

**STAY  
UPDATED**

Authentic Travel News

Enterprising Industry Views

www.traveltradejournal.com

# TTJ Travel Trade Journal

Vol. 11 | Issue 06 | April 2021 | Pages 28 | ₹50

TTJ  
Travel Trade Journal

GET NEWS  
DELIVERED  
TO YOUR WHATSAPP



To subscribe to us  
Give a missed call to  
**9560264443**

Save this number in your contacts



## COVID Weight Watch



### Team Sampan

Editor & Publisher	:	Ravi Sharma
Contributing Editor	:	Naveen Lal
Consulting Editor	:	Rachita Sehgal
Bureau Head (West)	:	Prashant Nayak
Reporter	:	Sonika Bhandari
Reporter	:	Aditya Vikram Singh
Consulting Editor	:	Sonia Dutt
Sr. Designer	:	Subhash Chaudhary
HTML Developer	:	Jitender Singh Shekhawat
GM - Marketing	:	Sonika Bohra
Bureau Head (East)	:	Partha Chatterjee
Manager PR	:	Ankit Dixit
Cordinator (West)	:	Bharti Kalia
Consultant (West)	:	Sameer Montario
Project Head Events	:	Rohan Rana
Photographer	:	Parth Sharma
Asst. Manager Administration	:	Kuldeep Singh
Accounts Manager	:	Priyesh Ranjan

Email: info@sampanmedia.com

Editorial and Marketing Office :  
Sampan Media Pvt. Ltd., B-7/114A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Safdarjung Enclave, Near Sukhmani Hospital, New Delhi - 110029 Ph: 9560264443, ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

All information in Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. Opinions / views expressed by third parties in abstract or in interviews are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced in whole or in part(s) without prior permission. The publisher assumes no responsibility for material lost or damaged in transit. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code. The publisher will not be liable for any loss caused by any delay in publication, error or failure of advertisement to appear.

Owned and published by: Ravi Sharma, Editor & Publisher, 18/3, Railway Colony, Sarojini Nagar, P.S. Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021 and printed on his behalf at Polykam Offset, C-138, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi-110028.



Dear Friends,

In this fight for survival in the pandemic, the travel and tourism sector started witnessing a slow and gradual recovery despite being compounded with stop-start cycles which hampered speedy recovery. The second round of COVID-19 which is now prevalent in the entire country brings in more challenges and crisis for the sector.

Our resilience is being put to test once again, but we should stay strong and be persistent in digging out new opportunities, encourage innovation, drive new business models, explore new niches/markets, and focus on new destinations.

Meanwhile, everyone in the travel sector has to look forward to getting vaccinated to help build up more resistance and immunity against the virus. This will also help us do early business and can travel at ease when things get back to normal.

TTJ April 2021 edition is a regular feature, along with highlighting some domestic and international destinations when travel resumes.

So while you read on, please stay safe and well, get vaccinated, and don't lose hope.

Happy Reading!

*Ravi Sharma*

Ravi Sharma

ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

### Honeymoon Travel

- Beautiful Greece (8 Nights)  
Greece | Athens | Mykonos | Santorini
- Exquisite Italy (9 Nights)  
Rome | Naples | Amalfi Coast | Florence | Paris | Venice
- Idyllic Maldives (4 Nights)  
Maldives

### Family Travel

- London, Switzerland and Paris (10 Nights)  
London | Paris | Basel | Interlaken | Lucerne-Zurich
- Astounding Dubai (5 Nights)  
Dubai | Abu Dubai
- Singapore with Sentosa Island (4 Nights)  
Singapore | Sentosa Island

### Friends Travel

- The Natural Treasure, Indonesia (6 Nights)  
Bali | Ubud
- Epic Land of Spain (9 Nights)  
Barcelona | Ibiza | Palma | Madrid
- Splendid Towns of Amsterdam (10 Nights)  
Amsterdam | Berlin | Prague | Budapest

### Solo Travel

- Splendorous Turkey (6 Nights)  
Istanbul | Cappadocia | Antalya
- Scandinavia (7 Nights)  
Copenhagen | Aarhus | Stavanger | Bergen | Oslo | Stockholm
- Mesmerizing Central Europe (8 Nights)  
Prague | Vienna | Budapest

**JetSave**  
India Tours Pvt. Ltd.

India's Leading Visa Facilitation Company

**Packages Starting @ ₹ 20,000/-**

### Inclusions

- Hotel
- Food
- Transport
- Sightseeing

**Ace Inbound - Outbound Tour Operators**

+91-11-45616161

journeys@jetsavetours.com

www.jetsavetours.com

30/28, 3rd Floor, East Patel Nagar, New Delhi- 110008



## QuadLabs introduces first ‘Health Travel E-pass’ in India



**T**eam QuadLabs has introduced TresCare, an AI-Based Health Tracking band and application, which generates the Digital Health E-pass based upon travel history, vaccination certificate, test reports & actual health vitals recorded from medical wearable devices.

It is a QR-based Health e-pass that will provide complete information on the current health status of a traveller to airports, airlines, hotels & other service providers. The health status is generated instantly based on different parameters showing the wellness of the individual. The system takes the readings based upon the pattern of the proactive health vital graphs, vaccination certificates (validated through ICMR), and the COVID-19 test reports. The system provides health information in real-time and will identify if the person traveling is safe or not, helping in stopping of spreading of contagious diseases assuring a risk-free environment.

TresCare application is a safe verified digital platform that stores an Individual or a corporate traveller's Health information in an anonymous & encrypted format. Only the travellers have access to their information on their mobile. This can only be shared by the traveller by using a QR code to the relevant government authority. It also provides monitoring services to medical response teams in large enterprises and government institutes.

"We are very excited to launch India's first Health E-Pass. This will help the industry to revive from the pandemic & open the borders for traveller. Our next target is to bring acceptability of this e-pass with various airlines, airports, and hotels to make travel easy and seamless," said the CEO, Gaurav Chiripal.

## Sokos Hotels & Radisson Blu Finland opens office in India



**S**okos Hotels & Radisson Blu Hotels, Finland (S-Group Hotels) has entered into a strategic alliance with Lumi Safaris (Shah Lifestyle and Hospitality Ventures) by appointing them as the India Sales Representative for all of their properties based out of Finland, Tallinn, Estonia & St. Petersburg, Russia. This agreement facilitates Sokos Hotels to move into one of the fastest-growing travel markets during the most challenging period of the tourism industry.

"We are very confident that this partnership between Sokos Hotels & Radisson Blu Hotels, Finland & Lumi Safaris (Shah Lifestyle and Hospitality Ventures) is going to be very exciting and fruitful for both companies. In the last three years, the Nordic region has not only created its own niche target audience but has also seen tremendous growth in arrivals. We also recently bagged the award of being 'One of the biggest hotel chains of NORDIC Region 2020'. We are targeting India as one of the potential markets as we have a huge inventory that can accommodate Leisure groups, MICE Movements and Destination weddings as well. We have designed different categories of Hotels in order to cater to different needs and likings of consumers," informed the spokesperson from Sokos Hotels.

"The brands look forward establishing Sokos Hotels & Radisson Blu Finland in the India market," said Jay Shah, Nina Nieminen, Commercial Vice President for S-Group in their joint statement.

With 48 hotels in Finland, Tallinn, and St. Petersburg, Sokos Hotels is the best-known hotel chain in Finland. They have three completely different hotel types: Original by Sokos, Break by Sokos Hotels, and Solo by Sokos Hotels.

On the other side, Radisson Blu has eight hotels in Finland: four in Helsinki and one in Espoo, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu and they provide unparalleled service, comfort and style while creating meaningful and memorable experiences. All Radisson Blu Hotels in Finland have been awarded Green Key certificates.

## India restores e-visa for 156 countries

**T**he Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has restored the electronic visa (e-visa) facility for foreigners from 156 countries, who intend to visit India for business, conferences, and medical reasons, including in the case of medical attendants. E-visa for tourists is yet to be restored.

Though the facility was available to 171 countries, after restrictions were announced in 2020, it has been restored only for 156 countries. China, the U.K., Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia are notable exclusions.

In an order issued on March 30th, the MHA said that "e-Visa under the following categories viz. e-business visa, e-medical visa, e-medical attendant visa and e-conference visa has been restored with immediate effect."

The relaxation for foreign visitors comes in the wake of a deadly second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed 1.7 lakh lives so far. The number of persons infected with COVID-19 increased from 59,118 on March 25 to 2,00,739 on April 14.



India had earlier relaxed visa restrictions on October 22, 2020, enabling foreigners to come to India for business, conferences, employment, education, research and medical purposes, after availing regular visas from missions and embassies abroad.

# Tourism in India to take another beating in the second wave of COVID-19



While outbound travel plans and inbound travel anticipation still look miles away, but domestic tourism surely and slowly had started picking up as lockdown norms were eased. Now, with the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in the country, a second wave poses a greater threat and concerns to yet another round of summer holidays and beyond that. TTJ tries to find out some factors which will deter a tourist from taking that vacation.

**Prashant Nayak**

**I**n normal times, summer is a season that almost everyone in India waits for all year long, and yet here we are again, all locked up in our homes, waiting for the deadly Coronavirus to spare the human race.

For the travel and tourism industry in India, with several people having put their travel plans on hold and that it is solely relying on domestic tourists in these difficult times, the latest surge in new cases has pushed the sector into further crisis.

However, travellers have a different mindset, and key insights from the latest InterMiles Consumer Sentiment Index (Travel) 2.0 reveals that while 2020 witnessed the rise of the essential traveller, the new and evolved 2021 Indian traveller is looking for adventure and is keen on exploring new destinations, in an attempt to leave behind the monotony of 2020. The roll-out of vaccines and pragmatic innovations across the travel chain seems to have contributed to this increase in consumer confidence. Almost 65 per cent of Indians have shown intent to travel for leisure and adventure in 2021. Also, over 60 per cent of Indians expressed confidence in domestic, regional and local travel.

Presently, even for travellers it is a dicey situation: to travel or not? While the thought of the risk of the infection is on a higher scale, the present rules of compulsory RT-PCR test and states imposed travel curbs make them think twice before proceeding for bookings. Another problem is that each State has its own rules now, which are further complicating travel arrangements. Curfews, quarantines, and the constant fear of infection don't make a good holiday plan for any individual or a family.

The country went into many lockdown

modes since March 25, 2020, restricting 1.3 billion people to travel with ease. For most Indians, after spending more than a year under duress of the pandemic and distancing socially, the urge to travel is getting stronger and stronger. Other than a break or a vacation, many want to travel to meet family and friends, and many are still considering business or work travel in 2021.

