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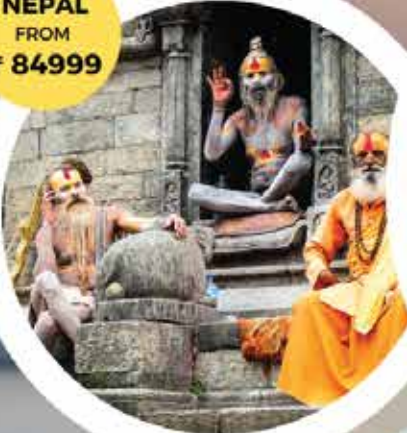


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# Editors Letter

**J**ust as we need nutrients to survive, we need inspiration to thrive. With the world in process of opening up more, the ability to travel again in search of meaningful connections with people and places feels like one of the greatest gifts bestowed upon us. The exact emotions I encountered on the two recent international trips I took, (you will definitely read about them in the upcoming issues). Whether we're in search of sun, snow, seas or urban culture, finding that perfect seasonal respite is exactly what we all crave for.

Though I was never very active on my social media, but after the mega travel events I attended, I just couldn't stop myself from writing. Do you know why? Because when you're sharing your sorrows, then you should share your happiness too. The last two years were dreadful in terms of business but now it's back on its feet. This May turned out to be a goldmine for the travel industry and a welcome turnaround from the pandemic era. The three consecutive mega-events are nothing less than reassurance of the bounce-back with more energy and zeal. After meeting an array of people, I can certainly say that sentiments are positive, people are serious and the pent-up demand for technology was a definite eye-opener. No matter how you decide to work, it's time to revive our connections with the world at large and to celebrate the power of travel anew.

Our June issue feels especially appropriate now with hordes of activities taking place and everyone gearing-up to entice their customers. We went on to do some research on Golf and its impact on the tourism sector. Our team checked-in into some great properties. There are a handful of things that have the capacity to lift us up and make us feel alive and new again, to allow us to feel real and true joy at the moment; the way travel does. To be moved, I say, get moving.

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).

Happy Reading!



**Bharti Sharma**  
Editor

   : [travelturtlemag](https://www.instagram.com/travelturtlemag)





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**16-19**  
**UTTRAKHAND**  
JOURNEY OF SENSES

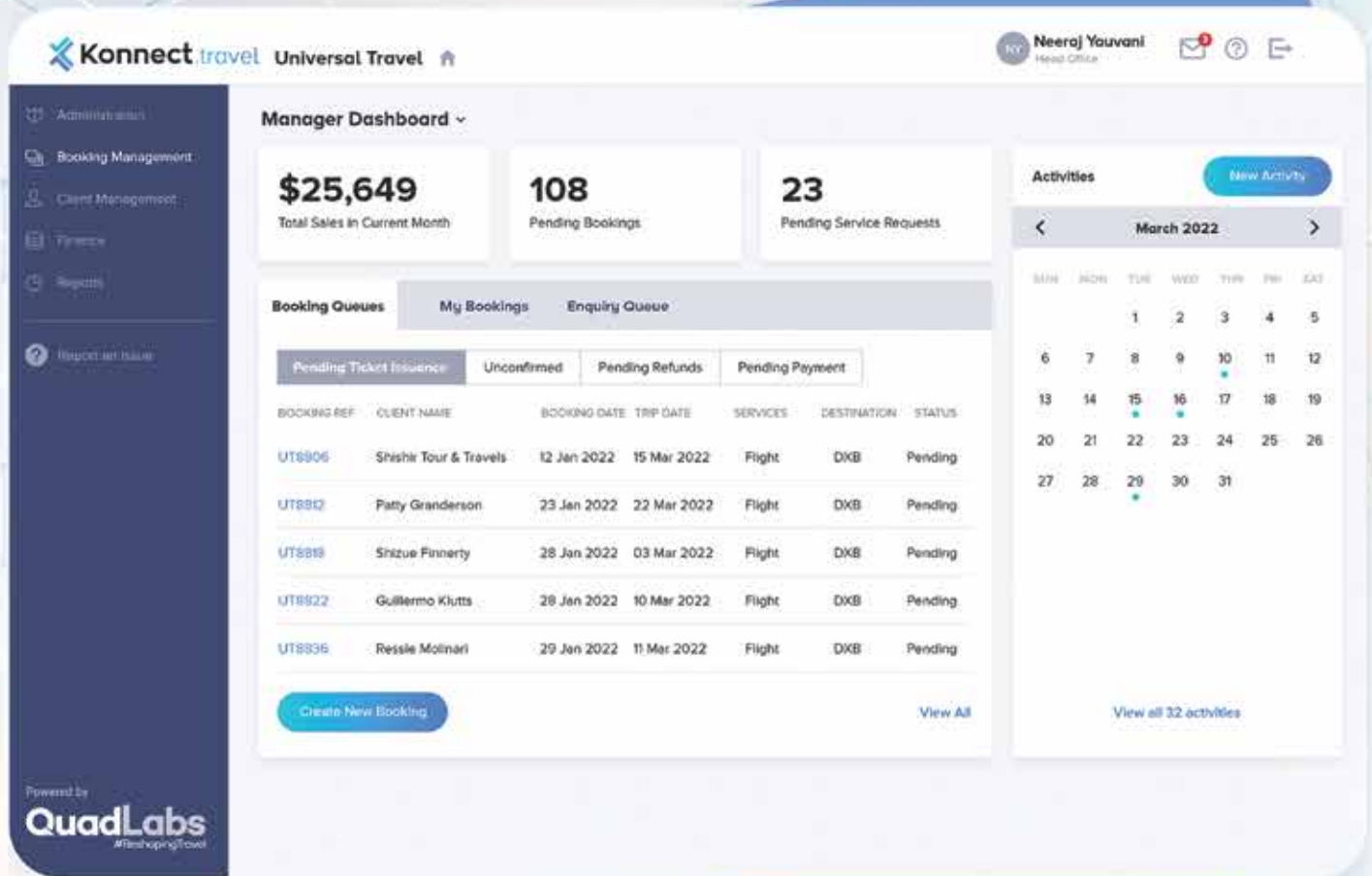
**26-28**  
**KISHAN BIYANI**  
THE MIDAS MAN

**46-49**  
**BERN IS**  
**BEAUTIFUL**

**54-57**  
**THE BRITISH**  
**BEER**  
**FESTIVAL**







**Manager Dashboard**

**\$25,649**  
Total Sales in Current Month

**108**  
Pending Bookings

**23**  
Pending Service Requests

**Booking Queues** | My Bookings | Enquiry Queue

**Pending Ticket Issuance** | Unconfirmed | Pending Refunds | Pending Payment

BOOKING REF	CLIENT NAME	BOOKING DATE	TRIP DATE	SERVICES	DESTINATION	STATUS
UT8906	Shishir Tour & Travels	12 Jan 2022	15 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8892	Patty Granderson	23 Jan 2022	22 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8898	Shizue Finnerty	28 Jan 2022	03 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8822	Guillermo Klutts	28 Jan 2022	10 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8836	Ressie Molinari	29 Jan 2022	11 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending

Activities: March 2022

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## ***Vietjet launches first and only direct flights from Mumbai to Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi***



Vietjet has officially inaugurated the direct flights connecting Mumbai with Vietnam's capital Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the country's largest city.

The inaugural flight ceremony of the two direct routes jubilantly took place at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai with the attendance of Consulate General of Vietnam in Mumbai, the airport authorities, Vietjet's management representatives and hundreds of passengers onboard the debut flights.

Vietjet's Vice President Do Xuan Quang said, "Following our launch of New Delhi - Ho Chi Minh City/Hanoi services, we are delighted to launch two more direct routes between Vietnam and Mumbai. We believe that the two services from Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi to Mumbai as well as the coming Phu Quoc - Mumbai route will strengthen the on-going relationship of Vietnam's two biggest cities with Mumbai. The services launched between Ho Chi Minh City/Hanoi and Mumbai operate four and thrice weekly flights respectively and we expect to increase the frequency in coming time to meet customer's demand."

## ***Nijhawan Group appointed as the India Representation for ONYX Hospitality Group***

Nijhawan Group has been appointed the India Sales, Marketing & Public Relations agency for ONYX Hospitality Group. Nijhawan Group would be responsible for strategizing and executing ONYX Hospitality Group's in-market trade engagements, joint marketing cooperation, product advocacy, brand collaborations and building trade and media relations.

With decades of experience of promoting some of the most successful hospitality brands and emboldened by the experience of a team that spans across the country, Nijhawan Group is one of the leading travel conglomerates with diversified entities within the Indian travel industry.

On this occasion, Ms. Priyanka Nijhawan, Director- Representations, Nijhawan Group said, "We take pride in announcing that ONYX Hospitality Group is the newest addition to our brand portfolio. We are prepared to magnify and pave the path for extensive trade and media outreach for one of the top hospitality brands in the world."



## ***Explore the whole of Germany on the cheap: 9-euro ticket for public transport***

From June 1 to August 31, 2022, travelers can use all means of public transport for nine euros per month. The so-called 9-Euro-Ticket is valid for any number of journeys in the selected month on regional trains, S-Bahn and U-Bahn trains, as well as buses and streetcars. By linking the various transport associations, it is possible to explore the whole of Germany by local transport. 9-euro tickets are not valid on long-distance trains (such as IC or ICE) or long-distance buses. Tickets can now be purchased throughout Germany at ticket vending machines, in train stations or online via the sales channels of Deutsche Bahn or the local transport associations.

Children under the age of 6 travel free of charge. Children aged 6 and over pay 9 euros per calendar month, as do all users of the 9-euro ticket. There is no extra children's ticket with this special offer. The conditions of the respective transport associations apply to the carriage of bicycles.





## ***Jazeera Airways announces the successful implementation of IFG as a new and additional Mode of payment for Group Bookings***

Jazeera Airways, the first privately owned airline in the Middle East today informed that they have successfully implemented payment through the IATA Financial Gateway (IFG) as a new and additional Mode of payment for Group Bookings. IFG (BSP) payment is only available for Travel Agencies registered with Jazeera Airways.

IFG, is a system designed to facilitate and simplify the selling, reporting, and remitting procedures of IATA-accredited passenger sales agents, according to the IATA website. As a response to this decision, everyone has highly appreciated and mentioned that this mode of payment has indeed enhanced yet simplified the business experience for the travel partners. This new and additional Mode of Payment was introduced when the Airways decided that they will discontinue its availability on all GDSs (Galileo & Amadeus) about 15 months ago. The availability of the IFG (BSP) payment will be for Travel Agencies registered with Jazeera Airways only.



## ***IATO Delegation meets the Hon'ble Tourism Minister to discuss concerns of the industry***

As per directives from the Hon'ble Prime Minister, a two member delegation of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) comprising of Mr. Rajiv Mehra -President and Mr. Ravi Gosain-Vice President met the Hon'ble Tourism Minister, Shri G. Kishan Reddy ji yesterday in his office in the presence of Mrs. Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and raised all their concerns for the revival of inbound tourism to our country.

Rajiv Mehra said, "we were given a very patient hearing and Hon'ble Tourism Minister assured to look into all our concerns including the issues related with the other Ministries but are related to tourism sector like MHA, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Railways and Ministry of Culture".

## ***Noida International Airport selects Tata Projects as EPC Contractor***

Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL) has selected Tata Projects Ltd. to undertake the engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) of Noida International Airport (NIA). The company has been selected from three shortlisted teams with demonstrated experience in the design, procurement, and construction of large infrastructure projects. Tata Projects will construct the terminal, runway, airside infrastructure, roads, utilities, landside facilities and other ancillary buildings at Noida International Airport. Tata Projects has a vast experience in building efficient infrastructure and some of their outstanding work includes the New Parliament Building, Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link, multiple stretches of Dedicated Freight Corridors, and Metro Rail Lines across various cities including Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, and Chennai.

Noida International Airport will combine Indian culture and hospitality with Swiss technology and efficiency to develop a modern, user-friendly design, inspired by India. The passenger terminal will encompass parameters such as short and efficient passenger flows, digital services, and commitment to minimal environmental impact. NIA will be a digital airport in India, enabling contactless travel and personalized services for families/the elderly & business travelers.



Noida  
International Airport





### **South Korea travel re-opens for Indian travellers**

As leisure travel is re-opening across the globe, South Korea is all set to welcome outbound travelers from India post two years of COVID-19 Pandemic hitting the world. Indian travelers can now apply for a short term (C-3) visa which allows foreigners to stay up to 90 days for marketing research, travel, visiting relatives, meetings or similar reasons. The visa can be applied physically at the VFS Global centers.

Effective from 01st June 2022, the VFS Global South Korea Visa application Center, New Delhi and Kolkata would accept all the visa categories including express visa applications. Applicants would need to take prior appointment to submit the application in New Delhi, however, for Kolkata applicant can walk in without appointment to submit the application. Online appointment link would be available soon on website.

Korea Tourism Organization has launched multiple campaigns on global and regional level to encourage leisure travel to Korea. The Global campaign is called "Travel to Korea Begins Again". KTO New Delhi has also launched a regional campaign called "Let's Go Korea Plan".

### **OTOAI writes to Embassies/Consulates to ease visa processes and guidelines**

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) has sent a letter to all European Consulates and Embassies, requesting them to streamline the Visa processes and guidelines. India is an important market for the European countries and there is a huge potential for growth for outbound market – that coupled with the pent up demand makes Indian outbound travellers an important segment for countries abroad. OTOAI strongly feels that a little cooperation on part of the Embassies and Consulates will help ease the Visa process and motivate people to travel abroad.

Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI said, "We at OTOAI are committed to uplift Outbound Travel from India and are willing to assist the Embassies in any way possible. We understand that the Embassies currently are overwhelmed with the Visa applications and we would be happy to help them out, in whichever way we can, to ease their burden. We strongly believe that it is only through our joined and concerted efforts that we will be able to go back to the outbound figures of pre pandemic levels. The Outbound Agents are losing revenue and clients because of Visa delays and we would humbly request the Consulate to look into the problem on priority basis and take immediate action."



