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Editor's Letter

No matter if you're living in the most magical place on the planet, you'd still crave to get away and explore more. On a similar front, I ticked off two destinations off my bucket list the last month. No point in guessing, it was Mizoram and Manipur. This was my first-ever trip to the mysterious Northeast and I consider myself to have covered the two most beautiful states together. My trip to the serene Northeast got me pondering, what's stopping India from having big inbound numbers when it's blessed with everything, like literally! The Inbound tourism sector faces a lot of impediments but let's not discuss the rationale as we have space limitations in my 'Editor's Note'. However, I am certain my thoughts will be put to rest at the 37th IATO Annual Convention in Lucknow (my favourite city in India).

Let me admit, penning down this note instils a sense of accomplishment. The IATO Special December Issue has left us feeling empowered, encountering the most illustrious names in the trade as we flipped through our pages. In this issue, we're unlocking the hidden gems of Uttar Pradesh, which will undoubtedly land you in the charming towns of Bundelkhand.

This special issue prompted us to cover the indispensable travel segment; LGBT, as Pink Tourism is gradually consolidating its long-awaited place in India and around the world. It's an accepted saying that travelling opens your eyes to new cultures and experiences. Agreed! Also, I'm proud to mention that in this issue we interviewed the maven of hospitality, Puneet Chhatwal who spoke at length about 'Taj'. Apart from the big players, you will also find start-ups and new products that are slated to make their mark, real soon; oh yes! India Assist and Red Sea Global.

As we inch towards New Year's Eve, I hope the last month of the year is full of travels for you all. Now as the season changes and fall is upon us, it's time to gather up the souvenirs of our travels and use them to inspire ourselves as we enter into the busy holiday season— refreshed and renewed, but before that have a wonderful time at the IATO convention!

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

Happy Reading!

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

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





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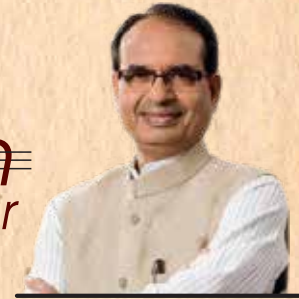


98th

World Music Festival

fansen samaroh Gwalior

19th to 23rd Dec 2022

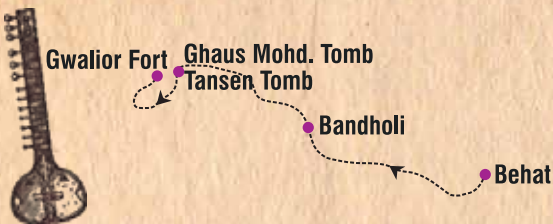


Shivraj Singh Chouhan
Chief Minister

Tourism Activities

Musical Strings of Gwalior

Time : 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM



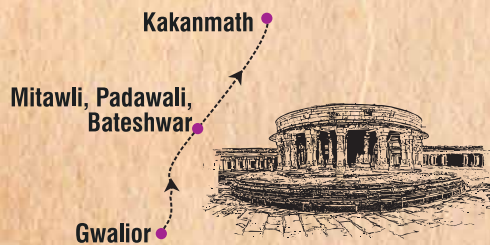
Day Excursion to the Medieval Land - Orchha

Time : 10:00 AM to 06:00 PM



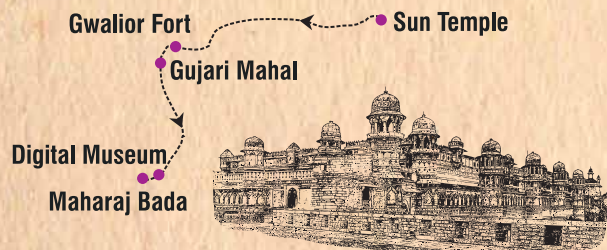
Jewels of the Ravines

Time : 10:00 AM to 06:00 PM



Gwalior Sunrise Tour

Time : 06:00 AM to 11:00 AM



Boating - Baija Taal and Tighra Dam

Time : 09:00 AM to 06:00 PM

1. Baija Taal, Gwalior
Water Zorbing, Peddle Boat and Speed Boat
(Operator - Rubi Adventure)
2. Tighra Dam, Gwalior
Motor Boat and Banana Ride
(Operator - Shrikant Kushwaha)



Food Festival

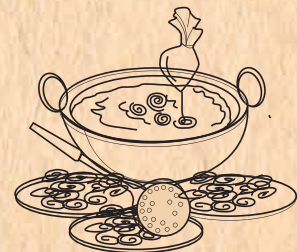
Date : 19th to 23rd Dec, 2022

Time : 07:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Enjoy delicacies of Chambal

Region at Hotel Tansen

Residency, Gwalior



For more information and tour booking, contact : Madhya Pradesh Tourism, Regional Office, Gwalior

0751 2234557, 4056726



12-15
LGBT
TOURISM
ITS TIME FOR THE
RAINBOW
FLAGS TO WAVE

26-29
IHCL
AIMS TO BUILD
A PORTFOLIO OF
300 HOTELS

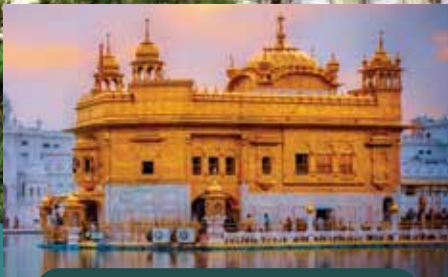
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IATO
ITS TIME TO
STRENGTHEN
THE INBOUND
TOURISM

74-76
RED SEA
GLOBAL
THE NEXT BIG
THING

PUNJAB

Full of Bliss • Full of Life

Virasat-e-Khalsa, Sri Anandpur Sahib



Golden Temple, Amritsar



Sri Valmiki Tirath Sthal, Amritsar



Durgiana Temple, Amritsar



Sheesh Mahal, Patiala



Gobindgarh Fort, Amritsar

The most talked about and enchanting state of India is not only a home to the majestic five rivers but also to abundant culture which is to be explored. The Punjabi delicacies for your taste buds, and the scenic beauty of green and mustard fields will leave you mesmerised.

Nakul Anand elected as Chairman of the FAITH

At election held today Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH), the policy federation of the 10 national associations representing the entire tourism, travel and hospitality industry of India (ADTOI, ATOAI, FHRAI, HAI, IATO, ICPB, IHHA, ITTA, TAAI, TAFI) and Cause Partner – AIRDA, have elected unanimously board Members of FAITH to the subsequent Office Bearer positions for the term of 2022 to 2024. Senior Hospitality veteran Mr Nakul Anand, has been elected as the Chairman whereas Mr Tejbir Singh Anand and Ms Jyoti Mayal have been elected as Vice Chairman, Mr Rajiv Mehra, the General Secretary and Mr P P Khanna, as the Treasurer.



ITC Hotels launches Welcomhotel Jim Corbett

With dreamy landscapes and the charm of the wilderness, Jim Corbett makes for a perfect bleisure destination. Far away from the hustle bustle of city life, located on a hill-top, spread over 3.5 acres of woodland forests, Welcomhotel by ITC Hotels, Jim Corbett is about 45 mins away from India's premier National Park, home to over 600 different varieties of flora and fauna.

The room views are breathtaking. 62 well-appointed guest rooms and suites with balconies & private sit-outs, as well as multiple open areas with enchanting views of the Kosi river and lush green hills bring natural splendour up and close. While you wake up to the sweet notes of chirping birds with picture-perfect backdrops and unobstructed views, the hotel interiors feature a contemporary take on design aesthetics providing for a luxury escapade in the wilderness.

Qatar Tourism launches global brand platform - Feel More in Qatar

Qatar Tourism is launching a new global brand platform and international advertising campaign under the banner of 'Feel More in Qatar', as the destination prioritises emotional connections and family-friendly activities and experiences. At the centre of the through-the-line campaign, which launches early December, is the new TVC which focuses on a family experiencing a breadth of emotions during their stay in Qatar. The TVC will air across global networks and local TV stations in 60 seconds and 30 seconds formats.

The campaign will be present in 16 countries and will also include extensive outdoor and online advertising on social media platforms. The campaign will be brought to life further through selected print advertorials. A revamped brand website, www.visitqatar.com, will also see the content available in nine languages.

"Feel More in Qatar" will see three engaging animated local characters introduce a family to the breadth of emotional experiences they will have in Qatar, as well as the country's renowned hospitality and warm welcome. The characters - Shaheen the falcon, Maha the Arabian oryx and Lulu the hawksbill turtle - represent Qatar's iconic wildlife and guide the family to discover the heart & soul of Qatar; a destination that blends cosmopolitan modernity and stunning landscapes with Arabic tradition and culture.





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T&A Consulting appointed as the Marketing Representative for Tourism Western Australia

T&A Consulting has been appointed as the official Indian Marketing Representative for Tourism Western Australia (TWA) through a competitive tender bid process. T&A Consulting will be responsible for defining and executing TWA's trade marketing and public relations in market as of Monday 28 November for an initial six-month period.

Commenting on the appointment, Tourism Western Australia Managing Director Carolyn Turnbull said, "We are excited to have T&A Consulting as our partner in India to promote TWA's value proposition to tour operators, online travel agencies and consumers at large. The team at T&A demonstrated a deep understanding of TWA's positioning and proposed an integrated approach that will elevate Western Australia in the minds of Indian travellers. We look forward to working with them."

Tarun Gupta, Global Managing Partner at T&A Consulting says "T&A is delighted to work with Tourism Western Australia as their partner in India. Both countries have vastly expanded areas of collaboration and tourism is a key enabler for the people-to-people connect. Western Australia with its immense geographical beauty, rich historical lineage and of course the vibrant metropolis of Perth provides a compelling proposition for the Indian traveller."



Japan National Tourism Organization hosted three city Japan Update Seminar

Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), Delhi office held three city seminars in Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai. After the opening of Japan borders for Indian FIT tourists on October 11th 2022, JNTO, Delhi office organized events for the travel trade community to ensure that the increasing demand is promptly met. The seminar served to inform travel trade partners about the new travel regulations and update them on Japan. In order to refresh and maintain top-of-mind recall for Japan, this three-city tour was conceptualised. In Delhi, 28 travel agents attended the session in each city, and 3 DMCs from Japan, along with senior delegates from Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways. Yusuke Yamamoto, Executive Director of Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), Delhi Office, welcomed the trade partners and addressed queries concerning the latest travel rules and new attractions in Japan. The networking session allowed agents to gain an in-depth understanding of the latest Japanese attractions.



New Team takes over OTOAI

A new team has taken over the reins at the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) Riaz Munshi, N.Chirag, has been elected as the President for the term 2022- 2024. Shravan Bhalla, Highflyer, elected as the Vice-President; Sidharth Khanna, Khanna Enterprises, elected as the General Secretary; Monia Kapoor, Travel O Holidays elected as the Joint Secretary and Gurdeep Singh Gujral, Gujral Tours and Travels elected as the Treasurer for the term 2022 - 2024.

Sanjay Datta, Airborne Holiday, was the Election Officer for the OTOAI Elections.

The EC has retained its previous five members- Himanshu Patil, Kesari Tours, Ankush Nijhawan, Travel Boutique Online a Unit of Lap travels, Adl Abdul Karim, Creative Tours & Travels India, Arshdeep Anand, Hma Spectrum and Mahendra Vakharia, Pathfinders Holidays, Rohit Shorey, Destination Travel Service has also been elected to the EC to complete the team for the term 2022-2024.

Nominated EC members include Romit Theophilus, GNTO & Rohit Chopra/Randhir Gupta, Accor Hotels. The new team will take charge effective 01st December 2022.





ANANTA LEISURE EXPERIENCE



The Ananta, Udaipur

ENCHANTINGLY UDAIPUR

Set against the breathtaking Aravalli Hills, Ananta Udaipur creates a fairytale experience for guests with the finest 5-star luxuries available. Our Udaipur resort spans 90 acres of lush greenery and features 239 opulent villas, four eclectic dining options, and two banquet halls. Our resort serves as a unique escape in the beautiful City of Lakes, with an outdoor swimming pool, a rejuvenating spa, a well-equipped gym, and a special kids activity area.



Ananta Spa & Resort, Pushkar

DEVOTEDLY PUSHKAR

Ananta Spa & Resort Pushkar is a blissful getaway in Pushkar, surrounded on all sides by the magnificent Aravalli Hills and lush greenery. For our guests, we have 52 contemporary cottages, 24 sprawling rooms, 12 tents, 3 tent suites, and Ananta Villa spread across 11 acres. We have three sophisticated and magnificent dining options and a banquet hall set in picturesque settings. Ananta Spa & Resorts pampers you with premium amenities such as a well-equipped recreational room, an activity area for children, an outdoor swimming pool, a world-class spa, and a cutting-edge fitness centre, making it one of the best resorts in Pushkar.



The Baagh Ananta Elite, Ranthambore

ROYALLY RANTHAMBORE

The Baagh Ananta Elite is one of Ranthambore's luxury resorts, located on the periphery of the Ranthambore National Park. Visit our resort to experience nature at its purest, with architecture inspired by the rugged wilderness of the place. We have luxurious rooms and cottages, two distinct dining experiences, a luxury pool, a gym, grand gardens, and a banquet hall. The Baagh Ananta Elite, a perfect blend of nature, luxury, and comfort, is the ideal place to explore Ranthambore's exotic wildlife.



Jagira Ananta Elite, Gir

GRACIOUSLY GIR

Our Gir luxury resort, Jagira Ananta Elite, is located on the outskirts of Gir Forest National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary. Our resort, surrounded by lush greenery, offers an exhilarating getaway with contemporary architecture, classic interiors, and modern furnishing. We have 52 opulent accommodations with a plethora of amenities and services. Our in-house multi-cuisine restaurant with a patio setting is set in a picturesque setting and provides a memorable dining experience. Jagira Ananta Elite promises nothing but premium services, with a small outdoor lawn, a swimming pool, and a slew of other amenities, making it the best resort in Sasan Gir.



Sultan-E-Jawai Ananta Inn, Pali

RUSTICALLY JAWAI

Sultan E Jawai Ananta Inn provides the most exciting stay close to the Jawai Bandh Leopard Conservation Reserve. Our resort also holds historical importance. The Sultan E Jawai Ananta Inn was established by the son of Thakur Sultan Singhji of Thikana Padampura in the erstwhile Jaipur State, who also manages the property. Guests at the inn can sense the royalty of our premium services and our deep ties to the royal family. Our resort, unlike any other in the state, allows our guests to enjoy the luxury of living in decadent tents in the middle of the jungle. These tents are decked with modern amenities so that you are not completely alienated from the modern world.

ANANTA HOTELS & RESORTS

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LIVE WIRE

LGBT TOURISM



LIVE WIRE



It's time for the rainbow flag to wave

Ever since Supreme Court decriminalised homosexuality in 2018, India is becoming a popular destination with queer travellers from across the globe. Feeling welcome is not only a reference to local hospitality but also a larger acceptance in society.

Bharti Sharma



LGBTQs spend more on travel than the general population, as well as take more trips. As a traveller, all you want is to feel safe and welcomed as who you are. As per various research and analytics, the segment makes up 7 per cent to 10 per cent of the travel industry (about \$1 billion in the USA alone). They are also far more likely to travel internationally.

An impressive impact on the travel economy, beyond its value for inclusion and respect of diversities

Most critically, LGBTQ travel spending goes to suppliers and destinations that recognise their unique buying preferences, and offer them differentiated value. The clear relationship between countries' progressive policies towards LGBT people and the economic benefits for their tourism sector, and the increasing social benefits as a result of the associated brand image of tolerance, inclusiveness and diversity. To exemplify the economic value for a city of this tourism segment, the data on participation in the 2017 Pride in Madrid witnessed 2 million people. We are talking about events that, in terms of numbers and the economy derived from it surpass the Olympic games. Madrid Pride and Amsterdam's Canal Parade have become so iconic that they now attract a much larger audience than originally targeted. The data shows that 12 per cent of travellers in Europe are LGBT+ and generate a turnover of 43 billion dollars, down from 75 billion in 2019, but less than other tourist segments in the period of the pandemic.

Fundamental for tourism

Tourism in general is poised to act as a catalyst for greater unity and inclusion for all. Talking about in what ways LaLit Hotels make LGBT travellers feel

welcome in an unknown land, Keshav Suri, Executive Director-The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group & Founder- Keshav Suri Foundation comments, "Leading the way forward, The Lalit Group is redefining set society norms to contribute to an inclusive and diverse society. The Lalit endorses #PureLove and welcomes everyone without any discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, caste, colour, religion or physical abilities. We respect individual choices and celebrate diversity! Through our #PureLove campaign, we have skilled over 2000 folks from marginalised groups at various intersections through Skill Enhancement Training Program, and provided opportunities to over 200 folks at The Lalit." The Group along with Keshav Suri Foundation has also helped over 50 Corporates in their D&I journey. Kitty Su, the nightclub at The Lalit became a haven for folk from the queer community as it not only hosted international drag artists but also revolutionised the Indian drag scene with its PureLove nights. It has given the platform to over 500 Indian queer artists in the last few years.



Keshav Suri

"Openness may not allay prejudice, but it's a good place to start"

Italy was a destination for LGBTQ+ tourism already at the end of the 19th century. Places such as Capri, Taormina, and Venice, where Mann set The Death in Venice, centred on the theme which owed much of their tourist success to the tolerance with which they welcomed travellers, as well as Naples, Rome, and Florence that we find described in the diaries of the many LGBTQ+ travellers of the time. Now coming back to the 21st century and India, things are taking a turn. 377 is abolished, people are becoming more open, and more accepting, and the viewpoint is changing. Some state governments are also looking into constructing gender-neutral washrooms for the transgender community. But there is still a long way to go. Keshav believes that there are many more changes to be made, many more minds to be opened, and many more people that still look for acceptance. "Being safe and accepted is one of the major concerns of LGBTQ+ travellers when they visit other countries. But with growing acceptance

and understanding, Pink Tourism is gradually finding its place in India and around the world. Despite the barriers and challenges that remain, there is an underlying optimism amongst LGBTQ+ travellers and a growing opportunity for the travel industry to work harder to create a safe, fun and discrimination-free travel experience for one and all," he shares.

On the other hand, Robindro feels there's hardly any impediment to LGBTQ travellers in India compared to other countries. In many ways, India is far more tolerant when one considers the middle east, China, and many other countries that seek to exercise strict religious protocols. The trend is improving as India becomes more and more publicly welcoming and seeks to grow the tourism sector."

Growing attention and involvement of stakeholders

There's an opportunity for stakeholders to expand and seasonally adjust tourism flows and enhance the country's image as a welcoming nation with an eye to progress applied to tourism. LGBTs are a community with a strong sense of identity,



constantly sharing experiences and information and in constant virtual interaction, using all the available means of communication, especially the communication channels and online platforms, developed specifically for this community, such as online associations and forums, specialised websites and apps, and several social networks. Robindro Saikhom, Founder, Serene Journeys, "Serene Journeys as a highly personalised boutique travel curator, becomes personally involved from the moment the clients land and until their departure. We attend to every need and plan for every contingency. We love hosting welcome dinners and keeping things intimate as we treat our clients as our close friends. Our representatives from the airport to local guides throughout the travel experience are thoroughly sensitised about our clients and any special needs." With the best local team working with select LGBTQ-friendly hotels and service providers, including my husband and I, we ensure our

travellers are well looked after showcasing the best India has to offer."

He further adds, "We make sure our clients know that Indians are very welcoming and tolerant of LGBTQ+ travellers but that culturally public display of affection has frowned upon no matter sexual orientation. We also brief them about dos and don'ts while travelling in India such as appropriate dress, dietary precautions, etc."



Robindro Saikhom

Takeaways for Hoteliers and Tour Operators

The need of the hour, not only for the hoteliers but also the industry at large is to sensitize their workforce and make the hotels and restaurants a place where everyone is treated with the same level of respect, regardless of their sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Keshav mentions that the hospitality industry in India is driven by the ethos of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' which translates into respect for every guest and welcoming them wholeheartedly. He further adds, "This is what everyone engaged in this industry – hotels, tour operators, guides, drivers, booking agents, should keep in mind. Ensuring there's no misgendering, asking guests their salutation and pronouns over assuming them, and asking for their preferences of room, bed type, etc instead of assuming, will only make them feel recognised, accepted and welcomed.

The travellers expect to be treated like any other guest in a foreign land. They don't wish to be singled out or somehow identified as 'different'. Robindro shares, "Probably the best approach for those in the hospitality industry is impartiality and commitment to equality of services provided. In other words, not only should

LGBTQ travellers not get special looks, stares, etc. they should also not feel like special accommodation/effort is required in their regard."

The torchbearers

But with growing acceptance and understanding, Pink Tourism is gradually finding its place in India and around the world. Despite the barriers and challenges that remain, there is an underlying optimism amongst LGBTQ+ travellers and a growing opportunity for the travel industry to work harder to create a safe, fun and discrimination-free travel experience for one and all. "All our hotels have The Lalit Progress Pride Flag flying high to express our solidarity towards the queer community. As you walk through the doors 'The Lalit Enlightenment Tree' shares important terms and words to describe the LGBTQ+ spectrum and 'Elphie' our mascot, dressed in rainbow colours welcomes all. In order to promote inclusivity and clear biases we have also initiated a children's book series – Elphie and the Peacock & Elphie and the Dance Party. Our regular interventions with our internal teams and various community engagement activities help us remain sensitive and thoughtful throughout.," concludes Keshav.



MoT takes assertive measures to reinforce 'Incredible India'

In the past 75 years, India has become synonymous with tourism, spirituality, transformation, culture, and diversity. Tourism in India has grown rapidly, with major developments and investment in the pipeline, India is set to build the rightful place of India's tourism industry in the global arena. In an exclusive interview with Travel Turtle, Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER talks about the strategic plans to position India as a key tourism destination in the world.

- Sudipta Saha



It is rightly said that 'Good things take time' and the same goes with this diversified nation-India. India, as a nation has been able to establish itself as one of the major countries in the world map. As India realises the immense potential that lies in the tourism industry, and establishing the tourism sector as a primary concern, the Ministry of Tourism has undertaken various initiatives and taken a four-fold development strategy that focuses on improving connectivity via air, rail, and roads, enhancing the tourism infrastructure and dependent services, streamlining branding and promotion and showcasing the culture and heritage. The Ministry has sanctioned Rs 7000 crores for the development of tourism infrastructure throughout the country.

