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Dear Friends,

It is great to hear the news that The Taj Mahal and 3690 centrally protected monuments and sites have opened to the public, despite India still reeling from a disastrous second wave of the pandemic. There has also been a surge in tourists to visit the northern hill stations and travel plans are being discussed across the country. After being confined to their homes for more than a year, travellers around the world are now seeing a glimmer of hope. With many countries easing their restrictions, travel plans don't seem that far down the lane.

TTJ in this issue continues with its spirit to be positive and full of hopes. For we know that once the government of India loosens up the guidelines for non-essential travel, Indian globetrotters will be ready to explore and reach the far ends of the globe.

However, before that, let us each make a cautious start with this little bit of freedom.

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma
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Editor's Desk

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Thailand sets mid-October to reopen to visitors vaccinated against COVID-19

Thailand plans to fully reopen to vaccinated foreign visitors by mid-October as the government seeks to restart the crucial coronavirus-devastated tourism industry, the prime minister has announced.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said fully inoculated foreign visitors and returning Thai citizens must be allowed entry “without quarantine or other inconvenient restrictions,” and that his goal is to open up the country within 120 days. Prayuth acknowledged that the push to re-open might create problems. “I know this decision comes with some risk because, when we open the country, there will be an increase in infections, no matter how good our precautions,” he said.

“But I think when we take into consideration the economic needs of the people; the time has come for us to take that calculated risk,” he added. Prayuth said the government would reconsider only if a serious situation develops. The government had previously targeted next January for reopening the country.

Thailand is in the midst of a surge in coronavirus cases that started in April and has accounted for more than 80 per cent of the country’s 204,595 total confirmed cases and 90 per cent of its 1,525 deaths.



No quarantine for Covishield vaccinated Indians in South Korea, mandatory for Covaxin recipients: Korean Envoy



Indians vaccinated with double doses of the Covishield vaccine will be able to enter South Korea freely as South Korea is going to withdraw the mandatory two-week quarantine guidelines from July 1. However, those inoculated with Covaxin will have to remain in quarantine for two weeks.

South Korea’s envoy to India Shin Bong-Kil said, “The South Korean government has decided to withdraw the mandatory two-week quarantine if individuals have fully vaccinated. There is no need to serve a mandatory quarantine if the person took Covishield, but those vaccinated for Covaxin are required to serve two-week quarantine.”

Meanwhile, South Korea’s ambassador to India has explained the restrictions only for the general public and not for heads of state and high dignitaries.

“We have seen that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken Covaxin and if PM Modi wants to visit Korea at any point of time he can visit Korea without quarantine. High ranking officials do not need to be in quarantine,” he said.

UAE now allows silver residency permit holders to fly from India



As of the latest, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is allowing silver residency permit holders — in addition to gold permits from India to enter the Arab nation. Apart from India, the UAE is also allowing passengers with silver residency permits from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka to fly to the country.

Issuing a notification in this regard, the UAE’s General Civil Aviation Authority said that the travellers who are eligible to visit from these countries will have to wear a monitoring and tracking device and it is mandatory for all while travelling to UAE. As per updates, this tracking device will not tighten the norms for visitors from India as the UAE makes you wear the bracelet for the 10-day quarantine.

However, the air passengers will have to undergo an RT-PCR test on the fourth day and then the eighth day. If the results come negative, then they can take off the bracelet and are free to travel anywhere inside the UAE.

As per the GCAA quarantine rules, the movement of such passengers is limited between the hotel and the airport without coming into close contact with persons of the community. Moreover, the GCAA has also announced that only a maximum of eight passengers can now fly into the UAE on business jets till further orders.

TCEB Conventions spearheads collaborative recovery roadmap

In anticipation of the opening of international borders, Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) invites the global conventions industry to collaborate on activating an initiative called Regenerating Legacies Recovery Roadmap.

The industry is now more attuned to new realities through its relentless efforts in adapting to change. TCEB Conventions Department leans itself into this shift in mindset and behaviour to embark on this collaborative journey.

"TCEB's advocacy for industry collaboration is one of the campaign cornerstones when we launched Thailand: REDEFINE Your Business Events in 2018. Now, the Regenerating Legacies Recovery Roadmap begins with a series of conversations that call upon that collaborative spirit to revive the business of global conventions with a future-shaping attitude," said Nichapa Yoswee, Senior Vice President at TCEB.

COVID-19 aggravated Associations' concerns around succession planning, evolutions that honour legacies and profitable innovations. The Regenerating Legacies conversations explore fundamental beliefs with association experts and industry partners to identify growth accelerators that cultivate valid advancements for the convention business ecosystems.

Yoswee explains, "We seek to understand Associations'

pain points, but we cannot resolve them in isolation. We have to move beyond rumination and spearhead effective changes that reinforce the value perception of our industry."

"Redefining the future is not just an outcome. It is a journey with unexpected

changes. The road to recovery challenges our resilience, but the way we respond is what matters most. Our team at TCEB is here to support association professionals in making informed decisions. What we can spearhead are robust conversations that attract agents for change and spark new approach for future generations."

A series of activities are in the pipeline to engage convention industry on this collaborative recovery journey.



Monaco relaunches its communication campaign 'Monaco FOR YOU. At last!'



While things were on hold, the Monaco Tourist and Convention Authority nonetheless worked to maintain contact with all those who are passionate about travel, whether loyal clients or tourism industry professionals. In recent months, the Authority has made sure that they are aware of just how much Destination Monaco has missed visitors of all kinds.

With the launch of its new campaign, the Monaco Tourist and Convention Authority communicates that it's time for tourism recovery. The Principality of Monaco is now planning recovery and demonstrating its resilience by sending a message of invitation which marks both the end of a long wait and the beginning of hope.

The campaign with an evolving slogan represents the diversity of what Monaco has to offer tourists, focusing on themes including wellbeing, fine dining, culture, family, romance, sport, responsible tourism, gambling and casinos, weekend escapes, and shopping. The campaign has been rolled out ahead of the summer season such that it covers all the segments within the leisure tourism industry.

Travelport and Amazon Web Services team up to power a 'simpler, smarter and better future' for travel retailing

Travelport, a worldwide leader in travel retail, has announced a strategic, long-term collaboration with Amazon Web Services, Inc. (AWS) to use advanced cloud technology to accelerate the digital transformation of retailing in the travel industry. The collaboration, which unites globally renowned expertise in travel technology, cloud technology, and hyper-personalised retailing, will focus on optimising Travelport's recently launched next-generation platform, Travelport+. It will also drive innovation in travel merchandising with the launch of a new accelerator program that will incorporate talent from the tech startup community.

As part of the long-term collaboration, Travelport will migrate its global platform that connects travel agencies and travel suppliers to AWS. It will also use AWS technologies, including High Performance Compute (HPC), storage, security, analytics, machine learning and databases to deliver a faster, easier, and more personalised travel booking experience. In addition, Travelport will use AWS Managed Services (AMS) to provide trusted operational expertise to help optimise platform efficiency and security.

Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Operating Officer at InterGlobe Technology Quotient, said, "With a growing demand for an application of digital, especially in the unprecedented times, this collaboration with Amazon Web Services shall certainly bring long-term advantage to our customers. Hyper-personalised retailing in the industry has been a rather futuristic goal for many but not anymore. Travelport is indeed reinventing travel retailing as promised."

Maharashtra Tourism: Confidently paving the way forward



Maharashtra has been the worst-affected state in India by the pandemic, in terms of the number of cases and the duration, in terms of the number of cases and the duration. In that sense, the travel industry of Maharashtra has been truly hit hard. Dhananjay Sawalkar, Director of Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra shares with TTJ that they are cautious about the revival of tourism in the state and intend to do that in a phased manner depending on the cities and districts.

