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TRAVEL turtle



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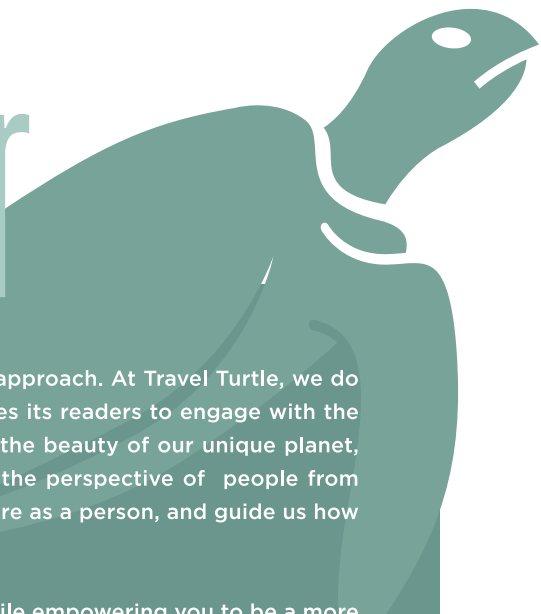
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Editor's Letter



It feels great to see your company proceeding towards a mission-driven approach. At Travel Turtle, we do not treat travel as a means to escape from the world. Travel Turtle inspires its readers to engage with the deeper aspect of travel. Travel enables us to take a break, acknowledge the beauty of our unique planet, build acceptance towards new cultures and adventures and understand the perspective of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The experiences of our travels help us mature as a person, and guide us how we choose to live our lives.

This issue will kindle the aura that augments from exploring the world, while empowering you to be a more thoughtful traveller. In this issue, we soar through the skies above Thailand, unravelling the concealed treasures it has to offer. We help you discover and deepen your appreciation for nature around the globe. Thus, we bring to you Fiji, the most beautiful and closest destination to natural extravagance. We unveil to our readers the most unique offerings of the destination. While deciphering some phenomenal properties, we unearth the magic of Soneva!

Keeping 2021 as the base year for tourism, there are myriad factors establishing the fact that travel is a force for good. In everything we do, we aim to inspire, guide, and empower travelers to have enriching experiences that make a positive impact. We can be more purposeful in the ways we travel. We can travel more steadily, empathetically, sustainably—and of course, more joyfully!

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
Editor

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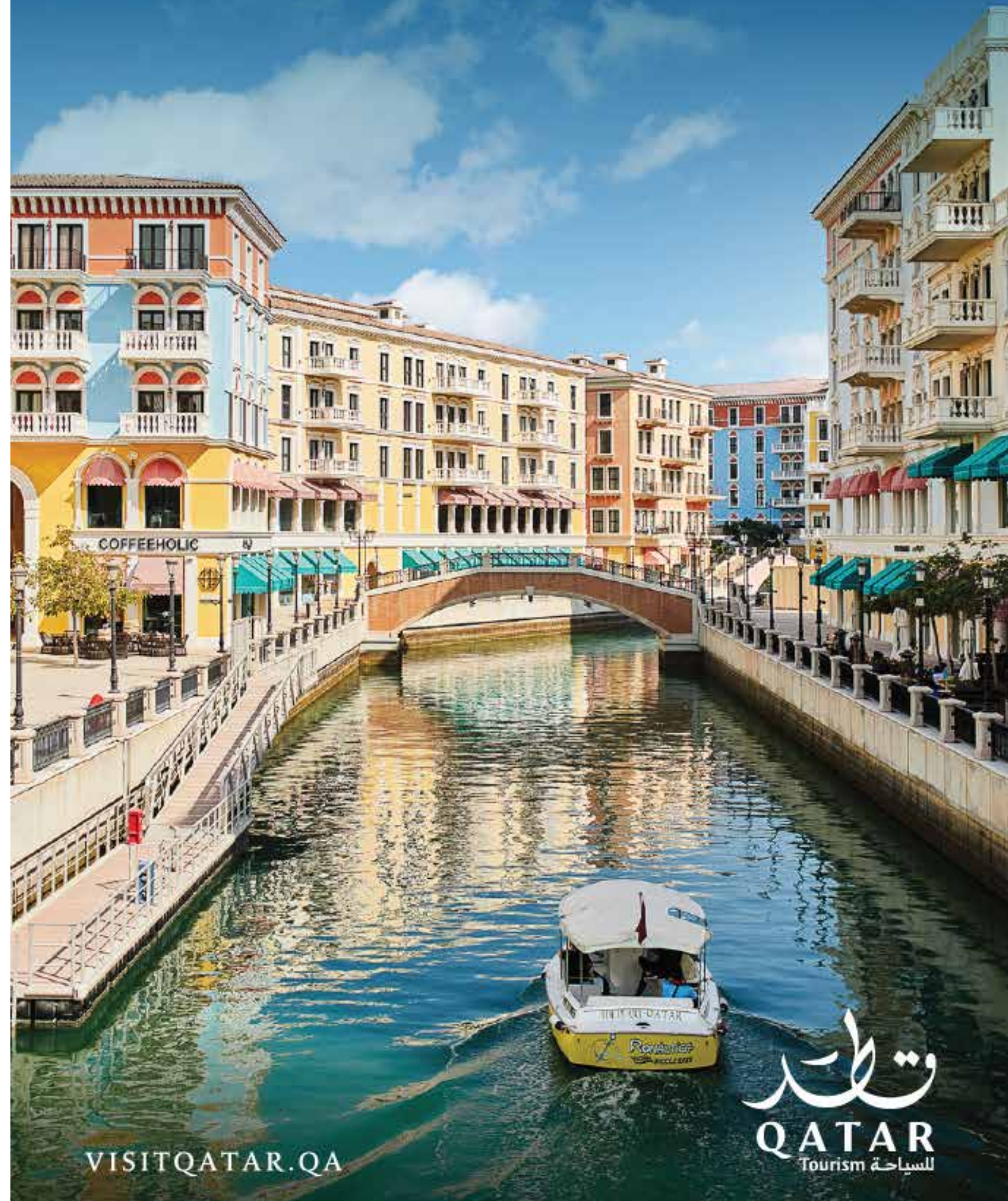
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Editor: Bharti Sharma

EXPERIENCE A WORLD BEYOND



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Qatar partners with GKA Kite World Tour and announces new kite beach resort



Qatar Tourism has become an Official Tourism Partner of the Global Kitesports Association (GKA) Kite World Tour for three years, with a new world-class kite beach resort set to open in the northeast of the country later this year.

Qatar Airways also becomes the Kite World Tour's Title Partner and Official Airline, while Qatar Tourism will become title sponsor for events held in Qatar. The exciting partnership combines the skies and the seas to celebrate one of the fastest growing and most exhilarating new sports.

The announcement was made at the site of an upcoming state-of-the-art kite beach resort in Fuwairit. Fuwairit is a coastal village north of Doha with excellent kitesurfing conditions thanks to consistent winds, ideal ocean water and powder-soft sands that is set to open later this year.

Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker said, "Kitesurfing is a travel sport where adventure seekers compete in beautiful destinations across many continents around the world. At Qatar Airways, we are proud to support this growing sport and become the preferred airline for athletes and fans travelling to GKA events all around the globe including Qatar, our home country, to experience something new and exciting."

Thailand Pass' registration scheme lifted

Thailand's Centre of COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) has approved the removal of the Thailand Pass registration scheme and an US\$10,000 health insurance requirement for foreign visitors. Both requirements were initially removed for Thai nationals from 1 June, 2022.

From 1 July, 2022, foreign nationals are only required to show proof of either a certificate of vaccination or a negative RT-PCR or professional ATK test result within 72 hours of travel. These can be in a print or digital format. Random checks will be made on arrivals at Thailand's international airports or land border checkpoints (in 22 provinces). Unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated travellers who are random checked and who are unable to show proof of a pre-arrival negative test will be required to undergo a professional ATK test at the point of entry.

Meanwhile, the CCSA also approved the designation of Bangkok and 76 provinces as the Surveillance or green zone, thus allowing resumption of new normal businesses and activities nationwide. And while maintaining the safety and health measures under the universal prevention, the Royal Thai Government is preparing to announce a new set of guidelines as the nation is stepping into post-pandemic.



Quarantine free travel is now allowed for South Korea

South Korea has taken a step further to welcome Indian travelers. Starting from 8th June, all international travelers to Korea are not required to quarantine regardless of their vaccination status. COVID-19 testing will still be in effect, making it necessary for travelers to submit a negative COVID-19 test result. Travelers must do a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test before departing to Korea. After arrival in Korea, another PCR test must be done within three days and a negative PCR test result must be submitted. If travelers do not have a negative test result or lack proper information, they will be unable to board their flight. Also, if travelers get a positive test result upon arrival, they must directly get quarantined. Central Disease Control Headquarters in South Korea recommend using the Q-code system before getting on the flight to make the arrival process quicker by scanning the QR code upon arrival. Q-code website As per earlier announcement, Indian travelers can now apply for a short term (C-3) visa which allows foreigners to stay up to 90 days for marketing research, travel, visiting relatives, meetings or similar reasons. The visa can be applied physically at the VFS Global centers.



Ethiopian Airline launches flights to Chennai-India-Chennai

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's leading airline, has started thrice weekly operations to/from Chennai, India. Chennai has joined the vast Ethiopian network as a fourth destination in India after New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Ethiopian started its service to India with a debut flight to New Delhi in 1966, just 20 years after the airline was founded. Ethiopian pioneered the air transport linkage between Africa and India. Recently, Ethiopian marked its 50th year anniversary of uninterrupted service to Mumbai, the commercial capital of India. The flights to Chennai will be operated using B737-8 aircraft.



IATO raises its concern on the issues creating hurdles for revival of inbound tourism

Rajiv Mehra, President IATO has requested the government to remove hurdles which are creating hindrances in revival of inbound tourism to our country and also has requested to help in getting refund of Travel Agents from Jet Airways. In his communication to the Ministry of Tourism, Mehra has requested the Hon'ble Tourism Minister to impress upon the Government to withdraw requirement of submission of self-declaration form on the online Air Suvida Portal for foreign nationals. Presently all foreign tourists who intend to visit our country need to submit a self-declaration form and attach documents which foreign tourists especially the elder person find very difficult. Due to this reason, many foreign tourists reported to have been offloaded which is giving negative publicity and now many tourists are skipping to travel to India. On one hand we are looking to bring more foreign tourists to India and on other hand, we are making it difficult for tourists to consider India as a destination by creating hindrances. Now under the present situation, many countries have abolished all hurdles to attract more tourists. This is high time that when situation is much better now we should consider removing such hurdles for foreigners. IATO has therefore, requested that requirement of submission of self-declaration form on the online Air Suvida Portal should be removed to encourage foreign travelers to visit our country so that inbound tourism to India could be revived.

Noida International Airport lays foundation for digital airport; selects ICAD as MSI consultant

Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL) has selected ICAD Holding Ltd. as Master System Integrator (MSI) consultant for the development of Noida International Airport (NIA). ICAD will support NIA with the systems integration design, integration program management and integration of ICT and Airport Systems. ICAD will also lead the core airport systems implementation and integration.

NIA will set a new benchmark as a digital airport, with the implementation of state-of-the-art technology to provide a seamless and mostly contactless flow through the airport. This will be supported by integrated systems, services and the use of technologies such as indoor navigation, passenger flow management, and data analytics. The digital environment to be set up at NIA includes paperless digital processing across all checkpoints in line with the Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation's DigiYatra Policy.

Mr. Christoph Schnellmann, Chief Executive Officer, Yamuna International Airport Private Limited, said, "We are pleased to partner with ICAD to bring alive our vision of a digital airport. NIA will be a truly modern, efficient, and customer-friendly airport, offering the highest levels of convenience and ease of making connections to the passengers as well as commercial benefits to its partners. The digital greenfield airport will enable contactless travel experience and cost-efficient operations for all airport partners."



Noida
International Airport



Jamaica welcomes one millionth stopover visitor for 2022

Jamaica has welcomed more than one million stopover visitors to the island on June 15, 2022. The arrival of the country's one-millionth stopover visitor is a signal of the strength of the country's tourism recovery and how the industry continues to rebound rapidly from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The arrival figures from the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) signal that the sector is proving its resilience and a return to pre-pandemic performance is on the horizon. In the mid of June, Jamaica surpassed the one million-visitor mark for this year. The island is continuing its efforts to achieve their 2022 projections, which is a of total visitor arrivals of 3.2 million and total revenue of US\$3.3 billion.

Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism of Jamaica, addressed a function at the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay to celebrate the milestone of the visitor figures. "This moment is a testament to the confidence that the market shows in Jamaica as well as the strength, resilience and enduring appeal of Jamaica's tourism product as we build back stronger," said Minister Bartlett. "It is a testimony to the hard work of our tourism workers and the success of the Jamaica Cares programme, which has prioritised the health and safety of Jamaican citizens and visitors," he added.

IndiGo introduces additional flights on Delhi-Leh, Delhi-Srinagar, and Lucknow-Pantnagar routes

IndiGo, India's leading carrier, announced additional frequencies between Delhi-Leh, Delhi-Srinagar, and Lucknow-Pantnagar effective from July 01 and July 15, 2022, respectively. The Delhi-Leh flight will operate daily at 4:20am from July 01 and will operate at 4:30am from August 01, 2022. To cater to the high demand IndiGo will be adding two additional daily flights for Srinagar from the period between 01 July till 11 August 2022, departing from Delhi at 05:20 and 21:30 and from Srinagar at 07:20 and 23:15. These flights will strengthen IndiGo's network in northern India.

Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer, IndiGo said, "We are pleased to strengthen our network by adding frequencies on Delhi-Leh, Delhi-Srinagar and Lucknow-Pantnagar routes, catering to increased demand for travel to Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Kashmir. Delhi - Leh is one of the most popular routes and we have been witnessing high demand on this route, with this new addition we will have 3 daily flights from Delhi. We are getting a good response to our Lucknow-Pantnagar flight and with the increase in frequency, this flight would now operate five days a week. These new frequencies will not only promote tourism, trade, and commerce in the states, but also make travel affordable to these destinations through additional capacity. We will strive to stay true to our promise of affordable fares, on-time performance, courteous and hassle-free service across wide network, onboard our lean clean flying machines."



TAAI-Air India meeting yielded fruitful results for travel trade fraternity

TAAI Office Bearers and the Airline Council had a very positive meeting on 7th June 2022 with senior officials of Air India, Nipun Aggarwal, CCO, Melwin D'Silva ED Commercial and Rajender Nath GM Marketing.

Jyoti Mayal, President TAAI interacted in-person, whereas Jay Bhatia, VP TAAI, Lokesh Bettaiah, HSG TAAI, Shreeram Patel, Treasurer TAAI and Paras Lakhia, Chairman TAAI Airline Council joined the meeting virtually.

TAAI is extremely pleased to share that the main agenda of the meeting was to push to open all Flight inventories for authorised IATA agents, which was immediately actioned by AirIndia, specially the Canada inventory has been reactivated effective 14th June on the GDS.



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Culinary Tourism

Exploring the world through food

Travel is an extremely personal preference. There are several reasons for people travelling to far-off lands. To a layman, sightseeing is one of the prominent reasons, however recent trends have witnessed a surge in travelling for shopping and more recently, the pursuit of unique cuisine attracting tourists to foreign lands. This transformation and maturity in travellers have resulted in projecting cuisine as an extension of a country's culture, giving rise to the growing trend of Culinary tourism.

- Bharti Sharma





The growing trend of encountering authentic culture has driven food to take a centre stage in a tourist's experience of a destination. A tourist's itinerary is incomplete without a meal, no matter the packed schedule or the point of interest, one will find time to enjoy the local cuisine. This meal could happen at a fancy diner with companions, or savouring local delicacies at street hawkers while strolling on the streets. The venue and choice of food might vary but the activity that is constant is travellers do is take pictures of their meals, which serves as their memory of a destination they travelled to. Revisiting these pictures, they relive the delicious food they devoured and the stories attached with it. The food they have is not about satisfying their hunger, it's about sharing eating habits of different ethnicities and cultures that nurture the habit of global exploration. This experience is

the sum total of what Culinary tourism is all about; exploring cultures and bridging gaps.

Food that travels

Let's see the first thing that comes to your mind at the mention of Italy. No points for guessing! Italy is synonymous with Pizza, Pasta, gooey mozzarella and other lip-smacking delicacies. Specific cuisines represent their country of origin is a general fact. The mere mentioning of a country unleashes the taste of their prominent food in our minds. Sampling the local cuisine of a destination is one of the key desires for a traveller while visiting a country, which is not an alien phenomenon. The target of tasting the local delicacies is the first thing on a traveller's mind after making it to the destination. Over time, the changing preferences have resulted in intensifying these gastronomic escapades, enabling destinations to emphasise sampling their

exotic delights and wine for which they need to be explored.

The range, taste, flavours and diversity of cuisines on offer worldwide is enormous. There are some globally-renowned examples of cuisines related to their country of origin. The British fish n chips, which are typical to the isle's charm, the assortment of legendary pasta, pizzas, spaghetti, lasagne, and mozzarella cheese are synonymous with Italy, and the Japanese have their sushi, seaweeds and fishes luring people over from across oceans and Thailand with its world-famous hot and spicy mix of rice, chilly, chicken, bamboo shoots, herbs and seafood are all pioneers of Culinary tourism.

Food attracting travellers

Culinary delights and wine as prime attractions are not a new trend, they have served as agents of fame for a destination since ancient times. How many of you have flocked the beaches of Goa

and tried Vindaloo; the local pork delicacy did in coconut water? No doubt the beaches and church of Bom Basilica are among Goa's famous attractions, but the Goan Vindaloo and local brew 'Feni' are responsible for adding to the region's tourism appeal, attracting tourists from far-off lands. The contribution of culinary tourism has always been crucial with destinations being defined by their gastronomic offerings and guaranteeing them a place amongst the most sought-after culinary tourism destinations across the globe.

The global culinary tourism market size was valued at \$1,116.7 billion in 2019, and is projected to reach \$1,796.5 billion by 2027, registering a CAGR of 16.8% from 2020 to 2027. The food festival segment was the highest contributor to the market, with \$338.6 billion in 2019, and is estimated to reach \$560.3 billion by 2027, at a CAGR of 17.2% during the forecast period.



Essential components of culinary tourism

A lot of factors come into play in making a destination a hotspot for culinary interest, but one of the basic factors is the accessibility to natural resources. Fresh procurement of aquatic organisms like shrimps, lobsters, prawns, crabs, clams, variety of fishes is only possible with the presence of natural water sources like rivers, freshwater lakes, marine coastlines or similar water bodies. Thus, for a region to thrive as a culinary attraction, the local availability of respective raw-material is of paramount importance. An authentic cuisine experience can only be cultivated when the destination is able to procure fresh raw materials from within the region and not imported from afar. This ensures the authenticity of delicacies and an affiliation with the local culture of the land. Culinary tourism loses the plot if the cultural angle is omitted from the scenario.

A noteworthy point here is complimenting the culinary experience with adequate infrastructure for the accommodation of tourists. Culinary tourism is not a concept

of isolation. Tourists coming in for experiencing culinary delights will expect good accommodation options, thus a network of good hotels and resorts is an important component for any destination eyeing to make culinary tourism a thriving venture.

Why does it matter?

In today's dynamic tourism scenario, Culinary tourism plays an essential role in contributing to the country's hospitality and tourism sector and its economy. The current trend makes it paramount from a country's cultural perspective to cultivate their food culture in order to capitalise on the increasing trend of culinary tourism. It is already established that a country's eating habits, culture, history and people are reflected in its food. Not only that, food today has evolved as a country's identity to some extent. It would not be wrong to say that Italians are identified with Pizza and Pasta, Japan with ramen, India with fragrant curry and spices and so on. People from different cultural backgrounds have different cuisines and a connoisseur would not only accept it but would also be

intrigued to explore deeper into varied cultures and their cuisine and also about the origin and history of the cuisine.

Cuisines that reflect the image of the destination toured

It is often said, that a person who has no control over his tongue ends up in misery. Though this saying has a negative connotation to it, the obvious conclusion is that the desire for good food is among the strongest craving for humans. A person's food habits are a doorway to a person's temperament and physical traits. How would it feel to have travelled to a destination and abstained from indulging into the gastronomic treasures on offer? Incomplete, right? Culinary today, is not just means to keeping your stomach full while on a vacation, it's way beyond that. If you're a traveller on your quest to explore the world, it would only be fair to be attracted and give-in to the temptations of gastronomic delights the world has to offer. Culinary tourism is beyond satisfying your taste buds, it is a philosophical expedition of exploring outlandish cultures, their culinary specialities and their way of life.



Travel and tourism arrangements in culinary tourism

Culinary tourism is a niche segment of tourism and thus the role of travel and tourism framework becomes pivotal for culinary tourism to come in public exposure. Travel agents invest all their resources and manpower in assisting tourists to fulfil their dream of exploring the culinary specialities of their destination. Sampling food and wine typical to the destination is a rather visible trend with tourists interested in discovering the culture, heritage and tradition of the region. The agents operating in this niche help transforming dreams into reality with their dedicated service and expertise, taking tourists on a magical gastronomic adventure, creating memories that would last for a lifetime.

The itineraries curated by agents does not leave any scope for error, accommodating feedbacks and reviews. The meticulously arranged fun trips are designed to make every moment of your culinary adventure packed with excitement. Travel agencies concentrate on delivering outstanding customer service ensuring tourists have exposure to the best eateries serving authentic regional cuisine, premium wine and culinary classes. There are provisions for short-duration workshops for tourists who wish to get insights into the local tradition and culture.

Facts

- 25 % added economic benefit for a destination
- 53 % of leisure travellers are food travellers
- 63 % of millenials seek socially responsible restaurants
- Money spent on food and drink while travelling accounts for 15-35% of all tourism spending.



HOTELLIGENCE



PRIDE GROUP OF HOTELS

The invincible hospitality haven

Pride Group is expecting to clock a turnover of INR 250 crores this fiscal year and has currently set a target of 50 hotels by 2022 and 100 hotels by 2030. Satyen Jain, Director & CEO, Pride Group of Hotels shares some exciting expansion plans...

- Bharti Sharma





Right positioning

India is at the cusp of a major transformation and hospitality sectors are emblematic of this journey. Satyen expects more transformation in the Indian travel and tourism industry in the coming years. He adds, "There is a lot of scope for growth in India's hospitality sector with necessary changes to keep up with changing trends. With the right positioning, brands can target new sectors in the domestic and international travel industry."

On an Expansion Spree

Pride Hotel is a homegrown brand that resonates with true Indian hospitality. The group's vision is to establish Pride Hotels as the best Indian Hospitality chain. Their major expansion plan is primarily targeted towards Tier ii and Tier iii cities. The expansion plan includes cities namely Nainital, Neemrana, Rajkot, Bhopal,

Aurangabad, Jim Corbett, Bharatpur, Jabalpur, Daman, Rishikesh, Aatapi, Surendranagar, Dwaraka, Bhavnagar, Bharuch, Alkapuri, Manjusar, Agra, Somnath, Dehradun and Chandigarh. Satyen tells, "All our brands are well appreciated and frequented by corporate clients, domestic and foreign tourists. Recently, we have forayed into the premium service apartment space with the launch of our new brand 'Pride Suites', with the first property signed in Gurugram."

Growing ADR and occupancies

Pride has adapted beautifully to the industry transformations and is constantly re-skilling itself. Intensifying the guest's experience that resonates with comfort and warm hospitality, the Pride Group of Hotels have launched multiple campaigns and has managed to grow even in difficult times. "Subsequent to the

challenges due to the pandemic in the past two years we are now witnessing exponential growth. We have performed much better in 2021-2022 in comparison to 2020-2021. We have almost doubled our turnover. The ADR and occupancy have gone up from 43 per cent to 65 per cent for the current year 2022-2023. We are expecting to clock a turnover of INR 250 crores this fiscal year," shares Satyen.

Focusing on Domestic market

Pride Group plans to expand its presence to 100 properties with over 10,000 keys spread across various geographical regions, primarily in tier I and tier II markets. Satyen further shares "The focus is on an asset-light model for expansion with a major slice of the portfolio managed directly by the company. Most of the new properties will be located in popular leisure destinations

with great tourism potential. We would be focussing on the domestic market at present. While we will have 50 properties by the end of this year we plan to expand our footprints nationally by doubling our portfolio to 100 hotels by 2030."



GLOBAL AVIATION

A glorious journey that embodies ethics and innovation

Global Aviation Services completes 47 years of operation, all these years they have been committed to delivering extensively superlative service in the field of aviation. H. K. Vithalani, Founder- Chairman of the Global Group, a man behind the success of Global Aviation Services shares the journey so far.

- Sudipta Saha





H. K. Vithalani

As Global Aviation is entering its 47th year of GSA (Representation), how has the journey been so far?

For Global Aviation Services the journey commenced in the mid-70s. I must say here that it has been very satisfying from a business creativity point of view. Not only did Global enhance business prospects and scope for its airline customers, but it was also successful in supporting Indian entrepreneurs in building a bridge with the international community. I have always been saying that it is a relationship business. I have made friends all over the globe, friends who were business partners and now in the aftermath of their aviation career, very personal friends. My team which comprises trade veterans and new entrants means a lot to me and my family. Over the years we have developed an inseparable bond. My colleagues have taken it forward in building new relationships. Ask any businessman, the purpose for doing business. Part of the answer is "to make money". To Global and its shareholders, management and teams, creating business which is deliverable and standing tall in fulfilling commitments, means a lot.

What are the challenges have you encountered over the years?

If you expect me to say

'competition', I may disappoint you. Competition is here to stay. Competition drives you to excel. At times it is the changing business environment, regulatory mandates, bureaucratic demands and at the time no clarity with rules and regulations. One has to find the way eyes closed and hands tied. But we all know the score and have agreed to face it when we launched our businesses. I do not look at other changes as challenges but as opportunities to fine-tune or speed up the process.

Over the years, what kind of evolution have you noticed in the aviation industry?

Coming to basics, in the 70's and the '80s, we relied more on hearsay and gut feeling. The forecasting business was at a very nascent stage. Technique and numbers were lacking but we still arrived at realistic results. Perhaps, we drove the bus on the only route available. This I look back on fondly. Now we have statistics, trends, growth models, and cost/benefit algorithms – a team cooped up just hitting the buttons. I have always been satiating about technology. We, like others, embraced it. Processes at the workplace, be it the cargo warehouse, the passenger terminal, the ramp or the sales office and finance centre, have ramped up at lightning speed. Another thing is

people have changed, for the better. Team building, team effort, and team gameplay are all everyday words and jargon. My experience is that it is an essential part of your commitment to your customer.

What are the current demands that you are seeing in the market?

