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# TTJ Travel Trade Journal

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Dear Friends,

Overall, activities in travel and tourism had stalled for most parts of the year in 2020, but the gradual return of activity was anticipated and witnessed in each passing quarter in 2021.

Following the national lockdown last year, Hotels and Resorts were forced to reimagine themselves. Apart from quarantine centers, many hotels also innovated new ways of generating revenue, by adapting concepts like food delivery or staycations, among many others. The healthy improvement in occupancies of key markets in the first quarter was the most trustworthy indicator of return of demand and confidence in the hospitality sector in India, though there were ups and downs.

In our August 2021 issue, TTJ gives a larger glimpse of the ongoing recovery of the hospitality sector and we pray that the trend continues. Other than that, we have our regular features to keep you occupied and be optimistic about the future of travel.

Happy Reading!

*Ravi Sharma*

Ravi Sharma  
ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

### Honeymoon Travel

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

### Family Travel

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

### Friends Travel

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

### Solo Travel

- Splendorous Turkey (6 Nights)  
Istanbul | Cappadocia | Antalya
- Scandinavia (7 Nights)  
Copenhagen | Aarhus | Stavanger | Bergen | Oslo | Stockholm
- Mesmerizing Central Europe (8 Nights)  
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## Excitement building for Qatar Travel Mart 2021!

**Q**atar Travel Mart (QTM 2021) will be held from 16th to 18th November 2021 at Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, the first of its kind exhibition in the country which offers a venue to begin the journey of recovery and strengthening of the Travel and Tourism sector. Bringing together the inbound and outbound tourism and providing a marketplace for a mutual relationship to both local and international tourism businesses by promoting, upholding and discovering places, people, and cultures.

The event will offer the most sought-after travel destinations, real estate development projects and up-to-date Luxury, Business, Medical, Sports, MICE, Halal Tourism, Leisure and Cultural tourism trends to the most discerning upscale market, providing insights and new perspectives to the future of tourism by bringing together companies presenting new products and trends in technology related to travel and tourism business.

QTM 2021 is bringing together various international tourism boards, national and regional tourist offices, airlines, tour operators, hoteliers, travel agents, and online travel companies, all under one roof. The list of the local participants include Qatar Tourism, Qatar Airways Holidays, Katara Hospitality, Marsa Malaz Kempinski - The Pearl, Retaj Hospitality, St. Regis Doha, Doha Bus. With growing international interest, confirming Visit Maldives, ENIT – Italian Tourism Board, African Tourism Board, Azerbaijan Tourism Board, Korea Tourism Organization, to



معرض قطر الدولي للسياحة والسفر  
Qatar International Exhibition for Travel & Tourism

name a few.

Having the potential to become one of the top tourist destinations in the world, Qatar has witnessed lots of activities in the tourism industry and MICE segment supported by Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030 (QNTSS) that spells out the focus of future tourism development based on developing a diversified, premium product that attracts families and travelers looking for new cultural experiences. In addition to building on Qatar's existing strengths in the GCC market and among business travelers, increased emphasis will be devoted to diversifying into new geographical source markets and further enhancing Qatar's MICE/business travel sector.

Visit [www.qtmqatar.com](http://www.qtmqatar.com) to find out more and register today!

## Kerala's Bio-bubble Tourism to be a role model for India

**S**etting a role model for the entire country in insulating tourists from COVID-19 to the maximum, Kerala has rolled out an efficient and meticulous Bio-bubble model to create protective layers of mostly inoculated service providers to receive and host tourists.



Bio-bubbles are sanitized, safe and secure environments where people within them, likely to come into contact with tourists, are vaccinated. The protective ring of the Bio-bubble will see that tourists landing in any airport in Kerala meet only vaccinated ground staff. From the airport they can drive to their chosen destinations in cabs, provided by accredited tour operators, whose drivers are all vaccinated. The same goes for the hotels, resorts or homestays they stay during their holiday, where the staff is vaccinated.

The bio-bubble model forms part of a set of well-planned and time-bound schemes initiated by the Kerala Tourism Minister P A Mohamed Riyas for an early revival of the pandemic-ravaged travel and hospitality sector by turning all tourism spots cent per cent safe zones.

"Safety of guests is non-negotiable as far as Kerala Tourism is concerned. The Bio-bubble initiative is meant to ensure that the tourists have a risk-free stay in our state. This is a critical factor for revival of tourism, which has been clobbered by the pandemic. It was with this larger perspective that we successfully carried out the vaccination campaign covering the entire population in Vythiri. This initiative will tell the world that Kerala is a place where you can holiday safely," said Shri Mohamed Riyas.

## Canada extends ban on passenger flights from India



**T**he Canadian government is adding another month of restrictions on flights to and from India. As part of an ongoing public health measure, the ban on direct flights between Canada and India will continue until September 21, 2021, according to a Transport Canada media release. All direct commercial and private passenger flights are suspended. Only cargo operations, medical transfers, or military flights are allowed to go directly between the two countries.

In order to travel to Canada from India amid these restrictions, travellers will need to take an indirect route. Regardless of immigration status, travellers from India will need a pre-arrival COVID-19 molecular test from a third country, taken within 72 hours of their final departure to Canada. This can be any country other than India, which may have its own coronavirus-related measures to follow.



## Cordelia Cruises plan to start sailings from September 2021

With the coronavirus situation improving after the unprecedented second wave, Cordelia Cruises, Jurgen Bailom, President for Waterways Leisure Tourism Private Limited, who also added that the response from the guests to the new itineraries has been overwhelming and extremely encouraging.

Given that safety is paramount and a non-negotiable factor, especially in today's times, Cordelia has implemented all the standard protocols for its crew members, guests on board, and at the ports. Cordelia has also partnered with the Apollo Group for its food and drink offerings. With immense variety, the food aboard Cordelia includes a plethora of cuisines and flavours catering to wide-ranging palates and tastes.

The first sail is planned from Dubai to Mumbai via Oman on September 2, 2021. Cruises are open to Goa, Lakshadweep, Diu, Kochi, and Sri Lanka and bookings for 2021-22 sailings are now open.



## Tourism Australia launches Australia 365 On Demand



Tourism Australia is rolling out a new 'always-on' virtual platform, Australia 365 On Demand, to support the industry in staying connected while travel and tourism continues to be impacted by ongoing uncertainty due to the global pandemic.

The new platform, Australia 365 On Demand, in partnership with the State and Territory Tourism Organisations, will provide Australian industry, global distribution partners, and Aussie Specialists the opportunity to share, train, update and connect throughout the year.

As part of the initiative, the Australian tourism industry has been invited to participate in the Australia 365 On Demand platform, with each exhibitor having their own company or destination listing to showcase their products and regions to travel trade partners across the globe.

Global distribution partners and Aussie Specialists will be able to search and review the listings, including key contacts, product updates, brand assets and social media links. Australian industry partners will continually update their listings to showcase the latest products and promotional materials for distribution partners to access and download.

Trade partners can register directly for Australia 365 On Demand to stay connected with Australian industry partners throughout the year, and access the platform via Tourism Australia's other support platforms: the Trade Resources Hub and Aussie Specialist Program.

## Ladakh scraps permit system for tourists visiting 'Protected' Areas



The Ladakh administration has scrapped the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system in another move to underline India's sovereignty over the territory. The move will benefit Indian tourists visiting the 'protected' areas in the region as there will be less paperwork required to deal with.

However, tourists visiting these areas will still have to pay the environmental fee of ₹300 and Red Cross Fund fee of ₹100. The payment can be easily made using the online portal, officials said. The report added that all visitors are required to carry identity proof during travel and foreigners are still required the Protected Area Permit.

Earlier, Indian tourists were only allowed to visit areas beyond Panamik till Warshi including Yarma Gompa/ Yarma Gonbo Monastery in Leh's Nubra Valley.

The scrapping of Inner Line Permit will not result in unfettered access. The Ladakh administration will notify areas, mostly villages near the border, where tourists will not be allowed. The Union Home Ministry has asked for the list, which will be prepared after the consultation with the Police and the Army.

Some villages near the Pakistani border, including Dungti, Koyul, Demchok and Chumar in the Nyoma subdivision in eastern Ladakh will remain out of bounds. In Kargil, tourists can visit places including Batalik easily.



# 'Indian hospitality industry will reinvent itself to fit the changing needs of guests'

For the last three decades, the Leela brand has come to be known for delivering an uncompromising level of personalised experiences with the true graciousness of Indian hospitality. Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Operating Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts firmly believes that even though they embrace the “new normal” and the new Leela experience may look different, they still want their guests and associates to know that it is thoughtfully curated so that they can continue to feel as welcome and comfortable as they did before.

Prashant Nayak

Anuraag Bhatnagar,  
COO, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts



## How are your hotels faring in the current situation? Is it the same struggle you have seen a year ago?

At The Leela, we have committed ourselves to readapt through the current situation and have been spending the last couple of months to think creatively about our operations and reimagine the guest experience based on our insights into the changes in consumer behaviour. Our focus has been to Reimagine, Redesign and Reset while keeping abreast with the evolved expectations of guests and ensuring we not only meet but exceed them. We are directed at delivering luxury experiences as we continue to remain true to the values of our brand. As a business, we want to remain agile, to be able to quickly adapt to an ever-evolving tomorrow.

The focus has been on four things - safely reopening our hotels and carefully preparing for our teams to return to work; gradually and slowly building consumer confidence and trust and engaging with our customers and associates, reassuring them our hotels are sanctuaries of cleanliness and remain at the cornerstone of sanitization; devising strategies and initiatives that will help elevate the guest experiences; driving demand through compelling and meaningful offers with inclusions and value additions built in around what matters most to our guests.

And to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our guests and associates, we have ensured all our associates are 100 per cent vaccinated. We have also implemented Suraksha by The Leela, our enhanced safety and hygiene protocols in partnership with Bureau Veritas India. Today, all our hotels are Platinum certified.

## Tell us about the recently launched Leela Gandhinagar?

The Leela Gandhinagar, together with Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, is set to offer a distinctive and convenient complex seamlessly blending state-of-the-art facilities with the graciousness of Indian hospitality. The hotel is an architectural wonder and the first of its kind; located atop the concourse of the redeveloped Gandhinagar Capital Railway Station. It is India's first luxury hotel to be constructed on the airspace of a conventional railway station and is built 22 meters above the ground. The hotel houses 318 tastefully appointed spacious rooms and suites, with contemporary interiors impeccably blending into grandeur, comfort, and modern sophistication. It delivers a rich culinary experience with dining venues spanning across a host of cuisines served in picturesque environs and also boasts of a private lounge and an exclusive party room with stunning views of the city.

From elegant ballrooms to a holistic world-class spa, state-of-the-art gymnasium, a pool and stately meeting rooms, the hotel's

inspiring venues provide the ideal backdrop for any occasion. The hotel's indoor and outdoor event spaces span across 30,000 sq. ft. and are well-matched with the legendary Leela hospitality. The Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre offers both choice and flexibility with state-of-the-art facilities to host conventions for up to over 15,000 people. Four seminar rooms, three exhibition centres, seven conference halls and a meeting room are all equipped with every modern amenity imaginable.

The momentum of growth the brand is gaining is exhilarating and encouraging. The opening of The Leela Gandhinagar and the traction it is gaining has restored our confidence in how the brand resonates with today's luxury travellers and we are committed to further strengthening our positioning as an epitome of true Indian luxury.

## Do you see the Indian hospitality industry still evolving despite the pandemic? By when do you expect to see stability in the industry?

Due to these unprecedented times, the world around us has changed rapidly, and we have had to adapt and become more thoughtful in the way we do things. As hotels begin to return to some sort of normalcy, the one thing we know is that the definition of "normal" as we knew it has changed forever. The industry must continue to evolve and prepare to take advantage of opportunities that will gradually but undoubtedly arise. While previously people visited hotels for a sense of community, now exclusivity is key. Guests are looking for luxury and comfort with the benefit of privacy and during COVID times especially, hotels can make for a safe haven. They also have the advantage to offer public spaces while still providing ample room to socially distance.

New opportunities have emerged with 'Work From Hotel', or rather 'Work From Anywhere' gaining popularity, food delivery has opened up new opportunities, and dine at home experiences have become a new option for guests who feel more comfortable dining in their own space and environment.

I have tremendous faith in the resilience of the Indian hospitality industry and know that it will reinvent itself to fit the changing needs of guests, especially during this pandemic. I believe that the industry will only see stability once international borders open, international flights resume and 60 -70 per cent of the population is vaccinated.

## With the industry resorting heavily to technology due to the pandemic, what about the human element that your organisation firmly believes in?

While technology has been one of the biggest reinventions for the industry, we believe it to be an 'Enabler of Experiences.' Owing to the current situation, health and wellbeing are of utmost importance to

travellers, and technology and digital tools are the keys to meeting these new expected standards by expanding existing "no-touch" options. While there is a significant spike in the adoption of contactless services, we are confident that through months of austerity and isolation, customers may, indeed, be willing to go back to their lives and enjoy luxury services including luxury travel, entertainment, food and beverage, and spa services. And as they do, we want to be ready and provide for them a safe and welcoming environment where they can continue to enjoy the distinctive experiences and unparalleled service that The Leela brand has come to be known for.

COVID-19 might have changed the way we work, interact, shop, and spend time, but it will not change who we are and what we want from life. We believe that the world will want to experience life again and companies which will figure out how to offer experiences instead of services will be leading the way and this has been reiterated by the traction our resorts are gaining, with occupancies reaching and, in some cases, exceeding pre-pandemic levels.

## How are your hotels reaching out to new, evolved and changed customers?

We know that the "normal" we have returned to will not be the "normal" we knew. And that the trends and behaviours that were predicted at the start of the decade are no more applicable.

Our approach has been two-pronged.

There is no denying that safety and hygiene are at the forefront of our lives, so naturally, the first is to rebuild consumer confidence and trust and reassure guests of our commitment towards ensuring that our hotels continue to remain safe environments for them. We, therefore, launched SURAKSHA, a comprehensive program that redefines our processes so our guests can continue to enjoy our indulgent services and distinctive experiences with peace of mind. It emphasises 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.