G20, a game changer for tourism industry

With India presiding over the G20, it is going to offer enormous opportunity to showcase the vivid landscape and astounding tourism products that India is blessed with. Well, G20 Grouping might be

discussing on various geo-political and economic issues, but on the other hand, it is definitely going to give a boost to the tourism industry. Speaking on the importance of G20, Shri G. Kishan Reddy says, "85 per cent of the population comes under G20 countries and 85 per cent of GDP comes from G20 countries. G20 is going to boost the tourism, and will be opening the scope of investment for hospitality as well as adventure, cruise and wellness tourism. We are going to explore our heritage, culture, history, monuments, festivals, traditions, arts and artifacts and showcase them to the G20 countries. Around 200 meetings are planned in different locations and approximately 250 cultural events will be organised and therefore we plan to promote and market the incredible tourism products to them. This is a huge opportunity for us and mainly the for tourism sector."

Northeast, the hidden gem

The seven sisters in the northeast India are adorned with impressive landscapes which are yet to be explored and experienced. With India hosting the G20 Summit across 55 cities including the

northeast, it is going to change the dynamics of the states in the region. At the central level, major emphasis is being laid towards the development of infrastructure in the different states in northeast, in order to enhance the tourism opportunities and other prospects. Highlighting on the same, Shri G. Kishan Reddy mentions, "The ministries of Tourism, DoNER and Road Transport & Highways are developing 100 view-points in the Northeast region. As many as 22 viewpoints have been taken up for development at a cost of Rs 49 crore. Recently during ITM in Mizoram, nine viewpoints have been taken up for development at the cost of Rs12.78 crore. In addition to that, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways is also in the process of developing other viewpoints on their own."

Domestic Tourism, a key player

Domestic tourism is on track and a mammoth increase in the segment have been noticed which is positive indication for the industry. "After a gap of 40 years, very positive scenery can be witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir; the tourism activity in the state is flourishing and is growing in a positive direction. There were several challenges for us such as corona, problem in Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir which have been resolved. Earlier, there were numerous beaches and water falls, forest areas that were unexplored because of leftist terrorism, but now as everything seems to be under control, a huge opportunity for investment in tourism has opened up. We have everything, but the need of the hour is to endorse and promote our tourism products on the international platform," adds Shri G. Kishan Reddy.

Major Investment opportunity

India is working on a vision to upgrade and uplift it's one of the major GDP contributor i.e. the tourism sector and as per a study the tourism sector contributes to around 4.7 percent of the country's GDP and provides employment to around 31.8 million of inhabitants. Many major investment, developments and events are in the pipeline to encourage and boost the tourism sector. Shri G. Kishan Reddy states that we are planning an Investor Conclave, where we will chalk out the plans for investment for different states and see which segment of tourism can be enhanced and developed in that particular state. He further adds, "We will focus to increase the global investments not only in the hospitality industry but to also develop theme parks and entertainment centers, adventure tourism, cruise tourism, wellness tourism, winter tourism, tourism in the Himalayan states, cultural, spiritual and heritage tourism. We are going to invite the major investors in the country and have an on table discussion on the investment plans. Tourism cannot grow without investors, the state budget has been increased and therefore we are planning to develop various circuits, tourism infrastructure and products on PPP model."

India - on a mission

In the past years, a phenomenal growth in the Indian tourism industry has been witnessed. Emphasizing the importance of air connectivity, Shri G. Kishan Reddy says, "The number of airports in the country has increased from 74 in 2014 to 140 now, and it is further proposed to increase the number of airports to 220 by 2025." He further adds, "The Prime Minister's vision of associating the Indian diaspora and NRIs for promoting tourism will be encouraged. The financial assistance to the tourism sector, which is the biggest sufferer due to Covid 19, continues to be extended up to March 31, 2023."

Highlighting the slogan of 'Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi' given by the Prime Minister, Shri G. Kishan Reddy elaborates that after a vast process of consultations and deliberations, the National Tourism Policy will be brought out before the Budget session. He also informs that various tourist circuits are being promoted and a new 'Ambedkar Circuit' shall soon be launched. The Himalayan Circuit will also be promoted under the action plan for the development of tourist circuits.

TIMELESS WEDDINGS

Embracing India's rich heritage, Noor Mahal Palace endorses the opulent royalty of the era of Indian maharajas, flaunting an enchanting fusion of elements inspired from traditional Mughal and Rajputana schools of architecture. A unique mélange of traditional royal essence with modern amenities, Noor Mahal Hotel in Karnal exudes warmth and comfort for all its guests by preserving the legacy of India's deep-rooted past heritage. Stunningly set in vast expanse of natural splendour, Noor Mahal is truly a one of its kind Palace in the region; an epitome of grandiose.



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THE HIDDEN GEMS OF

Uttar Pradesh

Where heritage meets culture, religion and traditions. Where centuries-old monuments and relics are a journey into the past.

- Tripti Jain

The state that embodies diversity and is home to the origin of different cultures, traditions and illustrious scenic beauty along with monuments that date back centuries, Uttar Pradesh is the heart of tourist attractions in India. The image of Uttar Pradesh brings to mind vast, swaying fields, ancient Hindu temples, and rivers meandering through towns and cities with lanes where a vibrant culture is all your eyes can witness. The North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh is a must-visit vacation spot since it is home to one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Taj Mahal. The state is also the birthplace of two of the world's most popular religions, and a significant classical dance style. Uttar Pradesh invites you to see its incomparable land of magnanimous history, culture, art, and customs.

Bundelkhand

A region that lies in the central part of India, occupying the southern region of Uttar Pradesh has recently been attracting a lot of eyes. Hidden among deteriorating monuments, flowing lakes, lush hills, and forests that tell stories, Bundelkhand is a part of history. The locals of this region will let you in on the hidden treasures and stories of Malwa Sultans and Bundela Rajputs that made a mark on this region. A lot of history can be discovered through the heritage trail and by gazing at forts that were built for Rajas. Apart from being picturesque views and rich heritage Bundelkhand is a perfect getaway with beautiful resorts and national parks for safaris.

Cities like Jhansi, Banda, Lalitpur, and Chatarpur are famous tourist spots and have a variety of monuments and vast stretches of land. Many historical and



natural beauty is found in Bundelkhand, making it a popular destination for travellers. It has a number of stunning waterfalls, magnificent forts, and spiritual locations where you may spend a lovely time. One of the most stunning tourist destinations in Bundelkhand is the Shabri waterfall near Chitrakoot Dham. Shabri waterfall's landscape is filled with water flowing over rocks and falling from above with a loud splashing sound. Its breathtaking beauty will leave you fascinated and mesmerised. Another renowned Indian cultural legacy is the Rahila Sagar Sun Temple in Mahoba (Bundelkhand), which was constructed more than 1000 years ago by the Chandelas. Rahila dev Varman, the 5th Chandela Ruler, constructed the Rahiliya Sagar Sun Temple. He also constructed a temple on the bank of the Rahiliya Sagar, a water tank. Bundelkhand is home to some of the most magnanimous forts and temples.



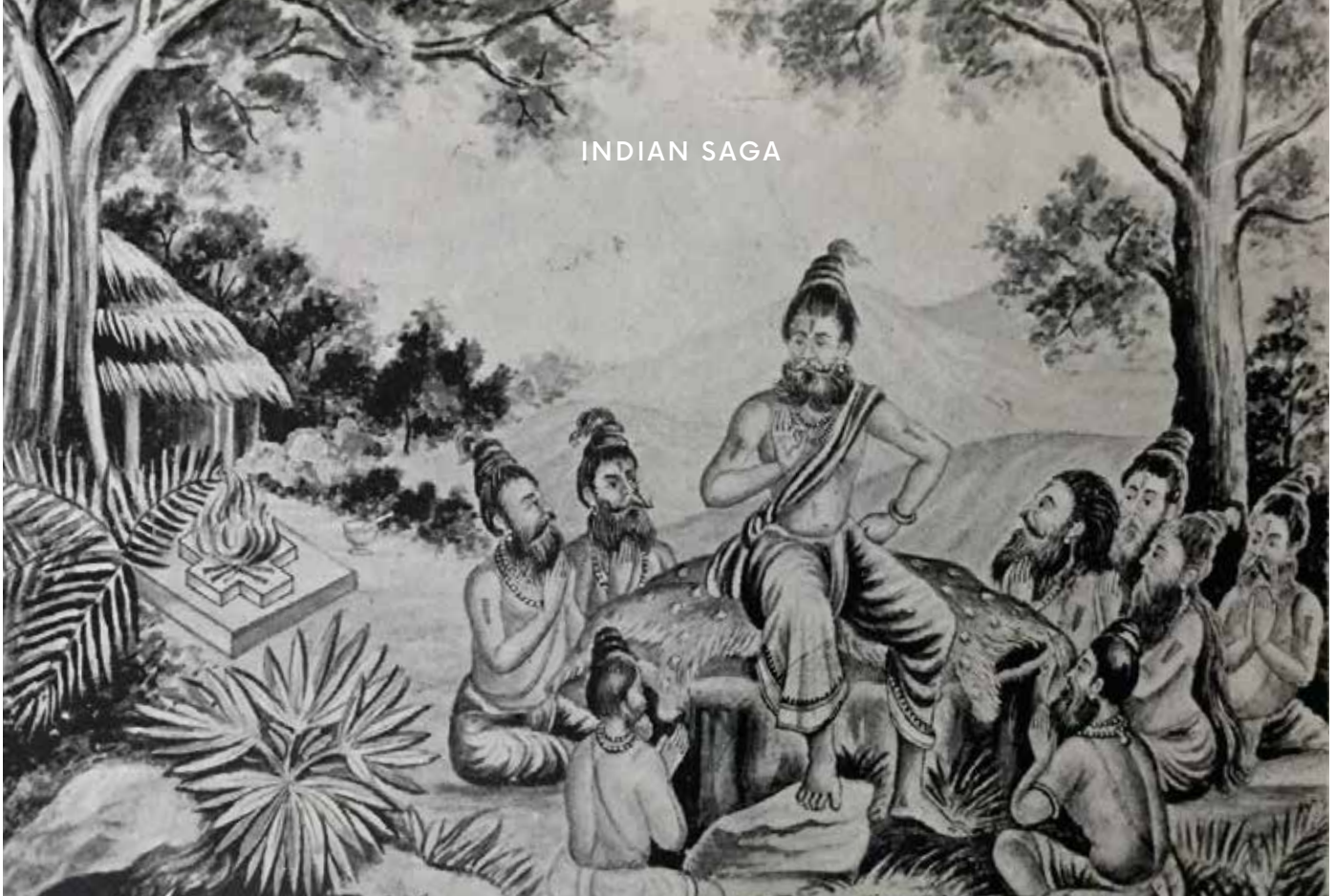


Deogarh

A small village in the Lalitpur district of the state of Uttar Pradesh, located on the right bank of the Betwa River and Lalitpur hills and the west. It is located in a natural woodland environment. When the Gupta dynasty, the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Gondas, the Marathas, and the Muslims ruled Delhi, it was at its most glorious. Along with other Jain temples, this location is home to the spectacular Dashavatar temple's ruins, which date to the Gupta period's fifth century. These temples' architecture is a masterpiece of a high standard

of craftsmanship. Some of the monuments and temples have carvings that have been preserved for ages. A place in Deogarh has around 2000 sculptures, making it the sole collection of its kind anywhere in the globe. The Siddha-ki-Gufa's rock-cut caves date from the sixth century and are breathtakingly gorgeous. A unique experience is descending the steep steps at Naharghati at the eastern end of the Deogarh fort to the Betwa River. This small village is very close to Jhansi, the Land of Valour and Glory, the Land of Rani Laxmibai. The Dashavatara Temple, a Vishnu Hindu temple from the first half of the sixth century is a must-visit in Deogarh. 125 kilometres north of Jhansi in the Betwa River valley, it is one of the earliest Hindu stone temples still standing and features a straightforward, one-cell square layout. The Dashavatara Temple in Deogarh, which was built during the Gupta Period, is an example of elaborate Gupta-style architecture. Deogarh Village is like a sneak peek into the historic religious realm.

INDIAN SAGA



Naimisha Forest

A sacred forest called Naimisaranya, also known as Naimisha, is frequently mentioned in Puranic literature as well as in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. It is said to be the location where the Puranas were first told in front of a vast assembly of sages. Before the sages assembled in the Naimisha forest, Ugrashravas narrates the Mahabharata. The place is an ancient forest which is in the modern-day Nimsar, located alongside the Gomti River in the Sitapur region of Uttar Pradesh.

The place is considered to be holy and it is believed that Ram wanted to commemorate the Avamedha sacrifice here. As a result, he left his younger brother Lakshman in charge of the steed while he proceeded to the forest with the help of the priests. When the sacrifice was taking place, Valmiki travelled there with his disciples and built several cosy shelters in the distance. Luv and Kush then recited the entire Ramayana, which persuaded Ram that they were the identical twin sons of Sita. Finally, at Sita's request, Bhumi arrived and followed her into the earth's interior after establishing her innocence. The Forest has a great religious significance and is a delight for travellers who wish to dive deep into the Indian religious origin.



INDIAN SAGA

Sonbhadra

Sonbhadra city, also known as Robertsganj is located in the southeastern corner of the state. This city lies between the Vindhyan and Kaimur Ranges, and was the hub of prehistoric human activity, as shown by the numerous rock drawings and prehistoric cave art, which can be discovered in different parts of the city.

The historic place that highlights the city is Vijaygarh Fort, which dates back to the 5th century and is in the Mau Kalan village. The fort is known for its numerous statues, cave paintings, rock inscriptions, and permanent ponds. On the fort's grounds, four ponds never dry out. Apart from the fort, there is the Kaimoor Wildlife Sanctuary which will give you a great experience of a safari and Dhandhraul dam amongst others. The Son View Point is a must-visit for travellers looking for a hilltop view.

A holiday in the beautiful state of Uttar Pradesh is what every traveller should have on their bucket list. If you want to experience the origin of religions and culture, the root of heritage sites and stories around it, there is no place better than Uttar Pradesh.



UP Tourism strengthens the foundation of the state's rich cultural offerings

Uttar Pradesh strategises to further develop and promote the tourism industry in all its forms, highlighting and strengthening UP's advantages with a range of tourism-marketing activities, harmonising information exchange, joint management of tourist assets, and provisions enabling tourists to comfortably enjoy the wide range of experiences and services in the state. Shri Mukesh Kumar Meshram (IAS), Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Govt of Uttar Pradesh talks about how the state is continually building and developing its diverse tourism offerings.

- Bharti Sharma

Enhancing efficiency in tourism through strategic partnerships and collaborations

The department strives to position Uttar Pradesh as the most preferred destination for eco-tourism, underpinned by its cultural heritage. Shri Mukesh Kumar Meshram emphasizes on the strategies to establish UP as the most preferred tourist destination as he tells, "We're working with our partners across the tourism sector to implement strategic pillars, which includes promoting UP as an eco-tourism destination. We have adopted innovative tourism approach to improve the tourist experience through provisions of innovative solutions. We have enhanced efficiency in the tourism sector through partnership and collaborative action to provide world-class tourism facilities and capabilities. We're promoting the cultural, heritage, sustainable elements among tourists to build the state as an international cultural hub."

Tour Operators are the backbone

UP is consistently working to attract more travellers not just from India but from around the

world, as well as to set up the necessary infrastructure and regulations to accommodate them and ensure their health and safety while allowing them to enjoy a memorable trip to this vibrant state. In order to achieve this vision the support from the industry is imperative, thus Shri Mukesh Meshram mentions, "Tour and travel operators are the backbone of any tourist activity, it's through them we promote and channelize our strategies. With, IATO taking place in Lucknow, we'll get an exclusive opportunity to showcase the best of UP to the potential buyers. Once they go through the destinations, they will see the change. A lot of infrastructure development has taken place including international airport, expressways, accommodation facilities and more. We are working vehemently to make it the best."

Policies spotlighting the religious and spiritual tourism circuits

As per the vision, the places associated with Lord Rama will be developed as the Ramayana circuit, religious places associated with Lord Krishna as the Krishna circuit. Sharing details on the destinations and



circuits, Shri Mukesh Meshram mentions, "The Ramayana circuit will include Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Bithoor, and other religious places that are seen as abodes of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita. Similarly, Mathura, Vrindavan, Gokul, Govardhan, Barsana, Nandgaon, Baldev, and other religious places will be included in the Krishna circuit while Kapilvastu, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Kaushambi, Shravasti, Ramgram, and similar places will be included in the Buddhist circuit. The new policy also envisages the Mahabharata circuit and Shakti Peetha circuit, in which places such as Hastinapur, Kampilya, Echhatra, Barnawa, Mathura, Kaushambi, Gonda, Lakhagriha have been selected. Under the Shaktipeeth circuit, Vindhyavasini Devi, taking from Ashtabhujia to Devipatan, Naimisharanya, Maa Lalit Devi, Maa Jwala Devi, Shakumbhari Devi from Saharanpur to Shivani Devi Chitrakoot and Sheetla Mata Mau will be extended."

He further adds, "Out of the total 12 circuits developed so far, 8 are catering to spiritual or religious tourism, Uttar Pradesh offers eight circuits like the Ramayan circuit, Mathura and Vrindavan, Sarnath, Prayagraj, Kashi, Varanasi, Jain Circuit, Buddhist circuit, Sufi circuit, etc. Furthermore, the State is developing culture and heritage tourism and adventure tourism

for millennials and enthusiasts. There are approx. 50 cr Buddhist followers who are eventually our target audience."

Targeting Rs 20,000 crore investment in the tourism sector

The Uttar Pradesh government aims to attract investment worth ₹20,000 crore in the tourism sector to develop the state into a 'tourism state' and create employment opportunities for 10 lakh youths in the next five years. UP government has allocated a fair chunk of the state budget for the infrastructural development of these circuits and destinations. In order to entice investors, the govt announced that those investing between ₹10 lakh and ₹10 crore will get a rebate of 25 percent or up to ₹2 crore. Sharing further Shri Mukesh Meshram said, "Similarly, entrepreneurs investing between ₹10 crore and ₹50 crore will be provided 20 percent subsidy or up to ₹7.5 crore. The entrepreneurs with investment between ₹50 crore and ₹200 crore will get subsidy of 15 percent or up to ₹20 crore whereas those investing between ₹200 crore and ₹500 crore will be given a rebate of 10 percent or up to ₹25 crore. Besides, subsidy will be provided at 10 percent or ₹40 crore, whichever is higher, to premier investors investing capital above ₹500 crore."





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IHCL AIMS TO BUILD A PORTFOLIO OF 300 HOTELS, CLOCKS 33 PER CENT EBITDA MARGIN

With a rich legacy of over a century, IHCL is not just an industry leader but the undisputed custodian of Indian hospitality. Today, IHCL is a robust hospitality ecosystem with a portfolio of 250 hotels across the globe including those under development and the company is on the path to rapid profitable growth guided by their vision of Ahvaan 2025. Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, IHCL in an exclusive interview with Travel Turtle unveils some thrilling projects and initiatives that will 're-structure' and 're-imagine' the way we perceive hospitality.

- Bharti Sharma





The hospitality maven, Puneet Chhatwal has managed to drive IHCL in the most coherent and sustainable way. After reigning some renowned global hospitality brands, Chhatwal was all set for a homecoming and there can't be a better brand for it than India's most adored 'Taj', IHCL. He has been exemplary in terms of operations and has been guiding the brand with his unparalleled experience.

Hospitality sector responsible to preserve the local culture and the environment

Chhatwal strongly feels that while India's travel and hospitality industry will continue to significantly contribute to the global economy and overall employment, what will truly define the sector in the future will be the pivotal role it will play – as a conservationist of both, local culture and the environment.

He explains, "In recent years, the world has seen a seismic shift, not just in decision-making and buying power, but in the way people view experiences while being cognizant of the impact of their actions on the globe. India, with its magnitude of kaleidoscopic offerings in terms of geographical diversity, rich history and

culture, will continue to lead travellers' bucket lists when it comes to experience-led travel. And this will not just shape but revolutionize India's hospitality sector as an enabler of authentic experiences, preserver of heritage, and driver of sustainable travel; while adapting to evolving trends and consumer behaviour."

India at the cusp of transformation

India's unique geographical diversity, rich culture and heritage and ancient knowledge of arts and sciences makes this country a travellers' paradise. With over 30 World Heritage sites, 10 bio-geographic zones, 80 national parks and 441 sanctuaries, the country is an amalgamation of all types of tourist destinations. From being the mecca of spiritual travel to slowly evolving as a leading wellness destination, from being known as the land of palaces to becoming a centre for adventure-seekers and a key destination on the global business circuit, we have witnessed a rapid evolution of the travel and hospitality sector in India.

"Today, India is at the cusp of transformation as a key travel and

tourism destination across multiple segments such as culture and heritage, leisure, sports, religious tourism and even wildlife travel," mentions Chhatwal.

He further shares, "Given the significant role travel and hospitality will continue to play in India's overall growth and positioning, it is imperative that the sector is strategically developed – be it in terms of infrastructure, connectivity, technology and policy frameworks – to help the nation become a \$30 – 40 trillion economy in the next 25 years while boosting prosperity and employment generation."

Overwhelming response of Promo Code Special Rates from IATO members

IHCL rolled out the Promo Code Special Rates for IATO Members during the last convention and Chhatwal tells that the response has been great and encouraging. "We are proud of our longstanding association with IATO and look forward to many more successful conventions with the members in the coming times. The response to the special promotional offers has been very encouraging,

especially with our small- to mid-sized agents, as it promotes travel and we look forward to even more enthusiastic participation in coming times. Destinations such as Rajasthan, Mumbai, Goa, Rishikesh-Haridwar and Delhi are proving to be especially popular among members."

IHCL outperforming the industry

In spite of the many challenges put forward by the pandemic and ensuing limitations on travel, there has been a surge in domestic tourism, with people increasingly looking to re-discover India and all that it has to offer. Be it staycations or driving vacations, the surge in domestic travel has been leading the rapid revival of the sector and the industry has been seeing occupancy levels surpassing even pre-pandemic levels in the past couple of months. Unfolding how IHCL properties performed, Chhatwal tells, "With our expansive pan-India footprint and presence across multiple brands catering to a varied target audience, our IHCL hotels have been outperforming the industry in the last couple of



quarters. Post-pandemic, we are experiencing robust performance in the current fiscal. Both occupancy and ARR have seen significant growth in H1 FY 2022-23 and are in the excess of pre-COVID levels."

IHCL has also been witnessing a steady momentum of inbound travel, with international markets seeing a revival of 40 per cent since October 2022; key markets being the USA, GCC and South America among others.

Taj slated to grow to 100 hotels across the globe

IHCL recently announced its long-term three-pronged strategy to grow profitably – Ahvaan 2025. Under the plan, IHCL will re-engineer its margins, re-imagine its brandscape and re-structure its portfolio. "IHCL aims to build a portfolio of 300 hotels, clock 33 per cent EBITDA margin with 35 per cent EBITDA share contribution from new businesses and management fees by FY 2025-26," reveals Chhatwal.

