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Dear Friends,

Here at TTJ, we understand the challenges so many of you are facing right now. However, I am happy to say that it looks like the wait is reaching an end, and I pray it does. Nearing two years, it is a testament to the resilience and innovation of the travel industry as a whole, which has soldiered through this adversity to open businesses and debut new products, importantly, keeping people safe and comfortable.

Our September 2021 issue is here to inspire and offer you a message that: hang on to your wanderlust and the world will be yours to explore and do business once more, as we are all still talking about travel. This time, we are featuring a few exclusive interviews which give some good insights into the happenings in travel and tourism business out of India.

And a special thanks to the advertisers, and of course you readers. Your endorsements and support have been heart-warming and comforting during these past months.

Happy Reading!

*Ravi Sharma*

Ravi Sharma

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Editor's Desk

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## Thailand to reopen five more destinations to vaccinated foreign tourists from October 1



The Royal Thai Government has announced plans to reopen Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chon Buri, Phetchaburi, and Prachuap Khiri Khan from 1 October as part of the second phase of the country's reopening timeline.

In the official statement released on September 9, 2021, Government Spokesperson, Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana, said the plans reflected the policy outlined by Prime Minister, General Prayut Chan-o-cha, to gradually reopen the country in phases, following the first phase that reopened Phuket, followed by Surat Thani, then Krabi and Phang-Nga over the last two months.

From mid-October, another 21 destinations up and down the country will reopen. These include Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Nan, Phrae, and Sukhothai in the North; Bueng Kan, Nong Khai, Ubon Ratchathani, and Udon Thani in the Northeast; Kanchanaburi and Ratchaburi in the West; Chanthaburi, Rayong, and Trat in the East; Ayutthaya in the Central Region, and Nakhon Si Thammarat, Ranong, Satun, Songkhla, and Trang in the South.

Thailand is set to proceed with the fourth phase of reopening in January 2022, with 13 border provinces to reopen under travel bubbles with neighbouring countries. All four phases will cover the reopening of 43 provinces across Thailand.

## Spain reopens to fully vaccinated travellers from India



With effect from August 2, 2021, Spain is now ready to receive fully vaccinated travellers from India without the need for any quarantine.

Indian travellers fully vaccinated with the Covishield vaccine are eligible to travel to Spain. Covaxin is not yet approved for the time being. Children under 12 years of age who are accompanied by fully vaccinated adults are not required to present these certificates or supporting documents. The last dose of the vaccine should be administered 14 days prior to the departure date.

For updates on Spain Visa, please get in touch with BLS International Spain VAC (Visa Application Center).

## Kerala Tourism launches mobile app

Kerala Tourism Department has launched its mobile app, which ensures hassle-free travel for tourists coming to Kerala and giving them an opportunity to discover unexplored attractions themselves and record their impressions during the visit.

Super star Mohanlal unveiled the app at The Raviz, Kovalam, in the presence of Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas, Dr V Venu, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Kerala Tourism.

"Besides providing all information about destinations and services at your fingertips, a key feature of this app is that it identifies unexplored destinations in all panchayats in Kerala. It will help attract local tourist spots to grab global attention," Shri Mohamed Riyas said.

The in-progress app is designed in such a way that a visitor gets the opportunity to write about any unexplored destinations and experiences through the option 'Create Story'. Moreover, the app makes the current toilet mapping activities very fast as it helps those travelling inside Kerala to find out safe and hygienic restrooms nearby. Tourists can also explore restaurants and eateries that offer delicious Kerala cuisine and relish local flavours as per their choice. With the application of cutting-edge technologies like augmented reality in the future, the app



will have the dimensions of a gaming station and it will draw a tremendous response from travellers across the world.

The app will be further upgraded with more innovative features within six months. In the next phase of the app, tourists can make enquiries using 'Voice Assistant' facility, which will give answers through voice, eliminating the difficulty in typing letters.

## UAE lifts travel restrictions for residents from India, 14 other countries

The UAE on September 10, 2021, said it will allow the return of those fully vaccinated with WHO-approved COVID-19 jabs and holding valid residence visas from 15 countries previously on the suspended list, including India, from September 12.

The National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA) in a tweet shared an official statement saying that those who can return also include those who stayed abroad for over six months. "UAE allows return of fully vaccinated (WHO-approved vaccines) holders of valid residence visa, including those who stayed abroad for over six months, starting from September 12, 2021," the statement said.

Giving details about the arrival requirements, it said that passengers can apply via the website of the Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship (ICA) and complete the vaccination application in order to get the necessary approval in addition to presenting the approved vaccination certification upon departure for the UAE.

The passengers are also required to present a negative PCR

test result done within 48 hours before the departure at an approved lab that has a QR code. The returnees are also required to undertake a PCR test before

boarding and another PCR test on the fourth and eighth day of arrival while complying with all precautionary measures in place. Children under 16 years are exempt from these procedures. All other previously announced precautionary measures for unvaccinated people coming from those countries remain in place, it said.



## TAAI wants MoCA & IATA to look into Alitalia's bankruptcy issue to safeguard its members

The announcement made by the Alitalia (IATA code: 055) states that flights departing October 15, 2021, shall not be sold and has been placed under Extraordinary Administration from August 25, 2021, by the Ministry of Economic Development in Italy. The airline is undergoing formal bankruptcy, reorganisation and liquidation.

On this, TAAI has urged MoCA to direct IATA to ensure all refunds are processed by the Airline and not place it under suspension as per the IATA-BSP rules.

Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, in her communication to MoCA, stated that no credit shells shall be acceptable and all refunds should be refunded back in cash into the bank accounts of Accredited Member Agents immediately. Taking prompt cognizance of the issue, TAAI is in touch with the highest echelons in the GOI, especially the ones dealing on the subject, sensitising them about the need of taking immediate measures and stern steps to protect the interest of the Indian travel agent's fraternity, stakeholders dealing directly and indirectly with the airlines.

Jay Bhatia, Vice President of TAAI, informed that IATA and the Government have been urged to obtain Financial Security Deposit and/or alternative security in the interim, thereby safeguarding the funds of the Indian travellers/ agents. The same should apply to all Airlines, their GSA's/representative cos, who are responsible for all airline operations/ liaison and handling in India.

IATA has been requested to ensure sufficient financial corpus is held in escrow, from the airline until all outstandings with accredited member agencies and travellers are settled by Alitalia. Further, it must be strictly ensured and no pay-outs to Alitalia through BSP should be effected since only refunds shall be transacted. The outstanding from the Airline is expected to be in crores of Rupees, stated Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI.

Mayal reiterated that the travellers and the travel agents are the ones always facing the brunt and challenges. She urged the MoCA to open a window to interact with the Association at regular intervals and prepare policies protecting the interest of the Indian citizens with the travel agent fraternity, otherwise having a dedicated Civil Aviation Ministry is ineffective and pointless.

Hon. Treasurer, Shreeram Patel, states that we have requested MoCA to issue an instant circular/notification to the Citizens of India to come forward and claim refund, if any, on all partly or fully unutilised tickets/ packages/ passes/ loyalty points, booked through all sales channels including travel agents, online website/s, airline's airport and sales counters, etc.



## AVIAREPS India appointed as Sales, Marketing and PR representative for the Utah Office of Tourism in India for five years

AVIAREPS India has won the Integrated Sales Marketing and Public Relations mandate for Utah Office of Tourism in India for the next five years. The aim



and objective is to position the amazing tourism offerings of Utah in India, which is considered to be a great outdoor State. Far more than just a state. Utah is a state of mind. Sculpted by wind, water and time. From the Mighty 5® National Parks, Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Capital Reef and Zion to the Wasatch Mountains' Greatest Snow on Earth®, and all points in-between, Utah is the place where families and adventures forge incredible experiences and make enduring memories.

Speaking on the company's diverse and expanding product portfolio, Ellona Pereira, Head, AVIAREPS India, said, "We are elated to represent the Utah Office of Tourism in India for the next five years and our immediate priority is to localise their global strategy by providing end to end solutions. In fact, some of the tourism offerings that the Utah State has to offer are apt for the Indian outbound tourists who post the pandemic, are seeking places of tranquillity, craving wide-open spaces and inspiring views, as nature breaks continue to be more appealing and on-trend these days. Our team of experts will work towards the development and implementation of effective sales, marketing and PR strategies to generate awareness about the destination amongst Indian travellers."



## SriLankan Airlines launches flights to Paris

SriLankan's new service will operate scheduled flights between Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) and France's Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) from November 1, 2021. SriLankan would commence thrice weekly, non-stop flights to France every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday using a fleet of Airbus A330-300 aircraft configured for 269 economy and 28 business class seats. The flight time is around 11 hours and 25 minutes., and Flight UL563 is scheduled to depart Colombo at 00:35 hrs., and arrive in Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport at 07:30 hrs. The return flight UL564 is scheduled to depart Paris on the same day at 14:30 hrs. and arrive in Colombo at 05:20 hrs. the next day.

SriLankan Airlines ceased its operations to Paris in November 2016 but operated provisional passenger and cargo flights during the pandemic in July and September 2020. The National Carrier

continues to rebuild its global network from the devastating effects of the ongoing pandemic. Passengers can also take advantage of connecting flight

opportunities via Colombo and explore a wider range of prime leisure destinations in the Indian Ocean region offered by the Airline.



## flydubai passengers to enjoy a complimentary 1-Day Ticket to Expo 2020 Dubai

Passengers booking a flydubai flight to Dubai will enjoy a complimentary 1-Day Ticket to visit Expo 2020 Dubai, taking place from October 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022. The initiative is valid

for all bookings made from 01 September for travel during the event dates.

The initiative is offered to every passenger travelling on a flydubai inbound booking itinerary, a one-way ticket to Dubai, or any connecting flydubai flight via Dubai. The complimentary 1-Day Ticket is offered to all passengers who are eligible for the promotion, whether they are travelling in Business Class or Economy Class.

Commenting on the launch of the initiative, Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer of flydubai, said, "We are excited to welcome the world to Dubai as Expo 2020 opens its doors to visitors. flydubai will play an important role in supporting the UAE's efforts to make this a truly remarkable event by connecting underserved markets to Dubai. We share everyone's excitement as we come together to witness Expo 2020 connecting minds and creating the future."

For 182 days, Expo 2020 Dubai will welcome the whole world in one place for a global gathering that will bring together 191 participating nations and millions of people for a unique and unmissable experience. Each of the participating countries will bring its own unique flavour, and with a programming calendar featuring up to 60 events per day and hundreds of varied experiences from food, art and music to business and sport, there will be something for every age and interest.



## Nijhawan Group appointed as the India GSA of Flyme



▲ Priyanka Nijhawan



▲ Abdulla Nashid

Flyme has appointed Nijhawan Group as its GSA for India. The new representation is expected to bring added benefits to travelers from India to the Maldives. Flyme, operated by Villa Air Pvt Ltd is part of the Villa Group of Companies, is set to operate from Bengaluru, India to the Maldives starting from September 26, 2021.

Flyme provides air transport services to domestic and international airports serving both the local community as well as international passengers. As a privately owned airline, Flyme strives to provide safe, reliable and exceptional service to its passengers when travelling on the airline through innovative and efficient operations.

The operational traffic base airport of Flyme is Velana International Airport (VIA) with scheduled routes to Villa Airport Maamigili-Engineering Hub (VAM) and Dharavandhoo Airport (DRV). Flyme's current fleet consists of two ATR 72-500, one ATR 42-500 and one ATR 72-600 (the Turbo Propeller with most seats here in the Maldives).

Speaking on the partnership, Priyanka Nijhawan, Director-Representations, Nijhawan Group said, "We are pleased to form this partnership with Flyme. India accelerated its growth to become the number one source market for the Maldives. This also created a gateway for better flight connectivity from India. We aim to invest our resources in customer experience, during pre-bookings, in-flight and on the ground as we look forward to promoting this across the Indian market."

Abdulla Nashid, Managing Director, Flyme said, "Maldives has risen in popularity with Indian travelers and with a GSA in the country, Flyme is gearing up to provide visitors with an opportunity to fly directly to the islands of the Maldives. With this partnership, we aim to position Flyme as a leading air transport provider for Maldives and support the economy of the country through developing a better aviation route."





# Mobilisation of the MICE Sector in Spain Return to safe events

Impacted directly by COVID, the Spanish MICE industry has shown itself to be generous, adaptable and resilient. Almost overnight, MICE players responded in two ways: first by offering their assets to manage the pandemic; second, by reinventing themselves with new formats, types of layout, professional profiles and protocols. The mobilisation of the MICE sector in Spain, as reviewed here, has never been so impressive.

## Solidarity

If in past wars, when churches were available for the sick, in the battle against COVID, hotels and venues opened their doors. And this occurred throughout Spain. The list of hotels that participated is huge; one of the first to transform its facilities for the sick or their families was Room Mate Hotels and more followed suit: Ilunion, Vincci, NH, B&B Hotels, etc. Several catering companies, such as Medems, have also contributed their services.

## Health security protocols

But beyond helping, the sector has reinvented itself to allow safe events, creating new protocols so that events can safely take place again.

**Fairgrounds, conference centres and large venues.** IFEMA was the first and setup the CECOR (Centre for the Coordination of Security and Emergencies), to back up the rest of the security and emergency structures at this venue. But by now, almost every venue has a COVID protocol in place.

**Hotel chains** have also done their bit. An example is NH Hotel Group that combines a 'Feel Safe' at NH protocol, suggestions for new set-ups, and solutions for hybrid events with audio-visual sets in properties; Meliá has a 'Stay Safe' with Meliá hygiene security programme, certified by Bureau Veritas; and Madrid Marriott Auditorium has been adapted to the requirements of the ICTE, the body responsible for the MICE health protocol in Spain.



**New outdoor spaces** will undoubtedly be an advantage to Spain, whose climate allows meetings or coffee breaks in the open air for much of the year. Terraces and gardens have been converted into meeting rooms like Accor's Open-Air Meetings. The Claris Hotel in Barcelona has modified its spaces to give groups direct access to the terrace. These are among many examples.

**Large venues have introduced creative layouts.** The Tarraco Arena (Tarragona), a former bullring, has rearranged rooms to allow large groups to separate into small ones. The WiZink Center has been transformed into a large artificial grass terrace with separate tables and chairs to seat 2,000 attendees while maintaining a safe distance, and an air renewal system keeps rooms fresh by renewing every eight minutes.

**Certification is a good way to build trust.** Today there are two options: the certified "Safe Event", which combines the definition and implementation of protocols, advice on this matter, inspection on D-day and certification by international specialist companies; and from the OCA certifier.

