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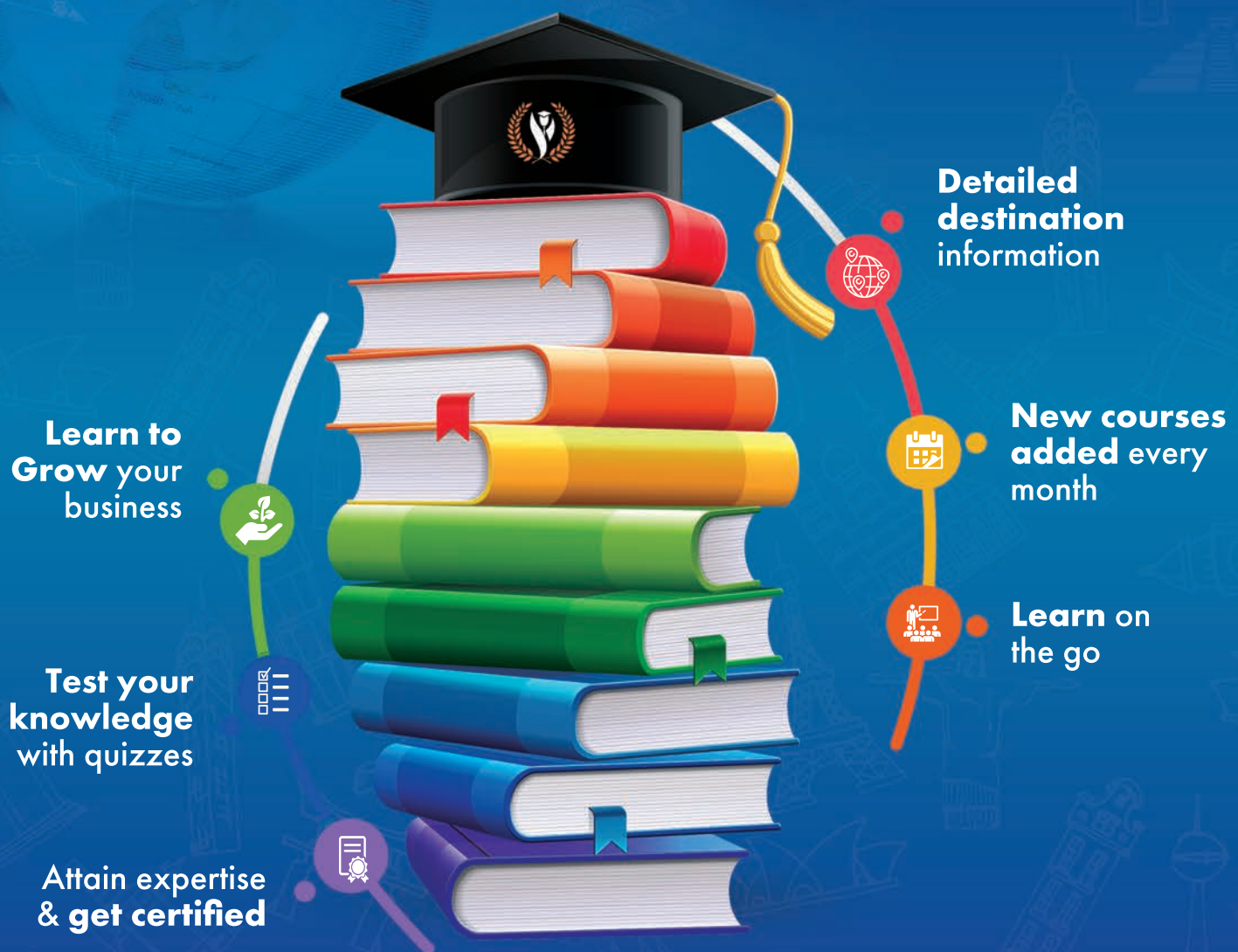
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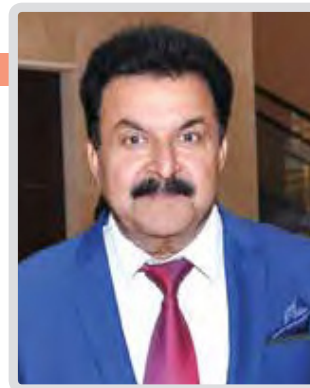
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Dear Friends,

As we unlock step by step from the lockdown against a backdrop of heightened uncertainty, now up-to-date and reliable information is more important than ever, both for tourists and for the tourism sector. It is also essential to investigate how the industry will recover after COVID-19 and how the industry can be made sustainable in a dramatically changed world.

Travellers hopefully will show interest to travel but responsible, conscious and transformative way of life will be high on their agenda. To meet such a demand as well as to support their own sustainability, tourism industry should marry into the idea of responsible tourism seriously. For responsible travel practitioners, this will not only be an intrinsic compulsion but also a market compulsion to strengthen credibility and establish a loyal customer base.

So the industry should be ready by emphasising tourism's proven resilience and standing ready to support recovery. It is very important to rebuild confidence in travelling and to enhance tourism's contribution to wider societal recovery.

TTJ June 2020 issue focuses on Responsible and Sustainable travel along with the recovery of the travel and hospitality industry wherein we have showcased some stakeholders who along with responsibility and sustainability in their minds are trying to redefine themselves and develop new skills that can help them to learn to live with the new normal.

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

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Editor's Desk



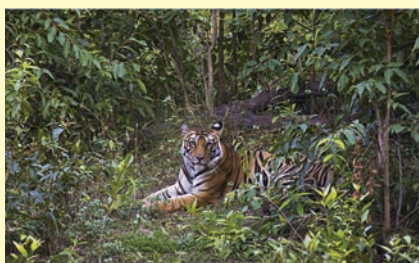
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Madhya Pradesh re-opens its tourist destinations



Madhya Pradesh re-opens its State Tourism Development Corporation hotels, resorts, and many private hotels at tourist destinations allowing tourists from within the country. Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has also issued a circular regarding the re-opening of National Parks from June 15, 2020. National Park's Buffer Zone will remain open during monsoon season. Following the health protection, safety and hygiene guidelines, the premises have been sanitised and fumigated. The state ensures all hygiene and social-distancing norms and SOP issued by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India.

Kedarnath Reconstruction Project reviewed by PM Modi, says will boost cultural connect and tourism

In his discussion with Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat and other senior officials via video conferencing, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi laid out his vision for the reconstruction of the shrine. PM Modi said that the state government should design development projects for holy sites like Kedarnath and Badrinath in a manner that stands the test of time and is yet eco-friendly and in harmony with nature and its surroundings. In addition to the redevelopment at Kedarnath, they also discussed ways to develop other heritage centres from Ramban to Kedarnath. He further pointed out that the development of centres such as Brahma Kamal Vatika will deepen our cultural connect and boost tourism.



Government relaxes visa rules for engineers, health professionals, others to visit India

The Home Ministry has allowed foreign businessmen, engineers, and healthcare professionals to enter the country on the condition that they get their visas re-validated and fly into the country in non-scheduled commercial flights or chartered flights. Foreign businessmen coming to India on re-validated business visas or fresh ones would be allowed into the country. The other categories permitted to enter the country include healthcare professionals on invitation from a recognised and registered healthcare facility, technical specialists and engineers travelling for installation, repair and maintenance of foreign-origin machinery and specialists who need to travel on behalf of foreign business entities located in India. The select group of foreign nationals would have to obtain a fresh business visa or employment visa, as applicable, from the Indian Missions/Posts abroad.

CapaJet to operate special repatriation flights, which includes Mumbai-Sydney and Bengaluru-Christchurch

CapaJet has received overwhelming success with India to Australia repatriation missions including the current Mumbai-Sydney flight, which has received a tremendous response from the fliers. CapaJet is also launching India to New Zealand with the first flight between Bengaluru and Christchurch on June 17. More flights will be announced in a few days. Flight details like date of departure, fare and booking process can be obtained from the company's website. CapaJet is committed to providing high-end service and a comfortable flying experience to its flier. To ensure this, the company has selected Singapore Airlines to operate its long haul Asia and APAC repatriation mission. With such strategic associations in place, CapaJet is on track to repatriate over 5000 people by the end of June.

Thomas Cook and SOTC in association with Apollo Clinics launch the Assured Safe Travel Program

Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel jointly launched 'Assured' – a comprehensive program to safe travel in the COVID-19 era. The companies have partnered with Apollo Clinics – a member of the Apollo Hospitals Group to jointly set a benchmark for safety in travel. To build confidence that it is safe to travel again, the companies have worked jointly with partners across the travel ecosystem to create the Thomas Cook and SOTC Assured program, that ensures meticulous health and safety protocols – at every stage of the customer journey – from the various contactless booking processes, safe physical outlets and processes at the sales/servicing pre-tour stage, as well as the on-tour stage. The Assured Program also defines a series of comprehensive health and safety measures in place across every travel touch-point from airports, airlines, local transportation, hotels, restaurants and attractions and encompasses employees and suppliers, sellers and channels, including franchisees and customers.

Germans to test out virus tourism in Spain before opening borders



Spain's Balearic Islands will allow 10900 German tourists to fly in for a two-week trial that tests out how to balance the needs of Spain's vital tourism industry with new regulations to curb the country's coronavirus outbreak. The trial that begins June 15 comes before the archipelago and the rest of the country re-open to international tourism on July 1. No previous health checks are required to travel but all visitors will need to complete a questionnaire during their flight that is aimed at identifying possible infections. The Germans will be exempt from Spain's rule now that visitors need to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. They will be able to stay, for a minimum of five nights, at designated hotels, tourism apartments, and their own houses in the islands. As they get off the plane, they will face temperature checks and get information on Spain's social distancing and mask-wearing rules.

Jalesh Cruises introduces Future Pass, book now and travel later



Jalesh Cruises, India's first premium cruise liner has introduced 'Future Pass', designed to provide flexibility for its travellers. Travellers can book their cruise holiday now and be able to finalise their travel dates until August 31, 2021. Also, if purchased before June 30, 2020, an exclusive discount of 25 percent can be availed on the Future Pass. Amid the current sentiment towards travelling, this offer will help travellers restore their confidence to book at a later date as per their convenience.

Etihad Travel Voucher – Buy now and receive a 50 per cent cash bonus

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the UAE, is encouraging travellers to start planning their next trip, once travel restrictions ease, with the launch of 'Etihad Travel Voucher'. Guests who purchase an Etihad Travel Voucher between 10 and 24 June 2020 will receive an extra 50 per cent cash value for future travel from August 1, 2020 onwards. Etihad Travel Vouchers are available in increments of USD 250 to a maximum of USD 65,000. The value of the purchased voucher plus 50 per cent extra credit will be added to a Travel Bank account for future redemption on flights, upgrades and extras.

Fiji declares itself COVID-19 Free

On June 5, 2020, in a statement, Honourable Prime Minister, Voreqe Bainimarama announced that Fiji has no more active cases of COVID-19 and the destination is free of this virus after the Pacific island nation treated its last known three infected patient, thereby continuing the Pacific's remarkable record of success against the COVID-19 virus. Their final three patients in isolation have all tested negative for the



coronavirus and will be released back home. Fiji has not recorded a new case in 45 days; that is over three full incubation periods for the virus — granting the country a high level of confidence that the virus has been wholly eliminated within their borders.

TAT- UNDP team up to strengthen sustainable tourism in Thailand



A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between TAT and the UNDP was signed on the World Environment Day, June 5, 2020, by the UNDP Resident Representative in Thailand, Renaud Meyer, and the TAT Governor, Yuthasak Supasorn. It is one of the highlights of a wider event marking TAT's 60th anniversary this year.

The MOU provides a platform for collaboration to integrate sustainability as a fundamental principle for tourism in Thailand and share Thailand's experience in sustainable tourism with other countries, building on UNDP's presence in 170 countries and territories around the world. The MOU is in line with TAT's overarching objective to strengthen confidence in the Thai tourism industry with a series of 'Restore and Reform measures'.

Pride Group of Hotels announces Co-Working and Corporate Spaces desks

The Pride Group of Hotels announces Co-Working and Corporate Spaces desks, the alternate office space for working professionals. The service features individual workspace, co-working spaces, corporate space, meeting suites and studio office. It is designed specifically to cater to the needs of an organisation or an individual, who wants to kick-start their businesses in a safe and reliable environment. This business centre facility form Pride Hotels provides its guests with move-in ready to use workspaces with workstations, private desk, conference rooms, and the amenities of a traditional office. These spaces are tailored for individual's small teams, startups, SMEs and corporates and can be booked by the guests according to their desired work time period.

From Porter to Palace, Josiah Montsho's stellar rise to success

Josiah Elias Montsho has come full circle with his appointment last year as General Manager at Sun City's flagship Palace of the Lost City hotel in South Africa, going from Hotel Porter to Palace GM. At the tender age of 19,



nothing about Josiah's first job as a Sun City porter could have prepared him for the direction his life would take. "I thought the job was going to help me to save money to study further, but it was the start of a journey to greatness," he said. Having no particular dream of working in the hospitality industry, Montsho developed a passion for hospitality once he understood the vast career choices and opportunities that it offers. During his time at Sun International, Montsho steadily climbed the corporate ladder from Front Office Manager at The Wild Coast Sun to Operations Manager at Carnival City Casino, Rooms Division Manager at the Palace of The Lost City, and finally General Manager of the Cabanas Hotel.

TUI and Booking.com announce strategic global tours, attractions and experiences partnership

Travel companies TUI and Booking.com announced a strategic global experiences, activities, and excursions partnership, providing millions of Booking.com customers worldwide with direct access to the rapidly growing activities segment of TUI and its digital subsidiary Musement. Under the agreement with Booking.com, customers will eventually have direct access to a portfolio of over 70,000 tours, attractions and activities via Musement, launching incrementally on Booking.com over the coming months. Musement will be the first third-party provider of tours, and activities inventory on the Booking.com travel platform, as the company seeks to expand its offering and provide customers with a more comprehensive end-to-end travel offering.

Ebix likely to file counter suit against Yatra

On May 14, 2020, Yatra Online, Inc. entered into an agreement with Ebix, Inc. ('Ebix') extending the outside date of completion of the Merger Agreement to June 4, 2020 (the 'Outside Date'). The Merger Agreement contained certain termination rights for Ebix and Yatra, including, among others, the right of either party to terminate the Merger Agreement if the Merger has not been consummated on or prior to the Outside Date. The Outside Date was extended to June 4, 2020 in order to provide the parties with time to determine whether they can reach mutual agreement on an amendment of certain terms of the Merger Agreement.



After the expiration of the Outside Date and the failure of the two parties to agree on the terms of an amended Merger Agreement by the Outside Date of June 4, Yatra terminated the Merger Agreement on June 5, 2020 and filed suit against Ebix in the Delaware Court of Chancery for breach of contract. Ebix strongly disagrees with the allegations outlined in the complaint. Ebix intends to enforce all of its rights under the Merger Agreement, and is currently considering all options, including a countersuit against Yatra on account of multiple breaches of its representations, warranties, and covenants under the Merger Agreement.

Darjeeling hotels rollback decision to shut down from July 1

Darjeeling Hotel Owners Association has reversed its decision to suspend operations during the offseason beginning July 1, triggering hope that it may encourage gradual restoration of tourism to the Darjeeling-Kalimpong and the Dooars tourism circuits that support around 50,000 jobs. Stakeholders in tourism business in the Darjeeling region of West Bengal were relieved with the retraction of the decision rooted in fears that the flow of guests to the region, choked by the coronavirus induced lockdown, was unlikely to pick up despite easing of restrictions in the off-season beginning July. The association also felt paying salaries to staff may not be possible after June.



Redeam and Experience Hub announce partnership to connect the world to Yas Island Experiences in preparation for the future

Redeam, the only independent global connectivity stack with digitized channel management and voucher redemption/reconciliation solutions for the Experiences industry, recently announced its new partnership with Experience Hub. Experience Hub connects the world to Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, and through its partnership with Redeam, Experience Hub looks to Redeam's multi-faceted connectivity technology to enhance its digital infrastructure and customer journey in preparation for a seamless recovery for the travel industry once restrictions have been lifted. The new partnership will accelerate Experience Hub's distribution capabilities globally and in particular across Europe and North America.

Cruise tourism at five destinations in Odisha soon



The Odisha government is planning to launch cruise services in five locations in the state by involving private players. The plan to launch cruise services on Chilika Lake, River Mahanadi, Bhitarkanika mangroves, Satkosia gorge, and Hirakud reservoir got delayed due to the COVID-19 outbreak and it is now being given a push. The tourism department has already invited an Expression of Interest (EoI) for operating day cruise services and interested private operators have been asked to come up with their plans by July 10. The tourism department will facilitate permission from the authorities concerned for the day cruise services and the government will soon unveil a new Tourism Policy 2020, offering many fiscal incentives to water sports, adventure sports, houseboats, cruise tourism projects and aquariums and aqua-parks to promote private sector investments.