The second is to generate demand through offers that are intriguing, meaningful, and memorable. So, when our guests travel and feel comfortable in doing so, we are there to welcome them with experiences and benefits that matter to them.

## What are your brand's plans for India? Are there any plans to take your brand international?

The Leela is committed to growing in key gateway cities and marquis leisure destinations. We are also exploring development in the luxury wellness and wildlife space and believe in the opportunities that the country provides. Given the diversity and the richness of the country, I think we have a lot to do within the country before we can start looking outside.



# Raffles Udaipur, offering a fresh perspective on 'Venice of the East'

Raffles Udaipur is now open and is set to bring Raffles' legendary hospitality experience to the romantic city of Udaipur crowned as 'Venice of the East'. Abhishek Sharma, General Manager, Raffles Udaipur, looks forward to warmly welcome their guests while he shares more about the property which will be a new discovery and a sanctuary for travellers on a quest for peace and rejuvenation.

Rachita Sehgal

## **This is Raffles' first property in India. Can you give us more insight into the Raffles brand?**

Raffles Hotels & Resorts boasts an illustrious history and some of the most prestigious hotel addresses worldwide. In 1887, Raffles Singapore set the standard for luxury hospitality, introducing the world to private butlers, the Singapore Sling and its enduring, legendary service. Today, Raffles continues this tradition in leading cities and lavish resort locales, enchanting travellers with meaningful experiences and service that are both gracious and intuitive. Connoisseurs of life choose Raffles, not merely for its aura of culture, beauty and gentility, but for the extraordinary way they feel when in residence with Raffles. Each Raffles, be it Paris, Istanbul, Dubai, Warsaw, Jakarta, or Seychelles, serves as a venerated oasis where travellers arrive as guests, leave as friends and return as family. Raffles is part of Accor, a world-leading hospitality group consisting of more than 5,100 properties and 10,000 food and beverage venues throughout 110 countries.

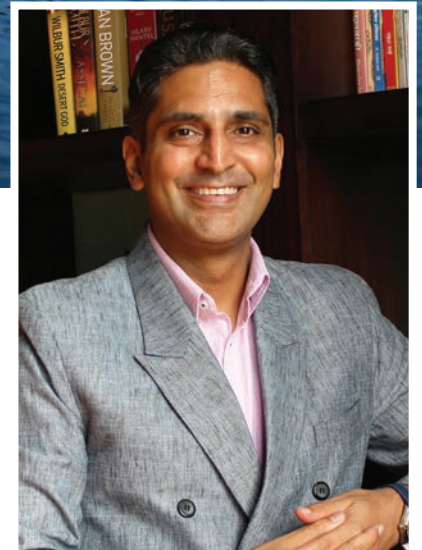
## **Tell us about the hotel? What were the factors in deciding the location of Raffles Udaipur?**

Located in the romantic and historic city of Udaipur, unlike other hotels in the city, Raffles Udaipur is reminiscent of a grand

country estate. It is set on an exclusive island, in the midst of Uda Sagar Lake that is home to migratory birds and bountiful flora and fauna. The 101 rooms and suites offer unhindered, breathtaking views of the lake and captivating sunsets. Our bespoke dining venues and programmes have been carefully crafted to deliver unparalleled gastronomy at six of our dining venues. The leisurely romantic walks in the outdoor spaces are serene, making it a haven for travellers who are on a constant quest for peace and rejuvenation. Legendary Raffles service coupled with these exclusive offerings makes our guests in residence feel the extraordinary emotional luxury that the brand is committed to. Udaipur, being an important extension of the Golden Triangle, is an attractive destination for both domestic and international travellers alike. What could have been a better place than the city of great culture and heritage to launch the first Raffles in India!

## **How is the brand different from other Accor luxury properties?**

Raffles is at the helm of Accor's diversified hotel brand portfolio, in the classic luxury segment. The brand is a true pioneer of worldly elegance and hospitality. This is an iconic brand where each Raffles hotel offers gracious warm and discreet service, delivering emotional luxury to the well-travelled guests.



▲ Abhishek Sharma

Raffles Udaipur is a rare place of extraordinary discovery and hospitality and a place of tradition and significance. Like every other Raffles in the world, this property reflects the mood of its location, with a personality that is both intimate and opulent. While the hotel structure is inspired by classical European Palladian architecture, featuring domes, high ceilings and outdoor spaces that are extensive, magnificent and lush, there are subtle influences of Mughal architecture. Decorative chhatris and stucco work has been intertwined in the spaces showcasing local Mewari elements such as jali panels and the iconic tikri art work. There is a serene on-site temple for special weddings, ensuring memories of a lifetime. Raffles Udaipur is a true embodiment of the confluence of two cultures, and this comes alive in its design philosophy. Besides this, lost recipes from the erstwhile royal families of India that can be experienced at our specialty restaurant Sawai Kitchen,



the Raffles' signature 'Singapore Sling' adapted to 'Udaipur Sling', keeping Indian ingredients at its core are some examples of how the brand's offerings have been blended with the local Indian influences to offer a unique experience.

**Are there any unique concepts thought about at the property, in accommodation, F&B, wellness, experiences, etc.?**

To begin with, at Sawai Kitchen, the Indian speciality restaurant, our guests can expect to be graciously served the lost recipes from the region's royal households, reinvented for modern tastes. Culinary enthusiasts can enjoy a co-cooking experience at Rasoi, the cookery school. Our guests can even pick up various chefs' special spices from our dedicated 'Spice Wall'. The Raffles Patisserie offers freshly baked breads, classic French desserts and signature Raffles pastries. To put a focus on the tea/ coffee culture, we have introduced the Indian estate coffee with the signature Raffles blend. Our guests can also relax and sip on artisanal, locally inspired tea from Anandini Tea Estate, Dharamshala. Last but not the least, Harvest, set to open in October, offers an interactive farm-to-table dining experience with produce foraged from the estate farm, spotlighting the region's food traditions.

The Writers Bar is a sophisticated, alluring space that pays tribute to the many famous authors from around the world. The cuisine philosophy of this bar has been curated taking a 6 'C's inspiration (Champagne, Caviar Short Eats, Chocolates, Coffee, Chai and Connoisseur Malts). Offering an ode to the traditional recipes, the chef has carefully curated an Indian-inspired small plates menu.



Raffles Udaipur promises exclusivity, unexplored destination and an ultra-luxurious experience on a private island. Our on-site experienced curators and the remarkable Raffles butlers ensure that our guests have a holistic and immersive stay with us. From our resident wellness specialist, Dr. Nitin Bhota taking the guests on a personal quest of self-discovery, the spice artisan taking them on a journey of understanding Indian spices at the artisanal spice wall to the resident Barista and tea sommelier who acquaints them with extensive sessions on coffee making and tea brewing, every experience at Raffles Udaipur is exclusive.

**What customer mix are you targeting? Can you elaborate if you are targeting MICE and the wedding business?**

Our guests will largely be leisure travellers who are on a constant quest for peace, calm and discovery. Raffles

Udaipur will extend the largest ballroom in the city facilitating big meetings, conferences and product launches while the smaller meetings rooms which can be used by the corporate groups staying with us, for their board meetings, giving us an opportunity to engage with the business segment.

Our outdoor meeting venues are expansive, covering over 40,000 sq. ft., along with the indoor Grand Ballroom spread across 9,000 sq. ft. Our MICE offerings cater to ultra-luxury brands whose brand values resonate with our brand ethos. We are in touch with key MICE associations in India such as FICCI and NASSCOM to strengthen our ties with key business travellers. The origin of business at present would remain domestic until international travel opens. The key international source markets for Raffles Udaipur will be Middle-East, South-East Asia, Europe, and the USA.

**Tell us about the bookings and introductory offers during the launch phase?**

Plan your first stay at Raffles Udaipur with an exclusive experience 'A Royal Escape' to discover Udaipur anew. The experience offers a decadent array of cuisines for breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as signature experiences like the Raffles high-tea, morning yoga with in-house master and sunset cocktail hours.

Soak in the enchanting views of the Udai Sagar Lake and walk around the lush green landscapes with the in-house naturalist during your stay. The experience presents an indulgent opportunity to upgrade to the next category of room, as per availability and a late check-out until 1600 hours. 'A Royal Escape' is attractively priced at INR 45,000 plus taxes per night and is valid only for stays between now and September 30, 2021.





# Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts, aiming for a robust presence in India market



Atmosphere Kanifushi Maldives

Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts, a dynamic and fast-growing Indian Ocean hospitality group, recently announced the appointment of Souvagya Mohapatra as the Managing Director for India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan. This announcement signals significant growth plans, with a strong focus on the Indian subcontinent. Mohapatra's experience of launching world-class hotels, his knack for identifying the right destination at the right time for strategic benefits, along with immense market knowledge will help and guide Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts in South Asia. In an exclusive interview with TTJ, Mohapatra sheds more light on the brand and the role he has to play.

Prashant Nayak

## Please let us know about your prior experiences in the hospitality business?

My tryst with the hospitality sector began in the year 1992 and it will now be more than 27 years that I have been associated with this industry. My short tenure at The Oberoi group just after the Hotel Management School has pushed my career with a strong foundation. Post my tenure at Oberoi, I was associated with Mayfair Hotels and Resorts for the most part of my career. I joined Mayfair Group in the year 1994 when it had only two properties in its portfolio and my major responsibility there included steering the sales and marketing strategy of the group, along with planning and executing its expansion plans. I must mention that in these 27 years, from a two-property resort, the brand grew to be a distinguished chain of 12 Luxury Resorts having a presence across 10 destinations in the country. I am confident that my past experience, especially on the expansion of business along with my familiarity with the India market will benefit the group.

## Tell us more about Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts in the Indian Ocean region?

Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts is a dynamic and fast-growing Indian Ocean



▲ Souvagya Mohapatra

Hotels & Resorts group registered office in Singapore and corporate office in the Maldives. Atmosphere's first property, Atmosphere Kanifushi, opened its doors in December 2013. The group opened its second property, OBLU by Atmosphere at Helengeli, in November 2015; followed by their flagship Lifestyle Luxury sub-brand, THE OZEN COLLECTION, in July 2016 with the launch of OZEN LIFE MAADHOO followed by the launch of OZEN RESERVE BOLIFUSHI in December 2020; and then OBLU Select at Sangeli, which opened in July 2018. The newest addition to the portfolio is VARU by Atmosphere was unfolded in October 2019. Atmosphere Group is also adding two more properties in Maldives and two properties in Sri Lanka.

## Any thoughts about launching the Atmosphere brand in the India market?

Having successful ventures in the Maldives and upcoming Resorts in Sri



Lanka, now the Group wants to venture into India, Nepal & Bhutan. As regards to our expansion in India, our focus is to explore across the country and wait for the right opportunities. India is blessed with varied tourism potential. It has always been replete with all that a travel connoisseur could ask for and with the improvement in the overall core infrastructure and connectivity, it makes for a very good investment opportunity. Our Business Development team is already in the job of identifying properties in potential destinations such as Goa, Kerala, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Guwahati, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, etc. Preferably, our Ozen brand will debut in these destinations. Our Ozen collection is an award-winning, Uber-Lux hospitality brand, and its resorts offer ultimate privacy blended with signature luxury aesthetics, for blissfully immersive holidays in pristine, Indian Ocean locations.

I am more than happy to share that the Govt. of Odisha recently approved our proposal to establish a Five-Star property at Bhubaneswar and we shall come up with a World-Class property there very soon. Indian Market remains a top priority for us and in the years to come, Atmosphere will have a very robust presence in this country which remains one of the fastest growing tourism markets.

## What makes your properties unique from others in the region?

Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts, Maldives offers guest-centric resort experiences through unique Resort Plans. The offerings include a range of all-encompassing experiences, with varieties of dining options as well as several value-added amenities and activities that ensure a relaxed, hassle-free holiday experience at each resort, all while staying true to the brand's core philosophy: 'The Joy of Giving'. These are some of the uniqueness that sets us apart from the others in the region wherever we are present.



Oblu at Helengeli

## What will be your role in the given markets? How confident are you in making a mark with the Indian audience, given the COVID situation?

This is a very difficult time for the entire industry. It is time for everyone to incorporate cost control measures and adopt innovative technologies for survival. However, the Indian subcontinent has a lot of potential as far as the hospitality and tourism industries are concerned. There are plenty of destinations possessing amazing tourism potentials in India which need to be explored. Our primary aim is to explore those untapped destinations and come up with world-class resorts. This is just an initiative in part of Atmosphere Group for enhancing the tourist inflows in India, both domestic and foreign. With our years-long expertise in understanding the Indian market, I do not think it will be much of a problem to establish the desired business post-pandemic.

## How are your hotels reaching out to new, evolved, and changed customers?

Safety, security, and hygiene are some of the factors that matter a lot for a traveller in the current scenario. With our highest degree of hospitality services across all six properties, coupled with luxury and the factors that I mentioned sets us apart.

Contactless services, new normal practices, and innovative cost control measures that our employees are trained and constantly practicing without hampering the standard of the organisation. However, with travel restrictions from maximum countries, the entire world is suffering and so are we. This is just a matter of time and I am sure it will pass by very soon.

## Do you see the Indian hospitality industry still evolving despite the pandemic? By when do you expect to see stability in the industry?

I see great potential in the Indian Hospitality market. With that being said, I agree that the kind of crisis the pandemic outbreak has triggered in our industry will take time to recover, but sooner than later, it will stand back on its feet and that too stronger than ever. I believe the biggest strength of the Indian Hospitality market is the presence of a rising middle class with increasing disposable incomes. This apart, one must also know that the growth of the Indian Tourism and Hospitality market is majorly fuelled by its Domestic Tourism and as restrictions on travel are lifted, more and more people will travel, leading to a more than faster-expected recovery. We all are aware of the recent surge in tourist footfall in the hill situations which was termed as revenge tourism what we may not be knowing is that particular rush had led to occupancy levels in hotels going as high as 60-70 per cent and by this standard, I assume that we shall be back to the pre-COVID level of growths in the next two quarters.

In terms of evolution, the major change we all will see will be on the safety and hygiene perspective along with more focus on health and wellness. Indian Hospitality Industry has adapted to these changes in a very impressive way and as we move ahead, we shall continue witnessing this evolution because guests will now be more conscious than ever of these criteria, and brands that reassure them will see great business.