**New profiles:** companies in an industry now reliant on online events have established new positions such as the virtual event manager, but specialists have also appeared for physical events such as the hygiene manager proposed by the Hyatt Centric Madrid Gran Vía.

**Hostess and staff agencies:** these play a much larger role today, they become part of the organiser's security team and ensure that protocols, required distances, etc. are respected. They have also added new capabilities.

**The role of associations:** New associations (for catering companies, incentive agencies, venues, stands) came to life during the crisis and created protocols and advice for safe events. The MICE Forum (a group of industry associations) has established itself as a uniting voice and has organised meetings with the Secretary of State for Tourism, as well as issuing requests for help; and AEVEA has supported the #redalert campaign movement with a video that explains the enormous variety of professionals who make a living from events.

**Your Safety is of Paramount Importance, refer to Travel Safe Spain:** <https://travelsafe.spain.info/en/>







H.E. Firat Sunel ▲

# "Turkey has a very special association with India"

India and Turkey have a long history of close ties and there are many commonalities based on history and culture. H.E. Firat Sunel, Ambassador of The Republic of Turkey in India, is of the opinion that both countries are "rising stars in their respective regions." In an exclusive interview with TTJ, Firat Sunel shares some delightful insights into the travel and tourism matters and aspects of Turkey in the Indian context. No wonder Turkey remains a promising and bucket list destination for many Indian travellers.

Prashant Nayak

**Turkey had 51.2 million international tourist arrivals in 2019, and in 2020, it was 15.9 million. According to you, when can Turkey once again achieve tourism numbers of 2019?**

2019 was most successful year for Turkish tourism in terms of the number of international arrivals. In 2019, our destination hosted 2.3 lakh Indian tourists, which was a record for India too. Current pandemic affected tourism industry most. However, we hope to witness a recovery in foreign tourist arrivals for our country very soon. When we look at the statistics for 2021, we see that between January-July, the number of foreign tourists coming to our country was 11.9 million. We expect to host around 25 million international visitors by the end of 2021. With the help

of successful vaccination campaigns in Turkey and other countries, we expect to reach 2019 numbers by 2022 or 2023.

**Pre-COVID, Turkey was becoming a popular destination with Indian tourists and even now it is on the wish list of many of them. On your embassy part, how do you look at this opportunity and also how are you facilitating and easing out travel for the desiring Indians during these uncertain times?**

2018 and 2019 were very successful years for Turkish tourism in India. We hosted more than 2.3 lakh Indian tourists in 2019, with an increase of 55 per cent in comparison with 2018. This number was a record for us in India. I believe that with the expansion of direct flights between our countries, both the number



of Indian tourists visiting to Turkey and Turkish tourists visiting to India will grow significantly in a short while. Our visa departments have been operating since June 2020 regularly. And e visa scheme for Indian citizens is still valid. Indian citizens who have a valid Schengen, UK or US visa can apply for Turkish e visa online and obtain his/her visa within 5-10 minutes.

**Currently, what are the requirements and protocols for Indian travellers to visit Turkey?**

I am very pleased to declare that, as of September 4th, fully vaccinated travellers from India will no longer be subjected to mandatory 14-day quarantine rule in Turkey. The vaccines that have been approved by WHO or Turkish Government are covered under this exemption. In addition to WHO approved vaccines, the vaccines approved by Turkish Government are Pfizer Biontech, Sputnik V and Sinovac. Indian traveller must be taken the second dose (if Johnson & Johnson, one dose is sufficient) at least 14 days prior to the date of travel. For Indian travellers who are vaccinated with Covishield will also be exempted from quarantine. I also believe that, once





Covaxin gets a nod from WHO, travellers vaccinated with Covaxin will also be able to visit Turkey as the people who have been vaccinated with Covishield. The fully vaccinated travellers are also required to submit their negative PCR test report taken 72 hours before departure in order to exempt the quarantine. Non-vaccinated travelers are required to undergo mandatory quarantine for 10 days in a hotel or a location mentioned in the declaration.

**Tell us, what kind of visitor target are you looking at from India to Turkey in 2021-2022?**

Turkey is a popular destination for FITs in India. We witnessed huge demand after the lifting of quarantine for fully vaccinated Indian travellers. In addition to FIT movements, Turkey has also become a popular country for MICE and Indian weddings. In this sense, I would like to mention that the number of Indian weddings that Turkey hosted in 2019 was 30. We also pay great attention to MICE movements. With the help of smooth visa system which we apply big MICE and Wedding Groups, we expect to host more groups in Turkey by 2021 and 2022. In order to maintain this growth rate, we will be conducting different specific activities for FIT, MICE and wedding segments in India in 2021 and 2022.

**According to you, what is that about Turkey that inspires people to take a trip to the country?**

From pristine beaches and clear blue waters to historical sites spanning back millennia, travellers from all over the world choose Turkey for their holiday each year. It is so diverse that there is always something new happening in some part of the country. Turkey maintains its popularity as a leading tourist destination with its unique coasts and rich natural beauty. And Turkey has a very special association with India.

Both India and Turkey share so much in common in terms of cuisine, general characteristics amongst our people, hospitality and even language. There are more than 9,000 words that are same or similar in both the languages. Sufism is another string that binds both the countries musically and culturally. Turkish dramas are very popular in India and likewise Bollywood is popular in Turkey. In last few years, there has been an increase in the number of Indian destination weddings in Turkey and also many Indian movies and videos have been shot in Turkey which has spiked interest to travel. These commonalities, along with so much more to see and explore, make Turkey a popular destination amongst Indian travellers.

**On the tourism front, any new developments in Turkey?**

I would like to mention Safe Tourism Certification Program, which has been at the heart of safety protocols of our tourism industry by the mid of 2020. As known, Turkey is one of the first countries in the World to introduce the Safe Tourism Certificate Program for the tourism industry. This certificate covers a broad range of measures, including transportation, accommodation, health condition of employees of the facilities and passengers. Granted by the international certification institutions, this system ensures the safety of the visitors, both domestic and international. Thanks to the Safe Tourism Certificate Program, the number of international visitors was more than 15 million in 2020 and we also aim to reach 25 million international visitors by the end of 2021.

From an Indian point of view, what would you recommend visitors to see and experience on a 10-day trip to Turkey?

As known, Turkey is considered as an open-air museum having 19 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. My recommendation differs for the visitors whether they are coming to country for the first time or not. For the first-time visitors, I would recommend Istanbul, Antalya and Cappadocia. As Napoleon Bonaparte says, "If the earth were a single state, İstanbul would be its capital."

The natural beauty, cultural richness and foods of the Black Sea region attract many. Popular destinations on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, including Marmaris, Çeşme, Bodrum, and Fethiye, are a must for those who love sun, sand and beaches. Sunsets and hot-air balloon rides in the Cappadocia valley have become a top tourist attraction so no one should miss it. For foodies, Gaziantep is a must visit as one gets to savour some authentic Turkish cuisine there. Gobekli-tepe has the UNESCO World Heritage Site, which gives you a glimpse of the early history of civilization. With world-class hotels, restaurants, pristine beaches, mountains, adventure sports, nightlife, etc, there is plenty to see and explore in Turkey for everyone.

I would also like to mention the rich Turkish cuisine. Turkish cuisine is considered to be the most varied and richest in the world. The unique location of Turkey, combined with the migration of Turks over the centuries from Central Asia to Europe, has shaped the identity of its gastronomy. Besides, as a country which is located in Mediterranean coast, one can also find different dishes from Mediterranean cuisine. In addition to that, Turkey is a preferable destination



for vegetarians as well. Turkish cuisine incorporates a huge range of vegetable dishes known as zeytinyagli yemegi - food cooked in olive oil. Traditional Turkish foods rely less on seasonings and more on tasty fresh ingredients.

**Do you also agree that marketing and strategising has played an important role in raising the image of Turkey globally?**

Turkey is at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East and that in itself makes it unique. Marketing & strategising is key for every destination in today's scenario, and it is equally important for us. We have been actively working towards this across key markets. Our strategy is simple, communicate and showcase. We are very active on social media. Istanbul and Antalya are counted amongst the top 25 cities in the world's best Instagrammable hotspot. We do roadshows, workshops and engage with stakeholders across all key markets and associate with platforms that could enhance Turkey's visibility globally.



# Boosting timeless charm and traditions of tribal heartland

Dr. Alok Prasad ►



Jharkhand Tourism is working relentlessly to give shape to its ambitious projects in the vertices of pilgrim, tribal and eco-tourism and offer an impetus to its upcoming destinations by sprucing up infrastructure, strengthening the connectivity and bolstering the safety and security of travellers.

**Swaati Chaudhury**

**D**uring these unprecedented times, all of us have seen our lives change in the most unexpected ways and tourism has been the worst hit by the pandemic. In an attempt to overcome the mental fatigue caused by being confined at home for a long time, most of us are seeking a post-pandemic break to some offbeat, newfound destinations. Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation has drawn up a tourism revival strategy and is tirelessly working for tourism to fall into place in the state.

Dr. Alok Prasad, General Manager, Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation Limited explained, "The pandemic has made a huge impact on tourism and hospitality sectors and our prime focus is to instill confidence among travellers on the issues of safety and hygiene in accommodation centres and tourist retreats in the state. We are tapping social media to send out messages to our potential markets to create a conducive environment for the revival of tourism. Our focus is to offer a boost to wellness tourism, adventure and sports tourism. Facilitating MICE tourism and provision of tax waiver for tourists staying in hotels form a large part of our revival plan."

The state tourism department has drawn up its post-lockdown agenda that includes aggressive promotion of niche tourist getaways, hosting a string of tourism roadshows across the state and Indian metros, organising webinars and

training moratorium on debt to various stakeholders.

Prasad said, "We are targeting the tourism sectors in the sphere of health and wellness, rural and tribal, wildlife, pilgrim, and eco-tourism. Our state takes enormous pride in harbouring some of the famed pilgrim hotspots of India that draw a steady stream of pilgrims all year round. The state is a repository of natural vegetation and mineral resources. Our eco-tourist destinations have gained immense popularity among travellers. Some of our ongoing eco-tourism circuit projects include Chandil- Netarhat- Betla National Park. We are emphasising on developing eco-friendly accommodation and building infrastructure to make the pilgrim destinations easily accessible for travellers." Other facilities include provision of clean drinking water, sanitation, affordable and hygienic accommodation facilities.

There is the Union Ministry of Tourism's two-year Prasad Scheme- a pilgrim project currently on at Deoghar. Alok Prasad further said, "The first phase of the project will be over at the year-end. The project themed- Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) comprises setting up city entrance gateways, tourist kiosks, development of Jalsar lakefront, Shiv Ganga pond, Kanwariya trail and laying the approach road to the revered Baba Baidynath shrine. There will be an integrated control command centre and a Jyotirlingam theme walk. The project

is pegged at ₹39.13 crore and a fund of ₹20.57 crore has been allotted from the Ministry of Tourism."

The newfound eco-tourist retreats in the state are Chandil in the district of Seraikela Kharsawan, Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary in the vicinity of Jamshedpur, Getalsud in Ranchi, Netarhat, Mirchaiya Waterfalls in the district of Latehar and Betla National Park. There are upcoming pilgrim points that deserve mention like the 800-year-old Shakti Mandir honouring Goddess Kali at Liori Sthan in Katras or Katrasgarh colliery in the district of Dhanbad. The Hindu shrine at Liori Sthan is one of the ancient shrines in the region.

Deoghar, Parasnath and Rajrappa remain pretty much the pilgrim hotspots in the state. Besides, there is the famed Itkhor- the impressive Buddhist pilgrim point in the district of Chatra. A museum has been set up and another Central government project is in the pipeline.

"The state has a tremendous potential to emerge as a prominent tourist destination keeping in mind the wide range of tourist attractions on offer. The state's calling cards are pilgrim, heritage, tribal and culture tourism, eco-tourism, adventure, and wellness tourism. With sound infrastructure facilities, support from stakeholders, hygienic and comfortable accommodation options, safety, and robust branding, the state can go a long way in creating wonders in the verticals of tourism," added Prasad.



# Thailand's "Phuket Sandbox 7+7 Extension" now in effect



The 'Phuket Sandbox' programme received the green light from Thailand's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) to be upgraded as the "Phuket Sandbox 7+7 Extension" providing fully vaccinated international travellers with more options to visit multiple Thai destinations without the need to quarantine. Now the Phuket Sandbox 7+7-extension offers a 7-night stay in Phuket and 7 nights in selected areas of Krabi, Phang-Nga, or Surat Thani (Samui Plus).

**T**he Phuket Sandbox 7+7 Extension programme signifies the progress of Thailand's plan to gradually reopen to fully vaccinated international travellers within the set time frame. The launch of the Phuket Sandbox from 1st July, Samui Plus from 15th July, and Phuket Sandbox 7+7 Extension from 16th August leads the way to the reopening of more pilot destinations, which are currently preparing appropriate measures to ensure the health and safety of both the tourists and local people.

Now in effect, the "Phuket Sandbox 7+7 Extension" programme allows eligible international travellers to reduce the mandatory stay in Phuket from 14 to 7 days, after which another 7 nights can be spent in Krabi (Ko Phi Phi, Ko Ngai, or Railay), Phang-Nga (Khao Lak or Ko Yao), or Surat Thani (Samui Plus – Ko Samui, Ko Pha-ngan, or Ko Tao).

The existing entry measures in place for the Phuket Sandbox programme remain

unchanged for the 7+7 extension. However, travellers planning to spend another 7 nights outside of Phuket must obtain a 'Transfer Form' issued by their hotel in Phuket indicating that they have stayed in Phuket for 7 nights, which they will need to show together with the negative results of their two COVID-19 tests (conducted on Day 0 and Day 6-7 in Phuket).

Travelling from Phuket to the selected areas in Krabi, Phang-Nga, or Surat Thai is available only via approved routes and modes of transport. Surat Thani (Samui Plus – Ko Samui, Ko Pha-ngan, or Ko Tao) can be reached via Bangkok Airways' direct domestic flight on the Phuket-Ko Samui route. Krabi (Ko Phi Phi, Ko Ngai, or Railay) can be reached by SHA Plus-certified boat and ferry services from approved piers.

Phang-Nga (Khao Lak) can be reached by SHA Plus-certified car transfer services from Phuket direct to the SHA Plus-certified hotels. Phang-Nga (Ko Yao Noi or Ko Yao Yai) can be reached via SHA Plus-certified boat and ferry services from approved piers.