Maharashtra Tourism is aiming to focus on domestic travel and inter-state tourism first and also keen on promoting tourism digitally and virtually, keeping pace with the trend.

Prashant Nayak

Maharashtra having the highest COVID-19 cases in the country makes it difficult to reopen the tourism industry completely. However, with the gradual decline of COVID infection figures in recent days, there is a possibility for reopening of tourism, but in a phased manner. Within their strategies, they have also been analysing the COVID figures of the different destinations and the districts, where there are huge caseloads. In such cases, the local administration takes a call on openings of different institutions like markets, transport, hotels, religious places, etc and thus protocols have to be followed. Thus, slowly and gradually in the month of July-August, there are possibilities that they will open up the tourism industry.

On asked about the effects and learning's of the continuous onslaught of the pandemic on tourism for more than a year? Sawalkar says, "This pandemic has severely impacted the tourism industry with international travel coming to a complete halt amid global travel restrictions. International tourist arrivals are completely stopped in cities like Mumbai and Pune. We are expecting a late recovery of the international sector as the exact plan of complete vaccination is still unclear. Hence, the focus will be on domestic tourism and within domestic tourism, the focus will be higher on intra-state tourism. We have a lot to offer within



Dr Dhananjay Sawalkar

intra-state tourism. We aim to bring people of one region closer to another region in the state."

The Tourism Department has witnessed an uptick in intra-state travel owing to the new behaviour patterns of travellers, which are primarily because:

- Travellers/tourists are keen on taking shorter trips.
- They are looking for an escape from the hustle-bustle of city life and crowded places.
- They are more interested in exploring natural locations.
- Trends on lesser preference for group



trips and higher preference for individual and family trips have been observed.

According to Sawalkar, the most affected tourism segment was MICE, as the absence of physical events has deeply impacted the segment. In luxury tourism, even the affluent people are wary about travel spends. Another major segment hit by the pandemic is religious or pilgrimage tourism due to restrictions on large gatherings. The Amusement parks have also suffered greatly due to restrictions on large gatherings.

Presently, the department is focused on many fronts for the revival of tourism, like increasing awareness of destinations through online sessions and knowledge sharing. Secondly, they are framing different tourism policies. They have different policies in the pipeline, however, because of the lockdown, the groundwork for new policies has been affected. The policies have been worked out for sustainable tourism, vacation rental home policy, non-notified forts policy, policy for instituting Maharashtra Tourism Promotion Society to engage stakeholders connected to the industry. Also, a survey was conducted by the Directorate of Tourism (DoT) to analyse the impact of the pandemic on the travel & tourism industry so that an action plan can be devised to revive the industry.

“Understanding of new dynamics, critical shifts, competition mapping, and the new trends that are shaping the tourism industry will help us in forecasting travel patterns and deploy strategies for new touristic experiences. We have been holding virtual conferences on various tourism segments like our recent

International Agri-tourism conference which was aimed at educating farmers on diversification of income and empowering rural women. The conference informed attendants about various sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities. We are also running a webinar series on Konkan Tourism to highlight Konkan’s rich culture, heritage and webinar since April 21,” informs Sawalkar.

Maharashtra is well-endowed with a variety of tourist attractions including golden beaches, magnificent forts, pristine hill stations, historic caves, heritage wonders, revered religious places, villages, wildlife sanctuaries and so on. So, the positive thing about Maharashtra is that they have a lot of destinations to offer,

which are in remote and isolated places and amidst nature. Road trips are gaining importance. Fortunately, Maharashtra, being the third largest state in the country, offers ample road trip opportunities. Also, the offbeat places are in abundance in the State. Similarly, with the rainy season on, there are many forts, waterfalls and trekking sites, which will also help in the revival of tourism.

The other important trend is that travellers want to visit places where hygiene and COVID protocols are followed. People want to eat only hygienic food in hygienic places. They have been avoiding eating street food. This trend can boost the concepts of ‘Farm to Table’ and ‘Agro Tourism’. With their current attention on promoting agro-tourism, it will be a boon in such kind of change in tourist behavioural patterns.

There are also new facilities and infrastructures being built that will aid the revival of tourism like the 701 km Samruddi highway, connecting Nagpur and Mumbai, which will be operational in the next few months. The Konkan expressway will connect three coastal districts of Maharashtra – Ratnagiri, Raigad, and Sindhudurg, which is in the final stage of construction. Similarly, the new RoRo services are going to start again in the month of August-September after the rains. The services have been

extended up to Kashid Beach. So that is going to be very much helpful for beach tourism in the Konkan northern belt.

Sawalkar feels despite all extreme difficulties the industry is facing, it is extraordinarily coping with the current challenges posed by the pandemic through, developing and updating industry knowledge by participating in seminars, implementing COVID complied safety measures, placing more focus on domestic tourists, offering customised holiday packages according to the tourists’ current needs and demand, reducing operating & maintenance expenses, restructuring of loans and diversification of products & services and starting operations in a phased manner to avoid unnecessary overhead expenses.

On the part of the state government to help the tourism sector, Maharashtra Government had recently announced a criterion to give the hospitality sector a boost. From April 1 this year, all star hotels registered with the tourism ministry have been able to enjoy tariffs and duties on electricity, water as well as property, development, and non-agricultural taxes at industrial rates. Also, to bolster the hospitality sector, the state government had given it industry status last year.

Maharashtra had launched several projects to kick start the tourism industry in the state. Maharashtra has its tourism policies in place and several partnerships to boost tourism. For example, MTDC and the Taj Group have signed an MoU to set up up a five-star tourism centre in the Sindhudurg district. MTDC has partnered with Motohom to launch caravan services in the state. MTDC has also opened few new properties across the state. To market its new initiatives, the tourism department is continuously looking at smart ways to market on its social media platforms. Once travel resumes, the state will surely address the pent-up demand effectively and swiftly.



Kerala Govt committed to revival of tourism, Minister tells stakeholders



Mohammed Riyas

Kerala's new Tourism Minister P A Mohamed Riyas has assured the stakeholders in tourism that the government will unveil various projects focusing on the revival of the vital sector ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, including special marketing campaigns.

Team TTJ

PA Mohamed Riyas, the youngest member of the new Kerala cabinet holds two portfolios, including Tourism and Public Works Department. In a special meeting which was convened to elicit suggestions for revival of the industry that has been hit badly by the pandemic, Riyas addressed representatives of 18 associations in the tourism sector along with other authorities from the Kerala Tourism Department. The meeting was also about working out plans for an impressive comeback.

The Minister said that the government will closely work together with the industry to double the tourist arrival by 2025, and hoped that 2022 will turn out to be a 'COVID-19 Free Tourism Year'.

"The government will implement all possible measures to ease the current problems being faced by the industry. Special marketing campaigns will be conducted once the second wave of Covid-19 recedes," Riyas said.

The participants explained to the Minister how the pandemic had resulted in a severe setback for the entrepreneurs and all others engaged in the sector. They also noted that, unlike any other state, Kerala Government had provided total support and encouragement to

the industry during the crisis.

The Minister told them that the urgent task will be to promote internal tourism and the arrivals from other states. "Apart from completing the present projects on a time-bound manner, two new heritage projects focusing on Ponnani and Aranmula will be planned and implemented quickly," Riyas said.