Many tourists feel safe at travelling in their personal cars and they can be a prime target for hoteliers, staycationers, or home-stay owners who follow the required COVID-19 guidelines and protocols and ensure customers on-demand demonstration of safety and precaution at their property. It is time for isolated properties in the nearby location around cities and towns to create demand by their aggressive marketing efforts, which will allow them to build a new customer base.

Air travel is something travellers are comfortable with, but a recent trend that has been noticed off late is that passengers are booking their flight tickets closer to their journey date to reduce uncertainty regarding their COVID-19 test. Since COVID-19 negative test reports which are to be submitted must not be older than 72 hours before their journey date, most passengers are booking tickets closer to their journey date to reduce the certainty to some extent. However, in the present situation, the average number of air passengers taking a flight has seen a dip with sharp spikes in COVID-19 cases in the country.

With the rising number of COVID-19 cases, a sudden surge in the movement of railway passengers at stations was reported recently from across the country. Many travellers are those who fear an imminent lockdown due to the crisis, and that is the reason behind their trips. For the tourist, it doesn't make travel

conductive in a kind of panic situation, even if there is no requirement for a COVID-19 negative certificate to travel by Indian Railways. Also, there is always a risk of passenger trains getting stopped or curtailed, if infection numbers rise.

Flexibility in date changes and last-minute free cancellation policies are other important key factors when making travel decisions. Many wary regular travellers who had made international or domestic travel plan back in 2019 for the summer of 2020 have still not been refunded and their chances to utilise the pending credit shells for this summer also look bleak.

It is estimated that the second wave could last up to the first week of June. Adding to the woes are, a plethora of new COVID variants still make a case for being wary about the overall recovery of travel and hospitality, and the onslaught of the virus presently has been more powerful than in the previous year. This makes it even difficult for Governments and tourism authorities to decide and to act as planned, strategised, or envisaged for recovery of tourism in the past few months.

However, with the travel industry crippled on all fronts, the central and state governments will need to play a key role in communicating and ensuring travellers' safety, as well as empowering the tourism industry through investments and in new technology and innovations that would ensure a seamless, contactless travel experience that is sustainable too. More than that, the travel and hospitality industry have to come together and pressurise the governments chalk a way forward. Many travel associations are working on this front since the last year but more needs to be done as the Governments have still not fully registered the importance of tourism in the Indian economy.



# Travel Associations seek Government support for survival and revival

India's travel and tourism industry has once again urged the government to consider taking multiple steps to ease the pressure on the sector and help it tide over the crisis as the surge in COVID infections and re-imposition of partial travel restrictions in some major states threatens its survival.

Team TTJ



Rajiv Mehra



E.M. Najeeb

**T**he Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), the apex body of inbound tour operators, has urged the government to extend the scope of air bubble arrangements that India is having with different countries for flight operations to include movement of India-destined leisure travellers as well. This, it feels, will help the industry get some overseas tourist traffic.

India has air bubble arrangements with some countries like Sri Lanka, and as per the understanding, they are allowing Indian tourists to visit their country. IATO has said that the government could permit similar arrangements for tourists

from Sri Lanka and other countries with which India has an air bubble arrangement.

The Association has also requested the government to draw a timetable as per which dates for the opening of visas, including e-visas, and resumption of international flights can be announced. Such a move will allow the Indian tour operators to sound their counterparts abroad in advance and bookings could be made likewise, it said.

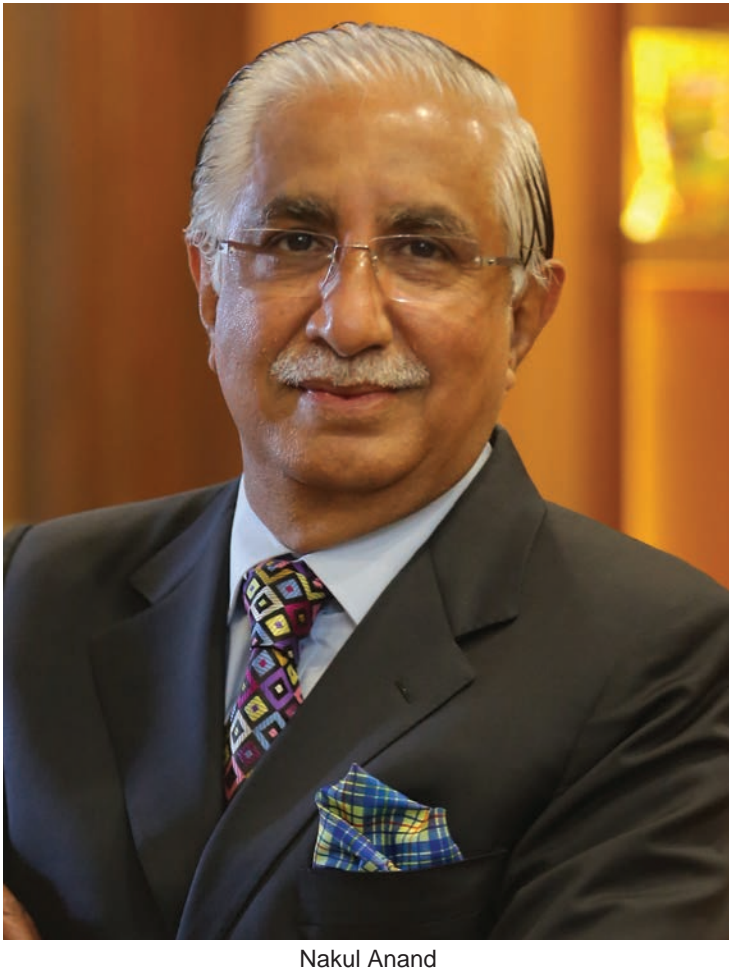
Further, countries are opening up for travel for those fully vaccinated and India can adopt the same model, the IATO added in its submission to the government. The pandemic has hit all the sectors of the economy hard, but the hardest hit is the tourism sector, especially the inbound one

which is almost at zero levels for the last one year.

Among the financial incentive, the IATO has urged abolishment of







Nakul Anand



levy of tax collection at source (TCS) on foreign tourists as they are not liable to pay income tax in India and therefore cannot claim a refund as they don't have a PAN number.

IATO President Rajiv Mehra said, "We have made multiple representations to the government, bringing to their notice that the objective of the TCS levy was to bring Indians in the tax net and it was not meant for taxing international tourists and as a result, we are losing business to neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and other countries where no such levy is charged."

IATO has also requested the government to urgently announce Service Export Incentive Scheme (SEIS) for the financial year 2019-20 which has been delayed by almost one year now. Announcing this will lead to some cash flow for tour operators, which is critical for their survival. IATO's Senior Vice President E.M. Najeer was of the view that the tourism business has made a continued effort of requesting the federal government to launch the SEIS underneath Foreign Trade Policy. "The interim order was passed by Justice PV Asha on the petition filed by Kerala Travel Mart Society (KTM) and on April 9, 2021, Kerala High court has given the order

ignoring the tourism industry. The tourism industry is undergoing one of its biggest existential crises. Spinning under the pandemic's colossal blow, nearly 30 per cent of inbound tour operators in India may shut their shops permanently; however, this figure could be as much as 60 to 70 per cent as per some estimates. With restrictions on international travels and no tourism in the country, there have been severe effects on the revenues of tour operators. The revenues have choked and the tour operators and travel companies are seeking relief from the government in the form of re-implementation of SEIS. Continuation of SEIS can bring some immediate relief to the tour operators, and millions of jobs could be saved as soon as COVID-19 subsides.

On the other hand, FAITH, the policy federation of all the national associations representing the complete tourism, travel and hospitality industry of India (ADTOI, ATOAI, FHRAI, HAI, IATO, ICPB, IHHA, ITTA, TAAI, TAFI) & cause partner AIRDA wants all tourism, travel & hospitality staff to be designated as COVID warriors and be vaccinated irrespective of their age.

Though the pandemic is still

stating that the Govt. should disperse new policy within 2 months and it should be announced," he mentioned.

However, since the pandemic has hit, the government has been

taking its toll, Indian tourism is entering the peak holiday season 2021 for domestic travel in India, which is estimated to generate more than 60 per cent of domestic tourism business. In a few months, the hard-hit travel industry will be looking forward to entering the October - March season, which is supposed to be the peak season for inbound travel, accounting for conventionally more than an estimated 70 per cent of the tourism business.

To get into a state of readiness, FAITH has thus requested to put in motion a policy that all tourism, travel & hospitality staff in India be dedicated as frontline COVID warriors and be allowed to be vaccinated at all sites of tourism, travel & hospitality companies irrespective of their age criteria.

"We have urged the Ministry of Tourism to consider travel and hospitality staff in India as frontline COVID warriors for vaccination irrespective of age criteria," FAITH had said in a statement. According to FAITH, this will send a strong message of Indian tourism getting ready to receive visitors safely and responsibly. This can also be the cornerstone of Indian Tourism's tactical communication strategy and will be a big competitive advantage and a key selling point for revival for all segments.

FAITH has requested this to be taken up with the PMO and Health Ministry and for advice to all state governments accordingly. "This will complement the efforts of all FAITH member associations who are engaging with the central and state governments to revive the Indian tourism and hospitality sector," informs Nakul Anand, Chairman, FAITH.





## Maharashtra's Medical Tourism Sector set to boom post COVID-19

Favourably positioning itself as a leader in healthcare services open to all, the state of Maharashtra is working towards guiding hopeful patients towards a better clinical outcome and the state has positioned itself as the top destination for Medical Tourism, and here is why?

Mihir Vora

**I**t should be no surprise that the world's largest democracy has been at the forefront in bringing some solution to the current healthcare crisis. With its contribution towards scientific research surrounding the novel coronavirus and the development of high-quality vaccines supplied around the world, India is paving the way for better prevention strategies for the disease. And it is important to note that a large chunk of these supplies are manufactured within Maharashtra.

Medical Tourism is the fastest-growing sector in the world today, with increasing disease burden across the globe; there is a huge shortage of experienced doctors and medical infrastructure. India is home to doctors who are far more experienced in handling complex treatment because of the high population and various cases that they come across. Not leaving out the fact that, at present, Indian paramedics across the globe are a force to reckon with. They are annually recruited by various countries to combat their shortage of medical staff.

Pre-COVID-19, a large number of patients around the world flew down to seek out services ranging from minor treatments to extensive surgeries. Curiously, it has been noted that many of the patients were from developed countries. Many of these fliers arrived with the hope that our doctors cure them of their health problems. This was due to the lack of accurate diagnosis back home or because they found their country's healthcare too expensive. On a good note, majority flew back with positive results. This phenomenon has carried on for years, and it is no longer just a word-of-mouth recommendation. In fact, large companies now assist patients outside of India to sort out their medical emergencies within highly equipped states like Maharashtra.