It is very refreshing to note that the customer has upgraded itself to understand deliverables and thus positions his expectations. That said, it prepares you to focus on key growth areas, whether in service levels, output, value or mutual financial gain. We are one of few who have learnt to say "no". Rather than bend over backwards and try to roll out the undeliverable – which is a waste to all concerned. Of course, sometimes stretching oneself to snapping levels may give some magic results, hitherto unknown. What a dream! Aviation wouldn't have evolved if some fellas, that two brothers, had stopped dreaming.

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

Making money is no crime. Let me rephrase that – "making money the right way is no crime". We all learned that a penny saved is a penny earned. So, if you help the airline customer and the end customer, and save some bucks, you too will end up with some profits. The key word here is being "reasonable". Covid has taught us the crucial lesson of essential costs and non-essential costs. Multitasking and cross-utilization are other ways to optimize resources for a project. We need to benchmark our service levels and ensure that there is no drop below our standards while tweaking costs. Apart from cost control, we need to optimize revenues within the parameters of the product. Customer satisfaction is essential in maximising revenues. During the 18 – 20 months of Covid restrictions on travel, airlines have accumulated high losses. Aircraft are parked in dessert packed in cellophane, personnel are laid off.

Now that travel demands have risen, airlines are unable to operate flights as no trained staff is available. About the time the airlines and all stakeholders start recovering some losses.

What is that one thing about aviation that excites you?

Have you seen a bunch of boys standing around and looking up to the skies when an aeroplane soars high? That's excitement. Have you been one of them? If not, you have missed something. My excitement comes from the fact that the world has become smaller with the advent of larger, faster, efficient and environment-friendly airplanes. We need to preserve the environment for future generations. Airlines have been very active and diligent in cutting down emissions and becoming Green. I think all passengers, travellers, and cargo carriers should be aware of the emission issue and make the right choices.

What do you think the global aviation industry will look like in five years?

Aviation is on the verge of a high-tech boom. AI, robotics, biometrics, alternative fuel, and electric-powered equipment all will rush in one form or another. The key is sustainability. On the reverse side, there could be an alternate mode of transportation as opposed to air travel. Will this hamper the growth of aviation? No, never. High-speed alternatives will help cater to growing demands in transportation. Be it passengers or goods. Sectors that will benefit are healthcare, education, and corporate governance, to name a few. The ultra-long haul will get popular. Demand will soar despite communication at the speed of light.

Bula!
From The Nirvana
of Exotic Islands

Fiji



Walk down the holy grail of white sand beaches and tropical rainforests overlooking vast stretches of water to wash all your troubles away. For all the beach bums out there, visit the magical land of islands to indulge in some world-class pampering.

- Tripti Jain



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

An archipelago of more than 300 islands with splashing waves and whooping breeze Fiji is the crown jewel of the south pacific region. A country in Oceania recognised for clear lagoons surrounded by rainforests serving as the perfect getaway for the ones looking for a detour to the land of water. Rugged landscapes with palm-lined beaches and coral reefs open gates to some magnificent ocean views and sunsets. A nirvana for beach travellers with accommodations and activities that are pure luxury. Travellers looking for peace and scenic bliss, pack your bags now and plan a trip to this realm of waterfalls and rainforests. One-of-a-kind islands in the world where each glimpse will leave you transported into a mode of Zen.

A luxurious Nirvana

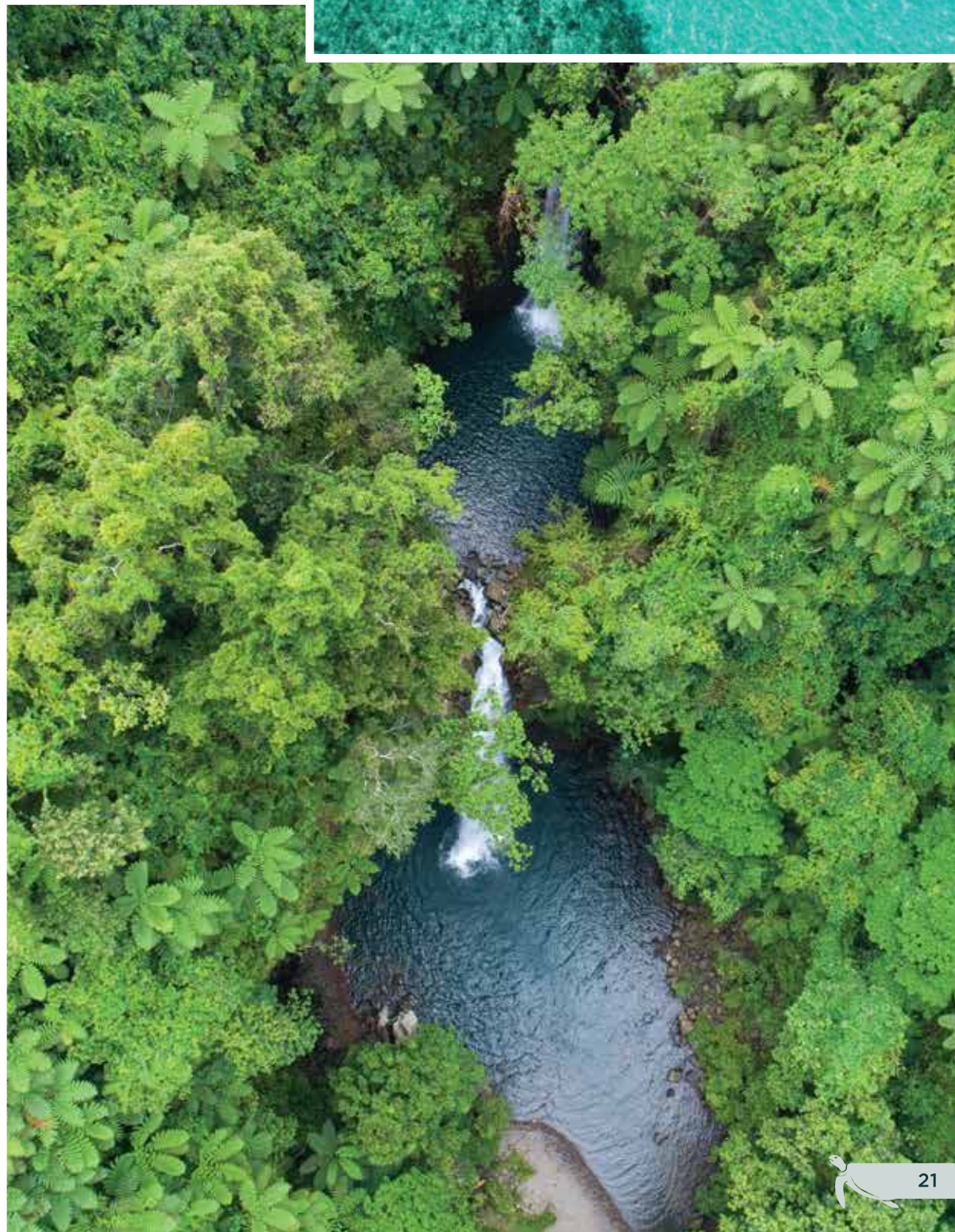
The paradise to more than 300 islands, Fiji welcomes everyone from all over the world. When travelling to this island land, you can book your flights to Nadi Island where a majority of international planes land. It is the centre of the nation's tourism with its luxurious stays, world-class restaurants, and markets that can be splurged. Another choice is the regional and international hubs at Nausori International Airport in Suva, the capital of the island nation.

Suva, being the capital of Fiji is flooded with travellers looking for adventure and beach fun. Apart from that, the city is also passing through for visitors travelling to little islands in Fiji. The best time of year to visit Fiji is during May. Not only will you score cheaper flights and accommodation at this time of year, but you'll also enjoy clear sunny skies with low chances of rain and high temperatures, making this the best time for outdoor activities.

Islands talking

The major islands in Fiji are Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, where you will find most of the population. When travelling to the paradise of island land make sure you are prepared with all your swimwear, because that is all you are going to need. Visiting different islands is something that people often do in Fiji. Upon arrival at the airport, you will find easy transportation that will help you

reach different Fiji resorts, accommodations, and top tourist attractions. There are taxis and buses for inter-island travel and ferries if you want to hop to other islands. The land of white sand beaches has always been a tourist attraction for couples and honeymooners looking for a staycation to relax and bond with each other. What can be more romantic than a hammock overlooking the sunset and ripples of water from the ocean?



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Cruising on adventures through Islands

Travellers looking for a White Water adventure in Fiji are in for a treat. The white water rafting adventures in Fiji are out of this world. The opportunity to swim through the frothy waves into the ocean with dolphins and fishes is something that cannot be missed. If you are looking to add some fun to your trip, you can go Paintballing. Paintballing adventure at Sonaisali Island Resort Fiji is perfect for an adrenaline rush evening. Another highlight in your Fiji itinerary can be a Jet Boat safari in the Sigatoka River, with thrills and spills, culture and education it is the best-rounded trip on the main island.

Explore the main island of Viti Levu, from visiting a secluded beach, to white water rafting or exploring the Oho caves. A hike to the Headhunter caves is what the history junky in your needs. A tour of the Oho Caves will open you to the historical realms of Fiji. The island will take you through all kinds of scenic marvels along with historic sightings that will leave you mesmerised. You can also take part in the Kava Ceremony, when visiting any village in Fiji it is customary to present a gift of Yaqona (Kava root) to present to the

executive head of the town. It is an elaborate ceremony that takes a little bit of knowledge before taking part. It is like one of those grandeur occasions to welcome you. An activity that is enjoyed by travellers is Zipline. The only canopy zip line in the South Pacific, Zip Fiji's zip lines were developed with the same technology as the lines that we have all heard so much about in Costa Rica.

A ride for the foodies

Any travel experience must include food since it allows you to completely experience the culture of the place you are visiting. A trip to Fiji is enjoyable for qualified foodies as well as beach bums and party animals because each island has lush areas suited for cultivating the most delectable tropical fruits. Who could forget the incredibly fresh seafood?

When visiting Fiji, you must try lovo cuisine. Typically, the meats, fish, and vegetables in these flavorful dinners are prepared in an earth oven. The richness of this cuisine, which evolved over many years, dates back to the arrival of Melanesians in Fiji in the first century A.D. Their cultural traditions grew as Samoan and Tongan Polynesians from Tonga and Samoa traded with the Fijians. During the 1600s and

1700s, the diverse foods and vegetables that Dutch and English explorers brought along helped to further diversify Fijian cuisine.

Later, Indian labourers added to the cuisine's diverse flavours. To get you started on discovering all the Fijian fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry, and fish that have been combined into sensational recipes with tantalising flavours that will make you want to visit Fiji even more.

Fiji is a dream destination for travellers looking for scenic adventures and relaxing evenings for the mind. A destination that welcomes everyone with open arms for an experience of a lifetime.



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS



Make a note

- Fiji Is One Of The Few Nations To Have Three Official Languages. The languages are English, Fijian, and Fiji Hindi.
- Rugby Is The Most `credit for this goes to the Britishers for introducing the locals.
- The Practice Of Walking On Hot Stones Began In Fiji.
- Cannibalism Is A Part Of Fiji's History.
- Fiji Has A Traditional Drink Known As Kava. It is also the country's national drink.



The India-Fiji connection

Fiji has always been an experiential destination and India and Fiji has a lot of similarities. Talking about this connection, Kathy says, "We have something for everyone, be it bag-pack, or leisure, branded hotels or boutique hotels, travellers will the Fijian hospitality everywhere. Fiji has always been deeply linked with India as over 40 per cent of the population from Indian origin have made this Pacific nation their home for over a century. A lot of cultural infusions can be witnessed in Fiji, the love for food, and the way we greet people is the same as in India."

Fiji is now welcoming travellers and is geared up to tap the potential segment from India. Shedding some light on the potential segments, Kathy adds, "Primarily, our primary focus will be on the honeymooners or couples from India because they are quick decision-makers. Secondly, pre-Covid, huge demand in MICE was noticed, therefore we intend to tap this particular segment. And thirdly, the family vacationer is on our list. We plan to position Fiji as a great destination for honeymooners, family, and leisure travellers, from luxury escapades, golf tourism, and marine adventure to destination weddings."

The source market

At the moment, Fiji is overloaded with tourists from Australia and New Zealand. Fiji's major source markets are Australia followed by New Zealand, North America (US & Canada), the United Kingdom, Europe, and China has been taken over by Japan. Adding further Kathy Koyamaibole says, "As Fiji is open to the Asian market, we hope that we will be able to revive the numbers from market and receive a positive number from there as well. India is part of our developing and sustainable markets and thus it's a significant market for us. While this is a long-haul market, we don't expect a massive footfall from India but a decent number is certainly expected. We are sure to witness an increasing propensity to travel to Fiji from India."

Matai Specialist Programme

This year, Fiji has revamped Matai Specialist Programme and incentives varied per market, it can be a trip to Fiji or some sort of monetary incentive. Speaking on the success of the Matai Specialist Programme, Kathy mentions, "It is more structured now, fresh, competitive, and new branding for the programme. It was a significant effort from all the travel trade members across Fiji to come forward and design the Matai Specialist Programme and give it a new look and rebranding. We have been receiving a fantastic response from India and till now have managed to get 400 registrations within one month and 200 of them completed the programme and we believe to receive the same response from other parts of the world."

Fiji Holiday

Fiji is known for its white-sand beaches, turquoise waters, year-round tropical warmth and world-renowned hospitality. "In Fiji, we are looking at highlighting a plethora of experiences through the length and breadth of the Destination. Fiji has always been a land of sand, sun and sea, but we also need to realise that there are many in-land activities also such as zipline, hiking, etc. Fiji has thousands of islands, and 353 islands are inhabitable, out of this, we only inhabit a third of it. Fiji has welcomed more than 100,000 international visitors since its borders opened back-up in December 2021. As Fiji continues to update and simplify entry requirements, travellers from around the globe will be able to enjoy a famous Fiji holiday and experience everything the country is known for," shares Kathy.