"The roads to tourism centres will be developed and more tourism circuits will be formed by connecting destinations. Through socially-committed Responsible Tourism, the benefits of the tourism sector will be made available to more people. The government's goal is to support the kind of tourism that brings benefits to entrepreneurs, tourists, and the local community alike," the Minister pointed out.

Riyas urged the stakeholders to approach the tourism sector with greater enthusiasm by taking the current crisis as an opportunity. He also assured that the government's activities and projects will be based on giving a new fillip to the tourism sector.

Authorities from Kerala Tourism like Rani George, IAS, Principal Secretary, Tourism, V.R. Krishna Teja, IAS, Director, Tourism, and Biju BS, Dy. Director (Mktg) were also present at the meet.

Representatives from Kerala Travel Mart Society (KTM), Association of Approved & Classified Hotels of Kerala (AACHK), Confederation of Kerala Tourism Industry (CKTI), Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) Kerala Chapter, Association of Tourism Trade Organisations India (ATTOI), Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) Kerala Chapter, Kerala Houseboat Owners Federation, All Kerala Houseboat Owners Association, Confederation of Accredited Tour Operators, Kerala Homestay & Tourism Society (Kerala HATS), Homestay Owners Welfare Association Kerala (HOWAK), Kerala Hotels & Restaurants Association (KHRA), Kerala Ayurveda Promotion Society, Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) South Chapter, CII Kerala Chapter - Tourism Committee, All Kerala Tourist Guides Association, Tourist Guides Federation of South India and Chairman of FICCI Kerala Tourism Committee attended the meet.

The Kerala government looks forward to ensure revenue for the people through tourism projects. Tourism centres will be developed in each district, and roads connecting the centres will be modernised. Kerala will be made a total responsible tourism centre in five years. Projects will be drawn up jointly with local bodies to achieve this end.

Responsible Tourism

Need for a behavioural change

Karo Sambhav, an electronic waste PRO offering solutions for e-waste management and EPR Services in India and have been working on sustainable tourism criteria for India that not only initiates infrastructural adjustments but behavioural changes. Karo Sambhav has partnered with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH India (GIZ India) under the development public private partnership (DeveloPPP.de) framework of the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation & Development (BMZ) to resolve the many aspects of waste management with responsible and sustainable tourism.



Team TTJ

India is fast emerging as an economic and industrial power but the burgeoning population and accelerated urbanisation in the country have resulted in an environment at risk and greenhouse gas emissions that continue to spiral upwards.

Furthermore, waste and pollution due to tourism have far-reaching impacts on the environment, wildlife, tourists themselves, and local communities. Litter along coasts transforms beaches into less desirable destinations; untreated sewage in the rivers/seas pose a grave threat to aquatic life; waste diminishes the quality of life for residents; trash that is left behind in scenic areas detracts from the natural beauty of such areas and throws off the ecosystem balance. Studies estimate that 14 percent of all the solid waste, each year, is produced solely by tourists. As the tourism industry is prone to overconsumption, it consequently produces a substantial amount of waste which puts tremendous stress on the local waste management systems – especially because the increase in waste streams is seasonal as many tourist destinations have peak seasons in either summer or winter.

The tourism industry has very consciously realized its negative impact and hence the new tourism policy has the overarching goal of sustainable & responsible tourism. Sustainable tourism criteria for India have been developed which highlight the need for not only infrastructural adjustments but behavioural changes wherein both residents & visitors have a major role to play in sustainable waste management. The concept of a Responsible Traveller targets the behaviour of visitors to ensure that there are no adverse social, cultural & environmental impacts on the destination city. This has been in India's pipeline for almost a decade now but of late there has been a great deal of resolve within the sector

to mainstream sustainability in tourism. To complement these efforts, last year the Himachal Pradesh State government introduced a plastic waste buy-back policy at Rs. 75 per kg of plastic waste and 1.5 years into the pandemic they have bought more than 1.35 lakh kg of plastic at INR 97 lakh.

Keeping the above theme in mind, GIZ India & Karo Sambhav have been working together under the development public private partnership (DeveloPPP.de) framework of the BMZ. The waste management project is being implemented in Varanasi, Goa & Ghaziabad with the objective of developing scalable, transparent, financially sustainable waste management systems as well as generating awareness amongst 100,000 stakeholders on the importance of recycling plastic and e-waste.

Recently at a Webinar on 'Role of citizens and Bulk consumers in Waste Management in Tourist cities', R.K. Verma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism emphasized, "Under Swadesh Darshan scheme, we are currently working in 400 destinations which have a component of Sustainable Waste Management in them and have successfully implemented said scheme least 100 monuments. Work is now being done to replicate it at a city level."

Karo Sambhav is a country-wide organisation, currently spread across 29 states, 3 union territories, and over 60 cities. Through our technology-enabled e-waste management programme, we provide producers and global brands with comprehensive Extended

Producer Responsibility (EPR) services. They aim to transform e-waste from a challenge to a formalised and environmentally conscious industry that provides fair value to all the stakeholders in the value chain. In just three years of their operations, they have successfully collected and sent over 13000 MTs of electronic -waste for responsible recycling and have collected 1170MT of plastic waste so far.

Karo Sambhav wants to bring manufacturers, distributors and recyclers together to coordinate their efforts to tackle e-waste, creating a more sustainable, circular economy.

For over 60 years, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH has been working jointly with partners in India for sustainable economic, ecological, and social development.

The Government of India has launched numerous important initiatives to address the country's economic, environmental and social challenges, and GIZ is contributing to some of the most significant ones. For example, it supports key initiatives such as Smart Cities, Clean India and Skill India. GIZ, in close cooperation with Indian partners, devises tailor-made, jointly-developed solutions to meet local needs and achieve sustainable and inclusive development.





Atout France

Adapting to the situation as it unfolds

Atout France has also been in regular touch with the travel trade and has been keen on updating them on the evolution of the situation in France. Sheetal Munshaw, Director, Atout France India feels that communicating relevantly and effectively across multiple platforms will be crucial in driving the recovery of the industry.

She shares with TTJ, about the learning of the pandemic, their current focus, and some measures to deal with the huge transformation and changes that has affected the travel industry.



Sheetal Munshaw

Prashant Nayak

While authorities in France have eased out international entry restrictions from June 9 based on COVID-19 activity in destination countries, they have introduced a colour-coded system to classify countries based on epidemiological risk, namely “green”, “orange”, and “red”.

India currently comes under the red category and includes countries like Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Turkey, Uruguay, and South Africa. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers are subject to the same

restrictions except vaccinated travellers may self-isolate for seven days and unvaccinated travellers must enter 10-day quarantine under the supervision of security forces. Travellers will also be required to present proof of a reason for travel, a negative COVID-19 test no more than 48 hours old, and will be subject to a rapid antigen test.

Authorities previously had tightened international entry restrictions for travellers from the UK due to concerns over variant COVID-19 strains. Authorities are also currently maintaining travel restrictions with the red-listed countries for the same reason.

Speaking about the impact of the more than year-long pandemic, Sheetal says, “While we have always known for our sector to be very volatile

and vulnerable to external factors of influence, and at the same time, one that is most resilient, this pandemic is certainly the most unprecedented crisis that the world has experienced. We still believe that the travel sector will bounce back worldwide and in India and ex-India in particular. The phases between the lockdowns have been testimony to the pent-up demand for travel both domestic and outbound destinations that the Indian traveller had access to. We also believe that the pandemic has further heightened the need to live in the moment and to invest in one’s self and not just forecast and invest in the future. This mindset will most certainly translate into enhancing the appeal, quality and demand for travel post pandemic.”

