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But the fight is on

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Dear Friends,

After a brief start to recovery, the unpredictability of COVID-19 has again brought the momentum of the travel and tourism industry to a halt. The recent headlines of the more destructive second wave have again put travel bans and major event cancellations and the word "progress" seem like a thing of the distant past.

While the timeline is hard to predict in the second wave, organisations, associations, companies in the better positions need to take bigger steps now to be ready to help and take initiative for the revival of the industry, support the economy and on their personnel front gain market share, enter new markets, and offer new products.

TTJ May 2021 issue keeps going and focuses on the many challenges of the more than a year-long pandemic.

While the fight is on! Read on....

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma
ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

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- Exquisite Italy (9 Nights)
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- Idyllic Maldives (4 Nights)
Maldives

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- Singapore with Sentosa Island (4 Nights)
Singapore | Sentosa Island

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Greece pledges extra 400 million Euros to help tourism industry: Minister



Greece will help its key tourist industry with an additional financial package worth more than 400 million euros (\$486 million), the country's finance minister said on Monday. The country, which generates about a fifth of its economic output from tourism, officially opened the sector on Saturday, hoping to save the summer season after revenues collapsed last year due to restrictions to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

"There will be a targeted support plan for tourism," Finance Minister Christos Staikouras told a Greek radio station. "It is estimated to cost more than 400 million euros."

Staikouras said further details about the support package would be announced when government had finalised its plans. The government has pumped in 39 billion euros to help shield businesses and workers in different sectors, including tourism, from the fallout of the pandemic and promised to pull back support only gradually.

Nepal extends ban on international flights until May 31



The suspension of scheduled international commercial passenger flights to and from Nepal has been extended until May 31 midnight. The suspension has been put in place by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) to contain the spread of COVID-19 outbreak. Two weekly flights on the Kathmandu-Delhi sector—one of Nepal Airlines and another of Air India—however, will remain operational under an air bubble arrangement between Nepal and India.

"Airlines are informed not to open passenger booking to and from Nepal until further advice and are notified to facilitate refunding of air tickets or extension of travel dates as required by passengers," the civil aviation regulator said in its notice.

Lufthansa to operate flights between India and Germany via Bahrain instead of Dubai

Lufthansa said it will operate its 10 weekly flights between India and Germany via Bahrain instead of Dubai from Sunday due to recent restrictions imposed by the UAE government to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The German airline said in a statement, "This change was made due to new UAE regulations that restrict flights between India and Dubai for passengers who were transiting there up to now for operational reason."

Beginning May 16, all 10 weekly flights between Frankfurt in Germany and Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore in India will transit in Bahrain, it said.

Instead of operating non-stop flights between India and Germany, Lufthansa had been operating its 10 India flights via Dubai so that the flight crew need not do a layover in India. Currently, the cockpit crew change happens in the Gulf country instead of India.



The COVID-19 impact

Survive - Revive - Start Again



The unpredictability of COVID-19 has again brought the momentum of the travel and tourism industry to a halt. The travel and tourism industry seeking to emerge from the crisis in a stronger position must develop a systematic understanding of behavioural shifts, innovations, take multiple perspectives, and reconfigure business models or reallocate capital and so on.

With the fight for survival raging on, TTJ tries to understand from a few, in the industry, their sentiments and their resilience in this destructive second wave of COVID, which has hampered growth and progress after a brief recovery.

Prashant Nayak

It will be quite some time before the travel and tourism industry understands the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. But the history of such shocks tells us two things. First, even in severe economic downturns and recessions, some companies are able to gain an advantage. Secondly, crises produce not just a plethora of temporary changes (mainly short-term shifts in demand) but also some lasting ones. For example, the 9/11 terrorist attacks caused only a temporary decline in air travel, but they brought about a lasting shift in societal attitudes about the trade-off between privacy and security, resulting in permanently higher levels of screening and surveillance.

During the pandemic, we learned to cope; in the post pandemic world, we need to learn to thrive. Companies emerging from the crisis are realising that workforces require new capabilities to face the digital and environmental future. Innovation and

technology now exist to deliver rapid testing at airports, and vital points of the tourism sector, such as museums, galleries and restaurants. And block-chain-backed track and trace smart app technology has already been successfully piloted for airline passengers on international flights.

To flourish during and after the pandemic, companies need a new set of skills, including social and emotional, advanced cognitive, and digital capabilities. It's time for companies to strategise and identify the most effective options, including digital learning and talent development of the workforce.

However, it is not as easy as it looks. Businesses have spent much of over a year scrambling to adapt to extraordinary circumstances. The quite unexpected second wave of COVID-19 has dashed the hopes of several tourism businesses and entrepreneurs who are now back to square one with no options left out to overcome

their business woes. Many bookings have already been cancelled with the increasing restrictions on travel and containment zone regulations. Many of them have already shut their ventures with the sudden fall in the number of visitors.

Thus, the year 2021 has taken a 360-degree turn and we are back to where we were last year. No one expected the second wave of COVID-19 to hit India this late and this bad as we are back to reporting more than two lakh cases per day and the healthcare system is once again on its knees. The second COVID wave in India is much steeper than the first. While the government is somehow managing the situation, the travel and hospitality sectors, which barely survived the crisis of 2020, are staring at another tough year despite the vaccination drive.

While the fight against the COVID-19 is on, with many vaccines in sight, there is at least a faint light at the end of the

tunnel, along with the hope that another train isn't heading our way. Leisure and domestic travel, particularly to drive-to destinations, will be the first segment to recover post the second wave. While widespread vaccination rollout will ease the situation once the curfews are lifted, the pace of recovery remains to be seen. While the vaccination roll-out was picking up a few weeks back, vaccine shortages in several states have affected the drive. An effective vaccination roll-out remains the key to industry recovery.

Revitalisation of tourism requires travellers and employees working in the sector to feel - and to be safe. This can only be done by regulations imposed by local governments. And to avoid adding to the communications deficit, distinctively visible in the Indian government's strategy, we must avoid any confusion over safety measures that are in place. Otherwise, this will result in a lack of confidence not only by citizens but also by international tourists when inbound travel resumes.

What we need to avert this disaster are partnerships between the public and the private sector, led by governments and the tourism industry including both organizations and individuals employed by the sector. Previously, government involvement in the sector has been rather limited, and it was majorly marketing. But this can no longer be the case. They need to look down at the sector which accounted for 10 percent of the GDP in the pre-pandemic age. Travel Associations in India have to continuously hammer these thoughts to the Government and come together to work in unison with a set of common goals for a start.

Cholada Siddhivarn, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand Mumbai Office



I have learned to cherish every second I have. Do whatever I can do, no delay, no excuse especially if it can help people and the team as well as our business and media partners. It's important to find sanity in whatever manner and maintain a positive outlook.

Given the situation, it is very important to be well connected with our partners to understand the sentiments, update them on a regular basis on the situation and new travel guidelines. Since social media platforms are proven to be great influencers at the moment, we are focusing on engaging with our followers, while keeping Thailand at the Top of Mind of the tourists, so that when travel resumes, they prefer to travel to Thailand. We are also monitoring the situation and are preparing to welcome more Indians as soon as borders open.

Travel is one of the most favourite activities of people around the world. It makes people happy. So as people in the travel and tourism industry, they are very positive and resilient. We all have hope and still hope for the better. Fair trade, genuineness, and flexibility will help the industry accelerate amid such adversity.

Elisa Robles Fraga, Director, Tourism Office of Spain in Mumbai, India



Spain is the second most visited country in the world and boasts of a very important tourist industry, both in terms of contribution to the country's GDP and employment in the country. Travel and tourism is a vital industry for Spain. The COVID crisis led the Spanish economy to register a clear GDP decline in 2020. With this setback, the economy breaks with six

consecutive years of growth. The positive note within this is in the fourth quarter of the year when GDP maintains positive figures, with quarterly growth of 0.4 per cent.

Spain understands the world that will form part of the "new normal" in the post-pandemic era. And we're preparing for it. Nothing will be the same in the near future and the whole tourism value chain will have to adapt to the new requirements in terms of safety measures, social distancing and many more.

The whole of the tourism value chain in Spain has exceedingly proved to be of excellent standards. Hotels and other accommodations, bars and restaurants, transport and leisure providers have all, without exception, made an enormous effort to adapt their product to current circumstances. The sector is now facing new challenges and profound social changes which require a new vision and new formulas, enabling this sector to maintain and increase results. We have all learnt that tourism will be different, at least in the near future. And strong political action is required at all administrative levels for this change.

We are hopeful that the reopening of the borders will resume in 2021/2022 since people have dreamed of travelling this year and they cannot wait to pack their bags and discover a new destination. The positive signs of worldwide vaccination drives, following of hygiene and safety protocols at all kinds of establishments, increased demand of destinations adopting responsible and sustainable tourism measures like the ones in Spain are some of the most motivational signs for outbound travel to resume from countries like India when the situation permits.

Now in this office, we are carrying out different webinars for the travel trade on different themes. These webinars are aimed to establish and improve the commercial relationship between Spanish companies and Indian travel agents. We are also trying to be quite active with travel media and through social networks. We have been carrying out strategic digital campaigns and promotions through our social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). Our latest campaigns had been based on the themes of the Jacobean Holy Year 2021-22 celebration and 50 iconic/unique experiences one can enjoy in Spain. Our social media campaigns are based on several themes like World Heritage Day, strategic partnership with the Spanish football association La Liga in India and many more such thematic promotions on our social media with constant dissemination of important

information and updates regarding our destination Spain.

The Spanish Government continues to be very active and in the tourism field; a plan to boost the tourism sector had been approved in July 2020, endowed with an important budget in the National Budget this year 2021. The plan includes the development of a wide range of measures that range from health security protocols at an international level to implementation of measures to improve the competitiveness of tourist destinations, tourism knowledge, and intelligence model and marketing to position tourism in Spain as a safe destination. This will promote recovery and growth of the tourist attractions within Spain – urban establishments that offer modern solutions as well as rural areas and villages closer to nature offering tranquillity and caring for the environment. Initiatives have been launched with the objective to move ahead and transform our model towards sustainable, digital, accessible, inclusive and safe tourism to improve the competitiveness of the Spanish tourism sector from a comprehensive perspective.

Destination Sustainability Plans have been developed with a strong investment effort, creation of a tourist intelligence platform-DATAESTUR, to reinforce Spain with a new Travel Safe communication tool. Moreover, work is being done on the development of Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030 which constitutes the roadmap to maintain the leadership position that Spain has in the tourism field, modernising tourism model based on sustainability and implementation of tourism intelligence and digitisation.

The Spanish Ministry has put in place a website called REACTIVATUR, comprehensive of all the aids that the tourist sector can get from the different administrative levels: local, regional and national. In Spain, we all hope that this pandemic will soon be over and we sincerely look forward to welcoming you all again to our beautiful country.

Daniel D'souza, President & Country Head, Leisure, SOTC Travel



In the current situation, it is extremely important to focus on customer connectivity and business continuity. We have used this time to re-imagine our businesses and processes. Technology has always been a key driver for growth at SOTC. We are focusing on an omni-channel approach to provide a consistent and seamless experience to customers. We introduced Virtual Outlets leveraging technology to provide contactless and seamless assistance to our customers - via phone, chat, video call and apps. We are committed to ensuring safety, health and hygiene protocols at every step of the customer journey and our teams continue to carefully design our packages with a complete focus on health, safety and affordability for our customers.

Customers are looking for guidance and handholding more than ever before. Our teams across SOTC are working closely to support customers with our flexibility in rebooking/changes, free cancellation, meticulous health & safety under our Assured-Insured-Secured Program - covering every aspect of physical safety as well as mental and financial security to give travellers complete peace of mind. We have several meaningful initiatives: Doctor on Call 24x7 service in partnership with Apollo Clinics; India's first Safe Holiday Helpline, a free service offering expert guidance & assistance for safe holiday planning and seamless COVID-negative certification services via a tie-up with

ICMR accredited labs.

Providing a safe customer travel experience has been possible with the esteemed partnership and support from our partners (tourism boards, hospitality, cruises, etc). We have forged partnerships with leaders in the Travel Ecosystem to build customer confidence and momentum in travel. We continue to look forward to their support in all our future endeavours.