Kathy Koyamaibole



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Fairmont Maldives

Purest and most untainted form of hospitality

Sirru Fen Fushi

Fairmont Maldives offers more than luxurious villas, world-class dining, and a fantastic location. Their core pillars are sustainability, family and wellness and they endure to create long-lasting memories for their guests. Mizaan Saeed, Senior Sales Manager, Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi talks about the attractive plans for Indian market.

- **Bharti Sharma**



HOTELLIGENCE

It's a tropical ocean-hugging hideaway where people can indulge their body and soul with unprocessed healing properties only nature can provide. Fairmont Maldives is blissfully nestled amidst the natural enchantment of the Maldives, creating a sense of exotic escape with all the creature comforts. The property keeps the environment natural with simple and elegant additions, which is the best way to highlight the remarkable landscape. Culture is powerful influencer behind the foundation of many brands. The biggest example is the evolution of the Indian market in terms of globalisation. "India was the largest market in 2021 with over 278,740 travellers and a market share of 22.6 per cent. As of March 30, Maldives welcomed over 427,677 tourists to the country, out of which 46,154 or 10.8 per cent of tourists are from India, ranking as the third top source market to the destination. We focus on creating a stay memorable for our guests. Perhaps therefore, so many celebrities, royalty, and artists have made their favourite Fairmont brand their home away from home," shares Mizaan.

Deep understanding of Indian society

Today people seek out brands that project their values through their actions. In industries such as tourism and hospitality, Fairmont Maldives offers a full range of luxury experiences, so the guests can always feel welcomed and privileged. Talking particularly about India market, Mizaan tells, "Indian travellers are equally important to us just as any other, and understanding the complexity of the Indian society, we have created the best luxury experiences by offering the most exclusive accommodation choices, dining options, wellness activities, and bespoke sustainable journeys."



Indian guests' response is noteworthy

The Maldives is a dream destination for many thanks to its beautiful islands and the mesmerising marine ecosystem. It also has a colourful culture that travellers can witness and experience while interacting with the people of the Maldives. Mizaan feels that the level of interest for future stays is growing in the Indian market. "Earlier this year, in May, Fairmont Maldives invited all partners to build a bridge of connection at the SATTE event—Asia's leading travel and tourism exhibition. We have been receiving guests from India. We also, strongly believe in recommendations, and so, our TripAdvisor reviews made by the guests who have stayed at our resort, speak for themselves. At Fairmont Maldives, we strongly believe in a bright future and another successful year to welcome. Our businesses' overall plan is to reach potential consumers from all regions of the Indian market, and hence, we have planned a set of attractive activities and offerings for the upcoming year, which we will be announcing closer to the finalised dates."

Passion for hospitality is one of the many key ingredients

Each international market will have varying preferences for products, foods, product/food quality levels, and even brands. Similar way, Fairmont Brand is synonymous with 'place of occasion' and 'understanding the guests'. "We believe that regional factors and culture are very important to any brand for a successful journey. Day after day, we are receiving positive reviews on our online channels and moreover, our guests from India becoming our returning customers. Our passion for hospitality is one of many key ingredients for delivering guest satisfaction along with a seamless holiday experience. Our resort has achieved several globally recognised awards, such as Best Island Resort, Best Honeymoon resort, and Best Spa in the Indian Ocean are just a few to mention," says Mizaan.



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Dynamic and charismatic veteran



A progressive mindset, vibrant personality, and ability to transform the business into a profitable gain make him a perfect choice for this magnitude. Sandeep Johri, General Manager, Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences has an extraordinary persona which inspires many in the industry.

- Sudipta Saha

Sandeep Johri



It's often hard to describe a man with exemplary achievements; an industry veteran Sandeep Johri has a enigmatic personality, with new-age thinking. With 29 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Sandeep has been a key contributor in the process of conceptualising, launching, executing and stabilising the hotels and their operations.

His six-year journey with Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences has been phenomenal, sharing his experience with the property, he says, "Kolkata has been a great experience. In the last six years, the hotel has undergone a sea change in the way we conducted our business. He feels proud of the way business has turned up, it has been a great achievement in terms of positioning and how people view the product. It has been extremely rewarding and fruitful."

Sandeep brings diverse knowledge with him, and as the General Manager of Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences, his vision has been to position it as one of the most preferred and go-to destinations in

the city of joy. Speaking on how the growth has been so far, he shares, "In terms of numbers, we have witnessed tremendous growth. Fundamentally, the hotel industry is reflective of business around us and the benchmark is, are we achieving more than the fare share. Every business has to be profitable and viable and for that, the prime concern was to elevate the product, service, positioning and confidence in the team. We have been able to see a stark rise in the ADR and the growth has been exponential and we have been able to generate profit throughout."

His ardour and enthralling attitude motivate many of us. This passionate hotelier drives immense satisfaction in supporting young talent and grooming them for the larger role and this is the reason the entire team of Novotel Kolkata is young, dynamic and focused. He satisfies his inner soul by keeping himself involved in various philanthropic activities such as Christmas Gift distribution to the special kids every year and very recently launched the 'Helping

Hands Initiative' where meals were door dropped to various nearby residents staying in isolation due to Covid Infection and are unable to receive assistance for their daily meals.

A commendable approach toward his team is appreciable, and his zeal and passion to introduce new elements to the hotel are highly appreciable. He knows the art of hospitality and understands it to the core, therefore, over the years, he has delivered praiseworthy results.

Sandeep has worked across the country and has been a part of many strong hospitality brands in India some of these include The Ramada, The Ambassador Group, Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Centre, The Chancery Group & Sarovar Hotels. He joined Accor in 2013 as a pre-opening GM of Novotel Ahmedabad which he successfully launched and operated before taking over the reins of Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences in September 2016.

Sahyog Foundation

Unraveling the tourism startups in Himachal

Tourism has significant potential to generate employment in the hills, Sahyog Foundation has helped 344 tourism startups by educating and consulting them for registration of homestays in Himachal Pradesh. Siddharth Bakaria, President, Sahyog Foundation tells about the structuring and scenario of the homestays industry.

- **Bharti Sharma**



Can you elaborate on the functioning mechanism of the Sahyog Foundation?

Sahyog Foundation works primarily for tourism, environmental causes, and education for underprivileged people in North India. We have 21000 volunteers working actively.

How do you plan to minimize migration from the hills? What are your plans to generate employment in the tourism sector through your foundation?

We can reduce migration of locals by providing them with professional education, employment opportunities, healthcare facilities, etc. Rural youth should be targeted to train them for better adoption of technology for those who are engaged in farming. We are working towards the vision of registering a thousand more homestays in the coming three years through our foundation. This will result in generating employment for thousands of households; this is our exclusive plan

What guidelines have been set in place for converting houses into homestays in Himachal? How is it expected to boost the plans to develop tourism as an industry?

It's effortless! The registration of Homestays is done at the Distt. Tourism Development Office with a nominal registration fee of Rs.100/- only. Some of the most essential requirements for a homestay is a well-maintained and well-equipped house with adequate parking facility. Guest rooms should be clean, airy, pest-free, and without dampness and naturally ventilated. Availability of bathrooms is mandatory with WC toilets and toilet paper. Good quality chairs, working tables and other necessary furniture should be there,

should have a kitchen facility, or you can serve from your home kitchen. For more information, you can check Himachal Pradesh Home Stay Scheme - 2008 online.

In what capacity is the state govt supporting these homestays to nurture in a regulated manner?

Well, I have a separate comment here; while hotels continue to reel under the impact of the pandemic, homestay units have been beneficiaries of this shift. This has resulted in direct conflict with the beleaguered hotel industry, which has been crying over its losses. On one hand we have the hotel industry, which is on the brink of a wipeout and on the other we have illegal homestays and bread & breakfast (B&B) units making money without paying due taxes to the government. This is not only unfair and a loss of revenue for the government but poses a serious environmental and security issue for the state.

The state government needs to have a dedicated minister for tourism, and there's an urgent need for the government to enhance their support to tourism on an advanced level. I believe there should be a more accessible process for registering homestays. In my opinion, an easy online application would be a welcome step in this direction for starters.

Skill Development can be a challenge when we talk about homestays or experiences in rural regions. How do you plan to train the staff in the region, so hospitality levels are maintained?

I don't believe we need any technical skills to manage homestays. Functioning a homestay is a rather elementary exercise, however scalability is a different game as a specific skill set is required for



Siddharth Bakaria

managing bookings, digital marketing and customer service. In order to cater to this challenge, we have organised 11 camps in the past with the aim to educate people in remote areas and villages for promoting eco-tourism and enabling them to start a homestay. We are already working to create a digital consultancy to help them and should have things up and running in this direction in the coming months.

There is no denying the fact that having an impressive structure and deploying the best marketing strategy can play a crucial role in acquiring new markets or retaining old ones, but creating comfort and delivering quality service is hospitality's most significant success

criteria. Some of the world's best hotels owe their success majorly to their ability to emphasise comfort and top-notch quality service at every step of the customer's journey, from bookings to check out. Whether that involves educating staff on client relationship techniques or implementing regular checks on customer service experience. There are numerous ways to improve your performance:

- Make the homestay customer service a team effort
- Train your staff regularly
- Adopt technology
- Keep your team updated on changes
- Define customer service and empower your team
- Emphasise empathy and patience



HEADS IN BEDS

Soneva Resorts Maldives

Healing In Heaven

Championing sustainability with true blue luxury and impeccable hospitality, Soneva Jani and Soneva Fushi continue to retain the top spot despite the Maldives being inundated with hotels. No other properties even come close...

- **Misbah Mansuri**

HEADS IN BEDS

For me, blue is the colour of luxury. Deep azures, soothing baby blues, sparkling sapphires and turquoises, comforting indigos—they remind me of an island getaway where all I have to contemplate is whether my first swim of the day should be in an infinity pool or the ocean.

On a four-day visit to the Maldives, which included a stay at two properties on two islands this summer. With two outstanding properties in the Maldives, Soneva is leading the way when it comes to barefoot eco luxury and so the resorts naturally had to be my top choice in paradise island.

The heartland of good life

'No shoes, no news.' That's the philosophy of Soneva Fushi - and, in fact, all Soneva properties. From the moment our seaplane drops us off on the powder-white sand, our shoes are off and returned to you at the end of your stay. From then on, we make our way (barefoot) around the island by bicycle, getting lost Robinson Crusoe-style.

I love how the environment is at the heart of everything Soneva does. All buildings are built, where possible, to fit in with the existing nature. You'll find palm trees poking through the roofs and abundant wildlife - there are bunny rabbits everywhere. While Soneva Fushi is a tropical island living at its most chic and comfortable, its sister property is glitzy and luxurious at its very best.

Soneva Jani: Overwater Luxury Like No Other

When I wake up at Soneva Jani, endless views of the turquoise sea - or is it jade engulfs us.

Our overwater villa is drenched with the incredible light from the ocean and sky, the cobalt and cerulean blues merging like a watercolour painting. Retractable glass walls and futuristic roofs, open up the space so we can fall

out of bed and dip into your pool, or fall asleep directly under the stars, the sound of the waves all around us.

Breakfast at Down to Earth sets the tone for the day as we pad along the boardwalk, barefoot, to the beachside setting, basking in the sun rays, hungry for what's to come. The healthy selections at breakfast are just mind-blowing, from passion fruit and ginger smoothies to the in-house 'Energiser Boosters' made of special blends of juices, spices and herbs. There's also a cold room housing a bakery, with an overflowing cheese table, 'cold cuts' corner and a tropical fruit station, where you can 'pick and mix' from a rainbow of fruits.

Found on the edge of the Maldives in the Noonu Atoll - next stop: Sri Lanka - Soneva Jani offers the ultimate Treasure Island experience. 'Chapter Two' is a selection of James Bond-style villas - which offer either sunrise or sunset views - and which only opened in 2020. They feel modern yet authentic and ramp up the Robinson Crusoe feel with slides, which take you straight into the lagoon, vast indoor and outdoor living spaces, sweeping terraces, private pools and glorious outdoor bathrooms.

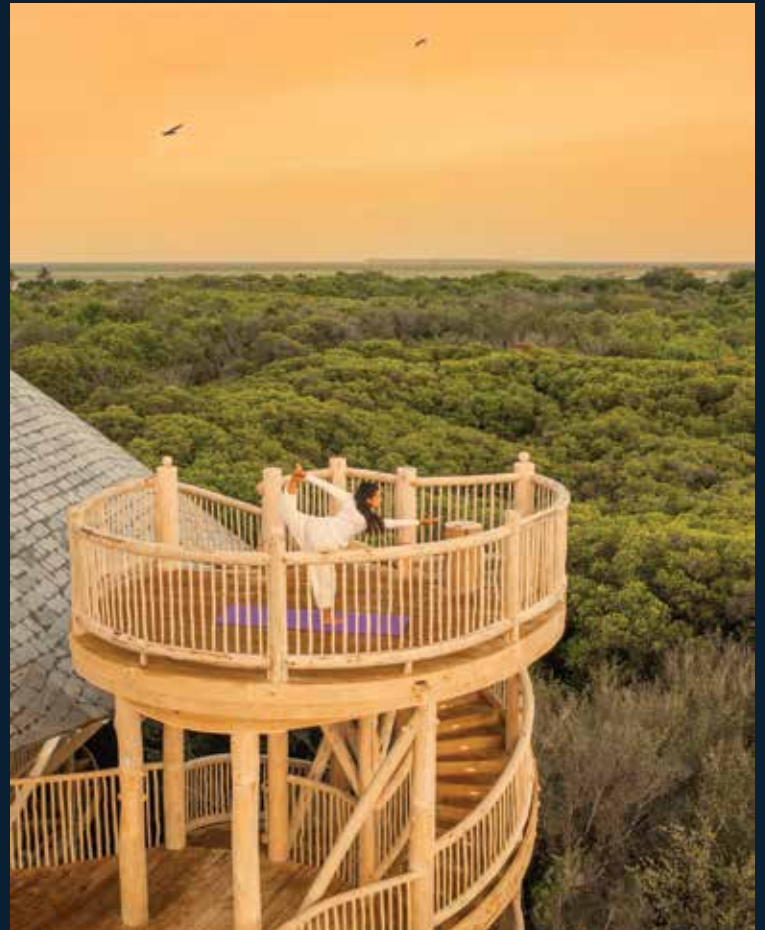
The design is beautifully thought-out - think: rustic-luxe style - with the villas built using sustainable materials and boasting undulating lines and curvy architecture - no doubt, to reflect the ocean waves. Each villa also comes with your own Barefoot Butler - so you have a member of staff to whisk you around in a golf cart, arrange activities and co-ordinate your stay.