Once travellers have completed the 7-night extension in Krabi, Phang-Nga and Surat



Old Town, Phuket

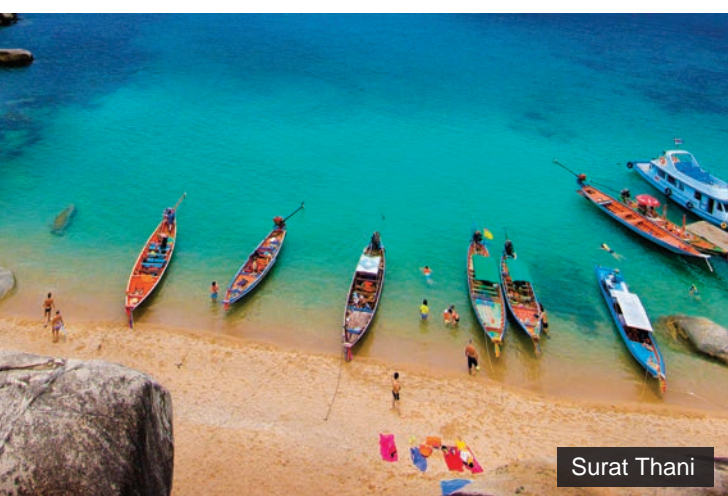
Thani (Samui Plus), and are tested negative in their third COVID-19 test (conducted on Day 12-13), they will receive a 'Release Form' from their hotel and will be able to continue their journey to other destinations in Thailand.

If the travellers stay in Krabi, Phang-Nga or Surat Thani (Samui+) is less than 7 nights, they must proceed directly to Phuket International Airport on the day of departure. At the port of entry back into Phuket, they will need to show a plane ticket or other proof of their international travel from Phuket.

While in Thailand, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) would like to remind all travellers to continue with D-M-H-T-T-A precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

D- Distancing, M- Mask wearing, H- Hand washing, T- Temperature check, T- Testing for COVID-19, and A- Alert application.

For more information about Amazing Thailand, please visit: [www.tatnews.org](http://www.tatnews.org)



Surat Thani



# Achieving sustainable tourism goals: increasing role of the public sector

Post COVID, the best hotels are going to be those that connect to their local cultures and communities. The future traveller will want to look to hotels that make him/her feel safe and secure, and also hotels that are taking on that social responsibility, focus on relations, empathy and giving back to the community.

**Kingshuk Biswas**

**H**otels can no longer be contained with measuring their efficiency by RevPAR, etc. Not only is sustainability a growing social issue, but consumers are becoming more aware of sustainable practices in hotels as information becomes more transparent. By advertising a brand or a hotel property's sustainable practices and activities, these brands/properties can gain an upper hand in attracting more customers.

Hotels have high fixed costs in mainly two areas: (1) Utilities and (2) Human Resources. It's an opportunity for the industry to learn how to convert fixed costs into variable costs. "Going green" should really be a priority for the hospitality industry for a number of reasons, including customer loyalty, cost savings, and most importantly, environmental impact. In today's competitive hospitality industry, if a hotel does not have a comprehensive sustainability program in place, then it is at a disadvantage.

The hospitality industry worldwide has always been a peoples' industry and largely dominated by the Private Sector. The Pandemic has changed all that. Post COVID-19, the Public Sector is going to play a dominant role in various ways such as public health regulations, environment policies, local community issues, certifications, etc. Public policy interventions will eventually encourage hotels to adopt sustainable tourism practices quickly and efficiently.

A sustainable tourism incentive strategy is a necessity that the national/ state/ regional authorities across the globe should adopt for the resurgence of the covid struck hospitality sector. Incentivised green technology and sustainable-friendly variations will help to overcome the problems plaguing the low occupancy in hotels or hotels which are on the verge of closure.

For example, the government can try to incentivise the costs associated with third-party sustainable tourism certification. One way to give such practices a boost is by offering direct or indirect monetary/ non-monetary instruments that propel private undertakings to change their outlook towards greater sustainability. This



▲ Kingshuk Biswas

becomes more necessary for small and medium-sized properties that will not be able to afford the extra costs associated with green/sustainable certification. It is said that green-certified/eco-friendly hotels require a higher investment than conventional or normal hotels. As per the industry standards, the cost of green/sustainable hotels is approximately 10 per cent to 15 per cent higher than the conventional properties.

The Government/Public Sector can incentivise sustainable tourism practices for the hospitality industry in several ways, such as:

Capital subsidy/Interest subsidy for green/sustainable hotels/purchase of EVs: The hotels which invest in captive power plants and energy-saving machinery/equipment in their hotels whether in the form of a new construction or retrofitting can be provided funding in terms of capital subsidy or interest subsidy provided the projects are bankable. Subsidies can be offered for the purchase of electric vehicles by the hotels. A capital incentive, including low-interest rate funding, through banks, may help propel the sector to adopt these sustainable measures quicker.

VAT refunds & income tax holidays: Government support for adopting energy-

saving machinery/equipment/certification can be in the form of VAT refunds or income-tax holidays.

Reimbursement of sustainable tourism/green building certification costs: Governments can seriously consider reimbursing/exempting the certification costs which smaller or stand-alone hotels incur towards green certifications. It could be applicable to both new constructions and existing hotels.

Financial support for setting up EV charging stations: Hotels/Resorts/Motels/Eateries etc can be encouraged to set up electric vehicle charging stations in their open spaces.

Appointment of a sustainable tourism task force: The Government along with hospitality sector stakeholders can form a sustainable tourism task force that will create frameworks and regulations to promote sustainable tourism, capacity building, monitor and evaluate results, share best practices on a domestic and global scale, recognise and award industry best practices, etc.

Promotional efforts: Governments should not only incentivise green/sustainable practices by the Hospitality industry but also effectively communicate to the tourists at large through marketing campaigns that highlight, promote and elevate sustainable tourism properties.

Governments world over are beginning to mandate reduced energy use and emissions in terms of renewable energy policies, electric vehicle incentives, etc. Government authorities worldwide need to frame incentive policies (financial/non-financial) to encourage small and medium-sized hotel properties to adopt green practices and/or get themselves certified as 'green hotels'.

Government authorities' no longer can postpone their sustainable tourism policies. If Governments don't already have sustainability on their agenda and built into their strategies, this crisis has given them a real opportunity to rethink.

Kingshuk Biswas is on the UNWTO Panel of tourism experts and employed with Gujarat Power Corporation Limited.



# Branding, for a 360-degree visibility



▲ Ritu Kishore Raizada

As Senior Vice President, Marketing & Communications at Think Strawberries, Ritu Kishore Raizada, has been shaping client strategy, leveraging marketing technology, and ideating campaigns for their brands. With over 24 years of industry experience, she has handled the South Asia region and some of the world's most valuable brands. Ritu's guidance on brand strategy and deployment has led to successful and award-winning marketing solutions for brands across multiple industry disciplines. We learn from her, certain strategies that destinations must adopt in order to remain attractive and relevant for travellers.

**Prashant Nayak**

At Think Strawberries, there are fresh insights and ground-level understanding that has been brought to bear on the work for Ritu Kishore Raizada. Essentially, communication is about direct marketing and accountability to a well-defined market segment. "The marketing communication tools in the travel industry are extremely dynamic with a high focus on B2B, apart from B2C. For all of us in the communications field, the pandemic has pressed on the importance of being flexible. With information changing at a rapid pace, the main strategy is to communicate it quickly, efficiently and in a contextual way to a variety of stakeholders. As soon as the nationwide lockdown was announced, we introduced certain processes in the system for uninterrupted internal and external communication to keep the brands alive in consumers' minds," says Ritu.

Speaking about their present engagement, Maldives, one of the prestigious destination that they represent in India, has reopened for Indian travellers from July 15. The new COVID safety rules of the Maldives Immigration have been eased and made it more convenient for Indian travellers. In fact, India was the No. 1 source market for the Maldives in 2020 and now ranks second in the world. Ritu further shares, "The good news is that the COVID restrictions are now lifting slowly in many countries where we represent not only the destinations but also tourism products. Among these are France where we represent Disneyland Paris, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where we represent Majid Al Futtaim and Dubai Parks and Resorts which have seen a massive surge in demand from travellers in

India after the country reopened its borders for fully vaccinated visitors, since August 30."

With so much disruption due to the COVID pandemic, staying relevant with their audience was very important and at Think Strawberries, they have adopted a robust plan for 360-degree visibility through various platforms for their clients. On this, Ritu speaks, "The digital-led approach enabled us to remain connected with our stakeholders even in the most difficult of times. Especially during the pandemic, our prime focus has been to ensure that our target audience (B2B, B2C) remains well-versed with the latest developments of the destinations we represent. From e-meetings and virtual events to social media and tech-led tools, digitalization in COVID times helped us to remain relevant in the face of one of the most challenging crises witnessed by the industry."

Presently, safety will continue to remain a top priority while making travel decisions as we all learn to live in the new-normal. Therefore, owing to the current scenario, for Think Strawberries, the prime role as a destination representation company is to instil confidence in their audiences by effectively and regularly communicating the health and safety protocols taken by their clients. For instance, while promoting Maldives, they kept its 'One Island One Resort' concept at the forefront of all their marketing efforts to promote safety and seclusion of travellers. Safety, along with other factors, made it one of the most visited nations by Indians during the pandemic. Today, as the vaccination drive is on full throttle around the world, they are now focussing on the efforts Maldives is undertaking to vaccinate its staff in its pursuit to become the first fully vaccinated tourism sector in the world.

"In addition to safety, we assess the

destination's connectivity from India, its unique offerings and experiences. Wellness, cuisine, adventure are also some of the experiences that are gaining popularity among Indian travellers. Other important factors include flexible cancellation/modification policies on flights and hotels. In the post-COVID era, we are designing products for travellers that are increasingly looking for outdoors and closer to nature experiences," adds Ritu.

For branding and communication, social media offers an avenue for companies to not only engage with customers but also influence them with the correct content, which assists them with making a decision. The true strength of social media is its influence. Ritu definitely thinks that 'social media' has had a long-lasting power and impact on the way people communicate and has now become an integral part of their lives. According to a latest study, global online content consumption doubled in 2020. In a post-COVID world, social media has been helping to satiate everyone's wanderlust as virtual travelling aims to fill the void left by months of staying indoors. Thus, they continue to actively engage with their audiences across all platforms and leverage the power of social media to keep our destinations at the top of the travellers' mind.

Ritu is also very optimistic about the return of travel as she concludes, "With the improvement in the COVID situation and a high rate of vaccination in India, countries are gradually opening their doors for Indian travellers. There is a huge pent-up demand for travel and we are extremely positive that with the stringent safety protocols and other measures being followed by the destinations and the travellers, the industry will revive sooner than later."





# Time to reconnect with the world again

Qatar Travel Mart (QTM 2021), the first of its kind exhibition in Qatar, aims to support and strengthen the competitiveness of the tourism industry of the country by bringing together the inbound and outbound tourism together. QTM provides a marketplace for a mutual relationship to both local and international tourism businesses by promoting, upholding and discovering the place, people, and culture. NeXTfairs, the multi-format events organiser has a national mandate to position Qatar as the premium destination for business events. Rawad Sleem, Co-Founder and General Manager, NeXTfairs shares more on the debut event.

**Sonika Bohra**

**Tell us about the vision, theme, and focus of QTM 2021? Is it the same as envisaged for QTM 2020 (which was postponed), or something new?**

First, let me extend my utmost gratitude to HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Khalid Bin Khalifa Bin Abdulaziz Al Thani for his patronage and the entire Qatari government for supporting Qatar Travel Mart's objectives during these challenging times.

The theme of Qatar International Exhibition for Travel and Tourism- Qatar Travel Mart is Discover PEOPLE, PLACES AND CULTURES. Its focus is to offer the most sought-after travel destinations, real-estate development projects and up-to-date Sports, MICE, Cultural, Leisure, Luxury, and medical tourism trends to the most discerning upscale market and provide insights and fresh perspective on the future of tourism by bringing together the industry's thought leaders, experts, and stakeholders. Also, it is QTM's aim to provide a venue for the travel and tourism industry to take its first step to recovery.

When it comes to QTM's vision, it hasn't shifted however, to adapt to the current situation, there is more emphasis on the well-being of all participants, the importance of creating a safe environment while conducting business, and the necessity of promoting face-to-face interaction as a tool of the marketplace.

**Please shed some light on the travel and tourism industry statistics for Qatar?**

As I'm sure everyone is aware, in the past 20 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the travel and tourism industry immensely. However, prior to this period, Qatar's tourism statistics were growing exponentially year on year. The total contribution to GDP in 2019 was 45.5 billion QAR which represents 7.1 per cent of Qatar's total GDP and 11.1 per cent of non-oil GDP, while there were 119,800 jobs supported by travel and tourism in 2019 and this is

expected to double by 2030 to 247,800 jobs. International visitor spend in 2019 amounted to 19.8 billion QAR (excluding airfare; so in-destination only). Visitor arrivals are expected to rebound strongly in 2022, as borders reopen more fully and pent-up demand is released, visitors from previously blockading GCC countries and visitors for FIFA World Cup 2022.

**How many exhibitors and visitors are you aiming at to be a part of the event?**

We are expecting to welcome a total of 7,000 visitors who will have the opportunity to meet with 90+ local and international exhibitors from various travel and tourism sectors, such as, tourism boards, governmental agencies, travel agents & tour operators, DMC's, medical tourism providers, hotels and resorts, airlines and sports tourism.

We are proud of having a very diverse and prestigious group of confirmed exhibitors; we are privileged to have on board Aspire & Torch Hospitality, Retaj Hotels & Hospitality, Doha Bus, Visit Maldives, ENIT – The Italian Tourism Board, Azerbaijan Pavilion, Rwanda Pavilion, Korea Tourism Organization, Dominican Republic Pavilion, Cyprus Pavilion, Gulf Adventures LLC, First Travel & Tourism, National Cruise Company, to name just a few.

**Tell us about the location? Also, how is it set to provide all-around better conditions for in-person exhibitors and visitors to engage?**

We have chosen DECC as the venue of QTM 2021. The Doha Exhibition and Convention Center is located in West Bay, at the heart of Doha's business district. It is close to the airport and is surrounded by various hotels with the choice of 5 stars down to affordable accommodations. DECC is also a stone's throw away from the metro station, which makes it more accessible to reach the venue.

**Any particular segment of travel that has been given more focus on?**



▲ Rawad Sleem

For us to cover all the travel and tourism industry's segments, QTM 2021 will be featuring seven dedicated sectors of the travel and tourism industry, which will focus on a holistic experience covering luxury, business, medical, sports, MICE, halal tourism, leisure and cultural tourism trends.

