finest, most exquisitely decorated ecclesiastical buildings in Germany. The church was built by Duke Adolph of Nassau in memory of his wife the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, a niece of the Russian Tsar.







Nearby is the Dem'sche Gelände, a heritage-listed architectural monument. This generous plaza that once comprised a market cellar is now home to the Stadt-museum am Markt, known as 'Sam', the first to explore Wiesbaden's history, from prehistory to the modern-day.

Stop by at the Lutheran Marktkirche (market church), the first brick building erected in the Duchy of Nassau, built as a Gothic Revival basilica with three naves, its 92 metres – high western tower making it the city's tallest building. The grand and opulent State Theatre and the historic and magnificent Kurhaus offer year-round programmes. Russian poet Feodor Dostoevski and German composer Richard Wagner tried their luck here. So can you! Today the casino operates in the former wine hall of the Kurhaus, and offers a truly magnificent setting for the games of chance.

Tempt your taste buds. Start at the Kunder Chocolaterie, an institution of the city with worldwide fans, which has kept its recipes a secret since 1898. The company's flair for experimenting is seen in its new range of chocolates inspired by Wiesbaden sights.

Move on to Café Maldaner, which is something out of a picture book. Officially designated as Germany's first Viennese-style coffee house, it offers an assortment of handmade tortes, cakes and luxury chocolates

beautifully displayed in old-fashioned cabinets. Enjoy the nostalgic charm created by its ambience, the aroma of the coffee, and courteous old-world service.

Round off your culinary tour with a stopover at Hepa Coffee Roastery that has offered quality coffee products for over 70 years. Hepa coffee is exceptional. The company uses a patented method to remove the outer layer of the coffee bean, and also the bitter compounds found in conventional coffee products. Unlike any other process in the world, this gives Hepa coffee its unique taste.

Summer lends a festival air to things. The beginning of June sees 'Theatrium' on the splendid Wilhelmstrasse. Cabaret shows and crafts, performances and culinary delights invite visitors to stroll along the famous street and celebrate for two days. The pedestrian zone is transformed into the longest wine pub in the world for ten days in August. The annual 'Oldtime Rallye' with some 180 international, historic automobiles, is a rolling museum that crosses the finish line in Wiesbaden. The year ends with the Christmas Market downtown and the fantastic New Year's Eve Party in the Kurhaus.

Wiesbaden is all about quiet holidays in the heart of Germany, imbibing that sought-after special Imperial atmosphere.

### Fact File

- *Wiesbaden is less than an hour by train from Frankfurt, Germany's main aerial gateway.*
- *City accommodation comes in the form of deluxe, standard and budget hotels.*
- *Eating out is easy and pleasant, thanks in part to the famed regional Sekt and Reislung.*
- *While it helps to scour the countryside by car, one can walk around the city and Old Town area.*
- *The tourist office is located ten minutes walk away from the rail station.*



### About the author

*Inder Raj Ahluwalia is a world-renowned international travel journalist & author. His professional profile features awards from several European and Asian countries, among others.*





# Rosakue

A haven of intimate luxury

Rosakue Hospitality is a handpicked ensemble of boutique home retreats that has changed the definition of hospitality with its cozy settings, welcoming destinations, and well-curated experiences. Deepika Arora, Founder, Rosakue Hospitality has aimed at introducing a retreat to the Indian market which is an amalgamation of comfort and luxury and is very much influenced by the local culture.

- Sudipta Saha





### Raise the bar

The evolution of boutique hotels in the Indian hospitality sector has created a lot of opportunities for travellers to experience and rejoice every moment of their travel. One such boutique chain is the Rosakue Hospitality, known to offer the finest hospitality, aesthetic décor, aura of luxury, joyful settings, and the essence of the local cuisine and culture that assures a hassle-free vacation. "Boutique hotels are typically smaller and more intimate than regular hotels, with exclusivity and personalisation forming the core of their offerings. While Rosakue has elements of this overall theme, we are unique in that we are boutique lifestyle homes rather than boutique hotels. Our USP is that we blend the conveniences of a boutique hotel with the comforts of a homestay," adds Deepika Arora.



Deepika Arora

### Boutique experiences

Each of the Rosakue properties is known for its exclusivity and to curate experiences that are close to our culture and ethics. Speaking on the array of experiences which Rosakue is known for, Deepika highlights, "Travel has always been about experiences and memories, rejuvenation and change, but travellers are becoming more discerning and their standards are

being constantly upgraded. This has converted even a simple check-in into an opportunity to make an impact. At Rosakue, we aspire to equate a stay with the feeling of living with family. We have enhanced 'guest service' to 'guest care' with every interaction reflecting genuine warmth. Our dahi-shakkar welcome and turmeric milk turndown are just a few examples."