Genting Cruise Lines launches 'GCL India' B2B app

Genting Cruise Lines has announced the launch of a new B2B app geared toward the company's travel trade and business partners to provide a wealth of information, all in the palm of their hands. The 'GCL India' app is readily available via the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store. The app shall deliver a



comprehensive platform for business partners to access a range of helpful tools including itineraries, brochures and presentations, cruise calendars, photos and videos, and important news. The goal of the app is to streamline information delivery and to speed up the turnaround time of providing essential materials to their end consumers.

Sri Lanka Tourism opens for international tourists from August 1, 2020

Sri Lanka is ready to welcome global travellers from all countries starting from August 1, 2020, following the country's successful containment of COVID-19. Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) and Ratmalana International Airport (RIA) as well as Hambantota's Mattala Rajapaksa

International Airport (MRIA) will be operational for international travellers from all nations.

The issuing of visas will be only online and must be applied for, prior to travel. The online visa procedure and requirements for tourists from August 1, 2020 are:

- A negative PCR test report from an accredited laboratory taken within 72 hours before landing in Sri Lanka.
- A confirmed travel itinerary covering at least 5 nights at certified accommodations.
- A valid return air ticket, travel

insurance with health and hospitalisation cover.

- A visa fee of USD 100 will be applicable.

Tourists will not have to undergo quarantine procedures. However, a mandatory health screening and sanitising process including a PCR test will be conducted at the arriving airports which is free of charge for tourists.

For the PCR test, all travellers will be transferred through pre-booked transportation to designated hotels in close proximity to the airport, to await their test results which is expected within 24 hours. Travellers are supposed to select a hotel for a one-night stay from a list of certified 4- or 5-star hotels in Colombo or Negombo until the test results are received. Sri Lanka Tourism will conduct further PCR tests free of charge, for any tourists staying longer than 5 nights.



With the launch of three-phase opening plans, Taiwan set to welcome international tourists in Q3



Taiwan, through their digital campaigns are focused on the Holiday for Healing – campaign where they are encouraging people to travel to Taiwan for that healing process, to be one with nature, with their families and truly move on from the global pandemic that has affected us all. Holiday for Healing encompasses other enriching and rejuvenating

holidays which emphasise on quality time being spent together by families, friends such as nature parks and trails, hot springs, beaches and, by the time international tourists arrive in autumn hues. However, healing is not an overnight task, rather a slow process that involves both time and healing experiences. Towards this end, Taiwan offers a three-fold offering paving the way for hope, beauty and tourism.

Taiwan has implemented a three-phase opening plan, the first phase of which is now underway. This phase includes focusing on a pandemic prevention tourism plan, various tourism-related guidelines have been established including quick action plans in case of an outbreak. To encourage tourists to 'travel with confidence', training courses and support courses are being provided to all those in the travel and tourism industry.

In the second phase, an estimated NT\$2 billion (US\$33 million) is budgeted for tourism re-introduction. As part of the training, upto 300,000 participants from the tourism sector will partake in local FAM tours to be eligible for additional relief subsidies. Various sightseeing routes will be planned by connecting local specialty outlets, homestays, attractions, shopping and more, to be promoted when the full travel plan officially resumes. These tours allow them a familiarisation of measures implemented, and the processes they must follow, thereafter.

Thereafter, the aim is to usher in the third phase, where Taiwan will excitedly await for international tourists to arrive, having created, implemented and successfully tested the measures adopted at the domestic level.

Hilton CleanStay brings new standard of cleanliness worldwide in time for summer travel



Hilton begins a worldwide roll-out of a new program to deliver an industry-defining standard of cleanliness and disinfection to Hilton properties. Hilton CleanStay, created in collaboration with Lysol and Dettol maker RB and Mayo Clinic, includes new procedures to help Hilton guests enjoy an even cleaner and safer stay starting this summer. Hilton and RB have expanded this partnership to support the global portfolio of hotels and the trusted RB family of products will be used in multiple markets around the world. Hilton guests can expect to begin seeing changes in some hotels around the world starting today, with Hilton CleanStay implemented across Hilton's 18 brands by mid-July.

Save the Lungs, save the Ocean



Adaaran Resorts Maldives have their 'Coral Replantation Research Project' in full swing, another one of their outstanding sustainability projects. The mission of this project is to save the lungs of planet Earth, the Oceans. The activity was commemorated on 'World Environment Day' and 'World Ocean Day,' both celebrated worldwide in June with the motive to encourage awareness and action for the protection of the environment and oceans. A fitting tribute to the environment from Adaaran Resorts Maldives.

Team TTJ

The Coral Replantation Research Project is another sustainability initiative from Adaaran Resorts Maldives. The initiative is aimed towards caring for the environment and giving back to the planet we live in. The long-standing measures taken up by Adaaran Resorts' sustainability journey started with the 'Green Dive' in the year 2016, by signing the sustainability pledge underwater at Adaaran Select Hudhuranfushi.

Now, they are back again with another worthy venture during this lockdown period, making the most out of the luxury of time that they have as hoteliers and engaging in sustainability activities to save the beautiful oceans. The research

done for the coral project is conducted with the support of their official dive partner, 'Adaaran Resorts Maldives, Dive Point'

The project was launched on June 5, 2020, while commemorating World Environment Day and the World Ocean Day. Discarded beds and iron trees were dressed carefully in selected and nurtured corals. The selection of the corals took a number of months before it came for research on the house reef and lagoon, the dive spots of the resort. The project is led by resort base leader, Andi.

Andi, counts nine years of experience in the waters of the Maldives and his work experience spans across Europe, Egypt, the Philippines, and Mexico. He is immensely passionate about corals and is in constant search of the best ways to regenerate corals in a sustainable manner.

Corals are very sensitive

and beautiful creatures that can be found underwater and each coral behaves in their own unique way, in tandem with the ever-changing environment. The resort helps them to grow and multiply while using different ways to fix corals. The selection process of these corals took quite a while and this included many aspects of research at the house reef and lagoon. For soft and leather corals, they give dead corals and reef stone as a base for them to grow, and metal cages are used for the hard corals. They believe that continuous monitoring is the key to success in their growth.

Maldives is made up of just 1 per cent land area and 99 per cent being under water. Beauty remains intact in this beautiful 'waterpark' which one must experience during their stay. All the Adaaran Resorts are 'Travelife Gold' certified and this project will add another milestone to their long-standing sustainability best practices which is deeply instilled in their DNA.





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The optimistic route of resilience by Kerala Tourism

After bearing the brunt of COVID-19 outbreak, the travel and tourism industry vivaciously gears up for a new month and indeed a 'Restart'. In the backdrop of heightened uncertainty, the industry together needs to reflect on the idea of Responsible and Sustainable Travel and how the idea will reshape the world of Travel and tourism post the pandemic. Kerala Tourism takes an optimistic route of resilience through its Responsible Tourism Mission. TTJ in conversation with K. Rupeshkumar, State Responsible Tourism Mission Coordinator, Dept. of Tourism, Govt. of Kerala, delves into the subject.

Shivangi Gupta



K. Rupeshkumar

The COVID-19 outbreak has certainly compelled many industries to accept the change and move forward to mend the broken pieces. The travel and tourism industry too is ready to diligently plan and implement reforms and strategies to suit the changing world.

The times of crisis have given a mainstream position to the idea of responsible and sustainable Tourism thus giving a new context to it. K. Rupeshkumar shares, "Till now, responsible tourism was like a passion or a marketing strategy for some people. The pandemic has changed the situation and from now onwards, the terms such as 'responsible tourism' and 'sustainable tourism' will be synonymous to the word- tourism. We cannot promote any of our packages or products without the protection of environment. The core attractions of

all the tour packages are God gifted natural attractions such as waterfalls, wildlife, beaches, backwaters, etc. Through the implementation of responsible tourism, we can also ensure 100 per cent community support, which is paramount to us in order to offer meaningful authentic experiences."

The baggage of responsibility is heavier than ever on the shoulders of the tourism government bodies to adapt and cater to the changing travellers' sentiments. With the industry now inclining towards formulating responsible and sustainable travel strategies, its impact on the Indian economy will be eagerly awaited. Reflecting on the same, K. Rupeshkumar shares, "I think we cannot expect international travel in immediate

future, because the travel bans might be extended to some more time. And certainly there will be a fear about COVID-19 also. Since the restrictions due to social distancing will persist for some more time, we can also not expect large number of tourists in future, people will move towards less crowded destinations and of course the possibilities of economic crisis will also make people to keep away from luxurious travel/facilities. Travel is a basic human

desire and the urge to travel will never end. So we have a hope that people will not lose their passion for travel. We expect that there will be a boost in rural tourism, village tourism, and experiential travel, etc. Rather than focusing on the number of tourists, we should promote the length of stay of tourists from now onwards. Under Responsible Tourism Mission of Kerala, we have designed and developed new experiential tourism packages for extending the length of stay of guests."

Responsible Tourism Mission is the nodal agency formed by the Government of Kerala to spread and implement the initiatives of responsible tourism. It believes in making tourism a tool for the development of village, local communities and women empowerment. Delving deep into the purpose of the mission, he elucidates, "At present, the Responsible Tourism Mission has 18000 registered units under it, around 1 lakh people are linked directly or indirectly with the tourism sector and are also generating income from tourism. The mission offers experiential tourism packages across the state comprising of experiences such as village life experience, cultural experience, carbon neutral packages, cuisine experiences, learning experiences, farm tourism packages, experiential stays options, storytelling packages, festival tour packages etc."





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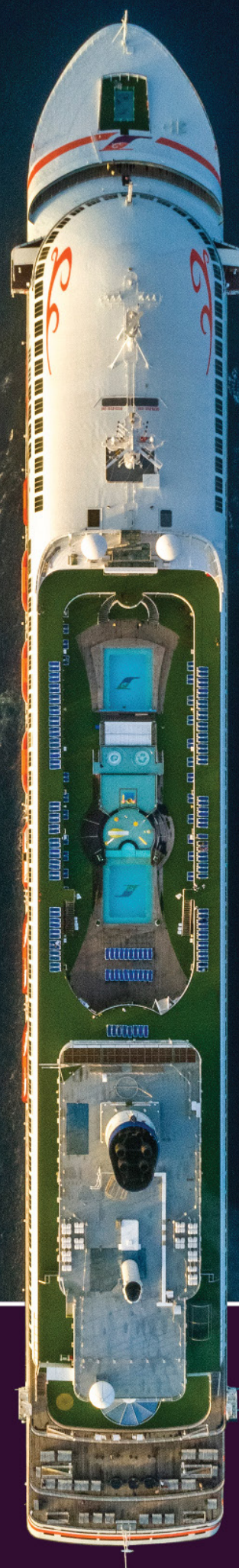
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Goa keen to attract high value and responsible tourists

Even before COVID-19 hit the world, Goa was re-centring its strategy towards a more responsible form of tourism. Given the size and the environmental vulnerability of Goa, it was wiser to prioritise quality tourism over large footfall volumes. With the disastrous after effects of the pandemic, Nikhil Desai, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) talks to TTJ about his state further strengthening the strategy for responsible and sustainable tourism and how it will go a long way in meeting their objectives and set new standards in tourism.

Prashant Nayak



Nikhil Desai

CCOVID-19 has come as a shock and massive disrupter for everybody across the world. Tourism has been the first hit and will be the last to recover from this current pandemic. Nikhil says, "What used to represent the essence of tourism – crossing borders, mingling with strangers, discovering the unknown – has proved to accelerate the spread of the virus. It is therefore obvious that, for some time at least, people will not travel as carefree as they use to, until and unless it is essential. Concepts such as MICE, weddings, large gatherings and music festivals may not be the same again till a vaccine is found."

Tourism is a marvellous medium which can help individuals to open themselves to the world, but it can also come with a heavy cost, such as spreading a deadly virus or deteriorating the

environment. Nikhil tells, "It is therefore important to plan tourism in such a way that we keep control over it and can mitigate its potential negative impact. Responsible tourism can help us meet this objective. Now, the on-going crisis has consolidated our belief in responsible travel."

According to a recent survey conducted by Goa Tourism, the travel and leisure industry directly generates 35 per cent of the jobs available in the state – and this does not include people that are indirectly dependent on tourism. Tourism therefore plays a massive role in Goa's economy.

"Reviving tourism activities will for sure fuel the recovery of the economy. But this should be done wisely, we cannot bring masses of tourists without making sure Goa can absorb them. This is where responsible tourism comes in. We need to promote and develop the right tourism activities which can guarantee value generation, and therefore employment, while minimising the negative impact on society and the environment. Therefore, to us, more than repairing the damage caused by the COVID-19 crisis, responsible tourism can help us address issues of the past and make Goa's travel industry more resilient and more sustainable," states Nikhil.

From now on tourists will be probably more sensitive to environmental, health and safety issues but Nikhil says, "We are aware that, as a society, we tend to have short memories. So, it is highly likely that irresponsible tourism behaviours will quickly return. At the same time, some

citizens – especially those who already had an inclination for eco-responsible practices prior to the pandemic – will use this opportunity to durably alter their way-of-life. It is these tourists with a high level of awareness that we want to target. Responsible tourists make efforts not to harm the destinations they visit, and on top of this, they are often ready to spend more for it. We intend to meet the demand of these types of tourists."

Goa has several initiatives in the pipeline to promote responsible tourism. Their first goal will be to change Goa's image as only a tourism destination. They intend to go beyond the Goa has been always known for: beach, parties, and carefree spirit. They now want to attract more high-value and responsible tourists. On the same, Nikhil shares, "We also have wonderful, unexplored backwaters, verdant interiors, beautiful western ghats, amazing flora and fauna, and almost 44 per cent forest cover with natural habitats, which will be promoted in a responsible and sustainable manner. We are developing basic and necessary social infrastructure in the state, while relaxing our norms for investment in development of our hinterlands. On the other hand, we are currently developing an ambitious marketing campaign to highlight lesser known aspects of Goa."

Goa Tourism intends to boost sustainable tourism by putting a spotlight on establishments, locals, which made extra efforts to adopt environmentally responsible practices and therefore help tourists to make informed choices. They are also creating collaboration platforms for knowledge sharing on environmentally responsible practices with Industry and academia. "We believe that these initiatives will lead us to rebrand Goa as Sustainable Tourism Capital of India," concludes Nikhil.

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Key to the success of tourism in Karnataka lies in the confidence and trust on the destinations

Karnataka adopted a nine-point Green charter in 2019, which is a step towards green and clean sustainable tourism and the government works diligently to ensure that they follow all the green practices. Kumar Pushkar, IFS, Managing Director, KSTDC, shares his thoughts with TTJ on responsible and sustainable travel practices for the future which will be essential in a post COVID era.

Prashant Nayak



Kumar Pushkar

experience the safety protocols being followed at all destinations in Karnataka, the message would reach out to all and we would see more people travelling to Karnataka in the coming months. The key to success of tourism in Karnataka lies within the confidence and trust on the destinations, due to safety against COVID-19."

Sharing his thoughts further on the evolution and changes in the nature of tourism post-COVID-19, Kumar mentions, "It is difficult to predict whether we would have Post- COVID-19 period or a period with COVID-19, where we learn to live along with this virus. But, I can definitely say that there would be a marked change in the type of tourism besides drastic decline in the numbers of tourists.

People would be a bit reluctant to travel to unknown places or the places where the hygiene and safety protocols are not well defined. The tourists would be more comfortable to travel to nearby local destinations, which they feel is safe. They would prefer places which are vast, such as nature, wildlife and where there is less of human movement, so that social distancing can be maintained. I strongly believe that going forward travellers will give preference to wellness tourism like ayurveda and yoga, which helps in boosting immunity and health."

Responsible and Sustainable Tourism is the basic need for the tourism, whether pre or post COVID-19 and now with the threat in place, KSTDC have issued detained guidelines/SOPs to all their units on how to keep their hotels and buses safe and sanitized. Now tourists would demand and prefer organisations which have adopted the sustainable development models. For

the holistic and uninterrupted growth of tourism, it is very important to keep the environment clean, adopt best practices for solid waste management, reduce carbon footprint by reducing the consumption of electricity, water, employ local people and generate revenue for the local community by engaging them in the supply chain for the Hospitality and Tourism sector.

"The global pandemic has definitely brought in a lot of awareness amongst people about the hygiene and sanitation. But it would still take time for the Indians to adopt the good practices in their daily routine. Though most of us are educated and taught about the cleanliness and sanitation, most of us do not practice the same and we do indulge in littering as well as pollution of our environment. As responsible stakeholders in the tourism Industry, we need to enforce the sustainable practices at our respective places, in the future period, at least in the name of Corona, and ensure that it becomes a way of life," explains Kumar.

Kumar continues, "The tourist must be made aware of the green and clean practices which they need to adopt when they come out to a destination. Though, it would take time, I am sure if we try it now, it will be successful eventually, especially in the light of COVID experience. The responsible travellers were always disciplined and followed the sustainable practices but the challenge is to convert the non-responsible tourists into responsible tourists"

Amidst the pandemic, KSTDC already has a marketing plan in place and they are waiting for the opportune moment to start their campaign. They intend to organise several roadshows across the country, along with willing stakeholders from Karnataka, they also plan to participate in all the tourism events and trade shows to promote Karnataka.