### **Laguna Phuket: A perfect golf destination for pros and beginners**

Laguna Phuket, an integrated island destination in Thailand, has announced multiple marquee golf events and engaged with golf veterans from the key global markets, including India, to entice guests in the upcoming seasons. The brand will be hosting the 6th edition of All Thailand Golf Tour's 'Singha Laguna Phuket Open 2022' from 26th to 29th May in its premises, which boasts of an award-winning golf course with an unparalleled view and world-class facilities designed to welcome professional players.

Laguna Golf Phuket has won the accolade of 'Thailand's Best Golf Course' by World Golf Awards, owing to its playable yet challenging 18-hole golf course across 6,775 yards, situated in the heart of Laguna Phuket. The scenic surrounding environment, comprising lush greenery, white sandy beaches, and natural lagoons, makes it a golf paradise.





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# GOLF

## TOURISM HITTING THE FAIRWAY

Over the last few years golf tourism has taken a long swing. If distinct chatters within the golf community and the travel industry are to be believed, the popularity of golf has been on a steep rise. Let's dig deeper and identify the precursors behind the climb...

- **Bharti Sharma**





When on a vacation, there are several destinations around the globe with facilities for various games and sports for enhancing the entertainment quotient of the customers. The visitors engaging in minor forms of sport, their participation is purely incidental. But, when it comes to Golf tourism, it includes sophisticated facilities that tourists encounter during their stay, whether they do or do not consider utilising these provisions. This specific category can result in boosting the involvement of golf in the framework at a later juncture. For a better understanding, executive courses, pitch and putt, crazy golf, mini golf, putting, driving ranges, target golf are perfect examples of the case. The above mentioned theory propels on the fact that there are travelers who book sport resorts, hotels near golf courses cottage holidays with golf courses nearby, holiday villa complexes with golf courses and visitor attractions.

### 'Slice' of tourism industry

To a naked eye, the concept of sports tourism might feel like a relatively new concept, however its scope and presence is anything but a recent phenomenon. The idea of people traveling to different locations for either participating in sporting activities or as spectators dates as far as the ancient Olympic Games, thus it would not be wrong to conclude that the practice of encouraging tourism in association with sports is more than a 100-year-old phenomenon. The last few decades, however have changed the whole perception of sport tourism, with destinations not only acknowledging the immense potential that lies within sport tourism but also aggressively pursuing this lucrative market niche. Amit Luthra, President, The Golf Foundation Asian

Games Gold Medalist Arjun Awardee says, "Sports globally is a 500-600-billion-dollar industry, out of which golf alone probably accounts for 20 million dollars. The industry will grow even bigger due to catalysts such as tiger woods' dominance over the sport, golf becoming an Olympic sport in 2016 and our indigenous stars earning big in the international circuits such as Aditi Ashok at the Tokyo Olympics. The ministry has also got in place a guideline to promote the country as a golf destination. If the revenue angle is discussed, an average inbound tourist to India spends about 7 days but golfers spend 12 days, thus generating good money as far as foreign exchange is concerned."

### The economy 'driver'

Estimated to grow by \$5.36 billion between 2020-2024, the global golf tourism market is far from saturation. With Google search results showing that the term 'golf courses' was up 40 per cent year on year in May 2020, it can be easily deduced that the allure of golf is gaining momentum by the year. Another indicator for concreting the argument shows that 55 per cent of non-golfers had neutral or positive things to say about the sport in 2020, as compared to 43 per cent in 2013; no points for guessing why social media has been experiencing a surge on the topic. Findings have also indicated that golf-related ad campaigns have become more relevant to individuals since the outbreak of coronavirus. A US-based marketing solutions company believes that a large chunk of this increased popularity comes from erstwhile casual golfers investing more time and interest into golf off-lately. All the findings and collated data are evidences that golf means big business. The reasons might vary, for some it is a primary motivator, for others an accompanying activity, but

nonetheless golf today is attracting millions of holiday-makers abroad with an estimated contribution of over \$22.9 billion annually. It is strange with all the chatters and this phenomenal figure, one is yet to define the characteristics that make a golf tourist or document the scale of this industry.



**Amit Luthra**



### 'An ace' of initiatives

'Everybody bows to the rising sun' is a common saying, and Golf Tourism is no different. The success and potential of golf tourism has gained acceptance with the government and how. Not only is the government getting on-board with promoting the segment as a flourishing niche market, but is also pumping investments for developing better golf-related infrastructure. With optimum infrastructure and promotion in

place, the potential of Golf Tourism to generate revenue for local economies could be unprecedented. Thailand forms a perfect case study in the subject as it was attracting an estimated 600,000 inbound visitors, worth over \$US2 billion for Golf Tourism alone. Commenting upon the role of government and initiatives in this respect, Rajan Sehgal shares, "Ministry of Tourism is giving great assistance and guidance to promote India as a Golf Tourism destination. They are giving full support to Golf Tour Operators, International Golf events and encouraging Indian tour operators to participate in International Golf Travel Marts. Also, Ministry of Tourism with various chambers like FICCI, PHD Chamber and India Golf Tourism Association organized an International Golf Tourism Summit inviting foreign golf tour Operators from potential Golf Tourism countries to interact with Indian stakeholders. Annual Golf Tourism Conclaves being organised at different states is also a notable initiative in this direction."

### Enhancing infrastructure

Golf is an expensive ballgame altogether, thus it won't be wrong to say that golf enthusiasts have the tendency of not thinking twice while spending money on the game and on hospitality services pertaining to the game. Golf tourists are offered customised tours that are flexible and can be tailored according to individual requirements. In developing countries like India, golf tourism is proving to be a boon in terms of revenue generation. It facilitates economic growth through hotels, restaurants and other retail establishments. However, the utility of golf tourism goes beyond economic parameters, it has the potential to create

new tourism destinations or pump life in a waning destination. Another addition to the list of benefits, it creates a good backdrop, providing opportunity to increase community support for sport and sporting events. The growing investments in golf is an effort to increase the number of foreign visitors and enhance tourism revenue. This is one of the strongest reasons behind the spread of golf globally and the surge in world-class golf courses over the years. The recent years have witnessed the emergence of exquisite golf resorts, each trying to stand out as the ultimate golfing experience. Many countries with a deep focus on golf strive to set themselves apart from the herd in an effort to maximise their revenue through this niche segment.

Rajan shares, "Golf is becoming a very popular segment for travel & tourism, especially after pandemic. Post lockdown, one of the very first places to open doors to the public were golf courses. Everyone was scraping for open spaces, fresh air, greenery and of course social distancing and the best answer to all their requirements; golf course. Golfers are always hungry to play golf at different golf courses in order to enjoy their golfing holidays. But in a scenario where overseas travel was restricted, these golfers explored various golf courses in India. Golf is becoming more popular by the day and the surge in numbers are giving unexplored golf courses their new golfers."



**Rajan Sehgal**



### The best 'address'

India has some fine, world-class golfing destinations, pointing out some prominent addresses in this category, Luthra adds, "The top golfing destinations in India are in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir, Pahalgam, Srinagar; all have internationally recognized golf course. In Delhi we have the prestigious DCC designed by Gary Player. Classic Golf Resort (CGR), is the first South Asian Signature Championship golf course designed by the legend Jack Nicklaus and Jaypee Greens Greater Noida designed by Greg Norman. Shillong, Ranikhet and the golden triangle i.e., Delhi, Jaipur and Agra have great golf courses along with heritage sites for a perfect holiday."

The term 'Golf Tourism' finds mention right at the top of state tourism department's website among other destinations and highlights. International tourists in this category mostly belong to Europe, South East Asia and the Middle East. Rajan further shares, "As far as India is concerned, we have great golf courses through the length and breadth of the country; from Jammu & Kashmir to Kerala. Thus, India can offer Golf courses throughout the year, which gives us a distinct edge over other countries. Jammu & Kashmir offers five amazing golf courses, Delhi/NCR has got world class signature golf courses. India offers golfing circuits in North, West, East and South. Kolkata offers the oldest golf course in the world ie, The Royal Calcutta Club. Indian golf-travellers have Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia on their list for Golfing holidays for the golf courses on offer."

No success story is complete sans hurdles and challenges. While we take pride in the infrastructure and what we have on offer for this niche segment, it is equally important to address the challenges, in order to maximise returns from the



**Pahalgam Golf Course**

growing golf tourism. Sharing his concluding remarks, Luthra shares, "At this stage, it is important to recognise that there is still room for improvement. We're still short of world-class golf courses for India to be talked about in the same breath as its Asian counterparts. India can capitalize on its cool winter golfing weather, which is something that Thailand and Malaysia can only dream of. India is a land of festivals and fairs and we should take advantage of this by combining certain festivals like Pushkar Mela, Taj Mahotsav, Surajkund Mela, and the likes with golf events so tourists can experience the festival and play golf at these serene locales."





INDIAN SAGA

# Uttarakhand

## Journey of senses

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. Shri Satpal Maharaj, Tourism Minister, Govt of Uttarakhand in conversation with Travel Turtle...

- Bharti Sharma





## INDIAN SAGA

Uttarakhand will leave you spellbound, and its alluring landscapes will leave you speechless. The destination has been the most preferred hub for spiritual enlightenment and divine experiences. Gradually, the destination has turned into a favourable adventure destination, offering an array of adventure sports such as rafting, trekking, camping, etc. Shri Satpal Maharaj shares, "The pilgrimage and spirituality are still top on the list, but the adventure enthusiasts and solitude seekers have also started to explore the state for their dose of adrenaline rush. The river rafting in Rishikesh, difficult trek to the upper regions such as 'Kedarkantha', 'Valley of Flowers' or fairs and festivals such as Magh Mela, Nanda Devi Mela, Purnagiri Mela, Phool Dei Festival, Harela, and Bhitauli Mela, Kumauni Holi,

Mahasu Parv and other such events have proved successful in attracting the tourists,"

### Reinforcing its tourism sector

The policy has been put to test and has yielded results in warranting 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 the signing of about 140 memorandum of understanding (MoU's) worth Rs 15,000 crore with the state government. The same tourism policy which has helped the state to reinforce its tourism sector is also shouldering the responsibility for facilitating reverse migration. Talking about a few initiatives, Shri Satpal

Maharaj "We have launched the 'Deen Dayal Upadhyay Homestay Scheme' to boost rural tourism and create opportunities for locals facilitating new ways of generating livelihood. Under this scheme, we are providing Rs 60,000 to build a new homestay structure and an amount of Rs 25000 for the renovation of existing rooms for a homestay. The scheme has also proven effective in exploring new unknown places. Then another initiative is '13 districts 13 destinations' wherein we are endorsing one destination in each district of the state to cater for tourists."

The idea was to get its people back to their land and create ample entrepreneurship avenues for the local youth in the tourism

sector. Considering the rapid economic progress of the state and a generous number of tourists being attracted to the state, Uttarakhand is one such destination that has not been commercially exploited to its capacity and has an abundance of hidden and unexplored destinations.



*Shri Satpal Maharaj*



### Nature's delight

The state is attracting all kinds of travellers from all around the country, and has also witnessed legends such as Swami Vivekananda or The Beatles drawn to the hill state's charm and enchantment. As per one of the studies, adventure tourism is the biggest draw for the state; 55 per cent of domestic and 80 per cent of foreign adventure seekers landed here in 2006. Shri Satpal Maharaj tells, "Over the years, travel trends have changed and travellers now intend to discover something which is untapped and unexplored. It's time to think beyond Mussoorie, Nainital, or even Rishikesh, there are ample of hidden gems such as Binsar, Chaukori, Munsiyari, Mandal, Khati Village, Khirsu, Khurpatal, Mana Village, Binsar, Hemkund, Dharchula, Chakrata, Chopta, Harsil, Chamoli, etc." Adding further, he mentions, "Over the years many of its hidden gems are getting immense

traction. Tourists are keen on exploring the virgin landscapes of the state. They look for places with minimum footfall and search for a destination not earlier known or travelled in the past."

### Wellness hub

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. Shri Satpal Maharaj asserts, "Uttarakhand is an experiential destination, the state is an apt spot for all kinds of travellers, be it an adventure seeker, or a nature lover, or someone looking for a spiritual delight. A getaway for health benefits and mental peace, it is an abode located in the lap of nature which makes it a nature's paradise. Therefore, we promote Uttarakhand as an eco-tourist destination together with spiritualism, yoga and meditation, and rejuvenation."

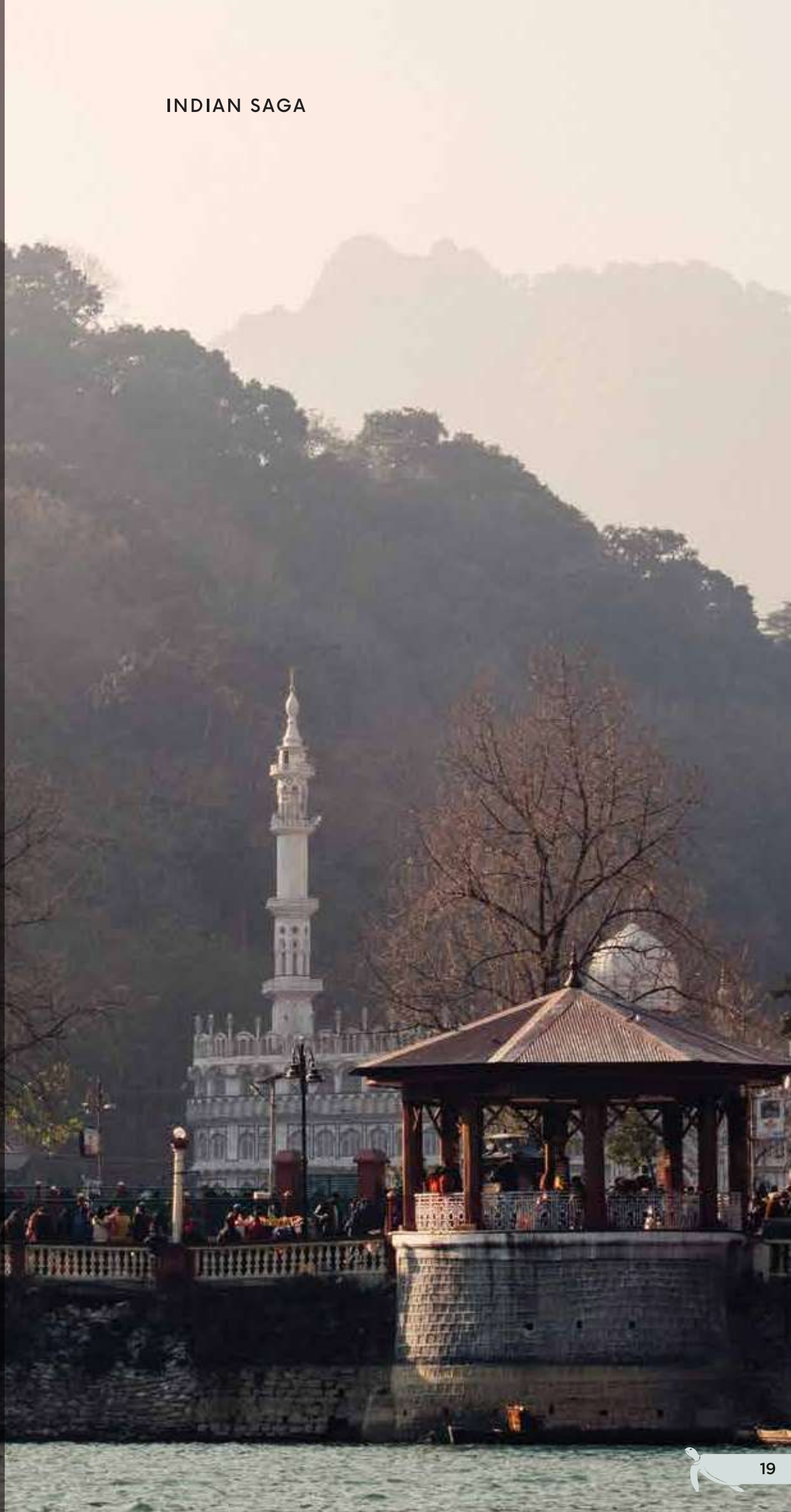




## INDIAN SAGA

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





A luxurious realm of oasis and deserts

# Saudi Arabia

The kingdom of breath-taking sand dunes covered with snow in the winters and the glitz and glam of the Arabian cities. Saudi Arabia is a Mecca for tourists looking for an experience of class apart luxury and a glimpse of historic gems.