Throughout the pandemic, Atout France focused on adapting to the situation as it unfolds. They are constantly reinventing themselves and staying relevant to the part they need to play as a National Tourism Board. Right after the outburst of the pandemic, Atout France took on the mandate for domestic tourism for the first time to generate travel within France in 2020 and they continue to do so.

“Aslewoftoolsweredeployedtoensure that our stakeholders on both ends of the spectrum were kept abreast with the fast-evolving changes. Interactive maps tracking the impact on our key source markets, reinforcement of our PR and Corporate communications to keep our source markets aware of the situation in France, digitising our activities and sustaining our long-standing relationships as well as upskilling, strategising and strengthening our own resource pool within the organisation through restructuring, diversifying expertise, redefining our segments and gearing up towards a resurgence

of a new avatar of travel including redefining our offering to meet renewed expectations that encompass conscious travel, regenerative travel, refined TGs, travel patterns and aspirations. Our focus remains to stay committed to our mission of securing the place of France as a world leader in tourism and staying invested in our source markets,” informs Sheetal.

Presently, we all live in a world of over information and we are inundated with news, snippets, videos, and messages from various quarters and on various platforms. Sheetal feels that as an industry, each stakeholder can take the onus of disseminating the right relevant info through ratified sources to avoid the spread of panic and lead to decisions based on being ill-informed.

“We have seen this happen not only with reference to factual and reliable information being shared about travel rules and regulations but also a true sense of community with helping out in collating and disseminating information

related to the crisis at hand, as well as encouraging and supporting new initiatives that the fraternity has forayed into in the interim,” says Sheetal.

The travel industry is ever-evolving and is going to be one that will have witnessed a huge transformation, knowledge sharing and empowering parallel sectors with the savoir-faire of ongoing changes as well as unique product offerings that may better align with the travel trends that await us. These will hold the industry in good stead to be better enablers and facilitators each in their own capacity.

Sheetal concludes, “Adopting newer technologies, platforms and enhancing our skills as an industry in these domains to keep pace with the consumer, being more conscious in our choices, incorporating sustainable and collaborative strategies to play our part as an industry that thrives of change and evolution are steps we can collectively undertake as an industry and lead by example.”

Iconic Tel Aviv Pride Parade returns

The Tel Aviv Pride Parade will be one of the first mass parades worldwide to return in a physical, in-person format – courtesy of Israel’s high vaccination rates and lifting of restrictions following the country’s emergence from the pandemic.

Team TTJ

The Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality has announced the return of its iconic Tel Aviv Pride Parade on Friday, June 25, representing the first mega-event in the city since the COVID-19 pandemic hit last year.

The famous parade marks the climax of the annual Pride Month celebrations that have been taking place in the city of Tel Aviv-Yafo every year in the month of June since 1998. The Pride celebrations in Tel Aviv have attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors and Israelis who join in the citywide festivities every year. The 2019 Tel Aviv Pride Parade was attended by over 250,000, making it one of the leading events on the global LGBTQ calendar and the largest event of its kind in the Middle East.

The parade, featuring party trucks and DJs, will start at midday from Tel Aviv’s Bograshov Beach, before continuing southwards along the seafront promenade, finishing at Charles Clore Park – where a huge party overlooking the Mediterranean Sea will host

performances by leading artists on two main stages.

This year’s theme ‘A Community That Creates Change’ will be at the centre of the Pride Month events, born of the desire to strengthen social involvement and shared activities within the LGBTQ+ community groups and wider society. The cultural sector will assume a prominent place in the Pride schedule. The city will salute gay artists in the fields of music, visual arts, writing, drag and more, who have always stood at the forefront of the LGBTQ campaign for equality and repeatedly

proved that culture creates change and has a veritable impact on our reality.

A few key events taking place during Pride month 2021 are the beach parties at Hilton Beach, Wigstock Drag Festival 2021 and the ‘Subculture’ Festival – Temporary Farewell to the Tel Aviv Municipal LGBTQ Community Centre.



Discover Germany from home

The German divide is still illuminated at night

Berlin has come to be an increasingly united city since the fall of the wall in 1989. Tourists can cross the former border without giving it a second thought and cyclists casually cruise along the Berlin Wall Trail. And yet if you look down at Berlin from space on a clear night, you'll see that it is still divided in one sense. Satellite images reveal that the west of the city glows in blue-white light, whilst the east has a warmer yellow shine to it.



The primeval forest reborn

About a third of Germany is covered with forests, which is a high proportion given that it is such a densely populated industrialised country. Would you really expect to find a primeval forest here? Probably not! And yet there is one in the Bavarian Forest National Park. A large area of forest just a two-hour drive to the north-east of Munich has been left to grow naturally without any human interference for decades. Similarly, Sababurg Primeval Forest, a part of the Reinhardswald Nature Park in Hesse right at the heart of Germany, hasn't been interfered with for more than 100 years now.

The “DiscoverGermanyFromHome” website serves as a central inspiration and information hub and allows you to travel virtually to some of Germany’s most impressive and unique natural sights and destinations along with a culinary voyage of discovery through

Germany’s beautiful regions and districts. You will be amazed at the variety of delicious specialties and taste sensations. There are plenty of amazing discoveries here you might want to add to your bucket list for your next trip. The below highlights will inspire potential travellers for their next stay in Germany. Whilst you are at it, why not dream of a sunny summer holiday in Germany?

Team TTJ





The modern caravan, another German invention

Luxurious caravan-style trailers may have been used to transport horses and oxen across England in the 19th century, but the caravans that modern campers tow behind their cars all around the world originated in Germany. Some 700,000 caravans are registered right now in Germany alone and they are growing in popularity. Camping holidays in Germany are all the rage at the moment, too, according to the statistics.

Invention of fast food in Germany

Good old Europe! Now it's even claiming an American institution as its own invention. At the very least this claim involves a nice little story set in the Bavarian city of Regensburg. Located along the banks of the Danube River, this little gem is home to medieval architecture so stunning that its perfectly preserved Old Town has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Stone Bridge is believed to be the oldest bridge still standing in Germany. Just a stone's throw away from the bridge stands a culinary relic of sorts that has been described as „the oldest fast food joint in the world“. A café, now known as the „Sausage Kitchen“, is said to have opened on that very spot in 1146, just as the bridge was completed. Now, it's certainly a big hit with international tourists.

Bratwurst Sausage, an edible German Icon

Bratwurst sausages have come to be symbolic of Germany. According to statistics from the German Butchers' Association, the Germans consume the equivalent of around three kilos of them per person every year. And yet they did not actually originate in Germany. But whilst the Ancient Greeks may have grilled sausages over glowing charcoal, it was the Germans that adopted the sausage as an edible part of their cultural heritage. „The Bratwurst sausage is Thuringian, Nuremberg and Coburg's top speciality and is known for it in the whole world“ – that's something they're confident about over at the first German Bratwurst Museum in Mühlhausen, Thuringia.



Germany is home to 25,000 castles

If you love visiting a good castle, you won't be disappointed by the huge selection just waiting to be discovered in Germany. The Thuringian Forest is an excellent place to start if you're looking for something a little different. The most famous castle in the whole of Germany, Wartburg Castle in Eisenach. The federal state of Saxony is another castle hotspot, whilst stunning fortresses line the spectacular landscape of the Swabian Alb in south-west Germany. But if it's moated castles you're looking for, a visit to the Münsterland or Lower Rhine regions will be a dream come true. There are 40 well-preserved castles in a row within the space of just 60 kilometres between Bingen and Koblenz. The Upper Middle Rhine Valley has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Dreaming of Paradise!