Sharing some stirring details, he explicates, "Under Ahvaan 2025, IHCL will continue to Re-engineer margins with an emphasis on sustained revenue growth, cost optimisation and operational excellence. This will further strengthen the balance sheet with focus on free cash flows and be a zero net debt company. To increase the EBITDA share contribution from new businesses, IHCL with its Re-imagined brandscape will scale Ginger to 125 hotels. Ginger will be one of the most significant growth vehicles for IHCL. 'amā Stays & Trails', a branded offering in the homestay market will be a portfolio of 500 and Qmin, IHCL's culinary and home delivery platform will expand to 25 plus cities."

IHCL also aims at Re-structuring its portfolio and achieve a 50:50 mix between its owned/leased and managed hotels. It will also look to stimulate growth by unlocking capital through strategic partnerships, monetisation and simplification Taj, the iconic luxury brand, is slated to grow to 100 hotels across the globe, and the Vivanta and SeleQtions will scale to a portfolio of 75 hotels. "While each of our brands continue to cater to distinct target markets successfully,

we are very proud that our iconic brand – Taj has been recognised as the World's Strongest Hotel Brand for the second consecutive year. Moreover, Taj has also been rated as India's Strongest Brand across all categories for the second time – the first being in 2020. These recognitions not only reaffirm Taj as the most acclaimed benchmark of excellence in the industry globally but are also a mark of our stakeholders' steadfast trust in us," shares Chhatwal.

"Experiences is the new currency"

While travel has always been known to expand one's horizons, today, travellers' expectations from travel have evolved beyond the usual highlights to exploring a destination more comprehensively. Chhatwal aptly believes that 'Experiences is the new currency' – and travellers are looking for 'experiences' that bring alive the spirit of a destination in all its raw authenticity, be it traditional culture to history to local experiences and traditional arts,

food and heritage.

He adds, "This has resulted in the growth of experiential travel, which brings together a mix of cultural exploration and experience-based activities that allow travellers to delve into all that a destination has to offer. For a country like India, which has a kaleidoscope of experiences to offer, offering guests an opportunity to immerse themselves into the country's unique culture, cuisine and heritage is key to further elevating India's position on the global travel and tourism map. For hospitality brands, the growth of experiential travel is an opportunity to curate offerings that are immersive, exclusive and unique, while also allowing guests to connect and engage with local communities for authentic experiences while having a positive impact on the community both directly and indirectly."

Taking India to the world

IHCL is the only Indian hospitality company with marquee hotels in key global destinations such as London and New York, in addition to Sri

Lanka, Dubai, Maldives and South Africa among others. The company will continue to expand and strengthen its presence across the Indian sub-continent, in cities that are on popular travel routes, especially among the Indian diaspora.

Commenting on some exciting expansion plans, Chhatwal discloses, "We will continue to have a strong focus on markets such as Dubai – where IHCL has recently opened Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, The Palm (the third Taj branded hotel in the city) and has another Taj hotel at Deira Creek in the pipeline. The Middle East, with locations such as Makkah – where IHCL has a Taj hotel in the pipeline, Riyadh, Jeddah, Abu Dhabi and AlUla, will continue to be a strong focus area for IHCL in the next couple of years for the development of the Taj brand. IHCL will also explore strategic partnership opportunities in key global markets across the UK, US and Europe among others, which have substantial customer crossover with India.



HOTELLIGENCE

Sustainability and community-driven initiatives engrained in the company's DNA

Today, it has become even more important to chart a future that is more sustainable and inclusive; and we believe this is the only way to drive India's journey to being among the top travel and tourism economies. While the focus on sustainability and community-driven initiatives has always been engrained in the company's DNA, they have recently launched Paathya – IHCL's ESG+ framework, to drive IHCL's sustainability and social impact measures. Derived from the Sanskrit term पाथ्य; inferring a path, Paathya encapsulates initiatives to lead positive change. The six pillars of Paathya include Environmental Stewardship, Social Responsibility, Excellence in Governance, Preserving Heritage, Value Chain Transformation, and Sustainable Growth.

"Under each of these pillars, we have defined both, short and long-term goals, to be fulfilled by 2030. These include 100 per cent elimination of single-use plastic across all its hotels,

ensuring 100 per cent of waste water is reused, 100 per cent of hotels will be certified to a global sustainability standard. All business meetings and conferences will go green with the introduction of Innergise - Green Meetings, reducing their environmental impact, etc. Telling further, he shares, "Taking ahead our commitment to skill building, and creating employability for the deserving and the marginalized, IHCL aims to impact the livelihood of over 100,000 youth. Long heralded as the custodian of Indian heritage, IHCL's collaboration with UNESCO, will see adoption of 100 per cent of Intangible Cultural Heritage (IHC) projects in the geographies it operates in."

Paathya also focuses on driving diversity and inclusivity for our customers, employees and community through our 'She Remains the Taj' framework, which encompasses,

- Enhanced experiences for women travellers at our hotels across the globe
- Goal to raise women participation

in its workforce to 25 per cent by 2025

- Support women-led businesses and partners

Diversifying within the sector

IHCL has launched two new businesses not very long ago—amã Stays & Trails and Qmin food delivery. amã Stays & Trails was launched in early 2019 as IHCL believed that there was a need for a branded product in the homestay market in India which was very unstructured. Qmin is IHCL's culinary platform and food delivery service, which was established during the pandemic. Making use of the power of digital platforms including its own app, Qmin offered people the opportunity to order their favourite meals from leading IHCL restaurants from the comfort of their homes.

"Today Qmin is a full-fledged business vertical addressing multiple segments of the market, present in over 20 cities across multiple platforms – be it the Qmin app for food delivery; Qmin Shops offering gourmet products; Qmin trucks and Qmin outlets. As per our Ahvaan 2025 strategy, Qmin,

IHCL's culinary and home delivery platform will expand to 25 plus cities soon. Qmin is further expanding to Ginger hotels and is currently present at over eight Ginger hotels, with more in the pipeline," tells Chhatwal.

Amã has a portfolio of over 100 properties and are looking to scale to 500 properties by 2025. Chhatwal shares, "We have a very clear vision for amã. The pandemic validated this belief. The brand did extremely well during the pandemic as a rising number of people embarked on driving vacations with loved ones, leading to a growing demand for exclusive and safe stays. We believe that this brand has huge potential to grow. Our model is very different – we follow a hub and spoke model. The closest IHCL hotel provides support. This leads to operational efficiencies and expertise. The management and operations are overseen by the IHCL team with a sharp focus on safety, hygiene and security. The exclusive bungalows are in unique locales which are scenic and picturesque. We follow strict standards for on-boarding. Guests enjoy local and immersive authentic experiences."



IATO making an impact in the government machinery

IATO, being the voice of its members, has the task of leading from the front. The trade has witnessed several instances, where the association has gone all in to make a difference for the trade, meeting with the Tourism Minister, Aviation Minister, Finance Minister, PMO, bureaucrats and other stakeholders. The association acts as the link between the Decision Makers and the industry and presents the complete perspective to both the sides, synergising the common agenda of Tourism facilitation. Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO talks about how the association leaving its mark on everything.

- Bharti Sharma

Over the years, the association has been a beacon of hope for its members, dealing with issues, solving them and maintaining an exhaustive list of loyal members who instill their trust and confidence in them. The IATO President was selected as domain expert on the subject related to Promotion of Indian Tourism in Overseas Markets - Role of Overseas Tourist Offices and Indian Embassies for detailed examination by the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture. It is a recognition not only for IATO but for the many tour operators who rely on the government for their day-to-day queries.

Here, Persistency is the Key

It was at the IATO's request that the Government of India appointed 20 Nodal officers for Tourism at our Missions abroad. IATO was also aggressively following up with the Government to restore Tourist/e-Tourist for Foreign Tourists including 5 years and 10 years visas directly with the MHA and through the Ministry of Tourism. There is no alternative to hard work and constant efforts, they eventually bear fruits and this can be verified here when an exhilarated Rajiv tells, "Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India issued orders on 16th March for the restoration of Tourist/e-Tourist Visa of all kind with immediate effect. IATO was also writing to the Government to allow entry through the Land borders of Nepal and Bhutan. Apart from this, the IATO was also advocating that e-Tourist Visa for countries like UK, Canada and other countries to be revived."

"Our constant efforts also helped in the withdrawal of Tax Collection of Source (TCS) on sale of overseas tour packages for foreign tourists who book tours through tour operators located in India," he adds.

Embracing healthy critics

In the past two years, we've observed that many stakeholders spoke against the role of travel associations when associations like IATO were trying their level best to secure relief for the sector. But with a positive attitude and outlook, Rajiv believes that critics only propel them to work harder for their valued membership. He comments, "Unless the loopholes are shown to you how can you improve. We are grateful to our critics for providing us the challenges in the garb of opportunities. A luminary once said Dissent is the way to progress."

What's next?

"IATO has been in regular touch with the MOT and various other ministries for copious issues and we are glad that few of our requests and demands were considered positively by the government," reiterates Rajiv. The Union Government accepted IATO's recommendations on removal of GST on services provided outside India as well as the GST for ferry service hired for transport of passengers. This request was made as there was hardly any income for the tour operators in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

It was the IATO's request to the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Andaman & Nicobar and Shri Ajay Bhatt, Hon'ble Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Tourism and Secretary Civil Aviation that prompted a review on resurfacing modalities of Andaman Airport would be undertaken pending which runway closure from 8th March 2022 was suspended. Fresh NOTAM for runway closure from 1400 hours to 0080 hours the next day from 8 to 11 march was being promulgated.

Overseas promotion utmost priority

There is a multitude of work that IATO is following up with the Ministry, but marketing and promotion is at the top of their agenda. Talking about the subject, Rajiv says, "Our persistent efforts are directed to the service of our members. With rigorous efforts on documentation and one-on-one meetings with the stakeholders on the diverse issue that our membership faces in their efforts to promote tourism. Physical road shows in target countries under the leadership of Ministry of Tourism. We look forward for a financial support under Marketing Development Assistance Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism." "We're working towards restoring e-Visa for countries like UK, Germany and other European Countries that are key source markets for us along with Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait etc. Also, the restoration of Tourist/e-Tourist Visa for Foreign Tourists and that will allow entry of foreign tourists through the land borders of Nepal and Bhutan will work wonders for the revival of Buddhist Tourism."

In new Foreign Trade Policy, IATO recommended that:

- The benefit of SEIS scheme should be continued for the tour operators and travel agencies for the next 5 years
- In case of SEIS getting discontinued, an alternative incentive scheme should be introduced.

Ubiquitous influence

The association has invested its time and energy in reaching out to larger audiences. The office-bearers have consistently worked in this area and it's evident from their regular appearances on our TV screens, in our daily newspaper, various latent portals and of course, our b2b trade publications. With time, the association realised that it was about time to come out of their comfort zone as there was a bigger picture to be dealt with and a larger role to be played. It was time to make their voices heard by the decision-makers.

The Centrum

Leaving an 'Impression' on Guests



Bringing out the aesthetics and elements found in traditional Oudhi architecture, The Centrum is an interesting marvel to explore. Aptly designed as a hotel, club and resort spread across 6 acres, it combines modernity with subtle inspirations from the past. Sarvesh Goel, Promotor and Bhagwati Pant, General Manager, The Centrum Lucknow talk about the positioning and the uniqueness of the property.

- Bharti Sharma



HOTELLIGENCE

The Centrum offers luxury stay in warm and comfortable 116 creatively collated rooms/suites, fabricating an oasis of comfort, convenience and luxury. The rooms entail warm colors and ergonomically designed space that speak mindfulness- a fine blend of modern amenities with traditional aesthetics, right at the heart of Lucknow's plush Sushant Golf City.

Opulent memories for the guests

I got the chance to visit the property on one of my visits to Lucknow, and I couldn't help but notice that Centrum is structured around 'The Fingerprint' impression that is omnipresent through all of the spaces in various forms- on the walls, the ceilings, and the floor. And when the curious journalist in me asked about its significance, I was amazed to know the amount of time and effort they have dedicated to minute details everywhere. "The Fingerprint, is a unique element of branding at Centrum. Representing the individuality that each of our guest

endorses, and leaves an imprint for us to cherish, the Fingerprint is vital to exude the elements that The Centrum brings forth," reveals Sarvesh.

The folklores of Oudh

Lucknow is world-renowned for its heritage and extremely warm awadh hospitality. The Centrum bridges the gap between the modern and time-honoured architecture, nature, and heritage. The hotel's architecture replicates the architecture of the monuments and structure of the old-world charm giving it an Oudhi touch and the best part is that all the elements have been sourced 100 per cent from the region itself. Telling about such intricacies, Sarvesh comments, "The material used to develop the club are vastly derived from the roots of the city. Chinhat Pottery, a dying art, is resuscitated through this project as the use of the art is widely and creatively infused in the structure of the building. Whether it is the uniquely inverted earthen pots placed on the ceiling, the Bridge- a

masterpiece with its railings designed with old-Lucknow inspired art or the use of Jaali as a reference of the element prominent in traditional architecture. Throughout the expanse of the property, you will find the arches, and the heritage of Lakhori brick- with which the entire city and monuments were constructed."

Nature flowing into the property

Most of the resort feel properties are built in such areas which are densely populated and also have an added advantage of a holy river, sea, dessert, mountains or may be forests. On the other hand, The Centrum sans any advantage of these natural resources manages to create a feel like none other as a result of deliberate efforts to infuse natural elements into the property with a lot of greenery and choice of earthy colours. "We considered taking a lot of environmental friendly initiatives to build the property such as leaving minimum carbon footprint during the

construction, sourcing the material locally, engaging local artisans to the maximum and henceforth making a green building. The property boasts of several menus and different types of experiences in terms of gastronomical experiences, recreational facilities, rooms and lush green spaces which makes you feel closer to the nature," mentions Sarvesh.



Sarvesh Goel





Mega venue for Mega-events

Being one of the largest MICE destinations in the city of Lucknow- The Centrum offers state-of-the-art conference facilities that elevates an event's grandeur and magnificence. On hosting the 37th IATO Annual Convention, Bhagwati tells, "We are privileged to host the 37th Annual IATO Convention, which is going to be the biggest-ever tourism event of the year. A gathering like the IATO convention is more than an event, it is a congregation of the tallest inbound tour operators from across the country, so we at The Centrum are leaving nothing to chance and are both delighted and prepared to host the convention.

He adds, "The Centrum, Lucknow offers cutting-edge, versatile indoor and outdoor meeting spaces that are well equipped to host business and social events of all magnitude. Furthermore, The Centrum boasts of extravagant and sweeping outdoor venues with the potential to host up to two

thousand people. Add to that the multiple boardroom meeting spaces combined with avant-garde technology and personalised Centrum services and you get the perfect ingredients for an awe-inspiring event like the IATO convention."

"We're in the hospitality industry and no matter the plethora of amenities, nothing can beat that personal touch and warmth. I am certain that all the delegates attending IATO will feel that personal touch in our hospitality and have a momentous convention at The Centrum."

A destination in itself

With a myriad of facilities, from a world-class spa, a swimming pool and a state-of-the-art fitness centre, to exceptional dining venues spanning an array of cuisines in idyllic settings, The Centrum promises its guests a stay worth remembering. Above all, the location of the property is an added advantage, Bhagwati shares, "The Centrum holds the advantage of being at the centrum of major activity hubs such as Avadh Shilpgram, HCL IT City, Lulu Mall, as well as Super Specialty Cancer Institute & Hospital, International Cricket Stadium, Phoenix Palassio Mall, GD Goenka Public School, Medanta Lucknow Hospital, 112-UP Emergency Services, Police Headquarters and an 18-hole Golf Course. A host of activities round the year such as Lucknow Run, Cycle Ride, Yoga & Meditation sessions, Architectural Photo Walk, Gala Dinners, Live Bands, Fashion Shows and much more, to keep the guests engaged."



Bhagwati Pant



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Its time to strengthen the inbound tourism like never before

Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has been sturdily working with the Ministry of Tourism to bring in new policies and open new avenues for the growth of inbound tourism in the country.

The association's commitment towards the betterment of its member and pave new ways to enhance the business post pandemic is commendable. Today, they believe that the need of the hour is to have intensive discussions with the travel trade from across the country, and to share ideas and come up with the right ways to support inbound tourism.

- Naina Nath



It's an annual ritual for the IATO to organise their mega convention and bring in the travel trade member under one roof to not just discuss but also to strengthen their professional bonding. The IATO annual convention is the most awaited convention in the industry and the EC member leaves no stone turned to make this a mega affair. This year, the annual IATO Convention is taking place from December 16 – 19, 2022 in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh with theme 'INBOUND TOURISM- What Lies Ahead!'. The theme has been carefully chosen by the IATO EC members, and is an appropriate choice, given the current circumstances of the travel industry that is still recovering from the hit of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Expectation from IATO Convention

This year, IATO expects over 1000 delegates from across the country to attend the convention. Just like every year, this year too, the IATO convention will witness some serious discussion on topics and issues related to inbound tourism and which can enhance the business in this particular segment. The travel fraternity can expect strategic business sessions held by leading players in the Industry. These sessions will address key issues and offer plausible solutions that will result in meaningful takeaways for the industry. Members can also look forward to State Presentations, where the participating states will be furnishing insights into the tourism offerings of the respective destinations, their promotional strategies where the trade can be drafted in and the policy initiatives; the implementation that shall finally aid in tourism. There will be media meetings, interactions organized with State Heads, and also the presence of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath during the inaugural

ceremony. Besides this, attendees will also be part of the entertainment evenings, networking lunches and dinners, as well as the post-event fam tours, all run by the IATO team.

The interactive sessions at the convention

According to the Senior Vice President of IATO, the association is foreseeing great prospects in the coming few years bolstered by the hugely successful vaccination program that was led by our Hon'ble Prime Minister, infrastructure developments across the country, and the last mile connectivity initiatives. E.M Najeeb, Senior Vice President, Indian Association of Tour Operators says, "The mantra is basically to capture issues faced by IATO members that impede tourism, document them with viable suggestions, and table them before the policymakers. Continuous follow-ups and one-to-one meetings in the pursuance of timely action on these issues are also regularly conducted by the association."

This year team focuses on bringing out meaningful and knowledgeable sessions for their members and participants this year. Speaking on the sessions, Ravi Gosain, Convention Chairman, IATO adds, "We will be discussing subjects such as government plans for policy development and marketing, promotion of inbound tourism, enhancing the relationships between tour operators and suppliers while we also search for new ideas to improve our product offerings. Our aim is to make tour operators efficient in their respective businesses and synergising neighbourhood tourism."

Besides the motivational talks and state tourism presentations, members can look forward to many other interactive/business sessions.

Ravi adds, "IATO aids in policy formulations by offering its suggestions to the Indian Government mainly in the realm of marketing India, overseas. We have advocated physical road shows abroad, familiarization trips for Foreign Tour Operators and Bloggers into India, and active participation by the Ministry of Tourism in International Travel events that are organised globally. Today, we have over 1700 members and expect at least 50 more by the end of the financial year"



E.M Najeeb



Ravi Gosain

Instilling confidence

IATO have always raised issues which is prevalent and relevant, sharing his view on the same, Rajnish Kaistha, Hony. Secretary, IATO mentions, "We have various and engaging sessions with the govt officials, hoteliers who are important for our industry. We have incorporated new topics in the session related to rural, agriculture and responsible tourism keeping in with new times and demands. Post covid with opening of borders and restoration of E-tourist visas, there is huge participation of nearly 900 to 1000 people and that shows the renewed confidence amongst industry colleagues. The format has improved and sessions are planned to keep in with changing times." He further says, "Many states have come forward with full support and their top officials are either panellists or presenting their states. We look at 2023 with optimism and walk into 2024 smiling. We have already started and in 2023 we look for being part of road shows, trade shows and rebuild our businesses."

Unique facets

Sunil Mishra, Hony. Treasurer mentions, "Participants will see unique facets of the convention, synergising with the travel trade in churning our doable intellectual inputs that shall then catapult inbound tourism to India into a new trajectory. At the 37th IATO Convention, over 1000+ delegates from all over the country are expected to attend and hence there is also a much larger involvement of State Tourism Boards this year, as every Indian state is ready to re-instate inbound tourism."

A tribute to the resilient industry

The IATO convention is an annual get-together of all the eminent inbound operators under one roof and they accumulate to share their

views, ideas and discuss. "The IATO convention is an important conclave for all our travel fraternity members. It brings members and their families from all over India together with the shared passion of selling India as the destination of the world and to discuss and deliberate on ways of improving destination India. This year's theme is 'Inbound Tourism - What Lies Ahead' and it is apt for this moment as we all come out of the shackles that were put on us due to the pandemic. We remain resilient and we will resurge into a new era for the tourism industry in the country," shares Sanjay Rajdan, Hony. Joint Secretary, IATO

Exploring the best of Uttar Pradesh

IATO annual convention has always witnessed a serious of discussion followed with some meaningful dialogue. The association always put their best foot forward to bring change in the existing policies in favour of its member. The convention gives a great exposure to destination and is always followed by fam trip designed to give a first-hand experience and better understanding of the tourism products to its member. Speaking on the fam trip, Prateek Hira, Co-Chairman of the 37th IATO convention talks about the 5 post-convention FAM tours that have been organised for IATO's members. He further highlights, "We have arranged post-convention tours to Ayodhya, Agra, Dudhwa, Lucknow and Varanasi. We hope to provide our guests with an inordinate learning experience. FAM tours are a must for operators to experience tourism products first hand, in order to sell them better."



Rajnish Kaistha



Sunil Mishra



Sanjay Rajdan

Here is a list of sessions to be organised during the Convention:

Business Session 1: Inbound Tourism- What Lies Ahead!

Business Session 2 - Building Relationship Between Hotels and Tour Operators

Business Session 3 Opportunities In Uttar Pradesh - River Cruise, New Circuits, Storytelling

Business Session 4 - Need of The Hour -Tourism Marketing and Promotion

Business Session 5 - Last Mile Connectivity - Air, Rail & Road

Business Session 6 - Explore the Unexplored - Rural, Agriculture & Sustainable Tourism

Business Session 7 - Search for New Ideas - What Next?

Special Session by The Host State- Uttar Pradesh Tourism

BIZ



STIC Travel Group

**A legacy woven with distinction
in travel and scads of passion**

A professed 'go-getter' from an early age, Isha Goyal, Executive Director & CEO, STIC Travel Group has a hands-on approach, ushering passion and drive to concrete the most esteemed travel company in India.

- Bharti Sharma



Isha's childhood was a stepping stone towards a future that we're witnessing today. As a kid she was a regular to office during her summer breaks and holidays. She was acquainted with the atmosphere, the people and somehow, she knew that's what lies ahead for her. There's a thing about family business, when you're born in a family business that is deeply involved in an enterprise of any sort so you end up growing up with it in you. And by the time you realise if it is your passion or not, it is so deeply ingrained in you that whether you like it or not it is already your passion and it comes to you as a second nature. Isha can't really place how she got into the business as it was really smooth and effortless. She considers it both as a tremendous responsibility and a privilege. She tells, "I am privileged to have the kind of exposure I've had and the experience I've had from a very young age. It has allowed me to transition into my current role very well because I have a perspective that most of my peers don't have."