Maharashtra revels in the glory of four international airports, as the state with the highest connectivity and expertly skilled medical staff. It is falsely perceived to possess the most expensive treatment, as it has many affordable schemes to aid patients. While it is crucial that treatment remains affordable, it is a fact that

Medical tourists prefer quality over cost.

The State has the highest number of Joint Commission International (JCI) hospitals as a state, with 10 JCI hospitals out of 36 in India. The State has all the latest Medical technologies, right from CyberKnife in oncology to Artificial transplants in cardiology. With the best outcomes and genuine treatment that is offered by our Hospitals & doctors, Maharashtra is a more promising state. The acquisition of such modern medical techniques has led to the emergence of highly skilled doctors from the best establishments in Maharashtra.

To name one such establishment, it would be Tata Memorial Hospital. Tata Memorial Hospital is known to be the best institute in India. The tremendous influx of travellers may leave Tata Memorial slightly overwhelmed in response to its amenities. But all the great doctors that have trained at Tata are doing wonders in the field of Oncology. A field that is in predominant need of foreign medical tourists. It is home to the best clinical outcomes in India, and the State aims



to provide the best healthcare for people around the world.

According to the FICCI - E&Y Report - "India: Building Best Practices in Healthcare Services Globally" released in 2019 on medical tourism, suggested that approx. 27 per cent of tourists come to Maharashtra. This number could point to the number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) routed to Maharashtra and not the Medical tourists. Various Facilitators and Medical Tourism servicing companies agree that a larger number of medical tourists are managed and serviced in locations like Delhi and Chennai than in Maharashtra. This implies that Maharashtra, with its best facilities, has a lot more to achieve. The current influx of patients into Maharashtra may range between 700-1000 Medical tourists a month. This can be increased to 10,000 patients a month in the next 5-7 years. This is the target designed under the roadmap for the State with The Medical Value Travel Council of India (MTVCI).

## Sought after treatments in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is among the best states in the country to seek out health solutions. The city of Mumbai is home to top hospitals and medical centres that offer procedures related to Oncology, Cardiology, Transplants & Orthopaedic patients.

## Offering wellness facilities for recuperation

Favourably positioning itself as a leader in healthcare services open to all, the state of Maharashtra is working towards guiding hopeful patients towards a better clinical outcome. It aims to not just focus on Healthcare, but also on Wellness.



One could say, "Prevention is better than Cure". Wellness plays a crucial role in the mental and physical health of a person. The mind and body constantly impact each other. Not to mention the increasing burden of a stressful, unhealthy lifestyle, offering ways to wellness is a must. This is where the state has undertaken priority on the wellness policy and promotes itself as a wellness destination. It aims to provide accredited wellness services for the holistic wellbeing of mind, body and soul.

Multiple destinations viz. Lonavala, Pune, Nashik, Igatpuri, etc., are already home to Wellness Centers where Post-Operative care patients are provided with traditional Ayurvedic Spa, stress-relieving procedures and other such wellness treatments. MVTCI has also included a dedicated focus on the Wellness Segment in collaboration with the State.

MVTCI, Directorate of Tourism and Government of Maharashtra shall work together to create the roadmap towards a Global promotion strategy that will encourage patients to seek out services in Maharashtra once the travel market resumes.

## Alternative medicine- Paving the way to the future

Most travellers, arrive to undergo surgeries and are educated about the options of Homeopathy and Ayurveda, post-treatment. Many patients who have undergone Homeopathy have got excellent results, leaving positive feedback. Maharashtra has all the facilities for alternative medicines available, but their reach needs to be widespread so that the patients are informed/aware of the various places for recuperation. From Ayurvedic resorts to more importantly Ayurvedic hospitals, where few are also prevalent in South India, that provides excellent results.

## Steps needed to boost medical tourism

The state should plan to set up comfortable living conditions, guest rooms, and other amenities for foreign guests seeking treatment. It would be wise to make this prevalent in parts where medical tourism persists. This way guests can be assured of comfort, security and basic

provisions within minutes of the hospitals where they are being treated. The State could take it a step further to curate these living conditions based on the medical treatment the guest requires.

The next issue is that the state needs to ensure the affordability of these living conditions. Medical tourists always emphasize that the expense of their journey, the hospital bill and accommodation are still more affordable than the healthcare in their countries. This practice of ensuring affordable services to all who need it should continue if Maharashtra seeks to improve on its medical tourism.

Looking at the bigger picture, a positive experience for the medical tourist would encourage them to tour Maharashtra, especially the hill stations and serene destinations, post services. This may lead to the patient's family viewing the state as a potential holiday destination.

The average medical tourist spends 5000-6000 USD on treatment and the other 3000-5000 USD on shopping, travel and other miscellaneous expenses. It can help generate huge employment for the locals and small businesses in the area. Those that can benefit will be anyone from Cab services, foreign exchangers, facilitators, Hospitals, Doctors, Hotels and boosting the economy of local markets. Keeping in mind that Medical Tourism is one of the 26 champion sectors given by the Government of India; it has high potential to grow.

Maharashtra's emergence as the leader in the medical sector in India is becoming more prominent with time. Its values lie in providing critical healthcare assistance to all who need it.



Mihir Vora is the Founder and CEO, Magnus Medi, a renowned name in the world of medical tourism.



# SINGAPORE

## powered up for a safe return to cruising



Singapore has piloted safe cruises from November 2020, with enhanced protocols to safeguard passenger health from pre-boarding to disembarkation. More than 120,000 Singapore residents have set sail on approximately ninety sailings on Genting's World Dream and RCI's Quantum of the Seas from Singapore since the pilot kicked off, with no reported cases of COVID-19 spreading on board. This is an encouraging response in the restart of cruising. TTJ discusses with GB Srithar, Regional Director (IMESA), Singapore Tourism Board, to know more about the current cruise scenario in Singapore and their anticipation of Indians looking forward to visit the popular destination.

**Prashant Nayak**

**Q STB India recently connected with Indian cruise stakeholders through CruiseWorld India 2021. What were some of the important feedback received from the participants in regard to resumption of cruising in Singapore?**

STB connected virtually with its in-market cruise stakeholders at CruiseWorld India 2021. The event enabled us to re-engage our agent partners to come together to exchange ideas and jointly configure a pathway to recovery of cruise travel

to Singapore.

We received positive feedback from the 300+ participants and a sense of optimism was communicated by the industry stakeholders on customers opting for cruising as a mode of holiday and vacation when travel re-starts.

Agents shared that customers will give utmost priority to factors such as health, hygiene and safety of the cruising experience and most of the travellers will prefer a mix of land-cruise holidays that lasts anywhere between 3 to 14 days.

Singapore has succeeded in restarting cruises safely for domestic audiences, thanks to stringent hygiene and safety measures under our CruiseSafe certification programme. We see this as a critical step in building the confidence of trade and consumers for the next phase of cruising.

**Q Pre-COVID, the concept of cruising was picking in a big way with the Indians and Singapore seemed to be a preferred short-haul destination for it.**



## Can you envisage their present preferences for cruising?

India remains a major source market for Singapore, not just for leisure and MICE travel but also for cruise tourism. In 2018 and 2019, India was the top cruise travel source market for Singapore.

As international travel gradually resumes, Singapore has been named one of the top post-pandemic destinations that travellers in Asia would be likely to visit, according to a recent study by Blackbox Research.

Based on feedback from CruiseWorld India 2021 event, we note that Indian travellers are most likely to take up cruising in Singapore once the international borders open. However, they will be mindful of their health and give importance to the hygiene and safety measures employed by the cruise lines.

Singapore is prepared for recovery to be a slow, deliberate and cautious process.

While we have made good progress in resuming domestic tourism and gradual resumption of MICE travel, we are sometimes away from larger leisure movements, including cruise holidays for overseas visitors.

**Q Tell us about the possible new opportunities in the Indian cruise market when normalcy**

## returns?

'Families with kids' has been a major target segment for us when it comes to cruises. That shall continue even after the pandemic is over as according to our partners, they are the ones eager to consider cruising. As per the poll conducted during the recent CruiseWorld India 2021, the 'families with kids' segment ranked top as the leisure segment most likely to consider cruises at 50 per cent.

We also foresee the 'early and established careers' segment emerging as a key segment from India who are most likely to travel to Singapore and hopefully consider cruising an ideal way to holiday.

We also anticipate that travellers may prefer a longer length of stay at destinations, opting to combine land & cruise vacations together for an average stay of a week. This presents STB and our partners an opportunity to drive longer pre/post stays in Singapore. This insight is also drawn from the survey conducted during CruiseWorld India 2021, where 42 per cent of the respondents said were likely to take a land and cruise holiday for more than a week.

Another important area that we will continue to focus on after the pandemic is over, is giving extra attention to hygiene and safety, as the health and safety of visitors is our

top priority.

Tell us about STB's Cruise Development Fund to support the industry and how it can be tapped to develop and market cruise packages out of Singapore?

The Cruise Development Fund (CDF) supports cruise industry players such as cruise lines, travel agents, charterers and trainers in activities that will build strong consumer demand for cruises from Singapore. It supports the development and marketing of cruise packages sailing out of Singapore. It supports qualifying costs relating to:

- Consumer & trade marketing
- Development of pre/post-cruise experiences
- Themed cruise
- Travel agent training activities
- Professional services

We are heartened that several of our cruise partners in India see the CDF as a tool to enhance their value proposition to consumers. Some of the agents on boarded for this grant include Thomas Cook, Guideline Travels, FCM, Travstarz Global, and Antilog Vacations.

**Q Despite the COVID-19 situation, can you tell us one or two encouraging trends you have noticed in the cruise industry?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the global travel trade economy, including the cruise industry. In these challenging times, the industry has showcased resilience in adapting to the changes brought on by the pandemic.

Focusing on the safe and gradual return of cruising, our cruise lines have been reviewing their processes to implement enhanced health and sanitization measures, with STB's support. Singapore





commenced pilot trials of “cruise to nowhere” itineraries for Singapore residents with two operators - Genting Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean International - last year. The programme has received an overwhelming response with over 90 sailings and more than 120,000 passengers so far. Singapore currently accounts for a third of the world’s cruises.

We are glad to see that the cruise lines have reinvented existing spaces onboard, to provide a greater variety of entertainment offerings for passengers. With no ports of call in the sailing itineraries, it is important for cruise ships to continually refresh their onboard programming to appeal to locals. For example, Genting Cruise Lines curated special programmes and experiences especially for the month of Ramadan – including dedicated prayer and meal timings for Muslim passengers fasting onboard.

