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Editor's Letter

As we're always plugged into an array of devices and forced to keep up with the fast pace at which the world moves, it seems almost impossible to plan the vacation of our dreams. The pandemic however changed this giving us all a lot of time to plan that long-awaited vacation. It was a very exhilarating month for our team since the onset of the second wave; most of us had hit the roads to our favourite destinations feeling normal again. The team has penned down their enlivening experiences for this issue. We as a media house felt the need to spread positivity in these stressed times with a focus on presenting things in the most unprejudiced yet optimistic way. It was an honour for me to be a panellist on the series of webinars hosted by the UP Tourism Board and FICCI on 'Being Tourism Ready' where we discussed the role of the media in reviving the tourism sector.

The normalcy in the travel sector can be felt as you flip through pages and encounter a lot of active business and fraternity back on track. The team spoke to an array of professionals in this issue to talk about their perception on 'new travel'. I would like to call this issue a round-up issue because we have interviewed three frontrunners of India's most established brands, Indigo, IRCTC and Cordelia.

Cricket is like a religion in India, cricketers are gods and this makes IPL a festival celebrated with the same fervour by cricket enthusiasts, not just in India but global fans of the sport alike. The cover story on IPL Tourism will discuss the tournament like never before. Flamboyantly vibrant and colourful is the aura of West Bengal, deeply-rooted culture and an intricate love for literature and cinema have positioned it very differently. When it comes to experiences, Bengal has plentiful.

It's a very special month for our travel industry, we all will celebrate the World Tourism Day and it will be a special one. Few industry leaders have talked about its significance and their vision for the year ahead.

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor



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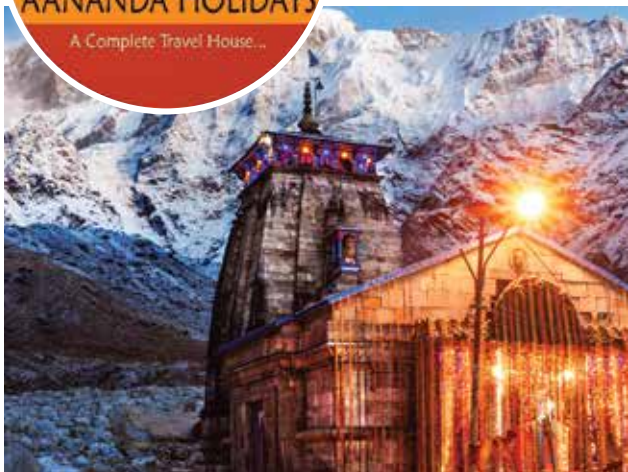
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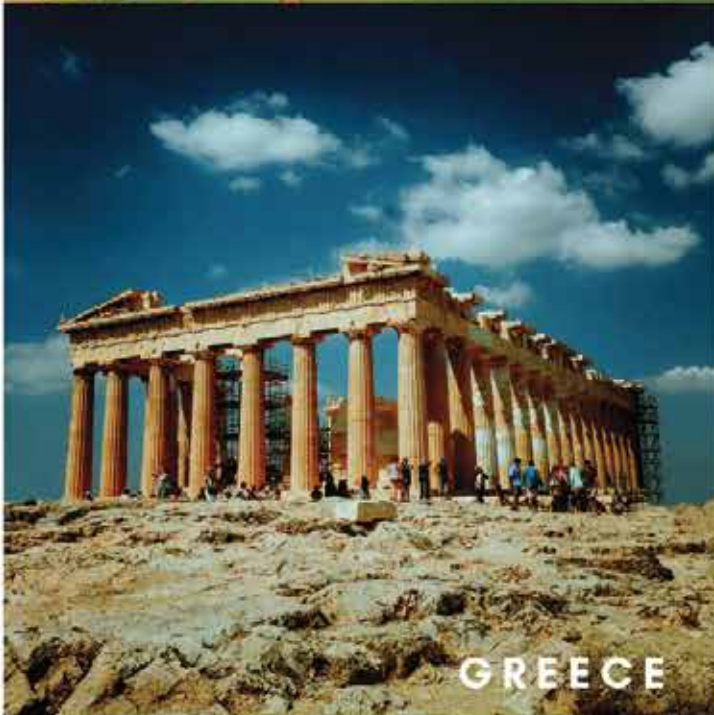
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Jumeirah Group announces the opening of stunning new address in Maldives

Jumeirah Group, the global luxury hospitality company and a member of Dubai Holding, recently announced a new international resort, Jumeirah Maldives, which will welcome its first guests from October 1, 2021. Adding to Jumeirah Group's growing portfolio of hotels, guests can now discover Jumeirah Maldives, an all-villa luxury resort tucked away in the crystalline turquoise waters of the North Malé Atoll, easily reachable by speedboat or seaplane from Malé Airport. Its idyllic location offers privacy for romantic getaways, a blissful island retreat for friends and family and experiences to suit the more active traveller. The resort's surprising panoramic architecture and calming interiors are the work of sophisticated Singaporean design studio, Miaja, who have created an elegant contemporary ethos in harmony with the natural environment, echoing the modern Mediterranean chic – a design that sets it apart from the rest.



Nijhawan Group appointed as the India GSA of Flyme

Flyme has appointed Nijhawan Group as its GSA for India. The new representation is expected to bring added benefits to travellers from India to the Maldives. Flyme, operated by Villa Air is part of the Villa Group of Companies, is set to operate from Bengaluru, India to the Maldives starting from September 26, 2021.

Flyme provides air transport services to domestic and international airports serving both the local community as well as international passengers. As a privately owned airline, Flyme strives to provide safe, reliable and exceptional service to its passengers when travelling on the airline through innovative and efficient operations. The operational traffic base airport of Flyme is Velana International Airport (VIA) with scheduled routes to Villa Airport Maamigili- Engineering Hub (VAM) and Dharavandhoo Airport (DRV).



SriLankan invites fully vaccinated Indian travellers to Sri Lanka

SriLankan Airlines, the National Carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of oneworld alliance, in a bid to promote greater travel opportunities from India to Sri Lanka, announced strengthening its presence in India with more destinations and frequencies offering travelers to enjoy the freedom of travel. The decision has been taken alongside SriLankan government's big announcement to reopen the island nation to fully vaccinated Indian tourists. Currently, India accounts for over 120 million fully vaccinated citizens, which can be a huge potential tourist segment for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka will accept tourist with all vaccines including Covaxin and there will be no quarantine for travellers who test Covid negative on arrival in Sri Lanka. One just needs to be fully vaccinated, with the second shot taken at least 14 days before the trip. A mandatory RT-PCR test will be conducted in the hotel and if anyone tests positive will be taken to health care centers run from hotels. All global Covid protocols like social distancing, & hand sanitation will be strictly followed.





ClassPass and STB team up to promote Singapore's urban wellness experiences

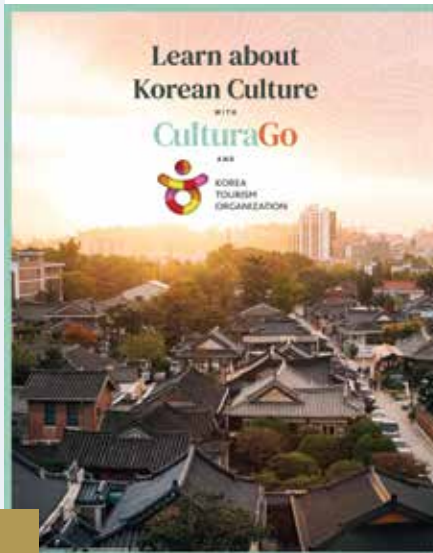
ClassPass and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) have launched a one-year partnership to jointly promote Singapore's wellness offerings and enhance the city's attractiveness as an urban wellness destination. This is the first such partnership in Singapore for ClassPass. It is also STB's first since outlining Singapore's goal to be a leading urban wellness haven at the Tourism Industry Conference in April 2021. As Singapore boasts a wide variety of health and fitness experiences alongside complementary health and

alternative therapies, the partnership aims to build on this strong foundation by providing businesses with a global platform to share their offerings with local and international audiences, while raising awareness for wellness in Singapore. As a fitness and wellness platform popular amongst many Singaporeans as well as action seekers around the world, the partnership will drive demand for wellness experiences available on ClassPass as well as expand the variety of such products and services on the platform.

Saudi Tourism Authority invests in India Commercial Office

The Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) has opened a commercial office in India as part of its strategy to engage the tourism trade in key source markets and raise awareness of Saudi, the authentic home of Arabia, as travellers around the world dream of exploring exotic destinations once more. The destination reopened to vaccinated international visitors at the beginning of August. The India representative office is being set up with the support of Think Strawberries, a leading destination consulting and Representation Company that provides strategic direction to global tourism

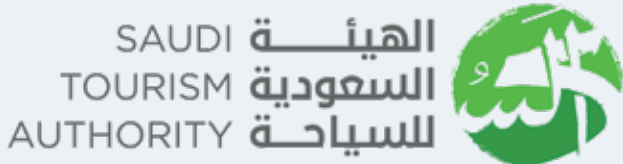
brands and destinations through meticulous market research and intelligence, a dedicated salesforce, innovative tools and best practices, to nurture and develop them from a long-term perspective. "STA is focused on enhancing its ability to deliver a truly global scale offering by investing resources today in the network that will drive our business for the future," said Fahd Hamidaddin, CEO of the Saudi Tourism Authority. "We are building an integrated global team of professionals to showcase Saudi's diverse offering of cultural adventures, world-class heritage sites and authentic Arabian hospitality."



KTO New Delhi collaborates with CulturaGo to introduce a Korean Culture online course

Korea Tourism Organization, New Delhi office has collaborated with international start-up CulturaGo to introduce a tailor-made Korean Culture online course for culturally minded travellers in India. This paid course, typically available at around US\$ 129 will be available at an exceptionally discounted price of US\$ 32

(approx. INR 2400) through this collaboration. It is a value addition for anyone who would like to increase their cultural awareness about South Korea. The course will remain available at discounted pricing till end of November 2021. The course is designed to help people planning travel to South Korea for work, study, extended stay, or tourism in the future. It contains 5 comprehensive modules to help one understand Korean culture, learn about the country's geography and different cities, daily life and etiquettes, prepare for any culture shock that one might experience and finally explain how to live and travel like a local in the country. Each module includes various video interviews of local experts and foreigners living in Korea to help get a better understanding through their personal experience on each topic. After completing the course, one will also receive a certificate of completion from CulturaGo.



Tourism Authority of Thailand launches #Tiedtothailand campaign

Tourism Authority of Thailand India office launched their new digital campaign #TiedtoThailand. The campaign encourages Indians to showcase their creative side and share some fun, quirky or interesting, taglines or slogans for each of these destinations within Thailand. Be it Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya, Phang Nga, Samui, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, Kanchanaburi, the campaign urges travellers to send in

entries that resonate with their experience or showcases their perception of the destination. The contest winners get some souvenirs from Thailand and prominent mentions on all the digital platforms of the tourism board. Through the #TiedToThailand campaign, the tourism board aims to keep the destination at the top-of-mind position while connecting with the sentiments of Indian travellers.



Mauritius looking forward to full reopening of borders in October 2021

The Republic of Mauritius is looking forward to the full reopening of its borders on October 1, when vaccinated international travellers will be welcomed in without restrictions. Visitors who present a negative PCR test taken in the 72 hours before their departure will be able to

explore the island freely from the moment they arrive. At this time of year, visitors will find the perfect climate for enjoying the various outdoor activities Mauritius has to offer, such as hiking, kite surfing, water sports, as well as of course relaxing on the country's world-renowned

beaches. Mauritius opened for international travel in the middle of July. Currently, vaccinated guests spend 14 days in a special 'resort bubble' hotel before going on to discover more of the Indian Ocean paradise. Arvind Bundhun, Director of MTPA, said "Mauritius is

delighted to see the world opening up again for travel. We have been welcoming international visitors to our island since the middle of July and the 'resort bubbles' have proven a great success."





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GLOBETROTTING WITH IPL

It all started in 2008, cheering for the favourite team sitting at the comforts of our homes. IPL has come a long way since then; who in their right mind would have thought that a sports series could have the potential to influence travel itineraries?