Though tourism has been greatly affected by the pandemic, it is evident that gradually, the tourism industry will be a catalyst in the revival of economy by direct contribution, by creating an eco-system for other businesses to flourish, as all the business requires a direct or indirect support from hotels, restaurants, and travel industry.

In Karnataka, tourism contributes to 14.8 per cent of the State GDP, which is quite considerable. It also provides employment, through direct or indirect jobs, to millions of people. Kumar says, "Karnataka shall do well after the exit of lockdown as Karnataka has been least affected by the pandemic and is considered safe. Moreover, Karnataka has a huge tourism market from Bengaluru, which would definitely travel, especially during weekends, to come out of the lockdown syndrome. Once, they

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Sustainable tourism will need to become our new normal

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how interconnected we all are. We have realised that our actions have an impact. The steps we took were hard, to protect ourselves but we were all united in making sacrifices for the greater good of the people around us. I am now more encouraged than ever that our community will acknowledge the responsibility we all have to promote and respect sustainable travel practices. However, in order to reach there, we have to invest in creating greater awareness and better resources for the travelling community.

Biji Eapen



Biji Eapen

These are unprecedented times; while we have faced many virus diseases in the past like SARS, Chikungunya, Zika, Ebola, and Nipah, none has had such wide ranging impact on our lives as the novel coronavirus. The global travel and tourism industry, especially the Indian hospitality sector has been hit very hard by this pandemic. In my 40 plus years in the airline and travel industry profession, I have never come across a pandemic of this magnitude that was able to handicap the travel industry worldwide. There is no playbook to navigate COVID-19. This 'new' normal has made us reconsider how to safely continue doing the work that we do best.

Recovery and getting back a sense of normalcy will take time. While travel will eventually resume, it will look and feel different. Our safety and that of others

will be the priority. Leisure travel may resume slowly. From airlines to hotels, social distancing will be the norm. The travel industry will also need to innovate and change practices to support tourism in the future. Additional hygiene and safety protocols will be introduced across the board. Airlines and hotels may need to support flexible cancellation and rebooking policies. Tour packages will need to be redesigned to make sure travellers and local communities stay safe and healthy while still ensuring memorable travel experiences.

Responsible and sustainable tourism becomes even more important in the post COVID-19 era. Travel

experiences will look different in the foreseeable future. Travellers and the tourism industry will need to be thoughtful, careful, and innovative to ensure safe, responsible, and sustainable travel. Responsible tourism is vital in reviving the travel and tourism industry from its current financial crisis. Sustainable tourism will need to become our new normal, 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 well while practicing the social distancing guidelines, being responsible, doing the least harm to ourselves and to others, while still allowing ourselves to experience the best our world has to offer.

As travellers, we will want to consider the effect that our travel would have on places with a highly vulnerable population or constrained healthcare system and make decisions accordingly. The pandemic

has ravaged many communities globally, and we can play a role in giving back to those communities that have allowed us transformative travel experiences for several years in the past. One way to do that is by supporting local businesses like local hotels and restaurants. Above all, we will need to work in partnership with and respect the guidance issued by the communities we travel to.

Similarly, tourism industry professionals will have the responsibility to make sure that health and safety standards, crisis management and preparedness plans, robust communication channels, are all in place to facilitate safe and rewarding travel experiences for customers.

There are a lot of interesting studies, articles, and thought leadership pieces that have been published on this topic. Some of these share information on the impacts of our dramatically changed travel patterns on industry and destinations, some include suggestions of proactive approaches, and some provide market insights. I encourage the travel and tourism community to actively educate and update themselves on current trends and make a commitment to be champions of sustainable tourism. As far as domestic travel is concerned, this includes actively partnering with central and state tourism departments to align on guidelines and promote social awareness norms for potential tourists.

In the past, the travel, tourism and hospitality sector generated 9.2 per cent GDP in India. Now, it may take months or years to recover from the devastating impact of COVID-19, but the travel and tourism industry will play a pivotal role in the recovery of the economy and our local communities across the world. However, for this, the key concerns that need to be looked and addressed are stated below.

1. Until there is a clear cure or vaccine, the public will be always 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, readiness and confidence in the health infrastructure to manage potential medical issues.

2. Unemployment and the financial recession are likely to discourage potential travellers.

3. International tourism will be more difficult to revive since there are several travel restrictions in place for countries with higher infection rates. Several countries including India, have imposed mandatory two-week quarantine for travellers entering the country.

4. Airline and transportation fares are likely to increase if they function at 50 per cent capacity or less, to consider the guidelines of physical distancing.

Now, with international travel restrictions, it is more feasible to promote domestic tourism and offer sustainable tourism within the country while properly following the social guidelines. Domestic tourism, if promoted right, can be done on a substantially lower budget and can aid the revival of the travel, tourism, and its ancillary industries. Sustainable and responsible tourism can slowly but surely overcome the current issues we face. But we will need to do this in partnership with

the government, healthcare sector, and our local communities.

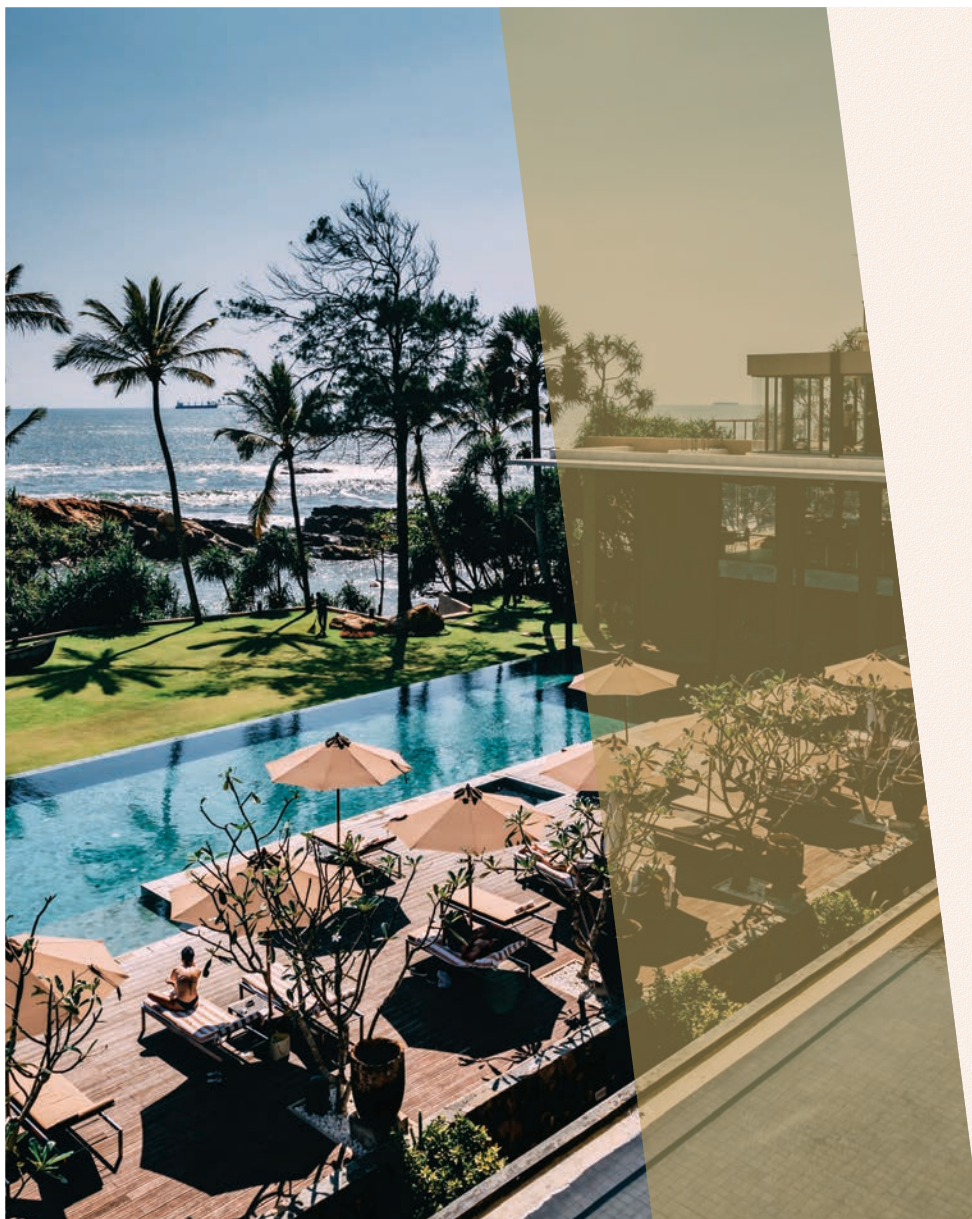
Sustainability and survival should be the ultimate target and in order to reach there, the travel and tourism industry has to do a lot of homework. Up until the usage of masks, gloves and social distancing are not over, passengers will be sacred to travel and this is an unprecedented phenomena throughout the world. In terms of convenience and cost, undisputedly, international travel will become costly due to the additional precautionary hygiene protocols, which will be in place for a very long time, and many travellers may find that unsustainable. Most of the passengers and tourists will prefer to visit places which are less crowded, clean, hygiene and safe.

The IAAI (IATA Agent Association of India) is working on a unique initiative to getting travellers in India comfortable with travelling again once the industry opens up for business. We will be launching a 'Public Awareness Mission' with the tagline – 'Consult Your Travel Advisor, Not Internet'. IAAI has formed a working group to spearhead this task and is currently in the process of soliciting the patronage from international organizations like ASTA, PATA, ECTTA as well as the national and international media.

One of the initiatives that IAAI is offering, in collaboration with Speedwings Aviation Academy, is a COVID-19 guidance course for airline, airport and ground handling operators. These are the new guidelines issued by IATA and ICAO in partnership with the WHO. This is currently being offered free of charge for all airline professionals using IATA's Dangerous Goods Regulations (DGR).

When travel finally gets back on track, IAAI envisions a shift in public opinion about travel and tour agents and particularly the travel advisors, who are still the heartbeat of the industry, as countless passengers who planned their travel online were essentially left to fend for themselves when domestic and international flights were halted. As we regain normalcy, passengers are going to demand the safety, security, personal care and attention, and the responsiveness from the travel advisors will make all the difference. Finally, I presume that the good and golden days will come back to the traditional travel agencies and tour operators.

Biji Eapen is the President of IAAI and the Chairman & CEO of Speedwings Travel & Cargo.



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‘Safety triumphs all’

As much as people want to be sustainable and responsible, they first want to be safe. This is fundamental to human behaviour and true to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. What people want, what they wish for will clash with the basics. In a tete-e-tete with TTJ, Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel & President, EUROMIC talks about the changing paradigms of travel and tourism industry in the ‘New Normal’.

Rachita Sehgal



Rajeev Kohli

Redefinition of sustainable and responsible tourism

“I don’t think that responsible travel and sustainable practices are the same. I do think that the pause in humanity has made many appreciate the environment and peace a lot more and that gives opportunities to responsible travel opportunities. Calmer, slower, and more meaningful trips and destinations would probably gain more interest. Travellers will enjoy going to destinations that have fewer

footprints. This can be a boon for far-flung regions. On the other hand, sustainability will probably struggle a bit as those will conflict with the needs of safety and hygiene in a post virus era. But yes, these areas will be more relevant and those specialising in them will see greater opportunities to showcase their products. I think people will listen a lot better now.”

Sustainable Tourism Practices

“Unfortunately, today in the middle of 2020, sustainability in tourism has in many ways been tossed aside and this will be a

new normal for the time to come. The use of single-use protective equipment has grown exponentially, and this may not go down for some time. Chemical usage for cleaning has gone up and the use of plastic containers has boomed. Hotels, restaurants, and airlines will be using a lot more water and supplies for cleaning linen, kitchenware etc. Water usage will go through the roof. The availability for eco-friendly safety products is currently insignificant and although it will probably come, the short-term negative effects on the environment will be hard. All the chemicals, sanitisers, plastic, disposal gloves, face shields, etc will have to be thrown somewhere. The movement against single-use plastic has taken a severe beating. Sad, but this is the harsh truth of where we are today. Perhaps it will change in the next year or so. But for now, sustainability is damaged and has taken a backseat. The high-end luxury segment of travel will still do well as sustainably has been big in that segment and they will be able to afford to find ways. But the mass of the industry will flounder, and I fear a short-term environmental disaster in the making. People will care for sure. Awareness has gone up, but travellers will not know how to deal with the conflict between safety and sustainability.”

Initiatives to promote responsible and sustainable travel practices

“Responsible travel and sustainable practices have always been a part of our actions. We have been working on policies over the past few years and are now fast tracking them. We are working on new packages that will take travellers to lesser known destinations. Also, we like to promote experiences that benefit local communities. A lot of ideas are in play and our team is working on them.”

Change in nature of conducting business post covid

“No one can be an oracle these days. There are far too many reports on what may happen in the future that are all over the place in their predictions. What we can be sure of in the short term is that travel habits will be guided by new protocols in hygiene and safety across all elements of travel. This does not necessarily mean that things will be bad, just a lot cleaner and a bit weirder. But I expect people will come around and return to their older patterns of travel. That is inevitable. 12 months from now I expect the world to have forgotten a lot of the madness and move on.”



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Let your hopes, not your 'hurts' shape the future

Times are not easy for travel companies and the experience of the most experienced in the trade is now futile. Each term in tourism has a new meaning and definition but at the same time, we ought to see this as one clean turf with a level playing field open for us as an industry. Let's plan seriously for a better tomorrow. Prateek Hira, President & CEO – Tornos, Gastroutes & Indian Frontiers shares more with TTJ...

Rachita Sehgal



Prateek Hira

Tourism always flourishes when minds are carefree and people feel secured to escape from mundane and hectic lives to relaxed environs. COVID-19 seems to be changing our way of seeing the world and people around us, at least till the time we see it as a threat to our wellbeing. This perception would continue till the time we have an effective cure or a preventive vaccine in place. Having said that, we also need to realise that COVID-19 is just another viral infection and can be prevented by just a few simple hygiene and lifestyle changes and that once we have learnt to practice that, we are somewhat sorted, or at least guarded against it to minimise the risk of infection. Travellers will now be concerned about hygiene protocols and service standards will include this as a priority but at the same time it is imperative that we do not make all this look 'abnormal'. There is a thin line between 'Abnormal' and so called 'New Normal'. 'New normal' is practical

and logical safeguards while 'Abnormal' is impractical protocols, exhibited protectionism, using 'hygiene standards' as marketing tools et al., which if takes over, will be very unfortunate and a deterrent in rebuilding the lost confidence of an average traveller.

"I foresee a temporary change in the demography of travellers, choice of destinations, kinds of accommodation and mode of transport. But then I believe that well-planned travel programmes will come back and people would like to travel in a more structured form, through tour operators and stay at standard hotels that reassure quality, will be a priority for travellers. In the leisure segment, domestic

short distance travel will be first to pick up, followed by domestic long distance and then inbound leisure will limp back to normalcy to gain the lost grounds," adds Prateek.

Words like 'Responsible' and 'Sustainable' till now referred to the responsibility towards the host culture and environment but now, it will also refer to the guests' wellbeing and safety, in a way responsibility of the host towards the guest. This is good in a way as under responsible travel and sustainable practices both will have inter-dependence and equal responsibility towards each other. Prateek further shares, "Responsible will now include responsibility of both the host and the guest to protect each other from any infection and ailment, while 'Sustainability' would now be not only about the destination but also about the source market as the safe and hygienic experience of travellers would be paramount for the sustenance of inflow and tourism in a destination as a whole."

Initiatives to promote responsible and sustainable practices

"We as a 26 year old business had seen many downtrends, though none as devastating as COVID-19 situation. Being an old company and financially disciplined, we could survive but the most worrying part is about the younger ones and the start-ups who are facing the worst already before seeing any good. As a company, we are seeing this period of lull as our (re)start-up days, where we are now seeing the market and avenues afresh. Our analysis points at the IBT recovery coming-in by October 2021 that gives us about 18 months of not much on the operations front. There are two ways to look at this, one that we lost all grounds and that eighteen months is too long a period for a running business to pause suddenly but we felt this would be a pessimistic approach and only letting the efforts of 26 years and the built-up market go waste; second thought was to think like a new business, like a start-up of sorts and then to restructure, reengineer and to innovate, to position ourselves more strongly and be ready when business starts flowing in."

Sustainable and responsible travel will now have new expanded meaning and to implement these, we have to be prepared well. COVID-19 has also very effectively induced empathy and care for all by all, and assumingly requirements of a traveller from travel will change even though for a short term. It is imperative that we prepare ourselves and be ready during this (re-) gestation period of our business.

People might demand, uncluttered destinations, peaceful and rejuvenating environs. Slow travel would be the kind of travel that will be most in demand as people would feel more comfortable travelling that way. Seeing all this, products would have to be redesigned, itineraries restructured, choice of accommodation will have to be recalibrated and tuned to suit the demand of COVID era traveller.