Much more than a legacy...

In the 90's during her school days she was exposed to paper tickets, cryptic commands on the GDS and a lot of nuts and bolts associated with travel business. Isha tends to have a deeper understanding of the foundation because of that early exposure and experience she's had. And above all, we are talking about the experience she got at the most esteemed travel company in India, STIC Group. She

proudly asserts, "The other advantage that the early exposure gave me was working in a company like STIC. Five decades is a very long time for any organisation and particularly in our industry, leaving of course the OTA's and global organisations, most companies are either owner-run or have some sort of entrepreneurial back behind them if they are not family businesses; most travel agencies are still family businesses. STIC has been built over the last 50 years on the heads and shoulders of Mr. and Mrs. Goyal. They are the first generation of entrepreneurs who've built this business and now that I'm the CEO and the second generation. My biggest mission is to continue the path of professionalising the company, continue to work towards allowing professionals to take stronger leadership roles in the organization and putting the organization on a path of independence so that STIC survives well beyond the Goyal's, myself and future generations."

In this kind of an environment, one is often dealing with a multi-generational workforce. Having been exposed to the business and the organisation and its journey at a young age has also helped her understand the relevance of people who've been around for so many years. Isha is constantly evolving, engaging with her team and discovering new ways to lead authentically and efficiently. "On one hand, we have reservation agents who are

in their twenties and on the other, we have people who've been with the company for 30-35 years. Goes without saying, the insight on some of the mistakes that take place in a running business and how to manage or avoid them is a complimentary virtue," shares Isha.

All the motivation in the world will not amount to anything if we don't take action

Travel has always been an area of interest and a passion for Isha. She believes that traveling is the greatest form of education outside the structure of formal education. Explaining it further she tells, "Sure, it's a lot of fun at times but there are enough number of times when it's not and that's a realisation that takes place over a period of time. Traveling has always been something that I loved and enjoyed doing, but I also feel that having a love for travel and running a travel business aren't always the same things."

As a teenager, she was passionate about a lot of things, but was always inspired and enthused by art and creative projects which again ties very well with travel because the more you travel, the more culturally enriched you become. Going down the memory lane, she recollects, "Apart from travel, there have been several micro-passions over the course of years, in phases. But one passion that has stood out, especially from my high school years would be writing, I've always enjoyed writing; found it to be my greatest outlet and has stayed with me over the years."



Got it all from dynamic parents and people around her

Isha profusely believes that life is about learning and one has to enrich themselves with as many role models as possible. All through her journey, she has drawn inspiration from people she has worked, met or socialised with. She feels that one should have different role models for different lessons in life. "My parents are my biggest role models. A lot of my work ethics, sensibility, perspective towards life comes from my parents, especially my mother. Also, there's one thing that I've always tried to learn from Mrs Goyal is her ability to peel through layers, whether its information or problem solving, she just never stops until she cracks through the situation."

We are all familiar with that notion of having someone 'light up the room'- to be in the presence of a person so strong, dominant and utterly engaging that all the energy is channeled immediately to them. So is the aura of Mr Subhash Goyal. "I'd like to make a distinction that Mr. Goyal is a tremendous inspiration and a role model for the way he deals with the world with a sense of humility and calm. He's humble, approachable, friendly, all of which I'm still in the process of picking up from him. To summarise this up, these are the two main attributes from both of my parents that I aspire to achieve

and overall, the legacy that they have created in itself is a huge inspiration as well as a huge responsibility to shoulder."

Stay relevant and on top of things

It was only last year that Isha was appointed as the CEO of STIC Group. She believes that there are two tracks for a business to grow so the vision has to be two-tracked. One obviously is the growth and the monetary side of it, which she believes depends upon the changing trends or setting trends in the future so it cannot be definite. The other is the organizational side, which is very structured. Isha mentions, "My biggest mantra for the company is that whatever we do we have to be relevant. Stay relevant and on top of things because as long as what you're doing is relevant and add values then you're doing something right. No matter how much I'd like to answer in a very polished and flowery manner, this is not who I am and not how I do things. Personally, I'm very clear about the vision, mission, goal and objectives; it is to perpetuate the legacy."

Get the ball rolling

Isha feels very bullish on India travel in general, and predicts the future of the industry to be tremendous. She's already noticing some consolidation taking place and thinks there will be more, which is good news for

us all. She adds, "Our industry has evolved and professionalised more in the past 2-3 years than it has in the last decade. In my opinion India is heading in a fantastic direction. The way the demand has surged in the last six months, since our borders have opened up in April. If visa would not have been a challenge this summer, it would have been a huge boom period for leisure and luxury. On the contrary, if you look at the western countries, visas and logistics have been a challenge, infrastructure has been a major problem at airports, luggage dispatch, union strikes and more are hurdles that we never witnessed in India. All these problems have been features of destinations that Indians want to go to."

Collaborate more than compete

To sum up, Isha has a simple yet strong message for the industry; "Collaborate more than compete". "I really feel that this is already happening today, more than it used to, in the past. With all the challenges faced by the industry, the margins we function at, collaborating more than competing is more relevant and imperative today, than it has ever been. Collaboration has been like a motto for me, it is the healthiest way to grow. So, collaborate and help each other," concludes Isha.





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Experience Jal Mahotsav to give yourself an adrenaline rush in MP

One of the largest water carnivals in India 'Jal Mahotsav' is all set to host you to experience adventure activities and beautiful tent city of Hanuwantiya in Madhya Pradesh

If you are planning an adventure-packed vacation with full of fun then Hanuwantiya Island in Khandwa District of Madhya Pradesh is the place that you should add in your bucket list this time. One of India's longest Watercation presented by Madhya Pradesh Tourism, 'Jal Mahotsav' is a combination of food, art, nature, culture and adventure where you can experience clear skies, sparkling blue water and the thrill of scuba diving, bumper boats and much more.

This picturesque destination awaits your presence for 'Jal Mahotsav', the festival which will commence in the last week of November 2022 and will go on till the last week of January 2023. A watercation to Jal Mahotsav has all the elements to give a boost to your body, mind, and spirit.

It offers an array of adventure activities organised at nature's paradise Hanuwantiya. Located on the banks of Indira Sagar Dam (India's largest reservoir), this is a perfect holiday destination for spending an exciting vacation with your loved ones.

At Jal Mahotsav, you can start your day with the golden rays of the rising sun lighting up the tent city, followed by a delicious breakfast and beautiful Mediterranean blue water views to admire.

What to see and do

At Jal Mahotsav, visitors can enjoy adventure activities based on land, air, or water.

Air and water activities- The major attraction of this festival are air and water activities which include windsurfing, water parasailing,

water zorbing, jet-skiing, speed boats ride, cruise boats ride, paramotoring, banana boat ride, hot air balloon ride, zip line and more.

Land-based activities: Yoga camp, wellness and spa, cycling, volleyball, archery, tug of war, climbing, kite flying, bull carting and other activities in adventure zone. One can also go for nature walks, cycle around the island, and visit the local villages. Food zone, craft bazaar, stargazing, island camping and experiencing melody of folk, classical and pop music and dance will keep you going throughout the festival.

Other Attractions

Apart from these amazing activities, Khandwa District has several other tourist attractions as well that include Nagchun dam, Ghantagar, Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga, Tulija Bhavani temple, Indira Sagar Dam and Sailani Island. Also, it is a must-visit place for nature enthusiasts as they can indulge in bird watching, trekking, and night camping.

Way to Hanuwantiya

If you are already making plans and wondering how to get here, the nearest airport is Indore, around 3 hours away from the Madhya Dweep islands where Hanuwantiya is located. If you are travelling by rail, you need to get off at Khandwa, 50 km away. And if you prefer the road, then Hanuwantiya is well connected to Indore, Bhopal and Khandwa.

For booking visit:
www.jalmahotsav.com



EXPERIENCE COLOURFUL MP THROUGH *Events & Festivals*

“The Heart of Incredible India” Madhya Pradesh is a state where people of various castes and religions are nestled and this is what makes it a state with multi-dimensional culture and tradition. The specialty of Madhya Pradesh is its different colourful tribes which is the add-on to the lively cultural collage of the state.

No matter, where and when you are travelling to the heart of the country, one will always witness a festival or event to have a kaleidoscopic glimpse of the cultural heritage of Madhya Pradesh. The musical and art ancestry of Madhya Pradesh is nurtured all over the state in the forms of classical, folk and tribal music, which depicts the way of living and culture of Madhya Pradesh. The vivacious colours, matchless attires, and harmonious music make it all eye-catching. Throughout the year, different events, festivals and fairs are celebrated in the state. Here are a few important events and festivals that attract tourists from across

Khajuraho Dance Festival

Every year in February, tourists witness Khajuraho Dance Festival at UNESCO world heritage site Khajuraho. This grand cultural show is a stunning combination of art and architecture. One gets to experience a wonderful opus of enthralling classical dance performances by renowned artists coming from different cities and town in India. One can witness the magnificent display of many art forms like Kathak, Bharathanatyam, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Manipuri and Kathakali. Khajuraho dance festival is not only a festival of dances; it has been transformed into a wholesome festival of dance, literature, fine arts and everything. Tourists enjoy activities like heritage walk, nature visits, e-cycle tour, soft adventure sports etc.

Place : Khajuraho

Month : February



Jal Mahotsav

Jal Mahotsav – Hanuwantiya

Situated on the banks of Indira Sagar Dam in Madhya Pradesh, Hanuwantiya Tapu (Hanuwantiya Island) is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Khandwa district. Number of tourists enjoys an array of adventure activities during the Jal Mahotsav. A beautiful tent city is also developed during the festival where tourists spend their time

and participate in different activities along with enjoying delicious cuisines and beautiful art works. So many activities are conducted for tourists like yoga camp, bullock cart, volley ball, tug of war, cycling, kite flying, adventure zone, kids entertainment zone, camp fire, wind surfing, parasailing, water skiing, jet skiing, banana ride, water zorbing, motor boat, cruise boat, hot air ballooning, parasailing, para motoring, star gazing, bird watching, treasure hunt, trekking and night camping.

Place : Hanuwantiya Tapu

Month : November to January

Mandu Festival

Mandu, also known as the city of joy is a place with countless attractive monuments. Abound with historical tales, the city witness huge footfall during Mandu Festival in December every year. The festival showcases live concerts and folk dance by local artists. Tourists also experience yoga session, cycling tour, heritage walk, rural excursion, sound and light show and horse riding in the pristine village of Malipura.

Place : Mandu

Month : December



Mandu Festival

Hriday Drishyam

Hriday Drishyam is an International Music Festival it has been organizing since last 5 years. In this festival Artists from different countries like France, United States of America, Israel, Canada and Spain participates every year. The festival also showcases local talent from Bhopal. Hriday Drishyam is now one of the most popular events which is attended by thousands of audiences every year. Apart from the national and international artists this event also showcases the talent of local artists, as well.

Place : Bhopal

Month : January

Tansen Sangeet Samaroh

Tansen Musical Festival is a platform to enjoy soulful rhythms of classical and folk music. The event is a tribute to legendary musical maestro Tansen, who was one of the nine gems of Mughal Emperor Akbar's court and brought folk music to a new level by composing expressive ragas. Many musical dignitaries gather to perform under the Tomb of Tansen in the four-day long event in Gwalior.

Place : Tansen Nagar, Gwalior

Month : December



Lokrang

Lokrang Festival

Depicting various folk dances, music and ethnic dances, Lokrang is a cultural festival where artists match their steps on folk music. It also a platform to witness several beautiful handicrafts made by tribal community of Madhya Pradesh. The event is organized by Adivasi Lok Kala Academy.

Place : Bhopal

Month : January

Noormahal Palace Hotel

**An enchanting fusion of traditional royal
& exemplary architecture**

Col. Manbeer Choudhary (Veteran), CMD, Noor Mahal Palace Hotel had a very distinguished journey, after serving the Indian army for 25 years, it was the time to live his dream and passion. The result of his fervent vision, thrust to pursue his dream, and his undeniable urge for the hospitality industry established the most successful palace hotel-Noor Mahal, Karnal. Let us take you through his journey, a perfect mix of dedication, perseverance and ideology.

Sudipta Saha



Col. Manbeer Choudhary

It was his passion for hospitality and love for the Indian royal heritage that motivated him to step into this industry. Col. Manbeer Choudhary believes that we Indians are excellent hosts and that is what he wanted to deliver through this heritage-inspired hospitality experience. Being able to translate and deliver this experience of warm Indian hospitality while celebrating the grandeur of the royal era of India, and getting appreciation from customers for that is what excites him.

How has the journey been so far?

It was a herculean task of building up History in form of a Palace hotel and it took us four years to complete this humungous project. The introduction of uber luxury hospitality in Haryana and plus the idea of recreating the architecture of the royal era, I can say that up till now every step in this long journey has been extremely rewarding. When we embarked on this journey, we were determined to succeed, but we did not know that Noor Mahal Palace Hotel would become one of the most iconic palace hotels in India and earn global recognition as well. The beginning years were of course demanding and we worked hard, evolved through time, learned from each experience, slowly but steadily built a good team, and overcame unprecedented challenges. But every time I reflect on it and I am satisfied that it was all worth it.

What are the challenges that you encountered over the years?

Unlike the heritage palaces, Palace Hotels are newly built, but do not really miss out on the 'royal factor' in any way. Even today, the idea of building a Palace Hotel sounds like an impossible mission to many. Despite being a ethnic property, you will find grandeur, opulence, history, art, architecture, and memorabilia at every corner of

Noor Mahal Palace, giving the toughest competition to the most popular and centuries-old palace hotels in the country. The idea of recapturing the grandeur of Indian palaces and creating an Incredible Indian Palace Hotel in the midst of the Land of Mahabharata was certainly exciting as well as challenging. Especially when the whole hospitality industry was working on contemporary and modern hospitality formats at that time. And we wanted to swim against the tide by building a heritage-inspired royal palatial hotel with modern amenities and ultimate luxury. It required much bigger than normal investment, lot of research, and sourcing each element from across the country, even abroad to get it just right.

We did not only take on the challenge of building a grand palatial building but also took an ambitious decision of curating a unique themed restaurant Frontier Mail (inspired by the legendary train of the same name). We ourselves set up a big challenge for us and put everything we had into making it possible. Apart from the regular challenges that any hotel or hospitality brand faces, we had the task of getting customers to the unconventional location of Karnal, and that too when the destination enjoys close proximity to Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh etc. Away from the popular destinations such as Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur etc. where getting footfalls would have been easy.

Another factor that we had to rein in early years was getting trained, talented and qualified professionals to join us. In this regard we compete with established hotels chains which have properties in cities, making them an attractive choice. While in earlier days we had to convince them to move to Karnal and work with us, today the best of the industry talent is willing to be part of the Noor Mahal Palace team. Taking a step forward in creating an impeccable staff, we recruited and trained youth from

local communities with a flavour of traditional hospitality values and family respect.

As we grew stronger and evolved over time, we became capable of taking on most challenges that came our way without being rattled. Then the unprecedented COVID 19 hit the world and the hospitality industry world over was one of the worst impacted. Though our business went through the worst phase ever, our survival without having to let go of people and resources reinforced our confidence that we had built something with a strong foundation. Once again, we swim against the tide and both our hospitality and wedding businesses bounced back in full swing.

What has been your growth plan and what strategies have you adopted to maximise profit?

Our strategy has always been to create excellence and success will follow. Every element, minute or grand, has been chosen so that it contributes towards what Noor Mahal Palace hotel is. From architecture to furniture to décor to the antiques and artworks, to the F and B to service and hospitality, everything embodies the Indian Royal era and warm Indian Hospitality. Our success is built on happy customers. We are humbled and motivated by the fact that we have a high rate of repeat customers and word-of-mouth endorsement by our customers. Noor Mahal Palace Hotel has earned its position as one of the most preferred wedding destinations. Our multiple wedding and function venues are booked heavily. Travellers prefer our royal chambers and we have one of the highest rates of occupancy around the year in the whole hospitality industry.

Noor Mahal gives the 'authentic heritage feel' to the guests. What inspired you to create a property which is indeed royal?

I wanted to create an iconic destination that can celebrate the grandeur of the royal India

heritage of India, showcase the richness of Indian culinary marvels and embodies the warmth of Indian hospitality. The big idea was to build a heritage-inspired experience, which is immersive, and not just surface deep. Noor Mahal Palace is the realisation of my dream hospitality project.

What are the experiences that Noor Mahal offers to its guests?

Re: Noor Mahal Palace hotel is built for people to feel like royalties while enjoying luxury and modern 5 star amenities. Away from the hustle bustle of big cities but at a close proximity to Delhi, IGI Airport, Punjab, etc, it is a short and comfortable travel for our guests. Spared across acres and surrounded by lush green fields, Noor Mahal Palace offers a refreshing change for guests. Amidst the palace architecture and grand décor, we have luxurious royal chambers for our guests to stay in. Noor Mahal Palace Hotel is one of the most Instagramable hotels in the country and we have experiences customisable for all kinds of guests.

We have multiple open and covered wedding venues for all sizes and scales for grand and magical functions.

We serve both authentic Indian to modern global cuisines through our three restaurants – Brown Sugar (All day global cuisine), Polo Bar (Polo themed resto-bar), and Frontier Mail (themed restaurant inspired by the train of the same name that journeyed in undivided India before independence. Frontier Mail is an award-winning restaurant with a life-size train coach set up embellished with actual elements from the original train. It serves authentic Indian dishes prepared with original recipes. We also have an elegant swimming pool, a state of the art salon, a rejuvenating spa and gym for our guests.

What is your strategy to target the Indian market?

Re: Noor Mahal Palace Hotel is a established and a preferred

hospitality destination among Indian travellers. We plan to keep our guests engaged and serve them nothing but the best so that they keep coming back. We have added new accommodations and wedding venues to offer more to our customers. We also create interesting and immersive events to offer something new for them.

Which segment of travellers/tourists from India is the key to your business?

Re: We have more than 57 per cent of NRI weddings, something for everyone. Noor Mahal Palace Hotel is as much a place for a couple to spend a weekend at, as a millennial solo traveller or a family with children or a group of friends. We have created activities and experiences for every kind of group. Wedding business is a very promising segment for us that contribute tremendously towards the revenue.

Any expansion plans?

Re: Our hospitality group recently took its first step towards global expansion, with the opening of our fine-dining Indian restaurant – Colonel Saab, right in the heart of London. Colonel Saab opened its doors for dinners just after the pandemic lockdowns and has already earned success and appreciation of global customers. From being named as one of the top Indian restaurants by Forbes, winning Best Restaurant in Feed the Lion awards, and welcoming regulars from Nobel Peace Prize winner, Malala Yousafzai to pop icons, TV stars, and presidents, Colonel Saab has actually taken the London Hospitality by storm. We have also recently expanded our capacity at Noor Mahal Palace by adding more designer royal themed chambers and wedding venues for NRIs, millennials, and royal wedding enthusiasts.

We are looking at investing more into increasing our domestic and global presence.



TRAVEL THERAPY

CHAMBAL SONATTA



A land that is untamed, raw and powerful, Chambal is a region synonymous on the one hand with harsh terrain and on the other with breath-taking beauty seen in the river's crystal-clear water and deep - cut ravines.

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia





We were running late.

"Sunrise is the best time for the scenic beauty, and late morning is fine for seeing the crocks." Our good guide paused, then continued. "Timing is crucial even for bird-sighting, but we should do all right. Yes, we should do fine".

Another pause, and then he smiled. "After all this is wildlife we are talking about, and luck plays an important role in the sightings."

We were deep inside the Chambal National Sanctuary, a wilderness area of some 650 sq km, that uncovers some of the secrets of the region and is home to a fascinating mix of bird and animal wildlife in stunning landscapes.

For centuries this land has harboured countless mavericks from blue-blooded kings to self-styled rulers of the wild. Glimpses of the region have featured in books, songs and folklore. There is no better place to savour the region's atmosphere than the sanctuary.

Originating in the Vindhya ranges of Madhya Pradesh, the Chambal River snakes its way through the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh before merging with the Yamuna.

The region's rich bio-diversity merited its being declared a National Sanctuary, spread across these three states. It is the last bastion for endangered wildlife species like Gharial, Muggar (reintroduced), Turtles,

Otters, and the highly-endangered Fresh Water Dolphin. There is also a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial birds - almost 200 different species have been identified - besides a few animals, mostly deer, jackal and wild boar.

The base camp was in the best possible location, along a length of beach with superb views upriver and down. Upstream, a bend in the river presented a spectacle comprised of a flat, expansive sheet of water with hills rimming the area into a cup formation. The river itself is startlingly blue with clear, clean water.

On the boat we went, sailing upstream. It was a fibre-glass

affair that could seat a dozen. The adventure had begun. The breeze was strong and icy and frantic efforts were collectively made to hang on to our lunch boxes which were in danger of blowing away and out of sight. (As it happened, mine did blow away. Well...!)

We sailed past sparkling sand beaches, rocky escarpments, and long stretches of flat terrain with sparse vegetation. The river became narrower, with the cliffs on the edges coming closer, becoming higher and larger, with little details becoming more visible. Some stretches had cultivation patches which I must confess, spoilt the effect a bit, but fortunately they were few and far between.



It took a while and then we saw them, one after another, basking the sun exactly as advertised. The Gharials were in groups, their long snouts pointing up at an angle. (Their snouts are often their only giveaway). The Muggars were mostly alone, and were bigger, heavier, and much more dangerous as they eyed us with deceptive calm as we went right up. Slowly, almost reluctantly, they left their perch and the sunshine, and slid silently into the water to instantly disappear.

It was only later that we realized that we had perhaps gone too far, in the sense that we had totally exposed ourselves to great risk by sailing right through the crocodiles. But then that is what adventure is all about.

Most visible as always were the turtles, mostly in large groups, soaking up the sun like everyone and everything else on the river that cold morning. I learnt that crocodiles don't eat turtles. Either that or they just weren't in the feeding mood, because dozens of turtles sat around, within a few feet of the fearsome reptiles.

My world travels notwithstanding, I had never seen so many crocodiles from so close up, at one go. The only negative was not seeing a single Fresh Water Dolphin, of which there are supposedly just a hundred odd left in the entire region, if not the country. Our good guide saw two, but the rest of us missed out on this unique spectacle because we were all too busy peering at a large crocodile that had appeared on a ledge out of nowhere. That's the way things pan out in the wild.