She further adds, "Under the umbrella of Rosakue, we have two brands, the heritage-style Bara Bungalow and the bohemian-styled Rosa. Under both brands, each property showcases the destination, local culture, and cuisine through its architecture, decor, and cuisine. Our bespoke experiences offer a peek into the local culture, landscape, and lifestyle, be it organic farming, mountain hikes, heritage trails, or riverside picnics."

### Create a buzz

In the current scenario, when domestic tourism is on the upsurge, the market intends to be competitive, marketing plays an important role. "In the age of social media, brands are made and destroyed with powerful imagery and storytelling. But the key to success lies in imagery and stories that are authentic. Authenticity creates trust, and trust builds relationships. By being true to ourselves, by building on our strengths, we aim to create a close-knit family, relationship with guests that endure and grow over time," says Deepika.

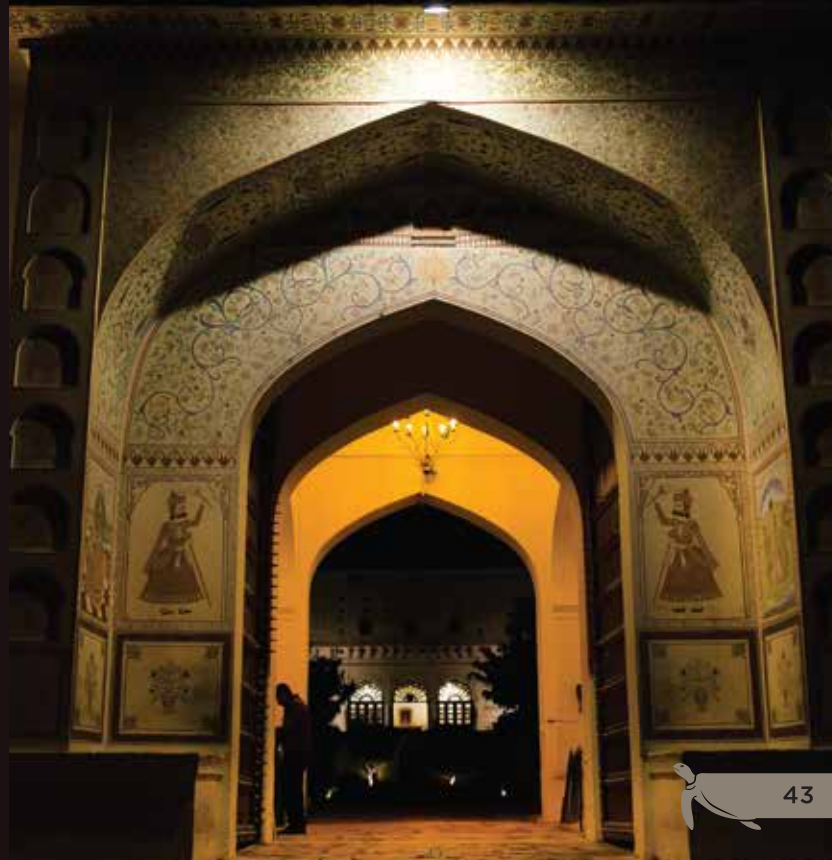
Covid has changed the way people use to travel and has turned the market into a competitive market. Adding to it, Deepika shares, "These times are certainly challenging where small or big fish, everyone needs to play by the changing rules of the game, and we can do that by keeping an eye on the pulse of the guest's needs. Today, what travellers need most are safety, seclusion, home-style comfort, closeness to nature, and a little adventure, all preferably at driving distance from their cities.

Our boutique lifestyle homes tick off every box. We believe that easy-going vacations on home turf are here to stay. We're prepped for a long haul."

### Expansion plans

Rosakue's splendid hospitality has already raised the bar; the plethora of experiences it offers is simply marvellous. Their signature services and warm hospitality, along with home-grown lifestyles have created a niche market for Rosakue. Sharing on expansion plans, Deepika Arora mentions, "Rosakue is currently present in

six states with its brands, Rosa and Bara Bungalow. We plan to selectively add homes in more destinations, both popular and offbeat, with upcoming properties at Jodhpur, Udaipur, Dehradun, Thanedar, Kasauli, and Panna among other locations. It's been a rocky road last year, but we made the most of the bad patch to consolidate and build our presence. This is just the start. We plan to continue focusing on boutique lifestyle homes across leisure locations and key metros and are also looking at opportunities of acquiring brands/companies operating in this niche segment."





# 36th IATO Annual Convention instills buoyancy amongst members



IATO, which has acted as an anchor in these constant high tides, recently hosted the 36th IATO Annual Convention in Gandhinagar from 16-19 December, the flagship event of the tourism industry in India.