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ARRIVAL

- Hotel cars are thoroughly sanitized before guest use, the driver will always be wearing gloves & face masks
- We shall greet guests with folded hands (Namaste) while maintaining a safe distance, with no physical contact.
- Hand sanitizers/disinfectant wipes and disposable masks will be available at the entrance of the lobby.
- All guests will undergo temperature checks in before entering the hotel.
- Guests running a temperature of more than 99°F will be met by a hotel doctor to provide medical assistance and advise further course of action.
- As a safety precaution rooms are allocated to new guests only after 72 hours of previous guest check out.
- Guest luggage passes through the disinfection routine.
- Floor markers at the lobby to maintain social distancing during check in Room key is sanitized before handing over to the guests.



HOUSEKEEPING

- Room is cleaned every day, unless guests request otherwise with no turndown service.
- Rooms are sanitized to immense attention to detail, every room is equipped with hand sanitizer and face masks.
- In room electrical sockets, appliances, door handles & fixtures are thoroughly disinfected unused room linen and bath linen will also be sent to the laundry on departure.
- Heavy curtains, sheer curtains, blinds, rugs, upholstered furniture and head board clad with fabric will be deep cleaned after every departure.



CONTACT LESS PAYMENT

- Guests who wish to pay via online payment gateway would have the option of QR barcode scan wherein they settle their bills and check out hassle free.

RESTAURANTS & BARS

All our restaurants follow social distancing norms, kept minimum 6 feet from other tables & chairs are sanitized after every guest use.

Entrance doors will be left open during meal periods. If the door needs to be kept shut, assistance will be offered so guests do not have to touch handles.

Bartenders will wear and frequently change disposable gloves when working at bar counters

Equipment such as coffee machines, ice crusher machines, ice machine doors, induction surfaces, cutlery trolleys, cookie containers, tea selection boxes, etc. will be sanitized after every use or on a frequent basis.



IN ROOM DINNING

- In-room dining is strictly followed with contact less delivery of food.
- In-room dining trolleys and warmers will be cleaned and disinfected after every use.
- Service staff will wear disposable gloves, face masks, face shields and carry hand sanitizers.
- Guests will be greeted with folded hands maintaining a safe distance.
- Canned beverages will be opened by the server only after seeking guest's permission.



INTERNAL GUEST

- All hotel staff are monitored with temperature checks on daily basis at the entry/exit point.
- All hotel staff are equipped with face masks and hand gloves
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‘Responsible tourism will replace mass tourism’

Adventure travel by its inbuilt character and DNA has responsible and sustainable practices embedded. When you promote the natural heritage of your country, it touches the lives of the people living in those far flung areas and the remotest corners. We have our ‘Eco Pledge’ and policies for responsible tourism in place. In a conversation with TTJ Tejbir Singh Anand, Adventure Travel Strategic Advisor, Founding Member & Board of Director at FAITH, Vice President Adventure Tour Operators Association of India, Founder & Managing Director - Holiday Moods Adventures shares an insight on the future and importance of responsible and sustainable practices in tourism

Rachita Sehgal



Tejbir Singh Anand

empowering regional economies involving communities and benefiting them will become popular and sought after. Companies who talk about and practice new SOP's aligned with social distancing and safety rules will be preferred. Mass tourism will be replaced by responsible tourism. It is well said that every dark cloud has a silver lining and we should never waste a good crisis.

In the COVID era, do words like, Responsible Travel and Sustainable Practices have a new meaning for you?

My company, Holiday Moods Adventures is almost 23 years old and has been by default practicing Responsible and Sustainable tourism practices ever since. Not only

these words have a meaning now but we were made to understand the importance of these words right from the word ‘GO’. We have our ‘Eco Pledge’ and policies for responsible tourism in place ever since. All our tours follow a strict eco-code that involves everyone, starting from the office, to our clients, the adventure staff on field, and the local community. We conduct responsible and sustainable tourism with minimal impact on the physical, cultural and social environment of the area. As a company, our ideas for current and future have been well defined and crystal clear as below:

Mission - Promoting sustainable tourism with exceptional ‘Handcrafted Experiences, Stories and Adventures Across The Globe’

Vision - To be India's premier B2B global adventure travel company

Values - Protecting the environment, respecting local cultures, benefiting local communities, conserving resources and minimising waste

Principle - Purpose before profits

Impact - Promote lesser trodden regions, facilitate life-changing experiences for both hosts and traveler

I wish that all stakeholders in Indian tourism imbibe similar ethos and understand that anything which is not sustainable, will not live for very long and initiatives that lack responsibility will not grow at all.

What role will tourism play in the recovery of the economy? Further do you think responsible and sustainable tourism strategies can help to revive the damage caused by lockdowns and travel bans?

I strongly believe that Adventure Tourism is the key to revive India's economy and make India a 12-month sustainable and responsible tourism destination. Tourism in India is a very important sector contributing to 9.2 per cent of India's GDP, it is a no brainer that tourism is the segment which can help revive the economy like a Nike swoosh or a ‘V’ shape growth chart. If we are talking about the recovery of the farthest-flung regions of this country, then this is the only segment of the industry which will act as a stepping ladder for reviving the economy. India is ranked 34th on the world travel and tourism index driven by rich natural and cultural resources. The World Economic Forum ranked India as the 5th best destination on the Natural Heritage Index in the world. One thing is for sure – ‘That the future is not in sedentary travel’. Adventure promotes socio-economic benefits in the remotest parts of the country helping poverty alleviation. At present, only 15 states and 3 union territories have declared tourism as an industry and I

According to you, will the very nature of tourism change in the post-COVID-19 world?

It will definitely be a different world post Covid. Safety will be the prime focus now. Clients will now look for certified and licensed travel agencies. Responsible tourism has come as a blessing in disguise. Travellers will certainly show interest in responsible, conscious and transformative ways of travel. All tourism stakeholders need to understand that to meet such a demand, they need to start preparing as of yesterday with suitable guidelines and protocols. The traveller and the stakeholders both need to embrace and promote transformational, conscious, and responsible tourism. Companies that talk about and can show that they are practicing offsetting of carbon footprint, waste minimisation, increasing their conservation and efficiency efforts, promoting local recruitment hence

wish that tourism is given an industry status at the centre touching lives in the farthest-flung regions of the country. To give you an idea, there have been studies conducted in the past by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India which have resulted in some pretty interesting findings related to adventure travel. Based on the data collected during the study, the adventure tourism and activity travel market is estimated to grow at a CAGR of 17.4 per cent from 2017 to 2023 in India. Sustainable and Responsible tourism strategies are not only the need of the hour but actually the way forward.

People are now seeing the importance of sustainable practices better than ever. Do you think it will bring a sense of responsibility in the minds of travellers across India after the pandemic?

Definitely! Already people are talking about 'less is more'. I see people talking about responsibilities towards nature which were less heard of. Revived nature is an attraction now- Clean potable water of River Ganga in Haridwar, bright blue sky and stars at night, view of Dhauladhar Himalayas from Jalandhar, Uttarakhand Himalayas from Saharanpur and Nepal Himalayas from Bihar, rhinos and elephants walking freely in the buffer zone roads in North East; all these are great inspirations for a traveller and mankind. I was talking to one of our corporate clients and the CFO mentioned that all business travel is being avoided helping save hotel and flight expenses. High-end cars are not needed anymore and Innova and Dzire are good enough. These are the radical and sustainable changes that are happening everywhere. Team bonding and trips are being preferred. No more leisure trips for school students but only camps and treks to remote areas

Initiatives to promote Responsible and Sustainable travel practices

"The first and foremost is that Holiday Moods Adventures has adopted industry safety guidelines and is ready for its clients, patrons, and even staff. We are geared up to educate our clients about guidelines pertaining to air travel, accommodation, and all activity related measures. There is a clear communication set for all how to live, travel and sustain responsibly. Tourism was the first to be hit and will be the last to recover. Not the largest, fittest, or leanest - but most responsible and adaptable companies will sustain. There will be demand for destinations that are least affected like the Himalayan States, North East India, Western Ghats, and all National Parks. I think people will prefer self-drive road trips. From July onwards - the lesser known regions of Spiti, Kinnaur, Ladakh and Kashmir can start hopefully. From mid-September onwards, Kumaon and Garhwal, Sikkim and North East can be taken on."

We will encourage them by:

- Attracting travellers by offering them unique native experiences that could create engaging stories for their social media content.
- Showcasing the natural heritage around you and promote the joy of new know-how.
- Make our traveller's stay unique with immersive experiences available around you.
- Approach the travellers with our beliefs, values and principles so we get like-minded customers. Today's traveller is well-read and knowledgeable and makes well-informed choices.
- Go Green - we will be launching initiatives to protect the environment.
- Respecting local cultures - we will nurture arts, culture, and local talents around.
- Benefit the local communities by making enterprising offers to our customers that boost their local economy.

Responsible and sustainable practices are need of the hour

Ethical tourism practices have always been an essential and crucial part of the industry, but with this latest pandemic, the dynamics seem to have shifted. Now, responsible and sustainable tourism is not just about revaluing your carbon footprints but ensuring the safety and wellbeing of your travellers whilst maintaining balance. In a conversation with TTJ, Zelum Chaubal, Director, Kesari Tours, discusses the redefined tourism patterns in the new normal.

Rachita Sehgal



Zelum Chaubal

2020 has come as a surprising shock to all of us. COVID-19 has not only brought the humanity to stand still, it has engraved newer definitions of conducting business in the future. Acknowledging this new change in the travel industry, Zelum, states, "I am very positive that the tourism will bounce back but, it is difficult to analyse the recovery time. Post COVID we will witness greater changes in the way we have been conducting business; visa restrictions and regulations will change and we will be asked for an additional health certificate. Essential travel will be a top priority for now, as people are still sceptical of safety and sanitisation norms. A major change that we will see in the future travel is the mandatory usage of masks and gloves in aircraft or any travel or tourism vertical."

Tourism has always been a revenue

catalyst for the economy, even at this time when the whole world is struggling to take a hold of the pandemic situation; everyone is talking about how travel and tourism can help boost the economy. To an extent that a lot of countries have already started promoting post-COVID travel packages, "Tourism has always been a major source of income for any economy, even though we as an industry failed to get recognised by the government but it is with the efforts and tireless labour of the industry workers that we are confident that we will revive and bounce back better and greater than ever. I strongly believe that the beginning of our revival will be with responsible tourism and eventually as days pass by and recovery happens sustainability will not be an issue if we learn to live with it," concludes Zelum.

While we humans have always prepared for worst of disasters, but what hit us in

Right time to resolve issues in the trade

As a leading travel association of India, TAAI has been instrumental in raising and voicing many important issues of our members, and ensuring the same has been brought to the notice and attention of the respective authorities. Civil aviation has also been our primary focus as many of our members are constantly unhappy by the way they are being treated in business by international as well as domestic airlines. Recently, the TAAI Managing Committee submitted a proposal to Shri Pradeep Singh Kharola, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, seeking the Centre's intervention to revive the sector. The proposal covered several important issues concerning the airlines.

Jyoti Mayal, President of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)



Jyoti Mayal

with several problems. COVID-19 globally, has deeply affected all trades and industries, travel and tourism being the worst hit.

In India, the travel and tourism industry employs over 12 per cent of the total workforce, contributing a huge amount to the Government by way of Income Taxes, and GST. Despite the contribution, it is heartbreaking to see that the industry was neglected in the economic stimulus package.

However, the time has come when we need

to re-invent and work towards the ongoing concerns that have delayed the growth of economy in our trade due to foreign intervention and the Government not being forceful in implementing the law of the land. As directed by the Hon. Prime Minister, we must be vocal about local. The industry

needs to ensure that we enforce our local laws strongly and are not forced to follow global counterparts which do not favour our citizens and the trade at large. In civil aviation, we observed several similar concerns. The following mentioned points were highlighted in the letter to the Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, which shall enable the travel agent members to revive well and assist the government in formulating and enforcing the law of the land to all who are desirous of flying in the Indian Skies.

Financial Security from all airlines against all defaults

Financial Security must be placed with Govt of India and/or with IATA. There is no security presently that the airlines have against their defaults and/or bankruptcy or even delayed payments. Many airlines like Kingfisher, Jet Airways, US Airways, Continental, Wow Air and many more that operated in the Indian skies have gone bust over the years and monies of customers/passengers and agents have been just written off which is in billions. The most hit in this scenario has always have been the Travel Agents. This move shall protect the Indian Travel Trade as well as the passenger/customer. With the same the following has to be implemented:

- Indian Carriers/Low Cost Carriers have to place a security bond with the Government at the time of applying for licence based on per seat/per aircraft.
- Foreign carriers to place a part cash deposit with Govt of India and part financial security with IATA based on route/destination/city tier category etc

As a travel association, TAAI is well known for the leadership it offers to the travel industry in different tourism verticals and even before the COVID-19, the travel tourism industry in India, was plagued

based on per seat/per aircraft.

c. The securities are also to cover interests in event of delayed payments as per agreements, defaults and penalty encashment of securities, if laws of the land or compliances not adhered to.

A Joint Working Group (JWG) to be formed by the Government of India between, MoCA/IATA/Airlines & TAAI

The JWG to be headed by the Secretary, MoCA. This group should work like the GST Council along with stakeholders which shall ensure a win-win situation for all in the interest of the passenger and the travel trade. The group shall also ensure that all airlines flying in/ from and to India follow the Laws setup by Govt of India. All resolutions passed by IATA must be in conjunction with the laws of India and must be approved by JWG before it is implemented in India. Detailed interactions and suggestions from this action group shall assist in formulating many policies ensuring the relevance of the trade and industry and smooth functioning.

Insurance charge to be levied in the ticket cost

Presently, Travel Agents provide financial securities and/or advance payments to airlines to issue tickets. These financial securities are currently submitted by giving co-laterals to the value of 100-110 per cent + stamp duty + bank charges etc.

TAAI has proposed, an insurance charge, per ticket be levied into the ticket as a part of the airfare. The JWG can formulate the norms and each airline can freely select their Indian Insurance Company to underwrite the risk. This shall enable the agents to free their co-laterals placed in providing financial securities and use the money as their working capital. It will also enable the airlines in a similar manner, creating a win-win situation for both, the airline as well as the agent.

IATA Billing Cycle

IATA member Airlines provide a credit of seven days to make payments based on Financial Securities provided by the agents. The same must be extended to at-least 15 days. This shall ensure appropriate turnaround time for agents to not go out of pocket and make payments to the airlines on behalf of the customers/ travellers prior to receiving the same from them.

Travel Agents Credit Cards (TACC)

TAAI through UFTAA, its representative, had made a representation to IATA to ensure all the airlines accept credit cards from Travel Agents as a mode of payment. This was done so that airlines receive the payment within 24 hours, thereby increase/enhance their cash flow and working capital and that the agents get an extended credit period. The same was approved by IATA.

Since, most of the airlines are not permitting use of TACC on GDS systems but are permitting use of Customer/ Passenger cards only; TAAI has requested to direct the airlines to start accepting TACC, which shall help Indian Agents work towards the goals set by the Hon. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi of Digital India. This shall be a win-win for the airlines as well as the Travel Agents.

Commissions to Travel Agents

The Airlines and Travel Agents follow the Principal/Agent relationship as per the IATA Passenger Sales Agreement signed by Agents with IATA. Over the years the commissions have dropped from 9 per cent to 5 per cent to Zero as of today. None of the airlines are paying commission to the Travel Agents other than Air India, the national carrier, whom TAAI members have always supported. Times are changing and post the COVID-19 era the trade needs to revise and rework their relationships and remunerations once again to at least 5 per cent of the total airfare, including all ancillary services of the airline that are booked by the agent.

This shall ensure more transparency, an equitable and profitable business amongst the trade. TAAI has urged the Secretary to take this up immediately before the re-commencement of all flights post the lockdown, be it domestic or international and direct all airlines to provide for a minimum 5 per cent commission to the Travel Agents and also maintain parity in all modes of their distribution channels.

GST – Reseller Model

Earlier, TAAI has appealed through the Ministry to the GST Council to permit the Travel Agents to take the input credit of GST charged by the airlines (K3). This shall enable the customers/passengers to get the GST input through us Travel Agents, rather than receive the same from the airlines. All payments of the airfare for the tickets purchased by the traveller are made to trade and in turn, they pay the same to the airlines.

However, the customer/passenger feels it more comfortable to receive the GST credit through the agent.

There is no uniformity to provide GST credits by the airlines. Some of the airlines are providing the GST credits immediately, as the ticket is issued, whereas some are providing after a week, some after a month and some are giving the same on flown basis, which can be after 360 days also. Hence, this is not a fair practice and each airline is following its own principles.

Hence, TAAI has once again requested the Secretary to support them and thereby appeal to the GST Council to permit the Travel Agents to follow the Reseller model only for the purpose of GST. All other terms of carriage shall remain the same with the airline/s.