- Bharti Sharma



LIVE WIRE

What is the first thought that comes to your mind at the mention of IPL? Let me guess, the fixtures and which destination you can travel to watch your matches? If this is your line of thought then you've understood the relevance of IPL Tourism. I'm sure even with this franchise of IPL being played in the UAE, the pandemic situation forcing the matches to be played in empty stadiums have spoiled a lot of our travel plans to Dubai to watch our teams live. Cricket is like a religion in India, cricketers are gods and this makes IPL a festival celebrated with the same fervor by cricket enthusiasts not just in India but global fans of the sport alike. At any given point of time, IPL has over 10,000 people working on the tournament. The sources claimed that only the teams consumed 30,000 rooms in hotels and 10,000 airline tickets for the IPL tournament in South Africa.

Now imagine the level of outbound to the UAE during the IPL under normal situations. Whether you're travelling to watch your favorite team battling for climbing the point table, or your eternal love for your favorite cricketer, the experience will include transportation, hotel bookings, and complimentary sightseeing; boosting the comprehensive tourism landscape of the destination. It's not just the 32 players travelling for the playoffs, but the millions of enthusiasts traveling to the destination on both long and short stays.





Notes from the coach!

We might predict that IPL tourism is at a nascent stage but studies and surveys support its potential growth. Be it domestic, inbound or outbound, every segment witnesses the augmented numbers during the IPL seasons. The spike in the number of foreign tourists during the season can be seen as a lot of families and fans travelling to India across countries to support their players. Talking about domestic matches, there has been a huge demand for IPL matches played on weekends (even weekdays) with people willing to travel across cities just to see their favourite team play.

Occupancies, hitting a six!

IPL period has been proven to be valuable for the hospitality industry as it is considered to be a relatively offseason in a lot of places in India. Travel and hotel demand witness an uptick, during summer when usually leisure

business drops. According to an industry estimate, the 60-game tournament creates as many as 45,000 room nights for the hospitality sector. As per one of the travel companies, the IPL led to a whopping 30 per cent increase in travel revenue.

This explains that tourism in India is not a niche market, especially IPL tourism. The concept of sports tourism started gaining momentum in 2003 with the ICC world cup, as the Indian fans experienced a new format of tourney. This continued to get more recognition after the introduction of the Indian Premier League. With time IPL has broken all records and as the dynamics and patterns of the viewers and travellers changed. After the IPL being shifted to South Africa, it was able to pull off a feat that was completely unimaginable and we saw people travelling in great numbers to support their team and also enjoy South-Africa as a tourist place.





There's a catch!

One thing is for sure, the travel industry needs no lessons on how to create opportunities to grab the customer's attention. Make no bones about it; the market has always been very competitive but the industry has managed to sustain even in the darkest times. It was when the IPL shifted the season to UAE and we witnessed tons of flyers/offers from tour operators on special 'IPL packages'. The tournament was the kind of boost our industry needed to trail tourism back on track.

Win-win for all

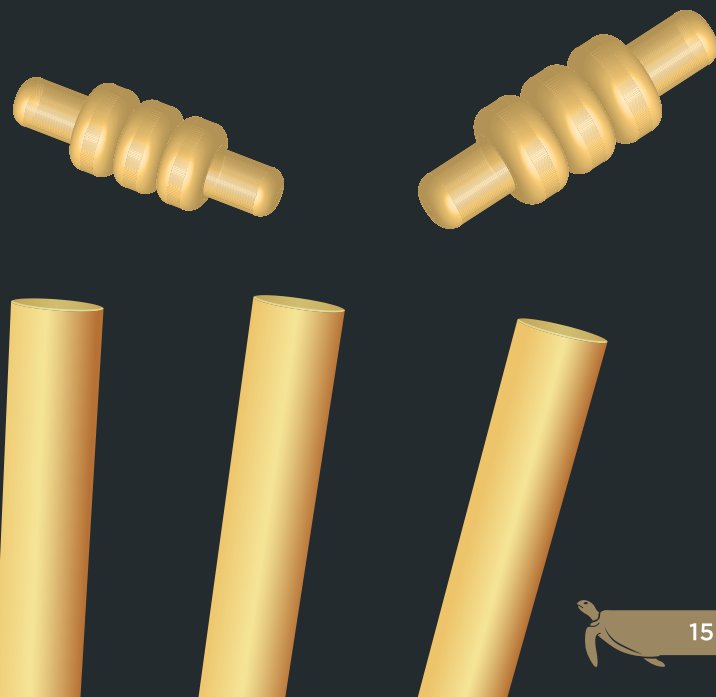
It's not an alien concept that tourism and sports have a directly proportional relation

that has an impact on national economies. It can be seen that the total number of tangible (direct) spectators of the WCC 2011 was 1,361,000. Back then, this depicted a trend of how India as a country started leaning towards sports and is a future market for growth. Further recognising India's potential and infrastructure, sporting events such as Common Wealth Games, ATP 250, and franchises like the Indian Super League and Pro Kabaddi League emerged in the category receiving overwhelming response.

If these leagues follow how IPL positioned itself over the years and with growing sports infrastructure in the country

supported by government initiatives focused on promoting a sporting culture, the league structure certainly has a lot of power to attract tourists from across borders. The way IPL has

functioned in recent years with great assurance to the three important aspects of tourism; airline, hospitality, and tourist destinations is an eye-opener for opportunities in sports.



THE QUINTESSENTIAL

WEST BENGAL

Flamboyantly vibrant and colourful is the aura of West Bengal, deeply-rooted culture and an intricate love for literature and cinema have positioned it very differently. Travelling from the mountains to the mangroves, you will be surrounded with unforgettable experiences; the journey is bliss in itself. Unfolding the state and its shades of happiness is a never-ending process, and with every step, the state offers an opportunity to let you discover the essence of life.

- Sudipta Saha





EXPERIENTIAL WEST BENGAL

West Bengal is like a storyteller, every nook-corner of the state has a story waiting to be discovered and read by the world. It is indeed blessed with numerous untold sagas and yet-to-be-discovered experiences. Listening to Rabindra Sangeet, or watching Satyajit Ray, either reading Feluda, or humming in the tune of baul, or getting into that puja mode, (it's a never-ending list), everything is unique here. Walking down the lanes adorned with colonial architecture, or sit by the window overlooking the snow-capped mountains or simply sit by the Ganges and watch the sunset, is an enchanted experience altogether. We did have had a chance to experience the artistic beauty of the state on the big screen, be it the Durga Puja experience in Kahaani, or the movie Parineeta which managed to bring the soul of the state on-screen, the Kolkata vibe was

so well portrayed in Barfi showcasing the trams, or the movie Piku where a father-daughter duo embarked on a journey from Delhi to Kolkata portraying the old heritage house in North Bengal along with some insights on the city of joy. Bengal is beyond what we think and the state which is engulfed with various tourism products such as heritage, culture, art, pilgrimage, wildlife, beaches, mountains, adventure, lush green tea gardens, enormous deltas, and the famous toy train.

"West Bengal is an all-season destination, the mighty Himalayas, the greenery of Gangetic planes, the serene beaches, mangrove estuaries, the old heritage, and a story attached to it, the colourful festival, arts, and culture makes Bengal a diversified destination. The state offers a myriad of experiences, many destinations have come up, and ample new experiences are yet to be explored. The state is blessed to have an astounding variety of tourism products, if you travel to



Smt Nandini Chakravorty

places like Shantiniketan or Kalimpong homestays have opened up, and these homestays are doing appreciable. Darjeeling Himalayas has always been on the top of the list and will remain so, but apart from Darjeeling, other prominent destinations such as Bishnupur, Murshidabad, Cooch Behar, Malda, Bakkhali, Dooars, Kurseong, and many more have come up as a favourite spot for travel. The feel of Bengal is mesmerising, it's a paradise for an explorer, and as you keep travelling you unwind the mystery of the place. Bengal is experiential and meant for all genres of travellers," says Smt Nandini Chakravorty, Principal Secretary, West Bengal Tourism.

EXPLORE THE HIDDEN TREASURES

What comes to your mind when we talk about West Bengal, the iconic Howrah Bridge, the snow-clad mountains of Darjeeling, the famous Rasogulla, or the popular cuisine maach bhaat. Well, hold yourself; Bengal is beyond what you can even imagine, this cultural state shares border with Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh internationally, and the Indian states of Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Sikkim, and Assam. As a traveller exploring West Bengal is like embarking on a journey. There are ample destinations for holidaying, from hill stations such as Kalimpong, Kurseong, Mirik to amidst the lap of a sanctuary in Dooars, or drive down to places such as Murshidabad, Birbhum, Bishnupur, Malda, Bankura to relish the historic flavour or dive into spiritualism at places such as Kalighat, Tarapith, Belur Math, Nakhoda Masjid.



INDIAN SAGA

Debjit Dutta, Director, Impression Tourism Services further emphasise, "From the mountains of Himalayas to mangroves of Sunderban, West Bengal offers life-changing experiences and the diversity of the state is its biggest USP. The campaign Experience West Bengal, The Sweetest Part of India was to position Bengal as an experiential destination. Bengal has every element which attracts a tourist, the Himalayas, wildlife sanctuary, the Ganges, the thousand years of history, a city like Kolkata, the largest delta, and a coastline as well. The people, culture, language, heritage, art, craft, and literature are another key element in Bengal. I believe that Bengal had not been branded properly, for a very long time. Till date, 80 per cent of Bengal still remains unexplored by different source markets. Bengal was wrongly positioned as a part of North-East India, if we talk about the domestic market Darjeeling, Kalimpong has been sold as a part of North-East India. Secondly, 80 percent of the Gangetic Bengal has not been positioned properly, the same thing happened with Kolkata. For a very long time, Kolkata has always been marketed as a transit destination, Kolkata has a 350 years old history and was once the capital of India. Sunderbans is one unique eco-system in the world and a UNESCO world heritage."

When it comes to experiences, Bengal has a lot to offer. Speaking on the same line, Debjit Dutta highlights, "Apart from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sunderbans, people have started realising that Kolkata in itself is unique, the Ganges heritage, Malda, Murshidabad, Bishnupur, Shantiniketan, little Europe in Bengal, village tourism along with that we have heritage

palaces. I have chalked out to 10 experiences one can explore in Bengal: The Himalayas, Trekking in the Himalayas, Toy Train running since 1878, Tea Garden along with old colonial Bungalows, Wildlife of Doars, Cruising on River Ganges, Kolkata as an experiential city an amalgamation of joy, contrast and culture, Ganges Heritage, Sunderban National Park and finally the Durga Puja is the biggest carnival."



Debjit Dutta

Bengal and Bengalis are strongly connected to their culture, their admiration for art, and strong affection for literature and not to forget their fondness for football and politics, have encouraged tourism in the state for years now. West Bengal is a land of some great personalities such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Satyajit Roy and many more have made numerous contributions in the field of art and literature has enabled the establishment of a separate tourism product in the state.

HOSPITALITY AT ITS BEST

The state is now all dressed up to flaunt its beauty and charm, and with the growing tourism in

the state, various hospitality brands have ventured into the market. Whether it's for leisure, weddings, or MICE, one can find all kinds of accommodations with superlative facilities. Kumar Shobhan, General Manager, Hyatt Regency Kolkata, adds, "West Bengal is one of the beautiful destinations, it offers you everything mountains, beaches, mangroves, barren land, heritage, wildlife sanctuary, beautiful river, etc. West Bengal cannot be compared with other destinations. There is a different segment of travellers, and for every segment, West Bengal has something to offer in terms of accommodation as well. Our location is one of our USPs, we are a 20 years old hotel, but we have embraced the culture and are trying to portray the same to our guests."