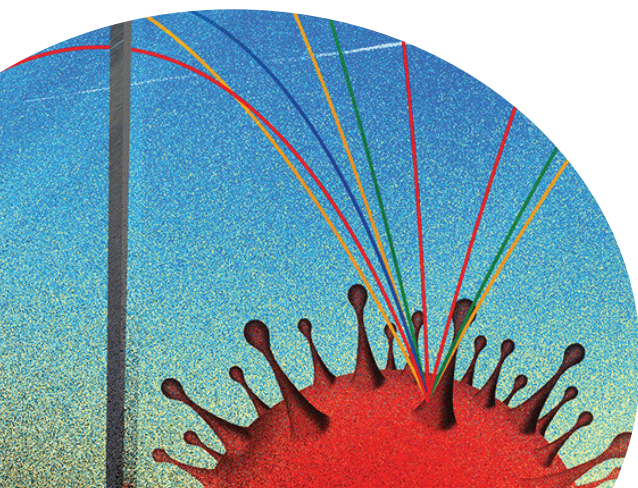
We strongly believe that the government needs to identify outbound tourism as a sector that creates employment, generates taxes via GST collection, TCS collection from customers. We hope for proactive reforms, supportive policies and rationalisation of taxes for the tourism sector that will stimulate demand.

Mehul Sharma, Founder & CEO, Signum Hotels & Resorts



The foremost learning in the pandemic is to protect yourself and your team. Lives are most important at a time like this. Another important learning is definitely to save cash reserves that you can utilise during such emergencies, whether to support employees and their families or for business sustainability. Cash is king and every penny is important, this is vital learning from this pandemic.

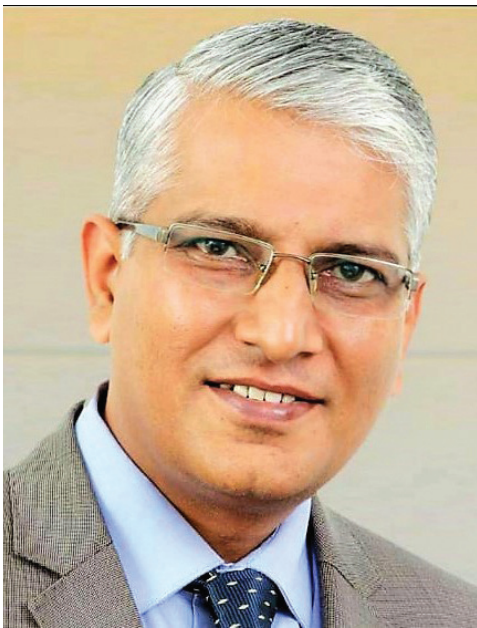
Presently, we are focused on ensuring our team is healthy and safe. The safety and wellbeing of our human resource is the foremost priority at Signum Hotels currently. We also continue our focus on the company's international expansion. We achieved great momentum early this



year with property signings in Greece, Israel, the USA, Dubai, and Belgrade, and are committed to exploring further opportunities and strategic partnerships.

Time and again, the travel trade has been ignored despite its substantial contribution to the country's economy. Travel and tourism is among the most affected sectors in this pandemic but still, the sector received no support from the union or state governments. I think the best way forward now would be to look internally than externally for support. The best would be for all trade partners to act together as one entity, harness the existing internal resources and stand with each other in these times of crisis. That would be the best approach, according to me.

Vikas Sharma, General Manager, Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala



The biggest learning of the pandemic, I would say, is to possess the ability to take quick yet firm business decisions with a short-term perspective, and the ability to quickly align your operations and business strategy given the evolving dynamics of the pandemic. Also, maintaining a lean workforce is crucial to ensure business sustainability in the long term.

The focus on the highest levels of health and hygiene SOPs will continue for times to come. Strict measures have been implemented and diligently practiced building confidence amongst customers as well as colleagues. Sanitization, social distancing, employee health will remain a focal

point of business operations going forward.

As a pre-opening hotel, our current focus is on implementing RHG defined SOPs across departments and getting the hotel ready for launch in the next few months. Stringent health and hygiene measures form a large part of the Radisson brand guidelines. These are also audited by a third party to ensure 100 percent compliance. This is a major area of focus for us at the moment. We are focused on shaping up Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala as the safest haven for our guests, as and when they are ready to travel.

The Government intervention to bail out hospitality from the current crisis is crucial. Our demand for industry status also continues. Especially keeping in mind, the substantial contribution we made to the country's GDP in the pre-COVID times, it is only fair to expect support from the government. Another support that can benefit the sector would be by flattening the GST structure and making it uniform all across. Also, lowering the overall tax structure can help jumpstart the business back to normalcy post-pandemic.

Sejoe Jose, Director, Marvel Group



The biggest learning after 14 months of the pandemic is that the tourism industry needs to learn to survive on its own. I am not sure how many other industries in the country have been affected or left out as the Tourism industry but our industry needs immediate attention from the government. We, at Marvel, have always felt proud that the tourism industry is one of the largest

employment-generating industries in the country and that tourism also forms 10 per cent of the GDP of the country. The tourism industry is the only industry that supports the rich and poor equally and it earns one of the largest foreign exchange for the country.

Despite all the above facts, I fail to understand that despite the Government knowing in the later stage that tourism was the first to have got affected and will be the last to recover from the effects of COVID-19, around one million people of this sector were ignored. Also, there were hundreds of representations done by the industry.

With the start of COVID, we were made to understand from different global experts that tourism is going to take more than a year to recover. So I tried my hand in different businesses, such as trading goods. However, I realised my passion for tourism is far more than I expected, so I decided to keep on pursuing my dream with travel and tourism only. We at Marvel Group have three verticals now. We have started developing a software which would help in getting all the tourism industry into one platform and support each other for better growth. The second vertical is called Moksha Villa and Boutique resorts. This brand will focus on villas or boutique resorts with 5-star facilities. The team behind this project will ensure the most professional service to each and every guest that visits the property. We also keep in mind that each of the properties supports the local community. Our third vertical is the Marvel Academy which will train young tourism professionals to give them practical training so they get better job opportunities.

The travel and tourism industry in the last 14 months must understand the importance of quantifying from this bitter COVID experience on their business. That is, we need to be more organized and come together. We need to have our associations start keeping data and records of the total staff and workforce and those who are listed in PF and ESI schemes. We need to have a list of tourism business houses registered with the state or central government. Once this data has been achieved, the industry with proper details can ask for support or relief for the staff, support for business, etc, so that the industry survives any other difficulties in the future. The travel and tourism industry should now be open to new thoughts and technology which will help in the revival of the industry.

Time to get united to chart out the road to recovery

The travel, tourism, airline, and hospitality industry has been devastated by the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and its continuous waves. The majority of businesses have shut down. COVID-19 has forced us to adjust and re-think how business is conducted, not only to comply with national and local restrictions and guidelines but also to protect the health of their employees. Despite all the difficulties, the important thing is that we need travel recovery and have to start somewhere.

Biji Eapen

Indian travel, tourism, aviation, and hospitality industry that supported 42.673 million jobs which were 8.1 per cent of the total employment in the country now needs broad-minded philosophy of parenting. Without the means to earn an income during lockdowns, many cannot feed themselves and their families. Many youngsters of the travel & tourism industry have now turned to be street sellers, selling vegetables or fresh fish at roadsides or home delivery.

The domestic travel and tourism sector was on the road to recovery from October 2020 onwards and though we saw a ray of hope from January to March 2021, the situation has become worse and out of control. The second wave and the new variants have not only down-turned travel due to lockdowns but many countries also banned the entry of Indians into their States.

Now with the new norms, Travel experiences will look different for the foreseeable future. Travellers and the tourism industry need to be thoughtful, careful, and innovative to ensure safe, responsible, and sustainable travel. We expect that responsible and sustainable tourism becomes more important in the post-COVID-19 era.

Responsible tourism is vital in reviving the travel and tourism industry from its current financial crisis. Sustainable tourism needs to become our new basics, and we all need to make a conscious effort to learn what it is and our role in supporting it. In a nutshell, it is about travelling safe while practising the social distancing guidelines, being responsible, doing the least harm to ourselves and others, while still

allowing ourselves to experience the best our world has to offer.

But the restart of domestic tourism did not last for long. Though it was well-coordinated, with risk-based solutions in a phased manner, it drastically failed due to the rapid spread of the second wave. The situation has worsened with the state governments have imposed localised curfews and lockdowns to curb the spread of Coronavirus second wave. The economic recovery downed again, and the flexibility in spending on luxury has declined drastically due to rising unemployment and the worries about likely job losses in the future.

Though vaccination readily started, the economic recovery becomes slow and uneven with employment and financial stability. In the current scenario, it is even harder to predict when economic activity could return to pre-virus levels, primarily because of the health crisis and the government's timid fiscal response.

Till we restore confidence for people to begin travelling once the COVID-19 pandemic finally diminishes, domestic tourism only will work out. Technologies play a significant role to increase hygiene. Touch-less seats that connect to Bluetooth on mobile to lower car seat back or fold out the tray. Touch-less lavatories; regulated boarding procedures, so people don't come in contact with each other in the aisles



Biji Eapen

and at airports, facial recognition technology and tracking through customs and boarding, so travellers and staff aren't touching the same boarding pass.

The pandemic has taught many experiences and lessons to travellers, travel agents and tour agents globally. Technology is penetrating every part of the aviation, travel, tourism, and hospitality industries, but human potential or human touch is one element that determines its value. It includes social importance and emphasizes knowledge, potential creativeness, responsiveness, reliability and accountability.

This global pandemic severely transformed the way we live, work, and think. Precarious livelihoods, food scarcity, social and economic

inequalities change the way we imagine our future. This second wave of pandemic highlights the need to reshape or redefine our responsibilities, encourage us to innovate, collaborate, and adapt our mindsets.

Post lockdown predictions and preparations would need a better understanding of the current situation. The pandemic effects are effectively visible on the country's inbound, outbound and domestic tourism, adventure travel, business travel, cruise holidays and air travel. For resuming tourism activities to revive the sector, governments must take all the trade associations and organizations into confidence and plan future strategies accordingly.

Accelerating plans for digital health passports like CommonPass or IATA Travel Pass can be a vital tool in opening up Travel once again. We have to see that all governments and airline operators will accept proof of vaccination as a condition for international Travel. Also, they must address the concern over data security risks, transparency, and control over the data collected.

In such a gloomy scenario, the Government of India must take crucial steps to help the tourism sector revive itself. The government should take immediate measures to reduce the rate of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on room tariffs, food and beverages, services charges or commissions and TCS or Tax collection at Sources. Also, all substantial loans or financial bailouts enable the sector to keep alive for a couple of years.

The potential impact of COVID-19 on global and national economies depends on several factors like how long the pandemic will last, the gravity of social distancing restrictions on businesses, and the magnitude and effectiveness of government stimulus packages. It is too early to talk about the post- COVID second wave, new variants, as uncertainties continuing in India as well as in many countries.

To overcome this unprecedented catastrophe, we have to do many home works based on the different degrees of damage caused economically and by human beings, which may directly affect the service segments like travel, tourism, aviation, and hospitality.

Researchers still don't know how long protection against the

virus lasts once someone has fully vaccinated. Whether a boost dose is required within 12 months or takes boosters yearly is still not clear on the effectiveness of vaccines. The reality is that vaccinated people are also getting infected, and that's a nightmare.

This pandemic is rigidly hitting our Industry, and the recovery is vital to prevent millions of people from being driven into extreme poverty. And the crisis has shown us the importance of coordination to overcome our Industry's vulnerability and become more resilient. It is essential and need of the hour to recognize that 'united we stand, divided we fall.'

For rebuilding and restructuring, we require a joined-up approach. All the related associations or organisations related to Travel, tourism, aviation, transport, and hospitality must jointly work together to achieve significant recovery and collectively represent the interests and requirements of the Industry and its stakeholders. Much uncertainty still surrounds the recovery of the travel, tourism, aviation, and hospitality industry; however, projecting the path to recovery is an exercise requiring prudence.

Though Travel Agents and tour operators are an integral part of the economy, neither the Union Government nor any State Governments considered any bailout or financial support for travel agents. Except for few who have MSME registration, most are in the 'unorganised nature', depending on the income-generating from 'Commission' or 'Service Charge' for the services.