Oblu Select at Sangeli





# Riding the wave of new Revenue Drivers!

As the hospitality industry continues to bear the brunt of the current economic environment, hotels are now looking for creative ways not only to offset their basic operating costs but also to make a positive contribution to their revenues.

**Deepak Nainwal**

Over the past months, we have seen hotels successfully pivot their business models in order to survive everything COVID-19 has thrown at the industry. It is a smart move – diversifying your hotel's revenue provides financial stability for your business and reduces risk.

This has never been more important – businesses with multiple revenue streams already in place have been in a better position to withstand the negative effects of the pandemic. The ability to react quickly and stay flexible – as well as a willingness to take risks.

Increasing the average spend per guest should not just be the focus during a pandemic. Hiking room rates is not the only option to boost revenue generation; there are countless innovative tactics one can use to leverage their hotel's assets to open new revenue streams, grow your customer base and build a wider community around your brand.

The global pandemic has brought about a dramatic shift in consumer behaviour and buying patterns. Brands have to step beyond the regular and offer extraordinary services to satisfy their consumer cravings. COVID brought the world to a standstill, where international/ domestic travel along with corporate movement was put to an indefinite halt, finally hitting the hotel industry to its guts. These unprecedented times not just got the industry experts into an ambiguous situation, it was also high time to get back on the drawing board and identify new revenue streams, and apply intelligent solutions to thrive and strive. The current crisis has forced the industry to come up with innovative and ingenious ways to utilise their assets to stay afloat, in the process opening newer revenue streams.

Radisson Blu Faridabad has always had an edge of being the only five-star hotel in the city of Faridabad. We have developed an array of innovative revenue-generating tools that have helped the hotel bring its revenues back on a growth trajectory.





▲ Deepak Nainwal

guests. Do not wait for guests to request this – target them with offers through your marketing and in pre-stay mailers. You can also use these ‘perks’ as a direct booking motivator – for example, when guests book through your website, they get early check-in or late check-out free.

➤ Our digital campaigns promoted the hygiene and sanitization protocols adopted by the hotel to boost customer confidence in the market (tie-up with SGS)

➤ Introduced Radisson Concierge Services to boost the revenue (Special services like laundry, disinfection, Food Delivery, and Corporate Lunch Packs)

➤ We also introduced a special chef-curated menu with immunity-boosting ingredients

➤ Planned disruptive marketing strategies with a strong digital presence to ensure large visibility and a great reputation. With the right assessment, designed incentives and packages for alternative markets to improve profit margins

➤ We have forayed into newer avenues like ‘Work from Hotel’. The co-working space has huge potential in our country as many organizations find them very cost-effective and it is an alternative revenue stream for hotels. ‘Work from Hotel’ gives you a complete change from the monotonous working from the home schedule with additional benefits of being in a hotel

➤ Radisson Hotel Group has recently launched ‘Meetha By Radisson’ which is yet another initiative to boost our F&B sales

➤ Special Staycation Packages for driveable distance, Special tailor-made packages for corporates and bleisure travel, sell rooms by the hour or for single-day use

➤ Coworking and boutique office space, renting out boardroom and business centre to corporates

➤ Hybrid/Virtual/In-person events, organised comedy night, live culinary sessions, live DJ nights and weddings, monetise virtual events. During this period, the use of technology to connect people has become more important than ever. Many of our clients were running physical events when lockdowns and restrictions began – making the switch to virtual programming meant they could continue to foster the community spirit they create onsite and stay at the forefront of guest’s minds

➤ The key is to give your audience a unique experience – something they cannot find anywhere else. Marketing wise, utilise social media ads and leverage your email list to promote your events. Looking beyond COVID-19, think about how you can integrate virtual events with physical ones as an ‘add on’

➤ Pick-up Minibar, offering special discounted rates at in-room minibar products

Apart from rooms and banquets, F&B is one of the major revenue drivers for hotels, hotels need to adopt a more digitalise approach in order to connect with their customers. Food delivery models have become an essential tool for hotel F&B revenues, it has now become imperative to tie up with food delivery giants like Zomato and Swiggy for they not only help reach out to the masses but their brilliant database and market segmentation has helped hotels encash on their delivery models.

Apart from increasing our restaurant sales we have also focused on maintaining a virtual relationship with our guests and patrons to assure them of safety and hygiene scenarios at the hotel, we have taken several steps to reinvent the market and reposition our restaurants in post COVID era, which includes

- Sharing recipes, tutorials, and live cooking classes
- Update our operating procedures
- Reactivate customers using a segmented approach
- Align the menu to new consumer preferences
- Optimize our delivery process.
- Digitalise our consumer engagement
- In-depth cleanliness and disinfection procedures; in partnership with SGS, the world’s leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. Our worldwide-customised Safety Protocol has enabled us to win the customer trust and recover faster uniformly, worldwide. This has definitely given us an edge over the competition, especially in the restaurant business.

Deepak Nainwal is the Revenue Manager at Radisson Blu Faridabad.

All our attention is directed towards the digital front and improvisation in terms of complying with the changes this pandemic brought. It is a given fact that the pandemic has influenced our revenues drastically; however, we have identified alternate measures to recover and build on this gap. There are numerous takes on how we can best move forward and adapt to the changing circumstances.

➤ Understanding the changing market dynamics, the hotel addressed the fact that for some time the corporate business will be slow and hence focused more on long stay guests

➤ Utilise time between check-out and check-in, the average hotel room sits empty for 7 hours from the previous guest departing and the next guest arriving – during which time, the room is not bringing in any revenue. One way to plug this gap is with day-use bookings, which involve allowing guests to book the room for a few hours during the day. However, to increase profitability with less hassle, you should be upselling early check-ins and late checkouts to existing



# Finding opportunities with the change in customer demand

Taking personalised and collaborative approach along with creating relevant marketing content helps in capturing the changing demand drivers. Shibil Malik, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Bangalore, in an interaction with TTJ shares more on the strategies to withstand and manage the pandemic crisis by working out effective solutions to the ever-changing hotel functioning and customer needs.

Prashant Nayak

**A**t Sheraton Grand Bangalore, the hotel occupancies seem to be gradually improving after the recent onslaught of the second wave of this pandemic. It has more than doubled and they are near about touching the 50 per cent mark. It seems that their guests seem to be a lot more assured and confident with the hygiene measures deployed at the hotel and in fact have been eagerly waiting to return.

"Year-long lockdowns have created a pent-up demand and we experienced the same trend soon after wave one too. We are exactly in the same phase now. Last years' experience made us undergo changes very rapidly that normally would unfold over multiple years. We innovated rapidly and were also forced to adapt to keep our hotels in business. The transition was much easier this year as we were just beginning to come back to some kind of normalcy. The hotel team coped better this year and was better prepared to deal with the onslaught for the second time. We were quick to pick up from the learnings of last year and were able to improvise on our strategies for both revenue generation and opting for more ingenious ways to control costs," briefs Malik on current hotel occupancy status.

Speaking of revenue drivers that their property has adopted to stay afloat, Malik says, "The most remarkable revenue driver at our property, in my opinion, was our team's adaptability and resilience towards the regularly changing scenarios. We launched and effectively advertised various new offerings in the market like the all-inclusive 'Intimate wedding package', catering to forty guests or less, which was a huge hit among the city audience. This package was among many other offerings which would



▲ Shibil Malik

be amended very regularly based on changing government guidelines."

Their team has also rolled out various all-inclusive room offers at the hotel, which includes the 'Staycation' & 'Self Isolation packages'. Their staycation package currently is the most in-demand with inclusions ranging from Early check-in and Late check-out, In-room movie experience, an exclusive kids zone, evening hi-tea, inclusive of breakfast, lunch, and dinner, kids up to 12 years dine and stay for free while guests earn bonus Marriott Bonvoy points per stay. With Marriott Bonvoy On Wheels, the hotel's F&B offerings reached out to a variety of audiences, helping the hotel with an incredible stream of revenue generation.

Malik is of the opinion that the challenge to quickly and accurately capture the change in customer demand and to innovate and personalise a customer experience will continue. "We must recognise the new segments of business that have emerged as opportunities during

this pandemic and try to invest in and nurture them. The post COVID traveller is now more tech-savvy than before, as going contactless is the new norm. This has changed the rules of engagement and has provided us with an opportunity to leverage technology far better than before and customise our offering at various touchpoints in the guest journey," explains Malik.

Sheraton Grand Bangalore's marketing strategy since the pandemic has been planned out in a very phased manner, the highlight of which through all phases being their stringent hygiene and safety measures. The spread of the virus led to an unparalleled need to adapt to the 'New Normal'. This not only meant improvising 360° on how they communicate with their customers but also focusing on how unique their offerings are during these trying times. Over the months, internally their teams have evolved immeasurably to face the challenge together.

"Our campaigns are a lot more personalised. The strategy at the very initial stages of the pandemic was shifted to winning our customer's trust with respect to hygiene and safety standards adopted by our property and also hotel experiences delivered safely to your doorstep. This was showcased by creating a series of visual content showcasing our current safety measures, boosted heavily on Social media platforms to our target audience, giving us great visibility. We also collaborated with various influencers in the city to help us amplify the outreach of our campaigns. All the printed collaterals were shifted online or converted into QR code-linked creatives. Be it in room collaterals or the menus displayed at the restaurants, everything has been digitized," concludes Malik.



# PARADORES OF SPAIN

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Of the ninety-seven, there are many popular ones for MICE movements, here are two of them:

**The Real Sitio de La Granja** is a garden town eleven kilometres from Segovia, where a Parador composed of the Casa de los Infantes, from the s. XVIII and the General Headquarters of the Guardia de Corps, which houses a modern Congress and Convention Center. Located fifty-five minutes from Madrid, The Parador de La Granja has sixteen meeting rooms for more than six hundred people. In its monumental and natural environment is the Royal Palace of La Granja, with its beautiful gardens and fountains and the Royal Glass Factory converted into a Glass Museum.

In what is known as the Silver Cup, is the Parador de Cádiz, considered the oldest city in the West. Between Baroque palaces and Indian buildings, you will find this modern and innovative jewel with views of the bay from its terraces and rooms. A Successful Bet for Exclusive Events!

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tourism or Michelin-starred menus.



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## Leisure or business, Spain is eager to welcome the Indian traveller

Elisa Robles Fraga ▶

**TURESPAÑA** 

In an exclusive conversation with TTJ, Elisa Robles Fraga, Director, Tourism Office of Spain in India, shares an insight into the country's present travel and tourism situation. Now that the borders are open for a few categories of people from India, she is hopeful that Indian leisure and business travellers will be able to visit Spain very soon.

**Prashant Nayak**

### What does the future hold for outbound tourism from India to your destination?

In recent years, Indian tourist visits to Spain have grown exponentially. In 2019, Spain received 5.29 per cent of total traffic to Europe and 6.49 per cent of total traffic to Western Europe. It can be attributed to various reasons/events during the last decade, such as the Bollywood film *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* released in 2011, the celebration of the IIFA (International Indian Film Academy Awards) award ceremony in Spain in 2016, the inauguration of the first direct flight between India-Spain with Air India at the end of 2016, and the events promoted to promote tourism to Spain, among others. In addition, the direct air connection meant an increase in air capacity and consequently an increase in the number of arrivals to Spain until the recent suspension of its operations for various reasons, especially due to the pandemic.

However, considering the current severe restrictions on international travel, it is estimated that international travel will

recover slowly and gradually from the year 2022. Once international travel is allowed for tourism, the recovery of the Indian outbound market will probably be slower than that of domestic tourism, as it will take longer to regain the confidence of typical consumers for international travel. All the same, we are eager to welcome them, be it leisure or business!

### What gives you cause for optimism in these difficult times?

We believe that Spain is a very attractive option for the Indian traveller for many reasons, including a more pleasant climate than the rest of Europe. Also, it has good internal networks like the AVE (Spanish high-speed rail network), roads, etc.

It should also be noted that, since the beginning of 2020, the visa application requirements for Indians have been simplified. In addition to the notable improvements regarding the procedure and required documentation (in collaboration with BLS visa management agency), the visa management period has been reduced to 4 business days on average. Therefore, as soon as travel for tourism is allowed,

Spain will compete on equal terms with other preferred European destinations for Indians in terms of visa issuance.

With the situation of the pandemic controlled in Spain and the government's aggressive vaccination program in India, a positive prognosis is expected for the near future. Spain's borders are already open for tourism for some countries.

We believe that not only the image of Spain has improved but also that awareness of the country as a tourist destination has continued to grow, not only due to the activities carried out before the pandemic but also due to the activities/promotions/online training carried out during the different periods of the pandemic.

Spain is currently one of the leading countries to plan and implement long-term sustainable solutions. For example, the newly implemented Digital Certificate will prove to be of great convenience for travellers. The entire Spanish tourism sector is getting prepared to face the "new normal." Apart from various measures like sanitization services, training given to personnel, digital solutions to avoid





Barcelona

physical contact, there are various tourism products being tailored to the needs of travellers in the post-pandemic era.

However, since Spain has opened its border to fully vaccinated travellers now, it gives us the biggest reason to be optimistic. All latest and most updated information related to this can now be referred to at the Travel Safe Spain link: <https://travelsafe.spain.info/en/>

#### **What are the latest developments or happenings in Spain on the tourism front?**

In recent months, in Madrid, the Mandarin Oriental Ritz, a five-star property, has opened right in the center of the city. The first Spanish Four Seasons hotel, framed in the Galería Canalejas, opened in September 2020.

In the coming weeks, Madrid will also see the Pestana CR7 Gran Vía hotel, the Hard Rock Hotel Atocha, or the Madrid Hotel Atocha Tapestry Collection by Hilton opening their doors, to mention just some of the projects that are changing the face of Madrid.

Madrid is a city where responsibility and passion come together for the professionals of the MICE sector; they are committed and active like never before. Because they know how important face-to-face events are and have never stopped organizing meetings, they know that they are more prepared than ever. If you choose Madrid, we assure you that your event will be a guaranteed success.