**What are some of the interesting and innovative programmes curated for QTM 2021?**

To engage both our participants and visitors, QTM 2021 will feature a 3-day conference which will be attended by high-profile speakers and influencers, the Global Village which will connect different parts of the world under one roof; showcasing heritage, philosophies and more, the Media Fam Trip which aims to introduce Qatar's amazing destinations and their unique travel experiences to be shared with the world, the Gala Dinner to engage QTM 2021 Exhibitors and VIPs to experience the essence of Qatar's local hospitality, along with the Hosted Buyers Program where QTM's Strategic Partner, Qatar Tourism, will bring together 24 high profile buyers from all over the world to Qatar, giving exhibitors the opportunity to meet senior decision-makers and tourism experts, source potential investments and joint ventures, and achieve real business interactions.

**How will this event impact the tourism industry in Qatar?**

The event brings together many international tourism boards, national, and regional tourist offices, airlines, tour operators, hoteliers, travel technology providers and travel agents, all under one roof. It is the only event in Qatar to promote recovery and best practices of the travel and tourism industry.

Being marked as the safest country in the world, Qatar is the best choice for a tourist destination including the MICE Segment. With over 80 visa-free on arrival, the country is the friendliest place for visitors and business people alike.



# Explore the spirit of adventure in Qatar

Qatar has a myriad of easily accessible tourist attractions, experiences, and a unique combination of cultural authenticity and modernity. From the finest of adventure, sports and activities to some top places to visit in Qatar, one can find numerous options to enjoy in this part of the globe. Qatar is also one of the largest transit gateways in the Middle East for overseas travellers in the world.

Team TTJ

Qatar is an adventurer's dream with a wealth of rugged, untouched nature, and ideal for everything from scuba diving to kitesurfing or quad biking over the desert landscape. Pristine sandy beaches are a haven for adrenaline seekers weary from tumbling over the sparkling Arabian Gulf, and dune-bashers looking to relax after a hard day's adventure in the Qatari desert.

To experience the desert like the Bedouins of yore, head south of Doha, to the 'Inland Sea'—a UNESCO site that is one of few places in the world where the sea encroaches deep into the heart of the desert. For a truly authentic desert experience, nothing beats a camel ride over the soft dunes, before embarking on an exhilarating desert safari over the dunes to Khor Al Adaid, accessible only by 4x4 vehicles. For more exhilarating



the deserts of Qatar perfect for paragliding, offering a wholly different perspective of the landscape. Enjoy beautiful sceneries of Doha during sunrise onboard a hot-air balloon. Experience the exciting sky adventure while enjoying a 360-degree panoramic and picturesque view of the city.

With over 560 km of coastline, Qatar boasts abundant marine life and crystal waters, making it ideal for fishing, sailing, water-skiing, canoeing, kitesurfing, jet-skiing, and windsurfing. If diving in the Arabian Gulf is a dream adventure, there is plenty of exploring to be done. Dive sites are easily accessible and include deep water, and reef dives. Kayak through the Al Thakira mangroves. Located just north of the seaside city of Al Khor, it presents a large expanse of natural greenery. Qatar has a proud history of seafaring, and today it is possible to experience that aboard a traditional wooden dhow boat with relaxed sightseeing excursions. And not to forget, the unspoiled beaches that dot the country's coastline, that make it ideal for a quick escape.

Qatar offers thrilling adventures that are not only awe-inspiring but will take your breath away.



experiences, sandboard along the dunes or hit the dunes on a quad bike, ATV or dune buggy. Enjoy a daytime, evening or overnight trip to traditional camps or glamps.

View Qatar from above with exquisite experiences like paragliding or paratriking. Sturdy winds and vast skies make





# The Rove Expo 2020 Hotel

## A perfect basecamp in the centre of 'The Greatest Show on Earth'

Dubai's home-grown hotel brand, Rove Hotels, is ready with Rove Expo 2020 Hotel, which will open its doors on October 1, 2021. Paul Bridger, from the Rove Hotels' Management, invites 'Rovers' to grab the best seats in the house at Dubai Expo 2020's only on-site hotel. He assures that their guests will be able to enjoy great hospitality within the Expo 2020 site.

Read on ...

Prashant Nayak

### **Tell us about the thought given behind coming up with Rove Expo 2020 Hotel?**

With Rove Expo 2020, our aim was to provide Rovers (guests) the 'best seats in the house' to the world's greatest show. Rove Expo 2020 is adjacent to Al Wasl Plaza, placing our Rovers (guests) at the epicentre of the event and serving as the perfect launchpad for 192 country pavilions, over 60 daily shows and more! We are positive that the presence of this hotel will boost the already huge appeal of such a historical and major event for the UAE and offer Expo 2020 visitors a new, innovative hospitality option.

### **Can you brief us more about the unique amenities and facilities at the hotel? What is the USP of this hotel?**

Being the only on-site hotel at Expo 2020 Dubai, as well as the amazing location adjacent to Al Wasl plaza make for very compelling reasons to drive many Rovers to stay with us.

From the refined design concept which combines references to past World Expos and hints to the future, to amazing facilities such as a stunning swimming pool and sundeck overlooking Al Wasl Plaza, Rove Expo 2020 takes the Rove Hotels concept to a whole new level, while maintaining the brand DNA.

Some unique facilities present at Rove Expo 2020 include suites, a first for Rove Hotels, multiple F&B outlets including The Daily restaurant, our signature concept, as well as a bar and a grab and go Rove Café. Additionally, the hotel will feature an outdoor event space and large co-working areas.

Sustainability is another aspect where Rove Expo 2020 shines. The hotel has been built following Expo 2020's strict sustainability guidelines and it has received the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification. Besides,



▲ Paul Bridger

we are applying all the environmental learnings acquired across other brand properties to Rove Expo 2020. Initiatives include 100 per cent sustainable amenities, AI-powered food waste management system, in-property waste segregation, recycling and much more.

Thanks to these initiatives, Rove Hotels have been awarded with the prestigious Green Key certification, as well as certified by DTCM's Sustainable Tourism Initiative.

### **Having the advantage of being the only onsite hotel at the Expo 2020 venue, have you started receiving bookings for the property? What is your expectation of room occupancy till the end of the Expo?**

Yes, definitely! We're getting lots of enquiries for Rove Expo 2020, not only for our rooms but also for our meeting and event venues and F&B outlets.

An example of this are our suites, which are almost sold out already! This is the

first Rove property to ever feature suites, so it has been a welcomed surprise. We are certainly very excited about being part of Expo 2020 and the fact that we are a homegrown brand is just a plus. We are looking forward to showing the world what the UAE is capable of.

### **What are your marketing strategies? How is the hotel reaching out to your global customers?**

Our focus has largely been on digital media and social platforms and historically, that has worked out the best for our target audience as well as the brand. For Rove Expo 2020, this continues to be true, but we will be maximising our reach by tapping into new platforms and working closely with the team at Expo 2020 to promote the event.

Given we are a homegrown brand, locally we have built a very strong brand presence and internationally, we have traditionally focused on targeted tactical campaigns on key markets. During the Expo 2020 period, we are expecting a great influx of visitors from across the world. With the only on-site hotel inside the event, we are sure lots of visitors will get to discover and experience the brand for the first time, which is great.

### **What are your expectations from the Indian audience during the Dubai Expo? Have you worked out special offers/packages for your Indian trade partners?**

India is a key market for the UAE and for Rove Hotels it has been among the top 5 markets across the brand. If the global travel situation allows for it, we would expect it to be among the top markets throughout the Expo period.

For the Indian audience, Rove Hotels has always had a wide appeal across segments thanks to the quality of offerings provided at great value, alongside being centrally located in Dubai. Some of the Rove Hotels are in areas that are particularly popular





with Indian travellers, such as Rove Deira City Centre, Rove Healthcare City and Rove At The Park in Dubai Parks and Resorts. With the India Pavilion hosting a variety of festivals and events showcasing its culture and art to keep its audience positively engaged, we expect the Indian audience to show full participation and support during Dubai Expo 2020 and hope to welcome them to the Rove Hotels across the city.

## How will Rove Expo 2020 hotel brand strategies and manage after the Expo?

Right now, we are focusing on ensuring a smooth opening to take place on 1st October 2021 to coincide with Expo 2020. Unlike traditional hotel openings, Rove Expo 2020 will not have a ramp-up period and will open at full occupancy on 1st October 2021, so we are working tirelessly with our team to ensure that we deliver the same high standards of service that we are known for from day 1.

After the event, 80 per cent of the total Expo site will be repurposed into a mixed-use area with residential, commercial, and retail spaces to be known as District 2020. Inside Rove Expo 2020 we have a special area that highlights the future of the district after Expo 2020 through an including an interactive 3D model, and audio-visual content. The hotel will sit right at the centre of that, strategically placed to host visitors to the new Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC) which will be hosting many of the city's largest events as well as in close proximity to Al Maktoum Airport and Jebel Ali Freezone.

## What are the other Rove Hotels you are banking on to attract the Dubai Expo

## audience?

We have 9 great locations around the city, all very well connected and with easy access to Dubai metro and public transport. While we are seeing interest for the Expo period across all our properties, there are several hotels that are specially well positioned to cater to Expo visitors thanks to their proximity to the event, such as Rove At The Park, Rove Dubai Marina and of course, Rove Expo 2020. Our full list of locations includes Rove Downtown, Rove City Centre, Rove Trade Centre, Rove La Mer Beach, Rove Dubai Marina, Rove Healthcare City, Rove At The Park and Rove City Walk.

## What are some new trends that you have been witnessing in the Dubai Hospitality sector?

Operational agility is an important new trend that we believe is here to stay. It's about offering optimal experiences to guests while keeping operations lean. At Rove we have always had a flat hierarchy which has helped us move fast and adapt to change when required, without affecting the quality of our service.

The second trend is sustainability and Rove it has always been an area of great focus. With Expo 2020 aiming to be one of the most environmentally friendly World Expos in history, the brand is upping its earth-love ethos to match. Rove Hotels' commitment to making a positive impact in everything it does can be found within the big stuff, filtering all the way through to the tiny details. The team has utilised the latest technologies in energy efficiency with

increased solar panelling, whilst operating with the leading artificial intelligence in food waste solutions and so much more – all in line with Rove's strong spirit of sustainability.

The third key trend would be repurposing hotel areas to cater to new demands. Over the last 18 months, Rove Hotels has launched a number of very popular initiatives that have helped us make the most of underutilised e-spaces and attract new Rovers to our hotels. Some examples of these are our new Gamer Caves, the Middle East's first gaming rooms, the Rove Podcast Studio located in Rove Downtown, a film and photography studio in partnership with Nikon, private hotel offices for those looking for a quiet and safe space to work and more.

## Do you think the Expo 2020 Dubai can be a strong catalyst in the recovery of UAE's hospitality industry?

Expo 2020 is expected to bring 25 million visitors over the next 6 months that will surely help in accelerating the city's tourism recovery. DTCM and the Government of Dubai have done an excellent job maintaining Dubai as a top-of-mind destination, which has translated in Dubai being the second city in the world in terms of hotel occupancy during the first half of 2021. We are excited to see what Expo 2020 will bring, it's a one-of-a-kind opportunity to show to the world what Dubai and the UAE have achieved and bring lots of new visitors to the city.



# JetSetGo

## A ray of hope in the private aviation space

With over a decade of hands-on experience in the aviation industry, JetSetGo Aviation, an online marketplace currently manages and operates India's largest private jet and helicopter fleet and is redefining the private aviation business in India. In an interaction with TTJ, Kanika Tekriwal, Co-Founder & CEO, JetSetGo Aviation speaks about her determination and focused approach on delivering innovative and transformational solutions in the air charter and leasing industry, with JetSetGo strongly in the lead.

Prashant Nayak



▲ Kanika Tekriwal

### **Tell us how you ventured into the aviation business? Also, the reasons behind founding JetSetGo?**

My decision to pursue a career in aviation was completely motivated by my love for the industry. I started working in the sector when I was just 17 years old. The initial idea for JetSetGo came up in a conversation with a colleague in the UK. I narrated an idea that I had about setting up a thriving aviation company, born out of India; not aimed at making my colleague laugh out loud, but that's just what happened. Being Indian and being adamant, I was determined to prove him, and everybody else that thought along the same lines, wrong. I narrowed down the two key industry concerns after studying India's private aviation market for several years- one of them being the inconsistent service and the other, lack of return on investment for aircraft owners. Thus, JetSetGo stepped in for an end-to-end management of aircrafts for the owners in the most cost-effective manner possible and consequently made it more profitable and efficient for one to own a private jet.

JetSetGo was established with a vision to completely redefine the notion and overall experience of chartered air travel. Through maintaining efficient management, cultivating a global network of suppliers, partaking in innovative parts & tool sharing programs, and achieving vast economies of scale, JetSetGo has managed to grow at an unprecedented scale as a business.

### **How did you manage to stay afloat in these difficult times?**

When the travel business came to a complete standstill and began witnessing major shifts and losses, we actively worked towards reforming our services in a manner that would eventually push the industry forward in the COVID world. To this end, we remained operational even during the initial stages of the country-wide lockdown, even though travel was really scarce then. With the increase in requests coming in for evacuation and emergency flights, we pivoted from providing a luxurious private charter experience to offering medevac/emergency services to our guests, while also continuing operations with a limited workforce

(due to the pandemic).

However, after the international travel bans started lifting a few weeks ago for various destinations, we have been getting daily requests for leisure travel as well; not just from the UHNIs and HNIs, but even the upper-middle-class with disposable incomes. So, in that sense, the pandemic broadened our clientele and enabled us to cater to a wider audience, also making our service portfolio more diverse and inclusive. Thus, we are seeing a lot of variations in our clientele since the past year. This is consequently leading to an increase in the market size of private jets in India as more people are preferring chartered flights as opposed to commercial airlines amidst the pandemic.

### **Do you think, due to the COVID crisis, with changing mindsets, the private aviation space is getting the required attention?**

In these unprecedented times, the demand for efficient and flexible aviation is gaining momentum. Before the onset of the coronavirus, we used to receive anywhere between 30-40 requests per day for



charter flight bookings, mostly for business flights. Post the lockdown, there was a sudden demand for evacuation flights. We were able to fly close to 17 evacuation flights with all the required approvals in place during this time. When compared to pre-COVID periods, our numbers have not increased, but they have significantly increased when compared to the overall aviation sector.