While it's wise to keep your eyes on the water, it's worth looking up at the skies. The sanctuary can seduce any bird-watcher worth the name.

The winter months make it home for a wide range of species, some flying in from as far as Siberia. There are pelicans, geese, ducks like Teal, Pintails, Mallards, and Pochards, Ibis, Spoonbills, Egrets, kites, vultures, eagles, and a host of others. We passed a couple of Egyptian Vultures feeding on a turtle. Apparently, they catch its leg, toss it over on its back and then feed leisurely on the helpless thing.

We were told that flamingoes were a big local attraction, but that morning they had taken the day off, and we saw only two and that too from a distance. But what we did see in abundance were the rare Indian Skimmers, so named because they skim the water with infinite grace. The boatman counted forty-eight of these beautiful birds that glide and feed in dignified silence.

We added a historical perspective to our safari with a visit to Ater Fort that is located on the sanctuary's periphery. Once a stronghold of the Rajputs, Mughals, and the Marathas, the fort bears indelible marks of its erstwhile rulers, presenting a unique blend of architectural styles!

Compared to all the activity it saw in the past, today the fort stands in splendid isolation, brooding and grand, dwarfing everything else in the vicinity. Its corridors, courtyards, and turrets are inviting enough. We ascended seven stories to its main tower for a staggering view of the Chambal Valley.

This was the final deft touch. We came away completely seduced.

Fact File

The Chambal National Sanctuary is best approached via Agra, being a couple of hours drive from the city. Taxis are available, and the road is in fair condition, but busy.

The best accommodation options are in Agra, but there is a Tourist Bungalow and a Forest Rest House quite close to the sanctuary itself.

The sanctuary is open from September through April, and closed during the summer period when the birds and reptiles are nesting.

Local activities include boat-rides, camel safaris, nature walks, and camping.

The ideal time needed to explore the sanctuary and the fort is about six hours.

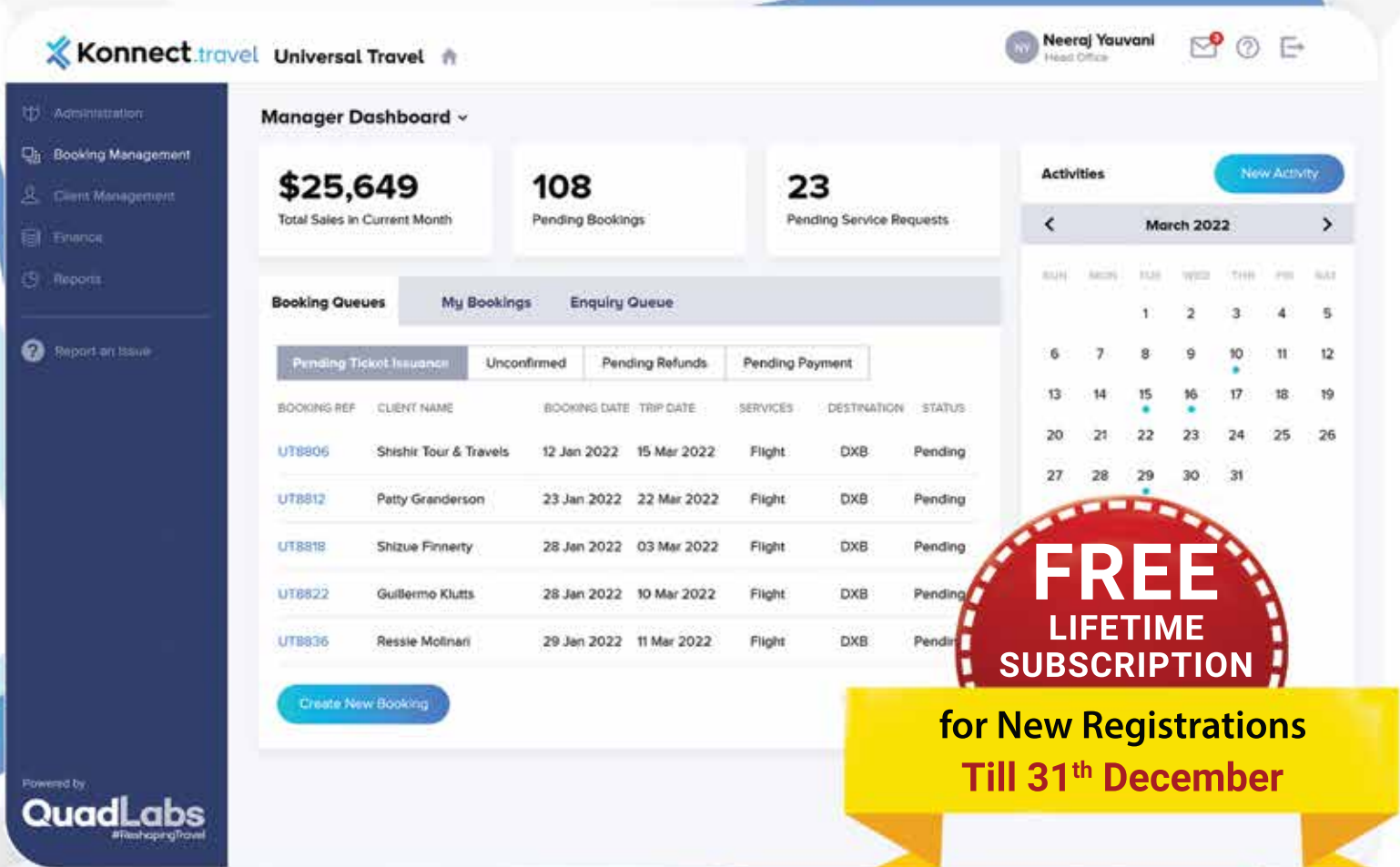


About the author

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



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March 2022

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





Booking Queues	My Bookings	Enquiry Queue				
Pending Ticket Issuance	Unconfirmed	Pending Refunds	Pending Payment			
BOOKING REF	CLIENT NAME	BOOKING DATE	TRIP DATE	SERVICES	DESTINATION	STATUS
UT8806	Shishir Tour & Travels	12 Jan 2022	15 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8812	Patty Granderson	23 Jan 2022	22 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8818	Shizue Finnerty	28 Jan 2022	03 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8822	Guillermo Klutts	28 Jan 2022	10 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
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Ananta Hotels and Resorts Luxury amidst nature

Ananta Hotels and Resorts have something for everyone; Boasting an array of options for both premium and budget-friendly properties that are spread across India. Luxury and bliss, accompanied by their promise to deliver excellent service to their guests, Ananta Hotels is the right choice for business or holiday stay-cations. Gagan Katyal, Head of Sales and Marketing, Ananta Hotels and Resort talks about the concept behind the chain and some exciting expansion plans.

- Naina Nath



Whether you're looking for a scenic getaway in the hills or a soothing escape deep in the trenches of greenery, their properties are set in a wide variety of locations offering an array of exciting experiences. Guests can curate a lifetime of memories through personal experience as Ananta enables journeys of adventure and indulgence.

Reflecting the essence of the locale

For any hospitality brand, it is imperative to provide a strong sense of place through the properties. Ananta has been taking it very seriously and managed to connect well with the environment we are in. After all, that is part or all the reason why people are travelling, getting to know the area, authentic food and meeting people. Sharing some details, Gagan tells, "When you think Ananta, you think 'Nature at its best', after all, that's our USP. Local taste served with love and care. At Ananta, our guests will find lush greenery, spread across acres of bespoke and upscale properties, which house some of the most popular specialty restaurants. Ananta Hotel's renowned hospitality, wellness, and recreational facilities make us the right choice for the perfect holiday."

The luxurious and comfortable Ananta resorts is a destination in itself and their enchanting settings makes it a perfect place to unwind and rejuvenate. "We offer luxury high-end properties as well as modest, more budgeted options. We have a total of 17 properties across the country out of which 6 are in the pipeline and 4 come under our pocket-friendly alternatives. The Ananta portfolio holds the following hotels; Ananta Udaipur, Ananta Spa & Resort Pushkar, The Baagh- Ranthambore, Ananta Elite- Jagira Gir, and

two properties in Kota on a franchise agreement as Ananta Inn., as well as 1 property in Salasar on a franchise agreement called Anand Bagh Resort and Spa," tells Gagan.

Venues matching the grandeur of royals

The hospitality industry has evolved beyond rooms and dining. MICE has completely changed the revenue dynamics of hotels, though weddings have always been business for properties in India, but the exemplary rise of corporate events, musical concerts and the ever-growing magnitude of Indian weddings, have kept the hospitality industry on their toes. Commenting on the MICE facilities, Gagan shares, "Our resorts feature large and luxurious banquets and event spaces that include sprawling lawns, grand ballrooms and conference halls that are fully equipped with the latest technology. Suitable for all kinds of wedding functions, events and corporate conferences, Ananta leaves its guests with memories that last a lifetime! We organise outstanding events and elegant wedding functions at our exclusive venues. We also have an in-house event management team that takes care of every need, from catering to décor, and all that's in between."

Attention to details score the winning goal

The world-class hospitality and the array of experience Ananta offers to its guests have established this luxury chain strongly in the market. The signature 'Ananta hospitality' further continues, as the brand expands while maintaining its high service standards and ensuring a comfortable stay for its guests. Talking about such experiences and

offerings, Gagan mentions, "To start with, Ananta Udaipur is a 50-star hotel set against the breath-taking backdrop of the Aravalli Hills. Sprawling across 90 acres of lush greenery, the resort houses 234 luxury villas, 4 dining options, 2 banquet facilities, and many recreational activities like swimming, a gymnasium, spas, and so on. Then we have Ananta Spa & Resort, Pushkar which is another 5-star property that offers a wide range of accommodations including 52 contemporary cottages, 21 sprawling rooms alongside 12 tents, 3 tent suites, and a lavish Presidential Villa. The Baagh, Ananta Elite, in Ranthambore is a must-visit luxury resort where guests can experience nature in its purest form. The Baagh is the perfect blend of nature, luxury, and comfort and is the right place to explore the exotic wildlife of Ranthambore. And lastly, Jagira, Ananta Elite, Gir. It is located on the periphery of the Gir Forest National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary. The resort offers a secluded getaway from the city with 52 luxury rooms that come adorned with a number of amenities and services, all amidst the jungle."

Well-maintained brand image

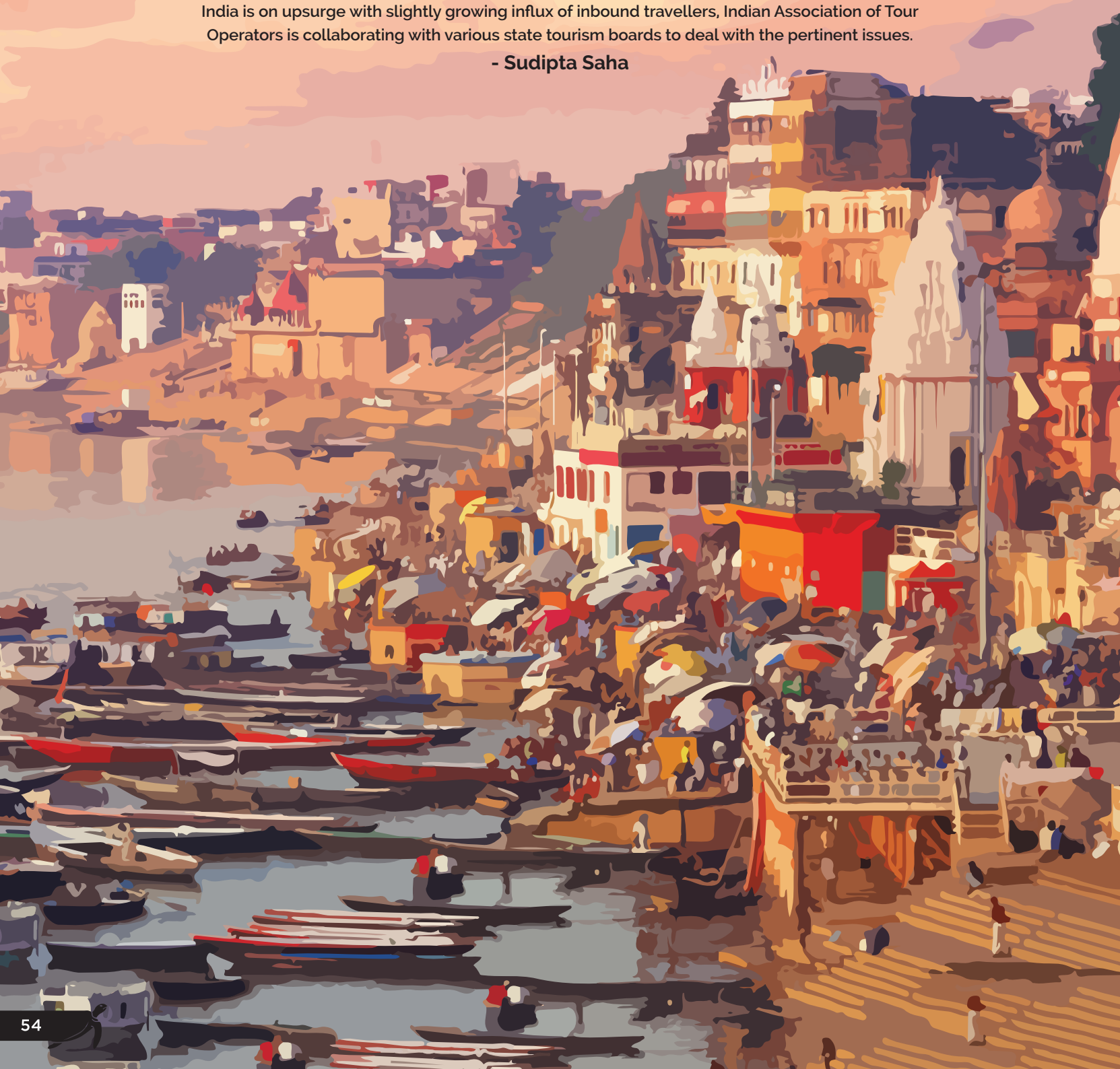
As markets are ever-evolving, Gagan listens and quickly adapts to the changes in different markets, which has enabled them to attract the best businesses at the right time. "We are a company that has shown a very stable and strong recovery post the pandemic. We have continued to maintain the highest standards of hygiene and guest safety and we continue to promote the same to our domestic guests. A very strong domestic reach and understanding have helped Ananta Hotels reopen well," he concludes.



Symbiotic Relationship of IATO with States

Land of diverse culture, captivating scenery, colourful tradition, India is unequivocally attractive and appealing. As one traverse from one state to another, a rhythmic transition in landscape can be witnessed which is not just alluring and breathtaking but it's a journey in itself. The tourism in India is on upsurge with slightly growing influx of inbound travellers, Indian Association of Tour Operators is collaborating with various state tourism boards to deal with the pertinent issues.

- Sudipta Saha



India is all about experiences, today, it is one of the fastest growing nations and tourism plays an imperative role and is a foremost contributor to the GDP. From then to now, India has undergone a massive development, the infrastructure, the amenities and facilities, the connectivity is at par making it one of the most and must visit destination in the world. The government is undeniably emphasising on the promotion of tourism but the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) is also chalking out plans and working hand in hand with the government to promote and encourage tourism in the country. The association has appointed Chapter Chairmen in almost all the states within the country to stimulate tourism in their respective states. Let's hear from the Chapter Chairmen on how closely they are working with the state government to develop tourism in their state.

Unbelievable Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh has always been receiving handsome number of tourists in their state, the iconic Taj Mahal and the Buddhist circuit has been attracting the inbound travellers. But, now Uttar Pradesh is all set to offer experiences that are impressive and authentic. Numerous destinations and circuits have been added, the state has also developed new attractions which is going to add to their tourist arrivals.

Sunil C. Gupta, Chairman-IATO, Northern Region

Collaboration with State Tourism: The UP Tourism is now very proactive and is available for collaborating and supporting tourism related activities to all stake holders. The IATO convention in UP is the biggest example and it is on the invitation and support of the UP Tourism that the biggest mega event of travel industry is taking place. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Board has been

taking booth in most travel marts and offers table space for free to tour operators and hoteliers. We have an interaction and meetings with UP Tourism at regular intervals where we collaborate for the growth of tourism in the state. The success story of footfall in Varanasi and Prayagraj is a witness and now it attracts highest number of tourists. Expectation from IATO: IATO EC is active and alive to all the needs of our region amongst the changing dynamic scenario after covid. IATO has given the biggest push to UP by bringing the convention to Lucknow after 26 years. The delegates will also travel to other parts of the state and the convention shall result in huge publicity of tourism potential of UP. We would request IATO to join its efforts with other stakeholders in promoting the KUMBH 2025 which would be the single biggest gathering of humans on earth.



Sunil Gupta

Thematic Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is one such state in India which boasts sculptures and temple architecture; it is a land of spiritual and heritage and poetry of timeless temples. The state offer plentiful of experiences but the major attraction of the state has been its ancient temples, the Dravidian architecture have been luring travellers from all around the world.

Pandian K,Chairman – IATO, Tamil Nadu

Collaboration with State Tourism: I must say that the relationship between tourism stakeholders and state tourism has started getting better post covid as the current team in Tamil Nadu is doing awesome in many aspects. Whatever recommendations and suggestions were given by tourism stakeholders in Tamil Nadu are getting implemented by the state tourism one after another. For example, as IATO Chairman, I strongly recommended to the state government that the tourism stakeholders need to be recognized with state tourism awards to boost their morale and motivate them to contribute more. We recently attended a state tourism award ceremony which was arranged by the state government on September 27, 2022, during World Tourism Day, for the first time in the history of Tamil Nadu. We were really surprised to see this initiative and we are grateful for the same. Likewise, on behalf of IATO, I suggested that the tourism stakeholders in Tamil Nadu need to be registered in the state to do tourism business, and their businesses need to be streamlined as an organised sector. Last month, I was one of the members who were invited to attend a tourism committee meeting, held by the Tourism Commissioner, and the agenda was about the tourism stakeholders' registration process in the state, and we were asked for suggestions in formulating the rules

and regulations thereof. Likewise, we wanted the state tourism to recognise Tourism as an industry and the same request was considered by the State Tourism and is under process right now. So slowly all the initiatives that I took as part of IATO Chapter Chairman are being considered by the state tourism, which is commendable, and I am sure Tamil Nadu will reap its benefits soon as all these will help inbound tourism to develop in the upcoming days.

Expectation from IATO: Exemption for IATO members from paying life tax- We (Inbound Tour Operators) don't use any vehicle for more than 4 years to maintain quality and service standards. So, IATO EC shall make a requisition on behalf of IATO members with the government and get an exemption for us from paying life tax. This would go a long way in boosting inbound tourism in many aspects.

One India permit implemented is to be followed by all states- The government did introduce the One India permit. However, IATO EC needs to make a requisition to Government to ensure all states in India follow this One India permit as South Indian states covering Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka do not bother to follow this at all and they insist the Tour Operators pay permit in addition to what we paid under one India permit rule.



Pandian K

Joyful Jammu & Kashmir

The verdant meadow, lush valleys, dense forests, splendid temples, Jammu and Kashmir is a serene destination. Known for its experiential offerings, it is one of the most visited states in the country. The tourism is on the upsurge and tourism seems to be flourishing in the state with the growing number of travellers. The state is now open for safe and experiential travel, and is open for all segments of travellers.

Nasir Shah, Chairman - IATO Jammu & Kashmir Chapter

Collaboration with State Tourism: In the last couple of years, post Covid, we were completely occupied with domestic travel. Now since last five-six months, I have given some proposals to the Department of Tourism the ways and means of promoting Inbound Tourism to the State in general and to Kashmir in particular. I am glad to inform you that IATO and J&K Tourism are on the same page to see the light of Inbound Tourism falling on us. Some initiatives which I discussed with our Secretary Tourism, who is much vibrant to new ideas, besides his own experience of handling the affairs of tourism for the last 10-12 years, he has agreed that stakeholders and the J&K Tourism will conduct series of Road Shows abroad, besides participate in all the Travel Trade Fairs and work closely with IATO Members. Recently, a road show was conducted in Thailand where the response was much encouraging.

Expectation from IATO: One to ensure fastest online visa facility across all major countries that send huge number of tourists to India. Second, Ministry of Tourism must support IATO to take up vast global promotional activities, such as road shows, interactions with media, besides strong participation in all the major trade fairs such as WTM, ITB, FITUR, ATM, BIT MILAN and financial support/MDA to highest level to the members of IATO.



Nasir Shah





H. Radhakrishna Sharma

Majestic Manipur

Well-known for its graceful classical dance tradition and rich art and culture, Manipur is lesser explored and yet to be experienced by the travellers. The state offers endless experiences along with a serene environment which makes it a perfect place for any holiday. The state boasts of picturesque landscapes and is promoting its incredible tourism offerings to the world.

H. Radhakrishna Sharma, State In-Charge – IATO Manipur

Collaboration with State Tourism: As the situation is favorable for travel (post pandemic) to our region and state in particular, we are trying our level best to make the destination more visible through various platforms either by participating or by hosting and through various media campaigns. Our state is known for unique things like the Keibul Lamjao National Park - the one and only floating national Park in the world, the modern game of Polo has its origination from Manipur, the world's oldest living polo ground is here in heart of the Imphal city, one

of the oldest all women market popularly known as Ima Keithel is here, the classical Manipuri dance and many historic battle sites of world war II are scattered all over the state, the unique cultural heritage of the various tribes of Manipur. All these need to be properly marketed and make it known to the tour operators and the tourists. After the relaxation of Protected area permit in the region and opening of Indo-Myanmar border for overland travel there was sudden increase in arrival of tourists in the state from many Asian countries, but the pandemic brought a complete halt to such travel and the unrest in the neighboring country of Myanmar has not been favorable for overland travel, hopefully peace will return soon to our neighboring country and the floodgate will open for overland travellers.

Expectation from IATO: IATO should start promoting the region by including the packages covering the state and the region in their regular brochures and websites and also inviting the FTO for familiarisation of the region. IATO EC committee should plan to have one of their EC meetings in the region annually in collaboration with the State IATO Chapters and respective state Govts and such meeting an/will act as catalyst for growth and development of tourism in the region.

WelcomHeritage

Giving connotation to experiential travel

With an endeavor to create a balance between local traditions and modern-day requirements, WelcomHeritage has curated best-in-class authentic experience without losing the Heritage ethos in some of the country's most inspiring settings. Abinash Manghani, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels talks about the qualitative expansion plans.

- Naina Nath

WelcomHeritage has been one of the early entrants into the small, boutique hotel concepts in the country. Its collection of 40 properties ranges from Forts and Palaces to boutique heritage and nature resorts in the foothills of the Himalayas. Successfully completing 25 years of showcasing India's cultural and environmental heritage, WelcomHeritage has always been future-driven whilst being agile and grounded in present realities.