Located in the heart of the South Pacific, Fiji comprises 333 idyllic tropical islands, drenched in golden sunshine, ready to be discovered. This island paradise is a popular South Pacific holiday destination, well known for its friendly, welcoming locals and its diverse range of holiday experiences. From world-class diving, snorkelling, and wellness programs, to adrenaline-pumping adventures and parties in the middle of the Pacific, there are nearly as many reasons as there are islands in Fiji to 'Dream of this Paradise'. Read on to know more about some of the most sought-after experiences in Fiji.

Team TTJ

Discover the 'Soft Coral Capital of the World'

Circled by three of the world's largest barrier reefs including the world-famous Great Astrolabe Reef dive in and experience Fiji's colorful underwater world. With an unmatched spectrum of colourful reefs, more than 1,500 species of fish and several hundred types of coral and sponges, Fiji offers plenty of unique diving and snorkeling experiences. There is even the opportunity to swim with Manta Rays and Hawksbill Turtles if done during the right time of year. With ocean conservation and sustainability top of mind for Fiji, the stunning coral reefs and thriving marine ecosystems remain some of the most abundant and vibrant in the world.





Immerse yourself in the natural beauty

Fiji isn't just all sun, sand and sea, although there is plenty of that too! From hidden waterfalls and lush green tropical rain forests to rugged coastlines and dramatic volcanic mountain peaks, there is so much more to explore. Fiji's third-largest island 'Taveuni' is referred to as the 'Garden Island' of Fiji for a good reason —80 per cent of the island is covered by tropical rainforests, along with natural rockslides and ancient lava flow. Also, the Sigatoka Sand Dunes, on the main island of Viti Levu is popular for whose rolling sand dunes are something straight out of Arabian nights though right on the coastal front!

Be marooned on a private luxury island

The 333 islands paradise offers many private island escapes to spend the night on. At an intimate private island resort, you can experience every unimaginable indulgence and feel like a true castaway while you enjoy seclusion in the middle of the South Pacific. Charter a helicopter or seaplane to reach the most deserted atoll on the planet and touch down for an intimate champagne beach picnic for two. At some resorts you can also hire a private yacht and sail off into the sunset, with a crew navigating you to secluded beaches, treating you to world-class cuisine and many such incomparable experiences. A few popular private island resorts would include -Vomo Island Resort, Kokomo Island Resort and Yasawa Island Resort.



Have an enriching family experience

With stunning beaches and a huge range of adventure activities, Fiji is really just one big playground for families too. Many of the island nation's family-friendly experiences educate kids with hands-on activities based on local traditions and conservation projects, helping them to gain a greater perspective of life as a local. One of Fiji's great attractions is the kids' clubs at many family-friendly resorts. They provide an array of fun & learning activities for the kids to do throughout the day like bushwalking, fish feeding, coconut boat racing and crab racing, to name a few. The Bula Club at Jean-Michel Cousteau Island Resort has an award-winning programme focused on exploration and educational activities, the Little Treasures Kids' Club at Treasure Island Resort guides children to forage for turtle treats and watch daily turtle feeding displays and be released into the ocean.



Pick an adrenaline-filled adventure

With an endless choice of adventure-based activities on both land and water, Fiji can truly bring out the adventure junkie in you. Whether it's kayaking or rafting on the Navua River, jet boating up the Sigatoka River or zip-lining through tropical rainforests, Sky-diving the Mamanuca Islands or quad biking the Noausori Highlands, there are adventures for everyone of any age. For more off-the-grid adventures, head to Kadavu or Taveuni to explore untouched nature.

Party in the middle of the South Pacific

Located in the Mamanuca Islands is a floating resto-bar equipped with its own pizzeria and upbeat DJ tunes—this is what Cloud 9 is all about. The choice is yours to enjoy lounging on their day beds, using their water sports equipment, indulging in wood-fired pizza and fruity cocktails or jumping off their two-story bar into the crystal-clear waters. It's only a 45-minute boat ride from Port Denarau to get you partying in the middle of the ocean.

Discover Fiji by sea

Enroll for Island day trips or charter yachts these are a popular option for short cruises through some of Fiji's most stunning island regions. It's also a great way to get the best mix of land and small island adventures. Alternatively, you could also go full cruise mode and opt for the 3-11 night island-hopping itineraries with fantastic small ship cruising companies like Captain Cook or Blue Lagoon Cruises.



Recharge and Re-energize with a wellness programme

Get recharged with one of many incredible wellness programmes in Fiji. From personalized meal plans to spa treatments, herbal medicine and specialized workouts, a trip to Fiji will get you back on track to feeling like your best self. Six Senses Fiji provides guests with a wellness expert to guide them through detoxing and meditation sessions. Nanuku Auberge Resort & Spa has an on-site wellness guru and Vomo Island Resort has created their Vomo Fit programme for guests to follow along on during their stay.

Tee of a day on the greens

You'll have no trouble finding a golf course to suit your skill level here in Fiji. There are over a dozen scattered throughout the islands, with three championship courses on the main island, Viti Levu, and many smaller and fun 9-hole courses elsewhere. The Natadola Bay Championship Golf Course, arguably Fiji's best, is located on the South-West coast of the island and it offers spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean, along with excellent facilities. This stunning course has hosted many international golf tournaments.

Get addicted to the 'Bula' Spirit

Fiji is the land of the 'Bula Spirit' and home to some of the friendliest people on the planet. In Fiji, 'Bula' is more than just a greeting of 'Hello'. It's a wish for happiness, good health and the energy of life. It's the Fijian people's this spirit, friendliness and culture that gives Fiji its unique identity. You'll hear 'Bula' everywhere you go in Fiji and it's impossible not to smile and return the greeting! It is here in Fiji you are sure to have the time of your life while creating lifetime memories.





EU Airline Associations demand Politicians to implement a consistent approach for restart of Travel and Air Traffic

BARIG, the Board of Airline Representatives in Germany and Boards of Airline Representatives (BARs) across Europe call for a fast and consistent approach for the restart of travel and air traffic within the EU and to third countries. Additionally, the BARs are calling for coordinated rules of travel between the EU and other reopening third countries such as the US, China and others.

Team TTJ

Across Europe, the national airline associations, the Boards of Airline Representatives (BARs), are advocating a fast and consistent approach regarding the restart of travel and air traffic within the EU and with third countries. The BARs involved are criticizing the current uncoordinated situation and point out that, from a technical point of view, the prerequisites for the necessary harmonization are already in place. Merely, the coordinated political decisions of 'what and how' are progressing very slowly.

Michael Hoppe, Secretary General of the Board of Airline Representatives in Germany (BARIG): said, "People have a right to mobility and freedom to travel. In view of the positive developments of vaccination campaigns and the enduring decrease of infection rates, basic rights and freedoms must now be returned to citizens on the basis of the EU Council of Ministers' decision of May 27, 2021. However, the apparently uncoordinated and constantly changing approach of EU states with regard to travel regulations is once again leading to great dissatisfaction and uncertainty among European citizens. We call on politicians to implement harmonized, practicable regulations now. Mere words are insufficient. Action must be taken; the technology is ready."

"My colleagues from the European BARs and I therefore appeal to national politics, the EU Council, and the EU Commission to implement harmonized procedures and regulations as quickly as possible. This will



Michael Hoppe

allow people to plan their long-awaited trips to see their families and friends or to go on vacation, and business travellers will be able to resume international meetings and appointments," he added.

The representatives of the European BARs strongly advocate for:

- Coordinated entry and exit rules.

- The recognition of vaccination, recovery, and testing certificates.

- Uniform declaration of risk areas, high-incidence areas, or areas of variant of concern.