Passenger confidence will take time to rebuild. But we must remain hopeful that we will build up some momentum as people start to travel again. But, as much as we are connecting through Zoom, Teams, or other technologies, it is not the same as being there. Flying is freedom, and Travel is freedom. That is not something people forget or lose their desire. It will take time for the market to return. But when it does, the long-term prospects are solid because we fulfil the fundamental human need for connection and mobility.

It may take months or years to recover from the devastating impact of COVID-19 until the travel and tourism industry plays a pivotal role in rescuing the economy and our

local communities across the world. Until the majority of populations are vaccinated, the public will always be concerned about general or essential travel. While we may need to 'live with the Coronavirus', our readiness to do so will depend on adequate knowledge, willingness and confidence in the health infrastructure to manage potential medical issues.

Restoring traveller's confidence is a big challenge. First and foremost, the traveller needs to feel that they can trust the service providers' including the governmental authorities, concerning their health and safety. The human touch will be a significant factor in the restart.

Social distancing becomes the new mantra, with masks and gloves turning into a part of daily wear, people prefer to remain within the safety confines of their homes. Very few only think about holiday trips. The scare of touching or standing near a stranger, the fear of infection or death, will take a long time to disappear. Until most of the populations are vaccinated and have emotional confidence in safety and security, survival of the travel & tourism industry is likely to remain in the dumps.

Since international flights are restricted or stopped due to the coronavirus second wave, we at IAAI feel that IATA Standard Accreditation is a "white elephant" for the majority of IATA Accredited Agencies who are SMEs, for which a travel agent has to annually spend around \$802.5 in addition to financial guarantees & expenses. In the present scenario, this expenditure may not be a viable business solution for most agents, and being the current situation may continue much longer. The IAAI National committee has suggested agents convert their accreditations to "GoLite" accreditation which curtails credit facilities but drastically reduces overhead expenditures and enables IATA Accredited Agencies to survive this unprecedented difficult situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how interconnected we all are. Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is a complex and challenging task requiring a lot of effort and time. However, we have to create greater awareness and better resources for the travelling community to reach there.

Biji Eapen is the National President of IAAI.

NCL is ready to set sail again with vaccinated guests

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), the third largest cruise line in the world in April 2021, announced its return to sail. Since the cruising industry has seen a significant setback in the pandemic, the news is pleasantly exciting for cruise enthusiasts. We at TTJ take the opportunity to interact with Nicholas Lim, General Manager (Sales) Asia, Norwegian Cruise Line to know more about their plans and operation. Based in Singapore, Nicholas works on maximising the cruise line's existing sales efforts in the region, while simultaneously developing new business strategies to further grow NCL's footprint in Asia.

Prashant Nayak

Q What are your plans on return to sailing?

After a long wait and suspended sailings initially, we finally announced our return to service in early April this year. We know that cruisers around the world are eager to hop on aboard and experience new destinations after being locked in for months. We too are eager and ready to welcome them back aboard. NCL ships will begin sailing in Europe and The Caribbean from July 25, 2021. We are restarting operations at a reduced capacity with Norwegian Jade, Joy, Gem, Epic and Getaway as the first of our 17-ship fleet to relaunch operations. Norwegian Jade will offer seven-day cruises to the Greek Isles, while Norwegian Joy will sail week-long Caribbean itineraries from Montego Bay, Jamaica, and Norwegian Joy will cruise from Punta Cana (La Romana), Dominican Republic.

Norwegian Epic will offer seven-night Western Mediterranean itineraries from September 5, 2021, through October 24, 2021, and Norwegian Getaway will sail a mix of 10 to 11-day Greek Isles voyages from Rome (Civitavecchia) starting September 13, 2021, through October 25, 2021.

We continue to liaise with various governments and agencies worldwide, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), to secure approval to sail within their perspective regions. We will provide an update on the roll-out of the remainder of our fleet in due course.

Q Can you elaborate on Health and Safety protocols?

Our vision is to be the vacation of choice for everyone around the world. That's why we've enhanced our commitment to health and safety with our Sail Safe program. To protect our guests, crew and communities we visit, we have



Nicholas Lim

developed a robust and comprehensive health and safety strategy with new and enhanced protocols to create multiple layers of protection against COVID-19 and enhance our already robust health and safety measures. Initial voyages will operate with only fully vaccinated guests and crew, combined with preventative health and safety measures which we believe will provide a uniquely safe and healthy vacation experience. Our Sail Safe health & safety programme comprises a comprehensive set of new and enhanced health and safety standards developed with guidance from the Healthy Sail Panel ("HSP") — a group of scientific and public health experts who have worked collaboratively to develop a recommendation for the cruise industry's safe resumption of operations. The program is based on the following pillars:

1) Safety for guests and crew with vaccination requirements, universal COVID-19 testing and enhanced health screening protocols; 2) Safety aboard with medical-grade air filtration, increased sanitation measures and enhanced

medical resources; and 3) Safety ashore through the collaboration with land-based tour operator partners to extend health and safety measures to each destination.

In addition, we have recently formed a Sail Safe Global Health and Wellness Council comprising six experts at the forefront of their fields. Led by Chairman Dr. Scott Gottlieb, former Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Co-Chair of the Healthy Sail Panel, the council's work will complement the Healthy Sail Panel initiative and will focus on the implementation, compliance with and continuous improvement of health and safety protocols across the company's operations.

Q Can you elaborate on the EMBARK campaign?

EMBARK with NCL introduces the people, destinations and experiences of NCL through some of the most engaging visual storytelling. This unique content platform features:

EMBARK – The Series: This docu-series takes viewers behind the scenes of our comeback journey, shares personal stories of staff, partners and guests and chronicles our efforts to provide for a safe and elevated cruise experience. After the highly successful global debut of the first episode "The Great Cruise Comeback", the second episode, "Second to None," is scheduled to premiere on Friday, May 21, 2021, at 6.a.m. EST at www.ncl.com/embark. The episode will further explore themes of health and safety, the evolution of our culinary offerings and the intricacies of operating one of the world's largest traveling production companies. It will continue to bring viewers along for an honest look at the future of cruising as it unfolds.

Q Any new upcoming itineraries you are planning to introduce?

Setting sail starting Summer of 2022, Norwegian Prima – our latest new build and the first ship of our brand-new Prima Class – will offer our guests unrivalled cruising experience as they explore the best of The Caribbean, Bermuda, or Iceland & Northern Europe.

Starting August 17 to September 13, 2022, Norwegian Prima will be the newest ship embarking in Northern Europe. She will sail a series of eight-day voyages from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and Copenhagen, Denmark, offering guests the opportunity to explore the continent's Northern Europe, Norwegian Fjords, and Baltic regions.

Guests will also have a chance to experience a cruise of a lifetime aboard Norwegian Prima as she sets sail from Reykjavik or Southampton on a 10- or 11-day cruise ending her journey in New York on October 10, 2022.

Guests can further look forward to her five-day roundtrip itinerary from October 10 to Bermuda, where she will make her debut as the newest ship sailing the fall and winter season. On October 15, she will depart from New York on a 12-day open-jaw immersive Caribbean itinerary where she will be the newest ship in the region and for the first time ever for NCL, the vessel will visit Galveston, TX.

On October 31, Norwegian Prima will kick-start her Caribbean season departing from Galveston, TX, to Miami on an 11-day itinerary with visits to Willemstad, Curacao; Kralendijk, Bonaire, and our recently enhanced private island Great Stirrup Cay, Bahamas.

From November 19 to December 3, Norwegian Prima will sail from Miami offering three, seven-day Western Caribbean cruises visiting Harvest Caye, our private resort destination in Belize, in addition to other notable ports including Cozumel, Mexico, and Roatan Island, Honduras.

In summer 2023 she returns to Europe to offer a mix of 10 and 11-day Norway and Iceland sailings from Reykjavik, Iceland, and Southampton, England, featuring extensive port time between nine and 14 in-port hours to offer guests an immersive experience.

Q What are the new projects in the pipeline?

We have recently unveiled our highly anticipated next category of ships, the Prima Class, our latest class of vessels in nearly 10 years. The first ship, 'Norwegian Prima', has just opened for sale with voyages beginning in summer

2022. Norwegian Prima is a first of its kind in many ways — the ship is 965 feet long, 142,500 gross tons and will be able to accommodate 3,215 guests at double occupancy. It is set to be a game-changer for us, offering guests exciting itineraries, more wide-open spaces, elevated service, thoughtful and stunning design and a variety of new experiences.

The show-stopping vessel built in Marghera, Italy, by Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri, features a striking hull artwork designed by Italian graffiti artist Manuel Di Rita, known commonly as "Peeta." Norwegian Prima will further offer the highest staffing levels and space ratio of any new cruise ship in the contemporary and premium cruise category, delivering an unrivalled guest experience. Innovating from indoor to outdoor space, Norwegian Prima will also offer the most outdoor deck space of any new cruise ship including more total pool deck space than any other ship on NCL's fleet as well as multiple infinity pools and vast outdoor walkways allowing guests to take in the sea, the ocean breeze, and a variety of elevated experiences.

Adding to the elevated experience that places guests first and understanding the important connection they have with the outdoors and proximity to the sea, we innovated our popular concept of The Waterfront and reimagined it by doubling the space and adding a variety of experiences and more dining options than ever before by introducing Ocean Boulevard.

Located on deck eight, Ocean Boulevard at 44,000 square feet long, wraps around the entire deck, allowing guests to walk around the entire ship and experience amazing ocean views. As part of the multifaceted experiences offered on Ocean Boulevard, we introduced our

first-ever upscale open-air marketplace with Indulge Food Hall. Created to elevate the guest-sensory experience, Indulge Food Hall offers visitors diverse menu items from a variety of different culinary venues, including a mix of self-service, order and delivery, and full-service options, as well as a mix of indoor and outdoor seating.

Q Any new updates for the India market?

As mentioned above, the announcement of our new class of ships - the Prima Class - and the opening for sale of the first ship Norwegian Prima are great news for the India market. The ship offers many highlights such as the Indulge Food Hall and the elevated Haven by Norwegian that we know will resonate very well among the Indian audience.

We will further launch our brand-new 2022/23 brochure this July and in the meantime, our team is looking to help and support our partners through this very challenging time. For our guests in India, we have launched a variety of new promotions, the most popular being:

BOGOHO: For every cruise fare purchase, the second guests will enjoy 50 per cent savings. The offer is available for a limited time only and allows travellers to choose from more than 250 sailings to a range of stunning destinations across Alaska, Europe, and Hawaii.

30 per cent Off with "Take 5": We are offering our guests a 30 per cent discount in addition to our popular "Take 5" promotion, which comes with all five packages from our Free at Sea offer, including free beverage package, shore excursion credit, specialty dining package, Wi-Fi package and access to 3rd and 4th guest sail at a reduced rate offer (on select sailings).



Achieving a milestone with the 'Oru Desi Drive'



Mitra Satheesh, a professor at the Government Ayurveda College in Kochi, completed almost a 17000 km drive covering all the Indian States and Union Territories. Her 10-year-old son accompanied her on this expedition. She's the first woman to attempt a solo drive with her young child all over India. She travelled with a message to encourage rural tourism, inspire women to travel alone or with kids. Incredible India and the Ministry of tourism supported her drive named 'Oru Desi Drive'. Initially, they travelled through villages in more than 15 states but when the second wave of COVID started to worsen, she stopped exploring villages and completed her drive. She reached back to Kochi, her hometown, on May 6th after 51 days of exploration.

Team TTJ

Mitra has been driving for the past 11 years and had made her first solo adventure trip to Bhutan in May 2019. That tour had changed her perspective about travel, where she realised it was not about the destination but more about exploration. After that, Mitra took solo trips to Nagaland, Manipur, Delhi, and Punjab, which further broadened her vision about rural tourism. Ever since she longed to see each state and experience the diverse culture and unique costumes and customs. It was during the lockdown period in 2020 when she came across an article in a travel magazine of a ten-member team that

travelled across India that she immediately decided that even she had to do it.

Mitra shares, "More than that, after seeing the disastrous impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry, I felt that as a responsible traveller, I must travel to encourage confidence among fellow travellers and people at large."