- Team TT





## EVENT AFFAIR

IATO Annual Convention, earned the badge for being the first tourism mega event in India since the world was ambushed by the COVID-19. The three day event was charged with elevated networking combined with insightful sessions and entertaining evenings. The convention has proved to be a renewed opportunity to start business and converge on networking at the most opportune time.

One of the highlights of the convention was the well-thought-out theme 'Brand India - The Road to recovery'; as the name suggests, highlighted on the industry's roadmap to recovery. The intuitive business sessions on diverse strategic topics addressed the SWOT to recuperation. Members were also exposed to policy discussions by the state governments thereby enabling them to chalk out their region-specific strategies.

The sessions were dedicated to addressing the key issues that plague the industry at present where members could raise their concerns with the policymakers present at the sessions and discuss amongst themselves the best possible solutions to address their issues. Besides the foremost agenda, the business sessions also attempted to brainstorm upon the in-depth analysis of a statutory plan of action for recovery, connectivity, marketing, policy framework relating to SEIS and other pertinent issues, sustainable tourism and other facets.

The success of the convention can be derived from the exuberance of Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO as he shares, "The 36th IATO Annual Convention 2021 was a grand success and more than what we had expected." He goes on and adds, "This convention was by far one of the best conventions of IATO as per the feedback received not only from the association members but from

the industry stalwarts who were present at the convention. This was only possible with the whole-hearted support from Shri Hareet Shukla, Secretary Tourism, Shri Jenu Devan, Managing Director & Commissioner Tourism, Govt. of Gujarat and his team."

The high-octane convention was attended and graced by equally high-profile guests. The inauguration ceremony witnessed the presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Bhupendra Patel who inaugurated the convention along with Shri G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, Director General Tourism, Govt. of India and Shri Hareet Shukla, Secretary Tourism, Govt. of Gujarat.

The panel discussion and valedictory session were

graced by senior bureaucrats from the Centre and the decorated list incorporated powerful names like Mr Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary Tourism, Mrs. Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General Tourism, Mr Rajiv Jalota, Chairman Mumbai Port Trust, Mr. Raj Muthuraj, Additional DG. Directorate General of Foreign Trade and from the State Governments Mr. SK Srivastava, Dept. of Forests & Environment, Government of Gujarat, Ms. Shilpa Gupta, Additional Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Mr. Manoj Kumar. Managing Director, Jungle Lodges & Resort, Govt. of Karnataka, Mr. G.S. Itoo, Director Tourism Kashmir, Mr. Rajiv Jain, Addl. GM, IRCTC, Dr. Abhay Sinha, Director General, Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC).

The list doesn't end there; the other eminent personalities on the panels were Mr. Sanjay Kumar- Chief Strategy & Revenue Officer, IndiGo, Mr. Nakul Anand-Executive Director, ITC Hotels & Chairman FAITH, Mr. Puneet Chhatwal- MD & CEO, The Indian Hotels Company Limited, Mr. Anuraag Bhatnagar-COO, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, Mr. Ajay Bakaya- Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, CA Talati-Chairman SEPC to name a few. The panel discussions were complimented by equally engaging and fruitful business sessions, all attended by large number of participants. One of the noteworthy achievement of the panel discussion in the Business Session on 'Hotels in the New Normal' was the pronouncement of special rates for IATO member tour operators and travel agents by Taj Hotels with a Promo Code, which was the highlight of the session. The memorandum is being worked upon by the Taj Hotels and will be announced by the first week of January 2022.

No convention is complete without a motivational session, and one can only imagine the energy of the auditorium when you have the famous Bollywood actor, Mr. Ashish Vidyarthi as the speaker in the motivational session. His words and stories inspired the members to stand strong during the crisis and look for future opportunities. Knowledge sessions check, business sessions check, panel discussions check, motivational session check, but all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and IATO was in no mood to leave their members low on the entertainment quotient and so every evening of the convention was lit-up with entertainment programmes lined with artists like Abhijeet Sawant, Jimmy Felix and Urvashi Arora charming the members with their performances.

Let's shed some light on the venue hosting the humongous





## EVENT AFFAIR

convention; The Leela Gandhinagar. This is the first luxury hotel in India to be built on the airspace of a conventional railway station, 22 metres above the ground. The 318-room property combines modernity with subtle inspirations from local Gujarat architecture and culture and sits proudly atop the railway tracks. IATO has always bestowed its members with the best-in-class hospitality and this special venue endorses their intention. The Leela Gandhinagar was as imposing as its quality of excellent hospitality. All arrangements including transport were perfect to order.