Our aim is not just to open safely, but to also ensure a sustainable resumption. The findings derived from the pilots will continue to enable cruise lines to refine safe management measures and best practices for the industry.

**Q Can you brief us on latest destination updates and highlights in Singapore and what STB has been doing to ensure a seamless visitor experience and a top choice destination for Indians when borders reopen?**

Singapore is fortunate in that we have the capacity and resources to manage the COVID-19 pandemic in a robust manner and we have

made good progress. Singapore is ranked by Deep Knowledge Centre, an independent think tank body, as the 4th safest country in the world for COVID-19. This is a mark of assurance that Singapore is doing things right. As international travel gradually resumes, Singapore has been named one of the top post-pandemic destinations that travellers in Asia would be likely to visit, according to a recent study by Blackbox Research.

The health and safety of our local community and overseas visitors have been our top priority, and Singapore has put in place rigorous standards of safe management and hygiene. We have developed detailed national guidelines called Safe Management Measures (SMMs) and customised them for each tourism sector – from hotels and tours to attractions and cruises. These cover measures such as capacity limits, as well as ensuring safe distancing and good hygiene practices.

To set high standards of environmental public hygiene and to build confidence in our businesses, we also launched the SG Clean quality mark in February 2020. This is a national mark of excellence that is awarded to businesses that meet those standards. To date, more than 29,000 individual premises have been certified as “SG Clean” across Singapore, including tourism-related premises.

In addition, STB and our tourism partners have been leveraging technology and the digital medium for consumer outreach in India since the start of the pandemic as it is important to continue engaging

and entertaining potential tourists in such extraordinary times and keep Singapore close to their hearts and minds.

**Q How important are partnerships and engagements with Indian stakeholders for STB during these challenging times?**

STB India sees our partnerships and relationships with our stakeholders and partner-friends as critical to our success in the market.

Since COVID-19, STB India has been constantly engaging our partners to show our solidarity, keep them updated on the situation in Singapore, and discuss how to make travel better, safer and more seamless as we plan for travel to restart.

Early on, as the pandemic unfolded in the first quarter of last year, STB India ramped up our engagement efforts. Adopting the #UnitedWeStand trade engagement theme, we communicated, through virtual platforms, e-newsletters and videos, messages of solidarity and unity with the travel fraternity. We conducted update sessions and webinars on Destination Singapore to upskill our partners’ leisure and MICE product knowledge. We opened up our virtual STB Marketing College to enable travel agents to develop their marketing skills.

Earlier this year, STB concluded its first virtual travel trade engagement roadshows for 2021 in India. Based on this year’s theme, “Charting Our Pathways to Tourism Recovery”, the roadshows aimed at strengthening partnerships and planning on how to grow the tourism business and prepare for travel restart once travel resumes.

The recently held CruiseWorld India 2021 was another such event which helped in reconnecting with the cruise partners and strengthening our close ties. The event brought together industry leaders to offer valuable insights on how to gear up for when cruising returns, as well as help us to gather feedback on how we can better support our partners.

We value our partnership with all our Indian stakeholders. We continue to be in touch with them through our various platforms such as the STB India WhatsApp account, our trade newsletters and video messages, as well as webinars and destination updates.





# Atout France's B2B alpine showcase 'Grand Ski' has a new avatar in 'Destination Montagnes- Grand Ski'

On the eve of Grand Ski's 30th anniversary, Atout France and its partners introduced an enhanced and holistic version of the French alpine tourism offering with a rebranding of Grand Ski to 'Destination Montagnes-Grand Ski'. Its first virtual edition was organized in the last week of March for buyers worldwide.

## Team TTJ

**T**aking place in January annually in a pre-pandemic world, the Grand Ski was an opportune meeting ground for travel agents and French professionals specializing in winter tourism to meet and further develop winter holidays in France. Typically, this 2-day workshop included pre and/or post familiarization tours for visiting agents to experience firsthand the diverse array of the French winter tourism offering available in France's eclectic collection of ski resorts.

While services offered by the French massifs for winter tourism still constitute the core of Destination Montagnes- Grand Ski' for an international audience, the key stakeholders are also keen, especially in the current context, to offer their clients, a 360-degree experience of the mountains. Thus, alongside winter services traditionally promoted at the workshop, a whole range of outdoor activities, events, and even new accommodation options available during the summer were also highlighted. This shift also takes into account the growing aspiration of travellers to enjoy authentic experiences responsibly and throughout the 4 seasons in the French Alps.

Keeping in mind the current crisis and the closure of borders, this event was

transformed into a 100 percent virtual edition that took place from 23rd-26th March. A total of 150 French suppliers representing different verticals of the alpine tourism offering engaged with 465 international tour operators and travel agents from 59 different source markets which included 15 agents pan India. A total of 9000 online meetings were planned during the 4 days of this event.

Barbara Breheret, representative to India, Regional Tourism Board of Auvergne Rhone Alpes, shares her thoughts "Our most popular French ski resorts have certainly charmed the Indian travel trade as we see a growing number of Indian delegates regularly being part of this showcase. Our meetings this year were a culmination of a shared enthusiasm to work together as soon as possible, many convivial moments of interaction and a very professional contracting setup. The French Alps are not only for skiers but are also a huge winter and summer playground with over 50 activities available with or without ski-lifts".

Amit Gilani, Founder Travel Butler, who was part of the Indian virtual delegation said, "This virtual event had the perfect mix of old and new suppliers on a seamless platform. The networking opportunity afforded to us was tremendous and we look forward to more of these perfectly executed virtual roadshows."



**Sheetal Munshaw**

Director  
Atout France India

Over the years, we have proactively tried to develop winter tourism through various initiatives and we are pleased to see that the concept of travelling to France in the winter has found favour with the discerning Indian traveller. Destination Montagnes- Grand Ski is a collective effort of key stakeholders of the French massifs to reinvent the mountains as destinations that can be visited all year round which is perfectly in sync with our strategy to showcase France as a year-round destination to Indian travellers.



# TAT announces a three-stage roadmap to reopen Thailand to vaccinated tourists

Three-stage reopening plans lead to no quarantine requirements for foreign tourist arrivals in five pilot destinations from October, with Phuket being the first to lift quarantine from July onwards.

Team TTJ

**T**he Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has recently announced that the Centre for Economic Situation Administration (CESA), chaired by their Prime Minister, General Prayut Chan-o-cha, has approved the TAT's three-stage roadmap to reopen six major tourist provinces – Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Surat Thani (Ko Samui), Chon Buri (Pattaya) and Chiang Mai – to vaccinated foreign tourists.

This development follows the Royal Thai Government's announcement that Thailand reduces quarantine for international arrivals from 1 April 2021, which includes the reduction of quarantine from 14 days to 7 days for vaccinated international arrivals involving 11 groups of people currently permitted to enter Thailand.

The TAT's reopening roadmap will take place in stages in the second, third and fourth quarters of this year, specifically for vaccinated foreign tourists arriving in the six specified provinces, which are Thailand's major tourist destinations.

## Stage One (Q2)

This is from April to June where

vaccinated foreign tourists will be allowed to undergo quarantine in government-approved hotels or other facilities under a '0+7 nights + designated routes' model. After completing the first 7 nights, they will be allowed to visit other destinations in Thailand. The '0+7 nights + designated routes' model means that during quarantine, vaccinated foreign tourists will be allowed to engage in leisure activities within the premises of their hotels or other accommodation establishments. They will also be allowed to engage in outside travel activities within designated areas in their selected destination of arrival.

## Stage Two (Q3)

This stage starts from July to September and Phuket will be the first destination to lift quarantine requirements for vaccinated foreign tourists under the 'Phuket Sandbox' programme. However, they will be restricted to travel activities within designated areas in Phuket for 7 days and will then be allowed to visit other Thai destinations. Vaccinated foreign tourist arrivals to five other major tourist destinations – Krabi, Phang Nga, Surat Thani (Ko Samui), Chon Buri (Pattaya) and Chiang Mai – will still be required to undergo quarantine under a '0+7 nights + designated routes' model.

## Stage Three (Q4)

Starting from October to December, all five other major tourist destinations will join Phuket in lifting quarantine requirements for vaccinated foreign tourists. Same as Phuket, tourists will be restricted to travel activities within designated areas in these destinations for 7 days before they are allowed to visit other Thai destinations.

Upon arrival in all stages, vaccinated foreign tourists will be required to undergo a COVID-19 screening, including RT-PCR tests, and download the specified

track and trace application. In order to be eligible to enter Thailand, vaccinated foreign tourists still need to have all of their advance arrangements in good order for arrival and entry. These include a valid visa or re-entry permit, a Certificate of Entry (COE) issued by the Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate; a COVID-19 health insurance policy with a minimum coverage of US\$100,000; confirmation of Alternative State Quarantine (ASQ) hotel booking, and a medical certificate with an RT-PCR laboratory result indicating that COVID-19 is not detected issued no more than 72 hours before departure. Interested vaccinated foreign tourists are recommended to enquire at the Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate in their home country for more details.

In addition, in line with the Royal Thai Government's announcement, vaccinated international arrivals must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with a vaccine, approved, and registered with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) or approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO), no less than 14 days before the travelling date. They must also be from countries with no mutated strain of SARS-CoV-2 virus as announced and constantly updated by the MoPH.

The following vaccines are accepted (as of March 31, 2021): ARS-CoV-2 Vaccine (CoronaVac) by Sinovac (2 doses needed); AZD1222 by AstraZeneca/Oxford (2 doses needed); AZD1222 by SK BIOSCIENCE – AstraZeneca/Oxford (2 doses needed); BNT162b2/CORMIRNATY – Tozinameran (INN) by Pfizer/BioNTech (2 doses needed); Covishield (ChAdOx1\_nCoV19) by the Serum Institute of India (2 doses needed); Ad26.COVS.2.S by the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson (1 dose needed), and mRNA-1273 by Moderna (2 doses needed).



# WHEN TRAVEL RESUMES

## Get your adrenaline pumping with adventure sports in South Africa

South Africa is a brilliant destination for travellers who seek adventure. Depending on one's tastes, interests, age, and level of fitness, there are many thrilling activities on offer and adventure tourism have gained tremendous popularity here. South Africa's diverse terrain along with an ideal climate for outdoor activities makes it a paradise for adventure seekers – and all the adventure sports companies have dedicated and efficient guides.