- **Bharti Sharma**





## OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

The largest country in Western Asia needs no introduction. The country that is officially known as the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the fifth largest country in Asia. Situated on the Arabian Peninsula it flaunts some of the most mesmerizing deserts overlooking the stars. A country with strong roots and modern architecture is a treat to visit in winter. Flooding with tourist destinations, Saudi Arabia is the oil source of the world. The country has around 17 per cent of the world's proven petroleum reserves. The Middle Eastern country is immensely rich in its culture with streets flooding with authentic cuisine while local people welcome you with warm hearts.

The kingdom in its current form was founded in 1932 as an absolute monarchy. This means most of the power in Saudi Arabia lies in the hands of the royal family, the House of Saud, who rule the kingdom to this day. The current monarch is King Salman. The official language of Saudi Arabia is Arabic, no surprise there! Due to the large number of foreigners living in Saudi—roughly 30 per cent of Saudi's population comes from abroad—it's also common to hear people speak Tagalog, Urdu, and Hindi, among other languages.

### Exploring and discovering

Saudi Arabia stretches from the vast coral seas and cliffs to green

oasis and ancient cities. It is a land of adventures, stories, and remote mountain villages. It is a spiritual sanctuary for Muslims, and it gives a rare insight into the Arabian Peninsula before Islam.

Saudi Arabia is also diverse in history: from sites related to local rulers, such as the Barzan region in Hail, the Shubra Palace in Taif, and the famous fortress of Masmak in Riyadh, to sites related to the major Islamic empires, including a dam from the Umayyad Empire, the Abbasid DarbZubaydah, and Tabuk Castle the Ottoman.

Saudi Arabia is quite rich and diverse in its landscapes, traditions and culture. From magnificent coral reefs to desert tombs to vibrant cities, the country is known for its varied topography. Replete with interesting historical and cultural sites, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a perfect destination for adding to the bucket list of every traveller. The most beautiful cities in Saudi Arabia are the top tourist attractions showcasing the country's awe-inspiring scenery and landscape.

### Travelling through Saudi

The Arabian Peninsula is the founding place of Islam, one of the world's largest religions. Its two holiest cities, Medina and Mecca, are

both in Saudi Arabia. They are the main destinations of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages that millions of Muslims from around the world undertake every year. During the pious days of Ramadan, the country is flooding with people to visit the holy place and be blessed.

Apart from the pilgrimage destinations, popular cities to visit in Saudi include Riyadh, which is the capital of Saudi Arabia and is known as the cultural hub. A perfect blend of the old and new, the capital city of Saudi Arabia is absolutely a cultural delight for travellers. Some of the best places to visit in Riyadh are the Masmak Fort, King Abdul-Aziz Historical Center, Al Faisaliah Center and DeerahSouq. The next city that should be on the list is Jeddah, a true metropolitan city that is also renowned as the gateway to Makkah. Some of the most amazing places to visit in Jeddah are Al Rahma Mosque, Al Saif Beach, Al-Balad, Athr Gallery and AlShallal Theme Park. Dammam, Al Jubail, Abha, Al Khobar are some of the major cities of trade, scenery and beaches with magnificent views and package deals that will blow your mind.







A burst of flavours



A symbol of hospitality in the Arabian Gulf, food is an extremely important part of the Islamic and Bedouin culture. Communal platters with roasted chicken and meat served with bountiful rice, the traditional way to eat this is with your hands. You can start your day in Saudi Arabia with some basic dates and Qahwa or bread and cheese. Lunch is the main meal in Saudi Arabia and often includes a rice dish, also called kabsa. This is topped with either roasted chicken, meat or fish served with tomato salsa or gravy. Dinner is mostly the lightest meal of the day with sandwiches or a bowl full of soup.

Saudi Arabian cuisine has become a synthesis of various influences. Saudi Arabian recipes could range from flavourful meat-based meals to filling rice dishes and delightful desserts. To end the day on a sweet note you can eat Martabak, Saudi Arabian pancakes or a Maamoul which is a date cookie. Saudi Arabian cuisine has hints of flavours from all over the world but is dominated by a few strong authentic flavours.

A country which is booming with destinations for travellers to experience the Islamic culture and the modern ways of living in luxury in the most exquisite ways. Saudi Arabia has tons to offer with never-ending surprise elements.





## Facts to remember

Saudi Arabia has more oil than any other country in the world.

Camels are still big business.

Its home to the world's largest sandy desert.

Its home to the world's largest airport too.

It's building the world's tallest skyscraper.





# Saudi Arabia: Changing the tourism landscape globally

'Time; although momentary, continues to flow. It passes yet its shadow lingers.' These lines do absolute justice to the Saudi landscape, which is a beautiful amalgamation of deep-rooted history and contemporary infrastructure. Drawing its traditions from a nomadic past as well as practices that are centuries old, Alhasan Aldabbagh, Chief Market Officer – APAC, Saudi Tourism Authority talks to Travel Turtle on these facets and more...

- Bharti Sharma

The shimmering country has evolved like no other country in the Arabian Peninsula, offering you endless views of panoramic landscapes while the endless beauty of the vistas creates a sense of timelessness. Alhasan Aldabbagh shares, "Saudi Arabia is accelerating its development of a new tourism offering in the Kingdom, fuelled by the ambitious Vision 2030 program. Our goal at Saudi Tourism Authority is to establish the country as the most favoured tourism destination and welcome 100 million visitors by 2030. To achieve this, we have a lot of developments underway, including a wide variety of existing and brand-new unexpected experiences we're sure the visitors will enjoy."

Saudi has some amazing offerings for Indian visitors who are looking for culture and heritage. Paired with that, we have destinations that are ideal for sports and adventure as well. Art influences an individual in ways that are beyond imagination. You can discover spaces filled with artifacts, ancient relics, and sculptures that take their cue from nature, showcasing artistic prestige with vibrant cultural frames.

## **Ambitious marketing activation**

Saudi has embarked on an ambitious programme to drive inbound visitation from India, inspiring local trade partners and travellers to explore the undiscovered beauty and wonder of the country. "We're investing in a healthy network that will enable Indian travel businesses to partner with stakeholders in Saudi Arabia to drive and develop tourism business. As we continue to open up to the world, India is an incredibly important key source market for Saudi and presents a wealth of possibilities for trade partners, to grow their business and to ultimately, create a new exciting destination for Indian travellers. There is a lot of activation that we're planning to do in order to raise awareness about Saudi," asserts Alhasan Aldabbagh.

## **Out-of-this-world mega projects**

Focused on sustainable and resilient development, Saudi Arabia is bringing together key players in the sector to build a future for tourism that is better

for all. The Red Sea Project, a 28,000-sq-km regenerative tourism destination, is currently under development along Saudi Arabia's west coast. The \$500 billion futuristic megacities known as NEOM and Diriyah are being redeveloped as heritage and entertainment destinations. He adds, "We are undertaking an extensive development programme which has and will continue to see us investing in world-class infrastructure and major projects such as new hotels and hotel apartments. Saudi Arabia is accelerating its development of a new tourism offering in the Kingdom, fuelled by the ambitious Vision 2030 program."

## **The number one, India market**

STA recently signed 17 MoUs with strategic partners. The partners will now explore opportunities to collaborate on key initiatives and undertake various activities to promote and develop quality tourism experiences in Saudi Arabia and expand its presence in the Indian market. Shedding light on these areas, Alhasan Aldabbagh tells, "We plan to educate our strategic partners and create the right incentive packages for them. With different cities, destinations and very diverse cultures just like India, it is easier for Saudi to entice Indians to the amazing nation. Saudi is leaving nothing to chance and is taking into account all the essentials for Indian travellers. For the families travelling, food and shopping is important, Hindi speaking tour guides, etc., are the minutest things taken into consideration in Saudi. Thus, educating the trade is yet another important factor because comparative or relatively, Saudi is a newer destination for the Indian travel trade."

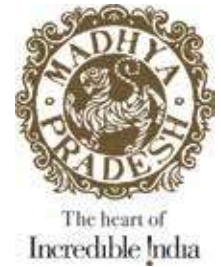
Saudi Arabia has embarked on an ambitious programme to boost inbound tourism and India is the most significant market for them as Alhasan Aldabbagh mentions, "India is our number one market. China, GCC and neighbouring countries UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait are the key source markets followed by North America and a mix of Germany, Austria and Switzerland."



Alhasan Aldabbagh







# Lights, Camera, Action!

## Yes you are in Madhya Pradesh

Let's explore the stunning filming locations and picturesque film-inspired destinations of Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh is truly a gift for everyone who loves watching the beauty of nature through a lens. The natural beauty, historic monuments, local tradition and way of life, all of these are a shutterbugs' dream come true! From some ordinary sites to a landscape amid the majestic hills, Madhya Pradesh has given some of the most unique and marvellous shooting locations.

The magnificence of the state could not be unheeded by the patrons of film industry since long as the 'heart of incredible India' provides an enormous backdrop to whatever the case is! Be it a crime thriller, a rom-com, historical, social reform or just a feature film documenting life in India, the state has all such destinations to offer.

Various Bollywood films from Dilip Kumar's AAN (1952) to most recently shot films like Bhumi Pednekar's Durgamati (2020), and The Last Show (2021) all were shot at the most exquisite locations in Madhya Pradesh. In 2001, Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan performed brilliantly in Santosh Sivan's historical epic, 'Asoka', which was an adaptation on the life of Indian emperor 'Ashoka the Great'. The movie completely bowled over viewers with its visual spectacle. Almost all of the locations featured looked unearthly and were a treat for sore eyes! Madhya Pradesh' destinations like Pachmarhi, (Rajat Prapat, Apsara Kund, Handi Khoh), Jabalpur (Saraswati Ghat, Panchwati Ghat etc) and Maheshwar etc. were featured in various scenes of the film. Apart from this, many of the

spellbinding locations shown in the film Mohenjo Daro (2016) were shot in the bewitching Bhedaghat. The whole area is extremely beautiful with the lush greenery, river and Dhuandhar waterfall serving as the perfect backdrop for any Bollywood flick.

Madhya Pradesh has now become the hub of 'film shooting' and a good number of filmmakers are coming to shoot their films. Till now, more than 150 projects including Hollywood Projects like 'The Bear', 'A Suitable Boy', 'White Tiger and The Lion etc. and many feature films, TV Serial/Series, TVCs and Reality shows have been shot in the state, of which a few names are Stree, Sui-Dhaga, Kalank, Manikarnika, Luka Chhupi, Padman, Toilet ek Prem Katha, Bajirao Mastani, Paan Singh Tomar, Lion, C, Aarakshan and Raajneeti.

One of the most divine, sacred and religious town of Madhya Pradesh, Maheshwar, which is situated on the banks of river Narmada, attracts number of tourists and pilgrims each year. The place has also become a regular visiting point for film makers of India. You must have seen Maheshwar fort in many Bollywood and Kollywood (Tamil) movies.

The land of Khajuraho and Sanchi, the jungles of Kanha and Bandhavgarh, the forts & monuments of Gwalior, Maheshwar, Orchha and Mandu, the culture of Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior offers film directors the most diverse film making experiences in Madhya Pradesh.