EVENT AFFAIR



The IATO run for responsible tourism, an event that has over the years become synonymous with the convention and already a huge hit amongst the members was organised on day two of the convention. This year's IATO Run was a thrilling experience with all participants enjoying the cold morning breeze in an almost zero pollution environment with AQI level below 50. The run was flagged-off by Ms. Bhavina Hasmukhbhai Patel, silver medallist in table tennis in the 2020 Tokyo Summer Paralympics. She was also felicitated by IATO during the inaugural function.

Porbandar, Modhera, Bhuj, Patan, Little Rann of Kutch. The Convention was executed by the experienced events team of Occasion Xperts.

"The basic purpose of having this convention was to bring our members to come out of their house, relax their mind, interact with each other and rebuild confidence. Having the Karaoke Singing competition was to give an opportunity to the talented members to enhance confidence and to perform on the stage," said Mr. Rajiv Mehra.

Following the convention, five post-convention tours were organised and over 200 delegates explored Gujarat by visiting places of their interest like the Statue of Unity, Somnath, Dwarka, Jamnagar,





# GRNconnect, a platform with the right structure, strategy and vision



GRNconnect understands the market needs something that is uncomplicated with precise functionality. Thus, being one of the largest aggregators, they intend to offer a consistent level of seamless service and world-class offering through their platform. Gaurav Khandelwal, Director-Sales, GRNconnect talks about the stellar technology, endless inventory and great pricing options available only at GRN.

## - Bharti Sharma

Being one of the oldest aggregators, GRN has been serving the travel fraternity for almost 30 years now. Over the years, they have been upgrading their products as per changing trends and were the first to launch a b2b online portal for their travel partners. "We surely have the first-mover advantage. GRN is connected with the major tech players which have helped us with the inventory, price competitiveness and ease of integrating APIs into our product," shares Gaurav.

Gaurav believes that the online travel system needs to evolve with time to make travel more accessible to a larger, global audience by providing integrated travel services including hotels, tours, transfers, activities and packages in one platform with enhanced user experience and bookings. He adds, "We have upgraded our portal during these tough times by adding new products and making the portal more user-friendly by adding new features. We are already live with Amadeus and shall soon be available on their web service as well by the end of this month i.e. January 2022."

GRN is incessantly focusing their efforts on adapting to the evolving demands of travel clients in order to ensure the growth of the travel business in this pandemic era. Looking at the customer demands, GRN plans to expand its portfolio with some DMCs in the international market.

Gaurav emphasizes, "We have already launched our US DMC for which we have secured a good response from the market. We are also planning to launch a DMC for Egypt and a DMC for India soon."

The all-encompassing accelerated rate of technology adoption enabled by the pandemic has ushered an instant change that would have otherwise materialised over a few years or even decades. Gaurav shares, "Travel Technology has already been playing a vital role for the last few years and it has evolved a lot in the last couple of years due to the ongoing situation. Many companies have gone the online way to reach out to a wider range of clients and have been serving them smoothly."

Much has been said about how technology is transforming the travel industry through dynamic pricing, personalised campaigns, and automated support leveraging these technologies to deliver better customer experiences. Gaurav believes that audiences are moving online faster than anticipated, and there is an increasing comfort level with online services. He says, "People have already become quite net savvy and they are switching online to cater to their requirements for not only travel but probably in every sector of life. Technology is a segment that is being updated and upgraded on a regular basis and is an ongoing process. Innovation and adaptability are the key to success."





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# Travel Predictions for 2022

In its most extensive travel predictions research to date, the digital travel leader reveals a renewed sense of optimism amongst Indian travellers, fueling a hunger to embrace the new normal and get back out to fully experience the world in the year ahead.

- Team TT





While COVID-19 is not yet in the rearview mirror, an indefatigable sense of hope for travel is beginning to take its place. To explore this rolling wave of travel optimism, Booking.com has commissioned extensive research with more than 24,000 travellers across 31 countries and territories including India, combining it with its proprietary data and insights as a digital travel leader for the past 25 years, to predict how travel will continue to be redefined in 2022.

### Vitamin Vacay:

**Travel will become an essential part of self-care**

More so than daily exercise or mindful meditation, getting away on vacation will become THE form of self-care in 2022, with over 84 per cent of Indian travellers affirming that travel helps their mental and emotional wellbeing more than other forms of rest and relaxation. After more than a year of ever-evolving travel restrictions, the important benefits that travel has on health and wellbeing are now being acknowledged. Booking.com's Travel Predictions research reveals that 85 per cent of Indian travellers believe that having a vacation planned has a positive impact on their emotional wellbeing and 69 per cent of Indian travellers say that they didn't realize how important travel was to their wellbeing until it was no longer an option.