The other major appeals made to the Ministry which are also pending direction being:

1. Refunds from Airlines:

Float account refunds, which are travel agent advances given to low cost airlines against all non-ticketing booking should be transferred back into their bank accounts, immediately.

Full refunds to be paid by airlines in cash for all tickets issued for up to next six months from March'20. The refunds are to be processed immediately or maximum within 3 weeks time.

Refunds on groups/series bookings/ advances which have been paid non-ticketed/ not undertaken/not flown and for ticketed groups.

2. Abolishing the collection of RAF charges by airlines.

3. Industry Status to be given: This is the time when the Civil Aviation Ministry has to ensure, recommend and enforce that the travel trade in India must be recognised as an Industry. Over 12 per cent of the workforce in India is employed directly into travel and tourism. A detailed paper is already submitted by TAAI to the office.

So, during these times of crisis, where the travel trade received no support from the Government of India in terms of salaries, waivers in taxes and interest charges. TAAI has once again appealed to the Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, to kindly consider all the members' appeals, which are based on securing the financial interest of citizens of India, protecting the laws of the land and thereby supporting the Indian Travel Trade.

Leaning towards responsibility, learning through the crisis

Crisis brings myriad challenges and in these challenges lies a greater change; change for a better and safer tomorrow, change that will compel us to begin from the beginning and change for a sustainable world ahead. All it demands is rethinking and reshaping from scratch. Such is the optimistic vibe radiated by OTOAI, the youngest travel association in India which has been a catalyst for boosting travel from India ever since its inception. TTJ speaks to Riaz Munshi, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) to find out what it draws from the times of crisis and what lies in the pipeline.

Shivangi Gupta



Riaz Munshi

The travel trade associations have been valuable possessions of the travel trade business in India. However, the prevailing crisis is testing the travel industry limitlessly; but even when the pandemic has hit the industry the hardest, OTOAI decides to look at the brighter side without deviating from its fervid vision of conducting successful outbound travel journeys from India. The association is ardent about not giving up and rather considering the lessons as its luxuries.

As associations pave their own route of recovery and revival, a lot of other elements such as determinants for success, premises about consumers and points of differentiation is likely to

change thus prompting the remodelling of the systems from ground zero. As we ponder about changes 2020 brings amidst the crisis, Riaz Munshi frames it precisely, "The dynamics of conducting business are going to change today. The market will shift from price-driven to knowledge-driven. We need to be flexible in adopting the new norms enhancing our product knowledge and focus more on developing experiences rather than selling run of the mill itineraries. We have to let go of the fear of losing customers on the basis of price and instead form trusted relationships. Consumers will gravitate towards advisors who can steer them in the

right direction and give them the confidence that be it any unforeseen event, they will be well taken care of." With responsibility becoming the new norm, OTOAI also looks forward to responsible ways of serving customers and also respecting the safety and social distancing regulations. "I have no doubt that responsible travel and sustainable practices will now be a priority as the travel industry is highly dependent on the health of the environment and interaction with the local communities and cultures. Once travel resumes, it is natural for the industry and travellers to embrace slow and sustainable travel." shares Munshi.

Tourism has always played a crucial role in the economic growth of a country generating revenue and employment and most importantly spreading happiness.

With regard to the revival of the economy and future travel prospects, Munshi believes that recovery will happen at its own pace. "The pandemic has had people locked up in their homes for too long and travel is a great stress buster to revive and rejuvenate - it is actually a way of life and will not stop. However, travellers will now be a lot more cautious. We anticipate a greater inclination towards wellness retreats, isolated island getaways and scenic countrysides rather than crowded places." shares Munshi. OTOAI has been working closely with all the stakeholders including tourism boards, hotels, resorts, and consulates in its attempt to maneuver towards the right paths. It believes that the travel industry at large is now actively supporting goals to ensure sustainable travel, from essential certifications to responsible practices. OTOAI has been regularly disseminating up-to-date information on such developments to its members. It has also been conducting webinars and knowledge sessions for them to adopt the best practices so as to pass on the most accurate information to their respective clients.

With regard to the Indian Government granting permissions for domestic flights to resume, Munshi shares, "According to me, it is a good sign. There is nothing wrong in starting the flights with all the required precautions. Gradually, international travel should be resumed as well in phases certainly with all the health and safety standards in place. The travel industry is stepping into a new era and innovation is the key to meet the standard needs of quality travel. We have to collectively ensure that through all the touch-points of a traveller's journey, highest levels of safety and sanitisation is adhered."

TTC committed to sustainability and make travel matter

For everyone at The Travel Corporation (TTC), the COVID-19 crisis comes at a poignant time, in the midst of commemorating the 100th anniversary of their founding in 1920. Needless to say, this is not how they envisioned celebrating. Being in the travel business for a full century, however, has taught them many lessons, chief among these being to always take the long term view. Brett Tollman, Global Chief Executive, The Travel Corporation shares with TTJ that how in the process of restoring our world, he believes that responsible and conscientious travel will play an essential role in the future.

Prashant Nayak



Brett Tollman

Brett says, "COVID-19 has united the world globally with a strong sense that we're all in this together, and we'll come out of this hopefully better and stronger. We're anticipating a greater awareness of people becoming more engaged citizens and conscious travellers. I think that people will be aligned and more inspired to protect the planet and its inhabitants. We'll better appreciate the privilege of travelling and desire more meaningful travel experiences, to be shared with our friends and family. We're social creatures at heart, so we'll seek personal connections more than ever and want to interact with local cultures and people."

We are seeing how the planet has reacted to the minimised pollution, and hopefully travellers will realise how key their role is in protecting it. Everyone needs to take action to be less wasteful and make more mindful choices while travelling, and choose companies that adhere to sustainability principles. Tourism, which defines sustainability, will be the real heart which will transform the industry.

"During this time, while our travel plans have been curtailed, I am sure there will be more reflections on why we choose to travel. The global pandemic has offered everyone an opportunity to reflect on our relationship to this planet we all call home. For many of us, including travellers across India, I believe that we will have a deeper appreciation of nature and the people we connect with through our travels, and will seek to do more to protect the places we visit, and also support the local communities who call the places we visit

home," tells Brett.

TTC is well aligned with Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection, and Ellen Bettridge (Uniworld CEO) with her passionate team is well committed to making a positive impact through environmental, social and economic initiatives. As a joint initiative between The Travel Corporation and Uniworld, they have partnered with the TreadRight Foundation where they contribute to a fund to help ensure the environment and communities they visit remain vibrant and preserved for generations to come.

Bret shares, "On our ships, we have removed single-use plastic across our operations. We have partnered with 'One Tree Planted' to commit to plant a tree for every guest who books as we have committed to going completely digital with our pre-cruise documents. For offshore cruise experiences, we bring our guests to visit organic wineries small, family-run enterprises, and environmentally conscious businesses. By introducing our guests to these local and sustainable ventures, we are able to provide truly unique experiences to travellers while bringing economic opportunity in the destinations we visit."

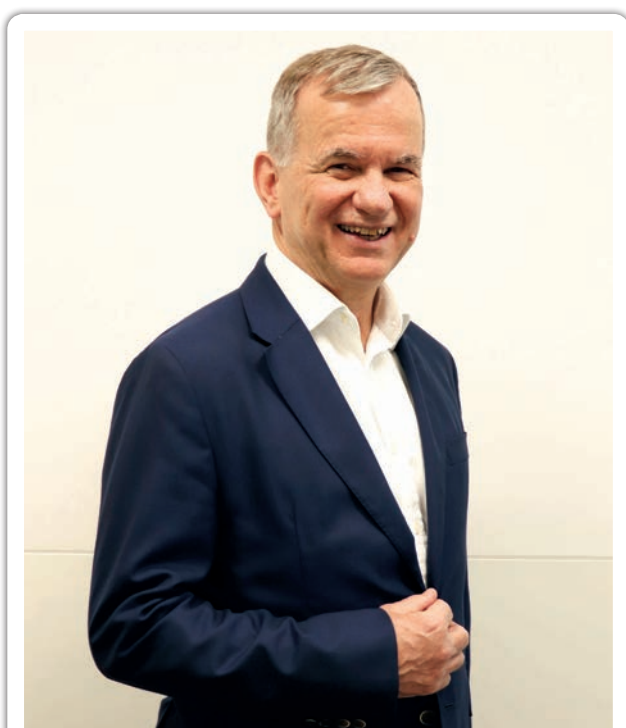
As part of their continuing sustainability journey, the organisation feel it is increasingly important to provide their guests and their team with the necessary tools and information to allow them to make responsible travel choices whenever possible. With this in mind, they have identified four leading carbon offset programs that their guests can consider to carbon offset their travel experience. Conservation International Carbon Fund, myclimate, The Nature Conservancy, and Rainforest Concern – Forest Credits, are the four programmes which provide travellers with several ways to offset their travel experiences.

During these trying times, Brett feels we should all recognise that we cannot take travel for granted. Responsibly, we all need to do it better in the future, so as to make travel matter more than ever. The responsibility lies with both the travel and tourism industry and also the travelling public. There is a strong sense in ensuring, healthy relationships that benefit local suppliers, and that there is sustainability across all levels of business. For tourism to truly benefit a community, the members of that community must be involved in the decisions that affect them – this includes being at the table when issues of travel and tourism are planned and are being addressed. Further, companies must embrace the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, take necessary steps to reduce their carbon footprint, and stop relying on single-use plastics.

Beginning of a 'New Normal'

'Responsible Tourism' now is not only about a reduced carbon footprint or using sustainable products; today, it is about safe tourism, encompassing preventive measures that every business is taking to protect its customers and employees from COVID-19. Moreover, safety has now become a collective responsibility, wherein everyone is taking precautionary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. William Boulter, Chief Commercial Officer, IndiGo shares more on the safety and sanitisation procedures adopted by IndiGo.

Prashant Nayak



William Boulter

In the times to come, safety and hygiene will be the top-notch priority when people plan to travel, choosing domestic and international destinations with lesser incidences of COVID-19. People will also prefer to travel in smaller groups to reduce the risk of infection, altering the trends and products being offered by travel operators.

"After the resumption of flights post the lockdown, our passengers on the flights are not only welcoming of our employees using PPE, but they themselves are using all the protective gear provided without any hesitation. We feel that as responsible citizens of the country, we are all required to do our bit to maintain safety for ourselves along with the people around us. It is just the beginning of a new normal for all of us," shares William.

At IndiGo, they are taking every step possible to make sure that their travel

practices remain safe and secure. Some of the key safety measures include - ensuring social distancing at all points - airport entry, baggage drop counters, security checks, boarding gates, coaches, ramp and baggage claim. All common surfaces such as the baggage drop counters, boarding gates, coaches, ramps, wheelchairs, crew vehicles and of course, the aircraft itself, are being thoroughly disinfected using approved cleaning agents. The tray tables, armrests, overhead nozzles, lavatories and galleys are given special attention, given the fact these are high touch points.

"We are disinfecting the aircraft before every flight.

In addition, we are also following a periodic fumigation of the aircraft. Before entering the airport or before boarding the aircraft, the body temperature of every passenger is being checked using non-contact thermal screening devices. We are handing over a safety kit to all passengers at the boarding gate to make sure they are covered. Our ground staff and crew members (cockpit and cabin) are wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) appropriate for their roles. We have stopped our in-flight meal services to minimise contact with the crew, though, we will be serving water on demand," informs William.

Apart from the above mandatory measures, IndiGo is also encouraging customers to follow a few additional steps to ensure their own safety and the safety of others including - advance web check-in on website or app, fill in an online health declaration before being

issued the online boarding pass, print the boarding pass and baggage tag, affix the baggage tag firmly on the luggage, carry only a small handbag/ laptop bag that fits under the seat in front, pre-book add-on services like excess baggage and wheelchair assistance, reach the airport two hours before the flight, wear mask and gloves and keep a sanitizer handy, scan their boarding pass at the boarding gate and practice social distancing at all times. Besides these, they are encouraging customers to use airport restrooms and have food/water at the airports as much as possible to minimize movement inside the aircraft. Most importantly, download the Aarogya Setu App to be able to fly hassle-free.

Adding on, William shares, "Apart from this, it has been analysed that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 from one passenger to another passenger on board is very low, making flying the safest way to travel. The possible reasons for this would be that the customers sit facing forward and not towards each other, seatbacks provide a barrier, the use of HEPA filters and the direction of the airflow on board (from ceiling to floor), and the limited movement onboard aircraft once seated add to the onboard protection. We have been providing face shields as part of our safety kit to every passenger to ensure safe and hassle-free flying experience on a lean clean flying machine."

For recovery of the aviation industry, more than anything, will depend upon the consumer confidence in airlines with regards to safety. IndiGo is taking measures beyond the guidelines as well to ensure a safe flying experience. The airline is confident that they will be able to restore the trust of their customers in air travel, as it is the safest mode for travel in the current scenario given the protections and precautions implemented.

Sustainable and responsible practices, a priority at Roseate Hotels and Resorts

Roseate Hotels & Resorts have always been responsible towards the environment. The brand with their wellness tourism focuses on the aspect of nature and protection of the ecosystem and surroundings. Ankur Bhatia, Executive Director, Bird Group shares more with TTJ.

Rachita Sehgal



Ankur Bhatia

Will the nature of conducting business change during/post-COVID-19?

Yes! Domestic travel will take centre stage while international travel may take longer. Social distancing, hygiene standards, contactless mode of operation will be a priority whether in hotels or home stays. I also believe drive in hotels and destinations within closer vicinity will pick up more compared to long haul destinations.

Q: What kind of responsible practices have you adopted at your properties?

Roseate Hotels & Resorts has always given priority to sustainability and responsible tourism. Roseate House, New Delhi is accredited with LEED Gold rating- The

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED - INDIA), while The Roseate New Delhi had recently been awarded with the GreenOtels 2019 Award in Silver Category. Further, our hotels and resorts are completely non-smoking, 100 percent recycling of wastewater, no plastic straw usage, sustainable waste disposal, zero kitchens waste, and recycling.

Q: What role will tourism play in the recovery of the economy?

Tourism, hospitality, and other associated industries contribute to about 10 per cent of the total GDP. I am sure, responsible and sustainable tourism strategies if adapted in an effective and efficient way will play a major role in revitalising the industry.

Star Air assures maximum safety and distancing measures on its Embraer aircrafts



Sanjay Ghodawat

The aviation industry heaved a sigh of relief, when the Civil Aviation Ministry gave a green signal for starting domestic flight operations in a calibrated manner. The latest entrant to this club is Star Air, a scheduled commercial airline, which also commenced its daily flight operations from May 25, 2020.

Team TTJ

said Sanjay Ghodawat, Chairman - Star Air.

Star Air is a prominent airline services company, which has made a significant presence in the airline space with its impressive and qualitative services. The airline operates under the RCS-UDAN scheme and provides services in far deeper pockets of the country. Many see it as the most promising airline brands in making. It is known for providing world-class flight services to various metros as well as tier II and tier III Indian cities at a very affordable cost. Star Air operates in Ten Indian Cities including Mumbai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Tirupati, Hubballi, Belagavi, Delhi (Hindon), Kalaburagi, Indore, and Kishangarh (Ajmer).

"Star Air has already started bookings for its various travel routes and is getting a phenomenal response from the customers across India. It has decided to implement numerous precautionary measures to ensure passengers' safety as per the directives of the Union Government. Daily sanitisation of

aircraft with effective disinfectants, enabling employees to wear PPEs while serving passengers, providing a web check-in facility to reduce physical contact, and many other such measures have been implemented by Star Air to maximise its passengers' safety," assured Ghodawat.

Experts say that travelling in Star Air in these challenging times would be far more comfortable and safer than any other airline. Star Air uses 50-seater Embraer aircraft with an alpha seating arrangement facility. This seating is unique because it has dual features of aisle and window seat.

Travelling in this arrangement makes any passenger less exposed to other fellow passengers, due to fewer people density and wider distance amongst passengers inside the aircraft. Its extra legroom space of total 31 inches between the seats is far greater than what most of the established airline giants offer and thus ensure more comfort while maintaining maximum distancing.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union Government had restricted all modes of travel including air travel since March 25, 2020. However, the impact of the nationwide lockdown and the growing demand from passengers for safe travel encouraged the Government to start domestic flight operations.

"It is a delight that DGCA gave its nod to start operations in the domestic skies. Millions of people are stuck in different parts of our country due to lockdown. Now, these people can easily reach their homes safely. We are ready to serve our passengers with utmost safety as per guidelines issued by DGCA,"

Welcome back to luxury

Unlock 1.0, hotel industry heaves a sigh of relief.

Rachita Sehgal



As we sailed into 2020, the hospitality industry was a joyous face, hoteliers shared their delight discussing the profitable numbers, talking about the growth of the industry and how the year ahead looked promising; little did we know two months into the New Year and we will come face-to-face with a never seen before crisis. The humanity

was brought to a standstill, the colossal hotel buildings which once wore a face of luxury and delight looked deserted, the industry which worked round the clock was languishing in the heat of COVID-19. But the enthusiasm and the industry fervour to survive and thrive was impeccable, and not only did the hotels stood strong supporting government's Vande Bharat Mission, their undying spirit to serve the best was exemplary in every

way. Glued to their computer screens the hotel industry worked tirelessly to lay down new SOP's and strategies' which ensured the utmost safety of their employees and guests.