Changing dynamics

Travel now has become more rejuvenating, reconnecting and increasingly experience-driven, especially post pandemic. Now, travellers are looking out to explore unique leisure experiences and travel to less-known (hidden gems) destinations, unlike the commercialised ones; they are expressing more interest in the concept of more regional, adventurous (activity-led), immersive travel. Abinash feels that the trend has widened the scope of leisure and expanded from its traditional focus on the 'Golden Triangle' viz. Delhi-Agra-Jaipur and Kerala to a plethora of options.

It's an era of bucket-lists

Abinash feels that the concept of having a bucket list has penetrated all markets and segments and ticking off a particular type of travel has given a more significant meaning to experiential travel. He shares, "The bucket lists comprise experiences that allow travellers to energise and develop as a person. In keeping up with the travellers and their evolving travel desires, transformation is imperative and it's an ongoing process for the hospitality industry to stay relevant. In addition, the moral and ethical compass of the world as a collective has undergone a shift to

include the environment, human connection, heritage, and social responsibility as primary features. This is true for our industry too and the Indian hospitality sector is keeping up pace!"

Major transformations in the trade

At the same time, Abinash further shares the factors that have contributed majorly in accelerating the changing trend for travellers. He shares, "Enhanced connectivity has enabled access to quaint and remote destinations and in turn, new hotels and lodges are coming up. The digital world has expanded dramatically in the last two years and technology upgradation has personalised travel experiences and convenience. There is a lot of focus on sustainable tourism which has led to eco-friendly accommodations, new experiences crafted to include community, ecology and heritage. A renewed focus on domestic tourism during the pandemic has fueled the development of restaurants, hotels, and entertainment activities (experiences) for travellers in India."

Spreading wings to new destinations

WelcomHeritage is in the process of launching a few properties in the coming months: WH Parv Vilas Resort & Spa, in Kasauli Hills, Solan; WH Azora by Ayatana, in Fort Kochi; WH Ayatana, in Ooty. The choice of select locations in the hills and in South India as well as nature-driven and heritage experiences are a part of a more strategic vision for WelcomHeritage. Abinash reveals, "We will soon be launching WH Akashganga Heritage Hills Resort, near Dungarpur; WH Santa Roza, in Kasauli and are also in active discussions for a strong presence in

Goa, the Gir and Kabini forests. We also aim to expand our horizon in the North-eastern region."

Showcasing the local essence of a region continues to be the premise for WH

Abinash further shares that as the oldest living civilization, we are indeed fortunate to have inherited such a rich and glorious past with a treasure-trove of culture, heritage and nature. "We believe in promoting the intangible heritage and culture of respective regions, comprising of local traditions, regional cuisines, age-old architecture, the environmental heritage, and the spirit of the local communities. From an enchanting wildlife safari to witnessing the fine architecture of 320-year-old temple, cruising along the lake in the colorful shikaras, relishing the panoramic view of the snow-clad Himalayan Peaks, to plunging into the spectacular infinity pool," Abinash shares.

The experiences offered by WH complete an array of unique memories including the adrenaline rush from activities such as rock climbing, horse safari, bird watching, trekking and wildlife safaris. He comments, "We indulge our guests in authentic regional cuisines prepared with fresh, local ingredients and craft tours to the surrounding villages and communities for a taste of the local culture."

Domestic travellers now appreciate quality

With an emphasis on opening new destinations with quality products and services, the focus is on scalable properties with a unique story and experience. "We've been fortunate

to have the support of the Domestic traveller. But the key is to identify new products, experiences and ideas that continue to hold the guests' interests and resonate with different segments of travellers. To this effect, Hungry for growth, we are exploring opportunities across the country. We find the Domestic Traveler has come of age and appreciates quality with a capacity to pay, which we feel will transform the Tourism and hospitality scenario in our country. With International travel resuming, Abinash foresees a demand for the properties only growing further."



Abinash Manghani



BEACH RESORT-NATURAL WONDERLAND


Award-winning resort located on Krabi's Klong Muang Beach, a natural wonderland wreathed by white sand and a lush cloak of green, designed with freeform curves and local cultural touches.

Honeymooners can indulge in pampered spa treatments, romantic breakfast and dinner experiences.



The true 'rural' essence of Punjab

The green and golden fields stretching over miles have turned this magnificent land into a scenic picturesque location. The flamboyant aura of Punjab is simply captivating, right from spirituality to cultural history to heritage, Punjab will leave you spellbound for sure



Punjab, also known as the land of five rivers is bursting with cultural history, showcasing its rich heritage to tourists from around the world. The land not only has many ancient monuments but is also close to nature, boasting fields of colourful flowers, surrounded by mountains. The heart of Punjab lies in its villages offering travellers with an opportunity to discover the real and rural Punjab. Whenever, we think of Punjab, we always relate it with the blockbuster movie 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge', the movie which has brilliantly showcased the village life and its landscape.

Today, Punjab is known for its majestic farm experience allowing tourists to experience and explore the 'real' Punjab. Punjab is adorned with vast fertile land which makes it a preferred destination for a 'farm holiday'. The rural part of this magnificent land is blessed with utmost greenery; and a fresh environment, and it also allows tourists to enjoy an enormous of activities such as organic farming, cow milking, kite flying, handicraft making, cart rides, tractor rides, home-made Punjabi food, village safaris, and of course interaction with the local people. Apart from this, one could also enjoy the scrumptious delicacies; the food served is mostly home-grown and is served fresh. The delicacies include quintessential Punjabi cuisine such as sarsoon ka saag and makki ki roti (mainly during winters), parathas, and fresh butter and milk, and not forget the creamy lassi.

ADVERT

Visitors can spend a night in the village homes and go for early morning walks where they observe a day in the life of a villager where men are seen milking cows and women are preparing the meals for the day. You will also notice farmers ploughing the fields with bullocks and local potters at work, creating masterpieces. The rural women of Punjab are famous for their colourful Phulkari embroidery. The villagers are definitely hard-working individuals, and it is a blessing to watch these artists in their most natural element. Nature lovers can take a walk along the yellow mustard fields, take a ride on a tractor, play with the village children or feed and milk the cattle, or simply sit and relax. Great surroundings, folk songs, singing and dancing, laughter and playfulness, and of course lots and lots of love, form the backbone of hospitality in the state of Punjab.

If you have plans to explore the villages of Punjab, you can easily plan for it. The connectivity in the state is excellent and is accessible and convenient. As you begin to explore the countryside, you will come across the rich culture, big-hearted locals, and joyful life. Well, farm stay or rural tourism is on upsurge in the state, there are ample numbers of farm stays, luxurious bungalows, and private cottages available all across Punjab. Equipped with all modern amenities and modern comfort, they make an excellent place to stay while enjoying and experiencing the magnificent landscape of the state. In some of the villages, the owners of the farm stay personally assist the guests giving them the insights into the farm life. They also share the anecdotes with the guests and offer them a true experience of the farm life. The stay is filled with activities such as a tour to the village, the first-hand experience of the day-to-day life of the locals, and interaction with the locals.

There numerous farm stays all across Punjab, some of them are: In Amritsar one can explore Sarhad Farm Stay, Acre Haveli & Retreat, Chahal tree Farm House, Farmer Villa Farm Stay; while in Gurdaspur there is The Kothi, Punjab Farm Village; in Fatehgarh Sahib one can stay at Hunsali organic Farm Stay, Mayfair Farm, in Patiala experience the Gary Farms, Pind Virasat, Fun Ville Farm Stay, The Getaway Farmhouse; Rupnagar offers ample of options to stay such as The Bharatgarh Fort, Sukh Amrit Farm Stay, Barota Farm, Kahlons Ranch & Farms, Anand@TheSatluj, Nisarga Farm Stay, Olive Trotter, House of Lalpur, Olive Farm; whereas in Mohali one can experience the farm life and plan their stay in Casba Farm Retreat, Master Farms, Westonel Farm House, Mystic Meadows, Sidhu Farmstay, Whistling Hills, Kullar Farmstay, Inderjit Farmstay, Ground Zero Farmstay, Pamma Farm, Falcon Green Framstay, Survarsha Greens, Bramble Bush Farmstay, Cops Canopy Forest Hill Farms, Rolling Hills, Forest Organic Farm, Virsa The Heritage Farm, Dhillon Farm; and in Hoshiarpur there are Kailash Farms, Citrus Country Firdaus, Puri Farm and Jyani Natural Farmstay, Forest View Farmstay at Fazilka.

There are many scenic and historic villages in Punjab that not just bring you closer to nature but also adorn you with an opportunity to feel the true essence of Punjab. Exploring the countryside is an experience in itself.



Habtoor Palace Dubai

A Mesmerising Escapade

With three differently styled rooftop pool decks, a plethora of dining options and interiors and hospitality that spells opulence, inaugural property of Hilton's LXR collection of top-tier luxury hotels, Habtoor Palace is sure to impress.

By Misbaah Mansuri

HEADS IN BEDS

Brimming with Old World grandeur, Habtoor Palace feels indeed like a royal palace of sorts. I marvel at the exquisite lobby, French-inspired and luxe, with grey and white marble, candelabras, and Louis XV-style furniture. No wonder the regal façade attracts wedding parties and the lobby's sweeping double staircase has been a backdrop for many a bride, oftentimes after arriving in one of the hotel's Bentleys. Canvases featuring UAE royals are presented on easels, a nod to the hotel's artistic leaning. Regular exhibitions are presented around the pretty shisha courtyard, Le Patio.

Luxury has an address

I loved my gorgeous room featuring an elegant mix of damask and striped wallpapers, padded leather headboards,

chaise longues, armchairs, dark wood furnishings and high white skirting boards. Decadent bedding and carpeting ensure utmost comfort, and a full complement of mod cons includes iPod docks and coffee machines. Marble bathrooms have roll-top bathtubs, separate showers and twin vanity units. Beds and linens are soft, luxurious, and ultra-comfortable.

Never a dull moment

The biggest brownie point has to be the free tickets to La Perle by Dragone, enthralling acrobatics show and the area's biggest attraction. It's truly an immersive experience with a lot going on from the water stage to acrobatics and moving stages and props. There are moments where the light and sound effects really captivated my attention and made me believe

in magic and marvel at its beauty.

An incredible massage at the dreamy Silk Spa also happened to be the perfect escape I needed. Thanks to the nimble-fingered therapist, it felt like my soul was nourished.

Restaurants with distinct personality

Gastronomy had to be another favorite aspect of my stay with Hilton. Mornings would be off to a great start at French brasserie BQ, an international breakfast buffet serving the best offerings from reams of cuisines. From chia seed puddings to great congee, sambar and ful medames. One can also choose to settle into Bergère-style chairs to enjoy high tea and a tinkling of piano keys at Sidra Lounge, imbibe bubbles at Champagne Lounge and pour over the four-page whiskey

menu at The Polo Bar. The brunch at World Cut Steakhouse had to be one of my top experiences wherein I savored tantalizing steak and unbelievable oysters while reveling in Jazz tunes. My dinner at Indian Bazaar, V Hotel Dubai and the Island Seafood Dinner, The Market, Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor were true testaments to the culinary finesse of Hilton Hotels.

From staff that is genuinely gracious and goes an extra mile to make your day to restaurants that are true masterclasses in gastronomy, this one is truly like a dream. With its old-world charm ensconced in unmistakable luxury, Habtoor Palace glows from within with a lovely golden warmth, even among the ever-expanding empire of Dubai hotels.



How has 2022 been for Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection?

Firstly, stating the obvious, EXPO 2020 was a huge success for Dubai with around 20 million visitors over 6 months flying down to Dubai with a direct constructive impact on the hospitality sector. During this time, Habtoor Palace specifically was home to VIPs, government delegations from Brazil, Korea, and United States of America, Majilis receptions from Diwan Amiri guests from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. Secondly, Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection held The Emirates Literature Festival which is the world's leading international literary festival as well as the Arab's largest celebration of the written and spoken. Thirdly, The Prime Minister's office event, which focuses on the driver of leadership and excellence in the government through providing direct support to federal entities. Fourthly, The World Police Summit, was held at the complex which is hosted by Dubai Police under the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum with participation of over 200 key leaders and over 2000 delegates. Moving forward in May we welcomed the Arabian Travel Market which was a huge success for Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection, as we got to position ourselves as 'The 1,001 Arabian Nights' destination, since we have the capacity to hold up to 1600 rooms and suites across the three hotels.

Now moving to sports, In September, five out of six Asia cup teams stayed at Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City – Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and the winners Sri Lanka. Not to forget, the biggest sports season of the year is yet to start from November 20th 2022, the FIFA World Cup in our neighboring city Doha. Where the hospitality sector benefits from this is that Dubai will be the satellite city and there will be over 30 shuttle flights a day to

and from Doha through Dubai (FlyDubai) and Sharjah (Air Arabia). We believe in the national vision and we are fortunate to be elected as satellite city with Dubai's attractiveness featuring so many official FIFA Fan Zones and as hospitality icons, we are dedicated to play our role in this attractiveness by offering Black Friday deals throughout the month of November. "Spend less on your hotel, and more on your dreams". Last but not the least our spectacular Winter Garden that takes place every year with lines of food kiosks, delicious mulled wine to keep guests warm during peak winter (even though we are in a desert, it does get cold haha), kids play area, pop up shops and a lot more. The Winter Garden attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

As the complex commercial director, what will your approach, strategy and leadership style be like for the property?

As the complex commercial director, I am responsible for developing strategies covering all internal divisions and external networks to maximize total revenue, profit and market share of the complex with a focus on all available business tools and intellect available to consistently exceed the budgeted revenues across all streams: rooms occupancy and ADR, MICE and Catering, Food and Beverage, recreation and Spa with optimized cost of sale, route to market and brand marketing opportunities.

I make sure to drive the planning and execution of the commercial strategies and activations by supporting the revenue, sales, reservations, marketing and group events teams. For example, it could mean supporting the complex revenue



Soufiane ElAllam



HEADS IN BEDS

manager to establish an ideal marketing mix, review and validate forecasts, develop yielding strategies for different demand periods and review and scale up all retail and group pricing including MICE and FITs in a way that is cohesive with both our demands' level, our inventory, and our perceived unique value proposition.

Being a key member of our senior leadership also entrusts me as a role model for the commercial team and Al Habtoor City community. I develop teams and talents across all functions. My role as an executive committee member is key to take hold of new opportunities through strong relations and working as a representative for the company with our owners and all stakeholders.

What was your approach during the pandemic?

With all that Al Habtoor City has to offer, it brings such great excitement to welcome our privileged guests as they are to finally be able to travel, with renewed behaviors and expectations about what travel now means to them. The success of 2022 has been overly positive with around over 20 million visitors flying down to Dubai with a direct positive impact on the hospitality sector. We

understand that our guest's expectations for cleaning and disinfection have changed as to what it was pre pandemic. As a renowned global brand, Hilton partnered with Reckitt, Lysol and Dettol to help deliver a cleaner stay for our guests with the creation of the Hilton CleanStay program. Our promise is to deliver the same level of reliable and friendly service you would expect from Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection with the added confidence of hygiene practices to keep our guests safe. Plus, with over 20 entertainment destinations including live music, live cooking stations kids club and more, three rooftop pools, two spas and the beautiful outdoor winter garden, there is enough venues for the guests to feel a sense safe space and social distance that feels truly natural and enjoyable.

The Emirate is inundated with hotels, what gives Hilton an edge over the rest?

Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection known as 'The City of Dreams', is located in the heart of Dubai and the banks of Dubai Water Canal. Guests can arrive in style through road via Sheikh Zayed Road, though air via the hotel's private helipad or through sea



via RTA's water taxi. We are a 15 minutes' drive from Dubai International Airport, Museum of the Future, DIFC, Dubai Downtown, Dubai Mall and much more. Guests can even request for a private shuttle for beach access at our sister property Waldorf Astoria, The Palm. With over 20 dining and entertainment venues, three roof top pools, two rejuvenating spas and the gorgeous Winter garden that takes place every year. Not to miss the world class water themed show La Perle by Dragone. Truly 'The City of Dreams' with three extravagant hotels – Al Habtoor City's jewel of the crown Habtoor Palace Dubai, LXR Hotels and Resorts, the iconic 44 story Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City and the retro futuristic V Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton.

If you were a guest at the property, what would your 24 hour itinerary look like?

First, I would decide what kind of experience I want. If royalty, then I would check into Habtoor Palace Dubai, if fun and adventure, I would check into V

Hotel Dubai and if with my family, then Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City. Once checked in, I would go and relax at Firefly, Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City's chic and urban rooftop pool lounge, followed with drinks. Grab a delicious hearty lunch at Ribs and Brews, Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City. I would then, go to my room for an afternoon nap and then head to Sidra at Habtoor Palace Dubai for afternoon tea to refresh my mind and palate. Not to miss the world class water based show La Perle at 6.30pm. Once awed by the show, I would head to World Cut Steakhouse at Habtoor Palace Dubai, for a fulfilling meal. To end my day, I would then go to The 44, at Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City, to relax and play a few games at the highest bowling alley in the world. The next morning, I would grab breakfast at either BQ French Kitchen and Bar at Habtoor Palace Dubai, The Market at Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City or Level Seven at V Hotel Dubai. My epicurean journey would come to an end after a rejuvenating spa at Silk Spa, Habtoor Palace Dubai.





Ravi Gosain

Tourism Enterprises

INTRODUCES NEW DESTINATIONS TO INDIA

Exhaustive knowledge of the destination paired with the muscle of a network spread across India enables Tourism Enterprises to deliver high-quality service at a competitive price. Tourism Enterprises has a strong partnership with international DMCs such as KTI Voyages, Morocco, Hello Asia Travel, Vietnam & Cambodia, etc. Ravi Gosain, MD & Kumar Utakarsh, CEO, Tourism Enterprises share more...

- Team Turtle



Kumar Utakarsh

Through long-standing industry connections, they deliver a wide range of unique experiences at the starred destinations. In line with its commitment to bring unique products to travel agents and as a natural extension of its business, TE has built a strong foundation with solid fundamentals and considers itself future ready. "Tourism Enterprises is actively promoting several destinations ie Morocco, Central and East Europe & Asia for 10 years and it's been a fantastic journey for us so far. Personally, Africa and Europe are my favourite destination for holidays because it's different from India as well as Asia and yet not very far from us. Morocco has a rich historical past which can be very attractive for Indian travellers. New destinations are emerging every year and we hope this year we will bring some more DMC from unknown destinations, so Indian operators will be aware of new places and increase their portfolio."

Focus on incentive groups

The TE sales team is equipped with extensive know-how of the products they sell. The team travels frequently to the destinations they serve, allowing them to learn about new offerings and better collaborations. Utakarsh asserts, "After a successful stint in Central and East Europe, we

introduced an upcoming future destination- Morocco in collaboration with KTI Voyages, a DMC for North Africa. This DMC has a strong backup of a Morocco-based Travel group with over 35 years of experience in the tourism sector and has great experience to cater MICE as well. Tourism Enterprises have signed a strategic deal with them to provide full back-office support to cater Indian market. Apart from this we will also focus on and promote our DMC for Italy-France-Poland. These countries can be good destinations for both individual travellers as well as for Incentive groups and Leisure."

In-person engagement to build brand loyalty

Elaborating on the plans for 2023, Ravi shares, "We are working and planning investment in international DMCs to set up our DMC or building a partnership with few existing DMC to give trust and value to our B2B network in India. We already have a partnership with Hello Asia Travel Vietnam and Saffron World BV. We will continue with our marketing efforts by regular roadshows from our partners, attending tourism trade fairs like SATTE & OTM. and organising fam trips for agents in 2023. We offered fam trips for our B2B

partners to Greece, Romania and Czech Republic, we will plan to take the fam to Morocco and some new destinations This will be a good educational experience for tour operators."

More opportunities, more growth

Utakarsh feels market like India is full of potential and they are making sure to cater for the demand of Indian travellers in the most efficient way. He adds, "Tourism Enterprises shows a handsome growth of 22 per cent after Covid restrictions lay off. This is quite motivating for our team and we are bringing some more new destinations to India. Similarly, we are aggressively promoting Morocco, Italy, France, and Poland to our B2B network in India. Outbound from India is steady, although its price sensitive but I am sure there will be an increase because Indians are venturing out more and more to explore the world. The proximity to international destinations is easily approachable due to several airlines offering enough seats and promoting special airfares. Interest and willingness to travel for holidays abroad are creating opportunities for Indians and I don't see any hindrance in this way in future too."

As the business gets into revival mode, Ravi retains an optimistic outlook. He feels that

collaborations across this huge market are a vital part of the strategy as most of the DMCs have perished over the past two years. Utakarsh tells, "India is a good market for incentive travel to destinations such as Dubai, Sri Lanka, Central Europe and Greece, this trend may continue in future too. Our B2B partners in India are very supportive and give good support to DMCs we brought to them. We are focussing on the family segment of travel and small family/friends group, as this segment is emerging because of personalised trips and tailor-made programs in comparison to set departure tours."

Power of connections

Every year TE tries to bring new destinations to prospective Indian tour operators and travel agents. This year after Morocco, they will be showcasing Balkan countries which includes Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia and the partner DMC Rolandia will be there with them. "Apart from this we will also focus on and promote our DMC for Italy-France-Poland (Saffron World BV). These countries can be good destinations for both individual travellers as well as for Incentive groups and Leisure. Our Simple Agenda is, what we say, we do and we sell right, plan right and execute right," concludes Utakarsh.





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HELIA JOURNEYS

FOR THE MOST INSPIRING AND IMMERSIVE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

Established with a vision to provide discerning travellers with premium, tailor-made tours, Helia Journeys has curated authentic experiences that make for lasting travel memories. Sandeep Kapur, Director, Helia Journeys shares what makes it unique.

- Sudipta Saha

The team at Helia Journeys knows their destinations like the back of their hands, paired with the experience and connections to deliver an unrivalled and meticulously managed holiday. This makes Helia adaptable, and allows them to constantly be on the lookout for unexplored experiences to recommend their clients.

HUMBLE YET IMPACTFUL BEGINNING

Helia Journeys offers an interactive experience to their guests; started in August 2019 the brand has created a niche market. Sandeep Kapur after having worked for over three decades in the tourism industry, his knowledge about the industry is immense. His unmatched experience and understanding about the industry led to the inception of Helia Journeys. "We started off as a primarily inbound and MICE operator and our client base were mainly from Europe, the USA and Far East. For the MICE vertical, we worked with several Corporates and PSU's in India. Covid hit the entire tourism sector, with travel and leisure taking a back seat for upwards of two years. As the world opened up, we switched gears and shifted our working model to include ticketing, domestic travel, outbound, friends and family leisure groups, weddings

and celebrations and thus diversified ourselves," adds Sandeep Kapur.