Moreover, the Mobile World Congress is back in Barcelona. The city is reactivating its economy and getting back on track with the return of the congress. Following the global economic downturn caused by Covid-19, the world's largest mobile phone event reopens in Barcelona. This year, the

Mobile World Congress will feature more than 600 speakers from the industry. It will present a hybrid experience, combining face-to-face and virtual formats.

#### **How is your country working to offer safe travel and environment in both leisure and MICE segments when travel resumes?**

All hygiene and safety protocols are being exercised and followed at all tourism establishments in Spain. Turespaña, our headquarters, has implemented a new Travel Safe microsite (<https://travelsafe.spain.info/en/>) which provides you with the most updated information regarding all safety tips before, during and after your travel. Spain continues to offer a safe and sustainable environment for every kind of traveller, whether leisure or business traveller. We believe that global vaccination numbers and the opening of borders for leisure tourism would be the driving factor

for the recovery of safe tourism.

#### **What are the tourism trends in your destination which are now being promoted with the Indians?**

We are carrying out a wide activity to inform different Spanish destinations and products through webinars and actions with specialized media in travel and tourism.

We believe that, at least in the short term, a drastic change will be observed, like the products demanded by this source market. Considering the traveller's new sanitary regulations and cautious behaviour, the traditional demand among Indians for large group travel, vacation packages, cruise trips, MICE segment, etc., will no longer be as strong. Segments such as FITs, couples travel, honeymoon travel, youth travel (millennials) and small groups, among others, will gain more importance.

There will also be some increase in the demand for nature trails and hiking and adventure sports. The best-known places such as Barcelona, Madrid, Andalusia, Ibiza, etc. will continue to be preferred. However, possible increases (although small at first) are also foreseen in visits to less visited areas such as, for example, the north of Spain due to new trends and combinations of tourism products that are evolving post-pandemic. These trends are also reflected in the interest shown by various tour operators and travel agencies in getting to know Spain to promote it.

In short, Spain is one of the most popular destinations in Europe, so it is to be expected that the demand to travel to the country will continue to strengthen as regular tourist trips from India resume.



Madrid





# Makes as a great destination for Women Travellers



Thailand is a spellbinding travel destination with amazing adventure, delicious food and incredible places to visit. The best thing about travelling in Thailand is that one can explore on a shoestring budget and in luxury too. Plus, the people in Thailand are just so incredibly friendly, helpful and welcoming! So don't worry about traveling to Thailand as a solo woman traveller or with a bunch of your girlfriends. Many women travellers have already found that Thailand is actually one of the easiest, friendliest and safest countries to travel around in, making it an ideal choice for a ladies' getaway or a solo backpacking trip to explore the wonders of travel.

## Solo travel is a blast in Thailand

Travelling and even more so travelling alone teaches you so much about life and about the world. Thailand is adept for the solo woman travellers ranging from the newbie travellers and to the experienced ones. It's up to you where you want to spend your time. Thailand is home to different regions, each with its own attraction, cuisine, and culture. To get a grasp of the country, you'll have to see them all. Also, the country is no stranger to tourism and is continuously evolving and tourists are appreciated. With basic precautions like travelling to any other country, everything should be perfect. Thus, beyond being safe and welcoming, it's budget-friendly, readily accessible, and yet still totally envy-inducing.







## Shopping is a treat here

Well, all women love shopping, and so, all women love Thailand. Street markets here are bustling with locals and tourists and this is exactly the traditional Thai market in a nutshell. You can choose from a variety of products that include clothes, fashion accessories, electronics, souvenirs and plenty more. The interesting part is, if you have good bargaining skills, you can 'shop till you drop' without betraying the budget of your trip. For an upscale shopping experience, there are many shopping malls in all major cities of Thailand where international brands are easily available.

## Get pampered in the Wellness Capital of Asia

Thailand is undeniably one of the best countries in the world to enjoy a soothing spa break and has also earned its reputation as Asia's Spa Capital. Known for its world-class services and variety of wellness techniques and treatments, the Land of Smiles unsurprisingly boasts some of the finest spa facilities in the world. The country has a number of luxurious spas where one can get truly pampered as well as Traditional Thai massage outlets lining the buzzing streets for a relaxing experience to unwind and rejuvenate after a busy day of sightseeing, shopping, etc.

Speaking of Traditional Thai massage therapy; it is something to consider at least once, if only for the experience. Thai massage uses gentle to strong pressure and stretching techniques to relax the whole body. Developed by Buddhist monks, the healing system is practised from nearly 2500 years ago and its techniques have influences from India, China and Japan. This massage is excellent to reduce stress, for deep relaxation, improve quality of sleep, stimulate blood circulation, boost energy, improve athletic performance and get you in a state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy.



## Recreate your favourite Thai food

From the scents of the street markets to the complex flavours of the curries and soups that form the heart of Thai cuisine, a trip to Thailand leaves a lasting impression on travellers' senses. For those who want a deeper immersion into the culinary magic of Thai cuisine than a cooking class is the way to go. As tourists have become increasingly interested in diverse world cuisines which are propagated in modern times, cooking schools, classes and organic farms are becoming a must-do item on travellers' itineraries in Thailand. Thai cooking classes teach vacationers how to recreate favourite dishes like Pad Thai, green and red curry, mango sticky rice, tofu making, dipping sauces, and Thai desserts with authentic and ethnic Thai practices. They're also quick to offer substitutes for ingredients that might be hard to find back home.



## Be a part of the growing women's golf clubs of Thailand

Thailand is on course to make the country a golfer's paradise. Kingdom is renowned as Asia's most popular golfing destination. And if you look around the courses, you'll find that many of these golf tourists are female. It seems that women are no longer content to wait by the pool while their husbands are on the greens. Thailand as a golf destination really appeals to women who appreciate that as well as an amazing round of golf. For women, a unique and truly memorable part of playing golf is the predominantly female Thai caddies who will provide ease, comfort, and a great level of service. Golf Destinations in Thailand are Khao Yai, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Phuket, Hua Hin, Bangkok and around. Also, women-only golf events are becoming more common.





# Better prepared and equipped with technology at the forefront



▲ Nagesh Chawla

While 2020 presented a multitude of challenges for everyone, the Renaissance Mumbai housed repatriation and shipping. 2021 began on a positive note for them, which nosedived again in April with the second wave spiralling. In August, the Production houses for on-location shoots started returning and sports teams have been taking over towers for a bubble, essential services, etc. The expat movement from Germany, Italy, and Japan, etc. is going on. So now the struggle is not the same as that of the year before, as they are now better prepared and equipped for days to come with technology coming to the forefront. "The industry as well as the hotel have witnessed a gradual shift in gears in the business, and are thankfully on an upswing. Occupancy per se has become atypical with several highs and lows and has witnessed a major change in terms of lead time. Weekends are seeing brisk business in terms of staycations in the hotel as well as the serviced apartments as the RevPar index has begun to rise," informs Nagesh.

In terms of stay concepts, their lakeside staycations have spearheaded their recovery index with more and more guests within the city opting to spend their weekends in luxury, away from housework. After more than a year of staying locked inside their

The pandemic has been the greatest teacher in recent history, uprooting everything from its halcyon days to the new normal of increased screen time, contact-free deliveries, biological bubbles, cashless payments and so much more. A whole new lexicon has made its way into everyday conversations and at Marriott International; they are delighted to reinvent each day, stay ahead of the curve and continue to delight all their guests. Excerpts, from the interview with Nagesh Chawla, Cluster General Manager, Marriott International, Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet Mumbai, Marriott Executive Apartments, on the current scenario at the hotel.

Prashant Nayak

homes, they have rediscovered the joy and luxury of the hotel's suites, rooms and serviced apartments, breakfast and lunch buffets for in-house guests at Lake View Café, a la carte dining beside the lake, wellness programs administered by duly inoculated and highly trained professionals, long walks by the lake beside dazzling greens, unique staycations with their pets, a tennis court, outdoor games, the list goes on.

Adding more Nagesh shares, "Marriott Bonvoy of Wheels heralded a new era in dining-in with home delivery of freshly cooked culinary treats delivered safely. The introduction of Linktree to all our guests where they could book anything from a table at the restaurant, to a staycation at the property or have food home delivered was all made available from a single link. Safety and sanitization swung to the forefront with inoculation drives for team members, deep sanitising off all areas on a regular basis, end to end safety procedures for all food deliveries resulting in positive feedback from our guests and a marked increase of footfall inside the hotel."

The new, evolved and changed customer is in the driving seat at this moment as technology has become everyone's steering wheel for survival. The hotel's marketing content, strategies, concepts, imagery and interactions have been regularly tweaked to adjust to the brand new sentiments that abound.

While Renaissance Mumbai continues to delight its loyal guest base of more than two decades who prefer traditional hospitality, it is also welcoming in with open arms the deluge of new-age consumers who are constantly seeking vacation options inside the city, piping hot food delivered contact free to homes and workplaces, smart workdays with high-speed Wi-Fi with their day-use room packages, healthy menus for weekdays and delicacies for weekends and special occasions. The food and beverage promotions and festival offerings can now be enjoyed in the restaurant as well as anywhere the guest desires, due to 'Marriott Bonvoy on Wheels' which has garnered a superlative response from all corners. Their focus is now on promoting features of Elite memberships for their Marriott Bonvoy members while staying innovative, passionate and also compassionate.

When asked about India's evolving hospitality scenario, Nagesh opines, "India's hospitality situation is beginning to look up once again despite the state of flux and constant evolution it is in. The future currently depends on how effectively the third wave of the pandemic is nullified. Having said that, the rate of improvement is inching back ever so slowly. For the industry to reach anything that resembles stability, the first quarter of 2022 is where one should focus and work towards the regular growth pattern that is visible as of now."



# Bonded to the focus

## 'Safe Stays at Fortune Hotels'

Fortune Hotels' brand philosophy is driven by its objective to provide contemporary accommodation to business and leisure travellers through its wide range of accommodation in pertinent destinations, with emphasis on personalised service at a great value. TTJ had the opportunity to interact with two of its General Managers, S. Ajit Kumar, GM, Fortune Inn Shree Kanya, Visakhapatnam, and Devinder Walia, GM, Fortune JP Palace, Mysore. It was interesting to know from them how they are faring at their respective properties in Southern India amid the pandemic.

Prashant Nayak

**Can you tell us about your present occupancy rates? Is it the same struggle you have seen a year ago?**

**S. Ajit Kumar:** We currently maintain an occupancy of 55 per cent, at Fortune Inn Shree Kanya, Visakhapatnam. Much to our surprise, the occupancy rates seem to have picked up faster as compared to last year due to the early opening of the economic activities, awareness and vaccination. Amongst others, revenge travel is a key factor in influencing occupancy. While revenge travel is more focused towards tourist and leisure destinations, we have many who are taking short breaks and staycations with us. Another attribute driving business is socials, where we continue to see a steady rise in queries for intimate social functions.

**Devinder Walia:** With the second wave decelerating and the opening of economic activities, the hospitality sector is seeing a pent-up demand. Leisure travel in July has been far better than last year, especially for drivable destinations. The present occupancy rates are around 55 per cent, this year at Fortune JP Palace, Mysore. We believe that the on-going 'Vaccination' drive is giving travellers' confidence and will thus help in the recovery of occupancies, though the Average Daily Rates will take time to recover.

**What new or remarkable revenue drivers has your property adopted to stay afloat? (Stay concepts, F&B, technology, hygiene standards, etc.)**

**S. Ajit Kumar:** In terms of the market, the current focus is on project-related corporate business and transient business for rooms. Small and intimate social functions and takeaway/home delivery for F&B are also high on our radar. Innovations in F&B have brought us additional attention from city residents, especially with concepts such as Barbeque@Home and curated festive meal offerings. As most of the travel is happening within the 200 km radius, we have curated stay packages with flexible terms to attract guests. We have also rolled out the 'Safe



▲ S. Ajit Kumar



▲ Devinder Walia

Stays at Fortune Hotels' programme which focuses and communicates about the enhanced cleanliness and hygiene standards that we have implemented.

**Devinder Walia:** The mindset of the customer has undergone a change and being safe is now their first priority. We continue to remain focused on the 'Safe Stays at Fortune Hotels' programme which communicates about the enhanced cleanliness and hygiene standards that we have implemented. To increase room revenues, we keep our pulse on the occupancy forecast and set competitive price points to increase occupancy. The stay packages we have rolled out to create demand with flexible cancellation policies have made it easier for our guests. At the corporate level, travel is happening for the servicing/setting of machinery in manufacturing in our region. However, MICE has not picked up as companies are continuing with the 'Work from Home' model.

**What are your current marketing strategies? How are you reaching out to the new, evolved and changed customer?**

**S. Ajit Kumar:** With the changing market dynamics, the current focus is on project-related corporate business and transient business for rooms, social functions and takeaway/home delivery for F&B. Safety

& Hygiene remains the #1 priority of travellers today and our primary strategy is to help maintain guest confidence in our functioning. Constant engagement on social media channels, emails, and other points of interaction has been the key to communicating and reassuring guests during the post COVID scenario. Value-centric offerings such as short breaks, staycations and workations have been chiselled, keeping in mind the immediate needs of guests. To drive F&B revenues, we continue to focus on food delivery and have partnered with leading food delivery apps for the same along with extending the option of takeaways.

**Devinder Walia:** Our strategy has been to keep the basics right. We diligently monitor our vitals and that of our competitor set. To increase room revenue, we keep our pulse on the occupancy forecast and set competitive price points to increase occupancy. Besides this, attractive stay packages have been floated to create demand and make it an enjoyable experience for our guests. Our approach for reaching out to the new age/evolved customer is by way of digital outreach through channels like social media, personal calls and emails and this is how we will continue to engage with them in the future till the scenario gets better.





▲ Karthik Ramdas

## Curating experiences for the new and evolving traveller

At JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity, they are foreseeing a great demand in quarter four, and if the situation stabilises, next year should be better. Karthik Ramdas, Director of Sales & Marketing, JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity has noticed good occupancy levels at his hotel in recent months. He feels that if everyone takes necessary precautions, then the pandemic situation is likely to normalise sooner.