### Resetting the Out Of (Home) Office :

**Vacation time will be strictly work free**

When the pandemic hit, homes across the globe became our offices too, and the novelty of working remotely was realized. However, in 2022 we'll see a significant rise in people wanting to take back control in a bid to firmly re-establish a healthy work-life balance as vacation time itself will be strictly work-free for 77 per cent of Indian travellers in 2022, which wasn't always the case in 2021 with home and remote work lives blurred. And with 76 per cent of

Indian travellers claiming to have worked more hours using less vacation days during the pandemic, we expect to see more people setting their well deserved out of (home) office messages in 2022.

### All the First-Time Feels:

**The anticipation of the journey will be as exciting as the destination**

While many of us may have forgotten where our passport is or even just how to pack, all that out-of-practice travel awkwardness will give way to a genuine sense of delight for even the most routine aspects of our trips in 2022. After feeling 'stuck' for so long, rather than rushing through the journey, travellers will be relishing every moment. Each 'first' of our trips in 2022 will be a moment to savor, with a majority of Indian travellers saying that simple pleasures such as feeling the sun on their skin (75 per cent) or seeing a body of water of some kind instantly improves their mood for the better (84 per cent). Even the uncertainty of navigating public transportation in a new city in a foreign language is something 75 per cent of Indian travellers say they'll enjoy while 84 per cent of Indian travellers say that travel is more enjoyable when the journey feels like part of the trip itself. After such a long period of limited options, recapturing that first-time feel and leaning in to every single moment will be a hallmark of trips in 2022.

### Community First:

**Authentic connection with the local community will be priority**

As restrictions caused travel to slow in many parts of the world, the pandemic forced us to make the most of what was on our doorsteps. From supporting independently owned businesses to spending more time than ever at the neighborhood park, our relationship with the community around us has rekindled. In 2022, this desire to connect authentically with the local community will

continue on vacation too, as we seek to be more mindful about every trip we take and ensure our impact on the places we visit and the people who live there is positive. To this effect, 78 per cent of Indian travellers agree it's important that their trip is beneficial to the local community at their destination and 75 per cent of Indian travellers would appreciate an app or website that provides recommendations on destinations where an increase in tourism would have a positive impact on the local community.

### Swipe Right on New Places and Faces:

**2022 will finally be the time to branch out and make new connections**

For many, the pandemic meant spending an extended and intense period with our closest friends and loved ones, but vacations in 2022 will be an opportunity to branch out and make some new connections. As 81 per cent of Indian travellers want to meet new people while away, we expect to see travellers using their vacations as an opportunity to expand their usual social circles, with 77 per cent of Indian travellers looking forward to socializing while on vacation. A resurgence of holiday romances is also predicted with 77 per cent hoping for a holiday romance on their next trip.

### Just Say Yes:

**People will be saying YES to travel, making up for the lost travel time**

After so long of being told 'no' travellers are reclaiming a more positive way of thinking for 2022. The coming year will bring the very best of improv to travel, with us responding to each unexpected twist and turn in the trip with an emphatic 'yes, and...'. To that end, nearly 83 per cent of Indian travellers agree they will say yes to any vacation opportunity if budget allows. 79 per cent of Indian travellers are more open to different types of vacation than before the pandemic and 65 per cent of Indian travellers won't mind

where they go on vacation as long as it's the type of trip they want, they're just happy to be away from home. Adopting a positive mentality will open up even more of the world to travellers than ever before, with many taking a more adventurous approach to their holiday choices, and maybe even their companions.

### Embracing the Unpredictable:

**People will use technology to embrace travels continued unpredictability**

Uncertainty will continue to be a constant in travel in 2022, and while we cannot change or predict every new surprise and challenge that fate has in store for us, we will embrace it. Having half, our favorite apps will continue to help us navigate the unknown on our trips, with 76% of Indian travellers agreeing that technology helps alleviate the anxiety around traveling. Technology will continue to smooth out the unforeseen bumps in the road with increasing finesse and proactivity.







# PAIN'T THE WORLD GREEN ON ST. PATRICKS DAY

Marking the onset of Christianity in Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is the Holiday celebrated with pints of Guinness and people parading in leprechaun costumes with green hats dancing on top of their heads.

- Tripti Jain





We all remember when Barney dressed up in a green suit and made the St. Patrick's Day, 'wait for it' legendary. The holiday that is famous for its larger than life vibes and is a head spinner for generations to come. Celebrated across the western nations of the world this holiday aptly welcomes the onset of spring with pompous and parades. The day March 17th is said to be the day St. Patrick left for his heavenly abode blessing the people of Ireland with the start of Christianity. He left behind his legacy to be known to the world with two hand-written letters that were addressed to himself.