We have seen a nine-fold increase in booking requests, out of which 70 per cent are new clients of JetSetGo. We have seen approximately 10-12 booking queries each day ever since the air travel suspension was lifted for the Maldives and other European countries.

**Tell us about the Private aviation business in India? Do you believe that the concept of Private charters will gain momentum in a country like India any time soon?**

Given the current state of in-flight disruptions, charters provide a high level of flexibility and dependability. The demand for chartered aircrafts is at an all-time high as more travellers become conscious of their safety. The increasing complexity and disruptions in flying commercial, for which there is no clarity on when or what the new normal will be, are resulting in a significant spike in demand for private aviation.

With safety added to the list of additional advantages offered by flying private, such as on-board comfort, the convenience of booking, speed of service, scheduling, and seamless ground transportation, the industry is poised to experience unprecedented growth.

In addition, since the suspension of air travel for both domestic and foreign locations was removed, charters have seen a surge in leisure travel demand due to safety concerns. As a result, we are experiencing many international one-way trips from India as people are looking forward to leisure trips. Now, we are not only restricted to HNIs and ultra-rich clients. but expanding our customer base to people with disposable income as well.

**What are your major hurdles and challenges in the business?**

Private aviation, like any other industry, has experienced a number of obstacles since the pandemic

struck- from overnight changing flying rules and regulations in different parts of the world and doing just limited flights to having a limited workforce on the ground to run aircrafts. The increase in ATF is also adding to the operational cost. That said, our demand also exceeds the supply, for which we have decided to overcome this by investing in the GIFT City project and managing an adequate supply. Furthermore, when we return to normalcy, the challenges will be overcome. Gradually, more countries are already reopening to Indian visitors, and we will soon be flying at full capacity.

**How is JetSetGo revolutionising the private aviation business? How are you working on JetSetGo to be more accessible and affordable to air commuters?**

JetSetGo was established with a vision to completely redefine the notion and overall experience of chartered air travel, while also eradicating the two biggest problems in India's Aviation Industry; making private jets profit centres instead of cost centres for owners, and substantially reducing aircraft charter costs for customers.

We were able to accomplish both these missions through intelligent integration of Technology, Development of Maintenance Procedures and our SMART Management (a proprietary technology of JetSetGo). These technologies help us reduce the maintenance costs, increase the air time and decrease the ground time, making the business profitable for us and in turn also for the aircraft owners who partner with us. Due to the successful deployment of these efficiencies at each step, we are also able to significantly reduce the cost of chartered aircrafts, thereby making them more readily and frequently accessible to flyers.

**What is your fleet strength?**

Currently, we have a dedicated fleet of 22 aircrafts out of which 11 are self-owned and a few others are on marketing contracts with us on lease, globally. When JetSetGo entered the private aviation industry in 2014, it was still in its nascent stages and charter planes were considered to be the most expensive mode of transport which was only accessible to UHNIs and HNIs. However, the times have changed since the past

few years and the prominence of private jets as a means of transport in India will soar in the near future.

**How do you reach out to your loyal and new and evolving customers?**

At JetSetGo, we always go an extra mile to deliver the best possible experience to our flyers. From enabling clients to make bookings 24\*7\*365 days via a simple phone call or through the JetSetGo Mobile App, to booking a private charter for them in just 3 minutes and ensuring they land at the said destination at their chosen time, JetSetGo has it all covered for them.

Additionally, we offer 29 more safety & security checks than an average carrier/commercial airline. Through our innovative approach, commitment and dedication, we have completely transformed private flying and made it an extraordinary and memorable experience for anyone who chooses to fly with us. Our priority has always been the safety and comfort of our guests. To that end, we are constantly evolving as per the feedback from our guests, to fully align with their expectations.

**Tell us about your vision and expansion plans in the near future?**

JetSetGo will continue to focus on the upper end of the market, with greater play in either the mid-sized or the larger long-range private jets. We have already set up an aircraft financing and leasing arm at Gujarat's GIFT city, and are in the process of acquiring pre-owned aircrafts. This is a fully-owned unit of JetSetGo and we will be beefing up the activity on this front in the months to follow. In fact, our very first aircraft, a Hawker 800 XP has already been imported into India through a lease of IFSC, GIFT City, marking a historic event in India's aviation history.

Additionally, our focus is on enabling urban air mobility in congested cities of India by using eVTOLs, as we firmly believe that everyone should be able to use an air taxi at a price similar to that of an Uber. We are working towards turning this vision into reality with JetSetGo's 'Sky Shuttle' service. This service enables the user to book a ferry ride at the cost of an uber and reach their destination with a same day return without any wait time at all.



# Hong Kong gears up for recovery

With the global economy starting to rebound in Asia and with the gradual easing of the pandemic situation in Hong Kong, Puneet Kumar, Director, South Asia, & Middle East, Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) is further keen to raise the profile of Hong Kong with their Indian trade partners and share about the latest developments in the iconic city known for its world-famous cityscapes. HKTb also has a good number of initiatives such as the 'Hong Kong Convention Ambassador' programme to help revitalise Hong Kong's MICE industry and Great Outdoors Hong Kong campaign to highlight the city's offering to its discerning travellers from across the globe.



Manisha Patel

▲ Puneet Kumar

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

For us, India's importance is in its diverse traveller segments with varying travel intents. Over the years Hong Kong has successfully attracted leisure travellers, fly-cruise vacationers, Meetings and Incentive business groups and we are confident that with exciting tourism developments, new upcoming attractions and rejuvenating experiences Hong Kong is well-positioned for business recovery in all key segments from India once the travel resumes.

While the travel has taken a long pause between India and Hong Kong due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we filled this time to keep our prospects, friends in media, corporate clients and trade partners updated and engaged with Hong Kong. The HKTb launched 360 Hong Kong Moments; a bouquet of VR-enabled video stories to showcase the myriad experiences of Hong Kong. We also took creative initiatives such as experiential virtual tours during the

HK Wine & Dine Festival, Chinese New Year and Wellness tour of Peng Chau Island to give an entertaining destination experience to our media and trade partners. We also updated and refreshed destination knowledge for our travel trade partners through multiple webinars that reached over 1900 travel professionals in the year 2020-21.

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

Love for travel among Indians has grown multiple folds despite pandemic-induced travel restrictions that limited their mobility. We are pleased to share that HK's return to normalcy has garnered confidence and steady tourism recovery. Many attractions in the city are now open.

Also, cruising is back! Hong Kong residents can set sail from the spectacular Victoria Harbour and enjoy a host of unique Seacation experiences. To offer extra peace of mind, every precaution has been taken, including fully vaccinated crew and passengers onboard. Genting Dream Cruises has lined up a series of travel-themed festival and

wellness experiences onboard the Genting Dream that restarted on 30 July. Genting Dream is offering 3D2N Super Summer Seacation departing Fridays and Wednesdays, as well as a 4D3N itinerary departing Sundays.

In Hong Kong, there is a strong prelude to MICE business recovery with the return of physical events and exhibition resumption. The vibrancy in the city's exhibition scene demonstrated how Hong Kong continues cultivating business under the new normal – the Hong Kong Book Fair, the city's largest annual fair, returned with fanfare this July with more than 830,000 visits recorded, about 85 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels, all under a new standard of stringent hygiene and seamless operations.

Boosted by the momentum of the vibrant physical event scene in the second quarter, over 30 exhibitions have been scheduled in Q3, almost double the number of exhibitions in Q2. Some are the largest of its kinds in the region, including the HOFEX, Asia's leading food & hospitality trade show set to return in September.



Hong Kong has also been chosen as the host city for a number of international MICE events, including the city's first-ever events of high strategic values and repeated events amidst the COVID-19 challenges, such as the International Airline Transport Association (IATA) World Cargo Symposium 2022, The Congress of the Asian Society of Transplantation (CAST) 2023 and some events which are largest of its kind, covering industries of medicine, technology, tourism, financial services and more. It demonstrates international event organisers' confidence in Hong Kong as a strategic, safe and hygienic destination for high-profile business events. The HKTb will continue to proactively engage organisers to bid for hosting rights of major MICE events and step up efforts in attracting regional and international events with a view to maintaining Hong Kong's status as The World's Meeting Place.

**When travel resumes, how is your destination working to offer a safe travel environment in both in leisure and MICE segments?**

As a precursor to welcome the overseas visitors into Hong Kong, the HKTb launched the 'Anti-epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme' in partnership with the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency (HKQAA). Under this scheme, the tourism industry and related sectors will follow a standardised hygiene protocol to assure visitors of a safe and healthy stay, helping us establish a healthy and safe tourism image of Hong Kong and bolsters visitors' confidence in traveling here. More than 2,500 organisations participated to strengthen public and visitor confidence in out-of-home consumption and travel.

For the leisure segment, the HKTb has planned a promotional campaign 'Open House Hong Kong' that encompasses a collection of exciting travel offers and in-town experiences with a view to telling the world that Hong Kong is ready to embrace visitors again. The campaign will be launched after cross-boundary travel resumes.

In our efforts for business recovery and market readiness, our MICE team has curated new incentive ideas/programmes such as:

New themed itineraries for incentives: To anticipate the resumption of travel, the team is developing new themed itineraries

that answer the emerging trend of experiential, wellness and interest-based travel, such as CSR and wellness. Many new inspirational ideas and refreshed experiences are curated to enrich corporate Meetings and Incentive (M&I) groups' itineraries and to encourage them to rediscover Hong Kong with a new lens.

Tactical campaign for M&I: Along with our Hong Kong industry partners, we will be curating exclusive offers and incentives under the MeetON@HongKong campaign to make it a rewarding experience for the visiting corporate delegates. The programme will further be enhanced with additional offers from hotels, a free ticket from an airline, attractions and more.

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

We are promoting Wellness and Great Outdoors of Hong Kong to satiate the growing love for nature and doing nature-based activities among Indians, Arts in Hong Kong and unique D-I-Y itineraries to help them self-explore to find themselves with a whole new perspective and of course later this year we will present West Kowloon Neighbourhood and its authentic local living culture to satisfy their strong curiosity to discover the culture and history of the place.

We are keen to pleasantly surprise our overseas visitors with a whole suite of rejuvenated tourism offerings such as iconic Victoria Harbour front, internationalised dining and shopping, wellness and green great outdoors, uniquely intangible city culture and exciting art scene, Hong Kong has it all!

**What are the new and upcoming attractions in Hong Kong?**

Hong Kong Disneyland has expanded their attractions and experiences, together with the new Castle of Magical Dreams, new daytime shows, and night time spectacular to appeal to families and different generations travelling together.

Ocean Park Hong Kong will open in September 2021 the much-anticipated Water World Ocean Park Hong Kong – Asia's first and only year-round, all-weather seaside water park. Water World Ocean Park is created for adventurers of all kinds to discover the five zones, each filled with its own unique spirit

of fun and adventure. Within these five zones, there are 27 outdoor and indoor attractions, HK's first-ever surf ride, nine dynamic water slides to several areas specially designed for adventure seekers.

West Kowloon neighbourhood promotion will be launched under the Hong Kong Neighbourhoods campaign tied in with the opening of the M+ museum, the visual culture venue in late 2021. The West Kowloon Cultural District and its surrounding area offer a very authentic local living culture and exhilarating art scene that would interest our overseas visitors.

We encourage visitors to explore the beauty of Hong Kong through arts. The HK art scene remains vibrant throughout the year with in-town happenings and to offer an immersive experience of the city HKTb curated 6 unique art itineraries that tick off all the routes for an artful rediscovery of Hong Kong. Some of the points of interest covered are:

Arts by the iconic Victoria Harbour follow an 8-stop itinerary to some of the most interesting art and cultural hubs along the harbour including Hong Kong Arts Centre (HKAC), Ani-com Park@Harbour "Fun", Wan Chai Waterfront Promenade, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMoA), Avenue of Stars, Xiqu Centre, West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) and kick-off your journey as a bona fide culture vulture.

A star-studded tour of cinematic scenes in Yau Tsim Mong District in particular, has served as inspiration, and set the scene, for numerous genres of films and music videos around the world, from K-pop to Hollywood blockbusters. Follow an 8-stop itinerary to Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade, Peninsula Hotel, Temple Street Archway, Temple Street Night Market, Broadway Cinematheque, Mong Kok Road Footbridge, Goldfish Market, Lui Seng Chun and steer through some of the coolest filming locations in this ever-bustling district.

The artsiest venues in Wong Chuk Hang have in recent times gained a reputation as one of the city's most happening districts. Beyond the large factory facades that litter this neighbourhood are hidden cafes, world-class galleries, and art studios. Booming with creativity, these places form a thriving community that adds to Wong Chuk Hang's distinctive charm.



# NCL

## is positioning for continued success in Asia

Braydon Holland has taken on the role of Senior Director Sales Asia at Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL). He has joined the cruise line recently for his second stint, having previously been its Sales & Marketing Director. He has spent 20 years in the cruise industry, and with nine years based in Asia, gives him substantial leverage as Asia is one of NCL's most important markets. His new role is thus uniquely significant to the success of their business in the region. With their global return to service and while keen on taking NCL to the next level, Holland and his new team look forward to building close working relationships with their valued trade partners in India. Excerpts from the interview with Holland...

Prashant Nayak



▲ Braydon Holland

**Tell us about your new role at NCL? How challenging will this role be for you considering the pandemic situation and that travellers are still reluctant to sail?**

In my new role as the Senior Director Sales for NCL's Asian market, I am responsible for driving the sales strategy throughout the Asia region, including India, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

We're seeing the resumption of cruise in many parts of the world now, which is helping drive positive sentiment amongst consumers but also makes right now the perfect time for me to have re-joined NCL and help take the brand to the next level.

I'm lucky enough to have been part of the NCL family some years ago when I helped to establish the brand in the region. Today, I'm looking forward to contributing to NCL's continued success in Asia.

Though there are still some challenging conditions to navigate, it's an exciting time for NCL, with the launch of the first new class of ships in almost a decade. Known as the Prima Class, we will be delivering six ships in six consecutive years, kicking off with Norwegian Prima in the northern hemisphere summer of 2022. She's the most spacious of any new cruise ship in her category and truly elevates our brand.

I look forward to building close working relationships with our valued trade partners and my new team.

**2. Do you think there is a pent-up demand for cruising globally? And why do you feel so?**

Absolutely there is pent-up demand, in India, the Asia-Pacific region and globally.

As an example, shortly after announcing Norwegian Prima, she became our most in-demand ship ever, notching up the single-best booking day and best initial booking week for any of our newbuild sales in our 54-year history.