Initially planning a route map with some help, she started charting out her own course, keeping the initial plan as the base. In two months, she must have changed the routes at least 15 times. After many hurdles, at last, accompanied by her son Narayan, she set off on the adventure on March 17 in her Maruti S Cross. The duo started their pan-India trip named, 'Oru Desi Drive' with a plan to cover the length and breadth of the country by



road, in 100 days, covering more than 20,000 kilometres of rural India.

'Oru Desi Drive' written in bold on her car signifies the motto of this trip. "Oru in Malayalam means one, and desi stands for the rural side of India. The idea is to promote rural tourism and motivate people to see and enjoy the beauty of the countryside," says Mitra. With a passion for travelling, she had prepared a proper route chart to explore the rural belts of India and learn more about its culture and customs. She brought her son along on this trip as she wanted him to know what life is and how people live in rural India. "I also want to set an example for women who are reluctant to travel after having kids. It's high time they live their dreams," emphasises Mitra.



However, the second wave of the pandemic hampered their trip, forcing the duo to wind up their tour early. "We had to make a sudden change of plans as I had to get back to the Government Ayurveda Hospital, Tripunithura, for COVID duty. Though we couldn't extensively cover all the rural areas as planned, we certainly managed to cover all the states," shared Mitra. They had crossed 27 states and six union territories in 51 days.

In this trip, besides Jammu and Kashmir, a dream destination of her son, they also loved

the experiences at the tribal villages of Bastar and Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh, to be in the lush evergreen North East India and to meet the Rabha-Bodo tribals of Assam. Mitra's travels are not just about sightseeing. She loves to explore rare historical monuments, cultures and crafts. Some of the unique instances that caught Mitra's attention are the Salmora potters of Majuli village, an Aryan village in Leh, century-old terracotta temples in Bishnupur in West Bengal, researching mat weaving in Pattamadai, a village in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu; the forgotten Cherial scroll paintings of Hyderabad in Telangana and a sweet delicacy named Puthrekullu in Atreyapuram village in Andhra Pradesh.

The duo usually started their journeys at 5 am every day with halts at home-stays or huts in villages for the night. By the end of the trip, they had visited 3 International borders, 6 union territories, and 28 states in 51 days covering a total distance of 16,804 kilometres. Her son had turned out to be a great travel partner and a wonderful navigator.

"I thank my husband and my mother for trusting my decisions and backing me, along

with my dear friends, who didn't give me any option but to continue when things started going bad. Their daily calls kept my spirits high during testing times. I am also extremely grateful to MoT who offered me unfailing support in my unique adventure. My biggest cheerleaders were my fellow travellers with whom I was well connected on my social media platforms on a daily basis," concludes Mitra.



Prahlad Singh Patel virtually participates in the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting held in Italy

The G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting is one of the ministerial meetings organised as part of the G20 Leaders' Summit 2021 which was hosted by Italy in May 2021. The G20 2021 focussed on three broad interconnected pillars of action: People, Planet, and Prosperity. Within these pillars, the G20 aims to take the lead in ensuring a swift international response to the COVID-19 pandemic, able to provide equitable, worldwide access to diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines while building up resilience to future health-related shocks.

Team TTJ

Union Minister of State for Tourism & Culture (I/c), Prahlad Singh Patel virtually participated in G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting held in Italy on May 4, 2021. The Minister congratulated Massimo Garavaglia, Minister of Tourism, and Government of Italy for holding G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting in these difficult times and also thanked him for bringing together the member States for a dialogue to collaborate in protecting tourism businesses, jobs and taking initiatives to frame policy guidelines to support the sustainable and resilient recovery of travel and tourism.

Patel appreciated and supported the focus of the Italian G20 Presidency on recovery and ensuring new opportunities for People, Planet

and Prosperity by putting in place guidelines on the seven key interrelated policy areas: Safe mobility, Crisis management, Resilience, Inclusiveness, Green transformation, Digital transition and Investment and infrastructure which are comprehensive and relevant for resilient, sustainable and inclusive tourism framed with the support of the OECD. He also conveyed India's support for the principles for the transition to a green travel and tourism economy submitted by UNWTO as a further contribution to the policy area "Green Transformation" to embrace sustainability in tourism.

Patel also highlighted the initiatives taken by MOT to promote community-based tourism and rural tourism by involving the local population in employment opportunities



and income generating activities through sustainable and responsible tourism. Post-COVID, the Ministry's focus would be on promoting off-beat destinations and places such as nature and eco-tourism, wildlife, wellness retreats, mountaineering and trekking among others. Besides, India has a strong and vibrant system of traditional medicines, which provide for holistic healing. India would like to offer to the world, post COVID-19, calm, peace and health through Yoga, Ayurveda and other forms of traditional treatments and spiritual surroundings. The Minister expressed optimism that the tourism sector would fully recover from the impact of COVID-19 disruption and the sector will emerge stronger post COVID with the rollout of vaccination programs across the countries.

Solo Tripping

The new travel trend in India to gather momentum

With the onset of the pandemic, the trend of solo travelling has started picking up and will likely become more popular in the coming days. Earlier, solo tripping was limited to backpackers or maybe single women. But now, we are seeing people from all walks of life checking out on solo tripping.

Chavi Chadha



The trend of travelling solo is rapidly picking up momentum in our country, even though there are few misconceptions attached to the idea of solo travel. The trend is catching up for not only single women but others as well. There are quite a few notions about travelling solo, like the feeling of being unsafe or the lack of that happiness which is derived from travelling with friends and family.

The pandemic has taught everyone how to be alone and happy in one's own company. As per the recent surveys, there is at least a threefold increase in the number of people opting to go on a solo trip in 2021 when compared with 2019. We are seeing travellers who never travelled alone are now taking up solo trips.

Bored with lockdown and being at home, a lot of young people are preferring weekend trips. Moreover, with COVID protocols almost everywhere, travel enthusiasts are feeling safe to travel alone and want to enjoy their 'me time'



while exploring places.

Some tips on travelling solo that can be handy are: trusting your intuition, talking to the locals about what you should watch out for, and practice common sense. We at Bespoke have enumerated some unique characteristics in the context of solo travelling.

Thirst for adventure

A major chunk of solo travelling is expected to be driven by adventure and thrill-led experiences that can give people a sense of achievement and the satisfaction of doing something extraordinary.

Travelling like a local

A large part of solo travel is discovering and interacting with various cultures and communities. More and more travellers are looking for experiences that enable them to live as a part of the native community of the destinations and not feel like an outsider, a spectator. A feeling of inclusivity and mutual respect is another

derivative that travellers are likely to focus on.

Working out of a suitcase

With most companies opting for remote work and other flexible arrangements for employees, a top trend that is likely to gain momentum is travelling with

your work, as opposed to using travel as a break from it. Solo travellers can choose for longer stays at one destination and make temporary homes out of them as their work is unlikely to get disrupted.

Demand for meaningful experiences

Travel is yet to become a regular norm in the post-COVID world and parameters such as crowdedness and hygiene will be kept in consideration while drafting an itinerary. Solo travellers are therefore expected to include lesser-known, more meaningful activities in their travel plans rather than indulge in highly touristic sightseeing experiences.

Choosing less popular, accessible destinations

The primary condition for any traveller in a post-COVID scenario will be accessibility to a destination. Long-distance or cross-continental travel is yet to begin in full swing and this has forced travellers to find easy-to-reach destinations closer to home in a bid to avoid crowded places and be in proximity to their home in case of emergencies. Nature spots and wellness getaways are definitely going to be a focus area for both solo and group travel.

In conclusion, 2021 is going to be the year to check off your long-standing bucket lists and fulfilling the promises that you made to yourself. One might even be encouraged to travel more simply to make up for lost time and travel often since we now know the kind of value that travel adds to our otherwise mundane lives.

Chhavi Chadha is the Founder of Bespoke Tailormade.

Velas Turtle Festival

boosting tourism in Konkan shores

The Maharashtra Directorate of Tourism (DoT), Konkan Divisional Regional Office, Navi Mumbai, organised a webinar series on Konkan Tourism to shed light on the art, culture, history, and heritage of the Konkan region. In the second webinar in this series, Bhau Katdare, Founder of Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra, Chiplun Sanstha, an NGO that works towards the conservation of nature and wildlife in the Konkan region, was the keynote speaker. It was interesting to know from him about turtle tourism and that Velas in Konkan becomes a hot spot for tourists from March to April at the Velas Turtle Festival.

Team TTJ

The webinar, which was moderated by Hanumant Hede, Deputy Director of DoT, Konkan Region, Maharashtra, was attended by 225 participants from different parts of the state. Sharing valuable insights on turtle conservation and turtle festival at Velas, Bhau Katdare shared vital information about turtle tourism and stated that Maharashtra is the only state in India to have successfully implemented and promoted turtle tourism.

Speaking of the Small Olive Ridley turtles, which visit various coasts of Maharashtra every year, mentioning they are 2 to 2.5 feet in size and weigh 36-49 kg. Their breeding season is from December to February and their life span is around 50 to 100 years. These turtles are migratory but during the breeding season, the female turtle comes to the shore, digs a 1-1.5 feet deep hole, and lays 100-150 eggs in it. Out of these eggs, only 1 per cent of the hatchlings survive. This means only 1 out of 100 turtles survives.

Explaining the importance of this species of turtles, Katdare said that these turtles are essential for a balanced ocean ecosystem as they keep the sea clean by consuming dead fish and seagrass. These turtles, which are very important from an

environmental point of view, were in a bad condition some time ago as stealing turtle eggs, eating, or selling them, were some of the issues faced. Besides, construction work and global warming, causing a decrease in dry sand posing a threat to the growth of turtle eggs, unclean beaches were also other threats for the turtles. However, with turtle conservation in 2003, the situation has improved.

With an aim to conserve these sea turtles, Katdare tried to convince the locals that turtle breeding can create job opportunities while launching several new employment-generating and conservation initiatives such as turtle surveying, hatchery planning, and egg conservation. With the help of the forest department and individual sponsors, the Turtle Festival was initiated, which today has become big.

The Velas Turtle Festival is simply a treat for photographers as well as nature lovers and that is the reason why it is super popular in the whole of Maharashtra. Velas which is situated in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district is popular for its beautiful beaches, and the place is also home to the very famous Harihareshwar Temple and Bankot Fort. While these things make Velas a very amazing tourist destination, the place is garnering even more attention



courtesy of the Velas Turtle Festival.

All the five species of sea turtles occurring in India, including the Olive Ridley turtles, are legally protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and Appendix I of the CITES Convention which prohibits trade in turtle products.

Hanumant Hede, Directorate of Tourism Maharashtra's Deputy Director, Regional Office, Konkan region, Navi Mumbai, said, "The Maharashtra tourism department is planning to organise a Velas-Anjarle Festival on the lines of the Turtle Festival so that tourism is not limited to turtles and all other resources of the villages can be used to promote sustainable tourism. Bhau Katdare has set an ideal example to the world on how villages in Konkan can be developed through tourism."



#SpainAwaitsYou!

TOP 10 REASONS TO TRAVEL TO SPAIN

Elisa Robles Fraga, Director, Tourism Office of Spain in Mumbai, during a recent virtual press meet made a presentation of the relevant aspects that Spain has to offer to its potential tourists/visitors with top 10 reasons (from amongst several reasons) to travel to Spain once borders open up. While travellers from India can't travel now, but they can still keep in mind the top 10 reasons why Spain should be at the top of their bucket list, as and when travel re-initiates from India.

Team TTJ

With endless cultural festivals, beautiful beaches and amazing nightlife, Spain is awe-inspiring round the year. From Madrid to Barcelona

to Seville to Valencia, Spain is such a vibrant country with a kick of life. The climate in Spain is the most reliable, with over 300 sunny days per year. The versatile landscapes can pass as many locations in less than two hours. You can go from snow-capped mountains to sunny beaches, from deserts to



Lavender Fields in Brihuega



Biking in Tenerife

mountainous landscapes, from XXI to XV century.

The Cuisine of Spain is amazingly varied. The quality, creativity, and above all, flavour of Spain's cuisine has earned it international fame, and it is now one of the country's main tourist attractions. Spain brings both tradition and innovation to its cuisine.