As we prepare ourselves to again delve in the luxury and magnificence of hotels, we spoke with few industry leaders on their enthusiasm and zeal to welcome back their guests into this new world of new normal...



Nakul Anand

Nakul Anand Executive Director- ITC and Chairman-FAITH

FAITH and its 10 founder member associations would like to thank Government of India for realallowing commencement of business operations of hotels, restaurants and other hospitality services during Unlock 1. We are thankful to Ministry of Tourism, Niti Ayog & EG - 6 for flagging our concerns and we look forward to closely working with Ministry of Tourism and with State governments for harmonizing opening guidelines and for generating domestic tourism demand during Unlock 1 and Unlock 2.



Ritesh Agarwal

Ritesh Agarwal Founder & Group CEO - OYO Hotels & Homes

We welcome the government's decision to reopen hotels. We are excited and prepared to host guests with the new sanitised stay experience. At OYO, our topmost priorities are maintaining health, hygiene and well-being of our guests and staff. Right from our app to hotel teams, we are working to ensure proper sanitisation of hotels as well as maintaining social distancing with the guests. We are displaying a 'Sanitised Stays' tag for properties that clear background audit checks for sanitisation, hygiene, and protective equipment. We along with our asset partners, look forward to delivering a safe, secure and comfortable experience for our guests.

Chander Baljee CMD, Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels

We're thrilled to know that hotels will be opening soon. We applaud this initiative of the government as hospitality contributes heavily to our economy and provides major employment opportunities. This decision also comes at a good time as things may take two to three months to normalise. By this time, economic activity will pick up and demand will return. We'll also be in the festive season by then, which is a great opportunity. We look forward to a good Q3 and Q4.



Chander Baljee



Saharsh Vadhera

Saharsh Vadhera DOSM, Shangri-La Group/Sales Team

We welcome the government's decision of reopening hotels. Hospitality is embracing the change and adapting to the new normal. We are on the brink of witnessing new innovations in lines of new safety and hygiene for hospitality sector. It will be interesting to see new travel patterns and stay arrangements which will work hand in hand with government policies for pandemic control measures. Life has to get back to normal and this is the first step towards it. Human history has recorded many pandemics over the centuries but never before were we so prepared to handle it effectively due to technical advancements. Business travellers will require not only safe accommodation but also far lesser human interactions in the form of touch points. Various SOP's have been formulated and will be put to test in coming times and will set a new benchmark for hospitality which will be a part of history and may even be taught under various college syllabuses in future. Stakes of operations are higher now where guest comfort along with colleague safety will be taken care of. I am confident that guests will keep safety and hygiene as their top priority in hotel selection and hotel companies will be able to deliver as per the expectations."

Satyen Jain CEO- Pride Group of Hotels

We welcome the government's decision and are looking forward to resuming operations within government guidelines. We are ready with our further enhanced and new safety and hygiene initiative – 'Pride Safety Assurance', and are glad to welcome our guests and employees back with a stronger commitment to their safety and health. Right from contactless payments and mandatory mobile check-in and check-out, we are working to ensure proper social distancing with guests. We look forward to delivering a safe, secure, and comfortable experience for our guests.



Satyen Jain



Harpreet Vohra

Harpreet Vohra Cluster GM-Delhi NCR, Radisson Hotel Group

The recent announcement of the opening up of hotels and restaurants is a euphoric relief for the industry. The hotel industry, which was hoping for a reprieve, is still awaiting clarity from the State Government. According to the order issued by the centre the hotels and restaurants may start operations in Non-Containment zones with effect from 8th June. The State government is yet to issue its restrictions and relaxations. We hope the government comes to the rescue of the hotel industry that has been hit to the pits by the lockdown. As we enter this era of new normal, hotels have reinvented ways of greeting and welcoming their guests with new hygiene and safety measures. Radisson Hotel Group recently announced its Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol, a new program of in-depth cleanliness and disinfection procedures, in partnership with SGS, the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and Certification Company. The brands' highest priority is the continued health, safety and security of its guests, team members, and business partners. The company has conducted a thorough review of all existing health and safety processes and worked with a team of experts to develop and validate additional protocols.

Davinder Juj General Manager at Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place

The decision of re-opening the hotels was well awaited. The industry is now well prepared with best of the procedures, protocols and safety equipment to provide the guests with a safe and hygienic environment. At Eros Hotel, we are working hard on training our team members on safety precautions and are following government instructions to manage the business in the best manner. We are also reviewing each process in depth to ensure minimum touch points and continuous safe sanitization of all areas. The industry has suffered a huge setback due to the pandemic including the loss of revenues, load of fixed costs and manpower costs, expenses to keep the essential services operational in the building, completion of statutory compliances and loss due to the expiry of unutilised items. Hospitality Industry works on the basic philosophy of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' and in the midst of all these protocols and precautions, Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place shall ensure to deliver the warmth of hospitality to all our guests with a sense of safety and security.



Davinder Juj



Vinesh Gupta

Vinesh Gupta General Manager, The Den Bengaluru

MHA has issued guidelines for phased re-opening (Unlock 1) and we are glad to see that hotels and restaurants figured unambiguously in this list. The industry which has not seen any direct stimulus from the governments is on the brink of collapse with many workers being laid off or with reduced salaries. Opening up of hospitality should bring us some respite and much needed revenues to help support the overstretched finances. We at The Den have been ready with our restaurants reopening plan from May 18, 2020 with all processes and systems in place. Most important is to walk the talk – especially when it comes to Food Safety, Hygiene and Sanitation. The past two months went by reorienting ourselves and training the teams to be super conscious on health and germfree environment so that we are ready to showcase our ability of 'Safety and Security are in our DNA'. It takes time for people to regain confidence and start to come over again, but we strongly believe that in the coming weeks, we will see slow and a gradual build-up of demand, and the industry will be fully geared up to meet the increased business in this New Normal as soon as the curve starts flattening.



Pushpendra Bansal

Pushpendra Bansal COO- Lords Hotels and Resorts

This is a welcome move to oil the Hospitality Industry Machinery and it is with pleasure we receive the news that hotels would now gradually start opening up. As a part of fraternity we are happy to see positive initiative being done past approx. 70-75 days of hotels being closed. There is still a lot of uncertainty which I think should get cleared in next few days over the norms and process that DOT would want us to follow as every Hotel Chain is following their own norms and no uniform guideline has been sent out. We as both owners and operators of Lords Hotels still remain hopeful of Finance Ministry sending out some relief to the Industry to give us a much needed booster dose as currently industry is battered and reeling under various pressures as post launch also we do not see a BOOM in travel in initial stages.

Anand Chatterjee General Manager at Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa

I am happy how Honorable Prime Minister of India and Chief Minister of Goa have taken a balanced, graded and scientific approach on opening the economic activities including tourism in the last weeks. They have alleviated the fears of state citizens by robust testing mechanism, checks on entry points and being hospitable and practicing Atithi Devo Bhavo as taught by the forefathers of all humanity in Vedantic scriptures at the same time.



Anand Chatterjee



Vijay Dewan

Vijay Dewan MD, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels and Deputy Chairman - Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) - Eastern Region

The government's decision to re-open the hospitality industry with limited services is definitely a positive move. We are prepared and committed to the highest level of hygiene and safety and look forward to welcoming guests under our gold standard S.H.I.E.L.D programme. This programme is launched across our four brands - THE Park Hotels, THE Park Collection, Zone by The Park and Flurys. S.H.I.E.L.D. encompasses the best of luxury, design, hygiene, safety and service. Also with opening of the hotels and lockdown we do anticipate a lot of intercity vacations and short haul road trips. We have launched special staycations and daycations packages for locals across cities, so that guests are able to enjoy the luxuries without fear.



Pradeep Shetty

Pradeep Shetty VP, HRAWI

The Centre has proposed allowing hotels and restaurants to be permitted to open after June 8, except in containment zones. While this is a welcome move, the prohibition on liquor service in hotels and restaurants is a concern for the industry. Also the restriction on international travel will continue to be problem for many hotels in the city since a lot of our guests are comprised of foreign travellers. But we are awaiting the State's guidelines in furtherance to MHA's and the Centre-State co-ordination is therefore critical. Public transport is planned to be eased in the 3rd phase of the Unlock which will also have some effect on restarting operations.

The 'normal' we return to will not be the 'normal' we know

At The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, the safety and well-being of its guests and associates has always been of paramount importance. With the same spirit, they recently launched SURAKSHA in partnership with Bureau Veritas India. This comprehensive program is an extension to The Leela's existing rigorous cleaning protocols and is aimed at elevating sanitisation, hygiene and safety procedures to deliver a safe environment for guests and associates. Anuraag Bhatnagar, COO, The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts is confident that the future will get better if we work towards it.

Prashant Nayak



Anuraag Bhatnagar

SURAKSHA redefines The Leela's operating procedures so that their guests continue to enjoy their indulgent services and distinctive experiences with peace of mind. The Leela is taking a holistic approach and is working with Bureau Veritas India to develop and validate additional protocols and sanitisation procedures. These protocols will be reviewed regularly and certified by a team of hygiene experts from Bureau Veritas, India. It will also contribute to raising awareness levels by further providing training to associates as these initiatives are to be implemented across the brand's portfolio.

"For the last three decades, the brand has always been known for delivering an uncompromising level of personalised services reflecting the true graciousness of Indian hospitality. SURAKSHA reiterates

this commitment and is well grounded in its genuine care that is backed by unobtrusive technology so that guests have trust and confidence as they begin to travel again and continue to experience the renowned Leela services," shares Bhatnagar.

Caution is the new norm and the government has taken a phased approach in the lifting of travel restrictions. The focus seems to be on bringing back the stalled businesses and activities and revive the economy which has been in the grip of a slowdown due to the impact of the pandemic and the consequential lockdown. On this, he says. "I think we all have to play our part in this mammoth task; following the directives issued by the government, implementing procedures recommended by the authorities and so on. We must continue to take care of ourselves and ensure the safety of our associates including our guests and the communities we are in; while supporting the local businesses is the need of the hour."

On the 'New normal' that everyone will be encountering, he further explains, "The last couple of months have indeed been challenging for us all. With the world around us changing so rapidly, we have to adapt to the new way of life by becoming more thoughtful in the way we do things. There is no denying that safety and hygiene is the priority and this is here to stay. Today, more than ever, it has become imperative that we take even more stringent measures to ensure our guests and associates feel safe as

we prepare to welcome them back again. COVID-19 has also brought families, friends and loved ones together. Once, things go back to the 'new normal' people will have an emotional need to travel, they will also trust and stay where they feel safe. Personal space has become more important than ever and we have to acknowledge that."

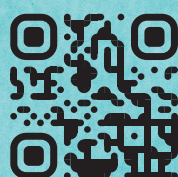
The best part about The Leela is their in-hotel experience that provides large expansive spaces such as private pools and private lawns owing to the social distancing conduct and Anuraag feels that this will lead to a surge of interest. There are also many private accommodations such as larger suites and residences where people can gather with family and friends while being mutually social distanced.

Finally, after months of isolation and anxiety, the world will want to experience life again. Hotels will eventually figure out how to offer experiences instead of services. "We are cautiously optimistic that demand will return soon. After months of austerity and isolation, customers indeed will be willing to go back to their lives and enjoy luxury services including luxury travel, entertainment, food and beverage, and spa services. And when they do, we want to be ready to provide them a safe and welcoming environment where they can continue to enjoy the distinctive and unparalleled service that The Leela brand has always been known for," says Bhatnagar.

"The Leela brand has a rich legacy and is based on stories and heritage. This is a unique time for us to show our true values and how far we are prepared to support these values. We are focusing on offering storytelling experiences based on purpose and values, heritage and authenticity in order to remain relevant to our discerning guests," concludes Anuraag.

**Dreaming of the cool
gentle breeze, sand
in your toes and the
breath-taking views
of the crystal-clear
waters?**

Until then let us help you feel
inspired. The Sunny Side of Life
will be here waiting to welcome
you back soon



IHCL, expanding sustainable footprints

As a part of the Tata Group, IHCL, has social inclusion and business responsibility embedded in their DNA and the company has always worked on furthering social inclusion and adopting environment friendly practices. In a conversation with TTJ, Alok Vijayvergiya, Associate Vice President, Sustainability and CSR, IHCL gives an insight on the brand's sustainable and responsible practices. Excerpts...

Rachita Sehgal



Alok Vijayvergiya

While the pandemic is something the world and the industry have never witnessed before, the world will adapt to a new normal way of life, the beginnings of which can already be seen. People will gravitate more towards trusted brands, with strong safety and hygiene SOPs clearly laid out and strictly practiced across hotels.

Prioritising the safety and wellness of their guests will further elevate brands as the top choice among customers. Sharing his thoughts on the changing nature of conducting business post COVID-19, Alok explains, "We believe that the travel and tourism industry will definitely revive itself, even as it undergoes a seismic shift in the way people travel and the choices they make. With a heightened sense of safety, social distancing and increased awareness about health and hygiene will continue to mark all social engagements, including travel. Moreover, people will be keen to travel to destinations within close vicinity of their homes and driving holidays and staycations will grow in demand. Some travellers may even be keen to explore lesser discovered or

footstep heavy destinations, if it means that they can maintain a comfortable level of social distancing; thereby paving the path for new destinations in India to become attractive tourist spots."

Brands will definitely have to quickly adapt to the dynamic requirements of both, the situation at hand and customers' requirements in-line with their new way of living, and innovative approaches will certainly triumph. The growing use of the term 'sustainable travel' in the tourism industry can be attributed to the increasing number of 'conscious travelers' who are keenly aware about the impact of their travel on the environment. Even before COVID-19 changed the world as we once knew it, travellers were becoming increasingly

socially conscious, picking destinations where tourism has a positive impact on the local geography and communities.

Alok further notes, "What this unforeseen situation has brought to fore even more strongly now, is the increased awareness among travellers about the environment and community, and one's impact on it. Travel in the future will be increasingly influenced by a growing sense of responsibility towards the places one visits and local communities, with greater demand for slow travel and immersive experiences as people look to explore authentic local traditions and culture, with sustainability at their core."

Sustainable and responsible travel will play a critical role in further driving the tourism and hospitality industry as travellers seek brands that truly hold sustainability at the heart of their business and offerings, and indulge in experiences that allow them to participate – directly or indirectly – in the overall sustainable and community initiatives. Alok further shares, "We continuously endeavour to give back to society by enabling livelihoods for less privileged target groups through skilling and leveraging our business value chain to support traditional art and heritage and social

purpose organisations. We wholeheartedly believe in further sharing these sustainable and community-driven initiatives with our guests with even greater focus in the future; thereby expanding the sustainable footprint while creating memories of a lifetime."

Initiatives to promote responsible and sustainable practices

"At IHCL, we believe that businesses can help in addressing many developmental challenges by contributing to growth and employment, reducing inequality, mitigating climate change and so on. Sustainable tourism is one of the key measures in maintaining local resources, preserving traditions and heritage and contributing revenue and employment rates towards local communities. It is with this belief that IHCL constantly endeavours to positively impact the communities it conducts business in, with sustainability and conservation forming the core of the brands operations."

We have always gone a step ahead to give back to the community by leveraging our business value chain. To reduce our carbon footprint, IHCL has increased the percentage of utilisation of renewable energy, including both solar and wind energy sources. Moreover, with 11 IHCL hotels to have achieved the EarthCheck Certified Platinum recognition in addition to 61 and 6 hotels having achieved the Gold Silver ratings, respectively, IHCL has the largest number of Platinum and Gold Certified hotels in the tourism industry across the globe.

From sustainable cuisine driven by locally sourced materials to decrease out carbon footprint to engaging with the local community at our various hotels and resorts to sustain additional livelihoods; embracing local indigenous design and architecture to restore and drive awareness about the rich heritage to adopting practices such as a biogas facility, a reservoir for rainwater harvesting and so on, we at IHCL will continue in our commitment to create destinations that put India on the global tourism map, while contributing positively and responsibly to the communities we operate in.

Using energy efficiently to drive profitability at Chalet Hotels

In the ever evolving landscape of hospitality industry, cost of utility and energy consumption while also considering environmental impact, is a matter of concern; making it imperative that hoteliers today take proactive measures to evaluate energy consumption patterns. At the same time, it is also important to implement a robust set of practices to ensure our hotels are energy efficient without compromising on customer experience.

Rajneesh Malhotra



Rajneesh Malhotra

equipment, refrigeration and elevators. To reduce and control energy consumption, let us consider the following essential factors:

Air Conditioning: To optimise the energy used for cooling, hotels need to be equipped with omni sensors that automatically detect occupancy and recalibrate temperatures in the respective guest Rooms. This helps saving load and results in lighter electricity bills. Apart from this, hotel premises must also be installed with Pressure Independent Balance Control Valve (PIBCV) for Fan Coil as well as Air handling Units to provide initiate further savings. At our HVAC plant rooms at Chalet Hotels, we have incorporated additional

measures like high efficiency chillers, Inline pumps and low approach cooling towers with Variable frequency drives with plant room optimiser for lower energy consumption. As a result consumption of HVAC plant room reduces by more than to 15 to 18 per cent.