Kumar Shobhan

Hyatt Regency Kolkata indeed offers the most luxurious stay, and through various means, it offers an opportunity to feel the vibes of Bengal. Adding further, he says, "In 2019, when I have joined the hotel, the major missing was the flavour of Bengal. The first move for me was to attack the breakfast, and therefore, we added few authentic Bengali food items to the menu. Secondly, we made some changes in the Hi-Tea segment, we got menus from all the old clubs in Kolkata and picked up the best out of it, and started

servicing at an affordable price, and this was a big hit for us. In the same year, we set up a Durga idol created by a famous artist in our lobby, and in the evening we had few girls doing dhunuchi dance. We at Hyatt Regency understand the culture and cuisine of the state and therefore intend to imbibe the same in whichever manner we can. In the room, we have added 'Bhalo Thakben' amenities, we are an international hotel, but Hyatt has taught us that whichever city you go, you become one of them without compromising on standards."

UNIQUE OFFERINGS

Exploring Bengal is a melodious journey as the state is adorned with almost everything which a traveller urges for. The celebration during Durga Pula, the unique Chau, the wildlife safari and rhinos, the charming terracotta heritage, the serene spiritualism, the magic and red earth, the mighty Himalayas, the mangroves, and the tranquil beaches, Bengal will leave you spellbound. Chander Prakash, Director, Neptune Holidays shares, "West Bengal has so much to offer, in terms of religion we have 13 Shaktipeeths, we have Mayapur, and they are opening up in a new way much



INDIAN SAGA

bigger and much experiential, and we have Gangasagar which has enormous potential. In north Bengal, Dooars has come up well, and one can spend approx six nights, the place is full with nature and rivers. In the south of Bengal, Purulia is coming up, and few luxury properties are opening up which is going to boost tourism. Apart from this, Murshidabad, Jhargram, and Birbhum are the new destinations in demand. When we create itineraries, we try and be a little innovative, and have recently launched a cycle tour in Kolkata with the cuisine of Sikkim and North Bengal. Another tour that we are introducing is the Ghats of Kolkata, almost every temple in Kolkata is located on the bank of the River Ganges, and thus we thought of bringing the same to our customers. Darjeeling is always in demand along with Kalimpong when it comes to West Bengal."



Chander Prakash





IndiGo,

beyond carrying passengers
and connecting cities.

IndiGo not only aspires to be an airline with the largest market share but more importantly, a catalyst for economic growth in India. William Boulter, Chief Commercial Officer, IndiGo talks about enhancing regional and international networks while achieving great milestones.

- Bharti Sharma

The whole aviation industry has witnessed the worst time in the last few months owing to the unprecedented pandemic. There are various factors that will determine the recovery of the sector in the long run. For instance, passenger trust in air travel as the safest mode will be the foremost factor in driving demand. With its fleet

of 275+ aircraft, the airline is operating over 1000 daily flights and connecting 69 domestic destinations and 24 international destinations. IndiGo has set a benchmark in on-time-performance amongst scheduled commercial carriers in the country and have won many accolades.





WILLIAM BOULTER

Embracing CarGo and charter flights to generate revenue

William believes that International flights will be another key factor in the revival of the aviation sector, which will also augment economic recovery. He also tells, "We all have learnt new lessons during the pandemic such as embracing CarGo and charter flights to generate revenue. These new modes of revenue generation will play a crucial role in the long-term revival of the sector."

The largest share of the domestic traffic

International flights are still limited so providing regional connectivity is the focus point for all airlines. As airlines are considering banking on the success of India's new regional connectivity scheme (RCS),

Indigo is aggressively strengthening its domestic connectivity and has recently launched multiple routes. Shedding light on the same, William shares, "We have extended our footprint to 7 regional stations in the past few months – Leh, Agra, Darbhanga, Kurnool, Bareilly, Durgapur, Rajkot. Also, since corporate travel is sluggish, VFR and leisure travel will drive business for airlines, which will place more emphasis on domestic traffic, especially between metros and tier 2/3 cities. In addition, we recently commenced operations from key tier 2 cities including Jabalpur, Indore, and Gwalior. Starting this month, IndiGo is operating 486 weekly flights from four cities in Madhya Pradesh, including Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, and Gwalior, to key destinations across the country."

Removal of caps to strengthen the revival of the sector

William believes that the Government can stimulate the aviation sector further by doing away with capacity and fare caps as travel demand has picked up over the last few months. These restrictions were implemented for a good reason last year – now is the time to relax them. He asserts, "Domestic traffic trebled from May to June 2021 as restrictions and the pandemic eased – and we are seeing strong growth since then in total demand. In another instance, Kashmir's single day air traffic has surpassed even the pre-COVID levels. In essence, the removal of these caps will really help strengthen the revival of the sector in India."

Increasing presence in international skies

Indigo has witnessed encouraging demand to the Maldives and have expanded its network to Malé from 5 stations in India (as opposed to 3 stations pre-pandemic), including the new daily flights to and from Hyderabad. He comments, "We definitely had plans to strengthen our international routes and we still aspire to do so contingently on international policies and public health recovery. We are eagerly looking forward to increasing our presence in international skies as the pandemic recedes. We are currently operating CarGo, charters and bubble flights in the international sector across various markets. We have also restarted flights to Bangladesh and Kuwait and hope to resume operations to Sri Lanka this month, under the air bubble arrangement."

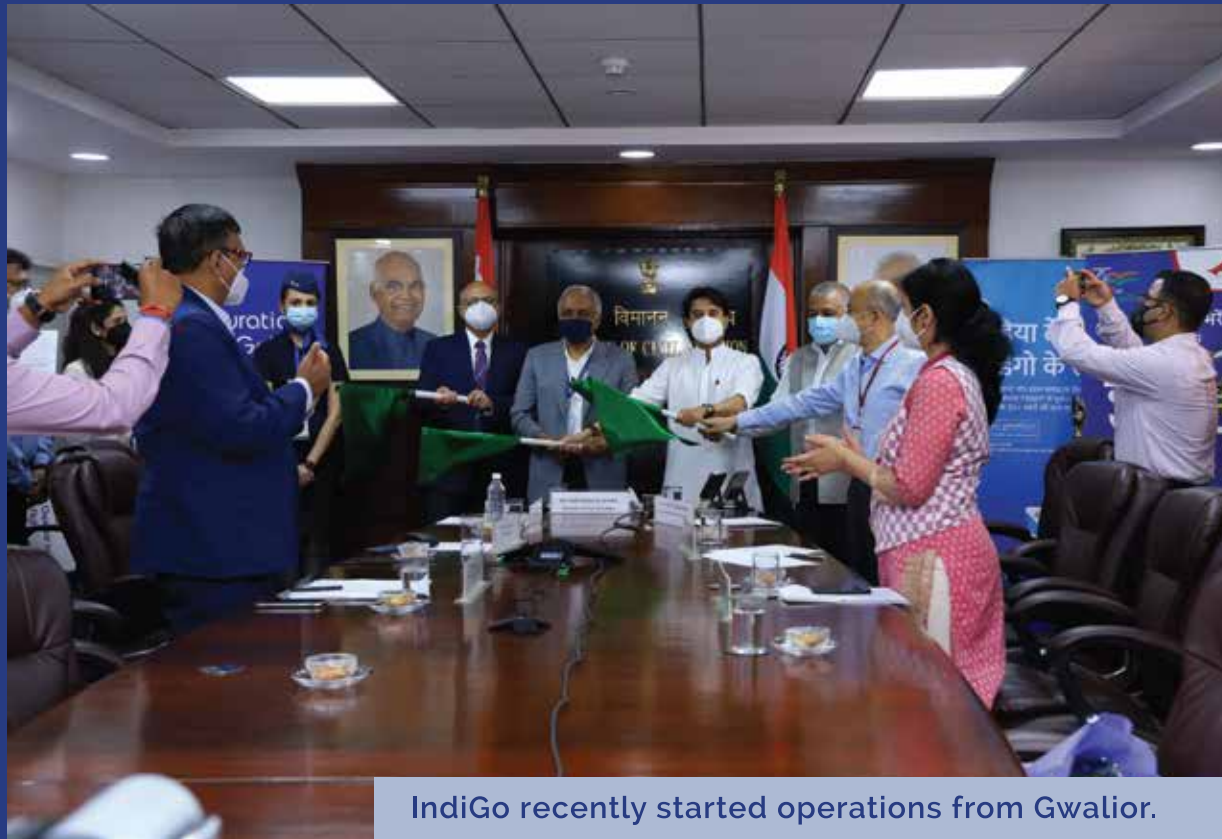


The relevant and high-quality positioning

While the Government is spending a lot of resources building road and rail infrastructure, IndiGo wants to develop the massive air transport network across the country that will be crucial for the growth of overall economic activity. "Our mission is to connect small cities and facilitate the movement of people and goods domestically and with neighbouring countries," states William.

Indigo believes that continuous effective communication with the employees, training and teamwork is what will make and sustain them as one of the strongest brands in India. He further tells, "We are positioning our product to be relevant and of high quality. Hence, employees are our biggest assets in terms of truly distinguishing ourselves through superior customer service. We are building the brand on four key values - affordable fares, hassle-free service, on-time performance, and continuous innovation.

We continue to make deliveries of new Airbus A320/321 Neo aircraft, which deliver a fuel saving of 15 per cent over the previous generation and help us realise our vision for sustainable operations. Overall, we hope to be back to pre-covid levels of domestic capacity by December and to full international capacity by next year.




IndiGo recently started operations from Gwalior.



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Embrace the journey with **IRCTC**

A humble personality with an extensive vision, Smt Rajni Hasija, Chairman & Managing Director, IRCTC under her mentorship has introduced various initiatives which have gradually uplifted rail-based travel.

- Sudipta Saha



Encouraging rail-based tourism

Rail has always been a preferred mode of transport for ages and, an uprise in rail-based tourism can be witnessed in India. IRCTC has been an extended arm of the railways and continues to be so. The mission and vision of IRCTC have always been to promote tourism on railways with an array of rail tours. IRCTC initially started with the Value Added Tour Packages (VAT) where the confirmed reservation is provided along with the other tour packages. Later, IRCTC aimed at targeting the mass tourism category, where many trains were running, and the same is being continued. We are also assisting the Government of India and have been running election specials and various other specials such as CRPF special, Shramik special, etc. Whatever is happening in the field of tourism through rails, the majority of that chunk is going through IRCTC. With the launch of theme-based trains, IRCTC is creating an opportunity to explore and offer an ultimate experience to its travellers.

Tourism taking the shape

The past one and half years have been an unpleasant phase for the travel and hospitality industry. When we started re-coping in the month of January, and the mass bookings were back, the second wave cracked in. With the ongoing vaccination drive, and states taking due diligence, gradually the traffic is coming back, but not at the full zeal as it used to be during the pre-covid time. In the air business, our air bookings are returning to normal, the train bookings have been doing positively well, although still few trains are yet to start their operation. We have done a favourable beginning in the segment of mass tourism. The Bharat Darshan train, a mass tourism product of IRCTC in the religious sector took off very positively in January this year, but because of the second wave, we had to cancel many such trains. In the deluxe segment, the recovery is pretty faster. Before the second wave, we could run only one train, ie, Padharo Rajasthan and but now we have launched Char Dham special, Ramayana special in the same segment, and many new itineraries are in the pipeline. The response from the industry is very appreciable, people are

picking up our packages, and our air packages to Leh-Ladakh-Srinagar are a good time hit. Therefore, we are likely to get some bookings this year.

An array of initiatives in the pipeline

In recent times, IRCTC has been alluring with its range of tourism products and offerings. In the times to come, we are planning to make our entrance in the NF region which is yet to be announced. We have one itinerary for the Ramayana circuit and are creating different itineraries in the Jyotirlinga circuit. In the coming days, we are planning to attempt in the Jain circuit as well. We did organise an adventure tour in Meghalaya in the form of a biking tour, and the outcome was indeed very commendable. Presently, we intend to offer many such routes in the Ernakulam region, the Rann of Kutch, and we are also tying up with agencies for organising Biking tours in various destinations.

95-99 per cent of the booking happening in IRCTC is through the online portal. We are very much there in the online

industry when it comes to railways, we are the leader, but in the air, bus, and hotel segment, we are gradually placing our feet. Recently, we have directly tied up with the hotels, and IRCTC is also in the process of creating its own inventory rather than hiring from an aggregator to provide the best of the rates to our customers. In the cruise segment, earlier IRCTC has tied up with Norwegian Cruise Line, and now we are making a beginning with the domestic cruise Cordelia Cruises.