When it comes to dining, Overseas by Mathias Dahlgren is highly commended. The menu, devised by the acclaimed Swedish chef, has a focus on plant-based dishes and locally-sourced produce.

However our favourite experience had to be the feasting at the Crab Shack. The beachside eatery is overseen by Sri Lankan chef

Priyantha. We eat with our feet tucked into the sand, bib on, ready to feast on oversized Sri Lanka mud crabs and Kamchatka crabs. Melt in the mouth goodness bursting with freshness, the crabs are wok-fried

with black pepper or chilli, steamed in herbs, or as an authentic Sri Lankan curry, while seafood salads, calamari fritti and prawns a la plancha are the perfect starters. Each bite is better than the last.



Soneva Fushi: A Blissful Island retreat

At sister resort Soneva Fushi, our imagination is captured by the swish and drop dead gorgeous Beach Villa which is ensconced in a verdant expanse of rich jungle. Think vast living spaces and views towards the sunrise or sunset, a great pool, with the beach at our doorstep. We loved how details everywhere celebrate the location – so you'll find portholes in villa floors so you can watch the sting-rays below and ladders which lower you down into the ocean from your terrace. Villas come with bikes so you can whisk around carefree and the widespread eco initiatives are ground-breaking and work towards educating communities with the main goal being to preserve the region.

In terms of dining, at Soneva Fushi, the choice of dining here is almost overwhelming – with 12 different restaurants to choose from. You can zip-line your way to your main meal at Flying Saucers or taste inventive cuisine at Fresh in the Garden, where chef Mads Refslund is currently running a 12-month pop-up championing produce grown in the kitchen gardens (found underneath the tree-top restaurant). We love how award-winning Maldivian chef Sobah Abdullah is championing traditional Maldivian dishes and elevating them for a fine-dining clientele. At Out of the Blue, he fuses local ingredients within Vietnamese, Japanese and Indonesian-style dishes – from tuna with ponzu and guacamole to spicy lamb chops cooked on the robata grill.

It was at Mihiree Mithaa that I had the best Lamb Ravioli and an Indian meal beyond comprehension, from fried fish to biryani, everything tantalizing teasing my tastebuds. Particularly special are Soneva's ubiquitous ice cream and chocolate rooms that are still etched in our memory as a favourite.

Verdict

Our favorite aspect is the group's Slow Life principles that have pioneered sustainable culinary initiatives in the resort's kitchens,

creating farm-to-table experiences and harnessing Soneva Jani's abundant organic gardens to support the circular, 'Waste to Wealth' economy. In Soneva Soul, the group has created a wellness brand that combines thousands of years of ancient healing with modern science and medicine to reconnect mind, body and soul.

As a wellness junkie, I love how Soneva Soul embeds pillars ranging from movement, sleep, yoga and meditation programmes; wellness and lifestyle products; a global network of acclaimed wellness specialists; and innovative, regenerative modalities and medical services and isn't just a superficial wellness journey but a transformative one. Linked by raised walkways that wind among the trees, the three-level complex is designed in perfect harmony with its stunning setting on the eastern side of the island. Complementing the existing Over-water Spa at The Gathering, it includes open-air treatment rooms, consultation rooms, a state-of-the-art gym and juice bar. A yoga pavilion and meditation platform sit high above the treeline, offering 360-degree views across the turquoise private lagoon.

Particularly special is the 90 minutes full body reflexology session by wellness expert and world traveller Dr Alex who took me through how he learnt the art in Vietnam by a guru who actually discovered reflexology as a means to serve the dejected army in war. Sunset dolphin cruises, silent cinema by the ocean and nature conservation expeditions take the entire soulful healing a notch up. I

At both Soneva resorts, there are wonderful star-gazing observatories. Come night-time, resident astronomers reveal the secrets of the dark skies, which are suddenly scattered with countless celestial bodies, as if God has turned on a gazillion lights. It's nothing short of heavenly. At Director's Cut, an overwater cinema dining experience serving Japanese cuisine, as we watch a movie on a large screen by

the ocean, we realize what makes Soneva so special. We succumb to the romantic allure of the Maldives that Soneva has infused the landscape with, something in us has dissipated. Life is starting to feel good again. Sometimes, it's as much about what you take home with you as it is the experience itself. And that's the magic of Soneva, its true super-power...



HEADS IN BEDS

What are you most excited about for Soneva this year?

At Soneva, we have always endeavoured to be a pioneer in the hospitality industry, whether it is opening some of the first spas in resorts in Asia, introducing private pools to villas, redefining the water villa, introducing sliding roofs that open up the sky to the master bedroom, adding slides to water villas for direct sea access, 'barefoot luxury', our focus on sustainability and commitment to existing in harmony with our local, natural environment, to our complimentary ice cream and chocolate parlours, open-air bathrooms, observatories, and private cinemas at all of our resorts.

In late 2021, we launched our new wellness concept – Soneva Soul which has been very well received and we will continue to develop and enhance our wellness offering by bringing world-renowned specialist therapists, doctors and treatment offerings.

This year, we will continue to innovate, both reinforcing our existing concepts and creating new, unforgettable experiences for our guests. We have so many exciting ideas already in development, from new restaurant concepts and innovations for our villas including new Beach Villas at Soneva Jani, new family offerings at Soneva Jani and sustainable initiatives such as propagating coral around our islands to protect our reefs and support our delicate ecosystems as part of our partnership with Coralive.com

As a GM/Founder, what has been your approach, strategy and leadership style throughout the pandemic and after?

Eva and I have been through many crises during our long career and there are few things that are common to all of them:

We have always operated on the basis that we have no control of the cards, which we are dealt, but we have complete control on how we play the cards. Difficult times bring out people's true characters. One can either make good or bad from difficult events and it depends very much on one's attitude and one's frame of mind.

I find the saying by Lao Tzu very

inspiring and relevant, during crises. He said, "good fortune has its roots in disaster".

And, they always end!

Like many other businesses, the pandemic has been a very difficult period for us, but the most important thing is that we do not lose our values and our humanity.

The Maldives is inundated with hotels, what gives the property an edge over the rest despite being fairly new here?

Firstly, we are both owners and operators of our resorts, which allows us to ensure that we are very focused on our philosophy and enhancing that. We are able to evolve and innovate rapidly as the world changes. A visit to a Soneva will clearly show how different we are from any other luxury experience, that exists in the markets where we operate.

Furthermore, Slow Life is a guiding principle for all our Hosts. It is our moral compass, as well as our operating compass. Sustainability runs through our core, and we always strive to limit the negative environmental impacts of our activities – which is both difficult, and yet critical, for a company which operates resorts in remote places of pristine natural beauty. Our Slow Life focus has led to levels of guest loyalty and repeat business that far surpass industry norms, and this tells me unequivocally that the values of a company matter to those who consume its products.

We believe that luxury is defined as something that is rare or uncommon for the consumer. It is something novel and authentic, that strikes a chord in one's heart when it is experienced. That's why we have pursued 'Intelligent Luxury' in our desire to challenge and fully understand what luxury truly means. The last 30 to 40 years has seen a major shift in the demographics of the wealthy. They live in cities, where pollution is present in all its forms: unclean environments, noise and light. They are not as in touch with nature, they hardly have time to sit down and take a breath, let alone spend large amounts of quality time with their family and friends.

With this in mind, the experience we have created for our guests is as far

removed from an urban scenario as possible, letting them indulge in things they rarely get to do in their daily lives. We ask our guests if they would like to remove their shoes when they arrive. Our 'No News, No Shoes' philosophy is all about disconnecting from the stresses of daily life and reconnecting with the earth with the sand between your toes.

Which are the most important markets for the brand?

Our markets are quite diverse however we do see visitation from key markets, such as the UK, Germany, USA and the GCC region and India due to their close proximity. Over the past six months we have also seen many guests from the Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark. However, the guests that stay at Soneva come from all over the world and more than half of them are repeat guests, like the multi-generational families who have been coming to stay with us for years on end.

We attract a lot of families with our extensive programme of activities for children and teenagers. Our children's clubs, called The Den, offer so much excitement and opportunities for learning. We also see guests who take great interest in water sports, diving, and wellness.

Wellness has emerged as a crucial fixture for Soneva with the launch of Soneva Soul. What are your visions from the concept?

Our new Soneva Soul is the culmination of everything we have learned since we launched our spa at Soneva Fushi back in 1995, the very first resort spa in the Maldives. Along Soneva's journey at the forefront of the hospitality and wellness sectors, we have gathered knowledge and wisdom from ancient healing practices and the latest in medical science and pioneering technology. Much like Soneva, at Soneva Soul we are pioneering an approach that combines apparent opposites to offer our guests a transformative and completely personalised wellbeing experience in inspiring surroundings that hopefully reconnects their mind, body, and soul.

At Soneva we believe that the concept of 'wellness' permeates all that we do whether it is our sustainable, barefoot philosophy that reconnects our guests to the earth; our life-affirming natural locations; our delicious yet health-focused cuisine; or our life-changing guest experiences.

But the genesis of Soneva Soul comes from my own, personal wellness journey. Ever since my own personal experience of recovering from Stage 4 cancer a couple of years ago, I have wanted to create a wellness concept with greater depth.

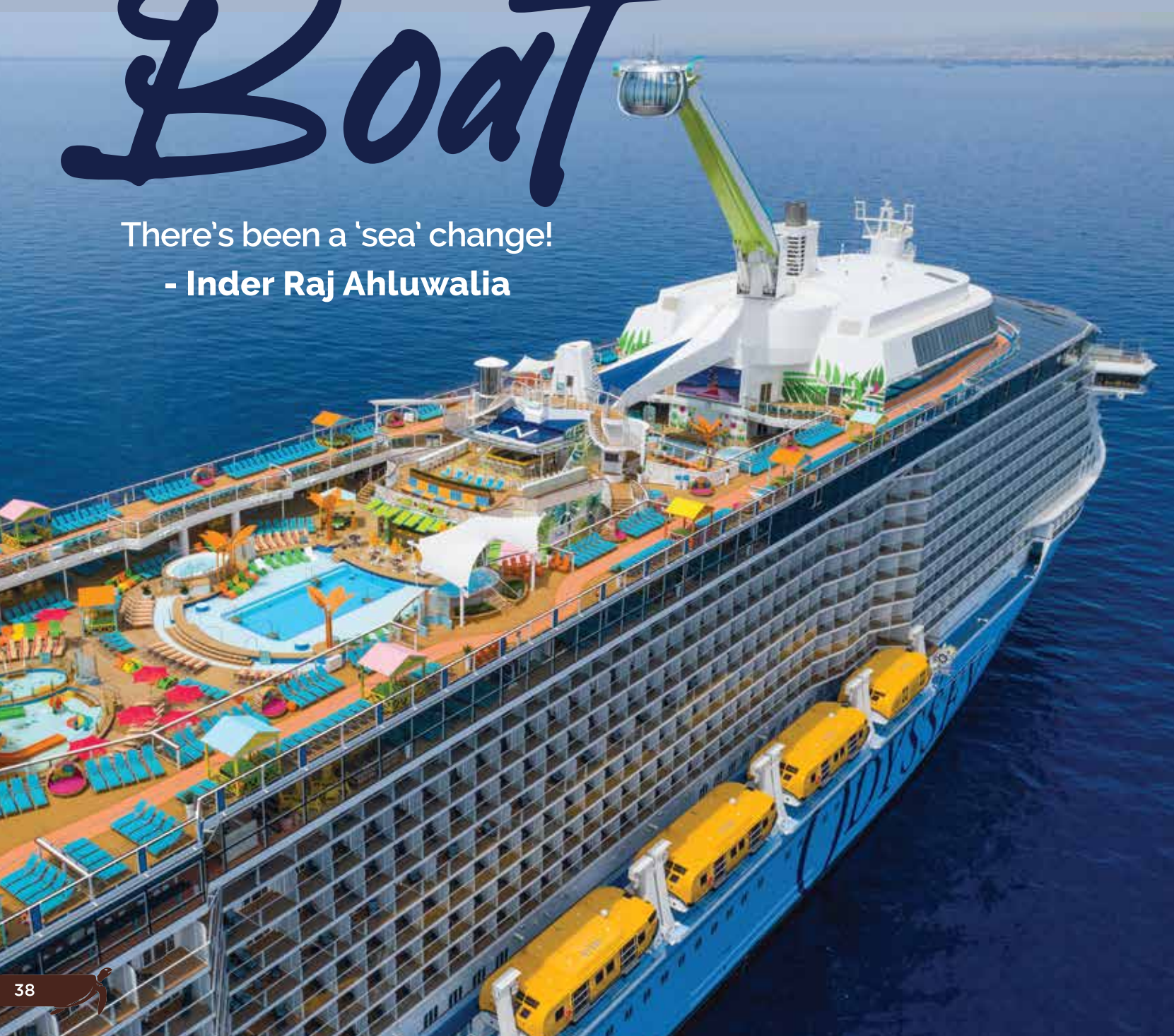
Hence it was while I was undergoing chemotherapy in Istanbul that the initial design concept for Soneva Soul Island Spa at Soneva Jani first came about. The overall vision for Soneva Soul was inspired by our beautiful natural island surroundings. I believe that nature is awe-inspiring, and its beauty is such an important contributor to one's total wellbeing. It was why I chose the area on the island's east coast, high above the mangroves, because it is such an incredible setting and the Soneva Soul concept and design was born from there.