Lighting: Controlling non-essential lighting consumption is a must when you are trying to optimise cost. Hotels need to adapt to efficient lighting systems with LEDs instead of incandescent or CFL lighting. Additionally, hotels need to focus on deploying technology and motion sensors to minimise energy consumption in various areas of the hotel. At Chalet Hotels, sensor-based lighting tools enable in delivering significant energy savings while also ensuring quality of service and comfort for the guests. Smart controls in rooms are environment-friendly tools and save energy by 15-20 per cent.

Kitchen equipment, plumbing equipment, refrigeration and elevators: With the use of smart technology, energy-

saving devices are able to perform several actions that lead to energy efficiency. For instance, walk-in and deep-freezers use smart technology to read and adjust temperatures according to the food stored in them. This reduces the load on the compressor and leads to lesser power consumption. Furthermore, hotels can implement Preventive Maintenance Schedule for refrigeration systems that are monitored online to avoid any mishaps.

Besides the factors stated above, it has become imperative for hoteliers to invest in modern infrastructure like green roofs and energy efficient windows. Energy efficient windows (Double glazed triple windows) reduce noise levels inside the room and solar radiation. Apart from ensuring overall energy efficiency, these tools help streamline operations, enhance employees' productivity and provide improved guest experience. There are a number of improving energy efficiency opportunities in hotels today and IoT (Internet of Things) based solutions have made these simple and affordable. While introducing newer technologies to minimise energy consumption is imperative it is equally important to onboard all stakeholders including employees and guests.

Hence, we train and sensitize our staff on the need to conserve energy and the importance of working towards a sustainable future. Finally, we ensure that our guests are made aware of various measures the hotel is taking to minimise its carbon footprint and how they can contribute to the effort. Adoption of technology and involvement of all stakeholders has helped Chalet Hotels lead the way in building a sustainable future while driving profitability.

Rajneesh Malhotra is the Vice President - Operations & Asset Management at Chalet Hotels.

Sustainability has been one of the most noticeable hospitality trends of recent times, with a growing number of businesses promoting eco-friendly initiatives. Environment sustainability in the hospitality industry has evolved over the last few years with hotel chains taking into cognizance the fact that the industry plays a pivotal role in protecting the earth's resources. In addition to this, consumers in general have become more conscious of their habits by choosing sustainable experiences over conventional ones. While the hospitality industry accounts for large amounts of energy consumption, in recent times smart technology and effective policies have helped control the impact on the environment.

Among the various factors that contribute towards energy consumption the larger share comes from – air-conditioning (45 to 50 per cent) followed by lighting (14 to 18 per cent) and the rest by kitchen equipment, plumbing

The Abduz Leh: Time travel to luxury

The Abduz Hotel in Leh, Ladakh is perfectly situated in between the beautiful Himalayan range and the city's famed local market. The property which derives inspiration from the richness of local culture and unique hospitality is enveloped in the finest elements of the world-renowned Ladakhi commitment to serenity, luxury and art. The Abduz symbolises warm reception and hospitality while preserving a legacy that is more than two decades old.

Prashant Nayak

Travellers from across the world, when in Ladakh can dwell on an opportunity to immerse in luxury like the Royals in the past and indulge in sophistication at this finely crafted abode known as The Abduz. A part of 'Spic N Span' Hospitality Group, The Abduz beams a different class altogether amid the scenic Himalayan backdrop and allows guests to indulge in a luxurious environment while vacationing in Ladakh. Holding on to the local and cultural diversity the hotel, premieres as one of the finest luxury properties in Leh, retaining the art of hand-crafted wood-work across the property.

The hotel boasts of forty-two stunningly crafted luxury rooms and

suites, each of which is unique in its own way. All the suites are finished in careful detail, exquisite interiors with the finest furnishings and materials to provide the utmost pleasure and comfort. Their guestroom features modern amenities like mini-bars and flat-screen televisions. Complimentary wireless Internet access

keeps you connected always, and satellite programming is available for your entertainment. Private bathrooms with showers feature complimentary toiletries and slippers are provided. Conveniences include phones, as well as safes and desks. Guest rooms are equipped with air conditioning, a fridge, a



kettle, a shower, a hairdryer and a desk.

‘Simply excellent’ is how they introduce their in-house fine dining restaurant, ‘Dontang’ that aspires to maintain the tradition of rich and diverse cuisine derived from memorable culinary moments of their hospitality group. Be it Oriental, Indian, or International haute cuisine, their chefs offer a perfect treat to suit every taste. Guests at The Abduz can also enjoy a continental breakfast.

One can explore and indulge in the fitness area that includes state-of-the-art techno-gym equipments. Explore the rooftop ‘Sky Lounge’ that beams a different class altogether and do try out the heated pool amid the scenic Himalayan backdrop which makes up for an amazing sight.

The property also boasts of a finely crafted convention centre, ideal for a destination wedding or corporate symposiums in Leh. So, while planning an event in Leh, this hotel has 1023 square feet (95 square meters) of space consisting of a conference center and a meeting room. The business centre has newspapers and a fax machine and a photocopier.

Additional features at this hotel include shopping arcade on-site, one of the finest in-house patisseries, and there is a tour



desk where car rentals are available, and provides bike hire for guests who want to explore the surrounding area. A roundtrip airport shuttle is provided for a surcharge (available 24 hours), and valet parking is available on-site.

When you stay at The Abduz Leh, you'll be in the historical district and twelve minutes of car drive from Phyang Monastery and 1.2 km from the main bazaar. Shanti Stupa is 5 km from the accommodation, while Soma Gompa is 1.3 km away. The nearest airport is Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport, 9 km from The Abduz.

COVID-19 Safety Protocols at Abduz Leh

- All touchpoints in public areas and guest rooms are cleaned continuously using sanitizer and disinfectant. These practices are also in place in guest rooms during the morning housekeeping services
- Electrostatic sprayers with professionally identified chemicals are used to disinfect the hotel
- Masks and disposable gloves are being worn by all team members
- Restaurants and seating in the lobby have been reconfigured to ensure safe distances are maintained
- Protocols are in place for staff in the kitchens, restaurants, in-room dining and banquet halls to sanitise their hands every time they serve food or touch food-related items
- Temperature readings of all guests are taken at the entrance of the hotel
- A guest check-in self-declaration form is in place which covers COVID-19 symptoms. Any guest who indicates these symptoms is required to undergo a medical examination
- All supplies and materials are sanitised before entering into the hotel premises
- Correctly formulated hand sanitisers are in place in all guest rooms and at all public spaces including the entrances, lobby, corridors, business centres cloakrooms, etc
- Professional agencies and doctors are on standby or sanitization of all areas should there be anyone detected with a positive sign of COVID-19
- Cars are disinfected after each use, as is luggage, before entering the hotel premises
- Aarogya Setu app must for all the guests entering the hotel premises



Resurrection of the new normal

The sudden jerk of COVID-19 saw one by one countries announcing border sealing, total disconnect from the world and further lockdowns, caging human beings into their concrete nest. The unexpected catastrophe rapidly was seen adumbrating the fun, frolic and fervour forever. My inner soul defied to accept all the ominous news and rumours claiming that life would never be the same.

Siddharth Dutt



Siddharth Dutt

In the last few months, we have witnessed only vicissitude. The media, social networking platforms have only slander, regression, wrath, fortitude, disconcert, and grouch in the offering. In my personal view, the only way to obliterate this pandemic is to preclude ourselves from the consumption of negativity. To recuperate, we need to choose positivity every single day, cherish each moment and feel the gratitude within that we still have a chance to unravel the wrong or not desired.

There is disconcertment on the economic growth, indignation amongst people being served pink slips, dissatisfaction over the tardy invention of the vaccine seems to have overtaken



the global sentiments. The recent hiatus was unexpected and no nation had envisaged any plan to handle such adversity. The prevailing panic and depression to me are inconceivable because we humans have all emerged victorious. The human race owes its sustainability and survival to its infinite ability to adapt and mould according to the situation.

The noteworthy point here is that the human race has survived many wars, pandemics, plagues, tsunami, cyclone, volcano eruption, floods, earthquakes, droughts, famines and recessions in its peregrination for survival all along. This is not the first time that mankind has been subject to test. We have and we will overcome now and every time. Our memory is short-lived and the testimony to this claim is the fact the no one remembered the last mega pandemic 'Spanish Flu' any more until we were caught in a similar situation seeing death, disconsolate and disillusionment assailing us all.

The worst-hit and most commonly heard sectors are travel and tourism. The indications flagged in the varied webinars, post and zoom calls, fail to dampen my enthusiasm and I predict that both travel and tourism shall not take too long to get a firm footing back. Man is a social animal and he has forever wandered to explore newer places, to experience something not tried before. This hankering to scout is so deeply hardwired into our DNA that the fear of the besets can just momentarily hold us back.

The forward thinkers have already reinvented and erected newer verticals to secure the engagement of employees and the building of revenues. Amazon is today home delivering food, MakeMyTrip has opened food home delivery from the

five-star hotels, Oyo rooms and few other hotels have encashed hosting of arriving passengers for quarantine period. Being human has added sanitizer to its product category, many resorts and hotels have launched pay now and use later. Airports and airlines have new SOPs implemented which has changed the whole pattern of air travel, tourism boards are gearing up with ways to allure tourists. The hotels have opened the doors with attractive offers like 99 per cent off on the second night, all meals inclusive packages, restaurants and eating places with social distancing dispositions and enlivened creative and messages to lure customers back again. A few hotels have added immunity booster morning drink and tea with Indian spices into the menu/buffet. The innovation will continue as a business strategy to re-establish the firm footing.

Defying iffy, domestic travel has recommenced and the international airlines are intently watching and waiting for the restart to happen.

The recent pandemic has reinforced that 'we live only once' and this craving for holidays, vacations, cruise, and adventure tourism will certainly pacify the ongoing turmoil in the hospitality, travel, and tourism sectors. Travel, vacations, road trips, adventure trips be it rafting or bungee jumping or skydive, rejuvenation break with Spa and Ayurveda treatments are no longer an option with the urban population. It is a lifestyle now and hence the minute our media will stop transmitting the number of deaths and new cases analogy, the enthusiasm will brew up again.

We all need to ally and spread camaraderie to annihilate the fear and uncalled anxiety. As I conclude, I am reiterating the words of wisdom said by Winston Churchill, 'Never waste a good crisis'. The resurrection of the new normal has begun.

Amen!

Siddharth Dutt is an inherent aviator, a travel enthusiast and social media influencer.

Thailand intends to combat pandemic challenges

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is still dedicatedly working towards resuming travel in the near future. In order to continue their efforts towards brand recall and outreach, TAT Mumbai, has been continuously conducting online educational webinars for select partners and agents. Further, virtual tour links have been circulated to the media for publishing them on their online portals to entertain travel enthusiasts during the lockdown extension. Cholada Siddhivarn, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Mumbai, shares more on the current situation in Thailand.

Prashant Nayak



Cholada Siddhivarn

flights will strictly comply with the safety measures and social distancing guidelines set by 'The Ministry of Public Health.'

Cholada says, "Owing to the rate of recovery and reducing number of infected patients, we are hopeful that we will be able to resume our travel and hospitality services in the next couple of months. However, we will have to establish a new normal and continue to maintain social distancing and advanced sanitisation and cleanliness across all sectors."

'BRANDit', TAT Mumbai's marketing representative has been conducting online seminars on Thailand's emerging routes with leading travel service providers such as Thomas Cook, Make My Trip, SOTC, Bhagyashri Travels and a group of travel agents in the South of India. The TAT team

is further working on developing more virtual tour links for media as well as their business partners to promote emerging destinations in Thailand.

"Although travel is not a viable option for the recent future, it is very crucial for the travel industry to keep the consumers engaged through various exciting interactions. Further, it is essential to capitalize this time and promote the destination differently and sell it in a 'future-ready' manner. Virtual tours are going to trend for the near future and brands will continue to enhance their experiences until the scope of travelling physically becomes an option. These

tours may also assist the customers in shortlisting their destinations for travel once we resume our regular travel and lifestyle," explains Cholada.

Virtual Reality (VR) has been one of the greatest tools of marketing for the travel industry in the past. It has an extraordinary visual appeal and provides a virtual experience to the potential customers and further entices them to buy the product or service. However, now the role of VR has expanded from just a marketing tool. A lot of destinations and tourism boards, including TAT are building microsites with VR links of their destinations and promoting them amongst travel enthusiasts to them keep excited and engaged. It is a way to connect with the potential customer (post COVID-19 era) and keep their travel interests motivated even during the times of lockdown.

On behavioural changes expected from the new tourist, Cholada mentions, "In my understanding, there will be a vast change in tourist behaviours across the globe until and unless we are able to wipe out the virus completely. In the recent future, the travellers will be sceptical but will slowly opt to travel with heightened measures. Social distancing, wearing masks, temperature checks, and health certificates will continue to be a mandate for both domestic and international travel. Tourists are also expected to plan their travel to less crowded destinations and opt for more offbeat routes. Moreover, travellers are expected to plan vacations in small pockets wherein only a few members travel instead of larger groups or families together. In addition, they will opt to stay at hotels and visit restaurants practicing all guidelines issued by the World Health Organization as well as local government bodies. Alongside, the above, travellers will now be more aware and make efforts towards sustainability and environmental consciousness."

The Royal Thai Government and the health authorities in Thailand are ensuring their best services to arrest the spread of the virus among the Thai citizens as well as the stranded tourists. Although, incoming passenger flights were banned till the end of May 2020; four airlines - Nok Air, Air Asia, Thai Lion Air and Thai Vietjet Air were allowed to reinstate flights from May 1, 2020 to fourteen Thai provinces after a month-long suspension. As of now, all other Thai Airways flights from India to Thailand are scheduled to start from October 24, 2020. Needless to say, all

Safety is the 'new loyalty'

With travellers realising the real importance of sustainable practices, there will be a substantial change in preference and behavior. Safety will be the topmost priority for travellers, Nishant Pitti, Co-Founder and CEO, EaseMyTrip shares more on his views about the redefinition of responsible tourism in the new normal. Excerpts...

Rachita Sehgal



Nishant Pitti

With COVID-19 hitting hard, everyone has realised the real importance of responsible travel and sustainable practice. Traditionally, every travel program focussed on cost and comfort as key metrics with very little focus on responsible travel. But now with the impact of COVID-19, the focus of travellers has completely shifted towards safety and well-being, redefining the term responsible travel and sustainable practices which barely existed earlier. The newer definition of responsible and sustainable tourism will help instil confidence in the minds of travellers about their safety and well-being. This will help calm their anxiety and encourage them to plan travel thereby, benefiting the revival of the industry and economy. "Domestic travel can prove to be a great measure to give the much required boost to the Indian economy. In 2018, a huge sum

of ₹1.65 lac crores was spent by Indians travelling abroad. EaseMyTrip.com, foreseeing this, is promoting domestic travel and is requesting its customers to pledge to take minimum two vacations within India (once COVID-19 calamity is over), to give the much required stimulus both to Indian economy and Indian travel sector. This pledge is also in line with the honourable PM Modi's initiative of asking Indians to travel 15 domestic locations by 2022. This initiative by EaseMyTrip to spread awareness about domestic tourism is already successful with more than fifty thousand travellers already pledging for the cause within two days of its launch," adds Nishant.

Safety is the new loyalty, and consumers will choose brands that prioritise their well being. There will be a substantial change in the way business is conducted with the change in people's habits and desires. Sharing his views further on the changing nature of conducting business, Nishant adds, "Travellers will be more conscious and will prefer service providers that keep their health and safety as top priority. Service providers for the same reason will have to change in accordance to become more responsible and offer transformational products."

With travellers realising the real importance of sustainable practices, there will be a substantial change in their preference and behavior. Safety will be the topmost priority for travellers. They will look very closely at their travel service provider's policies and practices around

hygiene and distancing, and restrict their list of preferred providers to those they feel most confident about. Sharing further on EaseMyTrip's initiatives to promote Responsible and Sustainable travel practices Nishant says, "At EaseMyTrip.com we feel that there is a major role that OTA's will play in driving responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry. We have taken multiple steps to support this situation. For our employees, we have firstly ensured that apart from a small fraction of staff that is necessarily required to work from office, the remaining is working from home. Secondly, to maintain safe environment for those working from office, the premises are sanitised at frequent intervals and proper precautionary steps are always being followed. Temperature checks are being done at all employee entry points and hand sanitizers are made available throughout the office premises. For our customers, we are integrating and promoting new suppliers/companies who are willing to go an extra mile to ensure health and safety of travellers at every touchpoint. Additionally, we are circulating all relevant information via messages and emails to keep them updated and requesting them to take maximum precautions. We have even uploaded current guidelines that passengers need to follow for safe travel on our website. In addition, we are ensuring that our customer care representatives address all the anxieties of passengers and provide relevant information."