- Coordinated rules for travel between the EU and other potentially opening third countries, such as the USA, China or others.

The BARs that are advocating these demands include the associations from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, and Spain.

On newer development, in the latest press release dated June 11, 2021, BARIG welcomed the publishing of a joint paper on the "Restart of Air Traffic." The joint paper was presented in a virtual press conference, "Update: Travel in summer 2021" and was developed under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI) and other partners. These partners included the German Air Transport Association (BDL), BARIG, the German Travel Association (DRV) and Federal Ministries such as the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI), the Federal Foreign Office (AA) and other parties.

The paper describes how the complex interaction of all those involved in air traffic and within the entire travel chain can be designed in a way that is safe for health.

On this, Michael Hoppe commented, "The paper on the 'Restart of Air Traffic' is an important positive signal for the travel industry, aviation, and the people in Germany. With the agreed framework conditions, international travel is once again much easier. Thus, German citizens can plan visits to relatives and friends, their summer vacation, and business trips abroad. Clear rules apply to all those involved in the travel chain, ensuring health-safe flying from departure to arrival. We would like to say thank you to the political representatives, the BDL, and the DRV for their constructive cooperation. Together, we have developed the best and safest solutions for the aviation industry and the passengers."

Hospitality industry's role in reducing environmental impact through sustainable energy practices

On the occasion of World Environment Day taking place on 5th June every year, companies and businesses across the globe come together to highlight various initiatives and practices that are contributing to reach overall sustainability goals. "Sustainable Development" is one of the core values at Chalet Hotels, and we focus on growth tempered with respect towards the environment and the local communities. I truly believe that the hospitality industry realizes the value & need for protecting the environment and needs to be a trendsetter in sustainable development.

Rajneesh Malhotra

As Benjamin Franklin once said, "When the well's dry, we know the worth of water." No business ecosystem is more crucial than the elements of nature itself. World Environment Day marks the annual celebration created to raise awareness and actions to safeguard the environment. As per the United Nations, the theme for the day this year is 'ecosystem restoration that aims to spread awareness and encourage citizens to develop a sustainable ecosystem through greener cities and conscious consumption habits amongst each individual and the organization to resettle the relationship with nature.

The tourism sector is a broader ecosystem that encompasses businesses such as hotels, airlines, restaurants, transportation, entertainment, and several other industries engaged in supporting travel, lodging & food service. As per UNWTO, tourist transportation accounts for an estimated 75 per cent of total tourism emissions, accounting for 5 per cent of all manufactured emissions and more than 20 per cent of all transport-related emissions. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled the tourism industry to refocus on resiliency, sustainability, and interconnectivity among varied stakeholders. As a result, worldwide trends such as clean energy, green architecture, and sustainable waste management reflect today's environmentally conscious travellers' consumption patterns. In 2021, it is crucial to promote the hotel industry's significant role in lowering the carbon footprint. It includes adapting to practices and values that encourage waste removal, increasing reusable energy, and discarding hazardous products.

Smart and optimized energy consumption:

The «new normal» has made it vital for hotel operators to review costs and explore innovative solutions not only to reduce energy & water consumption but also to work towards sustainable development. Hotels are introducing innovative tools like predictive guest room technology,



Rajneesh Malhotra

smart lighting technology, AI & data-driven solutions, and green infrastructure to reduce energy consumption, thereby enabling them to lower operating costs considerably. At Chalet Hotels, we have taken several steps towards lowering our energy consumption, and we source the bulk of our power from renewable sources. Several initiatives have been launched to reduce our energy consumption; our HVAC plant rooms have incorporated additional measures like high-efficiency chillers, inline pumps, and low approach cooling towers with variable frequency drives with plant room optimizers for lower energy consumption. As a result, consumption of HVAC plant rooms reduces by more than 15 to 18 percent. Notably, 51 per cent of our electricity was sourced from non-fossil fuel-based sources in FY 2021.

Effective waste management and water management systems:

As part of our commitment to achieve our overall sustainable goals, we focus on alternative solutions and breakthrough innovations to reduce single-use plastic consumption. Our team is working hard to reduce the carbon footprint through more green practices, which can still be effective in most business aspects

even during the challenges resulting from the global virus outbreak.

Prioritizing lowering water consumption at hotels has become a norm. Some of the initiatives that our hotels have undertaken are limiting water consumption & reducing wastage through aerators in taps, custom-designed shower heads in guest bathrooms, installing waterless urinals, sensor-based washbasin taps & drip-irrigation systems. Chalet Hotels follows a zero-discharge policy, and the wastewater is recycled through the STP plant and further treated with Ultra Filtration plants. This process enables us to use the treated water for horticulture and flushing systems & chiller plants. Rainwater harvesting and recharging groundwater is a standard practice followed in Chalet hotels.

Engaging guests and employees:

Hotels need to engage their guests through messaging and integrated service platforms about the initiatives undertaken for environmental causes and contribute to this cause during their stay. From an operational perspective, significant measures to train and educate staff about best practices. At Chalet Hotels, we continuously train and educate our staff on the need to conserve energy and the importance of working towards a sustainable future. We realize that effective communication & engagement with our guest & staff is important, and everyone needs to participate if we want to build a sustainable future.

Some straightforward policies implemented across our hotels encourage guests to opt-out of daily bed and bath linen change and replace individual one-time-use plastic water bottles with water dispensers during banquet events. We are also exploring installing water bottling plants at our hotels, which will use reusable glass water bottles and enable us to reduce consumption of single-use plastics further.

Rajneesh Malhotra is the COO of Chalet Hotels.



Travellers prefer booking directly with providers amid uncertainty: GlobalData

The pandemic left many travellers with cancelled flights, hotel rooms, excursions and more, and many never received their refunds. Now, it seems that those practices have left a lasting impression, and booking patterns are changing as a result. New research from GlobalData reveals that travellers prefer booking directly with companies, leaving online travel agencies behind.

Team TTJ

A recent GlobalData poll has revealed a shift in consumer preference towards booking holidays directly, instead of going through an online travel agency (OTA). A total 39 per cent of respondents said they would typically book directly, followed by 17 per cent that opted for OTAs and price comparison sites. This is as per the GlobalData Live Tracker



Gus Gardner

Verdict Poll of 156 respondents which is live since April 19, 2021. The leading data and analytics company notes that this shift is no surprise, given the flexible cancellation and straightforward refund policies offered by direct booking.

The pandemic has caused a significant shift in consumer booking habits. A previous survey in Q3 2019 showed that OTAs were the most popular booking option, followed by direct booking with a hotel or airline. Earlier, the GlobalData Q3 2019 Consumer Survey stated that of 29,744 global respondents, 44 per cent of respondents preferred booking through an OTA, 36 per cent directly with a hotel and 34 per cent directly with an airline.

However, as some OTAs have been

extremely slow to issue refunds and have received a raft of bad press as a result. This has knocked travellers' confidence to book through intermediaries.

"Direct booking channels are likely to have experienced an increase in popularity due to the fragility of booking a trip in the current situation. Travellers now desire the highest level of flexibility, and it is no wonder that direct booking channels' flexible terms, easy changes and quick refunds are winning travellers over," says Gus Gardner, Associate Travel and Tourism Analyst at GlobalData.

"Further, the ability to make changes online places the power back into the traveller's hands and streamlines the whole process. By booking directly, the traveller cuts out the middleman, considerably speeds up the change/refund process, and increases their satisfaction," he added.