Did you know that Spain is the country with the third-largest number of UNESCO World Heritage sites in the world? The Culture and Heritage in Spain have a uniquely spectacular wealth of monuments, with more than 15,600 monuments, archaeological sites, gardens, and historical complexes that have been declared Properties of Cultural Interest (BIC).

The History of Spain is extraordinarily valuable and remains from the different civilisations, cultures, and historical eras that evolved on Spanish territory. There is a variety of phenomena with profound historical roots and its diversity that made Spain emerge as a unified state in modern European history.

With fascinating nature and landscapes, Spain epitomises natural diversity and has more UNESCO Biosphere Reserves than any other country in the world. In Spain you can find mountains, forests and valleys; as well as volcanoes, dunes and desert areas, marshlands, lakes, cliffs, waterfalls, canyons. Unique and valuable nature that needs and to be looked after!

One of the best moments of any trip

is taking time to plan the destinations, what to see, and of course, where to sleep. Spain has accommodations to suit every budget. Pick between luxury hotels, rural houses, unique accommodation, serviced flats, tourist apartments, hostels, and camping sites.

If you are passionate about sports, you will simply love Spain. Of course, Football is one of the most striking and important sport in the country, but just imagine, thousands of miles of hiking routes and bicycle tracks, perfect beaches for surfing and diving, horse riding routes along the coastline.

Spain ranks seventh worldwide in infrastructures with the largest state-of-the-art network of air, sea and land infrastructures by the Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum); along with the 2019 DESI report (Digital Economy and Society Index) which ranks Spain eighth among countries best prepared for 5G technology deployment.

With sufficient guarantee measures in place, Spain has 21 specific tourism protocol guides for different types of businesses with technical and health recommendations for safety.

Spain is a country with a growing level of awareness towards environmental protection. The country maintains an active attitude towards global environmental protection, subscribing to numerous agreements for the global protection of nature and protocols to combat climate change and pollution. Spain aims for a Long-Term Sustainable



Fallas of València

Tourism Strategy by the year 2030.

Spain is also actively working to be prepared for the future opening of post-pandemic borders: protocols and guidelines on health and safety aspects, website on information on all measures for visitors (Travel Safe); and the recent launching of the website "Reactivatur" to facilitate aid to the Spanish tourism sector, as well as the preparation of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy, 2020-2030.



Cala d'Hort, Ibiza



Barcelona

BIJAPUR LODGE JAWAI

Luxury amidst the leopards



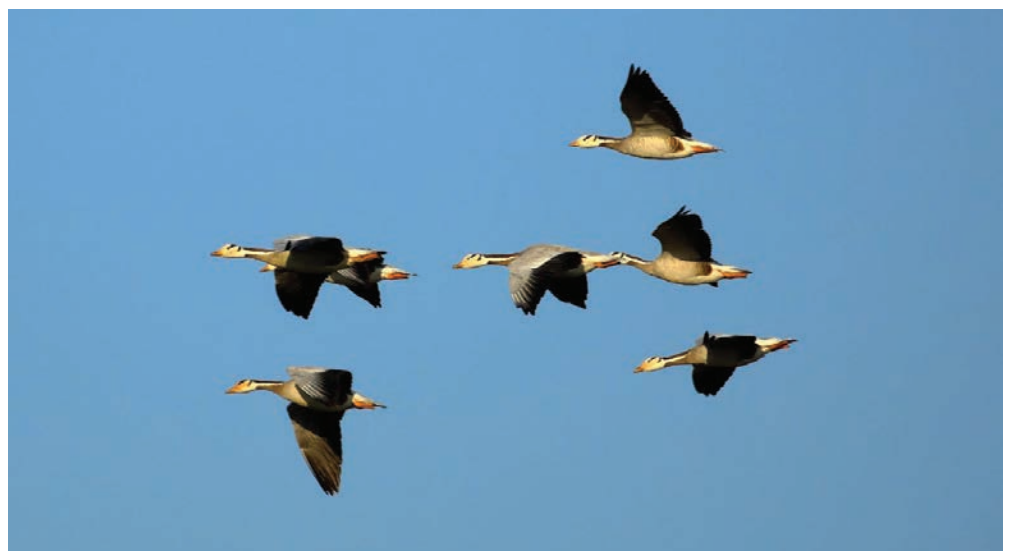
Bijapur Lodge Jawai is a newly constructed wildlife boutique property spread over 5 acres amid nature. The eco-friendly resort offers suites that are designed for fine experiences. Vikramaditya Singh Rathore and Devendra Singh Shekhawat, are very passionate owners of this splendid eco-luxury boutique property at Jawai. As TTJ delves deep to understand from them about the interesting property, it was nice to know that it is their love for wildlife that the location of the lodge was picked, keeping in mind that it offers access to most of the famous Jawai Leopard hills and water reservoirs teeming with great bird life.

Team TTJ

One of the most unexplored destinations in Rajasthan is Jawai, situated on the foothills of the Aravalis. Here, one will find the small village of Bijapur, known for its splendid blend of tribal culture and nature. In recent times, wild animals, frequent sightings of leopards and birds with their picturesque landscape have been gaining attention from discerning travellers. Jawai, also known as India's leopard hills, is one of the few places in the world where one can easily sight leopards in picturesque locations that are also home to other wild animals and migratory birds. The Jawai landscape is an extraordinary

and unique wilderness - land shared (almost equally) between wildlife and humans.

As a jungle resort, Bijapur Lodge - Jawai marries culture with modern grandeur, in keeping with





the understated elegance. From exploring the surroundings and the local culture to indulging in memorable dining, serene, and destination experiences, holidays at Bijapur Lodge Jawai offer a wealth of relaxation, discovery and adventure.

“Sustainably efficient, locally aware and personalised luxuries are the building blocks for the Bijapur Lodge. The idea was not to just build a lodge but to make a difference, and it had to start from the roots. Therefore, whether it is the ratio of land to suites for blending the nature into the architecture, or six keys on six acres of land, planting ten thousand local species in the barren land, or using local construction material and recycled wood with the skill to build the place from ground, sourcing of ingredients from the locality or to support a family with education, etc, all come with thoughts of sustainability and empowering the locality. Bijapur Lodge - Jawai, would move further when like-minded would travel and help contribute in developing communities and wildlife in the region while experiencing luxury, exclusivity and purity,” share

both, Vikramaditya and Devendra.

The six aesthetically appointed suites designed for quite an indulgence boast spacious luxury spread over 50 m2 with a king bed overlooking the courtyard and the hinterland view. The cozy daybed set against a large draped window enables to gaze at the rural beauty from one of the most sustainable eco-friendly resort in Jawai. From the basic amenities like the electric kettle, four fixture bathrooms (his and her vanity), all-weather air conditioning, mini bar and so on to the haven of luxurious comfort. The large writing desks provide enough space for living amenities and camera equipment, thus marrying harmony

of authenticity and modernity. The palette of elegant and neutral tone furnishings enlivened by deft strokes of colour showcase the region’s rich native artisanship with an indigenous touch distinctive to the jungle lodge.

The local communities have always been at the forefront of Bijapur Lodge’s vision. These ecosystems are vital to helping achieve long-term, sustainable results. The experiential offerings at the lodge are customised for the guests’ purpose of visit whether it is meeting the shepherd’s or seeing the leopards in the land of shepherds and leopards. Jawai landscape promises excellent opportunities for adventurous terrain, including rocks, water bodies, and forest. For beginners and serious bird watchers, one can spot various species like Bustards, Darter, Quail, a variety of Kingfishers, and Falcons. Five acres of land with just three trees to a jungle is the kind of transformation that Bijapur Lodge has done while reclaiming nature. Bringing back the natural regeneration of grasses triggered a chain reaction resulting in flourishing birdlife. Around 10,000 local species plants on the farm create a micro-climate for all living beings.

Other sustainability measures ranging from usage of old mud roof tiles that are bought and collected from neighboring villages to set an example that how these tiles can be reused with modern construction (Reinforced concrete) giving the best insulation or weatherproofing. For the





bodies, and forest skies that turn from sky blue to millions of stars at night - there's a lot in Jawai to be grateful about. For the upcoming season, especially scouted locations are chosen for the guests' picnic that is minutes away from the lodge. The Lodge team proactively keeps scouting for activities for guest engagement and it is here that one finds themselves relaxing in the pristine settings far from the hustle of life," says Vikramaditya.

The Bijapur Lodge team believes in word of mouth as the best marketing tool where the guest testimonials

about their wilderness experience inspire others to explore Jawai. In the recent age as one cannot stay away from digital media, thus the online presence with social media is used for communicating about the region and the lodge. Because of the boutique nature of the property and personalised service offerings, packages are promoted wherein the entire Lodge can be booked for a staycation. Apart from that, the Jungle plan i.e., inclusive of accommodation, all meals, and an experience, is the best seller. However, if one decides to spend their time at Bijapur Lodge, the team ensures to offer a customised idyllic getaway.

doors, windows and furniture at the Lodge, not even a single tree was cut – the wood that's used is procured from logs used in old 'Havelis' dating back at least a century. The waste of the reused wood is further used to design the indoor and outdoor lights, switchboards borders, rafters and purlins of 'Dhaliya' (reception hut) et al. Furthermore, the rainwater harvesting and a solar generation plant help in the reduction of carbon foot prints creating a better world for upcoming generations.

Devendra says, "As an experiential property every stay is curated based on the purpose of the stay and needs of the guest. Having said that, in the land of Leopards and Shepherds - Jawai, the signature crafted experiences are 'Jungle Safari' and 'Visit to Shepherd's home'. The great wildlife experience is where one gets to witness and learn about animals and birds while in the latter the hosts from the lodge take the guests to one of the Rabari's abodes that's also home for one of the lodge team. A packed Hi-Tea served in the hinterland just makes these activities a holistic rejuvenation."

In Jawai, one can explore villages, ancient watering holes, and so much more while driving through the most magical and dramatic landscapes. Discover places steeped in the hiding

during the trail through various floras. Specially scouted locations to choose for the picnic are minutes away from the lodge. It is here that one finds themselves far from the hustle of life, in pristine settings. The purity of a setting sun in the Jawai backdrop is a remarkable experience, a force of nature. Perfect with a rejuvenating calmness, serene calmness close to nature and any celebration – the lodge team will tailor-make this end-of-day experience to suit the requisite.

"Even the purity of the ambience in the Jawai backdrop is a force of nature irrespective of the season. Perfect with a rejuvenating calmness, serene surroundings, clean air, water





Global public backs COVID-19 vaccine passports for international travel

The expectation is that with a vaccine, some aspects of life will return to normal, especially when it comes to travel, which has been particularly hard-hit. This is where a “vaccine passport” or “e-vaccination certification of compliance for border crossing regulations” might become a required travel document, to enable seamless border crossing and the harmonization of varying national laws.

Team TTJ

The global vaccine rollout is underway with millions of vaccines purchased and administered. The vast majority of COVID-19 vaccines have so far gone to wealthy nations, however, with low-income countries receiving only 0.2 per cent of all shots given. As the world’s largest vaccine producer, India’s current crisis has sparked fresh fears for vaccine production.

But despite these challenges, there is growing hope that in time the world’s populations could become COVID-19 immune and there are promising signs that the vaccines are highly effective. Results from a study in Israel have revealed that two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech

vaccine offer 95 per cent efficacy against infection, hospitalisation and death from COVID-19.

As COVID-19 continues to ravage our world, a new Ipsos survey for the World Economic Forum finds that, on average, about three in four adults across 28 countries agree that COVID-19 vaccine passports should be required of travellers to enter their country and that they would be effective in making travel and large events safe. While the survey finds mixed views about mandating vaccine certificates for everyday activities, about two in three say they should be required to access large public venues and as many expect they will be widely used in their country. On the other hand, only about half agree they should be required for shops,

restaurants, and offices.

That same survey conducted online among over 21,000 adults between March 26 and April 9, 2021, finds that, on average across 28 countries, just 50 per cent are comfortable allowing their government to access their personal health information and 40 per cent in the case of private companies. Another Ipsos survey conducted online among more than 15,000 adults across 12 countries, April 8- 11, finds the global public sharply divided about whether only those who have been vaccinated should be allowed to take part in activities involving large groups of people such as taking public transit, flying, and attending cultural and sporting, or events.