Needless to say, the film industries are probably one of the best ways to promote tourism in the world. It could be an ordinary location, but as soon as it is

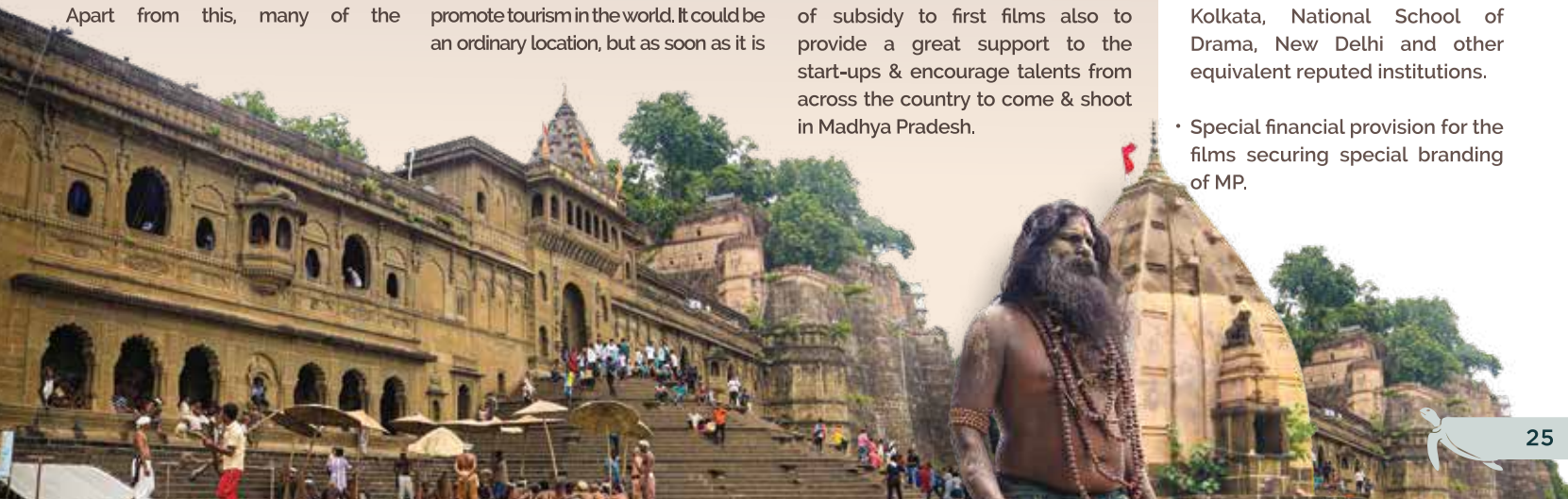
put in a movie, it becomes a popular tourist destination. Keeping this in mind, Madhya Pradesh Tourism has promoted film tourism in a big way.

After the implementation of Madhya Pradesh Film Tourism Policy-2020, the state government is encouraging film tourism by providing subsidies and all permissions and clearances through single window online system. The availability of line producers, production facilities, local artists and crew etc. makes it much more economical to shoot on diverse, rich and beautiful shooting locations of Madhya Pradesh. Vision of this Policy is to promote tourism in the state and make the state a major film making hub to create employment opportunities in Madhya Pradesh. After the COVID hit lockdown, "The Last Show" feature film directed by Vivek Agnihotri, featuring Anupam Kher, Satish Kaushik and Pallavi Joshi, was shot between 25th September and 22nd October 2020 in the state. It was probably the first feature film in the country which was shot after the lockdown period.

To encourage film tourism in state, Madhya Pradesh Government offers financial subsidy/incentive for film makers on shooting Feature Film, TV Serial/show, Web series/shows and documentaries etc. Apart from the direct financial subsidy, the state offers land allocation under tourism policy for various film production projects like film city, film studio, pre-post production centres, VFX centre, skill development centre, film and training institutes, incubation centre and other film related start-up projects with an aim to develop film Industry and film infrastructure in the state. There is also a provision of subsidy to first films also to provide a great support to the start-ups & encourage talents from across the country to come & shoot in Madhya Pradesh.

*Here are the silent features of Madhya Pradesh Film Tourism Policy-2020*

- Encourage private investment to make Madhya Pradesh (MP) a major attraction for filmmakers.
- Special grant for more screen time for promotion of sites in MP.
- Special financial incentives for internationally recognized and South Indian filmmakers.
- Financial incentives / grants / land allocation on construction of infrastructure of permanent nature.
- Providing services in units of MPSTDC at concessional rates.
- Dedicated Film Facilitation Cell for the implementation of Film Policy.
- Promoting the state by participating in various events related to the film.
- Development of infrastructure such as housing and transport etc.
- To make available infrastructure and services such as airplanes, helicopters, properties etc. owned by the State Government to the filmmakers as per the processes.
- Promoting the renovation of single screen cinema, closed cinema houses and upgrading existing cinema halls and encouraging the multiplexes and financial grants.
- Scholarship to the students of Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) Pune, Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute of Kolkata, National School of Drama, New Delhi and other equivalent reputed institutions.
- Special financial provision for the films securing special branding of MP.







# Kishan Biyani: The Midas Man

There's a popular saying, 'the two most important days in our life are the day we're born and the day we find out why'. Once we've identified the purpose of our being, our approach must be uncompromising if we're to live a life of impact, purpose, and legacy. Thus, while making an impact in the industry, giving a purpose to life and creating his own legacy, Kishan Biyani, Managing Director, ARK Travel Group (ATG) has established this invincible ARK empire.

- Bharti Sharma





There are these intersecting principles— a solid foundation and the ability to be nimble— which form the two cornerstones of success. Kishan hailed from a textile background, and a rather successful one. With two industries up and running successfully, how did travel happen to him? The most inspiring facet about his journey is his risk-taking abilities, yet he's always found solace in his vision and even in 'risks'. It was during the world cup in 2002, when Kishan got associated with a travel company and did a big group of around 3-4 thousand passengers. The assignment was huge, but so were his ambitions. He stayed in South Africa for the entire tournament ie about 30-35 days, exploring the country, meeting new people and relishing every moment of his travel. We know India lost the tournament in 2002 but do you know what sparked? Well, it was Kishan's dreams! This story was important because now we all know the backstory of one of the most successful, ethical, and growing travel group we have in the country, the ARK Travel Group. Going down the memory lane, Kishan shares, "It was a fantastic experience in South Africa. Interacting with different people, knowing their culture and being a part of it. Of course, monetary-wise it was good but the adventure got me hooked somehow. As soon as I reached India, I called my dad and told him, that the textile industry will be taken care of by my brother and I won't be handling it now. That's how it all started, my dreams and the travel agency."

### **Fostering a diverse and inclusive force**

His earliest experiences very much shaped who he is today and his values: Kishan followed an unusual path and found his interests lie there. Everybody kicks-off from somewhere in some manner, even while setting up the business, Kishan was clear in his mind that he will only go for the segments that are

untapped and yet have a lot of potential. Yes! No points for guessing it right; it was cruises. "I acquired ARK Travels and focused only on one product ie, cruise. We generated exceptional numbers and that somehow proved the scope in the sector," says Kishan.

A leader who not only 'talks the talk', but 'walks the walk' Professional trajectory is often not a straight line up— it can take you in different directions, including lateral movements. Kishan, by god's grace has been very fortunate to have witnessed a constant upward trajectory growth in his business as he shares, "Till date, the only setback game was the pandemic. I have had a great journey with only ups and no downs. Whatever came my way, I embraced. Even after the pandemic, my predictions are that we will be back to normalcy within this year's time."

### **Relationships- the most critical element**

Effective leadership means looking beyond the immediate and not losing sight of the big picture. It means going beyond words and believing in action. When I enquired Kishan about where he gets this energy and zeal or what his source of inspiration is, he laughed and said, "I'm a people's person." This got me thinking, how effortlessly he laid down his journey in just three words. It's palpable that when anybody in our industry talks about cruise, there will be a mention of ARK, and whenever people talk about the gems of the industry, there will be Kishan.

### **Broadening perspectives and distinguishing in new ways**

Leadership is a two-way street, and this also speaks volumes of Kishan's management style. At ARK Travel Group, he wants to hear from his teammates, learn from their experiences and understand what they are hearing from clients in each of their transaction. He makes it a

priority to hear-out everyone— up, down, and across the organisation, encouraging open dialogue and diversity of thought.

Kishan strives to learn every day, no matter how big or small the learning is. Sharing such learnings, Kishan asserts, "Seek mentors. Be intellectually curious, learn from those around you, and remember to take it forward. Become a mentor yourself. Our industry provides the opportunity to be part of an expanding, more inclusive community and powerful economic force. You can learn things even from the lowest of your staff. There are no boundaries to learning." Quoting an example, he shares, "When we are doing large groups, there are number of bags. What will you do if the luggage of a client is lost? Clueless? The solution was taught to me by a porter. He identified the bag out of so many bags and sent it to the cruise. So, everyday, you can learn different things from different people and hierarchy doesn't matter. Gathering all these experiences, I try to help as many people as I can."

### **At its core, this is mission/inspiration driven work**

A lot of people have inspired Kishan and his personality but one man who he swears by is Michael Goh, President, Resort World Cruises. Telling us what inspires him the most, he tells, "He's such a busy man but somehow he is so well planned and manages the minutest of things on his schedule. He works tirelessly with so many people yet he manages to give time to everyone. He always says one thing; 'we can't make good decisions in anger or in haste. You need to be calm.' Mistakes can happen from anyone, anywhere, but you need to calm your nerves. You'll learn more from your mistakes and your stumbles than from multiple successes. I still feel that I lack in time management; I have tried

getting it right but still not successful."

### **The 'close-knit' industry**

How many of you know surfboarding? There's a unique thing about surfboarding, you sort of challenge the waves by going against it, but at its pinnacle, you correct course and surf with the wave. The catch, there are times when you need to adjust and calibrate your model as the situation demands. When people used to explain Kishan about the gravity of the pandemic, he simply told them, "In textile industry, fashion changes every day. When fashion changes during the season time, what do you do? You'll produce what's selling in the market. When you create things and the market is slow, you utilise that time to think of innovating new designs and new plans. Similarly, I have dealt with travel in the pandemic. It was the time to take up something new, do it differently rather than being sad. Seeing the future, we invested in technology. We had launched a cruise portal in 2019 and during the pandemic, we brought onboard NCL, MSC Cruises, Holland America Line. In fact, we were the first to get Dream Cruises on any platform like this."

### **The human plus digital approach has proven to be the right recipe**

As a company with a significant footprint, ARK recognises the diversity of its customer base. Thus, Kishan believes that interacting with them in an authentic way will allow them to be relevant to us for years to come. Sharing further, he tells, "We plan to educate the clients about cruises. Once they log-in they will find the most basic to the deepest detailing of cruises. We recently launched the chatbot with NCL taking our experience of 15 years into consideration. Each and every question, queries have been answered there. If this model is successful, we will launch it with other brands as well. The plan is





## PUBLIC EYE

to grow the industry from 300,000 passengers to 1 million in the next year. It still has a potential of multiplying three times. A major challenge with the cruise liners would be facing the government policies. The customs and the port authority should work hand in hand. There is a reason International cruise lines are not getting attracted to our home port; they can't work on 'jugaad'. There has to be a single window clearance system."

### **New voices and different experiences**

Diversity is the key for strengthening an entity, and any company is stronger when broad perspectives are brought together to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders. Based on ATG's five pillars - Compassion,

Competence, Commitment, Cooperation and Celebration, the identity along with the design system was created to unfold and adapt itself as the brand continues to expand. The core unit with its vibrant colour spectrum represents the curiosity alongwith diversity and the limitless range of possibilities. Kishan concludes, "With this growth and expansion, it was imperative to create a unified messaging of ATG and guide the synergies of its sub-brands. The objective was to create a common story between distinct identities yet reinforce the mother brand's consistency across all touchpoints for all the group brands. I have certain ideas in my head and I will finalise it soon with 2-3 new segments at ARK Travel Group."



**The dynamic team at ARK Travel group**







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### Our Partners





# Sheraton Maldives

Full Moon Resort & Spa ticks all the boxes for a divine Maldivian escape

Enveloped by glistening turquoise waters, pristine white sandy beaches, and swaying palms, Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa is the ultimate destination for a dreamlike escape. Emilio Fortini, General Manager, Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa shares insight on the property.

- **Bharti Sharma**







It's hard to resist the charms of this exotic Maldivian resort, with its contemporary style quotient and eco-friendly ethos, the serene atmosphere, and impeccable service. The island is loaded with tropical vegetation, fringed with coral sand and lapped by a jade-blue lagoon: in short, a stellar paradise. A destination in itself and just a short flight away with provision of a visa-on-arrival, the Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa is located on the breath-taking private island of Furanafushi, which is a 15-minute speedboat ride away from Malé International Airport. All these features make the resort particularly attractive for the Indian market.

### Sense of place

Bestowed with serenity, spectacular reef, the property provides its patrons the most personalised, complete and unforgettable vacation on this island paradise. Sharing some details, Emilio tells, "The five-star resort has 176 recently renovated rooms and suites located both overwater and beachfront - from elegant deluxe rooms to charming cottages, indulgent water bungalows and villas, as well as an expansive two-bedroom water suite. The resort features five dining venues, two bars, and an endless list of culinary journeys on offer - from romantic in-pool champagne breakfasts at sunrise, to HamacLand™ dining cruises on your own private floating island,

to decadent Furanafushi sandbank picnics."

Talking about the Indian 'tadka' at the property, he further adds, "To entice the Indian market we have a dedicated Indian cuisine restaurant Masala Hut, set in a charming thatched-roof pavillion. Masala Hut introduces classic dishes such as chicken tikka, in a whimsical array of textures and flavors, coupled with a relaxed setting that lends itself well for shared family-style meal."

### The ultimate family destination

The resort extends great experiences and services to the guests so they engage with the community and leave with a memorable stay etched with regional encounters. Such indulgent experiences make it an ultimate family destination for families as Emilio comments, "We offer unique experiences that energise, educate, and entertain families as part of Side By Side, the brand's signature multigenerational programme offering immersive activities that bring families together and create shared experiences that foster moments of togetherness."



Emilio Fortini







## Destination in a resort

Loaded with extensive features, offerings, location, and the brand value have resulted in a positive response from the Indian market both in terms of business prospects as well as customer feedback. As Emilio asserts, "With Side by Side, the Sheraton brand's signature multi-generational programme built around togetherness, Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa can fulfill the demand of family travel from India. The resort is also attractive for honeymooners with unique offerings such as private beach dinners, a picturesque honeymoon garden to craft their honeymoon moment eternally, floating breakfasts in their overwater pool villas and has also gone ahead and created special experiences for Babymooners, becoming a dream destination for expectant couples before the hullabaloo of the new arrival."

## Spoiled for choices

As the world's population becomes well-travelled, they constantly look for better - set benchmarks and memories wherever they go. The resort has been widely accepted and admired by guests coming from India because of its distinctive features and services. Emilio believes while travellers are on the hunt for the local and the

sustainable, they are also charmed by experiences that feel 'close to home'. He further adds, "It is thus very important to showcase and offer a local feel and Sheraton Hotels and Resorts being the place where the world comes together, embraces the cultures, tastes and preferences around the world. We offer local Maldivian-themed dinners every week to give that local touch, and they also have an international breakfast buffet spread with a dedicated Indian counter, besides the Indian cuisine restaurant, Masala Hut, for Indian guests looking to get a taste of home."