**Prashant Nayak**

JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity reverberates with warm hospitality with moments of enrichment. Staycations have become an important segment for them and the concept has encouraged prevalent domestic travel within the country. The staycation at the hotel features experiences across dining venues, the comfort of staying in their rooms & suites, distinguished services and more. They have also adopted integrated technology when it comes to serving their diners with a contactless QR code scan ordering interface. Their website features contactless stays and enlists all procedures and hygiene measures for their guests to book.

'Also, travellers nowadays are seeking experiences that revitalize their mind, body and spirit; hence, wellness and rejuvenation offerings are of great importance for us and we provide our guests with these reinvigorating experiences at the Quan Spa,

fitness centre, and swimming pool. All these services operate as per the Government guidelines, with all safety & precautions under Marriott International's Commitment to Clean," assures Karthik.

The hotel started with an occupancy of 10 per cent after the lockdown in 2021. They have been seeing a constant growth to 60 per cent, and more after the hotel opened completely. Compared to the same time last year 2020, the city was under lockdown, hence the present scenario is favourable for JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity.

Speaking about the evolving hospitality situation in India, Kartik says, "The existing scenario is new for everyone and many concepts have evolved by engulfing safety procedures in services and offerings. Along with the Commitment to clean safety & hygiene practices, JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity has been leading many socially responsible

initiatives to serve the community in times of need. The hotel also has great environment-friendly initiatives that are an essential part of Marriott's Serve 360 campaign, which include terminating the use of single-use plastic water bottles in the hotel, an in-house operated AI-enabled water treatment and purification plant and more."

People are looking for unique experiences; therefore, the hotel conceptualizes and promotes experiential dining through their marketing channels with signatures like the 100 hours aged duck experience by their Asian Cuisine Masterchef, Travis Loh. "Experiences like these are an important part of our marketing strategies. Social media and digital platforms are preferred ways to reach and expand existing audiences that involve capturing the fastest turnaround times for revenue maximisation opportunities," tells Kartik.



▲ Shuvendu Banerjee

## Earning consumer confidence with well-executed strategies

The hospitality industry has been one of the most proactive verticals, as far as evolving with the new normal is concerned. Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla has adapted to the new normal with extreme speed and agility. Shuvendu Banerjee, General Manager, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla, shares his optimism in how they are positioning themselves well for the recovery ahead.

**Sonika Bohra**

The domestic market has been the first one to witness the green shoots post lockdown. With markets reopening gradually, a lot of travellers are looking to re-book their cancelled vacations. 'Staycations' at a drive-able distance has been the biggest trend of the year as the people are looking for escapades for unwinding and celebrating special occasions such as anniversaries & birthdays. "The occupancy rates have been promising throughout the month with sold-out weekends. Most of the guests are utilising the staycation and getaway offers floating on our official website," says Shuvendu.

F&B has been the biggest game-changer to stay afloat for Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla during such extraordinary times. They introduced their 'Takeaway Happiness' menu and collaborated with food aggregators to ensure that their patrons can enjoy the

scrumptious and hygienically prepared dishes at the comforts of their homes. We have also launched curated Meal Combos to tap nearby corporate and non-resident areas in the vicinity. Shuvendu further adds, "Soon, we will be launching birthday party menus for the kids. We would be introducing a Buffer-On-The-Table menu with the best of the regional and international cuisines to choose from. We are actively promoting concepts such as 'Stay Together, Celebrate Together' to capture residential wedding segments at our hotel. We are receiving a lot of queries for the wedding soirees, which got postponed due to the lockdown."

The next generation of travellers is looking for well-curated, immersive vacations. They are on a constant lookout for interactive experiences, local delights, and social media friendly content. This is exactly how Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla

plans to tap them- by creating engaging, inspiring and real-time content on social media platforms and online media. Third-party testimonials in the form of food critics and influencers have helped them a lot to garner positive word of mouth. The modern-day travellers with discerning palates and evolved preferences lookout for factors such as sustainability, local experiences, wellness regimes, healthy menu options while booking their stays. These insights help them curate customized experiences for their guests.

"A full industry recovery will take time, but we're confident in the steps we've taken to drive demand back to our hotels as guests feel safe to travel. We remain focused on leveraging the strength of our brands, scale and market positioning to recover strongly and grow this business moving forward," tells Shuvendu.





▲ Sunil Kumar

## The Westin Goa: Move Well, Eat Well and Sleep Well

Launched in April 2021, The Westin Goa is the ninth Westin property in India. With an aim to expand the brand's signature wellbeing offerings and world-class hospitality, this new entrant is set to make its mark in the beach haven of India. Sunil Kumar, General Manager, The Westin Goa shares more with TTJ.

Sonika Bohra

Travellers are no longer just seeking a break from work but are looking for options where they can spend a relaxing time, wherein they can enjoy their work as well as find their experience rejuvenating. Since the demand has evolved, The Westin Goa offerings too have evolved to an extent in this short period.

"With high-speed Wi-Fi, the all-day dining restaurant - The Market, along with local, western, and Asian food delicacies at the Haven, in-house patisserie at Anjuna Coffee and Co., we aim to give our guests the desired experience they are looking for. Additionally, making sure our guests get a chance to replenish their minds and body, we have our Heavenly Spa and much more. Our guests can avail any of our existing programs/offers like 'Stay Smart Offers', 'Breakfast at INR 1',

'Westin Staycation', 'Heavenly Getaways', and 'Westin Family Escapes'. All these reflect our foundational pillars of Move Well, Eat Well and Sleep Well," says Sunil.

Sunil also adds, "We are a newly launched hotel and since the restrictions were lifted, we have been experiencing a great response from locals as well as tourists. Although the current rate of occupancy is about 30 to 40 per cent, we are expecting a rapid increase in footfalls during the peak season of Goa i.e., October onwards."

Staycations are in trend and The Westin Goa has hosted many guests in the recent past, providing them with intimate vacations. From the brand's iconic Heavenly Bed, a revitalising rain shower which features luxuriant White Tea Aloe bath amenities, to the poolside bar and restaurant 'Drift' from

where guests can witness a mesmerizing sunset, the hotel ensures that they provide their guests the best of experiences. The Westin Family Kids Club featuring fun activities such as origami, sandcastle making, dancing, baby Zumba classes and a playful kid's activity area are also some of the offerings at The Westin Goa.

"In a year, I think there will be stability in the hotel industry. Since many have either taken the first dose of their vaccine or are completely vaccinated, travellers are now looking for options to go out, explore places and enjoy the much-needed break from their hectic work schedules. Eventually, the industry will be stable, especially since hotels like us are enforcing and paying high attention to precautionary and safety measures too," shares Sunil.

## The Fern Hotels & Resorts opens Rakabi The Fern, Igatpuri

The Fern Hotels & Resorts, an environmentally sensitive hotel chain, has opened Rakabi The Fern, Igatpuri in Nashik District in Maharashtra. This is the 18th hotel which the company is managing in the state. This takes the tally to 81 operational properties in India, Nepal, and Seychelles.

Team TTJ

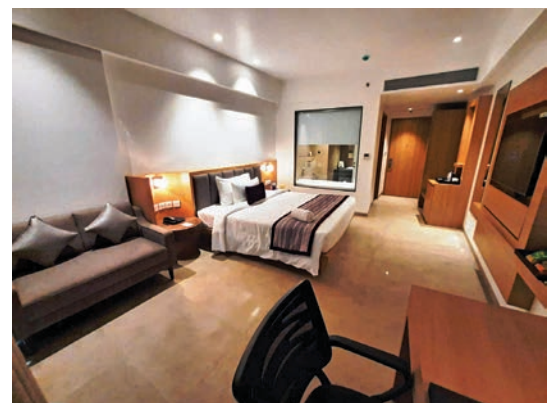
Rakabi The Fern, Igatpuri is an upscale 76 room hotel, offering four different categories of rooms- Winter Green, Fern Club, Fern Club Premium and Hazel Suite. The rooms are fitted with all modern amenities. All the rooms have a digital in-room safe, weighing scale, bedroom slippers, pillow menu, eco-friendly room lighting, eco-friendly bathroom amenities and rain showers.

The hotel boasts of a finely designed multi-cuisine restaurant, an authentic Indian vegetarian restaurant, bar, swimming pool and state of art banquet halls. The hotel is situated on National Highway 3 with easy access to public transport and major sightseeing attractions. The hotel offers spacious banquet and meeting rooms, business centre facilities, and huge lawns for open-air banqueting. The hotel also has

a swimming pool, spa, gym, activities centre and children's play area.

The hotel provides ample dining and entertaining options to its guests. Mélange, a multi-cuisine restaurant offers a wide range of Indian, Asian and international spreads and non-alcoholic beverages. Spice Della, the Indian vegetarian restaurant, gives the best experience of a wide range of exotic flavors and ingredients. Cake Boy, a bakery serving light snacks, freshly baked goods, along with hot and cold beverages. Ecstasy Bar, a contemporary bar offers a mix of appetizers and cocktails from a wide range of outstanding liquors and spirits. It is the perfect place to come and unwind after a busy day. The hotel is 120 km from Mumbai Airport, 3 km from Igatpuri Railway Station and 48 km from Nashik city.

Suhail Kannampilly, CEO, Concept Hospitality, said, "The Fern brand is extremely popular in the state. We have as many as 18 hotels in the state. Within the next few weeks, we are going to open another two hotels in Maharashtra. All our hotels are environment-friendly and follow all health and safety protocols for our associates and our guests."





# KOLKATA CONNECT

## Brighter days ahead for hospitality sector in post-Corona era

The global Coronavirus pandemic has taken the travel and hospitality industry by storm. Travellers are gradually gaining confidence with vaccination and industry experts put forth that the Kolkata hospitality industry will have proactive growth in the next three years.

**Swaati Chaudhury**



**Jaidev Dutta**  
General Manager  
Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport



**Nirmalya Chaudhuri**  
GM - Sales & Marketing  
Chocolate Hotels

**A**s the catastrophic tragedy ravaged our country, the unprecedented circumstances had a huge impact on every industry. The turmoil has been too difficult to cope with, and it has been a very turbulent time for the hospitality industry. As the world reopens, hope flickers for all of us and what's life without

a little hope.

According to Jaidev Dutta, General Manager, Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport, "The hospitality industry has been worst hit. With lockdowns and a ban on global and domestic travel, it has severely affected the hospitality business. However, there is a ray of hope with relaxation of restrictions and re-opening of business establishments. Business is bouncing back in tourist

destinations where hotels and resorts are performing well. We are hoping for a strong comeback with further easing of restrictions and the restart of global travel. The world has changed completely and we are performing business in the new normal."

Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport, being a part of a global chain of IHG, their hospitality group has adopted a dynamic strategy and the best practises of IHG with a view to





**Rodney Kaypee**  
General Manager  
Hotel Hindusthan International Kolkata

gear up in the new world and to rebound their business. IHG Clean Promise has been implemented by all their hotels that ensure cleanliness, hygiene and safety of the highest standards for all their visitors.

On this, Dutta shares, "With an increase in the number of flights and reopening of our fine-dining outlets, customers are coming back to our hotel and are satisfied with our COVID safety protocols. We have once again rolled out our popular theme buffets. We are looking ahead for revival in occupancies and ADR that are driven by the rise in domestic travel, wedding groups, staycations and corporate movements." Dutta also pointed out that there has been a positive resurgence in wedding segments and a surge in demand for MICE events.

Chocolate Hotels is a city-based corporate and business hospitality set-up that is emphasizing on domestic travellers for their leisure properties in Jaipur, Goa and Mandarmani in West Bengal. Nirmalya Chaudhuri, General Manager- Sales & Marketing, Chocolate Hotels, explained, "We are reopening our properties in phases. Hygiene has been our prime focus since travellers are more concerned with safety issues in the post-pandemic era. Our hospitality group has never encouraged lay-offs and we are in the process of restructuring our human resources. We are stressing on training and development, multi-skilling of employees, cost control management and energy saving."

The group's Park Prime Kolkata, Jaipur, Goa and Ranchi are open for travellers while other functional ones include Orbit Midnapore, Orbit Silchar and Suncity Resort Mandarmani. Chaudhuri also averred that it will take some time for MICE travel to flourish since there are restrictions imposed on



**Vinay Thakur**  
Associate VP & General Manager  
Pride Hotels

large gatherings. "We are in touch with our corporate sector and event management groups that form our MICE clients. Financial insurance, pharma and healthcare are the significant sectors constituting corporate MICE travel. Depending upon the policies of the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation, we expect inbound travel to resume by 2023-24. Travellers have gained confidence with vaccination. There has been a steady rise in occupancy at Park Prime Kolkata in the aftermath of the second wave as compared to last year. Social bookings, weddings and corporate transient business bookings are surging ahead. The rate of occupancy will be steady in the next fiscal. The mid-scale, economic hotels will rebound faster than luxury groups."

COVID curbs have culminated into lockdowns and complete travel bans that are prevalent across many global destinations. Binay Thakur, Associate Vice President and General Manager, Pride Hotels commented, "The need of the hour for the hospitality industry is to take strategic steps for survival, build capacities and services for revival and thrive once the pandemic subsides. Survive, revive and thrive are the new-age mantra for the growth of Indian hospitality in order to tide over the horrific onslaught of the pandemic. Adaptability is highly essential for survival. The global travel ban has hit the Indian travel industry hard, but it is high time for us to focus on the demand for domestic travel. This is only possible when the pandemic lockdown restrictions are lifted and the environment becomes conducive to travel. Initially, travellers may hesitate to opt for air travel and prefer driving down to weekend getaways. The resorts will witness more demand for rooms than the business hotels in cities. Staycation is a new form of leisure

travel and city hotels need to look forward to meeting its demand."

The hospitality group has prioritised its business strategy into alternative revenue sources that can help to sustain its business. Thakur said, "We have weekend and day family stay packages with a kids zone, leased out banquet halls into office spaces, offering outdoor catering, taking up food delivery, bulk food orders and few rooms have been converted into apartment rooms."