### Team TTJ

2021 brings with it the promise of a vaccine on the horizon, and a sense of freedom and adventure as the world is eager and hopeful of travelling before the end of the year. After staying home for a considerable amount of time, travellers are now scouting for destinations to

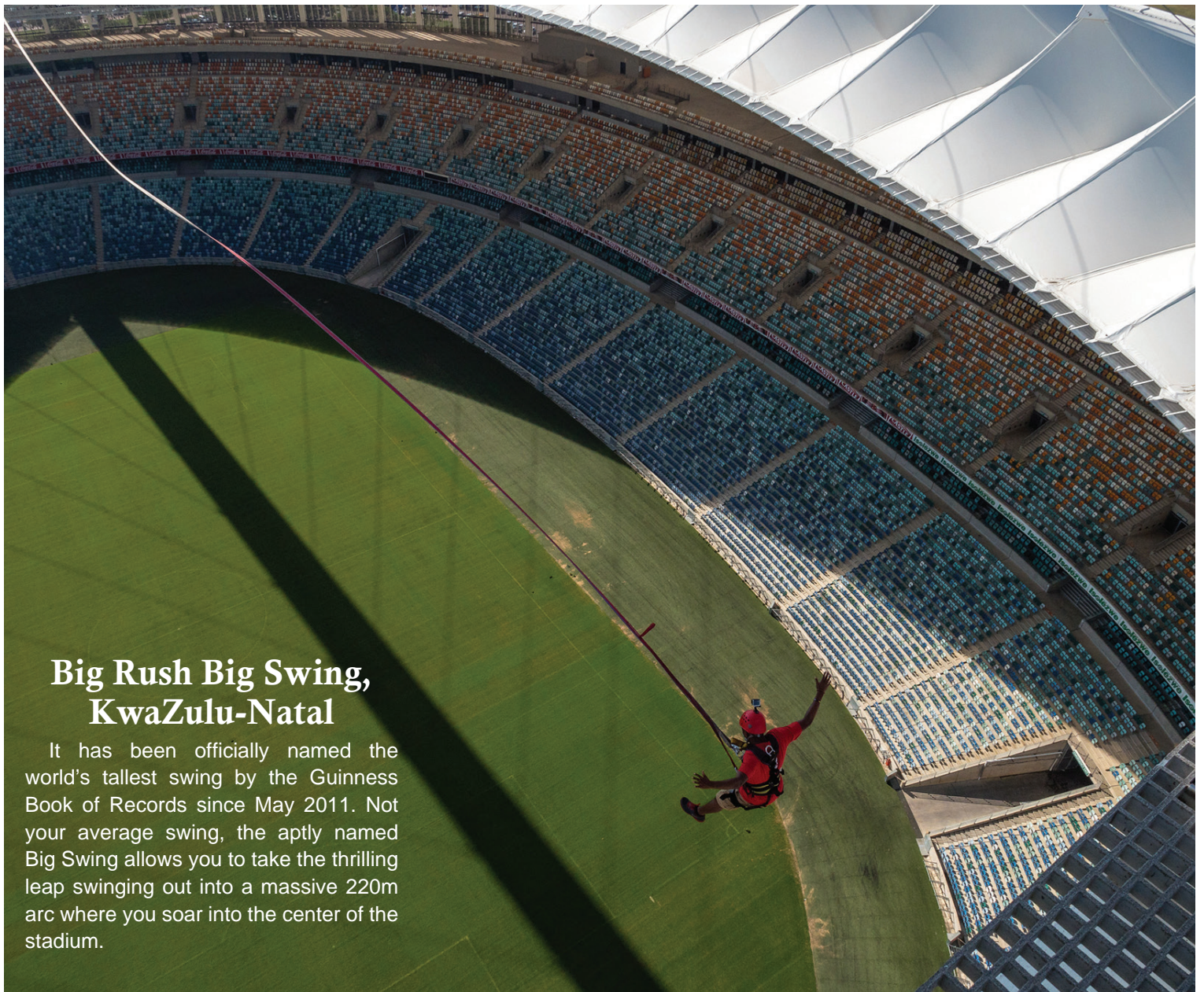
stretch their limbs and embark on an adventure of a lifetime.

South Africa, with over 3000 adventure activities, is undoubtedly the adventure capital of the world. The country has options across shark-cage diving, zip-lining, bungee jumping, quad-biking, horseback safaris, mountain biking, river rafting – and just about any other extreme

sport you can name, all supported by dedicated and authorized operators.

In addition, attractive currency exchange rates make South Africa a lucrative, value-for-money long-haul destination – especially when it comes to adventure activities.

### Must-Do Adventure Activities:



### Big Rush Big Swing, KwaZulu-Natal

It has been officially named the world's tallest swing by the Guinness Book of Records since May 2011. Not your average swing, the aptly named Big Swing allows you to take the thrilling leap swinging out into a massive 220m arc where you soar into the center of the stadium.



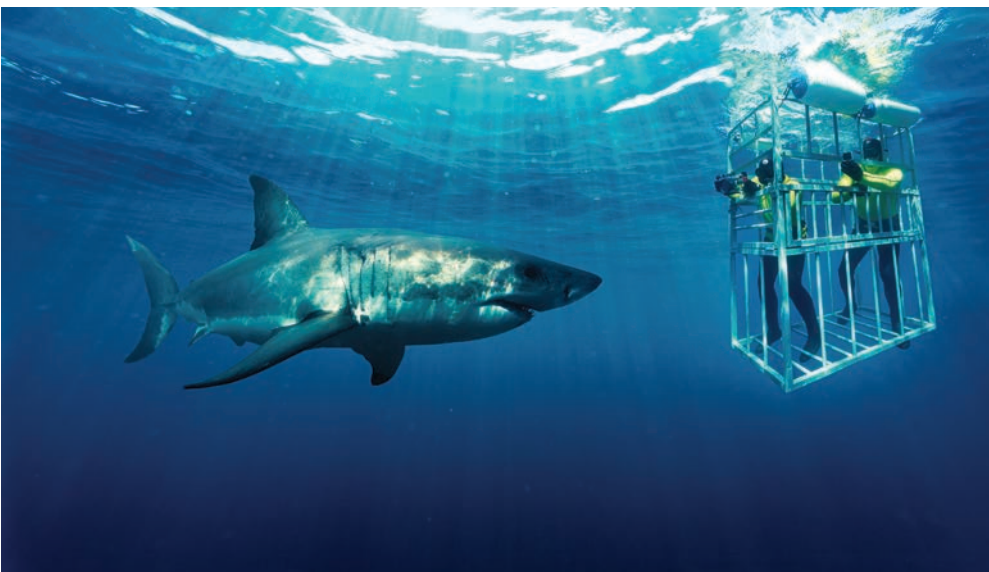
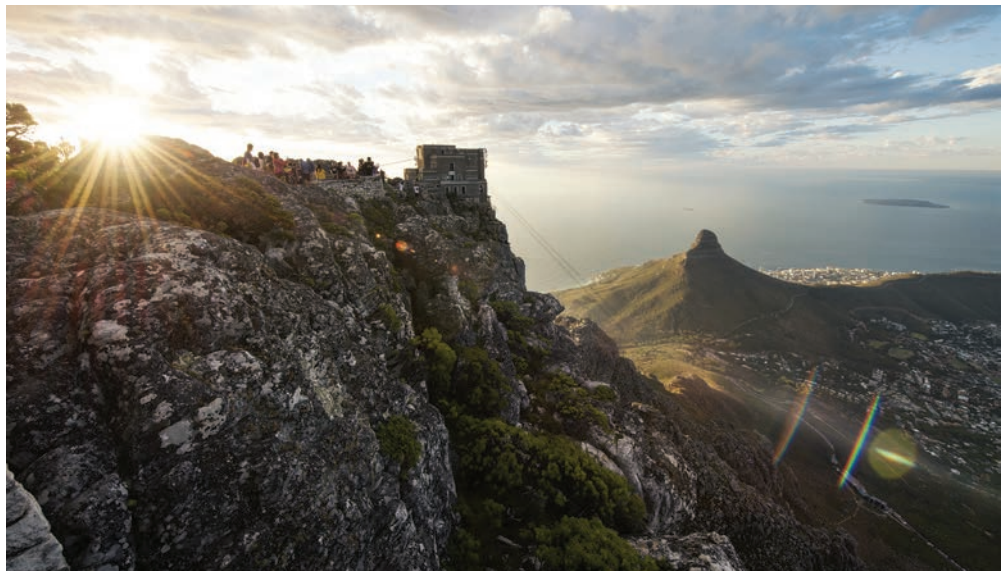


## Bloukrans Bridge Bungee, Eastern Cape

The highest commercial bridge bungee jump in the world at the Bloukrans Bridge has a 216 meter gorge below. It is one of the ultimate activities to feature on any adrenaline seeker's bucket list while visiting South Africa. The growing popularity is evident by the fact that 12000 Indians jumped off the Bloukrans Bridge in 2017, making Indians the 3rd highest participating nationality for the activity.

## Abseiling from Table Mountain, Western Cape

The 7th Natural Wonder of the World offers a spectacular view of Mother City with its bustling city life and the blue ocean. Abseiling from the top of Table Mountain gives you a view of the city that you will never see without indulging in the activity. One can also opt for a cable car or trek.



## Shark-cage diving

Great White Shark spotting is one of the biggest draws to South Africa. A trip to Rainbow Nation is incomplete without attempting the hair-raising shark-cage dive. In fact, Indians are the top 3rd nationality to undertake Shark-cage diving in South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal is often credited as a hub for shark-cage diving, with shark cage-diving outfits operating out of Durban and from the stunning coral reef – Aliwal Shoal. You could also explore options at Simon's Town, Mossel Bay, Dyer Island, Seal Island, and Port Elizabeth, among other places.

## Gorge Swing, KwaZulu-Natal

The highest gorge swing in the world is located on a waterfall cliff in the Oribi Gorge in southern KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. Lowveld is full of adventure highs and Graskop's gorge swing takes the cake. Prepare to freefall 68 m, plummeting 0 - 160km/h in 3 seconds, swinging out like a human pendulum across the gorge – the views are spectacular and so is the after-rush.







## Go Hiking in Cape Town

Hiking trails are the best way to experience South Africa’s scenery, sunny climate and outdoor culture – it is one of the world’s most popular hiking destinations. Whether you like to hike up mountains, along rivers, or through valleys, you’re certain to find a perfect route. In Cape Town you’re spoiled for choice when it comes to hikes – take your pick from Table Mountain’s many routes, Lion’s Head’s popular and spectacular trail walks in the various forests spread out below the mountain and beautiful coastal trails.

## Hot Air Ballooning in Gauteng

You rise ever so slowly into the sky and drift gently in the wind. A hot air ballooning adventure is a low-anxiety adventure that will take you to an emotional high as you look down like a bird in flight at the landscape that unravels below. And tradition requires that a hot air balloon flight ends with a toast of sparkling wine. Say cheers to a good time!