## Going above and beyond to ensure a seamless guest experience

The distinguishing features and elements have given their audience rationale to relate with the resort and choose the property for their holidays. Sharing such exclusive elements, Emilio tells, "Today's travelers are discerning and will not settle for anything less than perfect. Sheraton Hotels & Resorts recognises this and go above and beyond to ensure guests have a seamless and memorable stay through a series of brand standards and programs targeting the needs and desires of the audience. The brand delivers on its promises to meet the expectations of guests and is

hence a popular choice for business and leisure customers alike, for families, honeymooners or even single travellers."







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HEADS IN BEDS



# Address Beach Resort

## The Best Address

A superlative pick for a beachy blast, Address Beach Resort well sets the record sky-high as one of Dubai's swishest hotels

- Misbaah Mansuri



## HEADS IN BEDS



In a city inundated with some incredible hotels, how does a property stand-out and make a great impression? And when the city is Dubai where everything world-class is not uncommon this only gets harder. I found one during my Emirate visit, situated right at the confluence of two stretches of prime tourist real estate, Bluewaters Island and Jumeirah Beach Residence (JBR): Address Beach Resort, the coolest kid on the block.

Our Arabian hospitality experience began with shots of cardamom-laced coffee in the lobby. With piano recitals playing in harmony with house music compilations on terraces; man-made waterfalls cascading into abundant pools and dramatic metal sculptures poised over water, the first impression had to be great.

The best part? This one provides direct access to the world's tallest rooftop infinity pool on the 77th floor – one of the swishest and definitely Instagram-worthy ones that we've seen. The infinity pool is located on the resort's rooftop at 293.90 m (964 ft 2 in) up. The wet surface area is approximately 560 square metres, giving it the appearance of a massive lake in the sky.

The pool has a volume of approximately 500 cubic metres and is 1.2 metres deep at its deepest point, making it the world's tallest infinity pool which tops this imposing hotel. The

property overlooks the world's tallest Ferris wheel, Ain Dubai, just a short walk away, along with a glut of restaurants, bars, boutiques, beach clubs and an inflatable waterpark at sea.

In 50 shades of beige minimalist but swanky rooms lend the rooms the First Lady aesthetic. Ours came with amenities like 55-inch television, iPad controls, designer coffee machines, neat white sheets and feather bedding. Floor-to-ceiling sea-facing windows were our favourite part about them. Selected suites have balconies, and two- and three-bedroom suites are available. All rooms have rain showers and bathtubs and the super Lorenzo Villorosi amenities, laced with a heavy scent.

Breakfast was a cool affair laced with fine pastries, cereal and antipasto with à la carte options, including beef bacon and eggs Benedict – being served at The Restaurant. Asian fusion rooftop restaurant ZETA Seventy Seven on level 77 is another crowd favourite. However what stole the show for us was the Beach Grill by the sea, where glass walls have been retracted to create a breezy haven while the breathtaking aroma and flavours of the Mushroom Truffle Risotto teased our taste-buds. Interesting vegan selections are available at all restaurants, including Li' Brasil (we love its ambience by the pool overlooking Ain Dubai), a Middle Eastern-Latin American hybrid, serving a meat-free version of Brazil's famous pork stew, feijoada.





## HEADS IN BEDS



Another must-try is the recently-launched Dream, the name of the lavish new late-night dinner and a show concept, found at the base of Address Beach Resort. The stunning restaurant utilises sophisticated projection technology to express different narratives throughout the evening. With plush, regal finishings, the space has been expertly designed to offer a luxurious experience while keeping its ethereal 'Dream' aesthetic.

Outside, there's a huge alfresco terrace named Garden of Dreams, which has its own DJ booth and bar, serving as the ultimate sundowner spot for after-work drinks. Dream's draw lies within its evening show, which has been meticulously rehearsed to deliver a faultless performance. Combining singing, dancing and even roller-skating, the entertainment is akin to something you'd see in a fancy Vegas cabaret show.

Moreover, the elegant spa on the 75th floor, with huge 'A'-shaped windows overlooking the Arabian Gulf, was a consolation. Find all the latest kit and equally impressive views in the neighbouring gym, while at ground level there are more glamorous pools and a private beach.

Interestingly, the Address Beach Resort has broken two Guinness

World Records. The property achieved the records for the 'Highest outdoor infinity pool in a building in the world' and the 'Highest Occupiable Skybridge Floor in the world'. The two 77-storey towers are home to both the hotel and residences, and are linked by the record-breaking 210-metre high skybridge, making it a property that literally sets the records high.

This is the kind of place you get to and then stay put, enjoying the sky-high infinity, impressive culinary offerings and facilities. It's hard to imagine that any subsequent properties will afford better views of Dubai's glittering skyline, making it one of the coolest hotels in the world.

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# TATABYE TOURS

## INNOVATIVE, COMPETITIVE AND HIGHLY PERSONALISED SERVICES

Roshan Jain, Founder, Sales & Marketing Director, Tatabye Tours has expanded his horizons beyond his own business interests to nurture a brand with utmost commitment, reckoning the demands of the discerning clients.

- Team Turtle



The young and energetic Destination Management Company for Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia- across the Indian & Middle East, Tatabye Tours has made a mark for themselves in the trade. Talking about what helped Tatabye to reach their current heights, Roshan tells, "Our knowledge on the destination and our thorough research has helped us in serving better over the years. We have invested ourselves in the destinations we serve since the inception of Tatabye. We help our clients to choose from the wide range of product options with our in-depth analysis."

### Client's support system

Technology has profoundly impacted the industry movement and insightfully changed the dynamics of doing business. Tatabye Tours is launching its online booking system soon, which is expected to receive an overwhelming response from the market due to its high efficiency. Roshan believes in giving end-to-end solutions to his clients and thus shares, "Providing our clients with the local support round the clock with fair and single non-hidden rates has been our biggest credit quality which has been highly appreciated so far. Thus, we strive to work in the same direction."

### End-to-end exceptional service

Tatabye provides adequate assistance to its partners at every step of their travel journey. "Our in-house operations team has been tirelessly supporting agents and operators in terms of time, quality, priority and value in providing end-to-end service. Right from planning to organising transfers, excursions, sight-seeing, the best of hotels, resorts and guest houses to choose from and taking care of all the needs until departure," shares Roshan.

### Consistent and professional approach

The travel trade has always been a priority for them, ensuring they bestow the sector with the most

personalised services right from discovery, and bookings to authentic local experiences. Thanking the stakeholders and partners of Tatabye, Roshan asserts, "It's been 8 years since we started Tatabye and we have come a long way surviving the long lockdowns and travel restrictions for almost 2 years. However, we have witnessed growth even during the pandemic. Apart from that, there has been a growth in terms of trust, foundation and goodwill. It's our hard-earned credit that we are humbly proud of and thankful to all the well-wishers involved in its success. We continue to work with this consistency to achieve better results. Collaboration has helped us strengthen our association with fellow agents, which in turn assisted in serving our end consumers better to rebuild the business partnership and regain the lost ground during travel restrictions, resulting in achieving higher."

### Marketing is the king

Tatabye Tours has been a part of major b2b travel expo and road shows across India and have also actively participated in Arabian Travel Mart, Dubai, SATTE, OTM and TTF. Sharing some marketing plans, Roshan tells, "We strive to work outside these events too, building personal and professional understanding with our agents and partners with similar ideology and goals. Tatabye tours has done door-to-door marketing with the sales team and webinars to build brand awareness and marketing on social media platforms. We plan to organize a road show in Pune, Hyderabad and few other cities shortly. Also, we are in the process of adding 2 more beach destinations to our Portfolio soon - Mauritius and Seychelles."



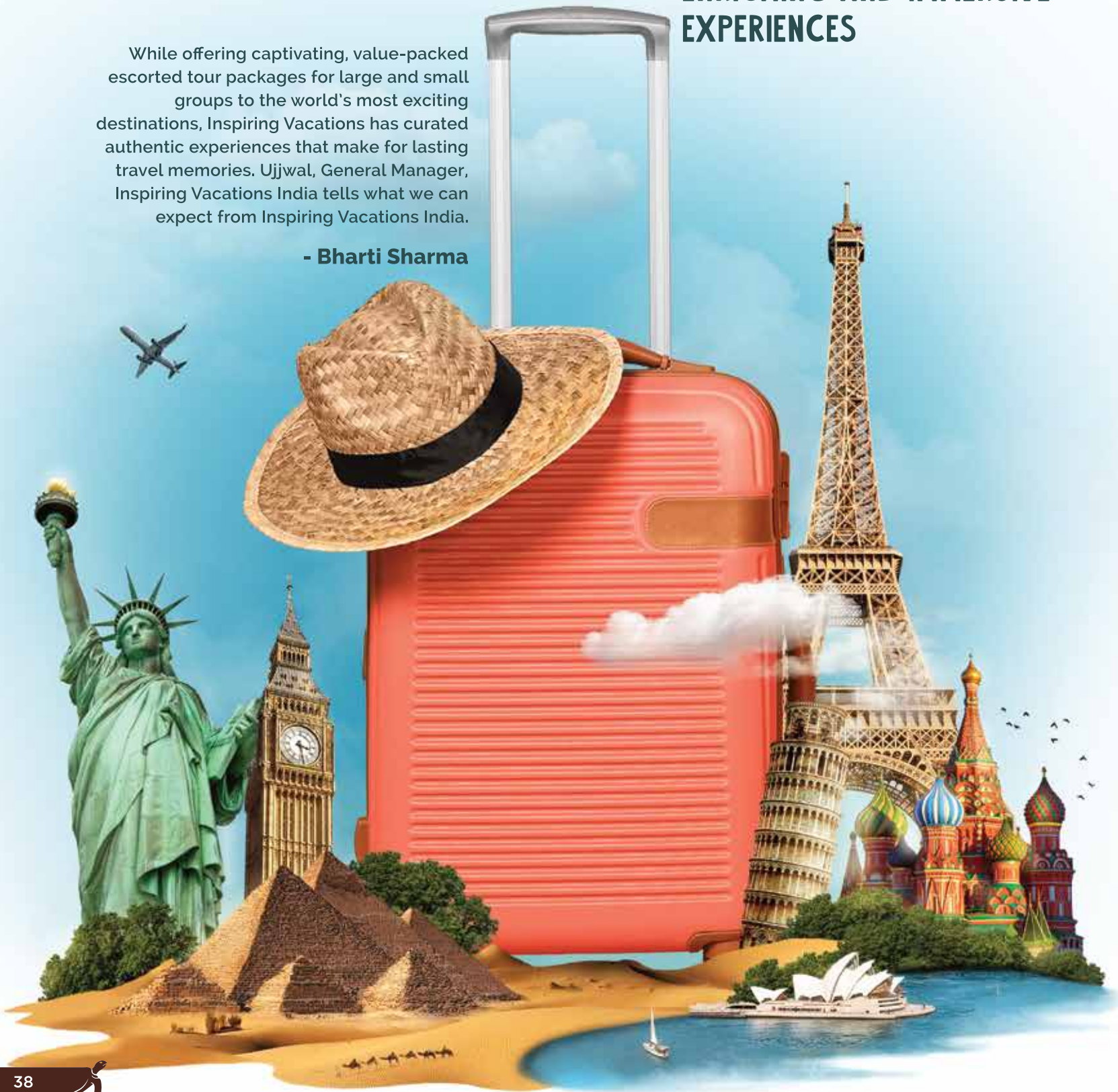


# Inspiring Vacations

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MOST  
ENRICHING AND IMMERSIVE  
EXPERIENCES

While offering captivating, value-packed escorted tour packages for large and small groups to the world's most exciting destinations, Inspiring Vacations has curated authentic experiences that make for lasting travel memories. Ujjwal, General Manager, Inspiring Vacations India tells what we can expect from Inspiring Vacations India.

- Bharti Sharma





Inspiring Vacations is already renowned for authentic, culturally-rich experiences to iconic destinations across the globe paired with outstanding service and support. Industry stalwart Ujjwal is leading the India expansion of global travel brand Inspiring Vacations, marking the newest international foray for the beloved tour operator.

### ***Comprehensive and experiential packages***

The customers at Inspiring Vacations are generally highly discerning, well-travelled and focused on quality and value. Shedding light on their quality products, Ujjwal shares, "Often first-time travellers seek support in their bookings and travel experiences and expect excellent value. Our carefully curated tour packages focus on a complete experience that encompasses the must-see sights along with authentic hidden gems— all this delivered in an attractively-priced package with every detail and comfort factored-in. These high-quality tour packages are supported by award-winning customer service and a superior digital solution that makes for a seamless booking experience."

### ***Building and nurturing its network***

Inspiring Vacations has already witnessed remarkable success in markets including Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom. A recent expansion into the United States has been met with rampant enthusiasm from a new segment of value-conscious travellers seeking rich, premium travel experiences.

Inspiring Vacations India made its debut at SATTE and the overwhelming response from travel professionals across the nation was nothing less than encouraging. Talking about penetrating this huge market, Ujjwal shares, "The general reception from industry figures

cemented what we already knew: we have a market-leading booking system and a product offering that exceeds consumer expectations, at an unbeatable, value-for-money price. We are in the process of expanding through building quality, productive relationships with trade partners across India. This incorporates offering attractive commissions, destination-focused campaigns and interactions and investing in trade advertising and promotions."

### ***First-to-market innovations***

The team at Inspiring Vacations knows their destinations like the back of their hands, paired with the experience and connections to deliver an unrivalled, meticulously managed, holiday package. "The service we offer agents and customers reflects our incredibly high standards in everything we do. Our website solution is a first-to-market innovation that changes the way you secure your clients' travel plans— all products

are displayed with live availability and can be booked instantly," asserts Ujjwal.

He further adds, "Most of our tour packages come with or can be packaged with flights, making our offering unique in the market from a customer-centric standpoint. Not only does our website make it a pleasure to browse an extensive range of tour packages and itineraries, but there is also a bounty of travel inspiration – articles, video content, even a digital magazine."