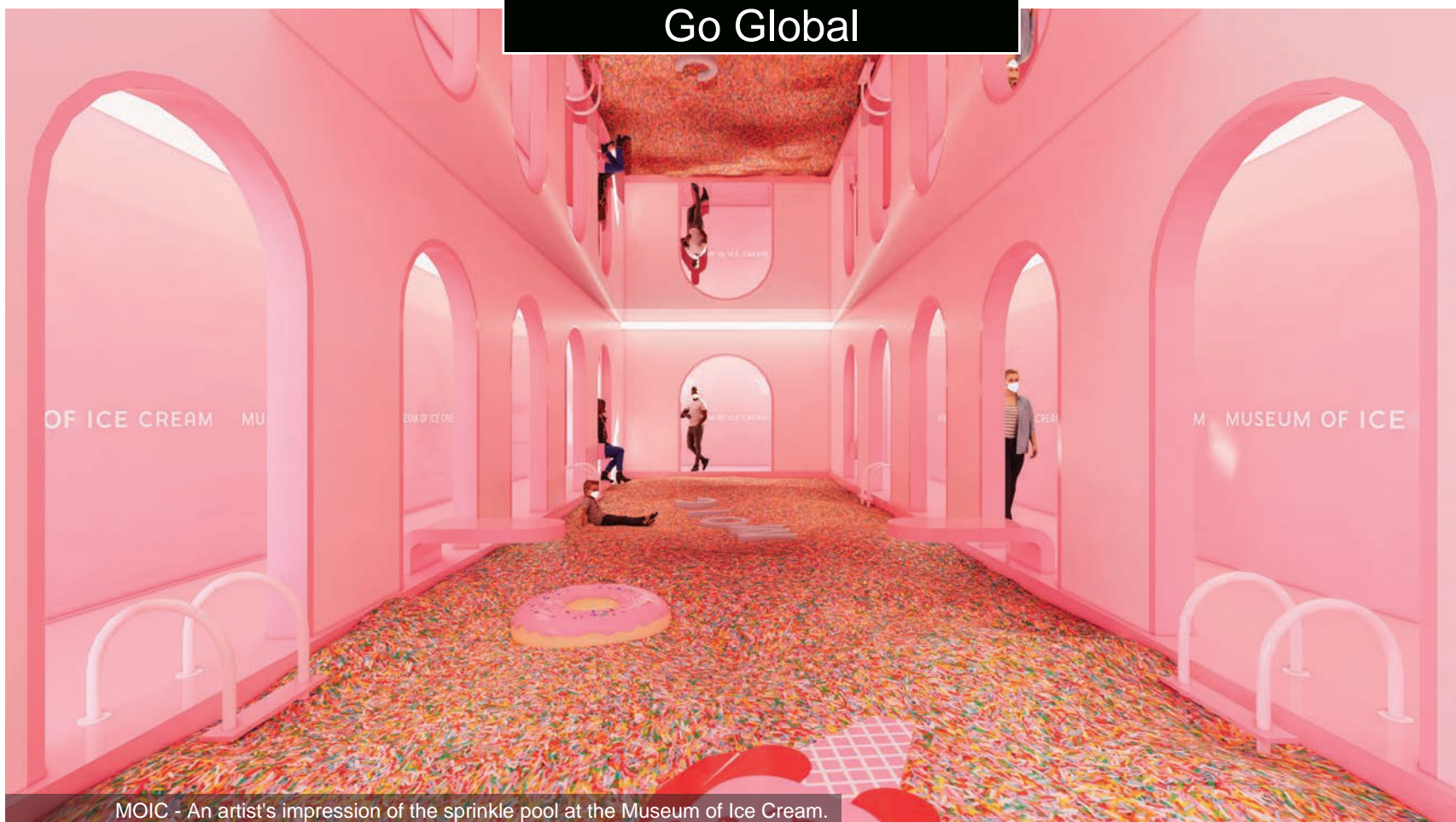
Once the pandemic is over, there will be a considerable increase in domestic and MICE travel. Thakur further said, "Outbound MICE travel in India will stand at USD 9 billion by 2025. Global tourist arrivals will begin at the year-end while domestic MICE travel will gain momentum this September. The eastern hospitality sector will be in a comfortable position with high demand in three years' time.

Domestic tourism will surge, resulting in high demand for hotel rooms than the supply in the coming years. With the reopening of the Golden Triangle from Kolkata to Bhutan, Silk Route and business routes from Kolkata to Nepal, Bangladesh and Bangkok, the post-Corona period will experience a spike in cross border trade."

Hotel Hindusthan International (HHI) Kolkata is readying up with its fully vaccinated workforce. Rodney Kaypee, General Manager, HHI, stated, "The adverse impact of the pandemic on revenues and hospitality operations will take a while to mitigate. Experts are looking ahead for a robust recovery in the next fiscal. Our set-up is upgrading the contactless service processes for an unlimited period, retraining the employees to cater to the post-COVID-related expectations of the guests, instilling confidence among our staff and guests by highlighting on their safety and protection, redesigning complete service delivery system, keeping with the COVID prevention protocols in future and upgrading the medical response team."

Apart from these, the luxury group is boosting budget packages, staycations, repackaging food and beverage products and stepping up the digital conferencing system. Kaypee further added, "Once India reopens, there will be a repository of pent-up demand in the sphere of rooms and food and beverage sector that will recover faster owing to the creation of the retail model concept. The industry will witness a new paradigm and factors that will lead to early recovery include revival of air and land travel, revival of complete economic activity, work culture in the office, availability of critical drugs, revival and incentivising domestic tourism, percentage of vaccinated individuals and prevention of the third wave."





MOIC - An artist's impression of the sprinkle pool at the Museum of Ice Cream.

## Singapore reimagines itself for the future of travel

As a key hub for business, events and tourism in Asia, Singapore is a modern metropolis and plays host to a multicultural diaspora. Its multi-cultural tapestry offers visitors a wide array of sightseeing and culinary options to choose from. Singapore's tropical climate welcomes both leisure and business travelers year-round. The island state's robust infrastructure enables visitors to enjoy its many sites and attractions in a safe, clean and green environment.

**Team TTJ**

**S**ingapore has been one of the most popular tourist destinations for the Indian traveler. India was the 3rd largest source market for Singapore, with over 1 million visitor arrivals logged for the fifth consecutive year in 2019.

Singapore has also been consistently named as one of the safest cities in the world to live in during the pandemic, ranking 11th on Bloomberg's monthly Covid Resilience Ranking in July 2021. It has adopted a disciplined approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic - the city-state expects to have vaccinated around 80 per cent of its population completely by September, putting the country in a favourable position to resume travel.



SkyHelix Sentosa - An artist's impression © One Faber Group





Merlion Park

Singapore authorities have said that restrictions shall be relaxed further if the situation remains under control, and will begin to progressively reopen its borders and allow vaccinated people to travel. It will start by setting up travel corridors with countries or regions that have managed COVID-19 well, and where the infection is under control. People vaccinated against COVID-19 will be given some concession when travelling to Singapore - this could mean a shortened stay-home notice when these travellers come into Singapore, or that the stay-home notice is waived entirely and replaced with COVID-19 tests. These guidelines, which are being finalised, will depend on the country visited and will take into account their risk profiles and infection rate.

To protect the health and safety of all visitors, Singapore has implemented rigorous standards of safe management and hygiene - Safe Management Measures (SMMs) such as capacity limits and ensuring safe distancing and good hygiene practices. These are in place everywhere, including at tourism establishments. To support this, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) launched the SG Clean national campaign to set high standards of environmental public hygiene and build confidence in our businesses. The SG Clean Quality Mark is a national mark of excellence awarded to companies that meet those standards. More than 31,000 individual premises have been certified as "SG Clean" across Singapore, including tourism-related premises.

On the MICE front, STB

had pioneered the Safe Business Events Framework for the calibrated and safe resumption of B2B events. STB, the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) and UFI (The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry) recently partnered to launch a white paper titled "Reimagining Business Events – Through COVID-19 and Beyond". Launched at the first hybrid Singapore MICE Forum x IBTM Wired at Marina Bay Sands on 28 June 2021, the white paper is the first such collaboration between a destination and leading associations representing the exhibitions, conventions and

meetings industry. It takes stock of how various sectors within the industry have transformed in response to COVID-19 and consolidate ideas from around the world to help business event organisers rethink their offerings and operations.

Singapore has also used this time to reimagine tourism, refresh and launch new offerings that will delight visitors when they return. The Museum of Ice Cream (MOIC), a popular US-based attraction, is set to launch its first-ever international location outside of the US in Singapore, in August 2021. Other attractions which are up and coming include: The Slingshot – Asia's tallest slingshot - a new thrill ride concept opening later this year at Clarke Quay, as well as SkyHelix Sentosa, Singapore's first open-air panoramic attraction that allows visitors scenic views of Sentosa and our Southern Waterfront, slated to open in 2022.



Jewel Changi Airport

The opening of such attractions adds vibrancy to the city and underscores the tourism industry's confidence in Singapore's continuing appeal as a top travel destination.





# TICK OFF THE ULTIMATE BFF TRAVEL BUCKET LIST ON A TRIP TO SWITZERLAND

What are friends for if not to build a lifetime of beautiful memories travelling to exotic, stunning locations and living it up? If there is one destination that deepens bonds of friendship like no other across all ages and any time of the year with the multiple storybook experiences it offers for every kind of traveller, it is Switzerland. The country has opened its borders to fully vaccinated travellers from India, so book your dream vacation to this diverse country with your gang of friends and sign up for the adventure of a lifetime.

Team TTJ

**F**rom hiking, biking, climbing, paragliding to skiing, tobogganing and several other life-changing experiences, you can tick off your entire travel wish-list on a trip to the Swiss Alps. Here are the five most popular experiences you can enjoy with your tribe in Switzerland:

## World's steepest funicular

The car-free village of Stoos is located at the foothills of the Fronalpstock Mountain and surrounded by a vibrant alpine landscape. This quaint little village can be reached only by the world's steepest funicular railway that offers the most breathtaking views of numerous lakes, valleys and peaks like Pilatus or Rigi below or via the cable car from Morschach. This breathtaking funicular ride lasts just about three minutes, but what makes it special is that the passengers in the cabins remain horizontal through the steepest of inclinations, making one marvel at the mechanics behind the machinery. The village itself is littered with hotels, apartments and other accommodations that are ideal for big groups and families.



## Open-air cable car

To get to the view from Stanserhorn that overlooks ten Swiss lakes and sweeping views of the Alps, you need to get on to the new double-decker open-air cable car, a thrilling experience by itself. The cable car, also known as the Cabrio train, offers the best 360-degree views of the surrounding landscape from its open-air upper story. Stanserhorn is a must-do with friends because, at its highest point, three energy flows meet. On this ride, you can also dine at the Rondorama revolving restaurant that rotates completely once in every 43 minutes, making it the perfect place to raise a toast to long-standing friendships.







## Thermal baths

What can be more rejuvenating with a bunch of besties than to check in for the renowned Swedish spa experience at Europe's largest Alpine Thermal Spa at Leukerbad. You can pick any one of its 10 pools with mineral-rich thermal water at a constant 28 to 43-degree Celsius, and enjoy waterfall showers, massage jets, whirlpools and even a natural stone grotto that elevate your bathing experience to another level. You can even relax and unwind with a variety of wellness offerings and massages like the nourishing Swedish seaweed wrap or hot rock therapy. Exactly what happy days are made of!

## Wine tours

Wine tastes best when it is shared with loved ones and Switzerland offers you the most magical setting that will make wine-tasting an out-of-this-world experience with your group. You can register for the wine tour led by local wine guides that covers the three unique wine regions of Bündner Herrschaft, Heidiland and the Rhine Valley. You could also taste wine in the La Côte region that brings together alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks from across 60 local wineries. If you like to know where your wine comes from, join the hiking tour from the slopes of Boudry to St. Aubin with views of Lake Neuenburg and the Alps and fragrant meadows and well-tended vineyards to refresh you along the way. To dig deeper into the history of wines in Switzerland, Wine Museum Salgesch traces the history of the extraordinary mountain viticulture of Valais. During your visit to the museum, not only do you get to know the secrets of winemaking, but also the traditional handles of the winemakers, development of customs, landscape and winemaking equipment.

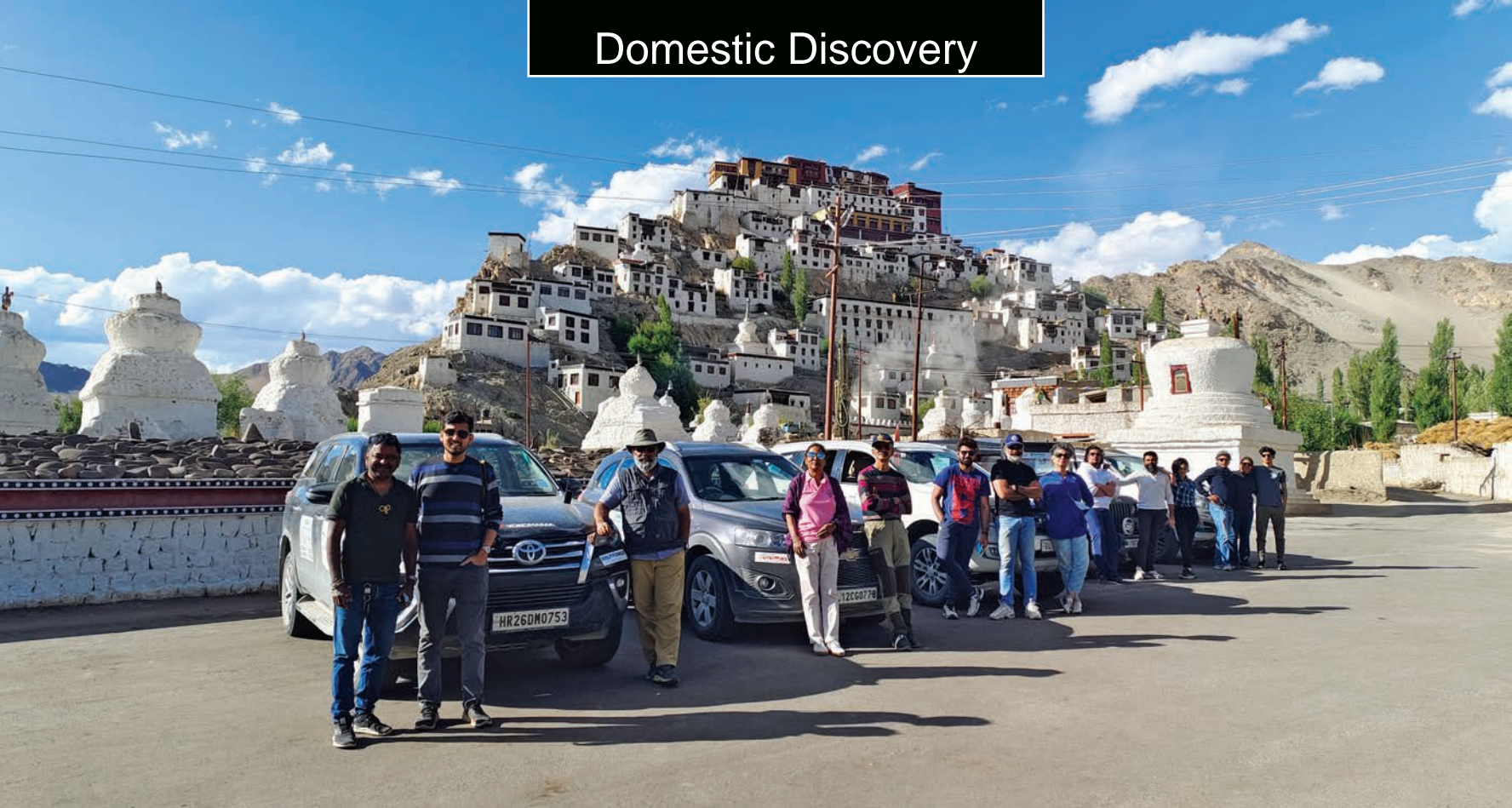


## Camping with a twist

Camping and bonding in the wild makes for a memorable experience with a close-knit group, but imagine camping on a lake! For the first time in Switzerland, you can hire a Sealander that can travel on land as a caravan and in water as a modern electric boat. You don't need a license to operate it and it comes equipped with everything you need while being outdoors - a swimming ladder, kitchenette, BBQ, kitchen sink, fridge, jukebox, lighting and a portable WC, to name a few. You can either hire it for a day out on the lake or even for an overnight camping trip to an untouched forest spot with a canopy of stars to lull you to sleep.