CARVING THEIR ON PATH

Helia Journeys have fashioned their own way towards success and intend to offer much personalised services as per the requirements and needs of the guests. Sandeep's vision was simple. Having been in the industry for so long, he had gotten the opportunity to travel extensively and understand logistics closely. He simply wanted to provide his clients with the kind of quality that we expect for ourselves. Sandeep adds, "We wanted to remain personalised to each individual need, attend to small details which are often omitted in run of the mill tours. Our belief is to remain a boutique operator with a limited client base which we can service professionally and come out with new concepts/themes every year."

WHAT MAKES THEM UNIQUE?

They are not just unique in their offerings and services but they have an appealing approach towards their clients. The name, the logo and their online presence is absolutely charismatic and pleasing. Sharing on what make Helia Journeys exceptional, Sandeep



Sandeep Kapur

mentions, "Our diversified experience is what makes us unique. The expertise we have gained of the 30 odd years means we have had to understand and adapt to travel trends since the 90s, right up to the 2020's. We have recently become the only DMC in the country which provides app-based emergency services to travellers in India and Nepal. We are also doing specialised leisure groups every year for our exclusive client base."

ADAPTING THE CHANGES TO CATER THE DEMAND

Over a period of time, travel and tourism industry has undergone through major challenges and several new trends have been noticed recently. Adopting the new trends and meet the market demand needs a lot of expertise and understanding of industry. "We have seen changes in the industry where-by clients are exploring new concepts and options online and majority of the partners/vendors we have

been observing are selling their products with minimal margins. Rates have become very competitive and hotels prefer B2C than B2B, which has resulted in price wars. To retain clients, many of the travel companies are literally working on net rates, with the clients getting the best price advantage," shares Sandeep.

Despite this, they try to stay true to their original ethos, and maintain the quality and personalisation that they started off with. He shares, "Our clients are now aware of our services, and the personal touch that we put into each tour. In our expansion drive, Helia has already set-up a global office with collaboration with a DMC in Turkey to service both domestic and international clients there. Many of the B2B partners are sending their requests to our Turkish Office for their Outbound FIT's & Groups. This is the first International Rep Office we have opened with more to go, as we go along."





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10th International Tourism Mart in Aizawl highlights tourism potential of the Northeast region

This International Tourism Mart 2022 showcased the diverse tourist attractions and products offered in the eight states. Union Tourism Minister Shri G Kishan Reddy inaugurated the 10th ITM for the North East Region on November 17, 2022 in Aizawl.

- Team Turtle



Union Tourism Minister Shri G Kishan Reddy and Chief Minister of Mizoram Shri Zoramthanga jointly laid the foundation stone of Aizawl Convention Center at Chite, PRASHAD Project in Mizoram and two Bamboo Link Roads during the inauguration of the ITM 2022 in Aizawl. The Union Minister also launched the Mizoram Tourism Coffee Table Book on this occasion. MoS Tourism Govt of Mizoram Shri Robert Romawia Royte, Secretary Tourism Shri Arvind Singh, Senior economic adviser, Ministry of Tourism, Shri Gyan Bhusan, Smt. Manisha Saxena, Principal Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of Mizoram and other senior officials of Gol and Govt. of Mizoram also graced the event. During his address Shri G Kishan Reddy also informed that India will also hold an investors' conclave in 2023 to promote global investments and MICE tourism into the tourism sector. The focus will

be to increase the global investments not only in the hospitality industry but to also promote Theme parks and entertainment centres, adventure tourism, cruise tourism, wellness tourism, winter tourism etc. The G-20 offers the best opportunity for India to showcase its culture, history and tourism potential and to position itself as a major tourist destination in the world. India is presiding over the G20 from December 2022 to November 2023. He adds, "We will host over 200 meetings across 55 cities during this period. These meetings are also proposed to be held in several states of north east including. He further added that among the G20 member countries, China, Mexico, India, South Africa and Indonesia are projected to expand their tourism industry post COVID. With our presidency we definitely can stride ahead of these 4-5 countries to build the rightful place of India's tourism industry

in the global arena. We must plan to showcase our North Eastern Cultural Richness while welcoming the world to our country."

Shri Reddy further informed that the Government of India has been providing financial assistance to the North-east region for overall tourism infrastructure development, promotion of fairs/festivals, tourism-related events in the region, publicity campaigns etc. The Ministry of Tourism has also formed a committee of active stakeholders in NER. "Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of DoNER and Ministry of Road Transport & Highways is developing 100 view-points in North East region. 22 view-points have been taken up for development at a cost of 49 crores. In Mizoram 9 viewpoints have been taken up for development at the cost of 12.78 crores. In addition to that Ministry of Road Transport & Highways is also in the process of developing viewpoints on their own", Union Minister added.



EVENT AFFAIR

Shri Reddy also informed that the Ministry of Defence through its Border roads organisation is playing a crucial role in improving road infrastructure in the border areas. Border roads organisation has taken the initiative of providing basic amenities to tourists visiting the scenic locations by building Border roads organisation cafes. Border roads organisation cafes are being built in 75 locations in the first phase. In the NE states, BRO cafes are being built at 25 locations in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Nagaland and Assam.

Shri Reddy added that the Ministry of Tourism is emphasising on the development and promotion of tourism for the North-eastern States. Under Swadesh Darshan Scheme, the Ministry has sanctioned 16 projects in the North-east region of India for a total amount of Rs.1337.63 crore. "Close to 25 per cent of SWADESH Darshan Projects have been sanctioned to North East states. Under PRASHAD Scheme, the Ministry has sanctioned approximately 200 crores for various projects in the region", Union Minister added.

CM Mizoram Shri Zoramthanga said that from evergreen hills, dense bamboo jungles, lush green paddy fields and the Blue mountains Mizoram has unpolluted environment and unpolluted atmosphere, which make the Mizo state one of the most beautiful places to visit in the north eastern region. Mizoram has a great tourism potential. CM also thanked the Central Government for approving several projects for development of Mizoram including bamboo link roads and Aizawl bypass.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Tourism Shri Arvind Singh said that tourism sector accounts for a higher share of women's employment and entrepreneurship as compared to the whole economy. "Indian tourism industry contributes to around 4.7 percent of the country's GDP and provides employment to around 31.8 million of inhabitants. If tourism's contribution is increased to 10 per cent of GDP in India, it can create 26

million new jobs. According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC), an investment of Rs.10 lakh can generate 47.5 jobs as against 12.6 in manufacturing", he added.

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is organizing the 10th International Tourism Mart (ITM) for the North East Region from 17th to 19th November 2022 in Aizawl, Mizoram. Objective of ITM 2022 is to highlight tourism potential of the Northeast region in domestic and international markets. The three-day ITM event will be attended by North-eastern Tourism Ministers, Seniors Officials of North-eastern states, State Governments, and Heads of the Tourism & Hospitality Associations. The International Tourism Marts are organized in the North-Eastern States on rotation basis. Mizoram hosted this Mart for the first time. The earlier editions of this mart have been held in Guwahati, Tawang, Shillong, Gangtok, Agartala, Imphal and Kohima.



Kata Group

The Thai-style beach experience

Being one of the prominent hospitality brands in Thailand since 1980, Kata Group with seven unique beach resorts is known for its desirable beachfront locations and the majestic and idyllic experience that it offers to its guests. Nisha Shrivastava, Founder, Sunrise Representations shares more on the business prospects and customer response.

- Sudipta Saha

Committed to delivering an outstanding Thai experience, Kata Group Resorts offers a perfect setting for any genus of vacation. The group has a strong presence in southern Thailand, with seven unique beach resorts they intend to offer the best experience a traveller is looking for.

It's all about business

Kata Group Resorts is strengthening its presence in India, and they are exploring its business prospects in India. India is a potential market; the group is vigorously promoting and has been educating Indian agents about the properties. Sharing her views on how the Indian market fared for Kata Group Resorts, Neha Shrivastava says, "Business prospects seem to be very promising and encouraging as we follow a 360-degree approach for maximum brand visibility. We are actively promoting and educating our B2B partners; our activities involve participation with Tourism Authority of Thailand events in various cities and one-on-one interaction and presentations to the travel trade. As of now, we are receiving enormous support from Indian travel agents and tour operators, and they are very receptive and supportive; many of them are promoting KATA Group and Beyond Resorts on their websites and online booking platforms. Apart from this, our social media promotion for the direct consumers is also very strong as it gives a push to travel

agents to sell KATA Group and Beyond Resorts."

Much-loved property

When it comes to India, Thailand is one of the go-to destinations for them. With stunning seven beach properties, Kata Group Resorts is apt for solo, family, and honeymooners, it has something for everyone. Well, the Indian market is familiar and has been booking Beyond Resort Krabi located on the sands of Kong Muang Beach. Every individual property of Kata Group is unique in itself and caters to a different segment of travellers. The Beyond Resort Kata, Beyond Resort Khao Lak targets the wedding sector and is perfect for small weddings and special event celebrations. "Phuket Orchid Resort and Spa and Pamoookoo Resort rooms have an inventory of 524 and 508 rooms respectively. They have adjoining and connecting rooms which makes it an ideal space for families with small children. Both the hotels have huge MICE facilities with multifunctional rooms which can cater to corporate segment for their events," adds Neha Shrivastava.

Strategies & initiatives

Kata Group Resorts have been actively participating in events such as TTF, and OTM in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The Tourism Authority of Thailand is also offering them an opportunity to showcase their resorts to wedding planners. They are actively promoting the brand in the

Indian market; through various webinars, they are reaching out to the MICE agents and wedding planners. The Kata Group Resorts have been very consistent with their marketing and promotional plans, adding to it, Neha Shrivastava says, "Our activities include participation in key travel trade events, advertising in travel trade magazines to get more visibility amongst travel trade. Social Media promotion is also something that we believe in and it is helping us enormously to reach our target audience."

Future developments

Kata Group and Beyond Resort's

flagship hotel will close for a full refurbishment and refit from April 25–September 25, 2023. "The scope of the renovation includes all 275 rooms, restaurants, public spaces, and comfort and safety systems. We are blessed with the best location directly on Kata Beach, and we look forward to continuing to improve and strengthen our value proposition for you, our guests, and our customers. Beyond Resort Krabi, during the period between May–October 2023, will be adding rooms, a children's pool, and converting room types to better serve the Indian market, our guests, and the expected increase in destination popularity," mentions Neha Shrivastava.



Nisha Shrivastava

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CSR TIMES



SHANGRI-LA, NEW DELHI

9th CSR Summit & Awards 2022 were successfully held at a grand ceremony in New Delhi. More than 300 delegates participated. The Summit was chaired by Chief Guest Km. Pratima Bhowmik, Hon'ble Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India and many other prominent dignitaries including parliamentarians, bureaucrats, diplomats, CSR Heads, Corporate Heads, PSUs and Philanthropists.

Supporting Sustainable Development Goals



Shri. Vijay Baghel
 Member of Parliament
 Government of India



Shri Arun Sao
 Member of Parliament
 Government of India



Hon'ble Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment, Km. Pratima Bhaumik being greeted by Mr. Harish Chandra, Editor-CSR Times & Ms. S Ravishankar, Hon. Secretary, IAF



Shri Sunil Deodhar
 National Secretary
 Bhartiya Janta Party



Shri K. Sudhakaran
 Member of Parliament
 Government of India



H.E. Mr. Sinisa Pavic
 Ambassador
 Republic of Serbia



Shri Janardan Singh Sigrwal
 Member of Parliament
 Government of India



H.E. Mr. Ganbold Dambajav
 Ambassador, Extraordinary &
 Plenipotentiary of Mongolia



Shri Baburam Nishad
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 Government of India



Shri N K Premachandran
 Member of Parliament
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Justice Narendra Kumar Jain
 Chairman, National Commission
 for Minority Edu. Institutions



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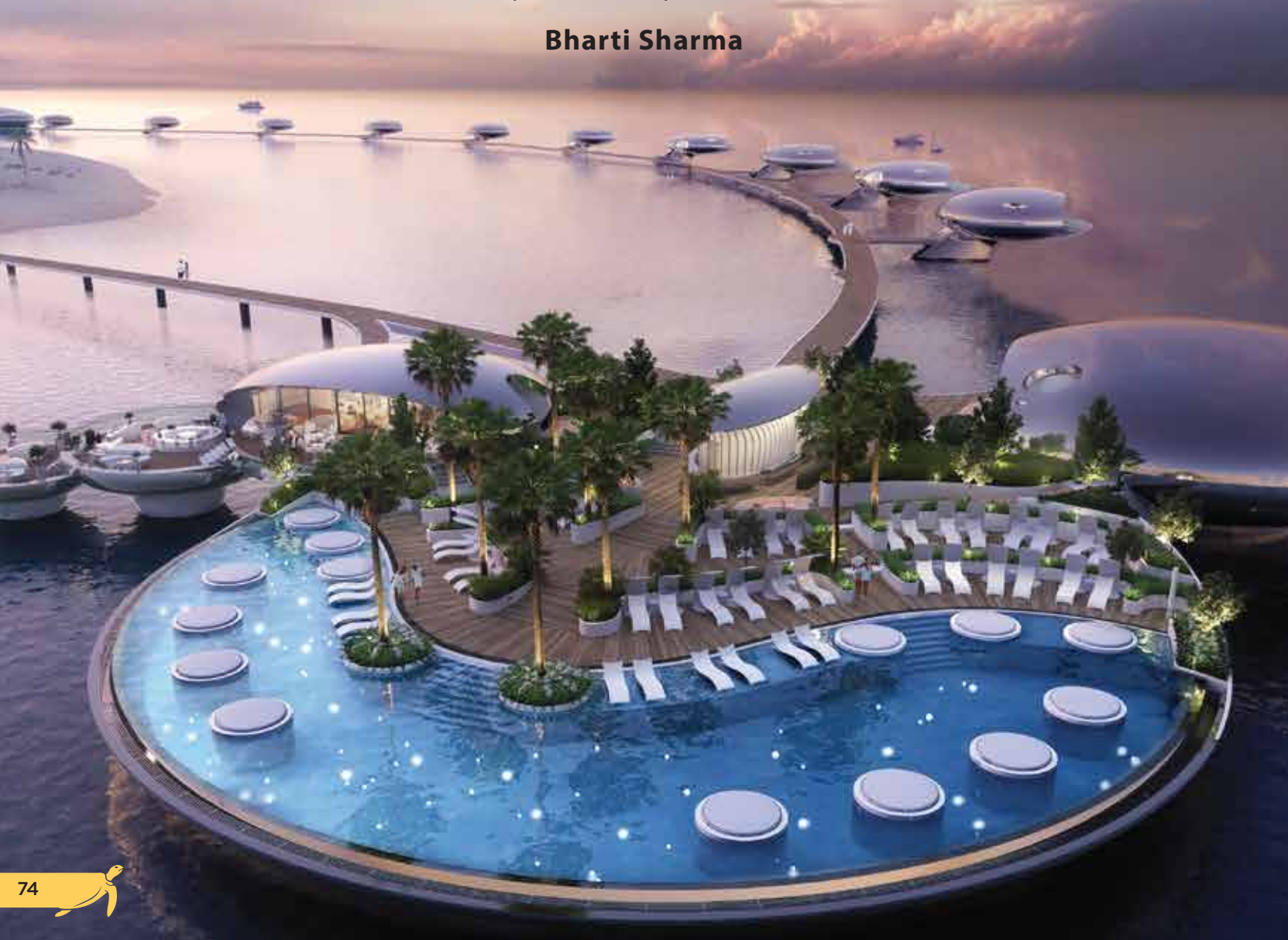
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RED SEA GLOBAL

The next big thing in the tourism world

With 16 hotels, residential properties, an 18-hole championship golf course, entertainment, and leisure facilities within phase one, Red Sea Destination will be spanning over 28,000 sq km of undulating desert dunes, mountain canyons, an archipelago of 90 islands, dormant volcanoes and ancient heritage sites. As they are planning to open in early 2023, Loredana Pettinati, Senior Travel Trade Director, Red Sea Global (RSG) tells us all we need to know about this most anticipated tourism product of 2023.

Bharti Sharma





As part of the regenerative tourism concept, how do you plan to target the most potential visitors that majorly include UHNIs & HNIs.

As per recent research by Expedia, destinations that focus on sustainability are preferred and are more likely to be visited by luxury travellers. 90 per cent of respondents in the study expressed that they cared about nature and look for sustainable options when booking while 70 per cent of consumers said they are willing to sacrifice some element of convenience in order to travel to a more environmentally friendly place. The research also revealed that early three in four travellers would choose a destination, lodging or transportation option that supports the local community and culture, even if it was more expensive. The study indicated that consumers in Asia-Pacific are showing a particularly strong interest in sustainability while traveling when compared to global averages.

Travelers want to know that travel brands are committed to

sustainability, not just checking a box, and the majority are inclined to favor a destination that employs measures like restoration of trees, marine conservation and recycling of primary resources.

Regenerative tourism is at the heart of The Red Sea, with recognition that nature is the destination's greatest asset and must be developed to protect and enhance the stunning and unique natural beauty around it. To achieve this, RSG has pushed the barriers on managing its relationship with the environment while offering unique tourism opportunities across diverse customer segments. We present the promise of enjoying world-class travel experiences while making a positive environmental impact and without compromising on factors such as convenience and comfort.

As Red Sea Global is planning to open The Red Sea destination in early 2023, which hospitality brands will be opening doors for the tourists?

The Red Sea is set to welcome its first guest in spring 2023 when



Loredana Pettinati

the first three hotels will open. These are the St Regis Red Sea Resort, Six Senses Southern Dunes, The Red Sea and Nujuma, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve. The rest of the 13 hotels will open throughout 2024 including SLS, Edition and Fairmont among others.

With much more of a focus now being placed on protecting the planet and travelling sustainably, how will Red Sea Global be working towards preserving and protecting the environment?

Red Sea Global is at the forefront of the global transition towards regenerative tourism going beyond sustainability to have a regenerative impact on not only the environment, but also on society and the economy. This vision is being delivered through innovation and careful management of natural capital. In line with this, we have planned to leave 75 percent of the destination's islands undeveloped and therefore less than 1 per cent of the destination's total 28,000 km² will be developed. Once the destination is fully operational our subsequent aim is to entirely ban single use plastics in order to be carbon neutral. Along with

sustainable construction, waste management and use of 100 per cent clean energy from renewable sources, the Red Sea is also committed to offering emission-free electric and hydrogen transport across the entire destination. Apart from these measures we will also be capping the yearly number of visitors to the Red Sea at one million based on the environmental carrying capacity of the destination.

Please shed some light on the project's development phases and what it will include?

The first phase of the destination is currently fully underway and will offer an impressive lineup of 16 resorts with 3,000 keys and 400 residential properties. The Red Sea will also feature an exclusive international airport, an 18-hole championship golf course, a luxury marina, sprawling athletic and beach clubs, indulgent entertainment and leisure facilities comprising of exquisite f&b outlets and luxury boutiques with prominent brands along with provisions to host weddings and events. Planning for phase two has already commenced with the entire destination set to be complete by 2030. Upon completion, it will feature 50

resorts with 8,000 keys, over 1,000 residential properties spread across 22 islands and six inland sites.

Saudi Tourism Authority has been pretty aggressive in India market. How do you plan to collaborate or work hand in hand with STA to establish The Red Sea Global in a huge market like India.

The Red Sea showcases Saudi Arabia's rich potential to the world and is unlocking new economic, cultural and social opportunities. The destination is set to contribute as much as 22 billion Saudi riyals (USD 5.3 billion) to the nation's GDP, by creating investment opportunities for the private sector and developing the Kingdom's tourism industry while preserving the nation's precious cultural and environmental heritage. In this pursuit India is a key feeder market for the nation. Our team will work very closely with Saudi Tourism Authority to conduct educational roadshows in India, partake in travel exhibitions, networking opportunities and create extensive media visibility to facilitate two-way communication and build destination awareness.

What experiences and activities are planned for the comprehensive growth of the destination?

Boasting of a diverse and remarkable environment replete with beaches, canyons, mountains, and mangroves, the destination will feature an exclusive international airport, an 18-hole championship golf course, a luxury marina, lavish beach clubs, superlative entertainment, wellness and leisure facilities comprising of exquisite f&b outlets and luxury boutiques with prominent international brands.

With a range of water activities such as sailing, kayaking, paddle boarding and windsurfing, it will also offer exceptional scuba diving and snorkeling excursions in a thriving marine ecosystem, as well as bring to life the stunning natural landscapes of the region through a range of active pursuits including hiking, free-running, climbing, nature walks among others experiences. For those interested in culture and heritage we will be supporting our local community to share their stories, craftsmanship, produce and landscapes with guests through art installations, archaeology and history trails, farmers markets, culinary experiences, astrology etc.





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Mahendra Pratap Singh

Travel India Tourism

Offering an impeccable bouquet of experiences in MP

Mahendra Pratap Singh is the CEO and Founder, Travel India Tourism understands the state to its core and his years of experience and knowledge of the innumerable offerings of Madhya Pradesh make him the man of the state. He shares the myriad offerings of Madhya Pradesh and its beautiful landscape and why every traveller should once visit the state.

- Sudipta Saha

Dekho Apna Desh, Sabse Pehle Apna Madhya Pradesh

Travel India Tourism is known for its experiential and creatively designed tourism offerings and they have been promoting vivid experiences of Madhya Pradesh on national and international platforms. Well, the state is known for its heritage, pilgrimage and wildlife, but yet the state has more to offer. Adding to it, Mahendra Pratap Singh says, "Our major focus is on wildlife, heritage, pilgrimage and leisure holidays. Madhya Pradesh is an unexplored destination, there are ample of aspects in the state which are yet to be experienced by the travellers. There are numerous unfamiliar spots which needs attention and promotion as well. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board have been vigorously promoting the state and its tourism products on the global platform but at the local level the DMCs and local operators needs to come forward and promote the state. Madhya is Pradesh is

one such state which has everything to offer such as culture, wildlife, heritage, pilgrimage what we don't have is sea and snow. But, Hanumantiya has come up as an island destination which now is popular amongst the tourist; the wildlife is now open for the entire year, so you can call Madhya Pradesh a year around destination."

Beyond conventional tourism products

With years of experience, Mahendra Pratap Singh believes in providing the best and personalised services to the guests, offering them a memorable experience filled with numerous extraordinary moments. Apart from the conventional tourism offerings, they believe in encouraging travellers to explore other aspects of the state. Sharing on the same, he mentions, "Now a day, Madhya Pradesh is promoting rural tourism to experience the village life and many accommodations and

homestays has come up in the rural areas. We intend to benefit the local community as well. Madhya Pradesh is one of the safest destinations for solo women travellers and all the basic necessities and amenities have been developed in and around the state. We are also inclined towards promoting our culture through various kinds of fairs and festivals. We also intend to promote the local cuisine and textiles such as Chanderi Silk, Baagh prints, apart from this we also focus on promoting on tribe jewellery." He further adds, "In Madhya Pradesh the infrastructure is incomparable and the roads are well-connected to the nearby cities and neighbouring states. We have four operational airports connected to Mumbai and Delhi, and we are urging the government to start direct international flights from Indore or Bhopal, this will encourage the number of inbound travellers."