Ministry of Tourism has launched a scheme Dekho Apna Desh, and Honourable Prime Minister has also stated that each person should see at least 50 such places, considering that IRCTC is launching a special tourism product for the middle segment. For the Bharat Darshan, we are running a package of Rs 900 a day, and if we provide the AC III tier we will be able to cater to the upper clientele as well. We have many circuits to work with, such as Sufi, Ramayana, Jyotirlinga, Krishna, Jain, and we intend to experiment few under this scheme. Our focus is to make India travel to a unique destination and offer them a saga of experiences.





FIJI HAS EXACTLY WHAT THE WORLD TRAVELLERS NEED - BRENT HILL -

Brent Hill, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Fiji brings over 16 years of experience and is passionate about working in the travel and tourism industry. His dynamic expertise along with his implausible ideas will open diverse opportunities for Fiji to market itself as an attractive, aspirational and safe destination.

- Sudipta Saha

1. What is the strategy that you're trying to push ahead when tourism opens in Fiji?

Our initial focus and strategy is working towards a re-opening of borders by the end of 2021. Currently there are plenty of on-going discussions with key

stakeholders, led by the Fijian Government and supported by the tourism industry, to determine processes and protocols to safely welcome vaccinated travellers again. Despite the current COVID-19 scenario the road to recovery

for tourism is through vaccination. Fiji has been able to do a phenomenal job here, with over 93 per cent of the eligible population having received their first dose and over 40 per cent fully vaccinated. The percentage of

vaccinated people across the world is also growing rapidly. Therefore, our strategy is to collaborate with markets across the globe that are open to sending vaccinated tourists and work with our Fijian industry to provide a safe destination for



travellers and our local population.

We have five key strategic elements we're working towards –

1. Sprint to re-opening ie, focus all our energies on re-opening our borders.
2. Communicate clearly to our industry, market and the consumers.
3. Market and generate a clear branding – we will be launching a global ad campaign to show the world that Fiji is welcoming tourists again.
4. Ensure readiness and capability in Fiji.
5. Invest in the team – provide support to make this happen.

2. There is a lot of talk about what the future is going to look like, and the overriding changes this pandemic is going to bring about across sectors, but particularly in the travel industry ranging from digital health passports to contactless travel. What changes do you foresee in the travel industry?

Yes, there will be some changes that we can anticipate. The truth though is that vaccine passports and the like have been around for years, in order to travel to some countries. The difference now is that the process will be digital. Passengers will require an easy and simple method of proving vaccination, and there is a lot of work going on around the globe to try and have a universally accepted standard. I think also things like QR codes, and digital ways of knowing where you are will also continue to be a part of our lives – perhaps not as manual as they are now, but ways of contacting you digitally and knowing where you have been will be helpful to continue to keep tourists safe. Overall,

the no.1 factor will be around safety and digital methodology.

3. How can we strike a balance between safety and travel experiences?

Fiji is exactly the kind of destination people will look to travel to in the new normal. Tourists won't be flocking to cities, instead they will look to get away, spend some time on the beach, in the sun, and to relax and enjoy life again. We have many incredible properties with open spaces, uncrowded and amazing experiences around them, staffed by the friendliest people in the world. With a heavily vaccinated local population, easy, convenient, and safe ways of getting around, I am confident Fiji would definitely attract tourists globally.

The existing Care Fiji Commitment is already in place and doing an excellent job of allowing the industry to follow protocols in order to be 100 per cent vaccinated and put in place plans for safely welcoming tourists back again. There will be further plans and preparations before the end of the year, and the stakeholders involved are working through all scenarios and best practice around the world, to ensure we can safely open Fiji once again to the world.

Thus, our combination of amazing accommodation, uncrowded beaches and facilities, stunning weather and generous hospitality makes Fiji is a perfect balance of safety and travel experiences. Fiji has exactly what the world needs.

4. What outcomes do you expect from the India market after the Fiji relaxes all norms and is open for India travellers?

Fiji has always been deeply linked with India as over 40 per cent of the population being of Indian origin have made this Pacific nation their home for over a century. The Indian outbound travel segment has grown leaps and bounds and during the pre-COVID times, the number of Indians travelling was on the rise globally. India is a key emerging market for Fiji and the country has always looked forward to building sustainable and responsible tourism from this region. We are sure to see an increasing propensity of travel to Fiji from India given the sheer market size and the rising standard of living of the young population who have the inclination to spend and who are likely to travel when borders re-open.

When the time is right Fiji will open to markets where vaccinated travellers are and where convenient flight routes exist. I am very confident that India, like many markets around the world, as their vaccination levels rise, will be a market of our focus.

5. Fiji has launched 'Care Fiji Commitment Program' for safety of travellers. Can you throw some light on the same?

Fiji has introduced the 'Care Fiji Commitment' which is a program dedicated to enhanced safety, health and hygiene protocols to ensure the utmost safety of travellers to Fiji in a post COVID-19 world. Its as good as any program available around the world and helps put Fiji forward towards our goal of making it the most safe tourist destination in the world. Although our borders continue to remain closed for international travellers, the introduction of the program

represents a destination-wide assurance that Fiji will be ready to welcome travellers when the time is right. We are happy to share the CFC programme has received recognition by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), having adopted health and hygiene protocols that are aligned with WTTC's Global Safe Travels Protocols. The Care Fiji Commitment program consists of the following key components:

- Globally Recognised Control and Mitigation Measures
- Designated Wellness Ambassadors
- careFIJI Contact Tracing App
- Two-Way Commitment

6. When Fiji opens its door for the travellers, what new experience/attractions the travellers will come across?

Travellers today are inclined towards experiential and niche holiday offerings. From luxury escapades, golf tourism, marine adventure to destination weddings in Fiji, we are looking at highlighting a plethora of experiences through the length and breadth of the destination.

Vou Hub – A big top arena in Denarau, Kokomana – Cocoa farm and chocolate factory in Savusavu, Kanu Restaurant – Chef Lance Seeto's newest culinary palace & Seventh Heaven – pontoon located in the Mamanuca Islands are some of the new experiences we can't wait to share with our travellers.

We also have new resorts - Leleuvia Resort – A small Eco resort as seen on Amazon Prime's Eco Challenge Fiji and Matanivusi Resort in the coral coast to name a few.

We are looking at expanding the array of products on offer for our visitors.



The pinnacle of African experiences, South Africa

If you're one for sweeping vistas, primeval river valleys, crème de la crème wildlife and adventure then put South Africa on the top of your list.

- **Bharti Sharma**

The Rainbow Nation of South Africa – with its 3000+ unique adventure offerings, captivating wildlife, beautiful golden coastal beaches, vibrant nightlife, diverse culture, warm hospitality, rich heritage and culinary treats, promises travellers an immersive and memorable experience at every turn. Nestled in the core of the southern part of the African continent, South

Africa is known for its tremendous Flora and Fauna, the country is edged by the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the Indian Ocean on the south, adjoined by Namibia to the northwest, Botswana and Zimbabwe to the north, and Mozambique and Swaziland to the northeast and east. South Africa has already cemented its place as the wildlife capital of the world.





A veritable playground for the experiential soul

What is the first visual that comes to your mind at the mention of South Africa? Well, any visual will not be even a fraction of the level of experiences and memories that are waiting for you here!

Scouting for Tarzans in the jungles

It's time to head into the wild African bushes to meet the creatures that have walked the earth for centuries. South Africa is more a paradise than a landmass, holding a diverse mammal life with more than 200 species of animals and more than 800 species of birds. The richness of South African wildlife includes the majestic big cats, African elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, baboons, zebras, and a variety of antelopes, jackals among countless others. Jungle safari in South Africa is a soul-stirring experience unparalleled to any other adventure in this world. An encounter with a pride of lions in their natural habitat here or coming across the majestic African elephants are some of the sights to behold for life.

Out in the jungle, you'll spend hours scanning the horizon for the 'Big 5'— the elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo and rhino. Your day will be action-packed with the epic wilderness at Kruger, Kgalagadi and other parks and guided drives and walks. If luck is knocking at your door you'll be witnessing the stimulating chase of a live hunt. By any chance, if riding in a gipsy on rugged terrains is not your thing, hop on to a helicopter for a tour of the surrounding mountains or take an aerial view of the wilderness in a hot-air balloon. Don't forget to experience the South African sunset; it is amongst the most exhilarating natural sights in the world.

A stroll through South African culture

South African culture embodies warmth and hospitality. The people here understand that for

many tourists, a trip to Africa is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity so they do everything in their power to ensure your stay is memorable. In short, you won't be let down by the hospitality of South African people. Even as an outsider, there is no hesitation to get involved in the frolics of South Africa. The country has a blend of taste in a fusion of various musical styles such as traditional indigenous music, jazz, Christian religious music and a fusion of cultural influences, such as township jazz and pop music, and religious choral music.

Relish the local cuisines

To travel more, one has to eat more and there is zero scope of scepticism for foodies when it comes to South African delicacies. Make sure you savour locally-made varieties of

cheese, olives and the country's finest organic fruit along with the best South African wine. Dry biltong, Cape Malay curry, malva pudding and bunny chow are some of the must-haves on your trip.

Powerhouse of explorations

People come to South Africa seeking adventure, unleashing their inner thrill and embracing nature in its most raw form. The Garden Route is one massive scenic route that spans cape to cape i.e. from Cape Town in the west, to Port Elizabeth in the east. It is blessed with a soothing climate, lush green landscapes with rising mountains and lagoons of all sizes. If just in case, you have more appetite for landscapes then you've got your wishes covered through the iconic Table Mountain. Lace up those boots and get set to hike.



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Lion's Head, a part of the Table Mountain National Park, is another short hike to stunning views of Cape Town and both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. A tour of Cape Winelands is recommended if you're a wine person, and wish to try horse-and-carriage rides and art galleries.

South Africa is a destination with deep history, so if you're interested in uncovering historical facts giving way to the antiquarian in you, head to the Robben Island and visit the jail cell that held Nelson Mandela captive for 18 years. Discover about the apartheid and the turbulent years that the people of South Africa went through.



Check-in your stay-tements here!

South Africa continues to leverage its international spotlight by luring visitors with a diverse mix of offerings. The nation is home to some of the continent's top luxury safari lodges, with a strong focus on conservation. The destination has a plethora of world-class

facilities, excellent infrastructure and distinctive attractions, along with internationally benchmarked health & safety standards; it also has surroundings that naturally promote social distancing – this makes it more appealing to leisure, business & MICE travellers.





Sustainability: Ditch the toxic elements

South Africans fiercely maintain and protect their cultural and natural heritage. It is home to eight world heritage sites that are funded by the government. They also refrain from promoting wildlife interactions, which is why most of the national parks that are streaming live safaris have the rangers reporting normal behaviour. The wildlife in the national parks is used to minimal human interaction, and they respect their space and privacy. They have also expanded their tourist offerings geographically to ensure that there is no over-tourism while ensuring that the local rural communities are positively impacted by tourism.

To sum up..

This land of 'wild wonders' welcomes adventure freaks from around the globe to experience rip-roaring activities like never before. You just can't miss experiencing the grandeur and thrill while roaming on South African terrain. Now you can imagine why South Africa is one of the few places on the planet that somehow succeeds in providing everything to everyone. Though South Africa is the epitome of adventure and wildlife, its diversity in offerings is what makes it a year-round destination.



Interesting facts about South Africa

- Reflecting the country's diversity, South Africa has 11 official languages
- South Africa has three capital cities: Pretoria hosts the executive branch, Cape Town is home to the legislative branch and Bloemfontein is home to the judicial branch.
- South Africa has 10 UNESCO-designated World Heritage sites.



What is great about South Africa that makes it so worthwhile visiting?

With its wide range of immersive socially distanced experiences as well as breathtaking self-drive routes, South Africa naturally continues to be an Indian travellers' favourite. The fact that there are a variety of experiences within driving range and that Indian driver licenses are valid in the country, only makes the deal sweeter. Reflecting demand for offbeat, non-touristy experiences, we are also packaging and selling itineraries that include the new regions of South Africa, which go beyond the popular cities of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. Additionally, attractive currency exchange rates and competitive pricing makes South Africa a lucrative, value for money long-haul destination. There are alluring experience options for both – the high-end luxury planner and those on a budget.