### ***Collaborative environment***

Inspiring Vacations has everything going their way, having already partnered with an extensive network of suppliers and partners, from airlines to tour leaders, cruise and rail companies, accommodation services, transport providers and local operators. "Collaboration with industry partners and affiliates has always been important to Inspiring Vacations, and to myself on a personal level." Ujjwal along with Dinesh Bhardwaj, General Manager and his team are currently travelling the country visiting customers and trade partners. They are building and nurturing their network of agents through email marketing, webinars, scheduled visits and trade advertising. Sharing further, Ujjwal tells, "Campaigns will cover products and destination-focused promotions, for example, an upcoming Japan campaign will celebrate one of our most popular destinations with time-limited special offers, along with our insights as destination experts to enrich agents' knowledge. A key tenet of our determination to build lasting relationships with trade partners is through attractive incentives – we can be the tour operator of choice and will reward these fruitful relationships accordingly."





# Manipur Tourism organises 4th edition of the State Level Shirui Lily Festival

After a two-year gap owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Tourism, Government of Manipur organised the 4th Edition of the State Level Shirui Lily Festival from 25th - 28th May 2022 at Ukhrul District. The annual gala event was inaugurated by Manipur Governor, Shri La Ganesan at Shirui Village Ground, Ukhrul in the presence of Chief Minister, Manipur, Shri N Biren Singh.

Shri N. Biren Singh while speaking at the event said that the festival will help visitors appreciate Shirui's scenic beauty, try local cuisines, purchase local products such as Longpi (Nungbi) pottery, fruits, and Sirakhong's Hathei Chilly, and check out Tangkhul's indigenous dog breed 'Haofa' among others.

Longpi (Nungbi) pottery is a black earthenware crafted by Tangkhul tribe, residing along Nungbi hamlet in Ukhrul District. The technique of this art is said to have been passed down from the Neolithic period. One of the unique features of this earthenware is that it is crafted without a potter's wheel. Food cooked in this pot generally doesn't get spoiled and it has many health benefits. The baked artefacts acquire a black colour looking almost like metal crafted with a great level of skill and attention.

Being a hyper-localised craft, the raw materials are exclusive only to the geology of this village. Black serpentine stone and special brown clay are collected - to be pounded and ground together to make the paste for construction. The whole process from start to end is done manually, taking a total of six days to be complete.

"Shirui Lily which is found only on top of the Shirui Hill of Manipur's Ukhrul District, requires proper scientific study so that this endangered flower can continue to thrive in its original habitat." said the Chief Guest, Shri La Ganesan, Governor, Manipur.

"Shirui Lily Festival if marketed properly can become a tourist attraction. It will not only create awareness about the need for protection of our environment which needs to be targeted to our people but it can also attract tourists and improve the well-being of the local population," added the Chief Guest.

Addressing the gathering, the Manipur Chief Minister - Shri N. Biren Singh remarked that Rs. 46 crores have been sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) scheme, for the construction of Shirui Heritage Village and upgradation of Bakshi ground. He also informed the audience about the state government's plan for construction of cable cars at Loktak and Shirui.

The grand tourism event - 'Shirui Lily Festival 2022' aims to raise awareness about the endangered 'Shirui Lily' which is endemic to the Kashong Hills in Shirui village, and recognize the state's ongoing efforts to foster sustainable and responsible tourism.

It celebrates Manipur's vast biodiversity and rich cultural legacy, allowing travellers to learn about the Tangkhul Naga tribe of Ukhrul and explore Manipur's highest hill station through its cultural origins, values, and customs.

Other features during the festival included Miss Shirui Lily beauty contest, MTB down-hill cycling, 22 km half marathon, 7 A-side football tournament, essay writing competition, LIVE music, best of the rock bands competing for the Shirock Title 2022, adventure sports, trekking to Shirui peak, Shi-chef indigenous food cooking competition, indigenous sports pork eating competition, cultural dance performances, folk music performances, fashion shows to promote Manipur's textiles and

handloom cross cultural performances from other states etc.

Moreover, special appearances by Miss Universe 3rd runner up, Adline Castenino as showstopper at the opening fashion show and Mister World 2016 Rohit Khandelwal at closing fashion show and performance of 'The Monuments' - a British progressive metal band at Bakshi ground on May 28 evening were some of the highlights of the festival.

ShiRock, battle of bands was also one of the major features of the festival. Department of Tourism, Government of Manipur has marked this festival as a calendar event which will be organised annually around the time Shirui Lily blooms





# TRAVEL turtle



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# Arunachal hosts first ever River Rafting Competition

This March when a handful of people had gathered on the banks of the Subansiri River in the small town of Daporijo in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri district, they had done so to witness who would win the first Subansiri River Rafting Competition.

## - Team Turtle

For years now, when it came to river rafting in India, the most favoured destinations have been the glacial waters of the Western Himalayas along Haridwar and Rishikesh in Uttarakhand. However, for the serious rafting enthusiasts, the rivers of Arunachal Pradesh have always been the El Dorado- an almost mythical destination about whose rivers they have heard a lot but never experienced.

Arunachal Pradesh is home to five major river basins, starting from the west of the state with the

Kameng, followed by the Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, and Tirap. These five basins were also the administrative divisions under which the state was divided in the early years of its formation.

Both casual and enthusiast rafters alike have steadily been flocking to the Siang basin for over two decades to experience its rapids which can reach grade IV. On the Kameng the rapid levels reach up to grade V but footfall has been slow.

Along with adventure enthusiasts from and outside the state, the

state tourism department has been looking to promote the rivers of the state as a rafting paradise through various national-level competitions over the years.

A major culmination of the years of efforts led to the state hosting the 15th National Rafting Championship held at Yinkiong in Upper Siang district in March this year on the Siang river. Amidst the predictable lineup of all-male competing teams, there was also a team of four young women.

That competition comprised of

four categories of Down River Race, Slalom, Sprint, and RX. The Indian Army teams took three podium positions in all four events. With dedicated teams, the Indian Army is often considered the benchmark for other rafting teams to follow in the country. So, it was hardly surprising that they secured top positions in that competition.

What did take some by surprise was the fact that a group of four women from Arunachal Pradesh came second in the women's category. That team comprised of





AruniTaniang, Devi Dada, MinamTeksing, and OmitiTeksing; the same four women who were also at Daporijo to participate in the Subansiri competition. Speaking after the competition, Taniang said it was the first time that they had competed against men and were happy with the outcome even though they did not manage a podium finish. "People probably thought our raft would flip but we managed to stay on. We are happy about that," she said.

Taniang is the default captain of the team and while she and her teammates may have been happy with their performance, it hasn't been smooth sailing.

Most of her teammates took up the sport in 2012 when they were still teenagers at a workshop near Seppa in East Kameng district on the Kameng river. Almost a decade later, their resilience is starting to show results. However, they still have to deal with major hurdles. With the cost of competition-level rafts running into lakhs of rupees, the women have been unable to purchase one for themselves. Taniang informed that they use the opportunity of rafting expeditions to get their practice and have to rely on organisers to practice just days before a competition begins.

Since the sport is still viewed as being fairly niche, information about rafting competitions is not as rapidly spread as football or other sports are. Despite these challenges, they appear to be doing fairly well for themselves. Nino Dai, a foremost tour operator from the state and a pioneer in the field of river rafting, said that the Subansiri is his favourite river. "I've been rafting on the Subansiri for 15 years and this is the first time that the state government has helped organise such a competition on this river," he said.

Dai, who also doubles up as the president of the Arunachal Pradesh Watersports Association (APWA), said that only five teams could participate owing to paucity of time but that

the scope of expanding the scale of the competition is very good.

"We hope to have around 20 teams next time," he said.

He also said that in the future when the competition expands, they hope to add more events.

"One of the advantages of holding such adventure sports competitions in Arunachal Pradesh is that our people are very enthusiastic when it comes to attending them which is not always the case in other states," he added.

Indian Rafting Foundation (IRF) president Shaukat Sikand who was also at Daporijo as a partner of the competition said that he was happy having organised back-to-back events in the state in two weeks.

"Daporijo is a remote place but we're happy to have seen the participation," he said, reserving special respect for the women's team.

Sikand also said that the river is ideal for rafting and that with the build-up of infrastructure, the Subansiri can become the capital of river rafting in the Northeast. After the event, he said that he hopes for teams from the state to represent India at international competitions. NobangTayeng of

the Arunachal Team that won the competition said that the team's coordination helped them secure victory. The competition winners covered the approximately 14 km stretch of the river from Sippi to Daporijo in 54 minutes.

The state tourism department's director Abu Tayeng said that the competition was organised to promote the state as a go-to river rafting destination.

"In Arunachal Pradesh, we have rivers that offer different grades of rapids. This is just a beginning," he said.

Tayeng, a known adventure enthusiast himself, has taken a keen interest in rafting and competitive angling in the state. In his role as the director of the tourism department, he said that the idea is not just to encourage rafting enthusiasts.

"We invited subject matter specialists to help us build a roadmap to take adventure activities ahead," he said, adding that the idea is also to nurture local talent. He said that such competitions will help train river guides in the state and that the women's team securing the second position in the 15th National Rafting Championship was an encouraging sign.

Over the years, Arunachal Pradesh's reputation as a rafting destination has been slowly growing. The flagship Siang Rush event has helped bring enthusiasts and novices alike to the state apart from bringing eyeballs. Like most of the other major rivers in the state, the Siang also originates from the glacial waters of the Himalayas in the Tibetan Plateau, crashing along the 'Great Bend' before descending into the calm waters of the Brahmaputra in Assam. Similarly, the Subansiri, too, originates in the high mountains of Tibet before descending into Indian territory.

While other rafting destinations such as the ones in Uttarakhand have always drawn visitors, in Arunachal Pradesh the scenario has been rather different owing to the lack of media coverage and inaccessibility (although that is changing recently).

Sikand, who has decades of experience in the field, said that the state's river rafting potential is yet to be fully realised. He said that the fact that there are relatively still very few dams that have been built in the state means that there is still huge potential for the exploration of the rivers.





HEADS IN BEDS

*Staycation in  
the heart of Delhi at  
Holiday Inn*

Rejuvenate with some  
mouth-melting cuisine and  
luxury treatment...

- Bharti Sharma





## HEADS IN BEDS

Amidst the hustle-bustle of the capital city of India, is a hotel that caters to all your extravagant staycation needs. Holiday Inn, an IHG Hotel with an amazing infrastructure is centrally placed, which makes it easily accessible from both the airport and the railway station. Solving all your worries to conduct a work meeting or a weekend trip to Delhi for a chill staycation, the hotel is a treat for visitors.

Well-equipped rooms with comfortable beds and a view of the city overlooking the famous Akshardham Temple and Humayun's tomb is perfect for a well-deserved holiday. The moment you step into the hotel, you'll be greeted by the staff of the hotel who will further escort you to your room, not to forget the chef's special pastries as a welcome are little delights of heaven. Depending on your preference you can book a suite with a bathtub or a poolside view and all the latest amenities including a work smart desk, high-speed internet and a coffee maker for your fresh mornings.

Different cuisine is something that has always intrigued me and Holiday Inn is the perfect place to explore your taste buds. With a pool of breakfast delicacies to choose from you will be overwhelmed and would want to dive right in with your taste palate. A special Sunday brunch that offers a fusion of food and music blended beautifully. The hotel dining area overlooking the infinity pool and a beautiful alfresco area provides the guests with Indian as well as international delicacies. I had the opportunity to taste some of the chef's specials and experience the raw flavours the dishes had to offer in the comfort of my room. You can say goodbye to your late-night cravings because Holiday Inn has a special late-night room service menu which is a genius idea.

Apart from serving mouth-watering Indian dishes, the hotel is famous for its Pan-Asian restaurant The Kylin Experience. The speciality restaurant at the lobby level of the hotel was one of the most amazing things about the stay. Offering the most authentic experience of the Far East gastronomic delicacies, the restaurant is open for Lunch and Dinner. Oriental cuisine with an

attached bar serving some yummilicious signature drinks is all you need after a long journey or just to unwind for a weekend. The Sushi bar with interactive Teppanyaki Grill and a wide range of music will give you a chance to destress yourself and enjoy the cuisine. Some of the chef's recommendations were the Spicy Salmon Roll, Asparagus Tempura Roll, Broccoli Almond Dimsum, Bullet Chicken, and Hot Stone Bowl.

The location of the hotel is all you can ask for, centrally placed and easily accessible from almost all parts of Delhi and NCR. Perfect to explore and trot around Delhi experiencing the magnificent light show at the Akshardham Temple, visiting the centre of Delhi Connaught Place for some much-needed shopping spree. Experiencing the glory of Lal Quila and delving into the stories around Humayun's Tomb, every sight is easily accessible from the hotel and will provide a personalised experience.

Next time when you are planning to visit the heart of the capital, Holiday Inn should be on the list of hotels to stay in, with a humble staff and some amazing dining experience. Not to forget a much-needed swim in the infinity pool on a summer day.





TRAVEL THERAPY

# Bern is Beautiful

Most times things are  
quiet around here.  
- Inder Raj Ahluwalia







As capitals go the city is small, with fewer than 200,000 inhabitants. But it is a power hub in its own right, and in fact has been one for centuries. Not that either the locals or tourists care.

The publicity jargon describes Bern as the 'City of Bears, Bridges, and Beautiful Blooms'. This is all quite apt, but there's also loads of history lurking in the shadows, and architectural exhibits of note. Picturesque and fascinating, the city is typically Swiss. The last Duke of Zähringen, Berchtold V, founded the city in 1191 as a bastion against unruly Burgundian nobles who owed allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor.

Time does things to cities, and Bern has emerged from the shadow of its renowned

cathedral to become a vibrant art and university centre, capital city and popular tourist destination rolled into one. Through the year, visitors hang about, admire musical fountains, sip coffee at small cafes, and walk along the world's longest shopping verandah.

One confronts local history at the train station itself through medieval urban architecture. Several ancient rows of houses with traditional fountains still line broad streets. The architecturally rich city watches over its arcades with a jealous eye, to the extent that no structures are renovated or rebuilt without an arcade on the ground floor, and every façade has to merge in with neighbouring structures. Uniformity apart, the arches

cleverly let into the facades of buildings have a practical side, protecting pedestrians from the vagaries of the weather.

Midway between German and French, Bern is truly cross-cultural. Amidst the Gallic spirit that pervades its streets and grand baroque buildings, there is French flavour. Rapid-fire French mingles with the ponderous tones of Bern-German dialect.