Views about vaccine passports

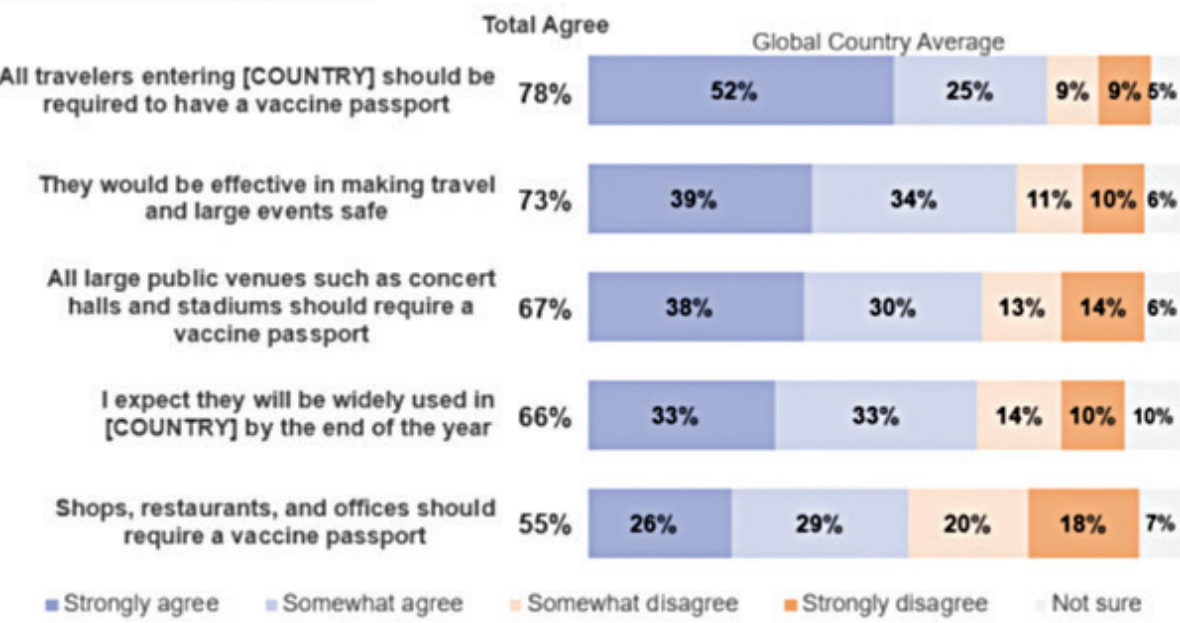
In the 28-country survey, Ipsos defined a COVID-19 vaccine passport as a record or health data certificate that would prove whether an individual has been vaccinated

against COVID-19 or has recently tested negative for COVID-19, and that would be accessible electronically (e.g., on mobile phone apps) or as a printed document or card.

On average, globally:

- 78 per cent agree that travellers entering their country should be required to have a vaccine passport; a majority agree in each of the 28 countries surveyed – from 92 per cent in Malaysia and 90 per cent in Peru to 52 per cent in Hungary and 58 per cent in Poland.
- 73 per cent agree that vaccine passports would be effective in making travel and large events safe; a majority in every country agree – from 84 per cent in mainland China and Argentina and 82 per cent in Peru, Malaysia, and India, to 52 per cent in Hungary and 53 per cent in Russia.
- 67 per cent agree that large public venues should require a vaccine passport with the highest agreement levels in India, Chile, and Malaysia (82 per cent in all three), while Russia and Hungary are the only two countries surveyed where fewer agree (31 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively) than disagree (59 per cent and 49 per cent).
- 66 per cent agree that vaccine

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following about COVID-19 “vaccine passports” or similar health data certificates:



passports will be widely used in their country by the end of the year, with wide differences across countries – eight in ten in India and Peru agree (81 per cent both) while it is the case of fewer than half in Russia (32 per cent), Japan (43 per cent), and Poland (45 per cent).

- 55 per cent agree that vaccine passports should be required in shops, restaurants, and offices across all countries with views also varying widely across countries – from strong support in India (78 per cent agree), Chile (75 per cent), and Peru (70 per cent) to widespread opposition in Russia (72 per cent disagree),

Hungary (59 per cent), Poland (55 per cent), the United States (52 per cent), and Belgium (52 per cent).

In general, favourability toward vaccine passports varies little by gender, but it tends to be higher among older adults and those with a higher level of education.

Allowing access to health data and vaccination records

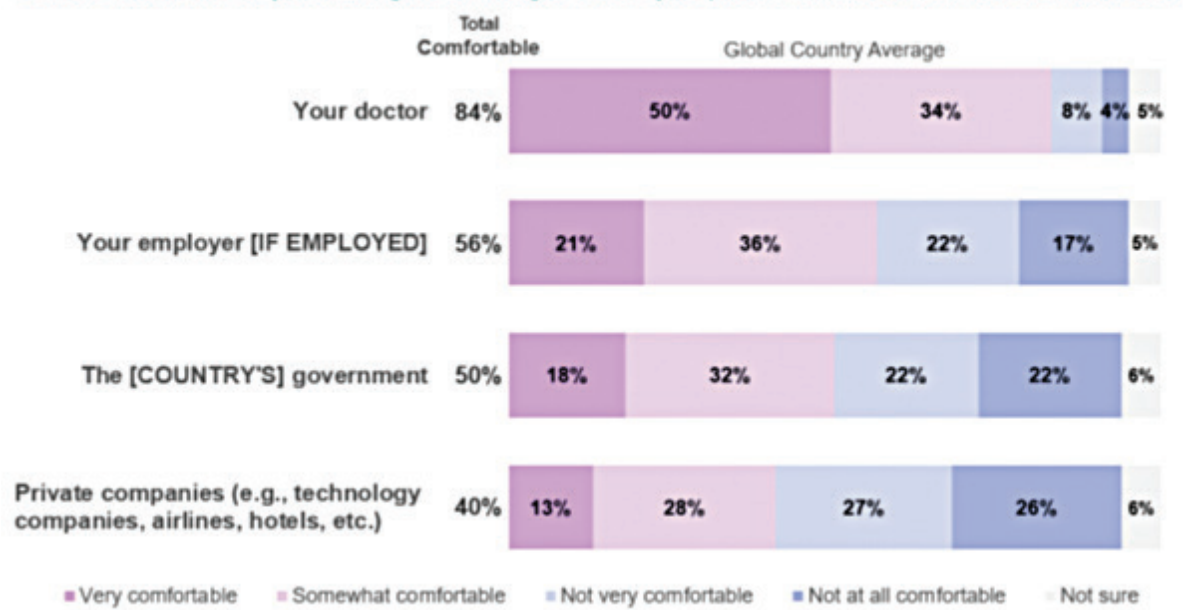
In the survey conducted across 28 countries, over eight in ten on average say they are comfortable allowing their doctor access to their personal health data and vaccination records.

However, just over half among those who are employed say so about their employer, half of all adults say so about their country’s government, and only four in ten adults about private companies.

More precisely, on average globally:

- 84 per cent of adults say they are comfortable

Q. How comfortable are you allowing the following to access your personal health data and vaccination record?



with their doctor having access to their health data and vaccination record, including 50 per cent who say that they are very comfortable; the prevalence of comfort sharing health data with one's physician ranges from 93 per cent in mainland China and Belgium and 91 per cent in Canada to 66 per cent in South Korea and 67 per cent in Russia.

• 56 per cent of employed adults report being comfortable with their employer having access to their personal health information, with 21 per cent being very comfortable; India (78 per cent), mainland China (77 per cent), and Saudi Arabia (74 per cent) show the highest levels of comfort with allowing employers access to personal health data while France (27 per cent) and the Netherlands (29 per cent) show the lowest.

• 50 per cent of adults say they are comfortable with their government having access to their health data and vaccination record, with 18 per cent saying they are very comfortable with it; comfort with allowing government access to personal health data and vaccination records varies widely across countries – from 86 per cent in mainland China, 78 per cent in India, and 73 per cent in Malaysia to only 28 per cent in Russia and Poland and 30 per cent in the Netherlands;

• Only 40 per cent say they are comfortable allowing private companies to access their health

data and vaccination record while 53 per cent are not; the only countries where at least 50 per cent are comfortable with it are India (68 per cent), mainland China (67 per cent), Saudi Arabia (66 per cent), Malaysia (57 per cent), and Turkey (50 per cent) while discomfort is most prevalent in the Netherlands (77 per cent) and France (74 per cent).

Overall, older people tend to be more comfortable letting their doctor have access to their health and vaccination information than are younger people. In contrast, younger people tend to be more comfortable allowing their employer, their government, and private companies to access their personal health information. People with higher levels of education are slightly more comfortable with their doctor, their government, and private companies having access to their health data than those with lower levels of education.

Limiting activities involving large groups of people only to those who have been vaccinated

In the 12-country survey, all adults were asked to identify which of two opinions is closest to theirs:

• Only those who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 should be allowed to do things involving large groups of people, such as taking public transit, flying,

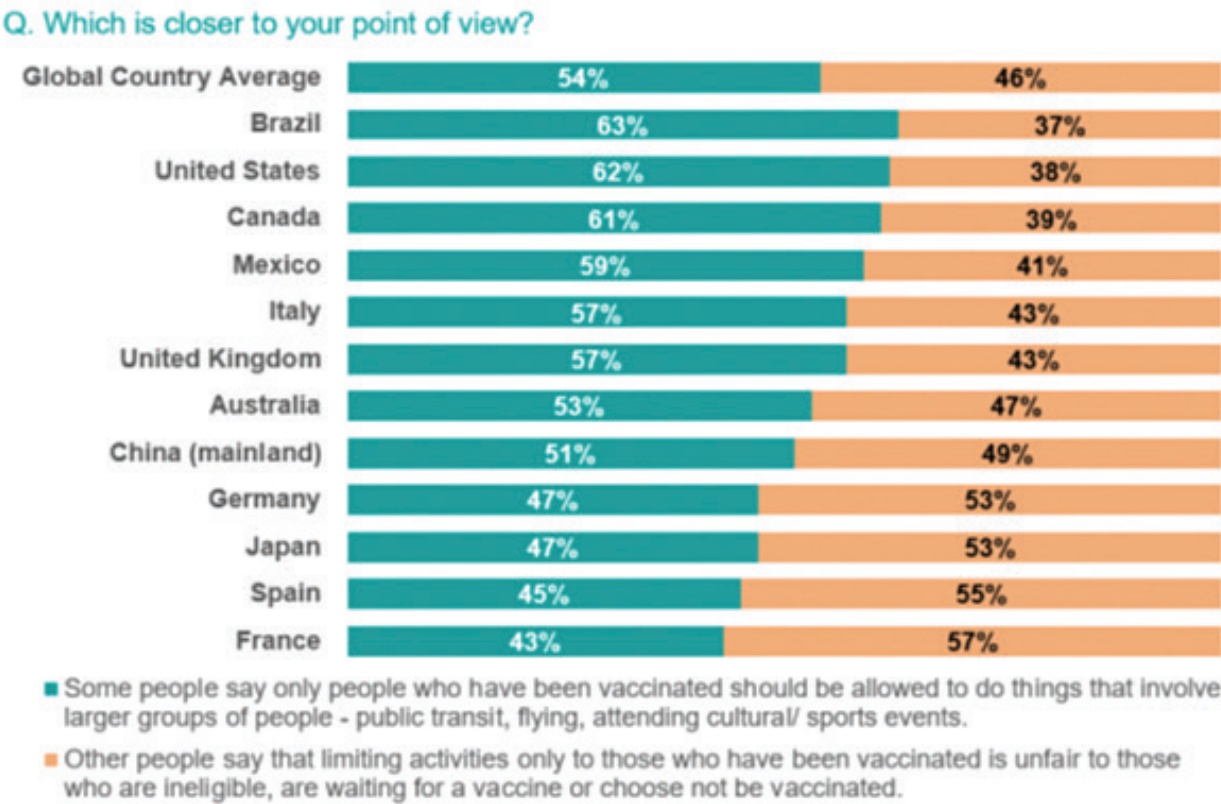
and attending cultural and sporting events (on average 54 per cent selected this answer), or

• Limiting these activities only to those who have been vaccinated is unfair to those who have not (46 per cent chose this answer). More than six in ten adults in Brazil (63 per cent), the United States (62 per cent), and Canada (61 per cent) believe activities involving large groups should be limited to the vaccinated. In contrast, majorities in France (57 per cent), Spain (55 per cent), Japan (53 per cent), and Germany (53 per cent) believe it is unfair.