South Africa has been developing a lot of experience based activities for the travellers. Apart from wildlife and adventure, what other experiences are planned for the comprehensive growth of the tourism sector?

The average Indian traveller seeks out a 360-degree, full range experience. They are fast-paced and squeeze in as many activities possible, in a single holiday. It means they are culinary crusaders one day, history buffs another day, and adventure enthusiasts next; this works well for us, as South Africa offers all these and more in each of our 9 Provinces! South Africa has already cemented its place as the wildlife capital of the world. That being said, we are now looking to build on and



**Neliswa Nkani,
Hub Head - MEISEA,
South African Tourism**

showcase our 3000+ adventure offerings to the adrenaline seeking Indian market. This year, we will be specifically –

- **Targeting niche communities**
- **Promoting new Regions and safe experiences**
- **Providing more value for money**

With pandemic adversely affecting the travel industry, what new initiatives and strategies are in place to boost South Africa amongst the travel trade?

At South African Tourism, we continue to utilize this window of opportunity to proactively and meaningfully engage with our trade partners in India, as well as the local DMCs in South Africa. We are looking at up skilling and reskilling ourselves and our partners, to identify synergies and sell South Africa in the best possible way to the new-age Indian consumer.

Towards this, we have been constantly communicating with key travel agents and tour operators directly through

two-way knowledge exchange webinars, while also conveying timely and focused destination updates. South African Tourism India been invested in virtually training over 150 trade each week – across all travel verticals.

What entry requirements are demanded on incoming tourists?

South Africa is currently open to all international tourists, including Indians. Travellers intending to visit the country will be required to produce a negative PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test, not older than 72 hours from the time of departure from the country of origin to South Africa. Travellers can also expect precautionary and sanitation measures at various other transit touch points including international and domestic airports, and car rentals.

In South Africa, we are seeing a large number of queries and high traveller intent to visit South Africa, as the destination is fully equipped to provide safe

experiences. Given the increase in Indian traveller demand, Emirates, Qatar Airways and Ethiopian Airlines have regular flights scheduled from India to South Africa, with layovers at Dubai, Doha and Addis Ababa respectively. Additionally, Air Seychelles is also scheduled to resume flights from India to South Africa.

When it comes to top international inbound tourism markets for South African Tourism, are you seeing the dynamics change post pandemic?

Our top markets remain the same as pre-pandemic. Travel has emerged as one of the most resilient and adaptable industries paving the way for innovations and technological ingenuities, which is why we are seeing little to no change in the order of our core markets.

Prior to the pandemic, India was the 8th largest international market for South African Tourism. In fact, South Africa was seeing tremendous interest by Indian travellers even right before the pandemic hit the country in March 2020. For the months of January and February 2020, we saw a ~7% YoY increase from the India market with 14,437 business, leisure, and MICE tourists visiting the destination during this period.

India still remains a core market for South African Tourism globally, and holds much promise in the coming years. Nigeria and China are our other key focus markets

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TRAVEL COMMANDERS ON ‘WORLD TOURISM DAY’

Celebrated annually across the world on September 27, World Tourism Day highlights the unique role of the tourism sector in preserving cultural and natural heritage all around the world apart from being a leading employer and economic pillar. The past 1-1.5 years have left a deep scar on our industry at every level. It won't be wrong to say that this has been the worst-ever period for travel & tourism around the globe. This World Tourism Day, we need to stand united as a family, boosting the morale and spirit of every tourism stakeholder! This is the worst phase of our lives, but we need to remind ourselves that we will be back on our feet, stronger than ever.

- Team TT





PUBLIC EYE

The World Tourism Day ushers in a new thought process in tourism – the new normal that addresses the hygiene, health and safety factors in all its macro and micro facets. The SOPs in flights, at airports (contactless check-ins), in surface transports, in hotels, at places of sightseeing are religiously followed by the stakeholders. Tourists prefer staycations, travelling in their own vehicles and the emerging concept of bleisure that combines business with a leisure trip. Business travel will now see a transformation into online meetings or a hybrid model. Cost-saving, reach, Frequency will be valued here without sacrificing the impact.

Sustainable & Responsible tourism will be emphasised a lot more. Above all the industry has come to realise that one can't put all the eggs in one basket- diversification of business will come along with the new mantra of preparedness to grapple with unforeseen extraordinary turn of fortune. Survival measures will gain prominence followed by revival. Our fellow stakeholders stand united to tackle the adversary called Covid. We look forward to the valuable support of the government to turn national promises in tourism into reality.

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO



There is no question that this year's World Tourism Day is a grim one as well. With our country still closed for tourism, much of the industry is in deep despair. But, this does not mean we lose hope. Quite the contrary! As we see more and more countries open up for Indian travellers, we are hopeful that wisdom will prevail, and our nation will open up soon as well. We have faced many a crisis before and we shall overcome as we have in the past. We must!

**Rajeev Kohli,
Joint Managing Director,
Creative Travel**

As we are aware that Tourism Day's significance goes back to 1970's when the Statutes of UNWTO was adopted and then since 1980 onwards we have been celebrating World Tourism Day. This year is the most important year for tourism as we are on the verge of coming out from the aftermath of the unprecedented event which took the world by shock and tourism was shaken and devastated to the core. This year is indeed the first milestone for the tourism industry to be achieved post pandemic. It has taught the current and generations to come that tourism the business will not be conducted the way it used to. Aspirations, expectations, service levels, and above all delivery will all have a new definition. A more organised, tech-friendly, service-oriented, and a more sustainable model of tourism will take over the conventional models. We at TAAI assure the fraternity that we stand in solidarity with them, as always, until sectors fully revives and thrives.

Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI



Rajasthan Tourism is planning a series of weeklong activities around the World Tourism Day 2021. We hope to engage with tourists and stakeholders for bringing tourism back to its hay days as quickly as possible with the cooperation of all stakeholders and the tourism fraternity. We believe that it's an opportunity for a diverse range of tourism stakeholders, including destinations and businesses to explore how they can be more inclusive as tourism restarts.

**Nishant Jain, IAS
Director, Department of Tourism,
Govt. of Rajasthan**



September 27, 2021 marks the 41st UN World Tourism Day. As we begin to rebuild the industry after the global devastation caused by the Covid 19 virus, it's a day to reaffirm our commitment to the planet and to the betterment of the human race through a sustainable approach to tourism. The economic benefits of tourism are well known – 10 per cent of global GDP, 10 per cent of global employment, the multiplier effect which outstrips the contribution of any other industry, etc. What is more important, however, is its contribution to global peace through connecting people across boundaries, making us realise that the differences that divide us pale in comparison to the similarity between our thoughts, desires, aspirations and hopes; that 'the other' is simply ourselves with different skin colour or different colour of eyes. Let us today dedicate ourselves to a more responsible way of doing business, of incorporating the United Nations SDGs into our core business practices and rebuilding the industry in a more sustainable fashion

Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI





INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES
WITH THE WARMTH OF

Indian hospitality at Condelia cruises

As Cordelia cruises is all decked up with new itineraries and a renewed focus on safety, comfort and convenience, Jurgen Bailom, CEO & President for Waterways Leisure Tourism talks to Travel Turtle and shares the unparalleled services the guests should look forward to.

- Bharti Sharma



Cruise is one of the worst affected industries from the pandemic globally, and revenues from the industry have seen a tremendous drop. What is your viewpoint on the revival of the industry (wrt global market)?

We want to thank the Government and the Shipping ministry for reducing the port tariff rates as well as tariff rates for Cruise vessels. This reduction has helped Indians to make cruising affordable to them. Since international travel is still restricted to various parts of the world, domestic tourism is on the rise and with Cruise Ships being safe environment for the guests the response to the bookings has been phenomenal so far. We have booked lots of charters for MICE, weddings, parties for the coming months, also with the wedding season starting from November we are getting lots of queries.

The cruise industry just like the rest of the travel industry came to a complete halt in 2020. But cruises are now set to sail as all the cruise liners have developed stringent hygiene concept that will ensure that everything will run smoothly on-board. Throughout its history, the cruise industry has responded to vacation desires of its guests and embraced innovation to develop new destinations, new ship designs, new and diverse onboard amenities, facilities and services, plus wide-ranging shore side activities. Sanitizers have been used on the cruise ships for more than 30 years. Cruise lines have also offered their guests new cruise themes and voyage lengths to meet the changing vacation patterns of today's travelers. Globally, cruise industry has been one of the most successful hospitality

sectors, with huge employable workforce and is set for revival.

Since the second wave led to the cancellation of your initial sailing plans, how prepared are you to handle such situations in the near future? How are things looking for the sector and Cordelia cruises for 2021 and beyond?

At Cordelia, as we set to resume sailing operations from this month, we will be taking utmost precaution, with our itineraries focusing on safety, comfort, and convenience. We will take all standard health and safety protocols implemented on board and at the ports. Cordelia

is working closely with the government and health authorities in India for the implementation of their COVID-19 protection. We will ensure staggered entry, social distancing, and the pre-booked slots at dining and entertainment areas further ensuring the safety of our travelers. Cordelia promises all its guests an experience par excellence while sailing to some of the best Indian and international destinations like Goa, Diu, Lakshadweep, Kochi, and Sri Lanka.

How well do you see these sailings clicking with the first-time cruisers?

Certainly, Being India's first multinational cruise line with the best of everything, Cordelia is set to offer a host of amenities, Food options, entertainment, giving a whole new experience and dimension to cruising, that will leave guests, especially first-timers satisfied and eager for more. At the cruise ship, and keeping the situation in mind we will be offering multiple entertainment options, Casino, Rock Climbing etc.

People have been starved of travel and also wellness during the lockdown period. What experiences do you have on board for the travellers?

The pandemic halted travel, where people were restricted and confined to their homes for months. As a result, a lot of people have taken to domestic tourism and travel to drivable destinations. Nature trips have also picked up. At one point, travellers gave priority to destinations based on sightseeing, today, however, travellers are looking at secluded and safe stays, where they can relax, and be at peace. A cruise ship offers comfort, luxury, and most importantly a safe environment.

What are you most looking forward to about getting back on board?

We are excited to commence our operations this month and look forward to welcoming our guests to an environment that offers safety and comfort. The safety of our crew and guests is of top priority, and we are doing everything to ensure that safety standards are met. As an experience provider, we want to make a difference, and create an unforgettable cruise experience for all our travellers.



Jurgen Bailom



'SIGNUM' OF FORTIFYING HOSPITALITY

Mehul Sharma, Founder & CEO, Signum Hotels & Resorts saw great opportunities to build a business in a field he was most passionate about; 'Hospitality'. He expanded his horizons beyond his own business interests to nurture a brand with utmost commitment, considering the desires of the discerning guests.

- Bharti Sharma



Tell us about the transition from managing a hotel to managing a group with such a versatile portfolio of hotels?

Managing a diverse portfolio of hotels allows a cross culture understanding of business and best practices being followed in various geographies. It allows you access to the best International standards. Travelling to other countries empowers you with the understanding of different cultures, cuisine and lifestyles. The global perspective, latest technology, the latest measures and tools being used in hospitality. With this understanding, Signum has been successful in building a very robust corporate office setup backed by a strong sales and marketing network.

Signum has already made its mark with 12 hotels

across India, 18 service apartments in various countries? What is the next benchmark you're looking at and in what time frame?

Signum Hotels aims to manage a minimum of 10 hotels in the US, 5 to 6 in Greece and Israel, 5 to 7 in Eastern Europe, 2 in Sri Lanka, 1 in Dubai, 2 in Canada and about 10 within India in the next 1 year. This is backed by an efficient International setup that we already have in place to accelerate company expansion.

What is the current trend in India's hospitality industry and is there any shift in terms of choices? What are the current preferred preferences for Indians and the next ones to be boosted?