Sonu Shivdasani

Don't Miss This Boat

There's been a 'sea' change!
- Inder Raj Ahluwalia





The once elitist and sole preserve of the super-rich, cruising is now considered a pleasant outing for 'you, me, and the others'.

There's a lot going for cruises that makes them exciting getaways. The holiday outings they provide are comfortable and exciting, and they have a great attribute, which is injecting a sense of romance into one's everyday life.

The start itself was charming. The winding streets of Old San Juan welcomed us with their strong Spanish flavour merged into a tropical setting, as we arrived to board the ship for a famed South Caribbean cruise, a five-day odyssey through enchanting little islands straddling the bluest of seas.

We sailed at sunset. Ahead, the

Caribbean was a pale grey, fast becoming black, while behind us the twinkling lights of San Juan faded into tiny specks. We were well and truly on our way.

A spirit of adventure has lured visitors to the Caribbean ever since the days of Columbus and the conquistadors. Modern-day explorers discover new experiences on nature walks through verdant rain forests or on more vigorous hikes to the lush peaks of dormant volcanoes. Snorkeling excursions take one to iridescent coral reefs full of neon-coloured tropical fish, while challenging dives reveal the last secrets of stoned shipwrecks and start the adrenaline rushing.

There's quite a bit one can do to stay honest. Bird-watch at small but lush nature reserves, sail to unspoiled coves, reel in a game fish, skim across the waves on a

windsurfer or ride the big rollers. In the Caribbean, adventure beckons at every isle, throughout the year.

Each morning saw us dock at a beautiful island for a day-stop that included sightseeing, hearty lunching, and lots of ice creams and banana daiquiris.

Amongst the region's choicest pickings, St. Thomas boasts some forty scenic beaches, exciting nightlife, and some of the Caribbean's most spectacular views. Magens Bay is ranked by National Geographic as being amongst the world's ten most beautiful beaches, and quaint shopping arcades and waterfront restaurants typify downtown Charlotte Amalie.

The next morning threw up another delight. Saint-Martin is bi-national, owned by the

Netherlands and France, and while the Dutch side has casinos animating the nightlife, the French part boasts famous cuisine and trendy hotels. Blessed by nature, the island has 38 white sand beaches, coral reefs, tiny islets, and little houses covered with colourful grape vines. This time it was the turn of ice creams and sparkling wine.

Our last port of call was St. Croix, discovered by Columbus who called it a 'lush garden'. From the calm waters surrounding Buck Island Reef to emerald-green golf courses, from select dining in chic restaurants to late-night snacks at waterfront cafes, St. Croix is all charm. The capitals, Christiansted and Frederiksted, are vibrant little towns with old-world waterfront ambience and loads of atmosphere.



A Delicate Indulgence

If there's one word that describes cruising, it is 'indulgence'. Guests are pampered thoroughly and effectively. On-board entertainment is omnipresent and heady. One can stretch out on the deck and listen to a live-band, enjoy live and recorded music in club and bar areas, join sophisticated lounge evenings, watch floor shows, do wine and cheese tasting, or go stargazing. Rounding things off are staff talent shows that would do credit to Broadway. Passengers join in for talent shows and everyone joins in for 'theme nights'.

There is special joy for gourmets. The food quantity and variety is staggering, making the cruise dining experience a grand affair that caters not just to the stomach but also the heart. The variety is vast and tempting, the preparations professional, and the displays and service pleasing to the eye and senses. All meals include low-fat 'Shipshape' items, apart from vegetarian entrees at lunch and dinner, fresh seasonal fruit, and 'natural' snacks.

For those who want a bit more than the layers of cold cuts, steaming curries, hot breads, baked vegetables, and assorted roasts, there are 'mid-meal' snacks and elaborate 'midnight buffets' on the decks.

On board things are mostly informally buzzing. No business suits except for the stipulated 'formal' nights, which require men to wear jackets and ties, and women to sport dresses and pantsuits. For the rest, the dress code is 'smart casual', which normally means jeans, T-shirts, and shorts.

If one considers the fact that cruises save costs in travelling from one place to another, they provide true value for money.

An activity in waiting' was how cruising was described some thirty years back. According to Ratna Chadha of Royal Caribbean Cruises, today not only is the wait well and truly over, things are literally 'buzzing'. The tides seem favorable, and the industry is set to 'steam ahead'.



Fact File

- A host of cruise companies combine to cover most parts of the world. The ships vary in size and classification, and cruises vary in duration, with the longer ones stretching for three weeks.
- Costs differ from cruise to cruise and can range from 100 U.S. Dollars per person per night, upwards.
- Cruising is a year-round activity.



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.

ADAPT INNOVATION & BE PRODUCTIVE

Being from a food and beverage background, it has been a remarkable journey for Jai Chugh, General Manager at DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Bani Square. His immense strength and idiosyncratic approach towards his team makes him stand out.

- Sudipta Saha



A passionate GM

Jai Chugh has worked hard to achieve the success; today being a General Manager he has an extremely focused approach. He enjoys his profession and is deeply involved with the team, "The best thing about being a General Manager is that there is so much to learn every day. Being from a food & beverage background, my journey as a GM has evolved through these years. I strongly believe in developing a distinctive work environment, spearheading strategic thinking and managing hotel's resources productively. Helping my team members and letting them shine each day makes me the most happiest. What's more satisfying is to see them grow and achieve their dreams. This role has given me so much and I am glad that I am able to contribute my knowledge in taking this hotel to newer heights with the support my highly talented team", shares Jai Chugh.

The evolving market

The hospitality industry in India has evolved over the years and last two year have been challenging for every brand. On the current market scenario, Jai Chugh mentions, "Post the third Covid wave which we saw in the month of January 2022, the demand has seen a steady growth with April being the highest demand month so far. We are expecting these demand trends to continue for the rest of the year. Currently the hotels are focusing on rate growth owing to the hard times the industry has witnessed in the last two years. With the demand going high, the hotels are now trying to balance the demand with rates to achieve higher profitability. The focus for the industry moving ahead will be try and match if not surpass the 2019 ADR numbers to obtain higher operations profits. This will help the hotels to mitigate the impact of Covid to a certain extent."

What's Trending?

With travel beginning to move again, India's inbound and

Jai Chugh

domestic tourism have started in a full swing. Speaking on the latest trends, he says, "Currently we can see a lot of domestic travel happening which is boosting the hotels demand. This travel demand is majorly driven by staycations and short getaways. Of late we have seen the business travel getting a lot of boost due to companies opening up and hiring back. With the international travel starting back again, we are expecting the demand in the market to go up further due to the pent-up

corporate demand. This is backed by the strong social event demand. We are expecting Quarter 4 of 2022 to be very high performing where the industry may see some huge demand influx."

We are different

Every property has a distinctive feature which sets them apart and makes them unique. Sharing on the uniqueness of DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square, Jai Chugh says, "With the carefully

crafted 201 rooms which are supported by an all-day dining restaurant and two bars, a fitness centre and a rooftop swimming pool, DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani square has all the facilities to cater to not only the corporate travellers, but also individual FITs who are looking for a short getaway or staycation. We also have banquet facilities to cater to corporate events as well as open air function areas to help our guests with family functions and intimate weddings."



The pinnacle of **Thai** Hospitality

Thailand's no stranger to tourism, but it remains full of fascinating innovations. While some are fascinated by the pristine beaches of Phuket, to some the bustling streets and nightlife of Bangkok is an attraction. But do you know what excites me the most about Thailand? Any guesses? Well, it's their bespoke hospitality. The way they greet with a wide smile and folded hands, uttering the rhythmic 'swadeeka', infuses my mind and heart with tranquility and poise.

- Bharti Sharma



My growing understanding of the destination has always made me wonder; doesn't anyone in Thailand have a bad day ever? In all my travels to this beautiful country, I've never encountered a single Thai person talking rude or ignoring tourists. The ever-welcoming smile, the warmth and 'never mind' attitude of Thai people leaves a mark in every tourist's heart.

Let's dive right in!

I have been to Thailand many times, but the destination has kept me captivated on every trip and left me wanting for more. Precisely why I said 'yes' at once to my most experiential trip to Thailand ever. My tryst with the country is unique, I say this because it's hard to ward-off fantasies in Thailand. I have seen some of the most spectacular big fat weddings happening in Thailand. It's a no brainer for couples who are looking for that fairytale wedding, packed with colours, breathtaking

backdrops, culinary extravagance and of course, the most hospitable people. Thailand's attractions are diverse in every aspect with each attraction providing a rewarding and memorable affair in its own way.

As I kickstart my journey with the super chilled group of journalists and the fantabulous TAT Delhi Team, we set on a mission to uncover some of the unsung gems that still pepper the so-called Pearl of the Andaman, I am not exactly free of trepidation. Planted comfortably in my window seat of the Thai Airways flight, I say 'Can't wait to see you, Thailand!'

Being a tourist hotspot for decades, Phuket is barely left with a few uncovered bases. Nevertheless, the isle's treasure trove contains plenty of shiny jewels, a hoard of spectacular scenery, quiet temples, fiery indigenous cuisine, and – my point of interest for the first morning of this trip – basking in

the unspoiled stretches of golden sand from the comforts of our hotel Phuket Marriott Resort and Spa, Nai Yang Beach.

Where everything touches your soul

"Open your eyes and take in the scenery," therapeutic words coming from our guide. I could already feel the trees staring back at me with a wisdom and grace that is nothing less than 'magical'. The mere glance at the nature was enough to wear-off all the exertion and fatigue of the late-night flight. The vistas of Phuket are so refreshing yet laidback that one could never feel down. It was time for some Spa. The 2-hour spa session at The Oasis Spa uplifted my mind and soul, taking me into 'nirvana'; it was a spa session I didn't want to end. My body could not have agreed more, it badly needed one.



It's time for CBT

Our second day kick-started with a journey full of new experiences waiting to be unfold. The first stop was Bang Rong. This place was nothing like the current trend of tourism is all about. Imagine a place fueled by locals inviting visitors not just into their lands but into their homes. Interesting and cherished anecdotes of their lives are shared, meals are prepared together, daily activities are being shared with the visitors, in-short for a period of time the locals share their lives with the visitors. This form of Community-based tourism (CBT) is practiced at Bang Rong. I don't remember trying painting after my school days. And finally, trying my hand at painting pouches and peeling the pineapples here at Bang Rong, took me off in the past to my school days. As happy and content I was with the result of my painting, I equally cherished slipping into nostalgia of those good old school days. I'm sure travellers will have a good time painting and enjoy this informative tour on the emergence of Bang Rong.



Take your horse to the 'Old Town Road'

How many of you have travelled to Phuket and left mesmerized by its beaches and plethora of water sports? The first thing that's on a traveller's mind while visiting Phuket is the world-famous beaches, and man we can't really blame them. The beautiful beaches of Phuket have been attracting tourists from across the world for a while now. However, if I throw statements at you like snorkeling is great, but have you experienced the "Walking Street" Night Market at Lard Yai? Or beaches are beautiful, but did you capture the perfect insta-worthy photo at the SoiRomane? You'll have to see for yourself in order to believe when I say, taking a trip down the colourful Thalang road in Phuket Old Town will open a new dimension of Phuket for you, one that will be etched in your memory forever. I was taken aback by the Sino-Portuguese architecture, the bold colours of the buildings that will not let your shutters rest, the heritage and culture I was witnessing with my bare eyes; for a moment I forgot Phuket had a beach. My personal suggestion, walk the old town road to get a glimpse of the real Phuket.





Being your own master Chef!

Given a chance, would you ever take the opportunity of discovering the best recipes of the world-famous cuisine? I would have no answer to this question myself, before this trip to Thailand. The opportunity presented itself on the third day of my stay, when I was informed we had to take a Thai cooking class; a lifetime experience for travellers looking for that something extra on their vacation trips to Thailand. Imagine a dream stay on Phuket island with a chance to embark on a culinary expedition. Experience the colors and aromas of a local market, following the lead of an expert chef acquiring the techniques of world-famous Thai cuisine. The not-so-short culinary journey was a fun learning experience no doubt, but cooking yourself those perfect Pad thai, tom yum and spring rolls is a feeling unparalleled to none. It is the tailored, personalised, heart-touching experiences like these that makes a destination unique, leaving a memorable impact on our hearts and minds, creating memories to be preserved for life.