Responsible tourism will sustain the tourism industry in the long run

Many cruise liners are becoming conscious about lowering environmental impact and taking necessary steps. Jalesh Cruises was the first cruise in India to upgrade to environment-friendly fuel. They have also set new standards to safeguard the marine environment through their clean wave policy. In a conversation with TTJ, Jurgen Bailom, President and CEO, Jalesh Cruises, assures that the saving grace for travel industry in the later stages after the pandemic will be responsible and sustainable tourism.

Prashant Nayak



Jurgen Bailom

faces. Unknowingly, there is a lot of pressure on existing, most frequently visited ecosystems. This has led to the concepts of responsible travel and sustainable practices. Responsible tourism will sustain the tourism industry in the long run as well as help in conserving this planet. Its aim is to improve the ecosystem for all its beings belonging to the locality and at the same time manage to continue effective tourism. Sustainable tourism is generally a concept involving all tourism stakeholders; the government, travellers and visitors, travel agents, vendors, etc., whereas responsible tourism is majorly practiced at a micro-level and an individual level.

will be a gradual process. Although, I am also a strong believer that post-covid19 if things are back to normal, we will witness a spike in tourism, something similar to what the world has witnessed through most economic downfalls. Once the curve hits rock bottom it can only spike up. I am hoping the same for the tourism and travel industry."

It is uncertain when it comes to how many people will change their behaviour towards sustainable practices, but, there will surely be people who will be more aware and conscious about their environment and preserving them hereafter. At Jalesh Cruises they advocate, incorporate and promote such practices. Jurgen says, "The change will happen, maybe gradually but we will have to adapt as it will be the only way to sustain a long and healthy travel culture for all our future generations."

Jalesh as India's first cruise travelling overseas, have always aimed at promoting responsible and sustainable travel practice on-board. They are committed to environmental responsibilities which are on top priority thereby reducing the negative impact on the ecosystem. Onboard Karnika, they have developed an environmental management system and keeping in mind the marine ecology, they have ensured waste water and general waste treatment procedures. They are also reducing their air emissions through the implementation of fuel efficiency measures, including improved hull coatings, low energy lamps, increased recirculation of waste heat, and improved efficiency in air conditioning.

"We are always looking at exploring new and improved technologies. We hope to set an example for our customers with the measures we practice for responsible and sustainable travel. Our focus will be on safety, health, hygiene, and value for our consumers without harming any stakeholders or the environment in the process," concludes Jurgen.

The current pandemic has created chaos in the tourism industry. Post COVID-19, travellers will account for multiple factors that will influence their travel decisions. While doing so, they will always consider their immunity and maintain social distance as much as possible.

Jurgen says, "Full-fledged tourism might look like a long shot, but we foresee domestic travel to recover soon and tourism within the country will become more popular. Cruising is a possibility at these times as the number of people you interact with are restricted. Owing to the uncertainty of future travel, we have introduced the concept of 'Future Pass', wherein travellers can book now and sail anytime until August 2021. However, we hope the prevalent conditions subside and travelling gets back to normal."

Over-tourism is a reality that the world

"Responsible travel and sustainable practices do have a new meaning for us post COVID-19 pandemic. It will be altered, based on precautions that need to be taken. These precautions will be determined, based on not only the impact on the ecosystem but also the socio-economic and health impact. For example, if tourism was to resume, we would resume cruising given it is one of the safest options for travel. However, for this, we would examine the travel history of the traveller, check their health record, and check their temperature at multiple checkpoints before we get them on board. Responsible travel will also include precautions such as social distancing and even on the cruise, this might have to be a compulsion. The overall tourism industry is discussing such problem areas and their alternatives," expressed Jurgen.

Speaking further, Jurgen assures, "Responsible and sustainable tourism will surely help revive the damage caused to the economy after the lockdown, but, it

GCL looking forward to start operations with robust safety and preventive measures onboard their ships

The global pandemic has brought about a sea of change in the cruise industry and they can no longer operate the way they used to. Consumers' mindset, requirements and expectations have evolved when it comes to leisure and travel with focus on health and well-being. However, Genting

Cruise Lines (GCL) has been at the forefront to enhance and introduce safety and preventive measures that will become the new norm for their fleet and they hope for the industry too. Naresh Rawal, Vice President Sales and Marketing, Genting Cruise Lines, shares more on the initiatives taken onboard their cruise ships as they are anticipating sailings in a few months time.

Ravi Sharma



Naresh Rawal

The global pandemic has had an adverse impact on businesses globally, including the cruise sector. Cruise companies alike worldwide are going through a challenging period with operations and businesses affected. Genting Cruise Lines' fleet has been on voluntary hiatus with majority of their crew repatriated home to their respective countries to be with their loved-ones during these uncertain times.

Naresh shares, "The reality is the cruise industry landscape has evolved drastically and the road to recovery will require time with new and fresh initiatives with strong education of the new norms of

cruising to boost customers' confidence once again. The cruise industry is also dependent on the easing of various travel restrictions in different countries based on how the pandemic evolves. We hope to start cruising very soon depending on various evolving factors, such as the reopening of ports and destinations, lifting of travel restrictions etc. We anticipate resuming operations in July or August 2020 and we can start by exploring to offer 'Holiday at Sea' itineraries cruising to nowhere as the ship itself is a destination, filled with onboard activities, performances and attractions."

It is well known that the Asia region has had a solid foundation as a cruise hub and destination with a strong market demand from short to long haul markets over the years. Other regional markets have also shown promising opportunities with countries like China exploring to expand its 'Travel Bubble' covering mainland China to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as South Korea. Genting Cruise Lines are also looking forward to the delivery of our new 208,000 tonnage Global Class ships built with the 'Made in Germany' reputation for the highest safety standards, Global Dream, is scheduled to be launched between 2021 and 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic will unquestionably change the travel industry and the way we travel, at least in the near future. Travellers will be more cautious and have heightened expectations on hygiene, safety and preventive measures in place. Naresh further shares, "Meeting and exceeding these expectations will become the new norm for the cruise industry and Genting

Cruise Lines is committed to maintaining the highest possible safety and hygiene standards. Initially, safe distancing will be a common practice which will see our guests checking-in online with designated times at the terminal to minimize congestion, onboard venues operating at half capacity to ensure ample spacing among guests, the suspension of buffets with F&B being served instead etc."

"Our enhanced measures developed with the COVID-19 pandemic in mind will be the new norm that include stringent health screening processes and protocols, thorough sanitisation and disinfection and enhanced hygiene practices for guest cabins, various onboard public areas and recreational activities, and increased food and beverage safety," assures Naresh.

At Genting, it is imperative to continue to educate and create awareness among potential and future guests to boost confidence such as informing them of the ship designs that enable 100 per cent external fresh air to be filtered and supplied to the cabins and onboard public areas – ensuring a constant and healthy flow of fresh air with no recirculation within the ship which is an important feature on their cruise ships.

"Offering new incentives such as our 'Cruise As You Wish' assurance that allows flexibility of up 48 hours cancellation before sailing to receive 100 per cent future cruise credit for Dream Cruises and Star Cruises bookings prior to or on October 30, 2020 will allow existing and potential customers to have ease of mind when booking a cruise with us," concludes Naresh.

The Future of Mobility:

The rise of self-drive cars

Many a time, it is not the crisis per se but our response to it that defines our future. A close examination of options leads us to a solution which may already exist. The future belongs to adaptability and personalisation. So, the next time for those who wish to travel and like to lead and cannot take a backseat, consider a self-drive car and enjoy the ride while keeping your family safe.

Sunil Gupta



Sunil Gupta

rental industry was no different. In fact, the crisis highlighted car rental as a safe, trusted and flexible means of transport that can adapt to. A customer's taste and preference, deliver on renewed safety protocols, and safely take the customer to where they want to be.

Sharing might have been considered a noble deed once but is not a wise one anymore. The present times calls for measures that ensure a seamless experience as before, yet take cognizance of the new imperative of social distancing. In view of the current crisis, self-drive cars will take the lead in the near future. Here's what will drive their popularity:

Safe Commute

There's an obvious reason why the authorities placed restrictions on public transportation. The more people occupying a confined space, the increased likelihood of them being exposed to someone with COVID-19. Apart from ensuring privacy, a self-drive car can also reduce the risk of exposure to the virus.

Feasible Option

The need to travel and remain mobile is intrinsic to humans. Renting or leasing a car can be a more viable option due to its flexibility and affordable pricing.

Risk Mitigation

Following the coronavirus pandemic, every organisation is being challenged to increase its cleaning and safety protocols. Industry-leading service providers such as ourselves, are equipping frontline staff with the necessary knowledge and tools, to reduce the spread of the disease. Employees are being trained to practice hygiene at the utmost level, and they are cleaning common touch points like seats, steering wheel and door handles with disinfectant proven against novel pathogens, including covid-19. A contactless experience is ensured with doorstep delivery and the collection of vehicles. Personalised chauffeur-driven cars and self-driving cars are a safe and trusted alternative to other forms of transport.

A Different Experience

The difference between driving a car and being driven around is the same as a passenger and an adventurer. It is a different feeling altogether. The smell of leather interiors, the adrenaline rush at the sound of the engine as you gently accelerate, and the power to steer wherever and whenever your heart desires sets the experience of driving a car, class apart. The option of self-drive will gain traction with millennials who love to navigate at their own pace and with the company and privacy of only their loved ones.

Sunil Gupta is the Managing Director & CEO of Avis India.

Travel and hospitality sectors have suffered the most severe blow due to the pandemic. Those who earlier felt restricted by travel bans are now reluctant to avail public transport services that cater to a large number of passengers at one time. The notion specifically resonates with travel enthusiasts who have been confined within their dwelling units following the new social distancing measures. But, should that bring your passion to move around to a screeching halt?

WHO rightly answered the query by saying, "We have all got to learn to live with this virus." This indicated that COVID-19 is here to stay for the foreseeable future and hence, we must constantly seek to reduce its spread as we lead our lives.

Businesses across the world started to look at things differently in order to appropriately tackle the situation. They beefed up their security measures and abided strictly to the government guidelines before resuming usual functions. The car



Trends ruling travel sector post pandemic



With an aim to envision the travel sector post pandemic, 'Representation World', a tourism representation, marketing and PR firm based in New Delhi, conducted a survey with their travel experts to understand their opinions and thoughts about the new trends of tourism industry. It seems that in the recovery process of the tourism sector, we will witness a number of transformations in the future redefining the tourism, aviation and hospitality sector. New travel trends generated from the pandemic will have a long time impact in the way we will see the world.

Prashant Nayak

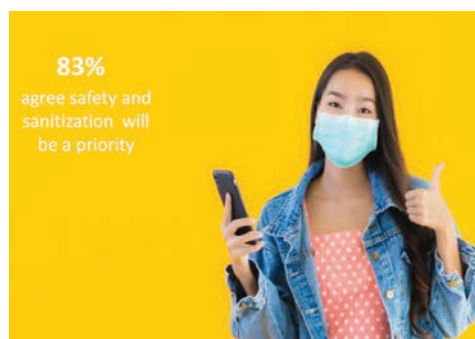
While sharing more details of the survey, 'Representation World' invited approximately 5000 industry professionals specialising in the field of travel, tourism, hospitality and destination representation to fill out the survey. It was about sharing their opinions about the new trends and possibilities that will be shaping the future of travel and the tourism industry post COVID-19. The time frame for the survey activity was fifteen days from 10-25 May, 2020. The profile of professionals ranged from business owners and company representatives, 5000 experts pan-India participated covering metros, tier I and II cities.

So now, it is given to understand that the rise of new travel trends after COVID-19 pandemic is based on fear and suspicion. Fear is the key. Fear of the unknown. Fear of the infection. Fear of touching someone. Fear of being touched. Fear of being infected, and infecting family and friends. Fear of being infected, and being far away from good healthcare. Fear of bringing back the virus from travels overseas. Fear and more fear. The combination of suspicion and fear will require dollops of good and positive news, on multiple fronts, over a prolonged period of time to abate, and then totally be dispelled. So till then in

the near future, some of the new trends that will drive the overall travel scenario as per the report are:

Safety and sanitisation, a priority before making travel decisions

Safety and sanitisation will be one of major factor influencing the decision



of the travellers. In safety, health and hygiene: both perception and reality will matter and there will be no compromise on these aspects. Approx. 83 per cent of travel experts agreed that safety and hygiene will be the top priority of travellers while making travel related decision.

Safe brands with value will win

One of the most prominent trends which is expected to be witnessed after



re-opening of the travel sector is travellers opting for known brands. Those that will stand for quality will win and 'good value for good money' will be the new mantra. According to the survey, approx. 55 per cent travel experts agreed that travellers would not mind to shed those extra dollars for a trusted brand keeping in mind the safety and hygiene.

Contactless tourism

Tourism and hospitality industry has always been based on human contact



and interaction. However, the spread of a pandemic has forced us to practice social distancing. Approx 41 per cent of people think contactless tourism is a measure to reduce the spread of viruses, whereas 49 per cent people said there is a possibility of a contactless tourism industry. 10 per cent still believed that tourism industry will continue to involve human touch and interaction as it has always been. Many people believe Travel sector will emerge as a sector of minimum human contact and interaction which might be replaced by technology in the coming years.

Dependency on traditional travel agents

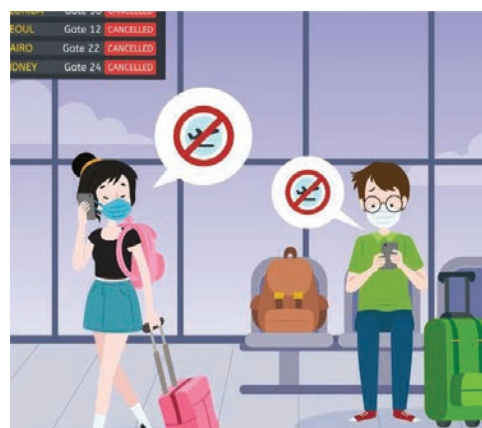
After observing the sudden cancellations of flights and shutting



down of hotels due to COVID-19, many travellers faced challenges with cancellation and refund policies of an online travel agencies. Therefore, 60 per cent travel experts believe that travellers will prefer the assistance of a travel agent rather than booking through an online travel portal.

Flexible travel options will be desired

After the COVID-19 pandemic, travellers will be highly influenced by the



flexible travel options like easy cancellation and refund policies. According to the experts, 40 per cent believe that flexible travel options will give an edge to travel organisation to attract the travellers. It will also assist to regain the trust of travellers and encourage them to travel again.

Preference to ease in travel restrictions

Once the nations start welcoming tourists again, 60 per cent of travel experts believe that ease in travel restrictions and VISA policies will also influence the



choices of travel destination for travellers. Whereas, 40 per cent travel experts believe that it might be considered but will not be a priority for travellers before booking their next travel destination.

Initially, low preference for air travel

Only 36 per cent travel experts said that travellers will avoid travelling through



air, instead travellers would prefer others modes of transports. Whereas, 64 per cent of travel experts believe that there might be some decline in the travel initially after travel restriction are lifted. Gradually, people will start taking flights for their travel.

Decrease in business travel

People are getting used to video



conferencing and online platforms for development of their businesses. Organisations are making the most of technology for their official work and in creating new business opportunities. Therefore, business travel might face decline for a period of time.

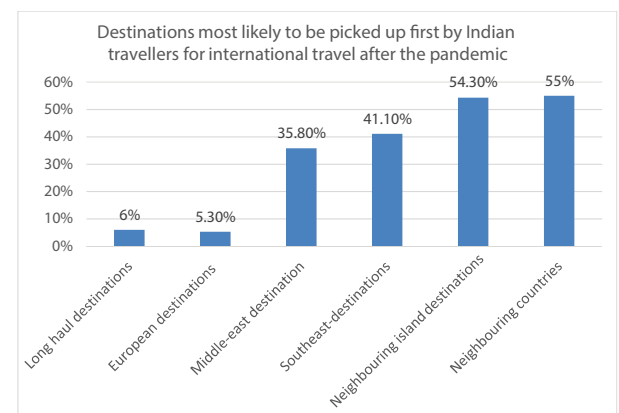
Emergence of new destinations



The tourism sector post pandemic will witness the emergence of new travel destinations, 47 per cent of travel experts agreed that there will be a shift in traveller's interest towards the lesser known and less crowded destinations to ensure minimum human contact and rejuvenate at peace. People would explore untouched and hidden gems of the world. Travellers would prefer to travelling to destinations with the least number of COVID-19 cases and give priority to the health and safety.

Travel pattern of Indians after COVID-19 pandemic

After the travel restrictions are lifted and India is ready to travel again, Indians will prefer to travel to nearby destinations



with short flight distance and the least impact of COVID-19. Eventually, Indian travellers will start travelling to the Middle East and long haul destinations.

Top 5 preferred destinations of Indian travellers post pandemic



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