Some OTAs such as Lastminute.com have been slow to issue refunds, and the negative press received has not helped traveller confidence. In fact, in lastminute.com's case, the UK Competition and Markets Authority threatened legal action unless it met a 14-day refund timeline.

"Confidence in OTAs' ability to issue refunds has quickly dented confidence. The slow responses have been incredibly frustrating and have resulted in a slight shift away from this booking method," concludes Gardner.



EbixCash

S Ravi has been appointed as the new independent director to the Board. S Ravi is presently serving as the CMD of Tourism Finance Corporation of India, the premier Govt owned financial Institution, set up to promote tourism in India. Ravi has a deep understanding of the sectors in which EbixCash operates and as the CMD of TFCIL has a thorough understanding of the travel industry. All of these attributes are extremely valuable to his role on the EbixCash Board as they progress towards growth and a prospective IPO.

Qatar National Tourism Council

QNTC has appointed **Deveekaa Nijhawan** to lead the International PR and Communications team, to assist in marketing the destination in key markets as part of the country's strategy to become a world-leading tourism destination. Deveekaa's remit covers key markets including India, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and United Arab Emirates with a focus on engaging and penetrating travel trade and consumer media. Deveekaa will execute QNTC's tailored global communications campaigns, with a focus in key markets.



Tamara Leisure Experiences

Tamara Leisure Experiences has announced the appointment of **Debopriyo Sen** as their National Head of Sales for the group. Debopriyo's core responsibilities at Tamara Leisure Experiences will primarily include planning and implementing the group's sales strategy across its three brands ie., Tamara Luxury Resorts, O by Tamara, and Lilac.



The Westin Goa

The recently launched The Westin Goa appointed **Sneha Jha** as their Director of Sales. Sneha aims to strengthen the dynamic of The Westin Goa by enlivening every guest experience and delivering quality work. Sneha was previously also the Director of Sales for JW Marriott Mumbai, Juhu and brought to the table proficient expertise and immense knowledge in Sales and Marketing, Hotel Operations, Customer Service and Business Development.



Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

Pavan Kumar has been appointed as the Director of Sales and Marketing at Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. In his new role, Pavan will take on the broad agenda of driving business for the two hotels by developing sales strategies across various market segments, aimed towards optimizing the hotel revenue. He will be spearheading the sales and marketing team, charting business opportunities and will aim at meeting the hotel's commercial objectives.



Signum Hotels

Signum Hotels has announced the appointment of **Sonia Sharma** as Associate Director – Talent & Culture. A self-motivated human resource professional, Sonia comes with over a decade of experience in hospitality. In her last assignment, she contributed her expertise as an HR Manager at Oblu Select at Sangeli, Maldives. At Signum Hotels, Sonia will lead the company's Human Resources, Learning & Development initiatives.



Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala

Siddharth Shanker Giri, a seasoned hospitality sales professional, is appointed Director of Sales at Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala. Siddharth is extremely well versed in all aspects of hospitality sales with an unmatched grasp of the leisure segment. At Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala, Siddharth will lead the hotel's overall sales strategy and will work towards positioning the property as a leading resort in India.



IHG strengthens footprint in Punjab with a Holiday Inn Express & Suites signing in Jalandhar



IHG Hotels & Resorts has signed a management agreement with Samplast Resorts to develop Holiday Inn Express & Suites Jalandhar GT Road. The new-build hotel featuring 110 keys is expected to be operational by the first quarter of 2024. With an existing portfolio of hotels from the Holiday Inn brand family across key cities in Punjab, the new development will further strengthen the brand's presence in the country and the state, in line with market demand.

Strategically located on the Grand Trunk Road, also known as NH1 which connects the country's capital city of Delhi to Amritsar, the hotel will benefit from the excellent visibility and convenient access. Holiday Inn Express & Suites Jalandhar GT Road will be a short drive from the city's central business district as well as shopping destinations. Additionally, the hotel will have an adjoining strip mall that will offer multiple dining options for hotel guests.

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Jalandhar GT Road will feature well-equipped modern guest rooms and state-of-the-art facilities. For recreation, the hotel will offer 'Great Room', a bar and a lounge. Other facilities will include a fitness room, meeting rooms, 15,000 sq. ft. of banqueting space, as well as signature amenities in line with brand's promise of offering a comfortable stay to guests.

Tripjack introduces IRCTC train booking service



'Tripjack Rail', the new venture by Tripjack is by far the best and most thought of product available for travel agents. They have focused on building a seamless user experience which allows them to be the first travel company to have an end-to-end mobile booking solution for trains. Agents can now book unlimited IRCTC train tickets, get instant cancellation & refund facility, and increase their income. Tripjack encourages all partners to sign up on Tripjack for the trains product, and they can also start their own flights, hotels, rail, insurance, and visa business in less than two days.

"With the launch of our new Rail product, Tripjack team has yet again proven their commitment to empower travel agents across India with robust technology solutions. We are very happy with the progress we have made together as a team, and even after the lockdown we have put our head down and worked hard to deliver the best for our agents. We at Tripjack are very excited for the bright future ahead and look forward to growing even faster as we enter the recovery phase post-pandemic. There's a lot more to come from us, so stay tuned." said Hussain Patel, Director, Tripjack.

Malaysia Airlines extends its booking flexibility until December 2022

Given the impact the travel restrictions have on customers' travel, Malaysia Airlines today announced the extension of rebooking travel flexibility, offering customers longer ticket validity until December 31, 2022, with a one-time fare difference and service fee waiver.

Eligible customers can now rebook their travels on or before June 30, 2022, for travel to be completed by December 31, 2022. Malaysia Airlines previously offered customers the flexibility to rebook their travels on or before June 30, 2021, for travel to be completed by December 31, 2021. Customers may refer to the airline's travel advisory available on its official website for more information.

Group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Aviation Group, Captain Izham Ismail said, "The recent spike in COVID-19 cases in Malaysia has moved us to prioritise further the safety and health of our passengers and employees. With customers being the

centre of gravity, we hope the extended travel rebooking flexibility regardless of the class fare will provide the certainty and peace of mind that their tickets remain eligible for future travel with us."



Uzbekistan Airways appoints Aeroprime as its Passenger Sales Agent (PSA) in India

As per the agreement, Aeroprime is responsible for the airlines' sales, reservations, customer service and ticketing. The appointment was made as Uzbekistan Airways seeks to reinforce the brand awareness of the airline, as well as provide a proactive on-the-ground engagement with customers and clients within the key strategic market of India.

Abhishek Goyal, Executive Director, Aeroprime stated, "We are honoured to be working with Uzbekistan Airways in India. Our appointment is a perfect reflection of Aeroprime's specialised offering of localised expertise and networks, which gels perfectly with the airlines' philosophy and vision. The airline will be supported by international best practices of Aeroprime, to expand their market share and sales in India."



AirlinePros partners with the Dex Group to expand its presence in India

AirlinePros International recently announced its partnership with Dex Group. This is extremely complementary to their existing network and significantly expand their presence in key cities across India.

Ramesh Marwah, Director Dex Group commented, "We are proud to partner with AirlinePros and are extremely



happy to join strengths with one of the most professional and globally recognised aviation network group. As a long-established business with pan India presence, the opportunity to work with a global organisation is a perfect fit for us both. For Dex Group to partner with AirlinePros seemed like an opportune move as our two organisations share similar values and ethics."