The 'flavours' of Bangkok

A day in Thailand is incomplete without indulging in the culinary delicacies the destination has to offer, more so when you're in Bangkok. The bustling markets of Bangkok are filled with aromas of the local delicacies one can't get enough of. Into the final leg of our Thailand trip, we were back in Bangkok, packed with renewed energy to explore the famed Bangkok cuisine and shopping. Amidst all the exploration and travelling, we made time to visit one of the world's best places to eat in style! It was a feast on scrumptious Thai food from a wide variety of regions. With our stomachs full and taste palettes satisfied, it was time for resuming our Bangkok ride. Our days could not have gone better, hopping on and off double-decker buses, enjoying the decadent food tour, dropping by popular landmarks



and savoring the flavors of Thailand. The citybus food tour was as educative as it was interesting. The entire tour replete with attractions, architectural marvels, magnificent temples, bustling markets and what not. When in Bangkok, do make out time to take the ride for everything Bangkok.

If you're a foodie, and street food makes you weak in the knees, Bangkok is a paradise for you, my friend! Strolling on the streets of Bangkok surrounded by hawkers selling curry, noodles, soup, and more is every food lover's dream come true. It's more than just the flavour of the food, it's the vibe of the areas selling the best street food in Thailand that makes it a must visit. These local food stalls are thronged by locals and tourists alike, keeping it busy, bustling and full of life almost all the time. Most of these carts specialise in a specific dish – and so they usually make that one dish really well. However, there are a few vendors that have mastered their trade having spent a lifetime perfecting generations-old recipe.

Recipe for the perfect Cocktail

Thailand has mastered the formula for delivering the perfect cocktail to visitors looking for weddings and honeymooners. A simple, yet effective concoction of infrastructure, activities, nature, culinary, hospitality and the personal touch. Throw in that genuine warmth, add in a huge range of entertainment and amenities, and you've got a recipe for a fun-filled wedding; Thailand's mantra for attracting weddings and honeymooners from across the globe. Swathes of white sand beaches, most romantic provinces, bustling markets with shopping options where visitors are spoilt for choice, makes Thailand an incredible destination for honeymooners and weddings.



Off-beat experiences to do in UTAH

Utah is known for Mighty 5 National Park and hiking opportunities around the state. Utah is much more than its national park and hike, it has many things for all types of traveller. Whether you are looking for adrenaline to relaxed activity, from rugged canyons to spa & wellness, we got you covered!

- Team Turtle

Slot Canyons

The narrow gorges in soft rocks like Utah's layered sedimentary deposits. Discover the best slot canyons of Utah ranging from roadside strolls to guided canyoneering in permit-only, highly technical channels. One of the truly classic hiking trails in the United States, let alone the world, Buckskin Gulch swerves through a subterranean paradise for the senses. Attempt this visually-arresting walk as a day trip, or walk the entire 20 miles over the course of four days. On most Southern Utah bucket lists, you'll find the local favourite one-two punch of Peek-a-Boo and Spooky Slot Canyons. These magnificent hikes, located in the Dry Fork area of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument area, can be done individually, but they make for a killer loop you can tackle in one afternoon of adventure.



River Rafting

Rafting a river can take you to some of the most remote places on Earth, filled with the darkest star-filled skies anywhere. Some of the most famous runs include the wild whitewater of Westwater and Cataract Canyons (class IV-V) on the Colorado River, the Gates of Lodore and Desolation Canyon (class III-IV) on the Green River, and the Upper and Lower stretches (class III) of the San Juan River. But it's not just the whitewater that Utah's rivers are famous for. There are also flat water stretches of these rivers that access secluded canyons like Labyrinth Canyon (Canyonlands National Park), Ruby and Horse Thief Canyon, the lower Provo River, the Little Grand Canyon, and many more.

Stargazing

Utah has the highest concentration of International Dark-Sky Association-certified locations, including communities, parks and protected areas. When we look into the dark skies with unaided eyes, nearly every star we see is within our galaxy. Perhaps it's no wonder that so many of us are drawn to look toward the Milky Way, whether it's simply to soak in its beauty or be changed in a way that is truly transformative. Of course, you'll want to take note of the weather and avoid nights where cloud cover is prevalent or potential storms are on the horizon.



Mountain Biking

Utah has made a name for itself when it comes to mountain biking. High-altitude tracks run through alpine forests in Northern Utah, and southern trails wind through red cliffs to panoramic desert views. Riders at every level can find great riding across the entire state. Utah mountain biking conjures visions of Moab's fabled trails, Slickrock, Porcupine Rim and Amasa back. These classic rides rightfully have a place in Mountain Biking's hall of fame.



Dinosaurs History

With fossil records of more dinosaur species than any other state and the most complete record of prehistoric life of any geographic area on the planet, Utah offers one of the world's largest collections of mounted dinosaur skeletons interspersed among actual discovery sites. No matter where you go in Utah, you aren't far from a significant museum, archeological dig, or former home to these astounding creatures. The George S. Eccles Dinosaur Park is the place to bring that dream to life, with 100-plus exhibits and realistic, full-sized dinosaur replicas, capturing the imagination of young and old alike. The Past Worlds exhibit at Natural History Museum of Utah is definitely a highlight.



Festivals

Utah is a hub of festivals. Hosted in Park City, Sundance Film Festival is one of the largest independent film festivals in the world. With additional venue locations in Salt Lake City, Ogden and at the Sundance Mountain Resort, and great access to some of the best skiing in the world, it only makes sense to pair the festival's promising films with more Utah experiences.

The Tony Award-winning festival has brought The Bard's plays to Cedar City stages since the early 1960s. The Utah Shakespearean Festival produced its first season on a makeshift platform. Now the Tony Award-winning festival operates with a \$7 million budget and attracts nearly 130,000 people to Cedar City.



Spa & Wellness

Relax and rejuvenate in one of Utah's luxurious spas. Plan a visit after an epic powder day or big canyoneering adventure, or just set aside a day to pamper yourself. The areas in and around Utah's Mighty 5 national parks provide abundant opportunities and resources for focusing on wellness. Dream-like turquoise waters, spectacular natural formations and the healing waters of nature's finest mineral cocktail are just some of the charms an adventure to Utah's thermal waters bring.



BIZ



RDTM 2022 to garner massive tourism opportunities for *Rajasthan*

With an aim to tap the domestic tourism potential in the State, the Department of Tourism in association with Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) is organising yet another edition of Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart RDTM.

- Bharti Sharma



The Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart 2022 will be organized between 22 to 24 July in Jaipur. The Inauguration ceremony of the Mart will be held on July 22 at Hotel Clarks Amer, followed by pre-scheduled B2B meetings over the next two days at the BM Birla Convention Centre, Statue Circle, Jaipur.

RDTM to open a whole vista of grandeur to the guests

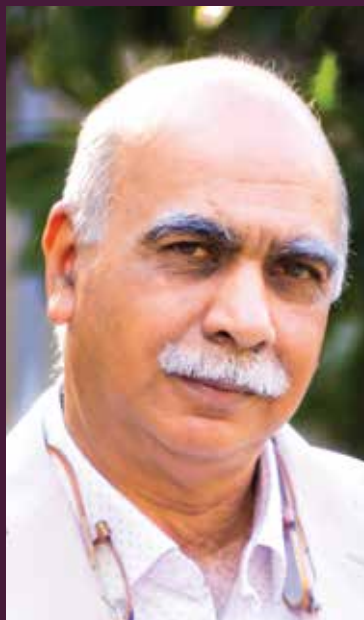
Shri Bhim Singh, President Honor, FHTR believes that RDTM will entice travellers to visit our state and experience exotic flavours of splendour, creativity, harmony and aesthetic beauty of our state, firsthand. He further adds, Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) is the only mart in the country promoting Indian traffic. Buyers from different states are thoroughly interested in the uniqueness of Rajasthan as a tourism centre. Rajasthan will be showcased and promoted to countless tourism stakeholders coming from various parts of the country. Films, brochures and interpersonal interaction will provide information about our wares and services to all the potential buyers. Besides, we would be sharing with them important information about the connectivity of flights, road-network, hotels and exciting tourist destinations. We are confident that it will be a grand success."



Shri Bhim Singh

Creating and expanding business portfolios

"The objective of RDTM is to provide a platform offering the best tourism products from across Rajasthan, all under one roof," says Randhir Vikram Singh, Former President, FHTR. He further adds, "RDTM would be a platform for tourism stakeholders from the state to showcase the wide range of products encompassing heritage, adventure, wildlife, wellness, leisure, eco-rural, MICE, pilgrimage, golf, wedding and other auxiliary segments. In particular, USP of the state of Rajasthan ie, Heritage Hotels which are operating in architectures like Forts, Castles, Palaces or traditional Havelis or period buildings built prior to 1935 possessing their own distinctive architecture, ambience and history." Relevance and significance of the domestic mart



Randhir Vikram Singh

The RDTM is a collective initiative of the State and the association coming forward and to organise an event of this magnitude with more than 500 buyers and sellers in attendance at one place. Apurv Kumar, President, FHTR mentions that tourism is surviving only on domestic business and so RDTM 2022 is a necessity to revive and boost tourism in the state post covid. He adds, "Domestic tourism is the only sustainable way forward for the sector. The industry

has suffered major setbacks with tourist volumes to the state taking a major dip exceeding 70 per cent in 2020. It is to be noted that as many as 200 exhibitors will be showcasing prowess and potential of their tourism products at the mart. Additionally, we are also expecting dignitaries from across India as well as Rajasthan to attend the event."

About 300 domestic buyers from across the country are expected to attend with the objective of tapping into the rapidly growing segment of high-spending domestic tourists. Talking about the significance of the event, Randhir Vikram Singh says, "As we know, domestic tourism is an important mantra for success for the tourism sector. This is because it will take time for the international tourists to match the pre-covid inbound numbers. Given the present situation of uncertainty post-pandemic, we are not sure when international tourism will regain its full gusto. Similarly post-pandemic, the domestic tourists also displayed keen interest in travelling within the country instead of travelling abroad. In this scenario, therefore, the stakeholders have rightly turned to domestic tourism."



Apurv Kumar

Time to highlight the unexplored destinations

A series of curtain raiser cum promotional roadshows were organized by FHTR Jaipur, Bharatpur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, etc., along with tourism stakeholders of the state. The key objectives of the series were to increase domestic tourists in the State, multiply jobs and increasing the share of State tourism GDP. Sharing the response from the participants, Kuldeep Singh, Sr. Vice President, FHTR tells, "The promotional roadshows in different cities witnessed an overwhelming participation. RDTM gathered a lot of appreciation from the stakeholders, as it is the right time to organise Domestic Travel Mart, which would ensure immediate commencement of business for hoteliers/resorts and travel fraternity, since thereafter the season starts. We intend to bring in participation from some of the lesser known or yet to be explored destinations and newer properties coming up."



Kuldeep Singh

Structured and elevated networking

The FHTR committee had undertaken a mindful screening process for selecting the right mix of potential buyers from across the country. Shedding more light on the platform, Khalid Khan, Vice President, FHTR shares, "RDTM provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to reconvene and work towards resuscitating tourism in Rajasthan. There will be structured pre-ordained B2B meetings between the buyers and sellers. While Exhibitors get to showcase their products, buyers can choose from a wide variety and have first-hand knowledge, eventually making Rajasthan products more accessible to travelers of their regions." He further mentions, "We are confident that RDTM will be a game changer for increasing domestic footfall in Rajasthan."



Khalid Khan

Going the unconventional way

This edition of the mart will see some of the biggest and the most popular names in wedding planners, event management, influencers, corporate meeting planners/organising companies that will be attending the event. Mohan Singh, Secretary General, FHTR asserts that buyers will be briefed about the developments that have taken place in the state from the tourist point of view during the past two to three years. He adds, "Despite of Covid, our hospitality industry was not dormant. It was planning for the future and much of the efforts are now showing results. All the members of the hotel industry and travel agents will present their best side and convince all the distinguished buyers to invest their time, resources and attention to partner with Rajasthan to excel in the domain of tourism."

Enticing investments

In addition to promoting tourism, RDTM will also have an additional responsibility of promoting investment in the sector leveraging the tourism-friendly and aggressive policies (industry status for tourism) by Government of Rajasthan. Apurv tells, "Over 11000Cr has already been committed for investment and more is in the pipeline because of enabling inclusive budget, which provides for employment, ease of doing business, incentives on investment, leading to the sustainable inclusive growth of Rajasthan." The domestic mart has all the industry associations of Rajasthan come together, namely; Hotel & Restaurant Association of Rajasthan (HRAR), Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) and Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO) in support of the event alongwith national associations; IATO, ADTOI, TAAI, TAFI, ATOAI, ICPB, ETAA and IATTE. Travel Turtle is the Exclusive Media Partner for RDTM.



Mohan Singh



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LA LA LAND



Celebrating the
'Fiesta Mayor' of Barcelona

La Mercè

A day to celebrate the Roman Catholic feast of Our Lady of Mercy, La Mare De Deu De La Merce in Catalan with streets crowding with people enjoying special traditions and synchronised fireworks.

- Tripti Jain



Annual merriment witnessed by the city of Barcelona in Catalonia, Spain is a local feast for people to let their hair down and take part in some special activities. Since the nineteenth century, the Virgen de la Mercé, the city of Barcelona's patron saint, has been honoured on 24th September to bid a goodbye to the fall and prepare for the upcoming winter season. A traditional feast from the Mediterranean region that attracts all of the city's residents back for music, dance, and street entertainment with giants, Castellars, and Sardanas who perform traditional instruments like the "chirima," a type of hornpipe. The festival usually starts beforehand and is one of the largest street parties in Barcelona. It has been an official city holiday since 1871, but the festival was introduced in the year 1902. The celebration lasts about a week and takes place in various public spaces across the city. Around 2 million people flock to la Mercé every year, especially to enjoy the different cultural and artistic activities.