The current hospitality trend in India is now shifting/moving into an asset model; a lot of mergers, acquisitions and joint ventures can be seen. There is a lot of cohesiveness in terms of brands operating at different levels. The major thrust on domestic tourism is the need of the hour. We can also witness a growing thrust on Food & Beverage options in terms of both takeaways and deliveries. From a customer perspective, short term breaks, leisure travel with a business mix, stycations, weekend stay options will remain in demand. Focus areas would be frequent

short breaks at drivable destinations offering both business and leisure options. Leisure destinations offering quality food and beverages and hygienic stays will remain in demand.

In your opinion, how influencing is the regional factor, giving a local feel based on the region's taste, preference and culture?

It is extremely important. People are exploring and understanding more about the local flavours. They love to travel more, experiment more, they are more evolved travellers. Health and hygiene remain the topmost priority. Ample options for children and senior citizens are a must when they are travelling with a group. Sustainability is playing a key role as people are getting closer to nature and they wish to experiment with things by themselves in terms of any local activity or experience during their stay at a hotel.

What has been your top business challenges navigating COVID-19?

Erratic business cycles with multiple lockdowns, different states having different plans for Covid actions and little or no support from local tourism at least to push domestic capping on a number of people visiting a destination, have been your top

business challenges. To top this is the high taxation and fewer rebates.

What according to you are the identified factors that shape up your brand's appeal in terms of the Indian market?

We pick up local flavours, we choose key USPs of a particular area and translate as per the choices of the discerning travellers, not only the food but the entire look and feel of the hotel is reviewed while considering the local factors intertwined with the best of global technology. The brand architecture remains robust and solid yet we move as a Global Indian Business Brand.

Any other info?

We want to get the global tourism under one umbrella. Covid also turned out to be an opportunity in crisis. Hence, Signum expanded its wings outside India and we continue to grow. However, the local entities and the local Government play a very important role in giving infrastructure status to tourism. Although, internationally tourism plays a very important role, we would definitely like to see the same thrust being given by the Government to promote Indian tourism. We have got destinations and resources which can be promoted and it can become a self-sustainable model.



THE UNPARALLELED
LUXURY OF
Mayfair
HOTELS & RESORTS

MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts runs an array of luxurious hotels and resorts across India and is widely known for its majestic architecture, authentic hospitality and exquisite settings. Pooja Ray, Managing Director, Mayfair Hotels & Resorts shed some light on the marketing strategy and exciting upcoming projects.

- Sudipta Saha



Filling the void with domestic tourists

The pandemic has drastically hit the travel and tourism industry, the inbound tourism volume is highly affected and even the numbers in regards to outbound travellers are now bored of the confinement and they seek a vacation with a similar variety of facilities. So, by inculcating themes that vary from an island resort at Raipur with a golf course, to the first tea resort in Siliguri, great heritage boutique hotels, a casino resort in Gangtok and excellent beach resorts in Puri and Gopalpur, the potential traveller is spoilt for choice and this helps us to fill the void left by the inbound travellers and thereby sustain the economic downtrend".

Technology is King

Technology is playing an important role in the travel and tourism industry. The digital trends have actually influenced the travel pattern which used to exist earlier. "Technology has made communications faster, easier and more personalised. Overnight online reservation systems, reviews, hotel information and facilities are all accessible instantly to the customer. Social media has played up to the hilt and marketing a good product is now as easy and informal. Ordering food products through online ordering has been made really feasible while techniques such as hydroponics have ensured herbs earlier restricted to cold places can now grow in a created environment where the season is no longer a criterion for production of edible and rare products".

Rethink and revive

The pandemic has been a great lesson for many of us, in the

personal as well as professional front. It did provide us with an opportunity to rethink and revive. "The major learning experience from the pandemic is a reorientation in thinking and operations of traditional hospitality methods. Accent on extreme hygiene, multi-skilling with optimum staff strength, the introduction of immune building and healthy menus and ensuring the least personal contact services while not compromising traditional warmth are new thought processes that have been post-pandemic fallouts in a positive way".

Expansion in the Northeast

MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts is synonymous with lavish and world-class hospitality, every hotel and resort offers an authentic hospitality experience. The luxury hotels and resorts is a destination in itself and their enchanting settings makes it a perfect place to unwind and rejuvenate. "We are in the process of expanding more in the northeast in tier I cities such as Guwahati. This is recast in a format where we get into management contracts for the first time and in this format boundary of operating hotels across the country have no limits and gradually a pan Indian presence is likely to be established".

Exploring tier II and tier III cities

The world-class hospitality and the array of experience Mayfair offers to its guests have established this luxury chain strongly in the market. "Over the last few years travellers from tier II and III cities have been high spending customers and are increasing in numbers every day. Towns such as Malda, Purnea,

Katihar, Bhagalpur, etc, have immense and promising potential for discerning travellers. So, we are seriously exploring the possibilities of marketing and capturing the potential here".

The resilient hospitality industry

The impact due to COVID is huge and the scenario seems to be unpredictable. The hospitality industry was badly hit but gradually with the opening of borders, the hotels are gearing up again. "The tidings may be tough for the hospitality industry during the current times, however, hoteliers are very resilient and will re-invent themselves to come out victorious sooner than expected. At MAYFAIR Hotels, we are re-engineering every aspect of our business to ensure cost optimisation while improving our service deliverables, which we believe, will benefit us today and forever".



Pooja Ray



An aerial photograph of the Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort's pool area. The image shows a large, vibrant blue swimming pool with a circular red-roofed pavilion in the center. Surrounding the pool are numerous palm trees, lush green lawns, and several outdoor seating areas with white umbrellas. In the background, a sandy beach and the turquoise sea are visible. The resort's modern buildings are partially seen at the top of the frame.

HEADS IN BED

Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort: An invigorating escape

From incredible restaurants, a rejuvenating spa to great views, Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort, one of the oldest hotels on the JBR strip continues to impress.

- Misbah Mansuri



HEADS IN BED



The United Arab Emirates is known for the many superlatives it has garnered and is home to some of the most impressive hotels. Given the cut-throat competition in the hospitality industry here, it's difficult to stand out. However, Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort, despite being one of the oldest in the region has managed to live up to guest expectations. We checked in to put it to the test.

Location

Located on the white sands of Jumeirah Beach right in the middle of the famous Dubai Marina and Jumeirah Beach Residence The Walk, with great shopping and dining options, Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort is just 5 minutes away from the world-famous Emirates Golf Club and close to Dubai Media City and Internet City. The hotel is also 5 minutes away from the 'Ibn Battuta Mall', 15 minutes away from the popular 'Mall of the Emirates' and 30 miles from Dubai International Airport.

paradise with superb relaxation and leisure facilities, set in the middle of 10,000 square meters of landscaped gardens shaded by palm trees. The Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort features 256 spacious Rooms and Suites with excellent views of the sea or The Walk. The hotel offers access to Jumeirah beach and is within walking distance to Dubai Marina and several transportation options for getting around the city. Our Deluxe Room Sea View boasted some amazing views of the city.



Suite dreams

We checked in the modern



HEADS IN BED

The food factor

At the Peacock Chinese Restaurant, Chef Xiao Jun prepares authentic Chinese and Szechuan dishes that are just scrumptious. The hotel's Palm Garden Restaurant & Terrace also serves delicious meals originating from such destinations as Lebanon, Italy, Germany and India. It is home to one of the best themed nights on Jumeirah Beach while Azure Pool Bar & Restaurant lets Jumeirah Beach hotel guests enjoy the outdoors as well as snacks, mezzes, salads, sandwiches, barbecue and refreshing drinks. For an evening filled with true Arabic delights, Al Hadiqa Restaurant and Tent is the perfect al fresco venue for dining on Jumeirah Beach. However the real culinary gem is the all-new Indian speciality restaurant- Chilli and Chutney. Here we savoured melt-in-the-mouth kebabs and fragrant biryanis. The impeccable service adds to the awesomeness!

R&R

The hotel offers a wide range of activities including water sports, Armonia Spa, kids' club, Turkish Hamam and multiple sports facilities for all the family. The major draw is the sprawling gardens and beachfront space, where you can sit and unwind by the huge, inviting pool, or take a small short onto The Beach or across to Bluewaters Dubai. Sheraton Fitness is designed to fuel fast and focused workouts, delivering maximum results in minimum time. With Wi-Fi, 24-hour access and cutting-edge equipment, guests can customize their workout to their day and their stay. Guests can also elevate their stay with Sheraton Club. Every Club stay includes an upgrade to

a preferred guest room and access to the Club Lounge – the perfect place to plug in or hang out.

The front desk is just a call away to upgrade, and experience benefits like fast, free Wi-Fi and complimentary breakfast, hors d'oeuvres and drinks daily. A rejuvenating spa therapy at the Armonia Spa is a must-try! We

loved our invigorating Thai Spa Treatment as our therapists activated our Zen mode with her hands-on techniques.

Our take

With gracious staff, brilliant restaurants, a great spa and some amazing facilities, Sheraton JBR serves you loads of reasons to keep returning back. We heartily recommend!





Travel to meet life

“Gone are the days when people would wander just to complete their travel bucket list. Now, traveling has become more of a source of collecting knowledge and indulging in different cultures and customs.

And therefore, this is now the time when the traveling experience needs to be revamped in India too. Keeping it in mind, we at Experience Globe are stepping up with a vision of offering experiential group tours within India and overseas.

Wouldn't it be great fun if you have a choice of exploring new places with like-minded people? Not just that, one also gets the opportunity to make new travel friends within the group and plan future trips together.

And the most important thing, our fixed departure group tours welcome people aged between 25-55 only. That's requisite to maintain group decorum and avoid any behavioural discomfort to the group co-members.”

Leading inbound travel company Erco Travels ventures new brand "Experience Globe", its main focus will be on experiential tours in India and Globally.

Erco Travels Pvt. Ltd. which has been into the Inbound travel business for more than two decades has recently started its new venture under the brand name **Experience Globe.**

Cultural captivation, history, art, lifestyle, customs and consequential connection with the people is the main focus of the company. The itineraries offer an amalgamation of activities with an abundance of unforgettable experiences that makes it worth traveling once.

If you intend on an experiential holiday, then consider taking group trips to various places in India and overseas with Experience Globe.



CEO, Experience Globe
Devendra Singh Kandari

A GUIDE TO THE
CITY OF HUNDRED SPIRES:

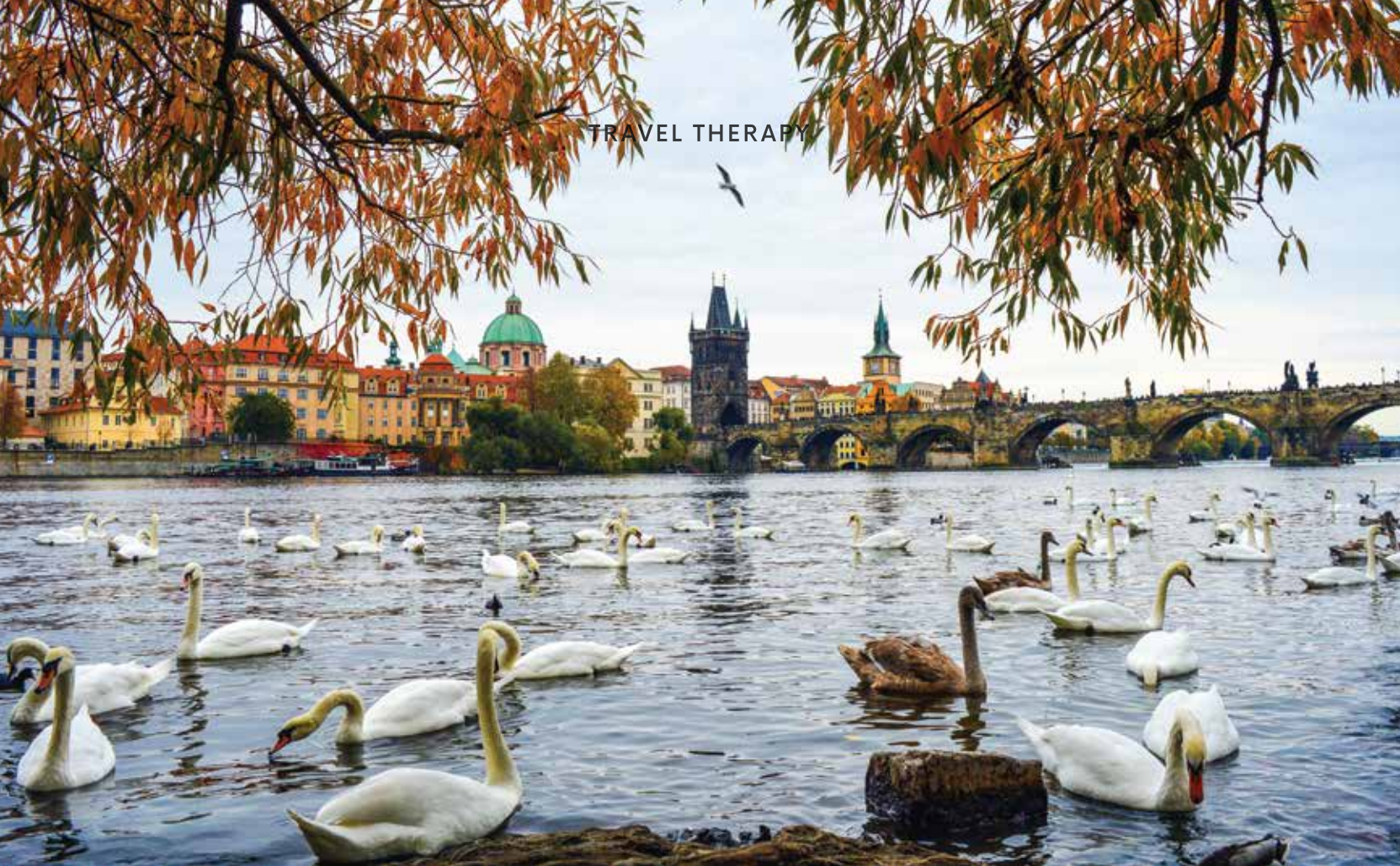
Covering Prague in 48 hrs

Art all around, where beer is god and
the city that is full of nature hikes and
urban explorations!

- **Anubhav Bansal**

The maze of cobbled lanes, hidden courtyards and breweries are a paradise for the aimless wanderers, increasing the appetite to explore a little further and get something more out of Prague. Prague offers more than just alluring architecture, an abundant amount of brews, a rich history that dates back to almost a millennium and an inherently romantic atmosphere.





The city of architectural beauty, artisanal beer and much more...

The city was one of the luckiest cities in Europe untouched by the gruesomeness and the atrocities of World War 2. Prague has kept up well with European trends in the realms of art, gastronomy, fashion and the city has comfortably merged its historical and architectural prowess with the contemporary times. One can navigate through a plethora of impressive architecture gems which include impressive Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance buildings. On one hand, we have the old architecture and on the other hand, one can get bewitched by the modern, most trendy boutiques, Swiss hotels, jazz bars, chic cocktail bars, and breweries. Some of the most fascinating explorations from the city's various epochs-

'Slavic', 'Habsburgian' and 'Communist' are still visible and so are the personalities from Rudolf II to Franz Kafka.

Day 1- Morning

Commence the day with one of the most elegant and peaceful areas of the city, 'The former Jewish Quarters/ Josefov'. One can grab an entry ticket from the 'Jewish Museum' which gives the combined access to the neo Gothic Maisel Synagogue and the Old Jewish Cemetery. The recommendation is to saunter between both these two landmarks to take in the rich exhibition which focuses on Jewish history in Bohemia and Moravia between the time periods of the 10th to 12th centuries. Get a separate ticket to visit the 'Old new Synagogue' which is the main synagogue for the local Jewish community. A visit to Holešovice is a must, formerly a 'meatpacking district'; its industrial-style building now hosts a number of house restaurants and art galleries. If the hunger pangs

commence to disrupt then a brunch at cosy 'Bistro 8' is

recommended or visit the 'DOX Center for Contemporary Art'.



Afternoon and Evening

In the Parizska, saunter along the line of luxury shops of the likes Louis Vuitton, Burberry and Salvatore Ferragamo and then move ahead to one of the most touristy destinations 'Old Town square'. To visit the 'Old town square' might sound too touristy to some of the travellers, the medley of eye-catching architecture can impress the regular visitors as well. The landmark of Old town square is the 'Astronomical Clock'. A personal opinion and recommendation is not to join the throng for the hourly procession of 12 Apostles. Do something out of the box and climb to the top of the adjacent tower. By climbing the Old Town Hall Tower one is doing something different and can take in the fabulous views of the square and beyond without any worries of the crowd. Lovely façades are found along Celetná which is one of the oldest streets one can stroll on. The street leads to the 'House of the Black Madonna' is a cubist building and the 'Powder Tower'. The tower separates the old and the new town. For the people who want to soothe up their souls through the medium of Orchestra, visit the 'Municipal House' which hosts work by various Czech artists.

Preparation to be done before day 2

Procure tickets for Prague castle online. The validity of the ticket is for 48 hours which means if you find the crowd to be too hectic then you could always return and visit the next day.



Day 2- Morning

Commence your day early in the morning as it is going to be a bit hectic day if not planned properly. The plan is to discover the city from a new perspective. Hop on one of the historic trams of line number 42 which have been up and running on the streets of Prague since it was a part of Austria-Hungary! With a 24 hour ticket, enjoy the circular route and hop on and off whenever and wherever you like! The whole route around the most important landmarks will take more than an hour.

The second day is all about the other side of the city, Malá Strana. Reach the other side by crossing over the historic Charles Bridge and enjoy a slow walk up to Prague Castle. Prague Castle is the oldest, most ancient and the biggest castle in the whole World. Prague Castle is the official presidential residence and the flag's position is indicative of his presence or absence in the castle. The sprawling grounds will need a couple of hours to explore and don't miss the Gothic Cathedral of St. Vitus, 16th century Vladislav Hall and the Golden Lane famous because Kafka lived there for a while.

Afternoon

The afternoon time is for the 'Petřín Hill' which is famous for its Observation Tower. It is regarded as a smaller version of the Eiffel Tower. On the way, there are a slew of interesting stops such as 'Petřín Rose Garden', where one transports back to the Victorian era. At the top of the hill, Strahov Monastery can be visited which has a modern beer hall, serving one of the best home-brewed beers.





Late

Down the hill have a brief stop at the St Nicholas Church and if lucky one can find and experience a live classical concert. Head to the Lennon

Wall where Graffiti inspired by John Lennon, the famous leader of the Beatles are drawn. For the late evening head to the cosy Blue Light. The rustic interiors with tattered posters

graffiti liven up with live jazz performances. There are various ways you can spend late evenings in Prague, indulge in a party of booze imbibing culture via pub crawls

and visit the most exciting and dynamic pubs and bars. At some of the bars, the evening begins with a shot of absinthe and one can party till dawn at multi-floored music clubs.



The legit future of industry, the students in travel

The future of travel and hospitality sector post pandemic is one of the most discussed and browsed topics we have today. Even while considering various elements, the one significant subject that remains undiscussed is the real future of our industry - the upcoming generation in tourism.

- Bharti Sharma

It was only a few decades ago the government and the education sectors felt the relevance of the skilled manpower in the tourism sector, introducing various courses to enhance the skills of the students enabling them to be industry ready. Tourism institutions across the world have witnessed an increase in the enrollment of students year-on-year, which endorses the increasing interest of generation Z in the tourism and hospitality sector. This proudly represents the structure of the tourism sector in India and also emphasizes on the upskilling of the industry.



Resilience - The need of the hour

The pandemic has left our tourism industry in distress, there has been zero or negligible business in the past 18 months. This has not only hit the people in business but even the students enrolled in the sector are in a pool of uncertainties.



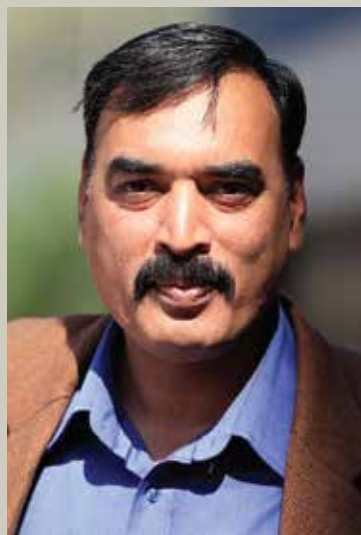
Prof. Alok Sharma

Prof. Alok Sharma, (Director), Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITM) shares, "The impact of the industry has also laid a huge impact on the education system as they both go hand in hand. As the tough times are coming to an end the students as well as professionals are coming up with various ideas to revive the industry with the help of the government."

Prof. S.K. Kabia, Director IQAC & Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management, Bundelkhand University asserts, "Tourism being one of the highly susceptible industries too has been badly affected. The students pursuing tourism education across the nation are in a situation of hopelessness and despair."

Required well-groomed & highly professional approach

Tourism students are considered as an essential asset in the developmental process of our Industry. They are trained and made as professional manpower which manages offices, organizations, industries and administrations. The target groups of educational/training programmes extend much beyond the organised sectors of the economy. Prof. (Dr.) M. Sajjani, Director, Amity Institute of Travel & Tourism, Amity University Uttar Pradesh comments, "In order to serve in this multifaceted travel industry different skill sets, education and training are required. As tourism is a service based industry it cannot take risk of losing the existing or potential customers by unprofessionalism and lack of service quality delivery therefore the employees who serve tourists are required to be trained, educated, well-groomed and highly professional in their approach."



Prof. S. K. Kabia



Prof. (Dr) M. Sajjani

Importance given to mental health

Getting prepared for future tourism, identifying right job opportunities, continuous

learning and upskilling, adaptation to newer technologies along with maintaining good mental and physical health are the important issues that are continuously being discussed with the budding professionals. Professor S.K. Kabia tells, "The major challenges before the students are- what will be the future of the tourism and hospitality industry? How to cope up with stress and maintain good mental and physical health? With persistent counseling and motivation from teachers, students are trying to recuperate from the situation and trying to equip themselves for the new normal conditions." Prof. Alok Sharma further shares, "We at IITM with all our centers (Gwalior, NOIDA, Bhubaneswar, Nellore and Goa) organise many short-term online courses and activities to involve our students and motivate them for coping up the stress on a regular basis."



Adaptability is the key

It was challenging for the institutes and educators to adapt to new technology proving its efficacy and providing the same level of education to the students simultaneously. Sharing the experience on how the educators adapted themselves in these crucial times, Prof. (Dr.) M. Sajjani states, "We at Amity Institute of Travel and Tourism left no stone unturned to swiftly switch to remote learning and gather all necessary resources. All the departments worked day and night to bring in the new technological tools and pedagogies to cater to all teaching learning processes be it online classes, conducting exams, evaluation or registering the students in their next semester without wasting a single day or letting students suffer any academic loss."

Upskilling, reskilling and preparing for the future

The post COVID 19 revival expectations of the Industry from the academic Institutions are many fold i.e. the Industry has a choice between trained and experienced staff who have lost their jobs during Pandemic and Fresh College Graduate. "In order to meet such a challenge we have already revised the curriculum keeping in mind the changing needs of the travel Industry particularly increased emphasis of automation in business processes," tells Prof. (Dr.) M. Sajjani.



WRECKING BALL



Present can be bleak but future is bright

Professor S.K. Kabia, shares, "The recovery in tourism might be slow, but we are sure that after the vaccination of a substantial chunk of population, there shall be control on this virus. It is envisaged that the tourism industry will be the first one to see major growth, as since for a very long time no international travel has taken place, people are eagerly looking forward to exploring once again. The Jobs certainly would multiply fast when the situation becomes normal or close to normal. Also, we all understand that nature is recovering and rejuvenating

fast. There shall be greater focus on nature/farm/agriculture/rural/ adventure tourism in future. Micro holidays and travel to nearby attractions would be more prevalent. Wellness and yoga tourism will witness huge growth."

The tourism industry will bounce back once the pandemic gets over for sure and many countries have started showing keen interest in easing their border restrictions, but not without a line of caution and adherence to COVID 19 protocol.