Tourists' tasks are set out for them. Local sightseeing normally follows a set pattern. A good starting point is the Rose Garden with its splendid display of flowers in bloom. Nearby is the Clock Tower, the western gate of the city, with a beautiful astronomical clock and figure-play set in motion four minutes before each hour, much

to the delight of tourists awaiting this traditional sequence. Half an hour's walk brings one to the Prison Tower, whose name says it all.

The famous local landmark is the magnificent cathedral, which towers over the tranquil city. A masterpiece of Swiss building skills, and the city's most impressive church with stained glass windows and carved choir stalls, the cathedral has been centre-stage in more ways than one. If energy levels permit, don't miss climbing the 340-odd steps to the highest platform for the reward. A stunning view of the city with the puzzle of red rooftops interspersed with clumps of greenery, the swiftly flowing Aare river, and the snow-capped Bernese Alps in the distance.





## TRAVEL THERAPY

An obsession with home-gardening has had Bern voted 'Europe's most beautiful floral city' numerous times. It is flower power at its best. Geraniums and roses burst with bright colours from windowsills, balconies, sandstone facades, in elegant parks and gardens, in the zoological gardens, around the hundred-odd fountains that dot the city, and along the river. And the Rose Garden is a giant canvas of floral colours.

Spread across squares and streets with its fruit, vegetables, and flowers, the 'market' is the place to visit, doubling up as a city-theme centre with lively weekly market days, and a site offering strong local flavour. Things hot up nicely in November at the annual 'Zibelemarit', the noisy, happy-go-lucky onion market, which is also the Bernse festival. With swirling crowds and

the high throb of the Bernse March Anthem-to which pipers and drummers once marched off to the wars of liberation-it is festivities galore.

Virtually intact, the Old Town, has been declared a 'World Cultural Landmark' by the United Nations, and packs a wallop when it comes to atmosphere. Six kilometres of arcades take one past myriad boutiques and theme shops excelling in jewellery and assorted crafts, antique shops, cellars boutiques, grocers, street cafes, and secluded taverns.

Every city needs a symbol. Bern has an endearing one in bears. Not only is the city's name itself derived from the German word for bear, they have always played an important role here. Ever since Bern's founder, Berchtold of Zahrin killed a bear in 1191, bears

have had a special place in the hearts of locals. The city has faithfully maintained and cherished its bear-pits, and the animal is featured on its coat of arms. Today, one can see these lumbering, droll creatures in the bear-pits, a tourist attraction in their own right.

Through generations, the city has remained a focal point for its fertile region's villages, with local farmers still bringing fresh produce to the market. This in part explains why over 150 local restaurants provide culinary inspiration for housewives and master chefs alike with excellent quality food.

Amidst all this medieval charm, Bern features an impressive modern face, and remains a power centre. From rather humble beginnings the city went

on to become the Swiss capital in 1848, a fact well attested by the imposing Bundeshaus-the Swiss Parliament.

World-famous brands like Toblerone, Emmentaler, and Ovaltine, are made here. Einstein liked to work here. The likes of Goethe and Casanova sang its praises. And providing value as a tourist centre today are museums, cultural caverns, theatres, famous schools and a university.

Through the year, tourists admire the fountains and blooming flowers, walk the arcades, and visit the bear-pits. Early mornings set the tone with farmers setting up colourful markets, and evenings bring with them cultural and entertainment activity.

The capital continues to thrive. And the tourists grin and 'bear' it.





## Fact File

- Bern is best accessed by train via Zurich, a couple of hours away.
- Local accommodation comes in a wide range that stretches from 5-Star Deluxe, to standard and budget hotels. Prior bookings are recommended.
- While there are several organised tours, the best way to see the sights is by a walking tour of the Old Town.
- Shopping is exciting, thanks to typical Swiss products made in the region. While boutiques are found everywhere, the Old Town sports several souvenir shops.
- Eating out is made easier with the availability of diverse cuisine that ranges from Asian and Continental to pure Swiss.



### About the author

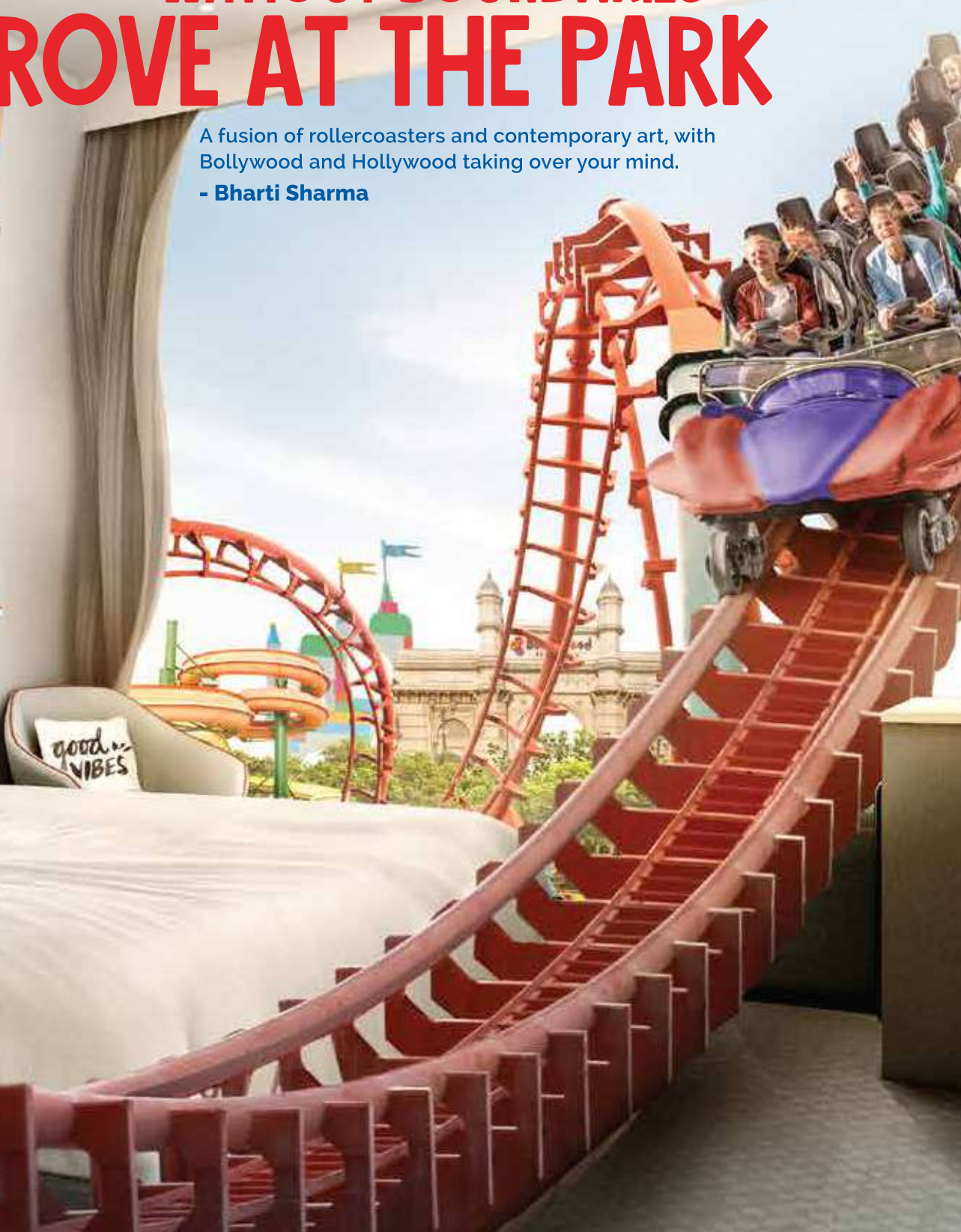
Inder Raj Ahluwalia is a world-renowned international travel journalist & author. His professional profile features awards from several European and Asian countries, among others.



# EXPLORING ADVENTURES WITHOUT BOUNDARIES ROVE AT THE PARK

A fusion of rollercoasters and contemporary art, with  
Bollywood and Hollywood taking over your mind.

- **Bharti Sharma**





## HEADS IN BEDS

Nestled in Dubai's Motiongate Amusement Park, The Outlet Village, and Dubai Marina, ROVE at the Park is a modern mid-rise hotel that indulges you in some out-of-the-box stay facilities and ambience. Located within Dubai's most adventurous and thrilling destinations, Dubai Parks and Resorts, it houses three world-class theme parks, as well as water parks, entertainment and luxury for the whole family. Whether you are looking for a meeting room or a fun-packed family trip, Rove at the park will take care of all your needs. The hotel is an hour's drive from Dubai International Airport, snuggled between Jebel Ali's flat deserts it is directly across from The Outlet Village, Dubai's very own Oxfordshire's Bicester Village. The highlight of staying at this luxurious and contemporary style hotel is the Dubai Parks and Resorts which is the most popular attraction, consisting of four interconnected themed parks -

Motiongate, Bollywood Parks, Legoland, and Legoland Waterpark. If you wish to be entertained and get the real experience give yourself a half-day to go around each one and explore rollercoasters slapping the wind away. The Daily at the Park is a neighbourhood hangout that provides meals all day long. The place opens early morning at 6.30 AM and closes at 11.30 at the night. Choice of Arabic, Western, Indian and Southeast Asian cuisine the place is a cure for your taste buds. Fresh fruit juices and healthy energy-boosting drinks are a must-try for that adventure-packed day at the amusement parks. The hotel gives you the facility to check in at 4.00 PM and provides late checkouts at 2.00 PM, with rooms that are an adventure on their own. The rooms of the hotel are specially customised in a way to relieve your stress with motivational quotes on the wall.

The hotel has a symmetrical façade with hints of art deco, but a very modern millennial style that dominates the premise. Contemporary artworks gracing the gallery and locally themed murals complimenting the eclectic quirky times ahead, it's a treat to just admire the property and soak in all the delights it has to offer. A swimming pool and sundeck are a must-visit for that suntanned day with some delicious cocktails adding the cherry on top. The hotel also has a 24-hour gym and a boutique convenience store if you are looking to splurge some big bucks. Other amenities that make The Rove at the Park a happy stay are designer beds by Simmons with sofa beds for extra guests, modern bathrooms with power rain showers etc. The rooms overlooking the theme parks will make jump right out the window and experience all the glorious fun. The region's largest integrated

theme park destination, with adrenaline-packed rides and something for everyone in the family, is a perfect getaway for the entire family and Rove at the Park is the best to entertain you. Indoor and outdoor rides with Hollywood and Bollywood-themed adventures for kids. Legoland, a dream for any kid to hop through blocks and find their way to a waterpark is just minutes away from the hotel. Motiongate Dubai, which is a film-inspired fun and adventure park will take you through your beloved movies. Riverland Dubai is a uniquely themed dining and entertainment destination in the heart of Dubai Parks and Resorts. The Legoland Water Park for kids to splash their minds away, The Bollywood Parks Dubai with entertaining stunt shows and amazing Raj Mahal Theatre. The theme parks are the charms of this beautiful property along with luxurious stays and relaxing nights.





NO  
PLACE  
LIKE  
#ROVE



**Paul Bridger**



## HEADS IN BEDS

**As Rove At The Park is located within Dubai's most thrilling family destination, Dubai Parks and Resorts, what experiences guests can expect from the property?**

Located in Dubai Parks and Resorts, the region's largest theme park destination - Rove At The Park is ideal for families as well as for those looking to make the most out of their theme park experience.

The hotel offers interconnecting rooms for families, a large, temperature-controlled outdoor swimming pool and plenty of games in public areas such as PlayStation, foosball, table tennis and more. While kids enjoying non-stop adventure, adults can have some me-time at our 24h state-of-the-art gym, tuck into some good food at The Daily restaurant or relax at our licensed Lounge bar.

Right on the hotel's doorstep, Rovers (guests) can visit 3 world-class theme parks and a waterpark, which include the film-inspired MOTIONGATE Dubai, lego-themed rides at LEGOLAND Dubai, splashtastic LEGOLAND Water Park and the musical kaleidoscope of colour that is BOLLYWOOD PARKS Dubai. This is in addition to free access to themed zones, street ambiance and numerous shops and restaurants at Riverlan Dubai.

Furthermore, Rove At The Park is within walking distance from The Outlet Village and 20 minutes from JBR beach and the yacht-lined Dubai Marina with a metro station close by to get you swiftly to The Dubai Mall, Burj Khalifa and beyond. There's something exciting for the

whole family in this epic wonderland. **Dubai's buoyant hospitality sector has been attracting huge numbers from the India market. What's your key focus to get the maximum out of this market?**

India is a key market for the UAE and for Rove Hotels. It has been among the top 5 markets across the brand.

To reach the Indian audience, our focus has primarily been on digital media and social platforms and targeted travel agents with a large presence in the Indian market. We collaborate with many top Indian influencers and KOLs, which is a great way to reach out to the Indian market, especially to the young audience who constantly search for new destinations and cool places to stay.

Historically that has worked out the best for our target audience and the brand.

**How do you identify factors that shape up your brand's appeal in terms of Indian market? How has it fared for you both in terms of business prospects and customer response?**

Rove has a broad appeal across segments due to our great value, central locations in Dubai and the quality of the offering. As one of the primary sources of travellers to Dubai, India is an important market for us. Some of our hotels are in the areas that are particularly popular with Indian travellers, such as Rove City Centre, Rove Healthcare City and Rove At The Park.

With the ease of travel restrictions between India and UAE, we have seen great demand from the Indian market, which came to visit their

families and friends after two years of the pandemic.

Considering the high percentage of Indian residents in the region, our local brand awareness and reputation help us generate a lot of bookings from those who need to accommodate family or travellers who have heard from us via their friends.

**What's your outlook on the year ahead? Can you please shed some light on the growth and marketing strategy for this year?**

India is one of the leading markets for UAE and for Rove Hotels. Unlike some other markets, Indians travel to Dubai year round and have always been among the top markets across the Rove brand.

In addition to the usual strong demand from the Indian market, the last quarter of 2022 is expected to be an outstanding season for Dubai hospitality thanks to major events happening globally such as the FIFA World Cup in Qatar and T20 Cricket World Cup in Australia. The city is a perfect stopover hub for travellers flying from India to any of these events, and we are sure that lots of new visitors will get to discover and experience the brand for the first time, which is great.