Origins of La Mercé

The festival honours the Virgin of La Mercé, who is Barcelona's patron saint. She is said to have performed several miracles that are connected to the city. The Virgin of Mercé allegedly appeared to King Jaime I, Saint Pedro Nolasco, and Saint Raimundo de Peafort at the same time on September 24, 1218. The Virgin requested in this apparition that a religious order be founded to free the Christian hostages held in the Holy Lands.

When a locust plague struck Barcelona in 1687, the next miracle occurred. Barcelona's citizens petitioned the Virgen de la Merced to lend a hand. La Mercé was declared a patron because it was thought that she had vanquished the locusts when the epidemic ended.

La Mercé was named the patron saint of Barcelona by Pope Pius IX in 1868. On September 24 of that year,

the city started to observe religious and well-known festivities in her honour. But the celebration didn't become as well-known as it is today until 1902. The number of parades that year was unheard of, famous Giants from all around Catalonia made an appearance, the first castells contest was held, and the Sardana gained popularity. The Barcelona City Council chose to completely change the city's major festival into a celebration in which popular culture and citizenship took over the principal events during the Spanish democratic transition, giving birth to the La Merced celebrations as we know them today. If you want to witness the traditions and culture of Barcelona, this is the perfect time to visit, nothing will be better than this festival to take you through the historic realms of the city.

The Giants of La Mercé

There are few attractions and traditions that have been followed by people during the festival for generations. They are the highlights of the festival and travellers from all across the trot to Barcelona to witness them. Since the 15th century, the Giants shown in la Mercé have taken part in several festivities. According to written records, the "King David ab lo Jiguant" was represented among the several hors d'oeuvres that took part in the Corpus Christi parade in 1424. This enormous man served as a Goliath and was the first to be recorded in Europe. The municipality paid for the statue. He was regarded as Barcelona's first giant.

La Mercé's giants are always on show in pairs, and attract the audience because of their intricate detailing and appeal. It is unknown how many different couples and individuals have traversed Barcelona's streets over the years, but at the end of the 16th century, their appeal started to wane and eventually vanish, but they produced a lasting impression.



The festivities of La Mercé?

It is best to visit Barcelona in September to appreciate its historical and cultural legacy, museums, parks, architecture, excursions to adjacent monasteries, coastal villages, and wineries, as well as the more agreeable temperatures for travellers and the Merce holiday celebrations. One of the symbols that helped Barcelona develop its identity is La Merce. It has influenced how Barcelonans see themselves and how the rest of the world sees them, much like FC Barcelona or Gaudi's SagradaFamilia.

The Giants

The Giants are well-known for parading around the Gothic Quarter and Raval, dancing while sporting enormous heads and entertaining enormous spectators in SantJaume Plaza. Once familiarised with Catalan culture, you shouldn't miss the amazing performances of the "Castellers" at the SantJaume Plaza. However, you should get there early because of the heavy crowds. The strength of the "Castell" members can be seen with - incredible solidarity, on top of their nerves and iron muscles, the human pyramids are something that cannot be missed.

The Castellars

The more seasoned Castellars have built pyramids up to nine stories tall, with the last level typically consisting of a child. Each level contains fewer individuals and less weight than the one before it. The goal is to carefully put together and take apart the

pyramid without letting any of the levels fall. Like in every celebration of the Spanish Mediterranean, fire is an important element. For Barcelona Merce, in addition to fireworks, there are several dragons and devils called "Correfoc" who rush through the streets while launching rockets and firecrackers. Although they are designed for both adults and children, it is advised that you wear suitable clothing to prevent getting burned.

Light it up!

The "Piromusical" sound and light show, which features a fireworks display timed to the beat of the music in the luminous fountains of Montjuic, is one of these festivals' newest attractions that mesmerises the travellers. During the second weekend of the holidays, a fantastic air festival is put on for the kids and adults, with displays of acrobatic planes, warplanes, and trade planes over the skies of Maresme beach, to cap off the festivities of La Merce in Barcelona, where the feast of heaven has been held for the past few years.



Facts to remember

- The celebration began in the Middle Ages after Barcelona was miraculously saved from two disasters
- Each year there is a 'guest city' invited to celebrate alongside the city.
- The poster announcing the celebration is designed by a different local artist each year.
- Each year the celebration is inaugurated by a special speech read by a prominent cultural figure.
- It's one of the best opportunities of the year to witness Catalan cultural traditions and folklore.



Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2022 highlights 'Amazing New Chapters' in Thai tourism

As the premier showcase of Thai tourism, the event once again brings together decision-makers at the same location with the goal of promoting Thailand and actualise business values.

- Team Turtle

Thailand's leading B2B travel industry show, the Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2022, hosted at the beautiful island of Phuket with a focus on the country's change towards stronger and more sustainable, more responsible tourism growth in line with the 'Visit Thailand Year 2022 – 2023: Amazing New Chapters' marketing campaign. Mr. Yuthasak Supasorn, Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), said, "Thailand is celebrating its full opening for tourism with entry requirements further eased from June 1, 2022. As such, this year's edition of the TTM+ presents an excellent opportunity for buyers and sellers to come together and build on existing business relationships and forge new ones. Throughout the three days, TAT together with Thai tourism businesses are ready to showcase the 'Amazing New Chapters' in Thai tourism to inspire travellers from around the world to visit Thailand."

First held in 2001, and took place mostly in Bangkok each year since its launch, the TTM+ was relocated to Chiang Mai in 2016 – 17, Pattaya in 2018 – 19, and then Phuket in 2022 as part of the TAT's strategy to promote provincial destinations. This year's edition of the TTM+ has attracted a total of 276 buyers from 42 countries and 264 sellers from across four regions of Thailand. In addition, around 90 domestic and international media are also attending the event.

The TTM+ 2022 has been conceptualised to showcase travel products, services, and experiences that promote Thai cultural values in the 'from A to Z Amazing Thailand has it all' concept. And, in corresponding with the TAT's 'smart tourism' strategy aimed at elevating Thai tourism's competitiveness, the event will also highlight the unprecedented digital transformation that now plays a pivotal role in accelerating Thailand's tourism ecosystem to quality and sustainability.

The event started with eventful activities, including registration,

pre-tours buyers and media, opening ceremony, TTM Talk, Thailand Product Update, speed-dating onsite appointments, and welcome reception.

The half-day pre-tours featured three customised routes that highlighted Phuket's natural and cultural charms. The 'Eco Adventure and Fishery' route toured local farming of pearls, fish, lobster, and sea grapes, while 'The Last Rice Field of Phuket' itinerary took participants to experience organic farming and buffalo conservation, and 'The Moken's Life' programme presented Urak Lawoi's ways of life and faith of Phuket.

The event will be officially opened in the afternoon with welcome remarks by HE Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, Thailand's Minister of Tourism and Sports, followed by a TTM Talk under the theme of "Global Tourism: Shapeshifting to the New Chapter" by three keynote speakers. Rahimah Abdulrahim, Director of Public Policy for Southeast Asia, Meta, will present the first session on the topic of 'Metaverse Possibility of Tourism Industry and Beyond', Mich Goh, Head of Public Policy, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and India, Airbnb, will address the topic of 'Driving Inclusive Tourism Recovery in Thailand with Airbnb' in the second session, and Mr. David Boehm, Co-founder and Chairman, Miskawaan Health Group on the topic of 'the Future Trends of Health and Wellness Tourism'.

Buyers and media will then be given a brief on the Thailand Product Update by Mr. Siripakorn Cheawwamoot, TAT Deputy Governor for Marketing and Communications, ahead of a speed-dating onsite appointment session for buyers and sellers.

The Welcome Reception will conclude the eventful first day with the 'Amazing New Chapters' show, further reiterating the Royal Thai Government's policy to promote the kingdom's soft-power foundations, including Food, Film, Fashion, Fight, and Festival. Phuket's gastronomy delights will prominently be



highlighted throughout the evening, along with contemporary and futuristic shows.

The two full days of buyer/seller appointments are scheduled on Thursday, 9 June and Friday, 10 June, along with a networking lunch on both days, and a networking dinner on Thursday hosted by the Phuket Tourist Association.

Post tours for buyers and media will take place Saturday, 11 June, with three routings that are tailor-made to showcase the scenic beauty, welcoming charm, and famous tropical island atmosphere of Phuket, Krabi, Phang-nga, Ko Samui, and Ko Pha-ngan, as well as the

cultural and gastronomy delights of Bangkok.

The TTM+ 2022 is being held at the spectacular venue of the Angsana Laguna Phuket beachfront resort set within the world-renowned integrated resort of the Laguna Phuket. The event has been arranged in accordance with the health and safety measures stipulated by the Ministry of Public Health to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and all participants are asked to kindly abide by these measures at all times. Those from overseas must undergo all procedures required under Thailand's entry requirements.



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Cora Cora Maldives & One Above DMC organise networking dinner in New Delhi

Cora Cora Maldives along with One Above DMC recently organised an exclusive dinner for select travel trade partners in New Delhi on June 22, 2022. The event proved to be an excellent platform to gain first-hand knowledge on property and updates by Karishma Kazi, Founder, Black Turtle and Indian Representative of Cora Cora Maldives.

PHDCCI organises the 5th Global Film Tourism Conclave (GFTC)

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) organised the 5th Global Film Tourism Conclave (GFTC) with the theme 'Unleashing the Power of Cinematic Tourism' on 1 July 2022 at Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, Maharashtra.

Mr. Arvind Singh (IAS), Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said that the Indian film industry is progressing dynamically with double-digit growth and producing more than 1200 films every year in multiple languages. The industry was valued at 183 billion rupees in the financial year 2020. "In view of the above, Ministry of Tourism is placing great emphasis on the promotion of Film Tourism and is enabling the States to prepare suitable policies to facilitate shooting permissions with single-window clearances for film projects and provide necessary incentives to attract filmmakers. Ministry also recognizes such efforts through the National Tourism Award given each year under the category 'Most Film Tourism Friendly State'," he said.

Renowned veterans of the Indian film industry and leading Filmmakers – Mr. Randhir Kapoor, Mr. Anees Bazmee and Mr. Rahul Rawail were felicitated during the programme for their contribution towards the Indian Cinema.

Mr. Ravinder Bhakar, CEO, Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) & Managing Director, National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) mentioned that films play an important role in the society. Contribution of the industry is immense in the country's economic growth.

Mr. Mukesh Gupta, Chair – Entertainment, Media, Art & Culture Committee, PHDCCI, shared his perspective in promoting Film Tourism while having synergies between Production Houses, Film Commissions and Tourism Boards.

Mr. Rajan Sehgal, Co-Chair– Tourism & Hospitality Committee, PHDCCI, said, "Several destinations have gained in terms of tourist influx by being the location of popular domestic and international cinema. A major issue that Filmmakers face in India is non-availability of a single window clearance facility towards all filming permissions. A few Indian states have started a single window clearance system; however, all state governments must consider setting up of online portals for single window clearance facility."



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APPOINTMENTS



Cordelia Cruises

Cordelia Cruises has appointed Pankaj Jaswal as its National Sales Head. Pankaj has a degree in Hotel Management from the University of Bangalore and brings with him an extensive 22 years of experience in Hospitality Sales. Pankaj has worked with reputed brands such as Taj Hotels, The Park Hotels, The Paul Hotels and Resorts, Sterling Resorts, and Zuri Hotels and Resorts. Prior to joining Cordelia Cruises, Pankaj was the General Manager – Resort Sales at Mahindra Holidays and Resorts. He has developed strong relationships with clients primarily from India, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Taking on this key role at Cordelia Cruises, Pankaj says, "I am ecstatic to start my new journey with Cordelia Cruises. What better time to begin than now! With the launch of the cross-over sailing in Chennai, Cordelia Cruises has not only introduced India to a whole new way of holidaying but also made it easily accessible to all parts of the expansive subcontinent."

Outrigger Mauritius

Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort has appointed Pradeep Petwal as Indian chef, effective immediately. In his new post, Chef Pradeep will be responsible for the wide range of Indian food in all Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort outlets, mainly Mercado and Edgewater. The Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort has Mercado, a dynamic international food market concept, celebrating cuisines from Europe, the Mediterranean, Asia, and India. Chef Pradeep will also prepare dishes for Edgewater, which is adjacent to the resort's beachfront pool. It also includes a wide vegan selection and Mauritian and European-inspired dishes in the evening.

Born in India, Chef Pradeep graduated from Chandigarh University in Punjab, North India with a degree in Hotel Management. He started his career mainly in New Delhi and Mumbai. He also worked in South Africa for a year.



Accor India

Accor India has announced the appointment of Vineet Mishra as Cluster General Manager of Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, along with Novotel and Ibis Bengaluru Outer Ring Road and Novotel and Ibis Chennai. A seasoned hospitality veteran, Vineet Mishra brings on board an illustrious career spanning over 23 years with an exceptional network in the industry. In his new role, Vineet will take on an elevated leadership role, taking charge for leading the overall operations. Vineet's rich body of work including successful stints with leading hospitality brands, strength in business management, meticulous operational techniques and his unique style of leadership with a 'team first' approach will help in crafting extraordinary experiences and while continuing to drive recovery.



Sarovar Premiere Jaipur

Sarovar Hotels and Resorts appoints Rajesh Kumar as the new General Manager for Sarovar Premiere, Jaipur. With an illustrious career spanning 22 years of cross-cultural experience in the hotel industry, Rajesh brings with him his strong analytical and planning skills, business driven and people-oriented management style. Prior to his present role, he was associated with Nile Hospitality based in Ahmedabad, where he successfully managed the hotel operation, won several awards for the hotel and created a strong social media footprint in the major SM platforms. As a seasoned professional, Rajesh aims to bring innovation and operational excellence with his fresh outlook for his current hotel.



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