Length of time vaccine certificate or passport should be required for activities and travel

On average, across 12 countries surveyed, one-third (32 per cent) say that a vaccine certificate or passport should only be required for only a few months, another third (32 per cent) until at least the end of the year, one quarter (23 per cent) for the next several years, and 13 per cent indefinitely.

The views that vaccine passport requirements should be limited to only a few months is most prevalent in Spain (54 per cent) and Mexico (48 per cent). Japan is the only country where a majority say vaccine passports should be required for the next several years or indefinitely.



More than 2,500 Authorised Ticket Resellers to drive international visitation to Expo 2020 Dubai



More than 2,500 online travel agents, tour operators, hotel groups and airlines have signed on as Authorised Ticket Resellers (ATRs) for Expo 2020 Dubai, organisers announced at Arabian Travel Market 2021 (ATM).

Spread across key markets, from 100-plus countries, the ATRs will offer value-added travel packages for international visitors to experience the best Expo 2020 has to offer based on a wide range of budgets and preferences, supporting Expo's mission to welcome visitors from across the planet to join the making of a new world.

The activated reseller networks in target markets are based on how prospective visitors in those countries book tickets at varying stages of their journey-planning process, and will be instrumental in facilitating travel to the first World Expo in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region.

Expo 2020 Dubai will run from October 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022, inviting visitors from every corner of the globe to discover life-changing innovations that will have a meaningful, positive impact on both people and the planet.

J&K govt announces ₹3 crore relief package for tourism employees

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha announced a ₹3 crore relief package for people employed in the tourism industry, which has been severely impacted by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tourism industry in Kashmir has suffered consecutive losses for the past three years, with the first lockdown, announced in 2019 during the repeal of Article 370, followed by the summers of the previous two years due to the pandemic.

"In this package, ₹2,000 financial assistance will be provided to 4,444

registered 'shikara' owners, 1,370 tourist guides, 6,663 'ponywalas' and 2,150 others, including those who rent palanquins for yatris. The money will be paid for two months. The relief will be transferred to only those who are registered with the tourism department," said an official of the tourism department.

"It is good that the government is considering such a package, but given how things are on the ground, we believe the amount should have been higher," said Bashir Ahmad, a shikara owner on Dal Lake.

Many people have also pointed out that the package excludes travel agents, owners of Kashmir's famous houseboats, hotels, and transportation operators.

"There is nothing in the package for people who work as travel agents or own guest houses. They, too, have suffered greatly," said Hussain, a travel agent in Srinagar.

The tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir has been in disarray for the majority of the last two years. Tour operators had hoped that tourist inflows would increase last year, but the pandemic kept most visitors away.

However, the tourism in Kashmir had improved during the winter, leading many to believe that the summers would be just as good, but the second wave of COVID-19 has devastated this sector once again.



Maharashtra organises 'International Conference on Agri-Tourism' on 15th and 16th of May, 2021

May 16th is celebrated as 'World Agri-Tourism Day'. On this occasion, the 'International Agri-Tourism Conference 2021' was organised by Agri-Tourism Development Corporation Baramati with the support of the Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra Government on 15th-16th May, 2021.

The theme of this year's conference was "Agri-Tourism - Women Farmer Entrepreneurship Development". The conference was inaugurated on 15th May by Aditya Thackeray, Minister for Tourism and Environment, Government of Maharashtra; Dadasaheb Bhuse, Minister of Agriculture, Government of Maharashtra, Aditi Sunil Tatkare, Minister of State for Tourism, Government of Maharashtra and Valsa Nair, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Government of Maharashtra.

The two-day interactive sessions had various stakeholders of Agri-tourism, farm tourism in India and from across the World. The discussions focused on empowering and encouraging the Rural Women farming community to embrace new opportunities in the realm of Agri-tourism.

On the occasion, Aditya Thackeray said, "I am really proud that our State has taken the lead in Agri-tourism. The concept of 30 per cent Krishi Yojana proposed by Agriculture Minister Dadasaheb Bhuse for women farmers is highly commendable. More than 60 per cent



of the country's population engage in agriculture and it is crucial to link agriculture to tourism. Agri tourism is instrumental for employment generation and economic improvement, especially in these pandemic times, when people have lost jobs, livelihoods, etc. Agri-tourism has given us the opportunity to bring together the two major sectors - tourism and agriculture. The current pandemic offers an opportunity for Agri-Tourism to grow as one of the fastest-growing sectors in India. One of the safest ways to enjoy travel right now is to visit rural areas, experience rural life, and enjoy a clean environment."

QR code on COVID RT-PCR report a must for flyers from India starting May 22



Air India passengers boarding international flights from India to countries that require carrying a negative RT-PCR test report will need to have a QR code linked to the original report from May 22 onwards.

“Effective May 22, 2021, passengers carrying negative RT-PCR reports as per the requirement of their destination country, must ensure that the report has a QR code linking to the original report,” Air India Express tweeted on May 14.

It, however, clarified that the rule is only for the passengers who are required to carry a negative RT-PCR test report as per the guidelines/requirements issued by the destination country.

The new requirement has been mandated as a significant number of false or forged negative reports were being furnished by passengers travelling out of India.

This has been done, also to ensure minimum physical contact and smooth movement of passengers amid the ongoing pandemic situation, without compromising on the verification, said Air India in a statement.

Due to the massive surge in the COVID-19 cases amid the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, several countries including Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand, UAE, Kuwait, Indonesia, Netherlands, and Australia, have banned passengers from India.

Vineet Mishra appointed as the Complex General Manager for Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

Pullman & Novotel New

Delhi Aerocity announced the appointment of Vineet Mishra as the Complex General Manager. He will be spearheading the management of 670 room property, a unique combination



hotel of two brands, Pullman and Novotel.

A seasoned hospitality professional, Vineet Mishra brings on board an illustrious career spanning over 22 years and an exceptional network in the industry. Vineet joins from Marriott International where he launched The Ritz-Carlton, Pune, and offered strategic council for five other hotels of the brand, as a Cluster General Manager. Prior to this, he has worked in various positions, including 9 years of leading teams in the role of a General Manager and other senior operational roles, at premium and luxury brands like Marriott International and The Oberoi Group.

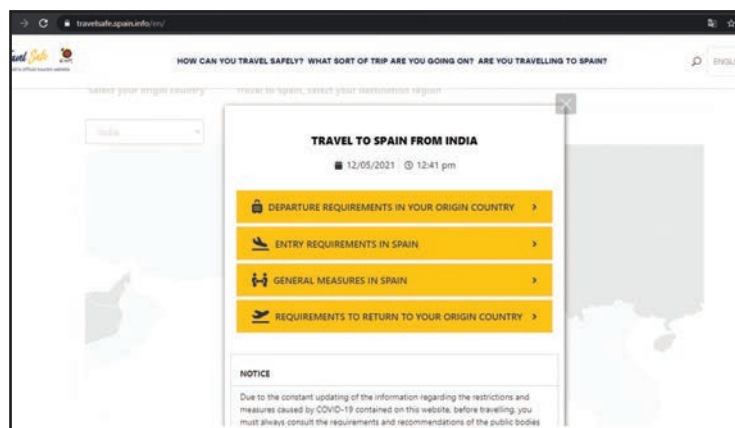
In his new role, Vineet will take on a cluster leadership role for Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, taking charge of leading the overall operations, human resource management, directing sales and marketing teams, ensuring sustained recovery and growth for the two hotels. He will be aligning his efforts to strengthen the hotel positioning as the capital's premium hospitality brand with diverse offerings.

Turespaña launches a new feature, the TRAVEL SAFE Spain microsite

Turespaña has launched a new feature within the TRAVEL SAFE microsite of the official Spanish tourism portal www.spain.info, whereby international tourists who wish to come to Spain can consult the travel restrictions due to COVID-19 in our country, as well as the entry and exit requirements for their respective countries.

TRAVEL SAFE microsite has included an information system, permanently updated on travel restrictions due to COVID-19, which allows consulting the information necessary to make any trip from 50 foreign countries to Spain. The objective of this initiative is to help the traveller to organize their trip to Spain in a more secure way with all the information available in relation to restrictions related to COVID-19, such as PCR tests, quarantines, as well as other prevention measures and regulations before, during and after the trip. The system is available in Spanish, English, French and German.

The tourists who wish to visit Spain will be able to find out the exit requirements from their country of origin, entry requirements to Spain, general measures that exist in Spain, as well as requirements to return to their country of origin. Detailed information on the specific measures in force in each autonomous community has also been made available. The



information is related to fifty countries, including India.

The Travel Safe microsite is the cornerstone of Turespaña Travel Safe's communication strategy. Travel Safe. Travel Again. A strategy designed to reinforce the perception of the safety of the destination Spain, regain confidence in travelling and that Spain is a prescriber of safe travel. This strategy started in December 2020 and will remain active until the international travel situation returns to normal.

Vistara opens bookings for flights to Tokyo (Haneda) from 16 June

Vistara has

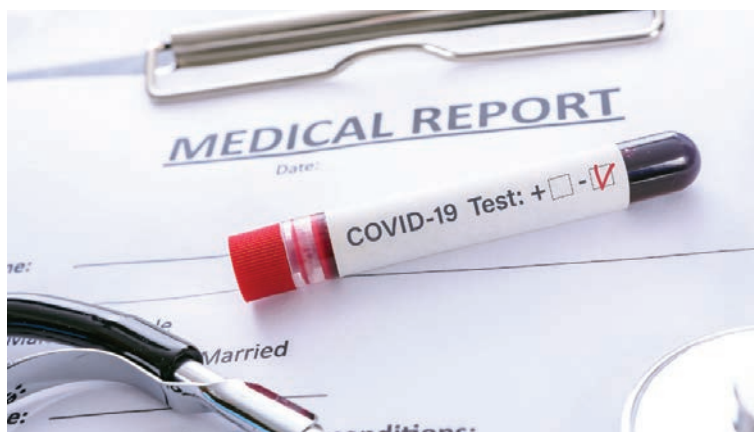
announced special, non-stop flights between Delhi (DEL) and Tokyo (HND) starting 16 June 2021. The airline will fly once a week between the two capital cities under India's travel bubble



agreement with Japan. The airline will use its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft with three-class cabin configuration to serve the route. This makes Vistara the only Indian carrier to offer the choice of flying Premium Economy class in addition to Business and Economy cabins. Bookings for the flights are being progressively opened on all channels, including Vistara's website, mobile app, and through travel agents.

Leslie Thng, Chief Executive Officer, Vistara, said, "Far East has been an extremely important geography for our global expansion from the beginning for its tremendous growth potential. We are delighted to add Japan to our international network, under the travel bubble and look forward to providing the best of Indian hospitality while maintaining the highest standards of safety and hygiene for our customers on this sector."

Negative RT-PCR report compulsory for passengers arriving at Mumbai domestic airport: BMC



The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has made it mandatory for passengers arriving from any part of the country at Mumbai domestic airport to have a negative RT-PCR report issued up to 48 hours prior to their entry into Maharashtra. In a letter addressed to the Airline station managers and CEOs of various airlines including Go Air, Indigo, Vistara, SpiceJet, etc., the Mumbai civic body has directed to mention the government directions about compulsory negative RT-PCR test on the ticket.

"After careful consideration of COVID-19 outbreak, the Govt of Maharashtra had imposed Compulsory Negative RT-PCR Test Report which will have to be issued from up to a maximum of 48 hours before the time of passengers entry from any part of the country into Maharashtra," the letter read.

"You (Airline station managers) are hereby directed to instruct all airlines operator from any part of the country, also to announce govt. directions about Compulsory Negative RT-PCR test and mention it in the ticket. The passengers will not be allowed to board without a Negative RT-PCR test," it added.

WTTC announces leadership changes

WTTC recently announced the appointment of International Airlines Group (IAG) Executive Committee Member, Julia Simpson, as its new President & CEO, effective August 15th.