## Helicopter Ride, Western Cape

South Africa also offers luxurious helicopter rides. Helicopter flips in Cape Town allow travellers the joy of a bird’s eye view of the beauty that the Mother City in South Africa is. Take a helicopter flip for a change of scenery and enjoy a view of the entire countryside in a single trip before choosing your drive-to destination, or swoop low over the ocean on a coastal flip and watch the dolphins at play in the breakers below.

Helicopter tours with a destination beyond Cape Town might include wine tasting or whale watching, while a similar trip in KwaZulu-Natal offers a visit to the scenic midlands or a Drakensberg helicopter tour to visit exotic and breathtaking destinations like Cathkin Peak, Vultures’ Retreat, Cleft Peak and the Organ Pipes.





## Indulge at the new re-imagined Chambers at Taj Mahal, New Delhi

The Chambers at Taj Mahal, New Delhi is a contemporary elucidation of elevated and immersive experiences, with timeless elegance for the esteemed patrons of this illustrious business club located in the glorious heart of the city.

Team TTJ

**T**he iconic Taj Mahal, New Delhi has unveiled the re-imagined and re-designed avatar of The Chambers, India's first and most revered business club. The Chambers enjoys illustrious patronage since its inception over four decades ago. The new Chambers at Taj Mahal, New Delhi offers classic elegance in a contemporary setting in the capital's landmark location with stunning views of the city's skyline. With the recent launch of The Chambers Global Membership, members can enjoy enhanced privileges and benefits.

With its world-class facilities, immaculate service and exemplary warmth, The Chambers creates an unparalleled environment and provides its members an exclusive haven to pursue business or simply unwind. The redesigned and renovated Chambers is home to a new restaurant, 7 meeting rooms, The Chambers Lounge, a whiskey bar and a cigar lounge and provides members a haven to conduct business or simply unwind.

New features include Rayasina, a 60-seater restaurant with stunning views of Lutyens' Delhi, heritage marvels & power blocks and boasts of a splendidly high ceiling with

beautiful chandeliers. Out of the seven meeting rooms, one is designed by the renowned Italian luxury brand, Stefano Ricci. The Chambers Lounge is a sophisticated bar and a cigar lounge. Rayasina and The Chambers Lounge offer Indian and international cuisine, rich in flavours and exquisite in its presentation. The menu features several world classics with a modern twist and specially crafted set menus for power breakfasts or a light, relaxed meal. Cheese and wine pairings, dark chocolate and almond boards, and a wide range of beverages are some of the added touches to the unparalleled experience at The Chambers. The dining experience is further enhanced with carefully customised and hand-picked cutlery, crockery and glassware from Europe. The

service, as always, is warm, discreet yet highly personalized.

The Chambers retains its treasured collection of original works by renowned Indian cartoonist, illustrator, and humorist R.K. Laxman. These are famously mounted on the walls of The Chambers corridor. The Chambers, today, has a presence across seven marquee Taj hotels in six cities including Dubai, and will soon have its presence in London and Bengaluru.



**Satyajeet Krishnan**

Area Director – New Delhi and General Manager, Taj Mahal, New Delhi

The Chambers is for a community of members, who are accomplished, acclaimed achievers. The renovated Chambers with elegant and stylish spaces and a world-class restaurant offering modern gourmet cuisine will give members access to an uber-luxury private and exclusive club at the city's most distinguished address. Taj Mahal, New Delhi has been on a transformational journey for the past 18 months and with the new Machan, Emperor's Lounge, tastefully done rooms and now The Chambers, we look forward to welcoming guests to the next chapter of the hotel's illustrious history.



# 5 HANDPICKED HOLIDAY IDEAS to explore in Northeast India

With its challenging topography and often wet weather, the hilly Northeast region of India is the least visited part of the country. Comparatively, few tourists venture much beyond Kaziranga National Park, where tigers and one-horned rhinos are sighted. Known as the Seven Sister States, each State has its own distinct identity and history, deriving in part from the mix of indigenous people who live within its borders. This cultural richness tends to provide the focus for most tours to the region. Travelers could explore the region for a lifetime, and still only scrape the surface of the region's unique offerings. My personal favorites are the below five.

Madhusmita Khound

## Manas National Park, Assam

Manas National Park in Assam is a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site. This beautiful national park located in the Assam Bhutan border is divided in two countries India & Bhutan and is contiguous with the Royal Manas National Park of Bhutan. It is a project tiger reserve, elephant reserve, and biosphere reserve.

Manas is only three hours' drive from Guwahati, the major city and point of embarkation in Northeast India for most travelers. The drive itself is quite picturesque going through small towns, neat villages, paddy fields, tea gardens, roadside weekly markets, etc. On reaching Manas, apart from the lush greenery, one is also greeted by the many peacocks that live here. For accommodation, there are some resorts and camps on the periphery of the park. Manas remains open for visitors from November to April and partially open in October and May.

Three main activities can be done in Manas – Elephant Safari, Jeep Safari, and Rafting on the Manas River. The Elephant Safari takes

place early in the morning and the Jeep Safari a bit later in the morning. Manas is mostly dense forests with very tall trees and some grasslands. Manas is famous for its unique scenic beauty and to quote the UNESCO World Heritage Tag declaration – Manas contains superlative natural phenomena/ areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance. The Big Five animals of Manas are - One-horned Rhino, Swamp Deer, Wild Buffalo, Tiger,







and Elephant apart from many other animals including 22 endangered species and about 500 species of Birds.

Apart from the animals and the forest, the beauty of the turquoise blue waters of the Manas River against the backdrop of the Bhutan hills looks like straight out of a fairy tale. This park has undergone tremendous transformation in recent years from the verge of destruction due to insurgency. There was mass deforestation, and many animals died a few decades back. When peace returned to the area, the forest also started healing and soon regained its beauty and magnificence.

Khonoma village, Nagaland

Khonoma village claims to be the first Green village in India. Situated about 20 km from Kohima, the capital of the state of Nagaland, Khonoma is an Angami Naga tribal village. There are sixteen major tribes in Nagaland, Angami being one of them. The Angamis were fierce warriors and were at the forefront among the tribes that offered stiff resistance against British colonial intrusion into their territories, and Khonoma was their vanguard village.

A picturesque village on top of a hill, Khonoma has about five hundred households. There is a methodical neatness about the layout of the village and fields. Beautiful terraced rice fields in the valley below surrounded by hills are a sight to behold. Khonoma has adopted many green practices like banning the cutting of trees for commercial purposes, reforestation, sustainable agricultural practices, etc. to maintain the greenery and natural ecosystem of the surrounding areas.

Khonoma houses nature’s pristine beauty in the form of its alder trees, terraces carved out of its hilly slopes and the Khonoma Nature Conservation Tragopan Sanctuary (KNCTS). KNCTS conserves a large and rare variety of plants and animals within its 25 sq km area.

People can hike around the village in the many paved walkways dotted with pretty flowers and exotic orchids enjoying the panoramic views all around. Smaller roads take one inside the village where one can see and learn about the Angami tribal lifestyle. Morungs are common houses where the male youth of the village get together, stay and learn about social conduct, traditions, hunting, etc. from the elders of the village. There are some circular platforms where the elders of the village sit occasionally to discuss important issues.

Khonoma also has its share of history in its epic resistances against the British colonial forces resulting in a



peace treaty after decades of fighting. The Khonoma Fort is a silent reminder of the brave Angami warriors who stood against the Colonial forces. The main festival of the Angami Nagas is Sekrenyi Festival celebrated in the last week of February. It is a purification festival where villagers perform rituals to purify the bodies and souls of the villagers and the entire community to safeguard from evil spirits. It also marks the initiation of young people to adulthood and is considered an “identity marker of the Angami”.





## Namsai - Parshuram Kund - Roing - Mayodia circuit, Arunachal Pradesh

Eastern Arunachal Pradesh is truly a paradise unexplored. This part had remained comparatively untouched due to limited connectivity. However, in the last couple of years connectivity improved drastically after two of India's longest bridges came into existence over the river Brahmaputra connecting Eastern Arunachal to Assam. This part makes a great holiday destination round the year. One can arrive at Dibrugarh Airport in Upper Assam, spend a night or two here exploring the Tea Gardens, or directly proceed to Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh. The main attraction here is the Golden Pagoda of Namsai. The Pagoda is perched beautifully on top of a hill on the banks of a river overlooking the Eastern Himalayan mountains. The temple has a beautiful jade, Buddha. A tourist complex near the pagoda has decent accommodation of individual cottages.

Mayodia receives ample snowfall starting from the month of November till February/March. From Roing visitors can



come back to Dibrugarh crossing India's longest bridge, the Bhupen Hazarika Setu commonly known as Dhola Sadiya Bridge which is 9 km long. The view from the bridge is a sight to behold with the mighty Brahmaputra flowing majestically and the mountains of Eastern Himalayas on the horizon. Dibrugarh Airport is well connected to all major airports in India.

From here one can drive to Parshuram Kund. Parshuram Kund located in the scenic Dibang valley is a natural water body fed by the Lohit river. It is an important place as per Hindu mythology with beliefs that one can wash away their sins by bathing in this Kund. Thousands of pilgrims visit this place every year. From Parshuram Kund, the next destination is Roing. Roing has some decent accommodation aligning with ecotourism. From Roing, a day excursion can be done to Mayodia pass at the Indo-China border. Enjoy the panoramic views of the eastern Himalayas' snow-clad peaks.



## Jowai in Meghalaya



When talking about Meghalaya, the destinations that get mentioned first are Shillong and Cherrapunjee. However, there is another interesting destination in Meghalaya called Jowai, headquarter of the West Jaintia Hills district. Apart from natural beauty and amazing waterfalls, Jowai also has a historical aspect. One can arrive at Guwahati airport and drive to Jowai, which is about 160 km from Guwahati. The main attractions here and nearby are Tyrshi falls, Krang Shuri falls, Thadlaskein Lake, Nartiang monoliths, and Durga Temple.

The Tyrshi falls comes down in steps, thundering down to the Pynthor (paddy fields) below. A trek through a winding footpath offering a breathtaking and panoramic view



of the valley and paddy fields takes one to these falls. The Krang Shuri falls is one of the most beautiful falls in Meghalaya. It also offers activities like hiking, boating, swimming, and playing in the crystal clear blue waters. The Nartiang Monoliths are the biggest collection of monoliths or Megalithic stones.

Monoliths are upright structures carved from one single stone. The tallest Monolith about 8 meters high, probably the tallest in the world was erected by a trusted lieutenant of the Jaintia King to commemorate his victory in battle.