Achma Asokan, CEO commented "Our vision to be the most trusted and innovative network for servicing the aviation industry involves global partnerships as the DNA that runs through our raison d'être. Our local partners bring to AirlinePros International the opportunity to connect innovative ideas, cultural diversity, expertise and professionalism to add unparalleled value to AirlinePros, our Global Partners and Clients. We have been exceptionally fortunate to have continued our global expansion throughout the pandemic, adding many new relationships. So, our global teams are prepared and ready for the 'Aviation Restart and Resurgence Phase.' Our India operations are particularly special due to the huge untapped potential that exists and the immense strengths of our partner, Dex Group, having been pioneers in the industry in India."

Vistara secures permission to operate flights to USA



Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines joint venture Vistara has secured the US government's license to operate international flights, the airline confirmed on Thursday. However, it will be some time before the airline launches its flights to the US.

"We confirm that Vistara has reached out to the relevant authorities in the United States of America to secure permissions to commence operations to the US. While we have received the temporary Foreign Air Carrier permit from the Department of Transportation, USA, the process is still ongoing. We shall be sharing further details at an appropriate time," an airline spokesperson said.

With this announcement, the US is set to be the fourth long-haul destination after London, Frankfurt, Tokyo — all taking off in a span of less than a year — despite a subdued travel demand and restrictions due to COVID-19. Flights to Tokyo commence from June 16.

Mauritius will open for international travel on July 15

Mauritius will be welcoming international travellers from July 15, 2021. The island will be opening in phases during 2021 and the first phase, from July 15 to September 30, 2021, will enable vaccinated travellers to enjoy a resort holiday on the island. Holidaymakers will be able to enjoy facilities within their chosen resort premises, including the swimming pool and beach. If guests stay over 14 days and have negative PCR tests during their stay in the resort, they will be able to explore the island's attractions. However, for shorter stays, they may leave the resort earlier and travel back home. A list of pre-approved COVID-19 safe resorts will be available from June 20, 2021 at www.mauritiusnow.com

Travellers to Mauritius aged 18 years or over must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. They must undergo a PCR test between 5 and 7 days before departure and a negative result is required to travel to the island. Travellers will also have a PCR test on arrival at the airport in Mauritius and on day 7 and 14 of their resort holiday, as applicable. For Phase 2, from the October 1, 2021, vaccinated travellers will be allowed entry without restrictions upon presentation of a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours before departure. Unvaccinated travellers will be subject to 14 days in-room quarantine for both Phases

1 and 2 until further notice.

The country's response to the pandemic ranked among one of the best in the world, as the Mauritian Government responded promptly with stringent control measures and protocols. The safety of Mauritians and visitors has been a top priority since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the success is a result of a joint effort by the Mauritian Government and the island's population.



Indian students won't need proof of COVID-19 vaccination to enter US

The US mission in India is 'actively working' to accommodate as many student visa applicants as possible in July and August, and facilitating their legitimate travel remained a top priority for it, a senior American diplomat said on Sunday. Don Heflin, the Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs at the US embassy, also said that the US-bound students will not require any proof of COVID-19 vaccination to enter the country. They will need a negative report of their COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours prior to their departure.

There has been growing anxiety among a sizeable number of Indian students aspiring to fly to the US for higher studies in view of certain restrictions in getting visa appointments due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The embassy has giving visa interview slots for Indian students.

"We recognise the stress and anxiety this has caused to students and their families, and we are actively working to accommodate as many student visa applicants as possible in July and August. Facilitating legitimate student travel to the United States remains a top priority for the US Mission to India," Heflin told.



GO FIRST inks partnership with DreamFolks, introduces Departure Lounge service

GO FIRST has partnered with DreamFolks, the tech-driven global airport service provider, to offer Departure Lounge service across select airports in India.



With this, GO FIRST aims at making flygofirst.com a one-stop-shop for value-added services for its customers.

Lounge services are available across 30 domestic terminals and 12 international terminals. The amenities available in Departure Lounge services include food & beverages, entertainment, free Wi-Fi, business centre facilities, etc. Customers can book lounge access during flight booking or post-booking through GO FIRST's website (www.flygofirst.com) and mobile app.

This initiative is part of the airline's ambition of creating a robust ancillary products portfolio that will offer customers an array of add-on services to choose from. An exclusive Lounge service for customers is a unique offering wherein customers can comfortably spend the pre-boarding time in a relaxed environment.

The services are not just restricted to Tier I cities but also covers many Tier II and III cities. This underlines GO FIRST's motto of 'You Come First' and the inclusive nature of its customer-centricity.

Saudi Arabia bars foreign travellers from Haj

Saudi Arabia has restricted the annual Haj pilgrimage to its own citizens and residents for the second year running in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the state Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Saturday.



Only people aged between 18 and 65 who have been vaccinated or immunised from the virus, and are free of chronic diseases, will be able to take part, the ministry that manages the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca said in a statement carried by SPA. It also set a maximum of 60,000 participants.

"The decision (was made) to guarantee the safety of haj amid uncertainty over the coronavirus," the kingdom's health minister Tawfiq al-Rabiah said in a televised press conference carried by SPA.

"Despite the availability of vaccine, there is uncertainty over the virus and some countries still record high numbers of COVID cases, the other challenge is the different variants of the virus, hence came the decision to restrict haj," al-Rabiah said.

Kerala tourist destinations to be 100 per cent 'vaccinated zones' by July 15

All popular holiday destinations in Kerala may soon be declared as complete 'vaccinated zones' as the state government is mulling to provide COVID-19 jab to everyone in the tourism sector, which had suffered massive loss due to the pandemic.

The government has already started providing vaccines to those working in the industry after including them in the prioritised list considering them as front line COVID fighters, Tourism minister PA Mohammed Riyas told the state Assembly.

"We are mulling to make famous tourist destinations in the state 100 per cent vaccinated zones by July 15 with the support of the health department," he said during the question hour.

He also added that the tourism sector has already incurred losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic to the tune of Rs 33675 crore. Elaborating more on this, he added that they are planning to make famous tourist hotspots in the state 100 per cent vaccinated zones by July 15, with support of the health department.

While presenting the budget in the assembly, Riyas also mentioned that Rs 50 crore will be allotted to the industry for marketing, in addition to the existing provision of Rs 100 crore.

Further, to provide support to the said sector and to resolve its issues, a rejuvenation package was also announced by the state Finance Minister K N Balagopal, who stated that an amount of Rs 30 crore has been earmarked as government share for its revival.

Also, to strengthen the sector, two new tourism circuits have been announced in the budget; Rs 50 crore was allocated for its implementation.



ITC to expand Welcomhotel brand to 25 hotels even amid pandemic



Amid COVID-19 pandemic and slump in the hospitality industry owing to lockdown and travel restrictions, ITC Hotels is optimistic about domestic tourism prospects and planning to increase the number of properties under the brand Welcomhotel.

The Rs 45,000 crore hospitality arm of ITC, said it was planning to increase the number of properties under the brand Welcomhotel to 25 in a year's time from 19 now.

The brand opened two properties in a span of six months. Welcomhotel Tavleen Chail was unveiled on Thursday and Welcomhotel Shimla about six months ago. And Welcomhotel Ahmedabad and Welcomhotel Port Blair were relaunched in March quarter.

With the addition of the premier mountain resort at Chail, a managed property of Welcomhotel brand, the brand currently boasts a portfolio of around 19 properties across India, officials said.

ITC said its hotel business segment EBITDA was in March quarter at Rs 25 crore against breakeven in previous quarter and extreme focus on cost reduction and controllable cash fixed costs down 41 per cent in FY21.

"Vocal for locals is gaining more ground as people prefer to travel motorable distances post pandemic. Hence, domestic tourism is on the rise. At ITC Hotels we have always showcased destination India and this is the appropriate opportunity to cater to the public demand for experiential stays," an ITC official said.



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