If you want to enjoy some extra special time with your friends, then Switzerland is the place for you.





## On 'Top of the World' with **Razdan Holidays**

Stretching boundaries once again, Razdan Holidays recently organised an exclusive 'By Invitation only' 4x4 Self Drive Expedition for Tour Operators to Zaskar and Leh via Shinkun La, Singe La, and Sirsir La. These treacherous but exciting roads have been taken by the fewest travellers from India or anywhere in the world and it is indeed a great achievement for all the participants to have traversed the terrain, which not many humans have done so far.

### Team TTJ

It's also worth a mention that this was the first-ever driving expedition undertaken by any tour operator or travel agent from India or elsewhere. The expedition was led by professional motorsport and expert driver Sanjay Razdan, who is the Managing Director of Razdan Holidays. The 'Sweep Car' was driven by Dhruv Razdan, also one of the Directors at Razdan Holidays. All cars were connected via a Walkie-Talkie, as communication is of prime importance in these kinds of roads and terrain.

This journey was conceived and developed after Razdan Holidays organised the first-ever driving expedition to Shinku La in October 2020, in which about 20 tour operators participated. Once Shinku La was achieved, the ambition to take the journey to the next level was imagined and hence the planning started on that very day. Finally, this tour was organised all the way over

Shinkun La (5100 Metres) to Padum and subsequently to Nurla over Singe La (5050 Metres and Sirsir La (4850 Metres). The participants traversed over eight high-altitude mountain passes averaging over 5000 metres.

The expedition was for the duration

of twelve days wherein the participants crossed the regions of Himachal Pradesh, Zaskar, Leh, Nubra, Changtang, and Jammu & Kashmir. The main highlight of the route was the journey to Zaskar over Shinku La and the journey to Leh via Singe La and Sirsir La.







These new roads are still in their early phase with plans to connect Zaskar valley via multiple roads for the army in order to have alternative routes to the border areas, but will eventually benefit the local population as well as the tourists in the future. However, with no tarmac on these roads, the participants and their machines had to go through extreme levels of testing and endurance. Day two of the journey covered the stretch between Keylong and Padum via Shinkun La in one day, a gruelling journey of almost fourteen hours with just one stop planned for lunch under the massive and mystical looking mountain, the Gonbo Ranjon.

Sanjay, who had earlier done the recce of the tour prior to its actual departure, had cautioned the participants before, "This will be a test of both your mental and physical endurance in a way never experienced before." For people like Sanjay and Rajiv, the route was highly nostalgic as it used to be a popular trekking route that was undertaken by them multiple times.

Participants: Sanjay Razdan and Anita Razdan from Razdan Holidays (Lead Car), Dhruv Razdan and Kanishk Razdan too from Razdan Holidays (Sweep Car), Richa Nayal and Wg. Cmdr. J.S. Nayal of Era Tours & Travels India, P. Balasubramaniam from Namaste Tours, Ajay Vinayak, Vandana Vinayak & Kartik Vinayak from Palomino Hospitality, Deepak Sharma and Khwaish Sharma of Katha Tours and Travels, Akshit Chandra of State Express, Rajiv Tomar from Mystical Journeys, and Shibani Kapoor, Vishal Kapoor and Aditya Kapoor from WanderGlobe Inc.



Sanjay on everyone's achievement said, "Razdan Holidays would like to congratulate all the Tour Operators and their families who participated in this unique and once-in-a-lifetime trip. The terrain and roads (off-road) were extremely tough, but everyone was rewarded with visuals and beautiful

landscape one would have never imagined even existed as well as with the sense of achievement of doing something which no tour operator had even thought of doing. The experience overall was extremely enriching which all participants would not forget for a long time to come."





# TAFI elects a new team; Ajay Prakash is the new President

Elections were held for the TAFI National Management Committee on July 24, 2021. Members, pan India, from TAFI's eleven Chapters, cast their e-vote in a virtual election conducted by NSDL and selected, with a thumping majority, a new team to take TAFI forward in the new decade.

## Team TTJ

**T**he new team comprises dedicated members who have demonstrated their commitment to TAFI and, as candidates, they won all nine posts. Ajay Prakash led the team, and they were confident of sweeping the election and they have done so with flair. The team swept clean the TAFI national elections in the e-voting process. Close to 561 votes were polled in the elections that day. Ajay is a passionate TAFI'ite, who has held various positions, including the position of TAFI President from 2010 to 2012, and will lead this new pan India team, with the mission to Rejuvenate TAFI.

While Ajay Prakash is the new President, Kamal Ramchand has been elected the Vice-President. Abbas Moiz is the new National General Secretary and Hitank Shah, Treasurer. Other than them, Rani Bachani, Anil Kalsi, Seeraj Sabharwal, Lalith Jain, Rai Achal Krishna, who all share the vision of a resurgent TAFI won at comfortable margins, and now are the new Managing Committee.

On the day of the election and on his team's victory, Ajay spoke, "We are grateful for the overwhelming trust the members have reposed in our team. We seek their continued support in our

mission to Rejuvenate TAFI and make it more responsible and responsive."

The opposite team was led by Rajat Bagaria. His team looked forward to assisting TAFI members in innovation through technology and bringing a "Creative Change".

Outlining the vision of the new team and major thrust areas, Ajay Prakash said, "The travel industry is facing, tremendous, unprecedented challenges, but challenges compel you to think outside the box and look for creative solutions."

He also stated, "Our first priority is to restore the faith of our members along with increasing our membership base because an Association derives its strength not from individuals but from the will of its collective membership. We shall engage with our members in a more consistent, meaningful, and coherent dialogue. Our Chapter committees need to be empowered and educated on the ever-changing scenario; our members need to feel a sense of ownership and pride and to believe that TAFI is there for them. We also need to work closely with all the other associations towards creating a credible lobby whose voice is heard. We need better outreach to the government and the travelling public and drive home the necessity of consultation with the

industry on policy matters. But above all, we need to inculcate a more responsible approach to tourism by all stakeholders. The ugly term 'revenge tourism' has no place in the lexicon of the next, normal. Sustainability has to grow beyond merely a catchphrase; the Green Imperative and Responsible Tourism needs to be built into the core business strategy at every level of the tourism ecosphere."

Some of the other key areas that Abbas Moiz, National General Secretary commented upon, "We need to urgently ensure that agents are protected against airline failure—this will protect not just agents, but also the travelling public since we have all suffered when an airline folds up. The fractured relationship between agents, airlines, and IATA needs a serious overhaul. We shall create legal and facilitation cells to assist our members. Our objective is to create value for our members and assist them to look at issues not as problems, but as a learning process, using technology to create unique solutions, suited to their own organisations. We shall also ensure that our members receive regular updates, from our liaison with relevant National Government bodies, like the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Tourism, DGCA, etc., and with our principals, i.e., IATA, airlines,

hotels, diplomatic missions, tourism boards and all others of relevance."

Two more members, Sampat Damani and S. Bhaskar have been co-opted as per the bye-laws of TAFI at the first meeting of the new Managing Committee and Pradip Lulla has joined the MC as the IPP (Immediate Past President).







▲ Ritika Singh

# Time for a paradigm shift in Hospitality Education

Going by the current market scenario and keeping the below views in mind, Hospitality Education can be made more meaningful and would hit the right chord with the industry.

**Ritika Singh**

People are critical to any business, and hospitality is no exception. The hospitality industry realised that employees are the biggest assets in keeping the guests feeling delighted and business profitable. The increased recognition of the economic importance of tourism has made it necessary for tourism education to be more dynamic and understand the industry's demand better.

A primary concern often shared is the lack of suitable and trained manpower, which will create a crisis in the industry and also impact the customer experience, thereby impacting the business.

As per the current market scenario, there is a major shortfall of appropriate manpower for the industry even though there are educational institutions in both public and private sectors operating at National and International levels. This industry is very dynamic and therefore the education in this field also has to match the requirements.

One of the major issues which the industry is facing is the employability quotient of the students who aspire to make their career in this field. There are a lot of students who may possess the required skills to do the job but lack soft skills. The line of hospitality is essentially a blend of skills, attitude, and communication, and the educational institutes need to focus on all these areas in order to have the right balance. Along with knowing the job, one also needs to have a basic level of communication and the ability to work with others in a team. The curriculum needs to lay focus on important aspects of the operations like critical thinking, decision making, global trends, and soft skills. The

curriculum needs to focus on holistic development and experiential aspects from an industry point of view.

Another important aspect that has changed the dynamics of the industry is "technology", initially, the industry was labour intensive but with hotels and businesses focusing on operational costs there has been a lot of focus on multitasking and going digital for routine and repetitive processes. Initially, there was a fear that automation would mean a big hit on employability but soon everyone realised that while nothing could replace the personalisation aspect, repetitive tasks could be left to technology leaving more time for quality engagements with the guest. The new trends of technology for guest engagements are something that the hospitality institutes would have to include in their curriculums, in fact, the professors themselves would have to be more informed about the use of technology as these are recent rapid changes which even they may not be aware of. The learning environment needs to be enhanced with technology and the students should be able to use it effortlessly.

The current pandemic has further affected the industry in a big way and there have been numerous changes. Now education would have to further prepare students for a very competitive and adaptive environment where they would mostly be working outside their comfort zones. A lot of processes of the industry have been changing, with an increased focus on health and hygiene. The guests are now extremely concerned about the processes being followed regarding hygiene, making it essential to add these aspects to the existing subjects.

Post the pandemic a lot of focus

is being laid on "Entrepreneurial mindset", the institutes can create opportunities where the students can learn this through real-life work settings like café's and events, they could be encouraged to share their ideas and could be mentored. There are a lot of unexplored opportunities with the young generation towards this aspect. Proper guidance can prove motivating and encouraging. The students would be able to learn about guest psychology, consumer expectations and other technical aspects of running a business. However, the faculty at the institute level would have to be equally in line with the latest trends and dynamics.

Education needs to be ready for a huge shift from the traditional ways to the newer trends and expectations. The colleges and institutes may want to collaborate with Industry and have hotels partner with them in their training, as the professionals from the industry help the students in fixing the right expectations and also make the hotel available as a live learning ground to the students as well as Faculty.

The right balance of the Faculty is important as they are the ones who are actually the role models and deliver the learning to the students. Along with the required academic excellence the institutes may want to have faculty members with industry experience and increased participation at development programs as this would enhance the delivery and the students would be more interested in learning from the real-life experience of the Faculty.

Ritika Singh is the Director, Faculty of Hotel Management at Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies



# Indian travellers are opting for “bleisure” as the workcation trend is on the rise

India is home to some of the most majestic works of architecture (think Taj Mahal). With charming, quaint hillsides and exotic beaches, it's no wonder Indian travellers are rejoicing in hybrid work. The world's leading travel technology company, Amadeus has released its latest Travel Trends, detailing four key trends shaping up travel and sparking new life into travel.

Team TTJ

The travel sector – which had already undergone a gradual evolution in the preceding years, largely driven by technology – has reinvented itself in a matter of months. From bubble resorts and travel corridors to the rise of hybrid work and a new breed of sustainably conscious consumers, the current map is almost unrecognizable from 2019 and 2020.

Predicting the future is more challenging than ever. But by calling on large swathes of data at their disposal, at Amadeus they have been able to identify some high-level trends. While the findings could evolve, there are clear indicators of what might lie in store for the rest of 2021 with the continued rollout of vaccines. As we look to rebuild travel, Amadeus also explores four emerging Travel Trends around the world:

**Workcation** - Out of the four trends, Indian travellers are embracing workcation, one of the key trends that offer city dwellers a chance for remote working while holidaying. Some call it bleisure (“individuals who combine leisure with professional business obligations”). However, at Amadeus, they prefer to talk about the rise of the workcation. The concept of working remotely from a coffee shop or a beach bar is not new, but the past year has democratized the dream. One can only see this trend expanding as countries emerge from lockdowns. More weary workers release a pent-up desire to step away for a breath of fresh air.

**The report identifies two key findings:**

1. This year, Indian travellers are searching for their destination just one day before departure.
2. These travellers are searching for long-term stays with 14 to 30 days and sometimes more.