The Nartiang Durga temple is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas and it is believed that Sati's left thigh had fallen here. The Goddess here is revered as Jainteshwari. The temple is perched atop a hill and the present structure is 600 years old. Durga puja is celebrated here annually.



Tea Garden stays in Assam



The tea industry of India started with a few tea gardens in Upper Assam. Spending a few days in a tea bungalow in Assam amid greenery and serenity enjoying your favourite cup of tea away from the hustle and bustle is an extremely relaxing and delightful experience. Many of these bungalows are quite old built during the colonial times and can be called heritage bungalows. Some of these houses known as 'Chang Bungalows' were built on stilts, taking inspiration from houses of local tribes built on raised platforms. Most of the

Tea Bungalows come with fireplaces, old wooden furniture like four-poster beds, and other colonial-era charms.

With the onset of monsoons, the tea gardens come alive with fresh new leaves and tea factories buzzing with action and filled with aroma. The guests can try their hands at plucking tea leaves and see how tea is manufactured in the tea factory. A session of tea tasting is a great way to learn about the different varieties and grades of tea. Guests can also indulge in local Assamese cuisine and try their hands in a cooking class. Cultural programmes like Bihu and Jhumur dances are organized on request. Other activities that can be availed are cycling around the garden, bird watching, picnic inside the garden, horse riding, visiting nearby villages and weaving centres etc.



**Madhusmita Khound** is a Partner at Avani Travel Services based in Assam with expertise in organising experiential and special interest tours on various themes in the Northeast.



# With the new board announced for 2021- 23, time to 'Get Associated - Be Recognised' with SITE India

The Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) is the only Business Events association dedicated exclusively to the global incentive travel industry. SITE India has put their faith in the New and a Young team backed by the experience and legacy of leaders who have founded and served on the SITE India Chapter since its inception.

## Team TTJ

**A**n association of 2,500 members located in 90 countries, SITE Global has members working in corporations, agencies, airlines, cruise companies channelled across the entire destination supply chain. Founded in 1973, it aims to bring value to members at both global and local chapter level by networking, online resources, providing educational certifications. SITE is deeply committed to a new generation and operates with the Best-in-class Young Leaders program & dedicated annual conference.

SITE India Chapter is the Indian arm that was launched in 2013 and is a platform to provide incentive



conferences in India. It had an initial membership of 23 members, which has grown to 46 now. In 2015, SITE India received aid from the Ministry of Tourism with staggering participation of 255 delegates and over 100 International delegates. India Chapter's vision by 2025 is to disseminate global education in incentive tourism to both the members and the industry at large.

The New Board for 2021-2023 to head Site India Chapter are:

**Nitin Sachdeva**, President

**Naveen Rizvi**, Vice President

**Barun Gupta**, Vice President Secretariat

**Vikrant Gulani**, Vice President Finance

**Sanjeev Joshi**, Immediate Past President

**Anup Nair**, Past President

**Ajay Vinayak**, Amaresh Tiwari, Ashwani Nayar, Atulya Joshi (Board Members)

**Rajeev Kohli**, Mentor

SITE India will come out with a power-packed year with activities that will help its members and associate partners to not only drive business but provide the necessary tools and education to get ahead in the Incentive Travel Business.



**Nitin Sachdeva**  
President,  
Site India Chapter

The SITE India Chapter was launched in December 2013 with an initial membership of 23 members. India chapter has always dreamed big, and those who follow their dreams are the ones who always lead the way. India Chapter hosted Site Global Conference in 2015 within two years of its existence backed by undying support of the Ministry of Tourism and the entire travel industry of India.

As the President of the Indian Chapter, my mandate is to create an environment among its members and industry as a whole for knowledge sharing and mutual growth. Members should have the right knowledge, and they should be able to connect to the right platform for driving their business growth. We endeavor to make them discover the endless possibilities.

Going ahead with the discovery of possibilities, India Chapter has come with its vision document called 'Vision 2025' which looks forward to imparting and disseminate global education in incentive tourism to its members and industry at large. We are tying up with leading global tourism and event education providers to embark on our journey to create professional incentive executives in years to come. Pedagogy of Events and Incentives with local knowledge and experience is being built along with the veterans of the Indian tourism industry for its members. I welcome you to our chapter to enter the world of endless possibilities. Get Associated – Be Recognised!



## Preferred Hotel Group introduces its newest offering, 'Beyond Green'- a new hotel GDS platform



Committed to building a better and brighter future for people and the planet, Beyond Green is officially launched as a curated guide for travellers seeking a more purposeful way to explore the world. Featuring a global portfolio of 27 hotels, resorts, and lodges that exemplify sustainability in action, the new brand has been unveiled as part of Preferred Hotel Group – the family-owned company that manages and operates other consumer travel brands including Preferred Hotels & Resorts, Historic Hotels of America, and Historic Hotels Worldwide. Debuting at the onset of a new era of travel in which protecting nature, benefitting local communities, and celebrating cultural diversity has taken center stage, this forward-thinking brand invites travel advisors to discover and plan adventures for their clients that align with sustainable travel values and aspirations through a variety of intuitive platforms, tools, and experiences. These include a new common GDS chain code – LE; a dedicated brand website; storytelling via its @StayBeyondGreen social media accounts; exclusive benefits through I Prefer Hotel Rewards; and a celebratory, limited-time Journeyer's Pick Package, offering a 3 per cent bonus on top of the standard 10 per cent agency commission.

"Today's travellers are craving connectedness and renewal, and with this comes a new and profound sense of responsibility for taking care of personal and planetary health and well-being," said Lindsey Ueberroth, CEO of Beyond Green and its parent company, Preferred Hotel Group. "The travel advisor community has always given their clients endless reasons to continue to Believe in Travel, more so than ever in the past year. As we look forward to new opportunities and possibilities, advisors will play a critical role in helping travellers live out their wanderlust daydreams in a way that prioritises holistic sustainability practices."

"Over the years, in speaking with advisors about sustainable travel, I was met with a common refrainment, 'We are inspired, we care, and we want to be part of the growing movement of travel that gives back in positive ways to the people and places we visit. But how can we easily identify the hotels that are truly doing it right?' The launch of Beyond Green answers that question for today's travel advisors," said Costas Christ, Brand Leader of Beyond Green and President of Beyond Green Travel, also an entity of Preferred Hotel Group.

## Final preparations underway for Arabian Travel Market 2021 in-person event in Dubai



Arabian Travel Market (ATM) has reconfirmed that the 2021 edition of its annual showcase, will go ahead in-person at the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) on Sunday 16 to Wednesday 19 May, as final preparations are being put in place, in particular health and safety.

In addition to Reed Exhibitions' Global COVID-19 'Safety Shows' Health & Safety strategy, ATM is working closely with the team at the Dubai World Trade Centre and with Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) to provide a safe, touchless and seamless experience for all. The show will strictly adhere to the health and safety guidelines set by the Dubai Government and followed by the venue. The team at DWTC is working hard to ensure that all events run safely and have implemented a range of measures including an enhanced cleaning regime, improved air circulation and multiple hand sanitiser stations.

The theme of this year's show is 'A new dawn for travel and tourism' and the spotlight will be focused on the very latest 'COVID' news from around the world – vaccine rollouts, social and travel restrictions and as consequence, the current state of the industry and more importantly, what the future holds. It will also look at the emerging trends and how innovation can drive the industry forward.

In-person on the show floor, 62 countries represented by main stand holders and sharers will be participating this year. They include the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Germany, Cyprus, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Italy, Greece, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Maldives, the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico and the USA to name but a few.

Features this year will include Travel Forward at ATM, which will highlight keynote speakers and world-class technology experts, that will provide industry-leading insights about the latest technologies and trends that will undoubtedly shape the future of travel and tourism. The ATM 2021 conference programme includes the Global Stage which will feature the Hotel Industry Summit and Buyer Forums dedicated to key source markets such as Saudi Arabia, India and China.

There is an International Tourism and Investment Conference, plus other focused events on Gulf-Israeli ties, an Aviation Panel and a special seminar aimed at encouraging women to take up careers in tourism and travel. In addition, other co-located events will include the Digital Influencer Speed Networking event and Buyers' Club.

Also, for the first time, a new hybrid format will mean a virtual ATM running a week later to complement and reach a wider audience than ever before. ATM Virtual, which made its debut earlier this year after ATM 2020 was postponed, proved to be a resounding success attracting 12,000 online attendees from 140 countries.

ATM 2021's strategic partners include Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) as Destination Partner, Emaar Hospitality Group as Official Hotel Partner and Emirates as Official Airline Partner.



## Israel to reopen international travel for fully vaccinated tourists from May 23



Israel government on April 13 announced that vaccinated foreign tourists can visit the country from May 2021. The country had closed international borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic for more than a year. Tourism Minister Orit Farkash-Hacohen announced the news on Twitter that the country now allows vaccinated people to enter Afghanistan.

The Tourism Minister said that the limited tourist tourists will be allowed to visit Israel from May 23. The individual visitors will be allowed at a later stage. The visitors have to undergo a coronavirus test before boarding the flight to Israel. The tourists must present a serological test to prove that they have been inoculated with the COVID-19 vaccine.

Yosi Fattal, head of the Israel Incoming Tour Operators Association said that the industry has welcomed the government's decision. He has raised concern over the speed and implementation of the decision. He said that they fail to understand why it is so much easier for a vaccinated Israeli who has taken the same vaccine as a tourist to travel the same country. He called on the government to adopt international standards for recognising vaccines and not rely on serological tests.

## OTOAI President delivers an optimistic keynote address at a Luxury B2B MICE Conference in Istanbul, Turkey

Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI, was recently invited to be the Keynote Speaker at a Luxury B2B MICE Conference in Istanbul, Turkey organised by Team Travel Shop. The event took place from April 6 – 7, 2021.



Expressing his thoughts on Indian traveller's travel habits in the light of the pandemic, President OTOAI said, "Turkey is the perfect destination for all segments of Indian travellers, be it families, honeymooners, MICE groups, or weddings. Turkey is also one of the first countries to launch the Safe Tourism Certification System, which is already a step in the right direction to build consumer confidence. Travellers will now be much more cognizant of their choice of destinations and will seek reassurance that they will be safe while in a particular country or location. Positioning the destination as one that promises travel safety upfront puts Turkey in a good position to attract more travellers. I am sure that together, we will make India the number one source market for Turkey."