"Businesses are exploring new technologies, both to drive bookings and to facilitate safe travel as well as to bring back the confidence of travellers from across the globe. Developments such as contactless check-in at hotels and airports, virtual tours of museums, and virtual experiences are not going to disappear. Hence the tourism institutes, educators and students look forward to a future where tourism booms once again and makes every stakeholder happy as earlier," tells Prof. (Dr.) M. Sajjani. Prof. Alok Sharma concludes,

"IITM's Tourism Research and Development Cell is working to analyze the future prospects of Tourism and Hospitality post covid-19 phase based on the case studies from different countries and I am sure that this will help the entire tourism education sector in terms of the future prospects and growth. I strongly believe in the saying by Charles Darwin "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."





Hola! Día De los Muertos

- Day of the Dead -

*Our dead are never dead to us until
we have forgotten them!*

- Tripti Jain





Calaveras and Calacas walking down the streets, with wide black eyes and molten carcasses hanging from left to right. River of black and red roses giving way to the mystical land of the dead, where nobody is without a tale to tell. The crawling skeleton hands offering you drinks and food. No, it's not a nightmare! But the most celebrated and colourful festival is Dia De Los Muertos of the land of extremes Mexico.

I'm sure we all could relate to Coco when he so eagerly wanted to know about the hidden truth of his ancestors and took the plunge to dive into the other side. Tripping down the stairs with his little guitar, he only wished for his ancestors to have a peaceful homage. What better than to recollect and replenish all the memories once a year and spread vibrant colours all over the town. Dia De Los Muertos or Day of The Dead is a 2-day celebration wrapped around the streets of Mexico, remembering the dead and create ofredas (offerings) for the departed. The beautiful reunion of the living and the dead will be celebrated on November 1st and 2nd of this year.





Historia

A tradition passed down from generations, The Day of the Dead dates back to several thousand years ago with the Aztec, Toltec, and other Nahua people, who believed that mourning the dead was disrespectful. A belief that death was a part of the natural phase of mortal life, these pre-Hispanic cultures were brought into light where the dead were still remembered as a part of the community. It is the faith of the people that during Dia De Los Muertos, the spirits of the dead temporarily pay a visit to the Earth.

Today The Day of the Dead is an amalgamation of pre-Hispanic religious rites and Christian feasts circling 2 days with elaborate meals, costumes and reaffirming life as we know it. A series of events that mark the 2-day celebration pan out with little Altars created in the homes of the people and massive flower decorations with parades.

Altars

The kernel point of all the festivities revolves around building the Altars, which are not for worship but to invite and welcome back the spirits of the departed to one's homes. Every household digs up memorabilia, pictures accompanied by delicious ofrendas for the dead relatives. Decorated with marigold flowers, the altar is a sight for sour eyes which is embellished with knick-knacks, food and water for the souls after their long journey back. The perfect welcome party for the dead. The marigold flowers are scattered from the altar to the gravesite and act as a missing puzzle piece for the digressed souls to reach back to their place of rest. The altars are lit

with candles and copal incense sticks that purify and express the warmth to the ancestors. Another charming touch to these altars is the sugar skulls or Calaveras that are placed as ofrendas to loved ones. Calaveras act like a little icing on the cake, where people draw them with a smile as a significance to laugh at death.





La Comida - Food for the Dead

We can't imagine going a day without food, so picture the thirst and hunger of the spirits travelling back to the realm of the living, especially when they are offered their favourite meals. If you want to experience the flavours of Mexican food, this is the right time to indulge your taste buds. Mexico is not only famous for its spicy tacos but lip-smacking traditional dishes that respire in the two days of the festivities. Secret old recipes are dug out of treasure boxes to make the ancestors feel welcome back. A typical sweet bread called pan dulce or the

bread of the dead is decorated with anise seeds and are given shapes of bones and skulls. Among other delicious offerings porridge made out of freshly chopped off maize is a must for long lost relatives.

Disfranzarse

Spilling into the streets of Mexico, Day of the Dead is not bound by any restrictions, after all, it is the reunion of the dead and the alive. A series of celebratory activities and parades spread day and night, it has turned into a social holiday where people get together and welcome the dead. Dressing up in skeletons, resembling faces with skulls and painted faces are the tea to this day.





ONE ABOVE: OPERATING UNDER THE PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Positioned to cater the pent-up demand for travel, Rahim Aslam, Founder and Consultant, One Above Destination Management Services is focusing on expanding its in-destination travel experiences network, which is the company's core business pillar alongside its extensive leisure and corporate travel operations.

- Bharti Sharma



Results are primarily based on intention, sincere effort and smart execution; Rahim has endorsed it as an imperative recipe, enabling One Above to be exclusive from the competition. At the same time, it is a pre-requisite for any travel company wishing to crown their customers port-of-call. They set their parameters to revive whilst remaining competitive in the market. Through long-standing industry connections, One Above delivers a wide range of unique experiences at the starred destinations.

INDUSTRY RISING LIKE A PHOENIX

If anything good has come of it, the coronavirus pandemic has taught destinations and businesses a great many lessons, the most paramount being the need to reinvent themselves. 'One Above' has rightly caught the pulse of it and Rahim being the chief has manoeuvred his way out of the rough terrain.

The travel industry is still reeling from the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic created a severe, global and sustained shock for travel services. On the other hand, the industry witnessed strong leadership actions that have kept companies afloat while remaining focused on long-term growth objective. "Many players have acted quickly to retain customer goodwill, tap into new sources of liquidity, and work effectively with their team with new work protocols. We have also seen innovation and a focus on customer experience. These examples illustrate the travel industry's strength that helped them chart a way forward through these challenging times," Rahim states.

EXPERIENTIAL AND SUSTAINABILITY - THE WAY FORWARD

The pandemic has caused a major transformation in how people travel and these key trends will dictate how the travel sector evolves in 2021. Decoding one of such trend, Rahim feels that people are keen to explore short getaways that are a drive away from their abode or connected via direct flights. He explains, "There is an increasing interest in travel experiences that are off-the-beaten-track, offering both affordability and adventure while also benefitting local communities. Safety and hygiene have emerged as the new comfort and luxury in travel. Post-Covid, travellers are looking for more control over their journeys. This is leading many to opt for higher category hotels, premium homestays and independent villas. We have seen confidence among travellers by making services contactless as far as possible."

MALDIVES, THE SHOW-STOPPER

"In terms of outbound, first is undoubtedly the Maldives but UAE is set to open up tourist visas to all COVID vaccinated people. Mauritius is easing out travel protocols for vaccinated travellers from September 1st. Destinations such as Thailand, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bali, London, Switzerland, and Paris have also opened their doors," Rahim shares. The Maldives has received over 550,000 tourists between January and June this year and the government aims to achieve 1.5 million tourist arrivals by the end of this year.

FITS POISED TO TAKE OFF

Rahim is pretty confident that 2021 is the year for 'FITs' and 2022 for business travel as he mentions, "This year it's majorly for FITs, small family holidays and leisure. By 2022 second quarter, with most of the business travellers getting fully vaccinated we are hopping business travel to take off with good numbers. Our DMC's are already witnessing good number of enquiries on business travel for 2022."



ETAA- North India Chapter organises 'Knowledge Session' for members

40 members including ETAA office bearers from the northern region participated in the event to explore the best business opportunities, elevated networking and experience a great hospitality of Best Western Country Club Resort, Manesar.

- Team TT



It was few months ago, ETAA made headlines for organising physical events in these thorny times to boost the morale of the members. ETAA team has always considered the members as their own family and has been working for their upliftment. The north India committee of ETAA organised yet another successful overnight networking event at the Best Western Country Club Resort on the August 12, 2021. After a rather torrid two months of pandemic's second wave, members attended the event with an overnight stay and were very happy to be experiencing normalcy and interaction. The office bearers of ETAA ensured that all COVID protocols were in place and members were asked to submit their vaccination reports and RTPCR negative reports to attend the event.



EVENT AFFAIR

sent out a note thanking The Best Western team for their very warm hospitality and also thanked media for their continuous support.

The event started with luncheon followed by knowledge session where committee members Saurabh Tuteja- General Secretary, Dinesh Kumar- Treasurer, Punit Bhasin and Praveen Ghai - Joint Secretaries and Gaurav Arora - Event Head addressed the participants.

The 'Knowledge Session' discussed the various aspects of revival of the tourism industry. It emphasized on the rebound of domestic business and outbound tourism to selected countries. A special presentation was made by Roop Sodhi, General Manager, Best Western Country Club Resort. She talked about the elite offerings and highlighted the importance of a sustainable

hospitality. The hotel follows strong sustainable measures to protect the environment. The networking session ended with high tea.

A one minute silence and a prayer for the departed souls was offered who died due to the second wave of COVID followed by singing of the national anthem to commemorate the 75th Independence day.

Post the session, members enjoyed the various activities organised by the hotel and the ETAA committee, followed by a very nice evening with the guitarist playing nostalgic music and creating an ambience that filled the souls with a realm of exuberance.

ETAA north India committee has been working very hard to come up with networking events and orientation trips for their members and will be doing so in the future as well.



Kandima Maldives organises an event for its contracted partners

Kandima Maldives has hosted an evening in Delhi exclusively for north India contracted partners which was attended by Islandhopper/ TBO, MakeMyTrip and Youngistan team.

Dhawal Vyas, Head of Sales, India, Kandima Maldives shares, "It was a thanks giving evening for our partners from North India. We are working over very aggressively towards developing India market and our vision is to bring India in top five markets for Kandima Maldives. Kandima is an Indian friendly resort and our staff is very familiar to Indian guests' need and requirement. We also have a team of Indian chef to cater the food habits of Indian guests."

Kandima is much more than just a holiday. This game-changing destination offers a seriously stylish island setting with extraordinary restaurants and bars and plenty of on-site activities to choose from. Kandima is a place with soul, deeply rooted in Maldives and respectful of our guests, colleagues, community, culture and surroundings. It is all about genuine hospitality with a human touch and smart solutions that make use of the latest innovations – not to mention a playful spirit!

APPOINTMENTS



Airports Authority of India

Shri M. Suresh has taken over the charge of Member (Air Navigation Services) at Airports Authority of India on 02nd September 2021. Prior to this assignment, Shri Suresh was holding the charge of post of Executive Director (Aviation Safety) at Corporate Headquarters of AAI and discharging the strategic function of ensuring safety in aerodrome operation and air navigations services and developing & maintaining a safety management policy of AAI.

Shri Suresh is an Air Navigation Service technical expert and has vast experience in planning, provision, operation and maintenance of CNS facilities, airport system facilities and information technology facilities at airports in India.

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts appoints Roberto Pelliccia as Vice President - Development & Operations - Asia and Africa. Roberto brings three decades of global progressive career in the hospitality industry and a wealth of extensive experience in operations, asset management, pre-opening and opening, re-branding and development. He leads the Business Development & Operations across the Asian and African continents and is responsible to spearhead and increase Cygnett Hotels & Resorts footprint particularly in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

An alumnus of Cornell School of Hotel Administration, his experience has taken him on key assignments with a variety of hotel groups such as Intercontinental, Hilton, Sun, Kerzner SuperClubs, Meritus, Grace and Latitude across Europe, Middle East, Indian Ocean, Caribbean, Southeast Asia, China, North, Central and Latin America and Africa.



The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre Complex

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts announced the appointment of Jaideep Anand as Vice President and General Manager at The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre Complex. With over three and a half decades of experience in luxury hospitality Jaideep has worked with well renowned brands like The Oberoi Hotels and Ananda in The Himalayas. Over the years he has developed an eye for detail and a deep understanding of design aesthetics together with the nuances of luxury operations.

Jaideep joined The Leela Hotels in 1995 and led the turnarounds of The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel and The Leela Ambience Gurgaon before moving into the role of Pre-Opening and Development at The Leela Corporate Office.

OM Tourism

OM Tourism announces the appointment of Amrita Bhatia as the Trade Sales Manager of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority. Amrita, based in Mumbai, brings an experience of nearly 20 years in the Tourism industry. She has worked with various hotels, travel agencies and DMCs over the course of her career. Her last assignment was as Sales Manager for ONYX Hospitality.

A graduate from University of Delhi, she also completed the IATA foundation course and the Travel & Tourism course run by the IATA/UFTAA foundation. Amrita likes travelling, meeting new people, listening to music and going for walks as her pastimes.





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