Both of these are in contrast to 2019, where travellers were searching much more in advance of their trip and averaging eight days total for their trip.

**Bubble Travel** - With uncertainty ongoing, the growth of bubble travel has significant implications for health passports. A recent Amadeus study reveals that 93 per cent of Indian travellers are willing to adopt digital health passports to help facilitate travel reopening, which is key in rebuilding traveller confidence. Across Asia, countries like Australia and New Zealand formed a bubble travel agreement with similar initiatives slated for Singapore and Hong Kong. With vaccination rollouts, these steps could potentially help provide a much-needed boost towards helping travel recover.

**Conscious Travel** - When it comes to being more environmentally and socially conscious, Amadeus data shows that one-third of millennials would like to see more sustainable travel options and ways to reduce their carbon emissions when traveling. It was a similar story across all ages and global markets. One in four shared this commitment to travel sustainably.

**Indulgent Travel** - A renewed thirst for travel is seeing consumers book more indulgent trips. Within Asia, Hong Kong travellers are starting their searches two

**4 trends sparking new life into travel**

**Bubble Travel**  
How the travel & tourism sector is facilitating safer travel  
The new term starting to permeate the world of travel and that could change the way people holiday forever.

**Workcation**  
The increasing viability of a flexible nomadic working life  
‘Nomadic flexers’ are interested in longer stints away from home as they seek a change of scenery.

**Indulgent Travel**  
How a renewed thirst for travel is seeing consumers book more indulgent trips  
Early signs indicate that consumers are likely to splurge on trips this summer as we reward ourselves coming out of lockdown.

**Conscious Travel**  
How travelers are looking for more sustainable and conscious travel options  
Travelers are putting a lot of thought into planning their next trip – in terms of safety as well as being environmentally and socially conscious about their choices.

weeks earlier than they did in 2019 to make the absolute most of their journey, while China has launched Viking Cruises, a luxury cruise ship from the port of Qianhai, Shenzhen.

## Mani Ganeshan, Head of R&D, Asia Pacific, Amadeus

In 2021, we can see that Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru are still the most searched destinations in India, the same as 2019. This suggests that Indian travellers seek to explore closer to home, albeit cautiously, as the pandemic is still widespread. However, in 2021, the travellers' duration of stay is lengthening, which tells us the desire to travel never falters and that travellers are creatively making the most out of their travel and taking advantage of the new hybrid working model we are seeing unfold.







## Raffles Udaipur

**Vishrut Gupta** has been appointed as the Hotel Manager at Raffles Udaipur. He has been part of the Accor family for the past five years. Before joining Raffles, Vishrut was at Fairmont Jaipur on a brief mission. Prior to that, he was with Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity where he was leading teams in both strategic operations as well as food and beverage service. He was previously associated with renowned brands such as ITC, Leela.

## Raffles Udaipur

**Prachi Tandon** has joined Raffles Udaipur as Marketing & Communications Manager. Possessing a decade of experience with pioneers in the luxury hospitality and entertainment industries of India, Prachi has proven strengths in driving strategic marketing, branding and communications, with a focus on amplifying revenues. She holds a master's degree in Business Administration from the Institute of Management Technology.



## Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park

**Anand Nair** has been appointed as the General Manager of Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park. In his new role, Anand will oversee the complete operations and management of the hotel along with the senior leadership teams. He will ensure the highest levels of guest engagement, profitability and continue to build on the positioning and reputation of Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park.

## The St Regis Mumbai

**Vikalp Raj** has been appointed as the Director of Sales and Marketing at The St Regis Mumbai. He will lead the dynamic sales and revenue teams at The St. Regis Mumbai to achieve revenue targets, forge relationships with internal and external stakeholders while balancing property STR, achieving Revpar and assessing competition and hotel intelligence.



## JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar

**Kunal Chauhan** has been appointed as the General Manager at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. In his new role as General Manager of the JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, Kunal Chauhan envisions a stellar roadmap for the hotel's leading position within the hospitality landscape. With his robust experience across several disciplines, Chauhan will steer the property to provide experiences that are synonymous with the JW Marriott brand.

## Niraamaya Wellness Retreats

**Allen Machado** has been appointed as the Presiding Chief Executive Officer at Niraamaya Wellness Retreats. He plans to spearhead significant achievements across all Niraamaya properties, and his vision is to turn these properties into showcases of wellness and bespoke experiences. He also looks at expanding the portfolio across key destinations like Jaipur, Udaipur, Darjeeling and other exotic locales and key cities abroad as well as strengthens the Niraamaya Private Residences portfolio across India.



## Click Hotels by Suba

**Rajan Kalra** has been appointed as Director of Sales at Click Hotels by Suba. Rajan brings the experience of over a decade in diversified hospitality and expertise from the markets of India, Asia & Africa. He will be responsible for the development and implementation of strategies to increase the visibility and further enhance the perception of Click & 1589 hotel brands.

## ixigo

Travel app ixigo has appointed **Amrish Kumar** as Vice President - Technology. Amrish Kumar will head tech innovations for ixigo. Having worked with reputed corporates, Amrish has managed several projects aligning business goals with technology solutions. His major areas of technical expertise include architecture, building large scale e-commerce systems, hybrid/cloud-based systems, systems using AI/ML & building big-data based platforms.





## Facial recognition-based boarding system under trial in six airports

Six airports, including those at Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune, are set to have biometric boarding system using facial recognition technology and currently, the project is at the trial stage, according to the government. In August 2018, the civil aviation ministry came out with a policy on Digi Yatra to provide a contactless, seamless and paperless handling of passengers at airports from the entry gate of the terminal to the boarding point.

“Work has been awarded for implementation of Biometric Boarding System (BBS) by using facial recognition technology at six airports namely Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune, Varanasi and Vijayawada. The project is at the trial stage,” Minister of State for Civil Aviation V K Singh said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on August 5, 2021.

Upon successful completion, the same will be implemented across other airports in a phased manner, he noted. Airports Authority of India (AAI) plans to invest around ₹25,000 crore



in the next four to five years for expansion/ development of existing and new terminals using modern technology.

## Meliá Hotels International opens its first hotel in Rhodes: The Cosmopolitan Hotel Affiliated by Meliá



When Greece reopened its borders to international travellers in May, Meliá announced its debut in the Greek islands with the addition of three hotels in Crete and Rhodes, in cooperation with the hotel company Zeus Hotels Greece. The Cosmopolitan Hotel Affiliated by Meliá is already up to full speed on the island of Rhodes, where the Greek government has prioritised the vaccination of the local population to provide a safer environment for the arrival of tourists.

This four-star all-inclusive hotel boasts a prime location on the Ixia coast, 14 km from Diagoras airport and a few kilometres from all the main attractions and the majestic medieval city of Rhodes, surrounded by shops, restaurants and nightlife, the ideal base from which to explore this historic and colourful island.

Built in the shape of an amphitheatre and surrounded by beautiful gardens and overlooking Trianta Bay, the hotel is ideal for couples and families with children, catering to all their needs with modern facilities and spacious and comfortable rooms, in addition to all the health and safety protocols required to ensure a safe travel experience.

The hotel provides 377 rooms with views of the sea or the large gardens, and a full range of services to enjoy a holiday in paradise: among them, lounging around the large pools, watching the famous sunset from the main bar or savouring freshly prepared international, Mediterranean and local dishes in the buffet restaurant. The hotel also provides a gym and spa, as well as a swimming pool and a children's club for the little ones. Ixia Beach, alongside the hotel, is a paradise for windsurfers and kitesurfers.

## No quarantine for children travelling with vaccinated adults to Switzerland



Children travelling with fully vaccinated adults will not be required to quarantine. Only children between 16 and 18 will need an RT-PCR report before boarding the plane and upon arrival.

All travellers need to be fully vaccinated with a CHE, EU and WHO-approved vaccine plus the 15 days cooling-off period post the 2nd dose. Fully vaccinated adults can enter Switzerland without undergoing health-related measures at the time of entry, including quarantine. For Indians, the approved vaccine is Covishield. The exemptions to the health-related measures at the border apply for twelve months from the time that the traveller was fully vaccinated.

The regulations are only applicable to Switzerland. Transit through other countries to Switzerland and visiting other Schengen countries internally from Switzerland might be restricted, depending on the travel regulations outlined by the respective country.



## UK relaxes COVID travel curbs for India, institutional quarantine exempted

Fully vaccinated Indians flying to the United Kingdom no longer need mandatory 10-day hotel quarantine as India was moved to the amber list on August 8. Under Britain's traffic light system for international travel, returning from amber list countries means 10-day quarantining at home or any place of one's choice.

Indian nationals will be able to quarantine at a location of their choice for 10 days after arriving in the UK. They will retain the option to 'Test to Release' after five days of quarantine. Those travelling from India will need to take a COVID test within three days before their flight and book in advance for two COVID tests to be taken on arrival in England as well as complete a passenger locator form on arrival. After arriving in England, passengers must quarantine, but at home or in any place they have confirmed as their location for 10 days and test on or before day two and on or after day eight.

Those below 18 and those fully vaccinated in the UK are exempt from home quarantine. So are those who have received two doses of COVID vaccine in the EU and the US.



## Air India to operate 13 non-stop weekly flights to London from August 16



Air India has announced non-stop flights between India and the United Kingdom from next week. Sharing the detailed flight schedule, the national carrier said that it will operate 13 weekly flights connecting London with six Indian cities — Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Amritsar, and Kochi from August 16 to September 1, 2021.

"Fly non-stop from India to London with Air India. 13 weekly flights to/from six Indian cities. Before you plan your travel, please click on to [airindia.in/international-travel](https://airindia.in/international-travel) to know more about travel guidelines to/from UK," Air India said in a tweet.

There has been an outcry in the past week over steep airfares on India-UK routes. "There are media reports claiming India-UK one-way economy class fares have touched ₹4 lakh. These reports have no proven basis. The veracity of Shri Sanjeev Gupta's claim has been thoroughly checked by DGCA," the ministry said on Twitter.

## GO FIRST introduces direct flight between India and Qatar



Strengthening its presence in the Gulf, GO FIRST (formerly known as GoAir) recently announced the commencement of direct flights between Mumbai, Kochi, Kannur in India and Doha in Qatar under the air bubble agreement between the two countries. Doha is GO FIRST's first destination in the State of Qatar and the sixth in GCC countries.

GO FIRST will operate direct flights four times a week between Mumbai and Doha, while passengers can avail flights twice a week on Kochi – Doha – Kochi and Kannur – Doha – Kannur route. To mark the introduction of services to Qatar, GO FIRST is offering inaugural return fares starting at ₹26666 on Mumbai – Doha – Mumbai, ₹37118 on Kochi – Doha – Kochi and ₹32332 on Kannur – Doha – Kannur routes respectively. The flight schedule has been planned to offer passengers convenient options and a seamless travel experience.



## Rove Hotels launches #RoveWithNikon Studio at Rove Dubai Marina, now open for bookings

Rove Hotels has partnered with Nikon to launch the brand-new #RoveWithNikon Studio at Rove Dubai Marina. With the rise in the digital content creation space, creatives are always on the lookout for spaces that not only inspire but accentuate the quality of their content, be it celebrities, influencers, YouTubers, or the young up-and-comers. The #RoveWithNikon Studio is a state-of-the-art space offering top-of-the-class equipment where amateurs and professionals can come to learn, experiment, and collaborate.

Rove, with its co-working and meeting spaces, podcast studio and gamer caves has established itself as the ultimate hub for content creators and digital nomads in the past few years. Adding to the list of offerings for not only established but budding social influencers, content creators and entrepreneurs is the all-new fully equipped #RoveWithNikon Studio at Rove Dubai Marina.

Walls filled with quirky designs and every corner mapped to inspire and enhance the digital content creating experience, the #RoveWithNikon Studio gives budding and established creatives the chance to utilise a dedicated room setup. Whether



one is looking to create a content pipeline or click and record as a hobby, the self-service studio, at Rove Dubai Marina, is fully equipped with easy-to-use plug-and-play equipment right from Nikon's newest cameras, lights, backdrops, tripod, reflectors and more.

## Lakshadweep to soon have Maldives-style water villas



Lakshadweep will soon have three premium Maldives-style water villas, claimed to be the first-of-its-kind in the country. The three premium projects will come up in Minicoy, Kadmat, and Suheli islands at a cost of ₹800 crore, for which the administration floated global tenders on July 31, 2020. With a vision to establish a robust base for maritime economic growth with tourism development at its core, the administration said it is engaged in developing high-end eco-tourism projects at these islands as anchor projects under the aegis of NITI Aayog.

The scientific approach adopted in each stage of the finalisation of the project ensures that it strikes a balance between protection of the fragile corals' ecosystem and the need to improve livelihood opportunities of the islanders, the administration claimed in a statement.

"In a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, three premium water villa projects are identified in Minicoy (150 keys, project cost of ₹319 crore), Suheli (110 keys, ₹247 crore), and Kadmat (110 keys, ₹240 crore) islands, based on comprehensive location suitability analysis, technical and financial feasibility and project structuring," it said. A joint survey, comprising representatives from National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), MoEF and CC, and NITI Aayog, visited Lakshadweep during November 2018 for site assessment and confirmation.

## France relaxes travel restrictions for students and researchers from India

Indian students can head to France in order to pursue their studies as the latter's authorities have lifted the travel restrictions imposed on arrivals from India. France's latest decision has been confirmed by the press counsellor at the French Embassy in Delhi, early this month.

Persons who have taken one dose of the Janssen vaccine 28 days before their trip or those who have taken the second dose of other authorized vaccines such as Pfizer/Comirnaty, Moderna, AstraZeneca/Vaxzevria/Covishield, seven days before travelling, are considered fully vaccinated.

According to French authorities, students and talented passport holders fall under the groups of compelling reasons for travelling to France's territory. Consequently, both vaccinated and non-vaccinated Indian students are permitted to travel to France and submit their visa applications. However, travellers will be obliged to present proof of vaccination status and evidence which confirms the absence of COVID-19 infection symptoms and contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Travellers who have not been vaccinated are obliged to present a negative result of the PCR test, not older than 72 hours before departure, or a negative result of the rapid antigen test carried out less than 48 hours before departure upon their arrival in France.





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