Emphasising how the entire world is travelling in the same boat and must collectively work towards turning this into an opportunity, Munshi said, "I believe that the travel industry is at a point of disruption and the future will be different from what we had imagined, but it will surely be a bright one. For all my friends who have suffered financial losses, I would just like to say that don't lose heart and be mentally strong. Create a bigger picture of your future. We all need to adapt, innovate, and collaborate to make travel easier, safer and more seamless than ever before. When we all are geared up to grow, we will see phenomenal growth of the world economy and tourism is going to be one of the biggest contributors."

## Ananda in the Himalayas elevates Mahesh Natarajan to Chief Operating Officer

As Chief Operating Officer, Mahesh will drive Ananda's brand, business vision and goals, lead wellness strategy, product development, research & innovation. He will lead expansion of Ananda's footprint internationally and extend Ananda's deep expertise in wellbeing into new brands and strategic developments. Mahesh is designated as the spokesperson for the company.

Mahesh has been leading brand, marketing, sales and business Development of IHHR Hospitality, the company behind Ananda in the Himalayas since 2008. In this period, Ananda has established itself as a leader in the luxury wellness industry being ranked consistently as the world's leading destination spa with an expertise in healing through traditional and integrated wellness practices.

Mahesh has over 25 years of experience in brand and marketing, sales and business development. He has worked in strategy consulting (Accenture), FMCG (Procter & Gamble and Perfetti) and Hospitality (Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Ista Hotels and currently with Ananda). He also founded and managed a tech-marketing start up for creating CRM solutions for B2C industries.





## Wyndham Hotels & Resorts continues strong growth in the Asia Pacific region



**W**yndham Hotels & Resorts, the world's largest hotel franchising company and provider of hotel management services with over 8,900 hotels across nearly 95 countries, continued on a strong growth trajectory in Asia Pacific in 2020, overcoming global uncertainty to achieve a series of important hotel openings, major milestones and a strong pipeline of new properties scheduled to launch in 2021 and beyond.

In a year of significant challenges for the travel and hospitality industries, Wyndham successfully opened over 125 new hotels and signed a further 140 properties in Asia Pacific last year, putting it in a leading position in the industry with over 1,500 hotels in 20 regional markets and territories.

This year, the growth is expected to continue with an estimated 40 percent increase in openings or approximately 180 hotels anticipated to open in Asia Pacific. Through its robust Asia Pacific pipeline of directly franchised and managed hotels, alongside strong relationships with master franchisees, Wyndham is on track to reach 2,000 hotels in Asia Pacific within the next three years.

"Strong partnerships with our owners will be key to our continued growth and our mutual success. We are building on the momentum achieved in 2020, as industries gear towards recovery in 2021, and our robust openings and hotel deal executions will pave the way for continued growth for the company. With so many great hotel openings and signings, it is a testament to the enduring confidence that our partners have in Wyndham's world-class brands. As we expand our scale, our reach, our distribution and our base of loyal Wyndham Rewards members, we will help create even greater benefits for everyone in our value chain," said Joon Aun Ooi, President, Asia Pacific, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts.

Alongside the company's extensive support measures for its existing hotel owners and partners, these milestone openings will put Wyndham in the best possible position to benefit from pent-up demand once travel restrictions eventually ease which is expected to occur in the coming months.

## Malta to pay tourists who visit this summer



**A**iming to revive its tourism industry and get ahead of rival destinations, Malta plans to offer foreign visitors a handout of up to 200 euros (\$238.10) each if they stay at least three days on the Mediterranean island this summer.

Tourism Minister Clayton Bartolo announced the scheme on Friday, saying that with most COVID restrictions expected to be lifted by June 1, tourists booking summer holidays directly through local hotels would receive the handout.

Bartolo said tourists booking accommodation at a five-star hotel will get 100 euros from Malta's Tourism Authority, which will be matched by the hotel for a total of 200 euros.

In a similar arrangement, those opting for a four-star hotel will receive a total of 150 euros and those booking a three-star hotel will receive 100 euros.

The grant grows by 10 per cent when bookings are made with hotels on the smaller Maltese island of Gozo, three kilometres (two miles) north of the mainland.

"The scheme is aimed at putting Malta's hotels in a very competitive position as international tourism restarts," Bartolo said.

## India establishes air bubble agreement with Sri Lanka



**T**he Civil Aviation Ministry stated that India has established an individual bilateral air bubble arrangement with Sri Lanka for the operation of special international passenger flights between the two countries.

An air bubble is a bilateral arrangement with a set of regulations and restrictions in which the carriers of the two countries can operate international flights.

"India has finalised an air bubble agreement with Sri Lanka, making it the 6th such arrangement in SAARC region and the 28th in total. All the eligible passengers will be able to travel between the two countries in the near future," the Civil Aviation Ministry said on Twitter.



## Turkey starts vaccination program for its tourism employees

**T**urkey has started a full-fledged vaccination of the tourism employees in coordination with The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Health and Turkey Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA).

The vaccination program will cover the employees of the airlines, airports, accommodation facilities, travel agencies as well as professional guides. Vaccination of the entire tourism staff will be completed before the beginning of the 2021 summer season. Within the scope of the 'Safe Tourism Certification Program', the vaccination program aims to welcome international travellers for the upcoming summer season and ensure the health and safety of tourism employees and its residents. Since the launch of the 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' in June 2020, Turkey has been following stringent health and safety guidelines and taking all necessary steps to ensure it continues to be safe.

Before the opening of the season, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism started to work on the inclusion of the tourism sector employees into the vaccination program to ensure that the tourism services in the country remain open throughout the year. The vaccination program is carried out meticulously in coordination with the Ministry of Health. The vaccination program of tourism employees started in line with priorities and within the scope of the 'Safe Tourism Certification Program'.

As part of continuing effort to fight against COVID-19



and further enhance its position as one of the world's safest destinations, Turkey is continuing to invest in 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' which is one of the first and most successful examples in the world in this field. The Country has expanded the scope of the practice and made it compulsory for accommodation facilities with 30 or more rooms. Up till now, more than 8.000 facilities were certified.

As the Country is expecting a V-shaped recovery in touristic travels, the tourism workforce is prioritised for vaccination. Turkey is taking all actions to make sure it remains to be a healthy and safe tourism destination in 2021 and will be one of the top choices as a safe travel option for international travellers.

## IHG Hotels & Resorts appoints Haitham Mattar as MD of India, Middle East & Africa

IHG® Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of Haitham Mattar as Managing Director of India, Middle East & Africa (IMEA), effective April 18, 2021.

In his new role with IHG, Haitham will take on a broad leadership agenda to drive IHG's business in the Middle East, Africa and the South West Asia region, covering both development and operations responsibilities across a portfolio of 165 operational hotels and a strong pipeline of over 100 properties, representing IHG's brands across luxury and lifestyle, premium, essentials and suites collections. Haitham will be based in IHG's Dubai office and will report to Kenneth Macpherson, Chief Executive Officer, Europe, Middle East, Asia and Africa (EMEAA).

Commenting on the announcement, Kenneth Macpherson, Chief Executive Officer, Europe, Middle East, Asia and Africa, IHG said, "I am very pleased to welcome Haitham back to IHG and lead our business in IMEA at such a crucial time for the travel and tourism industry. Haitham has a wealth of experience within the sector and has been at the forefront of several important strategic initiatives in the region over the last decade. I am confident that his knowledge, diverse experience, along with cross-continent and local expertise will be invaluable, as we look to continue driving our recovery"

Haitham Mattar said, "I am delighted to join the IHG family once again and have an opportunity to lead such a diverse region with enormous potential. The tourism and



hospitality landscape in IMEA has transformed significantly in recent years, providing us with a tremendous opportunity to offer world-class hospitality options to both domestic and international travellers. Building on IHG's strong performance track record and growth plans, I look forward to working with the team, as well as our partners, as we look ahead to the next chapter of travel in the region."



## The Boat by the Address Hotels + Resorts is ready to set sail

The new experience falls under the brand's event venues and welcomes guests to explore a new height of luxury aboard. Tailored to perfection in the comfort of your space experience a new season and a different side to Address Hotels + Resorts.

The Boat is designed to complement the hospitality brand where guests are given the comfort of their own space. Taking you on a journey to mesmerising views of Dubai Creek Harbour cruising through the Dubai Canal and passing through the Mangroves the cruise ensures guests enjoy some great views of the city skyline.

Board an 85-foot luxury boat offering opulent facilities which include three bedrooms and a kitchenette, a dining area and a large majlis living space that can accommodate up to 60 passengers. \* (In light of government's restrictions, currently the boat can host 30 people). An upper deck lounge is a perfect place to soak up some sun and take in the beautiful sights encountered on the cruise.

The Boat by Address can be used for business, weddings, social or family events that allow guests

to experience home-away-from-home and rediscover the magic of extraordinary gatherings designed to impress all. This cruising venue space can be hired for a minimum of 3 hours where guests will be offered a tailored-made menu for their special event by a dedicated Address Hotels Chef that will encapsulate the truly renowned Address Hotels + Resorts experience. Charged at AED 4,000 per hour, the experience is going to create a lasting impression on your guests.



## Roger Federer teams up with Switzerland Tourism

Roger Federer and Switzerland Tourism (ST) will together develop initiatives to promote Switzerland globally. The support is much needed at this time, emerging from the biggest tourism crisis since the Second World War. Nobody is more equipped to do so than this iconic personality wearing the Swiss Flag, officials at ST are convinced.

"I have always felt, whenever I step on the court, I am representing Switzerland. Whenever it says my name, there is a Swiss flag next to it. I have been very proud to do that for the first 22 years I have been on tour, and it will always be like that. To join forces with ST now is a logical step for me," says Roger Federer.

Communication activities will begin throughout the month of April with a focus on European cities followed by the USA and the Asia Pacific, specifically India. A series of visuals and short clips will showcase Roger Federer being energized by Swiss nature. On MySwitzerland.com, guests will be able to discover Switzerland through Roger's eyes. He presents his preferred places, Swiss highlights as well as hidden gems. "I have been all over the world. My favourite place has always remained Switzerland. It's the country I miss the most when I'm travelling" confesses Federer.

Roger Federer is highly motivated to support his home country, and he will do it for a charitable cause. The compensation for his appearances as the new ambassador for ST goes to the Roger Federer Foundation supporting disadvantaged children in Switzerland. The stage is set

– Switzerland Tourism and Roger are ready to officially become partners. Both are excited to start this long-term partnership.

"This is a perfect match because Switzerland and its unblemished nature have clearly contributed to Roger's unprecedented career. Switzerland Tourism and Roger Federer share countless values. Establishing this partnership is a unique opportunity and of great importance to us. Making a difference while recovering from the challenges of the past months and beyond will be a journey with numerous highlights," emphasised ST's CEO, Martin Nydegger.







# YEARS OF IMPACT