It's no secret that many of us have been in and out of lockdown now more times than we care to count, and travel has been severely restricted. However, now that we're seeing the pace of the vaccination drive accelerate and the global resumption of cruise in the US, UK and Europe, travellers are starting to recognize that to secure their 2022 or 2023 cruise, now is the time to plan.

To help inspire our clients and provide a behind-the-scenes look at our global return to cruise, I recommend taking a look at EMBARK-The Series, our docuseries chronicling our long-awaited global cruise resumption.

**3. Can you mention some factors that can lead to cautious and safe opening of confident cruising?**

At NCL, we've been working diligently behind the scenes to resume our cruises carefully and safely. I'm proud to say, thus far, five of our 17 ships are once again welcoming guests in Europe, the US and the Caribbean, with the full fleet scheduled to





welcome guests aboard in 2022. We have taken a thoughtful approach to itinerary planning in partnership with destinations and local authorities, guided every step of the way by the leading experts of the Sail Safe Global Health and Wellness Council, enhancing our already robust health and safety protocols.

100 per cent vaccination for all guests and crew is the cornerstone of our Sail Safe health safety protocols, which includes multiple layers of prevention and risk mitigation strategies such as universal testing, touchless temperature checks, medical-grade air filtration and a dedicated Health & Safety Officer on each ship who oversees the execution of the health & safety protocols on board.

We continue to evaluate and modify our health and safety protocols with our team of scientific and public health experts as science and technology evolve. For all the latest updates regarding our health and safety protocols, please visit [ncl.com/sail-safe](https://ncl.com/sail-safe).

**You have spent quite a while in the Asian cruise market! How different do you think it is from the US or the European markets?**

The Asia market, in particular, is incredibly vast—but with that comes a great opportunity for growth. With so many diverse nations and interests, it's a true melting pot of cultures. But there is more that brings us together than separates us, such as our shared desire for a quality holiday experience that allows you to visit multiple destinations while unpacking just once.

Traditionally, I would have said that the Asia market tended to book closer in than markets such as Australia and Europe. However, the current situation is changing some of these trends. With the pent-up demand brought about by the pandemic, we're also seeing shifts in the style of itinerary guests from Asia are seeking, as they explore longer voyages that visit multiple destinations.

**What are the new developments/anticipated sails at NCL in the Asia region?**

We've just launched a brand-new promotion for Indian travellers, offering 30 per cent off all 2022 cruise fares incorporating all five Free at Sea offers, including a free beverage package, specialty dining package, onboard Wi-Fi package, shore excursion credit as well as access to our '3rd and 4th guest sail at a reduced rate' offer (on select sailings).

As the global cruise resumption gathers pace, this is the perfect opportunity for Indian travellers to secure their preferred 2022 itinerary and stateroom and maximise value with virtually everything they need included in the fare.

**Before the pandemic, Indians were strongly taking to the concept of cruising, year on year. Do you think India is still a potential market to consider?**

India is an incredibly important market for NCL. Despite all the odds and challenges of 2020 and 2021, we know the demand is there - particularly for Europe, Alaska and Bahamas cruises - and as borders open up, we expect to see demand continue to grow.

**What are your strategies for the India market? How do you look forward to connecting and working with your Indian trade partners?**

As part of our "Partners First" philosophy, we're doubling down on our investment in the travel trade, developing tools and resources that will help travel partners maximise their selling potential. Personally, I look forward to getting to know as many of our valued travel agents in India as I can, so that I can better understand how we can support them and where the opportunities lie.

At the same time, we're continuing to invest in our consumer marketing in India to help inspire travellers to contact their travel agents to start planning their future cruise.

**In your long career, tell us how has cruising evolved and changed over the years?**

Innovation is everything! I love that NCL has always remained at the forefront of the modern evolution of cruising, and that's because innovation has always been a core brand pillar for NCL. What's more, NCL innovates with purpose because every decision is made with the guest in mind. A decade ago, who could ever have imagined a racetrack on the top of a ship? But perhaps the most important innovation is the concept of Freestyle Cruising, which we pioneered. At its core, Freestyle Cruising means holidaying the way you want, with no schedule to follow. No dress codes, no set dining tables or dining times, it's truly modern cruising, which is why the concept continues to resonate so well with our Indian guests.



# The new Siyam Water World promises endless aquatic escapades



## SUN SIYAM RESORTS

Siyam World is a striking new vision of the Maldives' rich natural wonders, a carefree playground with an exciting, diverse, and endless array of never-seen-before experiences to bask in. It is a premium all-inclusive island getaway that crosses cultures and borders.

Located in Siyam World's north-east lagoon, is the Siyam Water World, Indian Ocean's biggest floating water park, essentially a floating obstacle course for guests over the age of six to run and scramble around. So, it is time to become a master of the waves and unleash your inner child at this majestic floating water park.

Team TTJ

Not just for kids, the forthcoming Siyam World, Maldives, which will be unveiled at the end of October 2021, has designed and launched an ambitious floating water park in the sea, the Siyam Water World. The best part is, all guests at Siyam World will have unlimited complimentary access to the water park.

Siyam Water World is described by Siyam World as 'a fun-soaked fantasia featuring an array of inflatable obstacles.' The 2580 sqm course was specially designed by German SportsPark innovators Wibit Sports. Suitable for all ages, fitness and ability levels, and optimised for safety, Wibit SportsParks are an exhilarating antidote to screen time, promoting balance, agility, coordination, social interaction, and most important of all, fun!

Linked by banked curves and treacherous bridges, the slippery circuit of challenging obstacles includes halfpipes, slides, a climbing tower and a 3.2 metre springboard – not to mention 'Flip', the first free-floating human catapult on the water. All these thrills promise endless aquatic escapades.

At Siyam World, guests will be freed from the usual all-inclusive shackles of set menus, surcharges and venue restrictions; this lush natural island's 54 hectares are home to 14 restaurants and bars, including 4 different specialty restaurants for dinner, all of which are included in the WOW! All-Inclusive package, together with an unlimited medley of non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages. Siyam World's WOW! factor doesn't stop here, there are grand beach BBQ, authentic Maldivian food catered in carts better known as gaadiyas,

tropical fruits, dance shows, pool parties, group wellness sessions, spa and sports facilities, sunset cruises, snorkeling safaris and many more delights to explore.

Children will not be left alone, as kids and teens will be in their element with an array of excursions and activities, plus family programmes focused on fun-filled learning and mindfulness. For children aged 3 to 11, there is a Little Explorers kids' club. This shows that Siyam World is on a mission to bring guests the broadest offering of unique experiences and pioneering concepts ever seen in the Maldives, and it is set to be a game-changing new island of unlimited choice and endless escapades.

The resort boasts an enticing variety of 21 accommodation categories of one to six-bedroom villas, pavilions and The Beach House Collection residences, that span from 89 to 3,000 square metres in the 54-hectare haven. It is a resort that offers fun-loving, open-minded couples, romance seekers, families or larger groups of friends the freedom to roam, socialize and engage in an island community.

The exclusive enclave, The Beach House Collection, also features stunning Grand Water Pavilions and the magnificent Palace. All accommodation types overlook the pristine Maldivian waters, come with direct access to the ocean and feature generously proportioned indoor and outdoor living spaces with private pools.

Siyam World, Maldives, is located in the popular Noonu Atoll, a mere 40 minutes' direct seaplane ride from Velana International Airport, and also accessible via a 30-minute domestic flight to Maafaru Airport followed by a 10-minute speedboat trip.



# ARAMNESS GIR

## A fresh take on the Indian safari and lodge experience



Gir National Park occupies a prestigious position among all wildlife conservation sites that India has. This wildlife sanctuary is known for preserving the only known lion species out of Africa, and the park also offers an extensive range of flora and fauna, some unseen in the rest of the country. Situated on the fringe of this park, where the last remaining 600 or so Asiatic lions co-exist with the semi-nomadic Maldhari tribe, is the Aramness Gir, a new style safari lodge, all set to open in October 2021.

### Team TTJ

For the owner Jimmy Patel, the word 'Aramness' transcends into a peaceful village, and as the first boutique lodge of its kind in the region, he is setting the bar high with his Gujarati inspired, design-led aesthetic, his dedication to conservation and a commitment to delivering world-class gracious hospitality. Patel's passion for the wilderness, dedication to conservation and love for Gujarat has come together to create an experience entrenched in local culture, designed with authenticity and luxury in equal measure, providing a wildlife experience that rewrites the script.

To quote, Patel says, "There is a unique relationship between man and wildlife in Gujarat that does not exist anywhere else in India, nor in the rest of the world. At Aramness Gir, we will not only be supporting the Asiatic lions but also delivering an exceptionally crafted, luxury experience."

Aramness Gir is located within an undeveloped natural paradise in a protected teak forest within the 18 square kilometre area that skirts the National Park. This forest is home to abundant bird and animal species freely roaming between the park and the lodge. Along with the famous Lions, other animals and reptiles in the park include the chital (Indian spotted deer), sambar, chinkara, blackbuck, leopard, jungle cat, langur, striped hyena, wild boar, grey musk shrews, marsh crocodiles, Russell's viper, Indian rock python, and monitor lizard. Gir is also home to

over 300 species of birds, many of which can be seen year-round – the Orange-headed thrush, Indian paradise flycatcher, crested serpent eagle, Red-headed vulture, pelicans, painted storks to name a few.

Speaking of the Gujarati influence, the lodge design takes its inspiration from the characteristic local village, Haripur, with its central cobbled streets fringed with courtyard homes (kothis). Each of the 18 private village-style kothis (15 standalone single bedroom kothis and 3 standalone double bedroom Kothis) take their cue from the charmingly informal arrangement of the local Gujarati village homes. The luxurious interiors have been designed to instill deep comfort and tranquility and have been constructed using the many natural materials and craft techniques native to Gujarat and India. Each kothi is a spacious double-storey building with a cool shaded courtyard and upper deck veranda that overlooks waterways and beyond the dense forest. To accentuate the bespoke elements, each kothi boasts of a private pool inspired by the Indian step wells, with butlers assigned to each kothi.

At Aramness, the rich culinary repertoire is a wholesome experience that gets to the heart of Gujarati cuisine. The food menu has been expertly crafted to not just include traditional flavours of Gujarati vegetarian delicacies but also lends a unique opportunity to pique the palate with the most authentic non-vegetarian fare, inspired by the tastes of the region.

Guests staying at Aramness Gir have several choices of how they wish to spend their day. Game drives into the park to view the Asiatic lion with an Aramness naturalist, jungle walks in the teak forest, visiting a Maldhari family in their home, sampling Gujarati food like never before, relaxing in the spa, engaging kids with inspiring activities at Aramness Playscape or, even better, doing as little as possible whilst soaking up the natural beauty of the park.

There are plenty of other places to visit in and near Gir. Whether you are looking for a clean beach or want a peek into history, there is something for every traveller. Plan a getaway with friends and family at Aramness Gir from October onwards. It offers a perfect combination of adventure and leisure. Elevating the experience, Aramness will soon introduce Fly Safari, a private charter airline service operating from key cities in India.







# In the land of Tribals and Tigers

Chhattisgarh has positioned itself as a destination full of surprises with some of the amazing some of the amazing locales which could certainly lead to the growth of tourism in the future. Presently, it is creating a niche for itself on the tourist map of India. The state is covered with nearly forty-five per cent of the forests and thirty-two per cent of the tribal population, therefore; it offers immense opportunities for Eco-Ethnic, Adventure and Cultural tourism. TTJ makes a note of some of the top destinations and experiences in Chhattisgarh for readers to explore.

## Team TTJ

**C**hhattisgarh was the region known as Dakshin Koshala, which finds mention in both the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The joy of Chhattisgarh is that tourism is still in its infancy here. The state remains refreshingly under-visited, ensuring that those who do come to explore its ancient tribal customs, wildlife sanctuaries and renowned temple complexes find a genuinely warm reception. The landscapes, the unique culture, the serene atmosphere, all remain virtually untouched. Heavily forested and full of wildlife, with a pristine environment and especially rich tribal heritage, travellers are likely to find Chhattisgarh a pleasant surprise. Read on for more about some of the exciting and remarkable destinations.

### Bastar: a well-kept secret of Chhattisgarh

Often overlooked by travellers, Chhattisgarh's Bastar is a myriad of wonders. A goldmine of fascinating tribal culture in India, it thrives on the cultural magnitudes, age-old traditions and rituals that are yet to be explored. Whether it is the exclusive handicrafts, wild rivers, quaint villages, ancestral temples, rich tribal cultures, ancient monuments, historical cities, unique festivals, the saga of the royal palace, the wilderness of the natural parks, or forgotten tales of dense forests, Bastar is a land full of surprises and many possibilities.

Located at a distance of 264 km from Raipur, Bastar is one of the most significant eco-friendly destinations of the country. It has plenty to offer to its visitors with its valuable tribal art and culture that lie in and around the lush green city of Jagdalpur. The people of Bastar district are rich in rare artwork, liberal culture and innate nature. Also, the taste

of Mahua toddy and wild red ant chutney are some local delicacies that travellers are on the lookout for.

Bastar Mahal, Bastar Dussehra festival, Dalpat Sagar, Chitrakote waterfall, Tirathgarh waterfalls, Kutumasar and Kailash caves are the main centres and attractions of tourism. One can choose from national parks, waterfalls, natural caves, palaces, museums and places of religious significance.

Bastar Dassehra is a unique traditional festival held in the Bastar region. The Bastar Dassehra festival is directly related to Mahishasur Mardini Maa Durga and not the Ramayana. This festival continues for 75 days non-stop.





## Chitrakote Waterfalls: the mini-Niagara Fall of India

Chitrakote Waterfalls bears the proud distinction of being the broadest waterfall in India and thus called the Niagara Falls of India. The majestic beauty is located 38 km from Jagdalpur in Bastar on the river Indravati and is surrounded by the majestic Vindhya ranges. The water of the river flows through the dense vegetation and cascades from a height



of about ninety-five feet. The horseshoe-shaped waterfall is best seen during and after the monsoon, between July and October. The specialty of this waterfall is that during the rainy days, this water is reddish-brown, but it looks absolutely white during the summer moonlight night. However, in the rainy season, it is much more exciting as the roar of huge falls from the height gives you the thrills and shudders. If you are lucky, you will catch a rainbow or two hanging above the water, emerging from its misty depth.

One can hire a local fisherman's boat to take you as close as possible to the falls. You can also swim in the river downstream or try water rafting. A popular picnic spot, most tourists prefer making a day trip to the falls from Jagdalpur. Travellers can also explore the surrounding region for a glimpse of the local tribal culture.