### Tales and Legends

As the widely known legend goes, St. Patrick was born in England and at the tender age of 16, was kidnapped by Irish raiders. After six long years of enslavement, one night something happened, and that gave his life in Ireland a real purpose.

He believed that he was visited by God in his dreams and something about the whole situation made him realise that he needs to be set free. The journey for the ultimate escape then began and he was able to find a way and return to his family. However, he discovered the goal of his life and hence, decided to move back to Ireland. God had not just inspired him to

break free, message to the natives, giving rise to the practice of Catholicism in Ireland. He is also believed to have driven all the snakes out of the nation, giving us a glimpse of the miracles he performed. If Jesus can turn water into rum, St. Patrick's knew his tricks around the snakes.

### Green, green and green

No, it's not a hulk attack but the colour of St. Patrick's Day inspired by the Shamrock leaf. There are various explanations to why green is associated with the celebrations. One of the most commonly believed reason is that St. Patrick used the three-lobed shamrock leaves to preach about the Holy Trinity comprising the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is used as the symbol of Christianity in Ireland even today, as St. Patrick is considered as the patron saint of the nation. The other possible reason is that the colour is derived from Ireland's nickname as The Emerald Isle. There is also a mythical reason that is worth stating - wearing green makes you escape the leprechaun which may pinch you if you are visible. Whatever the reason is, the colour green has become synonymous with the revelry that can be witnessed at the St. Patrick's Day parades. So now we know when to paint the town green.







### Parades with pomp and pompous

Besides Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated with much splendour in the United States of America as well. The parades in New York and Boston are well-known, not just as religious feasts, but also an absolute fiesta of colours! The Chicago River is also dyed in green to commemorate the occasion. The grand feast is prepared for one and all to indulge their taste buds in some lip smacking home cooked meals. The pubs are filled with people asking for pitchers of beers and Irish whiskey is the cherry on the cake. No St. Patrick's Day goes by without one glass of authentic Irish whiskey for the ones who really need to blend in with the Irish culture.

St. Patrick's Day is known for its big parades. New York City hosts one of the world's largest celebrations, with two million people gathering for a six-hour march up Fifth Avenue. There are no cars or floats – just dancers, bands, and bagpipers. People prepare to walk

the streets of New York dressed in leprechaun outfits and hit the closest Irish pub for a much needed night of celebration.

### Ireland on Adrenaline

In Ireland itself it involves different processions through different villages and cities, usually followed by a trip to the local pub to continue the festivities. The Irish pub culture is recognised all over the world and people from all across the world travel down to Ireland not just for the beautiful scenic beauty, but also for the yummy Irish whiskey.

Irish pubs are to be found all over the world, from Tanzania to Peru and the Netherlands to Australia, one will always be able to find an Irish pub for a pint of Guinness and whatever comes near to an Irish stew that they offer. For a country that also brought us literature, music and art it would seem that the Irish are synonymous to good times and late nights. The Irish people surely know how to party and pull off late nights with mornings that open to long green pastures.







### Facts to know

- St. Patrick was not Irish, he was from Wales - This is an unusual fact that many people don't realize. St. Patrick is not Irish, he is actually Welsh. He served as a missionary in Ireland, but later fled back to England.
- The shamrock symbol is a teaching tool - St. Patrick was said to have used it to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- The first St. Patrick's Day parade took place in New York City in 1760s - Regardless of it being a holiday based for Irish people, the parade started out in New York for the first time. Many Irish emigrated to NY back in the 1760's and this parade featured Irish soldiers serving in the English army.
- Traditionally, every year, the Irish leader hands a crystal bowl full of shamrocks to the US President. Every year, the Irish leader makes a visit to the White House to present a crystal bowl full of shamrocks to the current president.



## OneAbove DMC hosts the 'Maldivian Night' in Mumbai

OneAbove DMC recently hosted the 'Maldivian Night' in Mumbai on 17th Dec in association with Villa Hotels & Resorts. The event was attended by over 130 select trade partners from Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur and Delhi. It was a triumph evening for the industry trade partners as they got to experience Maldivian Hospitality with a live band and one-of-a-kind award show.

The awards were presented in the most unique way through categories such as 'Avengers Award', 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham Award', 'Armour Award', 'Powerpuff Girls Award' and 'Northern Lights Award'.

Speaking about the Awards, Rahim Aslam, Founder & Consultant, OneAbove expressed his sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in the event. He added, "In just three years, OneAbove, as a company has become one of the leading DMCs in India and the credit,

goes to all our partners who believed in us and trusted in our team. This evening is for all our trade partners to celebrate their contribution and make invisible efforts more visible – be it for our team or for our partners". Further, he went on to announce One Above will be launching their online portal in a few months.