To top it all off, the city will be hosting a significant number of events during the period, with over 30 business events and exhibitions taking place at the DWTC alone. It's definitely going to be a really busy period for the city!

**The pandemic has swiftly changed the dynamics of the hospitality sector. With health and safety being the utmost**

**priority, how Rove At The Park is currently handling the situation while taking utmost care of the guests.**

At Rove Hotels, we've always taken pride in our cleanliness and hygiene standards. We follow all the regulations provided by the local authorities to make sure our Rovers as well as our team are as safe and comfortable as possible.

The government of Dubai and the UAE have done a great job keeping visitors and residents safe during the pandemic. A proof of that is that the UAE has now achieved 100% vaccination rates and has also led the way with the efficiency and frequency of, and ease of access to, Covid-19 testing throughout the Emirate.

We are truly thankful to the government of Dubai, for their great leadership throughout the pandemic, which has allowed the hospitality industry to remain operational and rapidly recover from the pandemic.

**What is the next benchmark you're looking at and in what time frame (wrt India market)?**

Our next objective is to continue expanding within the UAE and the MENA region. We already have a few hotels announced in Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah (within the UAE) and Saudi Arabia, which is very exciting. We are actively looking for opportunities in nearby markets.

These new openings will take our room count to around 5,000 in 2-3 years.



# The Great British Beer Festival

Quenching your thirst with water is in the past, it's time to up the game with some pints of beer. The United Kingdom is host to The Great British Beer Festival, where too much beer is a myth.

- Tripti Jain





## OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

The country of queen is a dream destination on every traveller's bucket list. Cities beaming with tourists and youngsters hopping bars every night, UK is a hub for socialising and interacting with new people. It is very common to find a bar in every corner that brews their own beer while serving some of the most amazing food. The city of dreams London has a huge market of people that love to trot all over the city looking for regular spots to visit for a fun and entertaining time. The annual event that brings people from all over the world to experience the flavours London breweries have to offer, The Great British Beer Festival is like a feather on the crown.

The Great British Beer Festival is known as the 'world's largest pub', and has at least 500 beers from British breweries, about 200 foreign beers from countries such as Belgium, Germany and the United States, and about 900 traditional British beers. It offers a variety of drinks like Cider and Perry. So if you are wondering whether it is a good idea to plan your trip around the festival, then let me tell you all the beer lovers, it is the best idea. One of the most interesting things about the festival is that it is run by unpaid volunteers, of whom about 1000 work at the festival.



### Where it all began

CAMRA hosted the first major beer festival in Covent Garden, London in September 1975. This was a four-day event that attracted 40,000 people who drank 150,000 pints of real ale. Strictly speaking, it wasn't the Great British Beer Festival, but is said to be an usher of the festival. The first "appropriate" Great British Beer Festival was held at Alexandra Palace in 1977. The venue has moved between cities since its inception, but has been based in London since 1991. The festival was not held in 1984, 2020 and 2021, respectively, due to the fire at the venue and the COVID 19 pandemic.

### All about GBBF

This year the festival is going to be a raging hit with beer lovers cruising down to London city for the ultimate experience. After two long years of waiting due to the pandemic, the festival is finally commencing and will take place from 2nd August to 6th August. Organised by the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), it presents a selection of cask ales and other alcoholic drinks from different parts of the UK as well as neighbouring places. The festival is also home to the Champion Beer of Britain awards, which decide the most famous beer of the season.





**What's in store for this year?**

CAMRA is hosting the Great British Beer Festival again at Olympia London. Providing a stunning backdrop of grand Victorian architecture for over 130 years, Olympia London has now been home to the festival since 2012 and we're excited to be bringing you some incredible beers this year at one of London's most iconic venues.

This year the Festival is taking place during the first full week of August, from Tuesday to Saturday. The Tuesday afternoon session is open to trade and press only, and the winner of the British Champion Beer will be announced in the afternoon. The general public can attend afternoon and evening events from Tuesday night to Saturday night. In 2006, more than 66,000 people attended the festival and drank about 350,000 pints of beer, according to CAMRA figures. One pint sold in less than half a second, isn't that just amazing. Apart from grizzling down pints of beer, the festival offers entertainment such as live music and traditional pub games, as well as a variety of food stands.

If you are wondering where you can book your tickets from, the answer is the official website for the festival. The tickets for the festival range from 20 pounds to 42 pounds, depending upon your choice. You can also avail season passes that give you the full experience of the festival throughout the week. Get your hands on British and international beers from over 500 different breweries, as well as ciders, perries, wine, and gin. Indulge yourself in the natural magic of grain to glass, while enjoying live music, delicious street food and incredible selection of only the finest beers.







### Brewery Bars you can spot

Famous British breweries come under one roof and offer people an array of freshly brewed beers that will keep coming all day long. This year's British Beer Festival is showcasing some of the oldies as well as newbies and the list just goes on. AnspachHobday London, which was founded in Bermondsey in 2014 makes traditional beers in a modern way. Classic British Style beer, it is best known for its porters and stouts. Adnams Southwold, founded in 1872 on the Suffolk coast and has been

an independent brewery for almost 150 years. Arkell's Family Brewers, established in 1843, is Swindon's oldest business. Bishop Nick, which is based in Braintree and has a rich heritage. They use local ingredients to produce high quality and distinctive real ales. Black Storm Brewery comes with a mantra that is 'Great Beer bringing people together.' Bradfield Brewery, which is a family run business, using the finest malts, traditional hops and natural spring water from their own borehole to produce winning cask real ales. These are some of

the brewing companies amongst others. Brewing a beer is an art.

Apart from these beer brewing companies, there are a number of famous restaurants putting up stalls to accompany the pints and mugs of beer. What better than hot steaming burgers and fries with a chilled glass of beer. This year's British Beer Festival is going to be larger than life and something that definitely should not be skipped. To all the beer enthusiasts, this is the festival that you have to be a part of. The festival that will make you drool and swoon at the same time.



## The Tourism Development Support Fund of Kyrgyz Republic and Salvia Promoters roll out the Kyrgyz Republic Roadshows in India

New Delhi, June 7th 2022: Salvia Promoters and the Tourism Development Support Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic, set about its series of the Kyrgyz Republic Roadshows in India. The Kyrgyz Republic Roadshow, India Chapter 2022 begins with its first Roadshow in New Delhi on June 7, 2022 and then resumes in Mumbai on June 8, 2022 to promote tourism.

In another major development in Central Asian nation Kyrgyzstan, officially known as Kyrgyz Republic, The Department of Tourism of the Kyrgyz Republic has signed an agreement with Salvia Promoters and opened its office in India for the promotion of Tourism.

Commenting on the latest development, His Excellency Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic in India, Mr. Asein Isaev said, "Kyrgyzstan and India have shared history, culture and friendship spanning over a thousand years. Promotion of Tourism would facilitate more and more Indian travellers to visit our beautiful country and further strengthen our people-to-people relations that is centuries old."

The roadshow witnessed presentations from all three Delegates from the Tourism Development Support Fund of the

Kyrgyz Republic. The President, Tourism Development Support Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic Ms. Elena Kalashnikova further elaborated, "I am sure this is the starting point for us to develop friendships between the Kyrgyz and Indian nations that will withstand a long time. And tourism is a gate for the win-win collaboration and multiple effects on sustainable development of other many sectors of economy. You are cordially welcome to visit us and share our values of being happy".

Speaking on the occasion, Prashant Chaudhary, Managing Director, Salvia Promoters said, "Kyrgyzstan has untapped potential and provides to be a fantastic short-haul destination in the Indian market. Our motive behind organising these Roadshows is to reach the Indian travel fraternity and through media reach travellers and make them more and more aware of the vast potential this destination has to offer with its culture, nature, silk route history, most importantly its hassle free 7 day visa processing time and direct two and a half hour flight duration from New Delhi. We have been promoting tourism to Kyrgyzstan in India for decades and with support of our new partnership, we plan to double the number of travellers to Kyrgyzstan by next year."



### Oman Air organises a fam trip for travel agents

Oman Air has recently organised a familiarisation trip to Oman for MICE, leisure and luxury tour operators from Delhi and Chandigarh. The trip was lead by Vineet Nayyar, Manager, North India, Oman Air and was designed to showcase the great offerings of Oman which can be an excellent products to attract travellers. The itinerary not only emphasised on the Muscat infrastructure, hotel inspections, sightseeing, attractions, venue capacities but also highlighted the rich culture, history, cuisine, famous landmarks and other facilities that Oman has to offer.



## SATTE becomes an epicentre for dialogues on the revival of the travel industry

Tourism industry participated in SATTE 2022, organized by B2B exhibition organiser Informa Markets at the India Expo Mart, Greater Noida. As many as 36,000 + industry buyers and trade visitors across multiple industry verticals like travel, wedding planning, and corporate travel were present at the three-day event with business opportunities.







**Seventh edition of Global Hospitality Conclave held in Capital after a hiatus of two years**

The National Capital Region witnessed the 7th Global Hospitality Conclave (GHC) at The Oberoi, New Delhi, recently. A dynamic event in the hospitality industry, the GHC has over the last seven editions raised the bar of discourse on critical issues impacting the world in general and hospitality in particular. This much awaited event took place after a hiatus of two years due to lockdowns and Covid restrictions across the world.

This year, the Conclave discussed and debated the way forward in a post Covid scenario in the travel and tourism sector with focus on Business in a world between orders, Permanent changes after Covid, Empowering your business and Digital disruption. Oberoi alumni as well as guest speakers from across industries shared their expertise and knowledge on these issues.



**Coco Collection & IRIS Reps organise an exclusive dinner for preferred travel trade partners**

Coco Collection along with IRIS Reps recently organised an exclusive dinner for select travel trade partners in Delhi. Attended by close to 25 travel experts, the event proved to be an excellent platform to gain first-hand knowledge on properties and updates by Suhaila Aishath, Director of Sales, Coco Collection. "We have recently concluded SATTE2022 and I'm glad we did it. It was great to see the enthusiasm and thrill among our partners to sell and promote our properties. We organised this evening to thank you each one of our trade partners who supported us through our journey and continues their support for upcoming season," said Suhaila Aishath, Director of Sales, Coco Collection.





## Cora Cora Maldives organises networking events in Delhi & Mumbai

Cora Cora Maldives recently hosted networking events in Delhi & Mumbai exclusively for its partners. A celebration of lifestyle and liberation, Cora Cora Maldives is driving hospitality trends that are setting the benchmark in its own style. Its contemporary trends create a space that sits in perfect harmony with the natural environment inspiring the guests. The brand is expanding its ambit in the Indian market and has been receiving an overwhelming response already.

Vishen Mootoo, Director of Sales & Marketing, Cora Cora Maldives shares, "The Indian market is considered an important one for the Maldives and thus, its equally important for Cora Cora Maldives as well. As a premium all inclusive resort we have four restaurants, guests will have the choices to choose from Vegan, Vegetarian, Gluten Free dishes as well as meat and seafood. We offer an array of zero proof beverages, and that set does set us apart from the standard all inclusive concepts which are already available in the market. We are working not with stakeholders but fans of Cora Cora Maldives and there is a handful of them which cater for all region of India."

Karishma Kazi, Founder, Black Turtle and Indian representative of Cora Cora Maldives shares, "We also consider India as our top 5 Markets. After three successful road shows in India which took place in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi, we were happy to let the agents know more and clear any doubts at all if needed. Our strategy is to do regular in-person visits to our partners/fans, making them up-to-date with the product knowledge additionally small events amongst the B2C segment with presentation. We also learnt about how happy and satisfied our partners were to have worked with us and for suggesting Cora Cora not only because of our all inclusive but also of the fact that our hospitality is considered one of the best."





## APPOINTMENTS



### **Cygnett Hotels & Resorts**

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts has recently announced the appointment of Amit Mahajan as Chief Growth Officer. He will be bringing over 23 years of progressive work experience, which has been primarily focused on hotel development, hotel real estate acquisitions, investment analysis, and growth strategy.

Congratulating Amit on his appointment, Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, said "We are excited to have Amit in our team. He will help us spearhead our next phase of expansion and achieve our goal of building 100 Cygnett hotels over the next few years."

Before joining Cygnett, Amit had an entrepreneurial stint in the leisure accommodation space, and before that served as Director of Development with InterGlobe Hotels (a joint venture between InterGlobe Enterprises and Accor Hotels), where he actively participated in real estate acquisitions for 21 hotels and greenfield development of over 3,000 rooms.

### **Ixigo**

Travel app ixigo (Le Travenues Technology Limited) has appointed Rahul Gautam as its Group Chief Financial Officer effective 5th May 2022. Rahul brings considerable experience in capital markets, corporate finance, and business advisory and will be replacing former Group Chief Financial Officer, Ravi Gupta, who has resigned due to personal reasons. In his current role at ixigo, Rahul will be leading the finance function for ixigo with specific focus on corporate finance and corporate development, mergers and acquisitions, public markets and investor relations, growth, risk management and financial reporting.



### **Accor India**

Accor India has recently announced the appointment of Vineet Mishra as Cluster General Manager of Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, along with Novotel & Ibis Bengaluru Outer Ring Road and Novotel & Ibis Chennai.

A seasoned hospitality veteran, Vineet Mishra brings on board an illustrious career spanning over 23 years with an exceptional network in the industry. In his new role, Vineet will take on an elevated leadership role, taking charge for leading the overall operations. Vineet's rich body of work including successful stints with leading hospitality brands, strength in business management, meticulous operational techniques and his unique style of leadership with a 'team first' approach will help in crafting extraordinary experiences and while continuing to drive recovery.



### **Holiday Inn New Delhi Mayur Vihar**

Sujeet Singh has been appointed as Director of Food & Beverage at Holiday Inn New Delhi Mayur Vihar. With over 18 years of experience in Hospitality Industry, he has worked with brands like Radisson Group, Four Points by Sheraton, InterContinental Eros, Taj and Oberoi. His last association was with Double Tree by Hilton Jaipur Amer as Assistant Director Food & Beverage where he has taken multiple layers of responsibility from F&B Operations to Events & Catering. He comes up with strong culinary background and won several awards including 'Executive Chef of the year' North India by IHE'2019, Runner up Chef of the year'2019 by Hotelier India Award for midscale hotels and many more. He ensures that he takes out time for Cricket when he is not at work.





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