Simpson brings extensive experience of the Travel & Tourism sector, having served on the boards of British Airways, Iberia and most recently as Chief of Staff at International Airlines Group. She previously worked at senior levels in the UK Government including advisor for the UK Prime Minister.

Carnival Corporation President and CEO, Arnold Donald, Chair of WTTC, paid tribute to Gloria Guevara and welcomed Julia Simpson to her new role. He said, "I would like to first thank Gloria for her dedication and commitment to WTTC, especially in these difficult times. Her contributions have been immeasurable, from helping to unite the sector as it manages and recovers from the pandemic to providing a clear voice and direction for the safe restart of international travel. And I and the entire executive committee are grateful for Gloria's continued help through this transition and her support to WTTC."

"I am delighted to welcome Julia Simpson, an exceptional leader with experience both in the private sector and in government, to help guide WTTC at this critical juncture of the Travel & Tourism sector. I look forward to working with Julia in my role as Chair, to continue building on WTTC's many successful

initiatives."

Julia Simpson said, "It will be a great privilege to lead WTTC as it emerges from the worst crisis in our history. Travel & Tourism plays a critical role in our economies across the globe, accounting for 330m jobs in 2019. In many communities, it is the backbone of family-run businesses that have been left devastated."

"The Travel & Tourism sector has shown real leadership in 'reopening' the world safely and securely, and I look forward to shaping and driving the sector's ambitious agenda to achieve long-term sustainable and inclusive growth."



EU countries urged to halt non-essential travel from India



The European Union's executive on May 12, 2021, called on countries of the bloc to temporarily halt non-essential travel from India, to limit the spread of a COVID-19 variant.

The European Commission said its proposal followed the World Health Organisation's proposal on Monday to reclassify the B.1.617.2 variant of COVID-19 found in India as a "variant of concern", raising the alert from a "variant of interest".

EU countries should apply an "emergency brake" on non-essential travel from India, it said in a statement.

"It is important to limit to the strict minimum the categories of travellers that can travel from India for essential reasons and subject those who may still travel from India to strict testing and quarantine arrangements," it added.

Last week the Commission proposed that the EU's 27 member states ease COVID-19 travel restrictions from June to allow foreign travellers from more countries to enter the bloc while keeping the option to quickly restrict travel from countries where the health situation deteriorates sharply.

The member states have not yet adopted this recommendation but could individually opt to ban non-essential travel from India before it is adopted.

The European Commission said limited exemptions should apply to its proposed halt to travel from India, including to those travelling for "imperative family reasons" or EU citizens and long-term residents. Those travellers should face additional health measures on arrival in the EU, such as strict testing or quarantine requirements, it said.

Turkey makes a difference with child-friendly hotels

With safe

tourism measures, Turkey offers various holiday options specifically for families with children. Turkey has a rich variety



of options for families with children. All-inclusive hotels that offer animation, children's workshops, children's pools and water slides are abundant in Kuşadası, Marmaris, Fethiye and especially Antalya. These "child-friendly" hotels offer many enjoyable activities for families and children, such as workshops and sports activities organised by instructors, and provide the opportunity for all family members to enjoy many different activities at the same time, prioritising visitor satisfaction and paying great attention to family feedback. The facilities are regularly inspected, and the hotels invest the necessary precautions to maximise the safety of the children.

For families who want to spend their time in a more natural and freer environment, many boutique hotels offer eco-friendly holidays and have taken the necessary safe tourism measures. Beach hotels in Karaburun, Bodrum, Fethiye, Datça, Selimiye, Bozburun and Kekova welcome their visitors with olive groves and the calm waters of the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea. Some of these hotels offer children the opportunity to feed farm animals, such as chickens, ducks and geese, and harvest fresh fruit and vegetables from organic gardens. Turkey also offers guests numerous hotels where families can go hiking, canoeing or enjoy nature together.

As part of continuing its 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 the 'Safe Tourism Certification Program'. The Country has expanded the scope of the practice and made it compulsory for accommodation facilities with 30 or more rooms. Up to now, more than 9,000 facilities were certified. In addition to this certificate, Turkey has begun vaccinating entire tourism personnel which will be completed before the beginning of the 2021 summer season. 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.

GMVN to refund money for Heli service to 11000 pilgrims

After Honorable Chief Minister Shri Tirath Singh Rawat announced to postpone the Char Dham Yatra amid the rising case of COVID-19. The government has instructed to cancel any other booking and refund the amount the pilgrims who have registered to avail the heli service.

Sharing this information Secretary Uttarakhand Tourism, Dilip Jawalkar, said, "Every year thousands of pilgrims visit Uttarakhand for Chardham Yatra. Keeping in mind the safety of pilgrims from India and abroad, an important decision has been taken by the state government to postpone the Chardham Yatra for the year. Directions have been given to GMVN to refund the amount after excluding the processing fee of ₹200. The amount will be deposited in the bank account of the pilgrims." It is pertinent to mention that the responsibility of booking tickets for the Shri Kedarnath Heli service was given to GMVN by the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB). Keeping convenience for the pilgrims, the booking opened from April 2 on the GMVN website. Many pilgrims from India and abroad booked the heli service in advance.



Managing Director, GMVN Dr. Ashish Chauhan said, "The amount of booking was taken by GMVN on behalf of Heli Operators which then transferred to the account operated by Yes Bank Limited for GMVN. Nearly 11,000 pilgrims have booked Heli services for the season. The decision of refund will bring relief to national and foreign pilgrims."

Etihad Airways introduces 'Verified to Fly' travel document initiative



Travellers flying from Abu Dhabi with Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, will be able to validate their COVID-19 travel documents before arriving at the airport. Guests can arrive at the airport with confidence and with peace of mind, knowing they have met all essential requirements before their flight. With the formalities out of the way, verified travellers can enjoy fast-track check-in at the airport by going to the dedicated Verified to Fly desk for a quicker and smoother experience.

To use the Verified to Fly service, guests can sign-up by visiting Manage my Booking and will receive further information on how to submit their documents. Once the submission has been checked by the Verified to Fly team, guests will receive a 'success' email if their documents meet government requirements. If requirements are missing or not met, the guest will be asked to resubmit or check their documents. Guests can also check their Verified to Fly status at any time by visiting Manage my Booking.

Verified to Fly will be available for all guests departing Abu Dhabi from (excluding China) and for flights departing Amman, Beirut, Dhaka and Manila shortly thereafter. Future developments are in progress to introduce the service to other destinations.

Maldives temporarily suspends tourist visa for India



Due to the surge in the number of COVID-19 cases in the region, Maldives has temporarily suspended tourist visas for South Asian countries. This includes tourists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

As India battles a major coronavirus wave, there's concern about rising infection levels in neighboring countries. The government of Maldives has taken a number of measures to curb the spread of the disease, including travel and other restrictions. This includes a curfew that will be imposed in the Greater Malé Area (Malé, Hulhumalé, Villimalalé) from 4 pm to 4 am, starting from May 12, 2021, for a duration of 1 week.

All inbound travellers are also required to present negative PCR test results, with the sample taken not more than 96 hours prior to departure to #Maldives. This includes travellers who have also completed the administration of their 2nd dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The negative PCR test result must be attached while completing the Traveller Health Declaration form, which has to be submitted online via IMUGA (www.imuga.immigration.gov.mv), by all arriving passengers before arrival (but not exceeding 24 hours before arrival time).

Cathay Pacific withdraws flights from Kolkata

Cathay Pacific has decided to withdraw its flights from Kolkata. Cathay Dragon, the wholly owned subsidiary of the Hong Kong-headquartered Cathay Pacific, used to operate flights between Kolkata and Hong Kong till early March 2020. The airline then suspended operations because of the Covid-related lockdown.

Sources said the contracts of the Kolkata-based employees of the airline had been terminated. However, a spokesperson for the airline could not confirm it on Monday.

"The Cathay Pacific Group has announced the suspension of its Kolkata route that was operating since November 2012. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on the aviation industry and our business," the spokesperson said.

"The group was operating five flights a week from Kolkata pre-March 2020 and has permanently suspended all international passenger commercial operations from Kolkata with immediate effect due to commercial reasons," the spokesperson said.

"However, Cathay Pacific Cargo continues to operate cargo



services as per the market demand. The Group will remain agile and continue to look for opportunities to serve this route as we can when the travel market recovers."

Kolkata is the only city in India from where Cathay has formally withdrawn. It has a presence in four other cities in the country, though flights are suspended now because of the pandemic.

Reuben Brothers to reimagine iconic New York Hotel in partnership with Corinthia Hotels and Casa Tua

Luxury Upper East Side hotel, The Surrey, was acquired by Reuben Brothers in 2020, marking another milestone for their growing hospitality collection. Undergoing an extensive transformation, the hotel is slated



to reopen in early 2023 as The Surrey, a Corinthia Hotel, operated and managed by Corinthia Hotels. The Surrey, a Corinthia Hotel will mark the Corinthia group's first property in the United States and a second collaboration with Reuben Brothers, the global private investment firm founded by David and Simon Reuben. The consortium will partner with Casa Tua on the hotel's food and beverage offering, bringing the Miami Beach hotspot and treasured celebrity favourite to New York for the first time.

The hotel will introduce a number of unique new dining destinations to the area, including Casa Tua's renowned private members' club, as curated by Miky Grendene. Founder of Casa Tua – the restaurant, hotel and private club on Miami Beach, with further locations in Aspen and Paris and Italian kitchen, Casa Tua Cucina.

Situated at the corner of East 76th Street and Madison Avenue, steps away from Central Park, The Surrey, a Corinthia Hotel will comprise both rooms and residences and draw inspiration from its illustrious history and elegant surroundings. The thoughtful design of the 97 guest rooms, including 33 suites and five signature suites, and 12 luxury residences will all be overseen by the award-winning studio, Martin Brudnizki.

OYO shows vaccination status of hotel staff on app



OYO has rolled out VaccinAid, a vaccine visibility initiative to drive awareness and social reinforcement among small and medium hotels and homes to get vaccinated against COVID-19. OYO also believes that vaccine visibility will be a key factor to build trust and confidence among consumers when they are ready to travel again. Therefore, promoting vaccination as a cause is very important to the impacted tourism and travel industry. With this initiative, OYO has become the first app in the travel ecosystem to show vaccine status of staff of its partner hotels.

According to OYO's internal consumer survey, 87 per cent of respondents said they would prefer hotels with vaccinated staff when they return to stay at hotels. With VaccinAid, as a part of the booking journey, users on the OYO app will have visibility on hotels and homes with vaccinated staff, either with the first dose or second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This enables users to book hotels with immunized staff and thereby acts as an accelerator on both sides of the platform.

Abhinav Sinha, Global COO & Chief Product Officer, OYO said, "This initiative is crucial to aid the recovery of impacted industries across the board, specifically for travel due to pandemic-led restrictions and the worry of stepping out. Vaccination is the most important initiative to beat the virus. With mass vaccination drives taking place across the country, self-declared vaccine visibility on the app is a simple yet powerful intervention to reinforce trust among consumers. This is also our small way of promoting the larger cause of vaccination among our customer base as well as with our hotel partners and their staff."

Emirates launches India humanitarian airbridge to transport urgent COVID-19 relief items

Emirates has set up a humanitarian airbridge between Dubai and India to transport urgent medical and relief items, to support India in its fight to control the serious COVID-19 situation in the country.

Emirates will offer cargo capacity free of charge on an 'as available' basis on all of its flights to nine cities in India, to help international NGOs deliver relief supplies rapidly to where it is needed.

In the past weeks, Emirates SkyCargo has already been transporting medicines and medical equipment on scheduled and charter cargo flights to India. This latest airbridge initiative takes Emirates' support for India and for the NGO community to the next level.

The first shipment sent as part of the Emirates India humanitarian airbridge is a consignment of over 12 tons of multi-purpose tents from the World Health Organization (WHO), destined for Delhi, and coordinated by the IHC in Dubai. The



freight division of Emirates has a close partnership with IHC, developed over several years of delivering relief materials to communities across the world impacted by natural disasters and other crises. IHC will support Emirates SkyCargo in channelling relief efforts to India through the airbridge.



YEARS OF IMPACT