Fathimath Ifasha, Manager – Sales & Marketing, Villa Hotels & Resorts also attended the event and expressed her gratitude towards OneAbove and all the trade partners for their continued support.

One Above DMC, closely work with the B2B market are proficient and have local expertise, huge bed bank, owned vehicles, in-house professional guides and fully-trained staff who make sure that every business is carried out effectually. Headquartered in Mumbai and has a strong market presence already.





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## Tourism Malaysia New Delhi hosts networking session with travel trade partners

In preparation for the reopening of its borders, the Malaysian Government has selected Langkawi as the pilot holiday destination to receive tourists under the 'Langkawi International Travel Bubble' from November 15.

In conjunction of the recent travel bubble, Tourism Malaysia New Delhi has hosted a Networking Session with travel trade partners at The Imperial, New Delhi. The event was also attended by travel agents, wedding planners and media representatives from the northern and eastern regions of India. The attendees were briefed about Malaysia's tourism development and tourism products, the latest Covid-19 situation as well as the pilot travel bubble and the expected reopening of Malaysian borders in early 2022.

Mr. Sulaiman Suip, Director of Tourism Malaysia New Delhi said, "Malaysia has successfully reached vaccination of more than 97.3 per cent of its adult population against COVID-19, making it one of the highest vaccinated destinations in

the Southeast Asian region. In addition, fully-vaccinated individuals have also started receiving their booster shots."

"We are thrilled and excited to welcome back tourists. All our attractions, tour operators, airlines, hotels, and resorts are operating under strict SOPs. Our industry players are offering value-for-money packages while health and hygiene will be of utmost importance as your safety is our priority. Also, the highlight for 2022 will be the opening of Genting SkyWorlds, the much-anticipated outdoor theme park in Genting Highlands. This is sure to be and take everyone's adventure quotient on a new high," said Mr. Suip.

India remains one of the top market sources for Malaysia and contributed 735,309 international tourist arrivals in 2019. The first two months of 2020 recorded a phenomenal cumulative growth of +29%. However, the spread of the coronavirus pandemic globally led the countries to close their borders and cancel most flights.

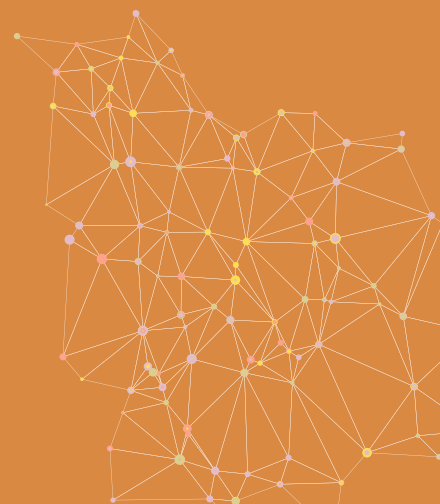


## ETAA North India committee organises networking event in Delhi

After only a gap of a few months of having their orientation Trip to Dharamshala / Palampur, The ETAA north India committee organised yet another successful networking event at the Taj Ambassador, New Delhi on the December 8, 2021.

The session began with a welcome note by the committee members and discussions on the positive rebound of the domestic business and some outbound business to select countries, followed by excellent presentations by Sheema Vohra from Brand USA and Varun Mehta/ Avneet Kaur from VFS Global giving a presentation on Visit Portugal. This was a very informative and an interactive session that gave exhaustive information about both the destinations.

The Chairperson, Ms Sangeeta Manocha took over and announced the new core committee for the north India Chapter, with Mr. Punit Bhasin taking on the role of Vice Chairman, Mr. Gaurav Arora as the Joint Secretary and the addition of the new Membership Head, Ms. Deepika Khanna.





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## ***Korea Tourism Organization organises its first Hybrid MICE Roadshow 'MICE Experience Day 2021'***

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) hosted a one day experiential event – 'Korea MICE Experience Day 2021' at Pullman Aerocity on December 10, 2021, targeting the Indian travel trade to update on its latest MICE destination offerings. While the pandemic restrictions have yet not been lifted for India by South Korea, the event was intended to prepare the travel agents for the re-opening of the destination in the near future. While South Korea is preparing to open for travel soon, the current roadshow was held as the first physical event in a hybrid format, which KTO had organized post COVID-19 pandemic. The event began with the virtual address by Mr. Sangho Moon, Director from the MICE Marketing Team at KTO head office followed by opening remarks by Mr. Y.G. Choi, Director at KTO New

Delhi. The special addresses to the event were given by Mr. Chan Kim, General Manager at Korean Air and Mr. Guldeep Singh Sahani, former president of OTOAI and supporter of KTO.