Planning & promotions

Travel India Tourism has been endorsing Madhya Pradesh and educating tour operators about the various the offerings the state has to offer. They aim at encouraging the number of tourist footfall in the state and make Madhya Pradesh, a one stop destination which has everything to offer for everyone. Emphasising on the promotional plans, Mahendra Pratap Singh says, "The promotion of Madhya Pradesh is on a right direction but I urge the local operators to come forward and promote their own state. We at Travel India Tourism are participating in all major trade fairs and exhibitions; also we focus to promote our travel trade partners about the state and its offerings. We have to create a buzz in the market and I am doing my bit." He proudly says, "Dekho Apna Desh, Sabse Pehle Apna Madhya Pradesh".





Rejuvenate yourself IN THE CITY OF JOY MANDU



MANDU FESTIVAL IS ALL SET TO HOST YOU TO RELIVE ART, CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND CUISINES IN MADHYA PRADESH

Mandu is a place that mesmerizes travel bugs for all the right reasons. This magical destination is mostly preferred to be visited during and post monsoon. The city is full of heritage sites like Rani Roopmati Pavilion, Hoshang Shah's tomb, and Baz Bahadur Palace, etc. that make it one of the popular tourist attractions in Madhya Pradesh. When you set out on a journey to a destination as beautiful as Mandu, you tend to fall in love with

its scenic beauty.

The town which houses one of India's biggest forts- 'the Mandu Fort,' says the story of legendary romance of Rani Roopmati & Baz Bahadur and also displays the ancient afghan architectural marvels.

Let's talk about the Mandu Festival organised by Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board in December every year to invite tourists from across the world to witness the real beauty of

this ancient town which has existed ever since the 6th Century BC.

Mandu Festival or Mandu Mahotsava is all about enjoying the vibrant culture, music, arts, heritage, and cuisines. The event, which is organised by Tourism Board in every winter, showcases live concerts, local art, craft and cuisine, adventure sports, cycling expedition, rural excursion, and much more.

The city has gained immense popularity ever since the first Mandu Utsav in 2019 in Madhya Pradesh. It also provides a platform to local art and culture to get recognition nationally.

HISTORY AND ATTRACTIONS OF MANDU

Roopmati Pavillion

The city of Mandu is adorned with spell-binding Afghan architecture surrounded by baobab trees, native to Africa. The City is synonymous with one of the most famous tragic love story of the melodious Rani Roopmati and the last independent ruler of Mandu, King Baz Bahadur, amongst other things. Its establishment goes as back as the 6th Century. It was a division of the Tarangagadh Kingdom and it houses the largest fort in the history of India which is still defended by the holy Narmada River from its south which was once a powerful dynasty in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. The grand palaces are still alive with royal romance while the gateways (Darwaza) speak of a history of imperial conquests.

Floating on two water bodies- Kapur and Munj Talao, the Jahaz Mahal in Mandu looks like a ship that's about to sail. However, for centuries this ship made of stone and mortar never did. Instead, it stood floating over the twin lakes, bearing a silent witness to Mandu's long, rich

and varied history. During monsoon, the water level reaches the edge of the monument thereby giving it a ship like appearance & hence the name Jahaz Mahal.

Apart from Jahaz Mahal the city is adorned with many magnificent places including: Kakrah Khoh waterfall, Rani Roopmati Pavillion (a striking view of Narmada river), Hindola Mahal, Baz Bahadur's Palace, Jami Masjid, Champa Baoli and Hammam, Ashrafi Mahal, Jain Temple, Taveli Mahal and Nilkanth Mahadev Temple.

Connectivity:

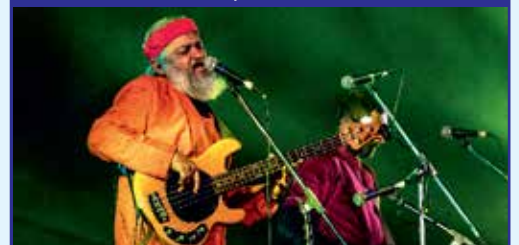
By Air: The nearest airport is at Indore, 100 km away, connected to Mumbai, Delhi, and Bhopal.

By Rail: Convenient railheads are Ratlam (124 km) on the Mumbai-Delhi main line and Indore (99 km)

By Road: Regular bus services connect Mandu with Indore, Dhar, Mhow, Ratlam, Ujjain and Bhopal. Best Season: July to March, with the monsoon months being the best.

ACTIVITIES DURING MANDU UTSAVA

- Live concerts and musical performances
- Hot Air Ballooning
- Cycling expeditions
- Adventure Sports
- Adventure Activities
- Art & Culture exhibitions
- Light and sound show
- Rural Excursion and interaction with local communities
- Yoga and meditation session
- Heritage walk
- Horse riding in the pristine village of Malipura
- Traditional folk dance and music performances by local artists
- Classical dance performances



India Assist

A travel partner every tourist must have

'India Assist' provides 'First-Call Assistance' to any traveller who requires assistance. To provide seamless travel, India Assist works on an app-based model. Harish Khatri, Founder & MD, India Assist talks about his roller-coaster journey while curating the powerful app and his vision for years to come.

- Bharti Sharma



As they say, a journey of thousand miles begins with a small step. The seed of 'India Assist' was sown during Harish's trip to the USA. While travelling through the country, he interacted with numerous people who wanted to travel to India but were discouraged by the experiences they might face in the country. Moreover, knowing people from different countries were keen on visiting India was yet another motivation for him. This was when he knew his calling. Through his research and first-hand experiences, he realised there is no centralised assistance system available for tourists and it is becoming a major deterrent for many who plan to visit India. Reminiscing his journey, he asserts, "The journey wasn't easy though as I didn't have any tech background and I hardly knew anyone in the travel industry. But I would say, Almighty has been kind to me. Moving forward I kept getting support from relevant people who could connect with the idea of India Assist and guided me so well that we were able to create an emergency assistance system for travelers. In-fact, now we have started getting queries from different countries to setup this assistance system for tourists in their countries as well."

Expansive network in 120 cities

India Assist is the showcase startup of the Government of India. They received the patent for the process in 2021. At the moment, they have their own network in 100 cities in India and are all set to start operations in Nepal. India Assist plans to get global representation in the coming years. With several expansion plans, they aim to cover 120 cities in India by the end of this financial year. They are also planning to expand their footprints in 10 countries by 2024. Sharing further, Harish tells, "We are the only startup across India with special permission from RBI to charge foreign tourists in a currency of their choice. We are full-time members in Startup category of almost all industrial bodies, including ASSOCHAM,

FICCI, CII and PHD Chambers of Commerce. We are FDI funded and also have some marquee investors from India on board with us."

Travel is the most visible and inspiring industry

India Assist provided more than 3000 free assistances to foreigners stranded in India when Covid-19 was at its peak. Being an extremely optimistic and visionary person, Harish always believed that the travel industry is one of the most visible and aspiring service industries in the world. On asking why, he shares, "The world has gone through a series of unwanted, life-threatening events in the last few decades. But regardless of these crisis situations, people didn't stop travelling. They just want a getaway from their homes-be it for reconnecting with their loved ones, revisiting their favorite destinations or exploring new places. For instance, post the pandemic the travel industry exploded like never before. People want to travel, and nothing can thwart their impulse to travel. Hence, putting our energies into the travel sector proved to be a worthy investment."

Must have tool for industry

Through its patented app, India Assist is trying to support the entire industry to handhold their customers better and concrete their relation with customers like never before. In the pursuit, they are getting support from Tourism boards, Hoteliers, Govt PSUs and Travel Agents as well. The industry has realised that active real time assistance gap is a sad fact and it requires mindfulness and acted upon for the industry to compete with more established tourist destinations and countries. Harish comments "Because people travel is the reason behind the travel industry having a huge presence in the country and across world. Travellers spend lot of money, time and resource while travelling. Absence of an emergency assistance for their handholding and guidance at every step of their travel is not only unfair to the

travellers but also a matter of concern for the destination and we all need to work towards it. We are currently reaching out to them through our b2b partners. Travellers can ask hotels and tour operators to provide India Assist services, which they will secure for the travellers."

Challenging Turnaround with New Dimension of Hope

The two-year-long global pandemic forced many businesses to redesign their products and services. India Assist launched as an app-based emergency assistance service for travelers in Feb 2020 and was shut down within a month in March 2020. On recalling the scenario, Harish says that it was a challenging time for the travel industry, which was terribly hit and they were back then at a nascent stage. He adds, "Despite all the hindrance, we always believed in our product, and we proved that India Assist has a lot of resilience. After the pandemic, we bounced back, giving world-class Assistance Services in a B2B avatar for all domestic and international travellers. Our primary focus is to build a service ecosystem connecting hotels, travel agents, airlines, railways and travel insurance."

Making travel seamless, smarter and safer

Now that we have more reasons than one to understand why should we have it, the question is how does it work? Honestly, it's even simpler than making an online transaction, or even online shopping. The platform encompasses all segments of a traveller, whether it's a millennial looking for an immediate update or a senior citizen who requires aid with everything, India assist is for everyone looking for a hassle-free travel experience. Harish shares, "The model generates a code when a service is sold to client through our B2B partner. Thereafter, the client can download the app using that code. In case they require any assistance, they can simply press

the alert buttons on the app. Once the ticket is raised for the assistance, a trained India Assist ground staff gets assigned and the traveler gets the assistance on their exact location, the location that as we capture when the call gets generated to our Call Centre. Based on the support protocol for each situation, the ground staff will provide support and alleviate the travelers' experiences."

What is covered:

To sum up, India Assist provides the following services in order to facilitate a seamless and hassle-free experience to travelers:

- Verified information and personal assistance: In today's time, travelers require quick information at the blink of an eye. India Assist team provides the same to travelers to ease their travel experience.
- Medical emergency support: We provide medical support to travelers and connect them to the nearest hospital in case of an emergency.
- On-ground support in case of Theft, Loss, Altercation and Transit Assistance or any other urgent/critical requirement: Our dedicated ground staff supports the clients in these situations by handholding them through such distress situations and ensure that they're not all by themselves in a new city.
- Pick and drop services for solo travelers and Senior Citizens: India Assist offers easy pick & drop service from Airports, Railway Stations & Bus Terminals to make the trip hassle-free especially for Solo Travelers and Senior Citizens.





Bjorn Noel Deniese

Bjorn Noel Deniese is a man of enthusiasm, and his attitude to succeed has certainly added to the growth of Mayfair Hotels & Resorts. Excited by the hospitality technology, and with the years of experience in the industry, he has witnessed an evolution in the industry. Speaking on the same, he says, "The industry has grown tremendously over the years with the expansion of global brands in the Indian subcontinent as well as home grown brands also coming up to give the hospitality industry a steady come back post the pandemic period. The evolution witnessed has been across the board and rapid of late. If you look at the adaptation of technology and payments, the industry has had to speed up the process which has only benefitted not just the customer from a health, safety and security perspective but also the hoteliers with greater access to data and analytics, opportunities to evaluate how marketing can be done better, exploration of regional destinations, cuisines and operating models. The younger generations of hospitality professionals are less risk averse and have certainly helped in pushing creativity and innovation for the industry."

Wedding segment made a comeback with all the bells and whistles

The diagram of the market seems varying, now a day, the demand seems to be on the higher side. With the rise of domestic tourism, destination weddings, opening of borders, this is a positive insignia for the hospitality industry. "We're experiencing a steady demand at all hotels especially those catering to MICE. With the baton of the G20 Presidency also now being passed on to India now, there is a positive and upbeat energy in the market for the forthcoming months. Weddings have expanded in both styles - the smaller intimate ones at exotic locations as well as the Great Indian Wedding that has made a comeback with all the bells and whistles. Conferencing has also gradually restarted while our FIT business has remained steady and almost back to pre-pandemic levels," adds Bjorn Noel Deniese.

Precise choice of destinations

Mayfair Hotels & Resorts have established itself as an architectural landmark that personifies the grandiose and elegance and over the

Mayfair Hotels & Resorts: Creating Experiences

A dynamic and energetic personality with an in-depth knowledge of the industry, Bjorn Noel Deniese, MD, Mayfair Elixir and Advisor Sales, Marketing & Business Development at Mayfair Hotels & Resorts is not just a hotelier by profession, it seems more like his passion. He shares on the growth, expansion, marketing strategies and much more.

- Sudipta Saha

year, it has been luring travellers with its signature experience. There is variation in Mayfair properties, "While Mayfair has always had a strong FIT base, and some of the newer properties such as the MAYFAIR Lake Resort in Rajpur and the MAYFAIR Tea Resort at Siliguri have become big destinations for weddings, events and conferencing. As we continue to expand, this is one of the key segments we will be focusing on and keeping in mind while selecting new locations for the resorts," mentions Bjorn Noel Deniese.

Efficient use of technology

When asked on his growth plan and strategy he adopts to maximize profits, he sounds very positive and optimistic about the market. He believes that it is always important to balance sales with costs without affecting the quality. Well, further he adds, "We are in the process of revamping our central reservation system, which I believe, is an important funnel with high conversion ratios. At the same time, as the spending demographic is changing especially for FITs, an interactive and quick easy booking process on the brand website is an essential."

Expanding the 'MAYFAIR' wings

Mayfair Hotels & Resorts has strengthened its position in the India market. Their strong presence in

different Indian destination and the diversified experience it offers have made it one of the most preferred brands amongst Indian travellers. Sharing his thought on the strategy to target Indian market, he says, "The Indian market has always been a stronghold for the Mayfair group. What helps definitely is to have circuits and developing packages around these circuit destinations. Meals and other add-ons also help in increasing the perceived value for domestic guests."

Mayfair Hotels & Resorts is on an expansion mode and they have been slowly and gradually throttlehold on the market is getting stronger. Well, the company has some expansion plans on the card, and speaking on the same, Bjorn Noel Deniese explicit, "Mayfair Elixir is a new company that will be expanding the Mayfair brand going forward on the asset-light model. This will be driven primarily through management contracting that will benefit investors from the reputation, network and operating know-how the Mayfair brand has gained over the years. The first property under this model is the Mayfair On Sea at Morjim, Goa which is a boutique lifestyle resort with a Beach Club that boasts of an expansive deck right on the Morjim Beach. Guwahati and Purnia are due to open shortly which furthers Mayfair's presence in the East."



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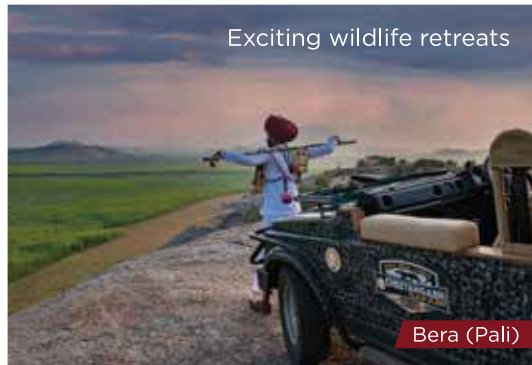
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EVENT AFFAIR

Manipur

celebrates 'Sangai' with extreme fervour

Hilltops with centuries-old tribes fostering their traditions and culture under coveted huts is a journey of a lifetime.

- Bharti Sharma

EVENT AFFAIR

The north-eastern region of India with its scattered pastures and hills overlooking the sunset has always been high on every Indian traveller's bucket list. The eastern states of India are like a series of hilly paradises that offer not only fresh clean air but are also rich in heritage and culture. A culture which is years old with traditions and practices which are a treat for travellers to explore.

The month of November came with a festival for the North-eastern state of Manipur, Sangai-The Festival of Oneness. This Festival was a great opportunity to travel to the land of hills and explore the fabulous north-eastern.

This festival was organised by the Department of Tourism and was held nearly after the two-year break because of the pandemic. Day 1 of the trip was packed with a beautiful cultural programme of the Manipur Sangai Festival at Heingang Ibudhau Marjing and a visit to the historic Kangla Fort. The fort is an integral part of the heritage of Manipur and is very important for the people of the state.

The next day was bright and early with an amazing breakfast spread followed by the Manipur Tourism Congress. The Congress was hosted by the Department of Tourism, Govt of Manipur, in the august presence of Shri Pradeep Kumar Jha, Commissioner (Tourism), Govt of Manipur, and W Ibohal Singh, Director-Tourism, Govt of Manipur. Ravi Gosain, Vice President- IATO led the IATO delegation and also gave a brief on the activities conducted by the association in the region. H Radhakrishna Sharma, State in-charge, IATO Manipur gave an extremely insightful presentation on Manipur which talked about the new tourism products and various



infrastructure developments happening in the state.

The Sangai Ethnic Park in Moirang Khunou, Bishnupur, was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Manipur, N. Biren Singh, and the Minister of Development of the North Eastern Region (MDoNER), G. Kishan Reddy. Post which the official opening commenced with releasing balloons and a presentation about the relevance of the festival and what made it so special. Manipur being a rich state with a rich heritage and culture brought locals from all over the state to perform and showcase different traditions under one roof.



EVENT AFFAIR



The visit to the Mapal Kangjeibung to witness a polo match on one of the world's oldest living polo grounds was something to be cherished. It was the 14th Manipur Polo International Festival 2022. The game was a treat to the eyes, which became all the more special because of the deep history behind the start of the sport. An enormous polo statue, which is perched above the Ebudhou Marjing hills, honours Sagol Kangjei, the semi-god who invented polo, and it will raise awareness of Manipur, the nation that gave birth to the game. The 120-foot-tall figure erected at Heingang Hill, the shrine of Ibudhou Marjing in Imphal East, upholds the sport's enormous religious and mythological significance.

To promote Manipur as the next tourist destination, the festival, a microcosm of distinctive cultural diversity, highlighted the state's tourism potential in the fields of Arts & Culture, Handloom, Handicrafts, Indigenous Sports, Cuisine, Music, Adventure sports, homestay, songs and dances, heritage walk, cherry blossom, etc.

Exploring the local markets of the city was the next thing on the list. We visited Ima Keithel, a unique all-women market. It was amazing to see a market led by women, starting from the shop owners to the salespeople. This shopping spree was followed by a visit to the Shree Govindajee Temple during the Aarti time, a serene and calm way to end the tiring day.

The following day of the trip was again packed with a lot of sightseeing and a visit to the Imphal War Cemetery to pay a tribute to the war soldiers. This was followed by a short visit to the Imphal Peace Museum and Japanese War Memorial where we witnessed parts of the historic northeast preserved beautifully. After our lunch at an

exotic resort, we visited the Keibul Lamjao National Park and Sangai Ethnic Park at Moirang Khunao which was the main venue for the Manipur Sangai Festival.

The 'Festival of Oneness' held at 12 different locations, is for guests to see 34 traditional domestic huts, Manipur Weaves fashion shows, the Sangai Run, the Longman Flower Show, indigenous cultural programmes, night tourism, handloom and handicrafts, tug-of-war, the Arambai Show, the Mukna competition, the Yubi Lakpi, the Sagol Lamjei (Horse Race), Arambai.

The festival, which is named after the state mammal known variously as the brow-antlered deer, Eld's deer, or Sangai deer, attempts to promote conservation efforts for the endangered species.

Additionally, the event highlights some of the greatest locally produced handicrafts and textiles. Along with the three GI-tagged Manipur handlooms, Wangkhei Phee, Sa phee-lan-phee, and Moirang Phee, one may observe the tribes through their distinctive handloom and handicrafts displayed in the international market.

Our trip to the land of culture, traditions and age-old tribes ended on the 29th of November, the Department of Tourism bid us goodbye with souvenirs and a bucket full of memories to take back. The Northeastern region of India is a delight for travellers looking for something unique and culturally rich.





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ETAA PARTNERS WITH GLOBAL DESTINATIONS FOR AN ELABORATE VIETNAM DESTINATION SESSION FOR ITS MEMBERS

As part of its endeavour to encourage and abreast its members on the latest travel developments and new destination opportunities, The Enterprising Travel Agents' Association (ETAA) organized a Destination Training Session on Vietnam in partnership with Global Destinations – an eminent representation firm, representing Threeland Travel Vietnam. It was well attended by the members and media from across Mumbai. Moving forward in the post-pandemic era with a strong intent to restructure, expand and strengthen its national presence the ETAA Board Meeting was held on the 26th of November 2022 and chaired by the Founder President & Chairman Emeritus who has decided to devote more time for ETAA in its Silver Jubilee

year 2023-24.

"We are re-grouping in the post-pandemic scenario and trying to take ETAA forward in our silver jubilee year," said Carl Dantas, Founder President and Chairman Emeritus, of ETAA. "ETAA will celebrate 2023-24 as its silver jubilee year. To mark its 25th year, the association will organize two conventions - domestic and International".

Jagat Mehta, President, of ETAA highlighted, "This time around we have selected a training program for Vietnam as it is fast emerging and one of the leading destinations from India. Besides this, the country is tourist friendly and also offers value for money to travellers". We will be doing similar programs for Vietnam in other Regions in association with Global Destinations.



TAT CELEBRATES LOY KRATHONG FESTIVAL IN NEW DELHI



Keeping the festive spirits alive and following the annual tradition, Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi along with Royal Thai Embassy and Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport Hotel, celebrated the Thai festival of lights- 'Loy Krathong' on November 9, 2022 at Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport Hotel.

Guests including diplomats, travel media and members of the travel fraternity were invited to celebrate the magical festival of lights where candle-lit krathongs twinkled on the water creating unforgettable experiences.

It was a beautiful and picturesque evening as several floating candles, flowers and krathongs decorated the venue showcasing Thai festivals & traditions. The Tourism Authority of Thailand launched the new tourism concept for 2022 Amazing Thailand, Amazing New Chapters' early this year.

Focus of "The Visit Thailand Year 2022 - 2023" was that Thailand is now filled with more amazing new experiences than ever before. Visit Thailand in the year 2022 - 2023 and make your new chapter the very best of your life.





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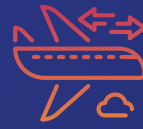
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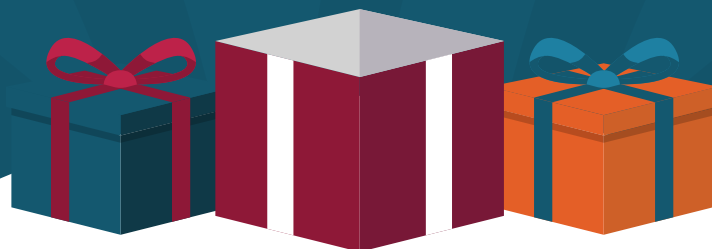
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