## Kanger Valley National Park: best weekend destinations in Bastar

Established in 1982, the Kanger Valley National Park in Bastar is bounded by numerous villages on all of its sides. Deriving its name from the Kanger River, this National Park is declared as one of the Asian Biosphere Reserve. Situated on river Kolab, this 34 Km long park is 27 km away from Jagdalpur. The highlight of this park is its location and is surrounded by the rich biodiversity of fauna like chinkara, barking deer, chital, jackal, hyena, wild boar, blackbuck, and some rare mouse



deer. Apart from this, the rich flora like fungi, algae, bryophytes and pteridophytes add beauty to the park. Last but not the least, the trip is only complete by taking a safari ride.

If there is any spot that will provide you with a combination of fun, entertainment, picnic and adventure, it is Tirathgarh Falls near the Kanger Valley National Park. This is one of the best-known picnic spots in Jagdalpur as well. The limelight of this waterfall is that the falls over

here split into multiple falls as it flows down and gives a stunning view for the spectators.

## Achanakmar Tiger Reserve: where tigers do roar

Chhattisgarh has two national parks, three tiger reserves, eight sanctuaries, and one biosphere reserve. The Achanakmar Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh is a tropical moist deciduous forest and is part of the tiger corridor formed with Kanha Wildlife Sanctuary of Madhya Pradesh. The Tiger Reserve is situated in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. A visit to the reserve assures it to be a very mesmerising experience of the Maikal range. It is amazing



to discover the dense, lush green Sal and Bamboo forests and the pleasure of wildlife viewing. The reserve is also a part of the much larger Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve.

Established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1975, Achanakmar was declared a tiger reserve in 2009 and is said to house as many as about 20 tigers now. Sal, Bija, Saja, Haldu, Teak, Tinsa, Dhavara, Lendia, Khamar and Bamboo flourish here, along with over 600 species of medicinal plants. The winding Maniyari river that flows right through the heart of the reserve is its lifeline. Wild fauna found here include the tiger, leopard, bison, flying squirrel, Indian giant squirrel, chinkara, wild dog, hyena, sambar, chital and over 150 species of birds. The most favourable time to visit the Tiger Reserve is from the month of November to the month of June for the safari and stay experience though summers could be very hot.

## Bhoramdeo Temple: the "Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh"

Bhoramdeo Temple is a complex of Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva in Bhoramdeo in the Kabirdham district. The Bhoramdeo temple bears a striking resemblance to the Sun Temple of Konark and is believed to have been constructed during the 7th to 12th centuries. It is popularly known as the Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh, as it also resembles the Khajuraho Temple of Madhya Pradesh. It is the main temple among the bunch of four ancient temples in this region - Madwa Mahal, Istaliq Temple, Cherki Mahal and Bhoramdeo temple - and stands as strong as ever in the Kabirdham district. This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The outstanding Nagar style of architecture and the intricately carved images are spectacular works of art. The Bhoramdeo Temple flaunts admirably sculpted images of the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, in addition to the images of Lord Shiva and Lord Ganesha. Pilgrims often stay back to savour the outstanding views that the temple has to offer, after seeking their blessings.





# 'Let's Talk' by TravelBullz and Centara Hotels sends positive vibes across the travel industry



TravelBullz, in association with Centara Hotels and Resorts, held an exclusive networking dinner event at the Le Meridien, New Delhi on September 3, 2021.

'Let's Talk' was the theme of this first networking get-together organised for their partners and the travel fraternity with the ebbing of the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was a great success, with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (New Delhi), Think Strawberries, and Le Meridien New Delhi, joining the league and initiating the event.

**Ravi Sharma**

**B**raving the message, 'Let's get back to work & get our Industry, hence unlocking the world', TravelBullz and Centara Hotels & Resorts came together for the first-ever networking session in the post COVID era. The event had professionals in the travel fraternity with smiley happy faces as they met and greet each other, with many of them coming together almost after a year and a half.

As the sessions began, Moumita Mukherjee Paul from Centara Hotels and Resorts shared news on their latest addition, the Centara Reserve, a 5-star deluxe property and the upcoming Centara Grand Mirage in Dubai,

In his speech, K. D. Singh, Founder and President of TravelBullz again reinforced that Maldives was a strategic destination offering in the portfolio of TBZ and Dubai was a core product of TBZ. He also emphasised that the industry had gone through a lot of challenges during 2020 and 2021 and said, "now is the time to come together and once again rise to the occasion and make ourselves count".

Elaborating further on technology, Singh said that TravelBullz has always maintained a leadership position in the market. "We have done a lot of development in the last 18 months, keeping in mind how our travel agents get benefitted from the technology and product portfolio of TravelBullz. We have launched

'TravelBullz Market Place' where all the DMCs, offline or online, can join from the world. DMCs and agents have suffered a lot due to the pandemic. Reaching out to new markets is extremely

added, "We have over 60 different nationalities who booked over the last couple of years. Any DMCs from across the world can join TravelBullz Market Place free of cost. Once DMCs upload their product on the marketplace, they can sell it anywhere in the world. It's a very powerful tool where we are linking the supplier to the demand and moving all the offline business to the digital transactions."

Remarkably, TravelBullz has invested over US\$200,000 over the last 18 months and will continue to invest to offer seamless experiences to trade partners.

In a way, this event just did not connect participants, but also gave TravelBullz and Centara Hotels an opportunity to showcase their latest products and developments and also show a glimpse of what the future holds for all of us in the travel business.

To conclude, the travel industry appreciated the initiative of TravelBullz to hold this networking and dinner event and pave the way for industry partners to come together and start to host physical events. Le Meridien New Delhi also turned out to be the perfect venue for the evening. Singh also mentioned that this was the first of the series of events that TravelBullz will be conducting in the rest of the country in the next three months.



along with some new properties coming in Vietnam, Qatar and Oman.

TravelBullz showcased their state-of-the-art B2B booking engine, focusing on Maldives and split stay packages and the one-click book package options. Travel agents and partners appreciated and were interested in the user-friendly interface of the booking engine for Maldives. TravelBullz also launched and showcased their dynamic packaging module showcasing their Dubai product.

expensive and difficult for them in the current scenario. With our platform, they can reach out to different geographies around the world," informed Singh.

Singh further





# IATO disappointed with Govt's decision to extend suspension of international flights operations

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, at the start of the month, the Director-General of Civil Aviation extended the suspension on scheduled international commercial passenger flights till September 30, 2021. IATO is disappointed with the Government's decision to extend the suspension of international flights operations and has made certain requests to the Government to help revive inbound tourism to India. Earlier, the scheduled international flights were suspended until August 31.

Team TTJ



▲ Rajiv Mehra

**R**ajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) expressed his disappointment on the decision taken by the Ministry of Civil Aviation/DGCA to extend the suspension of international flight operation till 30th September 2021 and e-Tourist Visa. He mentioned that the IATO members are very disheartened by the decision taken by the Government. It is time for the Government to help the tourism industry by reviving inbound tourism to India, for which they have

made the following requests to the Government.

➤ To open e-Tourist Visa for all those foreign tourists who have been vaccinated and wish to come to India. Let the foreign tourists decide whether they want to travel to India or not. The authorities should not restrict them to travel to India when other countries have opened their doors for tourists.

➤ Similarly, normal international flight operations should be resumed and let the airlines decide whether they want to

operate or not if there is any constraint of load factor. However, Government should allow them to resume flights.

"All other sectors have revived their business with the support from the Government and it is only the travel and tourism industry which is struggling for survival for last 18 months, but there is no relief at all. Government should support the tourism industry, especially the inbound tour operators who have had zero business since March 2020," said Mehra.

# TAAI facilitates a series of MSME Schemes Web Workshop for members

The workshops are a part of the series initiated by TAAI at a pan-India level to educate its members about the benefits and reliefs extended by the Ministry of MSME.

Team TTJ



▲ Jyoti Mayal

**U**nder the astute leadership of Jyoti Mayal, President, and Office Bearers of TAAI, web workshops are being organised in collaboration with the MSME Development Institutes to educate and update members about various schemes of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise.

During the Gujarat Chapter meet, T.K. Solanki, Senior Statistical Officer MSME Ahmedabad DI Office, shared various schemes and initiatives of MSME and explained how it can benefit businesses at large. He specifically mentioned the schemes utilising which attendees may avail finance, both at

micro and macro levels. While updating everyone present of all the benefits, he requested TAAI members to check the MSME URL or visit DI Office for more detailed information.

In the Northern Region meeting, Virendra Sharma, Director, MSME Development Institute, Ludhiana and his team also shared various schemes and initiatives of MSME and explained how it can benefit businesses at large. He specifically mentioned the schemes utilising which members may attend exhibitions and trade fairs in different parts of India. He highlighted that registration is Free-of-cost, and registration might be of benefit to

members looking at availing benefits extended by the MSME Ministry through different schemes in the years to come.

The Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana Chapter Members session had Gopinath Rao, IEDS, Deputy Director, gave insights on the various schemes and initiatives of MSME and explained how it can benefit businesses at large. He specifically mentioned the schemes utilising which attendees may avail finance, both at micro and macro levels. Also, he highlighted that registration is Free-of-cost, and if any portal using which industry is registering by paying a fee, then it was fake.



# TAFI holds its National Joint Council meeting in Gujarat

The new Team TAFI India, held its first National Joint Council (NJC) meeting at the Gift City Club Gandhinagar, Gujarat wherein the National Managing Committee and the Chapter Chairmen & Secretaries from all 11 Chapters were present. This was a fully interactive meeting where every participant was given time to speak and everyone was involved actively in all discussions and strategies.

## Team TTJ

Before the meeting, TAFI invited the members of the Gujarat Chapter for an interaction with the officials of Gujarat Tourism and the national Managing Committee. Manish Sharma, Chairman of TAFI Gujarat chapter delivered the welcome address and thanked Gujarat Tourism for their ongoing support to the trade and the get-together of TAFI officials from across the country.

TAFI President Ajay Prakash accorded a traditional welcome to Jenu Devan, MD & Commissioner of Gujarat Tourism. He shared his vision of a resurgent travel and tourism industry as vaccinations picked up pace and the epidemic ebbed. The one positive that came out of the COVID-19, he said was that Indians began to discover India. He further congratulated the Gujarat government on the addition of Dholavira to the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites and spoke of the need for responsible tourism, even more so in such ecologically sensitive sites.

In his speech, Jenu Devan spoke passionately not only about the well-known sites but also about the unknown and lesser-known tourist attractions of Gujarat. He invited The NJC to visit some of the nearby attractions on this visit and extended an invitation to TAFI to hold a convention in

Gujarat, promising to extend full support.

The NJC meeting was held the next morning at the Gift City Club. Ajay Prakash expressed his satisfaction with the excellent turnout and the presence of all Chapters. He outlined his vision of a strong TAFI where the Chapters were empowered to make decisions for the betterment of the industry and the membership was encouraged to communicate frankly with the elected officials at the Chapter or the national level. He reiterated the commitment of the National MC to visit every Chapter and interact personally with the members. He also spoke about the higher paradigm of tourism – which was to connect people across boundaries and promised to send over the IIPT Credo of the Peaceful Traveller, which he urged every member to adopt and display in their office.

Abbas Moiz, the General Secretary, thereafter proceeded with the extensive agenda which had members speaking and presenting ideas for trade betterment activities and revenue generation. A key part of the agenda was to understand the issues at the Chapter level and every Chapter Chairman was invited to report on their respective regions. For example, Ankit Bajaj - Secretary TAFI Gujarat with his team Ronak Shah, Dilip Masrani & Jigar Dudakiya presented



a detailed chapter report and shared more than 15 points on the 3-dimensional growth of Travel Agents and TAFI. Anil Kalsi - National Joint Secretary listed his efforts of liaising with the Ministries and his meeting with MoCA as a part of increasing strong relationships with all Government authorities.

The 'Gift City Club' turned out to be an excellent venue for the meeting. With spacious rooms, delicious food, courteous staff and overall elegant appearance, the Gift City Club is a very comfortable and appreciated venue. As a part of this event, Gujarat Team TAFI was able to arrange a VIP visit for the members to the Akshardham Temple after the meeting.

## AVIAREPS India organises an exclusive B2B workshop for the subscribers of UTEN

The workshop aimed to showcase the tourism offerings of AVIAREPS India's international clients, namely Visit Brussels, Budget Car Rental and the newly awarded representation of the Utah Office of Tourism in India.

## Team TTJ

AVIAREPS India organized an exclusive B2B workshop for the subscribers of UTEN (UTEN is a registered event company for tourism with approx. 2000 travel agents pan India) on September 3, 2021, at Hotel Courtyard Marriott, Andheri.

To ensure that the event could maintain adequate social distancing norms and safety protocols, the workshop welcomed not more

than 40 esteemed trade subscribers. The event was highly interactive and ended on a positive note. The highlight of the event was the Callebaut Chocolate workshop where almost all agents got a chance to try their hand at chocolate making. Needless to mention that AVIAREPS is looking forward to many more such trade engagement programs over the next couple of months to re-strengthen its existing partnership with the trade fraternity.







## Ambassador, New Delhi

Ambassador, New Delhi has announced the appointment of **Sheetal Singh** as the General Manager. Sheetal joins the landmark hotel after her successful role as Director Rooms at Taj Bangalore. In her new role, Sheetal will be responsible for the continued success of Ambassador, New Delhi - IHCL SeleQtions, through her strategic leadership and operational excellence. Her expertise lies in improving overall guest satisfaction, bringing innovation in day-to-day tasks and harnessing team strength.

## STIC Travel Group

**Anju Wariah** has been promoted from Senior Vice President of Alliances and Corporate Affairs to the position of Director - Group Business Development. Having worked across airline reservations, airport operations, pricing, sales and business development, she has managed multiple teams and products. She will continue her role in leading the airline sales business of STIC GSA Services as she takes a seat on the Board of Directors of STIC Travel Group with the promoter family.



## The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed **Megha Ajgaonkar** as General Manager - Sales. In her new role, Megha will spearhead and drive sales performance, thus fortifying The Leela's Sales and Distribution network and strategies. Prior to joining The Leela, her most recent role was with Marriott International as Area Director of Sales & Distribution West India for Marriott South Asia.

## AVIAREPS India

AVIAREPS India has appointed **Mansi Oza** as the Account Manager for Utah Office of Tourism. Mansi will be responsible for amplifying the presence of Visit Utah in the India market. In her new role, Mansi will be handling the sales and marketing of Visit Utah and will aim to showcase the unique offering of the destination to the Indian traveller. Being an avid traveller and adventure enthusiast herself, Mansi will work towards developing the market share of Visit Utah as a destination which offers breathtaking views, tranquility and adventure.



## Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

**Parinita Samanta** has been appointed as Director of Marketing and Communication. She will bring more than a decade of expertise and marketing acumen to her role, where she will be the custodian of the hotel's brand standards and marketing and will be responsible to create long-term strategic communications plan in alignment with organizational goals. Prior to taking up this role, Parinita held the position of Director of Marketing & communications at Hyatt Regency Delhi.

## The Leela Palace Bengaluru

**Madhav Sehgal** has been appointed as the General Manager of The Leela Palace Bengaluru. In his role, Madhav will lead the operations of The Leela Palace Bengaluru, and work towards strengthening its leadership positioning within this highly competitive luxury market. Prior to joining The Leela, Madhav was the General Manager at Andaz Delhi and Hyatt Delhi Residences. His previous assignments include The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, The Imperial Hotel New Delhi, Renaissance and Marriott Hotels in Canada, amongst others.



## Emirates

**Mohammad Sarhan** has been appointed as Emirates' Vice President for India and Nepal. Sarhan will be responsible for leading the airline's operations and strengthening Emirates' presence in the market. Sarhan will manage the airline's commercial operations, drive business growth and lead the airline's strategic initiatives across the region. The new appointment comes as the airline announces several commercial leadership movements across West Asia, Africa, the GCC, and Central Asia.

## ASSOCHAM

**Kush Kapoor**, CEO of Roseate Hotels and Resorts, has joined the ASSOCHAM as Chairman for the National Council on Tourism and Hospitality of one of the nation's largest and most influential chambers of commerce. His focus areas will be on enhancing Digitization (innovations, and digital and new-age technologies); Empowerment, and Sustainability (Sustainable Tourism as 'Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts).





## Bahrain relaxes travel norms for Indians

**R**elaxing travel norms for Indians, Bahrain has withdrawn India from its Red List. In addition to Indian residents of Bahrain, Indian nationals with valid visas are now eligible to enter Bahrain.

India was removed from the Red List of Bahrain on September 3, days after Minister of State MEA V. Muraleedharan visited the country and held bilateral talks with Rashid Alzayani, the foreign minister there.

The travel of Indians will be subject to the presentation of a negative RT-PCR test certificate with a QR code before boarding the plane, administered within 72 hours of departure; undergo three RT-PCR tests, on arrival, the fifth day and the tenth day after arrival. Passengers under the age of six do not need any tests. Those found positive would need to quarantine for ten days at their residence or a licensed government facility.



## Jumeirah Group announces the opening of a new resort in Maldives



**J**umeirah Group, the global luxury hospitality company and a member of Dubai Holding, has announced a new international resort, Jumeirah Maldives, which will welcome its first guests from October 1, 2021. Adding to Jumeirah Group's growing portfolio of hotels, guests can now discover Jumeirah Maldives, an all-villa luxury resort tucked away in the crystalline turquoise waters of the North Malé Atoll, easily reachable by speedboat or seaplane from Malé Airport. Its idyllic location offers privacy for romantic getaways, a blissful island retreat for friends and family and experiences to suit the more active traveller.

Jumeirah Maldives offers 67 beach and over-water villas in one-, two- and three-bedroom configurations, all assuring stunning panoramic views of the Indian Ocean. Starting from 171sqm, the resort's villas are among the most spacious in the North Malé Atoll. Each villa features a private infinity pool and large roof-top terrace with a dedicated dining area for guests to take in the sensational views while indulging in delicious culinary dishes or relaxing with a picture-perfect movie under-the-stars experience, while the three-bedroom villas also boast their own gym.

Guests can enjoy an array of activities from water sports, beach volleyball, billiards and tennis at the resort's phenomenal court location, or perhaps partake in enriching experiences from underwater photography, planting coconut trees and making coconut oil. A highlight for any guest stay is the unique submarine tour transporting them through the vibrant marine habitat. For the most memorable experience, try a night voyage to experience the rarely-seen underwater world after sunset.

Appealing to families is a splash waterpark and indoor play area for kids, while an outdoor cinema will screen family favourites beachside as well as blockbusters more suitable for older audiences. Meanwhile, guest experiences are made effortless by a team of dedicated butlers who work round the clock curating exemplary hospitality services: from reservations to check-in, dining and spa bookings.

## The Ashok to soon turn into multi-purpose building; to house service apts, mall, and more



**T**he government is planning to lease out 'The Ashok' to investors for turning the sprawling 25-acre property in the heart of the national capital into a 'multi-purpose' building, housing an array of facilities including service apartments and a mall, an official said. The Tourism Ministry is working on the contours of bidding and aims to complete the process in the current fiscal.

"The intention is to turn 'The Ashok' into an iconic building which would house service apartments, besides a mall and other amenities taking advantage of its location," the official told PTI.

The lease could be of 90-100 years, he said, adding that since the hotel land spreads over 25 acres and is close to the Diplomatic Enclave, the service apartments could attract international dignitaries.

The Ashok, and the adjacent Hotel Samrat are among the eight India Tourism Development Corp assets listed under the National Monetisation Pipeline announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last month.

"The government is not looking to ramp up collections from this transaction. The intent is to utilise the asset to its full potential and build a multi-purpose building like those in foreign countries," the official added.

The government last month launched the asset monetisation pipeline under which brownfield assets worth ₹6 lakh crore may be monetised through fiscal ending March 2025. The ownership and control would, however, be retained by the government.



## Hotelivate announces the 16th edition of HICSA

**H**otelivate will host the 16th edition of its Hotel Investment Conference – South Asia (HICSA) at the Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi on 28-29 September 2021. India's largest hospitality investment conference is back, indicating a key turning point in the industry's recovery.

For the first time, HICSA will be conducted in a blended format with delegates being able to opt for either in-person (limited seats) or online attendance. A collection of presentations, keynotes, interviews and panel discussions will cover a plethora of themes and topics as industry stalwarts address the challenges hospitality has faced this past year and highlight the growth potential and investment opportunities going forward. The two-day hospitality focused conference is aimed at providing a much-needed boost to one of the worst-affected industries in the country with some of its most prominent thought leaders and trend-setters uniting under one roof.

Commenting on the 16th anniversary of HICSA, Manav

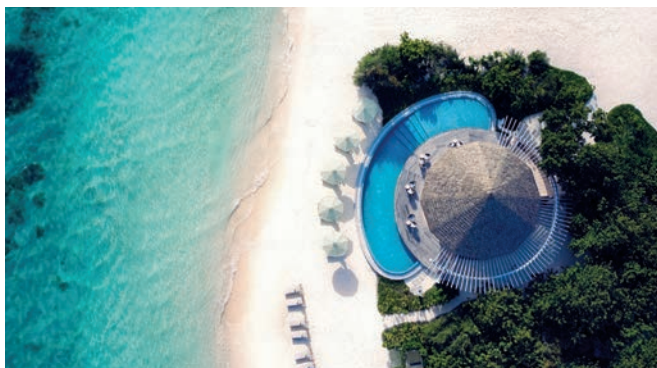
Thadani, Founder Chairman of Hotelivate

said, "The unprecedented challenge of the last year has left the hospitality industry in dire need of

upliftment. We hope that the exciting return of HICSA will bring our industry's stakeholders together and foster a sense of progression and recovery. We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from our delegates, patrons, speakers and sponsors."



## Le Méridien Hotels & Resorts lands in the Maldives with signature glamorous European spirit



**L**e Méridien Hotels & Resorts, part of Marriott Bonvoy's portfolio of 30 extraordinary brands, along with Singaporean developer Chiu Teng Enterprises recently announced the opening of Le Méridien Maldives Resort & Spa, marking the Paris-born brand's debut in one of the world's most captivating destinations. Located on Thilamaafushi, the southern pocket of Lhaviyani Atoll, the 141-villa resort celebrates the fabric of the Maldives, its people, nature and art, channeling its energy to uncover the charm of the destination through Le Méridien's distinctive European-chic lens.

Spanning nine hectares, Thilamaafushi is defined as an "island surrounded by vast lagoon" in Dhivehi, the local parlance of the Maldives. The natural island is an eco-conscious haven abundant with indigenous flora and fauna, enveloped by a shimmering lagoon and coral reefs bursting with vibrant marine life, including pods of Manta Rays and turtles. Guests can easily access the resort by a 35-minute seaplane journey north of Velana (MLE) International Airport, Malé.

"We are thrilled to introduce the iconic Le Méridien brand to the Maldives, strengthening our presence in this captivating destination," Rajeev Menon, President, Asia Pacific (excluding China), Marriott International. "The opening of Le Méridien Maldives Resort & Spa marks the second Marriott International property that opened in the Maldives this summer and the seventh brand entry in the destination. We look forward to expanding our portfolio further in the Maldives to offer distinctive and personalised experiences for travellers."

## Andhra Pradesh Government to launch tourism app by Dasara



**T**ourism Minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao on September 9, 2021, said the department would introduce a special app by Dasara to provide information related to tourism destinations, hotels, and special packages, to the public.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, the minister said that the tourism department had suffered huge losses due to the Covid pandemic. The department has netted a revenue of Rs 60 crore against the usual income of about Rs 120 crore. To provide an impetus to the tourism sector, the government proposed to establish five-star and seven-star hotels in the Public-Private Partnership model. The Oberoi Group had come forward to invest in five-star and seven-star hotels at Visakhapatnam and Tirupati respectively, he said.

The minister also said that proposals are still on for bringing seaplanes to boost the tourism attractions of the State and asserted that focus was laid on designing special tourism packages to attract local tourists. He later announced that World Tourism Day will be celebrated on the 27th of this month. Plans are devised to improve amenities at four tourism zones proposed in the state. Measures are being taken to make tourism a main revenue earner for the State in the coming days, he added.



## RISE Conference returns to Hong Kong for five consecutive years

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and Web Summit announced that RISE, 'one of the world's most influential tech events', will return to Hong Kong in March 2022, as an in-person event. This highlights Hong Kong's thriving startup economy, leading position in innovation and technology, as well as its status as The World's Meeting Place for business events to tap tremendous opportunities in the region.

RISE was launched in Hong Kong in 2015 and has already hosted five successful events, becoming Asia's largest tech event, according to CNBC. Over the years, the event has attracted thousands of global tech founders, startups and investors to the city, such as Joseph Tsai, Co-founder & Executive Vice Chairman of Alibaba, John Collison, Co-founder & President of Stripe, Peggy Johnson, CEO of Magic Leap, and Neil Shen, Founding

Managing Partner of Sequoia Capital China. The event has become an

important window for companies from both East and West to make connections in new markets. With the HKTB teaming up with InvestHK and AsiaWorld-Expo, Hong Kong has once again won as the host city of RISE for the coming five years.

RISE will take place as an in-person conference in AsiaWorld-Expo from 14 to 17 March 2022.

# RISE

### IndiJo Consulting to represent hotelemployeerate.com in India



▲ Lara Sidhu



▲ Joseph Fernandes

hotelemployeerate.com is a Global Hotel Employee Travel Program. hotelemployeerate.com will now actively promote the program in India by appointing IndiJo consulting as its representative in India. IndiJo activities will include market outreach through Sales, Marketing, and PR initiatives on behalf of hotelemployeerate.com.

Hotelemployeerate.com is a program which offers exclusive hotel employee rates for hoteliers, their friends, and families. With an ever-expanding collection of hotel companies, branded properties and independent hotels around the world joining the Hotel Employee Rate Travel Program, hotels in India signing up the program can now offer their teams the unique benefit of Hotel Employee Rate Travel. Hoteliers in the program can add up to 10 Friends and Family to the Hotel Employee Rate Travel Program.

Additionally, hotels in the program benefit with commission-free incremental bookings over low-demand periods from our global base of leisure travellers booking exclusively through the hotelemployeerate.com travel program.

Speaking on the occasion Joseph Fernandes, CEO, IndiJo Consulting, said, "We are extremely excited to represent Hotel Employee Rate which we believe has the potential to do exceedingly well in India, by offering hotels dual benefit of providing their employee with an additional perk, and at the same time opening up a new platform of attracting leisure guest."

Commenting on the appointment, Lara Sidhu, Director, Business Development -APAC, Hotel Employee Rate said, "We are very pleased to announce that IndiJo Consulting will be representing Hotel Employee Rate.com. While India is a new market for us, we see immense potential and we're eager to showcase India's beautiful hotels and locations on our global platform. As we see travel resume, hotelemployeerate.com will help mitigate the current issues in hotel employee satisfaction and retention rates."

### Fortune Hotels to enter Hoshiarpur, strengthens its presence in Punjab

Fortune Hotels, a member of ITC's hotel group, has inked an operating agreement for a hotel in Hoshiarpur, Punjab. With this signing, the premier hotel chain strengthens its footprint in the State.

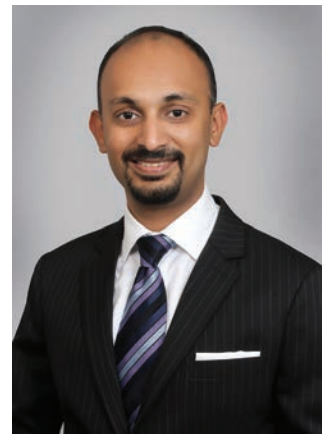
Announcing the signing, Samir MC, Managing Director, Fortune Park Hotels

Limited, said, "We are pleased to announce our entry into Hoshiarpur and thank the promoters for their trust in us. This hotel enhances our portfolio mix. Our quality offerings, along with the ITC's Hotel Group legacy behind us, will give the city dwellers a premium address to host their celebrations and memorable events."

Set to be a 'Fortune Park' the new hotel would be the first branded first-class, full-service hotel of the city and will aim to cater to a mix of leisure, business and social clientele alike.

Together with 57-rooms and suites, a restful spa, swimming pool, multiple food & beverage offerings and over 20,000 sq. ft. of banquet venues and extensive lawns, this regal property is located on NH3 just 6 km from Hoshiarpur town. Poised to open later this year, the elegant hotel doubles up as a convenient getaway for the city residents to relax and rejuvenate over weekends. Its strategic location also makes it a great stopover for pilgrims en route to religious places like Mata Chintpurni temple, one of the prime 'Shakti Peethas' in India.

Currently, Fortune Park Hotels Limited offers 4 sub-brands in the mid-market to upscale segment in India, i.e. Fortune Select, Fortune Park, Fortune Resort and Fortune Inn. With this signing, the premier domestic chain now has 11 new alliances across 11 key cities of India.





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