A live virtual tour of Gyeongbuk Palace (iconic landmark in Seoul, South Korea) was arranged for attendees followed by three exciting engagement activities – Hanbok (Korean traditional dress) wearing experience, Korea MICE (X O) Quiz and Dalgona Cookie Challenge (From the K-Drama fame – The Squid Game). To make the event meaningful for business purpose, hybrid B2B meetings were set up with 11 Destination management companies. 3 DMCs were present physically, while others connected virtually with the travel agents.





# OTOAI hosts 'Extraordinary General Meeting' - Protraction of the elections for a year



Keeping in view the 'Rules and Regulations of OTOAI and Societies Act' The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) hosted an 'Extraordinary General Meeting' on December 20, 2021, at The India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The meet was highlighted by the presence of the Association members and well-known travel trade media people.

Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI, addressed the gathering by highlighting the crucial matter for postponement of elections of the Association for Executive Committee for One Year keeping in view the Rules and Regulations of OTOAI and Societies Act. The decision was taken due to the Covid 19 Pandemic which has lasted for the last 18 months, the

term of the present Executive Committee needs an extension to complete the objects for which they were elected. The decision was sanctioned by all the members present over there without any obligation due to the present unavoidable circumstances.

Also Shrawan Bhalla, General Secretary enumerated the Turkey convention matter by saying- The Association was organising a convention in Turkey in March 2020 for its members, which got postponed due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. He says, "The Present EC is still in talks with the Tourism Board of Turkey to hold the Convention in the year 2022. The date has not been decided, the tourism board of Turkey wishes to deal with the present EC to propose

the convention for the sake of continuity. Riaz Munshi, President added his words by saying, "The convention will most probably be held in March 2022 in Turkey only if things go well. And if that didn't have to be happening then things are seriously not going well in the Industry."

"Lastly, for the past several months, we all have been working from home or probably not working at all due to that pandemic situation. Now definitely looking for greater and brighter 2022! We all were gearing up for this year-end season and again omicron came into our lives and everything again went back to that thing. But yes I think Omicron should be the last wave and the virus will end up and the whole world will start traveling again," said Himanshu

Patil, Vice President.

"Our focus as an organisation has always been the outbound sector and as the tourism industry is the most affected industry from the past several months or a year and it has been very much neglected by the government as no such actions have been taken for it, we are in talks with the Ministry of India to bring up the licensing system especially for travel companies which can become the keychain where they will ask us to get the revenue and by this travel, operators can do the business in some professional level. This will not only lead us to get noticed in the eye of the government but also lead to the smooth running of the travel business for which OTOAI is working," said Riaz Munshi.





## APPOINTMENTS



### **Accor**

Accor, a world-leading augmented hospitality group with over 420 hotels across India, Middle East, Africa and Turkey, has appointed Philip Mahoney as Vice President of Food & Beverage for India, Middle East, Africa and Turkey, with the main responsibility to drive the group's strategy in the region: making food and drink the heart and soul of each of its hotels. Throughout his 30-year career, Philip has managed hotels in the UK, Croatia and Mauritius for Malmaison, Lonrho, De Vere Deluxe, Radisson Blu and Regent Hotels, before moving into a regional responsibility for Radisson Blu and Hotel Missoni in the UK and Ireland.

### **Signum Hotels**

Signum Hotels, a fast-growing hotel management company announced the appointment of Urvashi Anand as Associate Director – Training & Quality. Urvashi is a seasoned hotelier with more than 12 years' experience. She was earlier a part of the pre-opening team at Delhi's largest hotel - Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. In her last stint, she was heading communications for the iconic dual property. At Signum Hotels, Urvashi will be responsible for formulating training calendars, analysing training needs, implementation of training strategies, auditing of SOP's and brand standards amongst other responsibilities.



### **Le Meridien Goa, Calangute**

Babita brings with her a unique combination of hotel sales and operations and has recently celebrated the 20-year completion milestone with Marriott International. Having started her career in F&B Operations in Taj and Oberoi hotels in India, Babita subsequently moved into the sales function where her notable achievements include the successful ramp up of the Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel and Lakeside Chalet- MEA after the inventory of the hotel was increased by 300 keys. In her last role, Babita led the team of Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai International Airport as General Manager for more than four years.

### **Sarovar Hotels**

Sarovar Hotels has recently announced the appointment of Manoj Soni as the new Chief Technology Officer. He will be based at Sarovar Corporate office in Gurugram. Soni has more than 25 years of experience as technology leader for Hospitality and Media Company. In his new role he will be responsible for company's digital transformation, overseeing IT operations, integrating new technology, cyber security and risk management.

Before becoming the part of Sarovar Hotels, Mr. Soni has worked with Oberoi Hotels for more than two decades as Head of Information Technology for various properties of Oberoi Hotels and Resorts.





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