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Photographer	:	Parth Sharma
Asst. Manager Administration	:	Kuldeep Singh
Accounts Manager	:	Priyesh Ranjan

Email: info@sampanmedia.com

Editorial and Marketing Office :
Sampan Media Pvt. Ltd., B-7/114A, 3rd Floor, Safdarjung Enclave, Near Sukhmani Hospital, New Delhi – 110029 Ph: 9560264443, ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

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Dear Friends,

What has been constant in this past year is the resilience and resourcefulness of the travel and tourism industry in the face of incredible odds, challenges, and ever-changing adversities.

Our October 2021 issue is once again a balance of inspiration and the feel-good factor mostly because of the Government opening up avenues for Inbound travel starting from this month. Alongside our usual compendium of refreshing destination stories and places to stay, we are here to motivate people to get back out there when it's safe, encourage local businesses and travel communities and advise you to plan more conscious, sustainable and mindful trips for your clients in the future.

Meanwhile, all of us here at TTJ would like to thank you for making us one of the trusted sources of information during the pandemic. So, keep sending us your news, ideas and inspirational content— we will do all we can to keep telling your stories along with ours. We're absolutely up for banding together and we are truly committed to the continuity of this spectacular industry.

Thank You.

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma

ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

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- Exquisite Italy (9 Nights)
Rome | Naples | Amalfi Coast | Florence | Paris | Venice
- Idyllic Maldives (4 Nights)
Maldives

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

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Bali | Ubud
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- Splendid Towns of Amsterdam (10 Nights)
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Tourism Australia relaunches Aussie Specialist Program

Tourism

Australia has relaunched the award-winning Aussie Specialist Program and made it easier for travel sellers around the world to gain the skills they need to better promote and sell Australia.



The Aussie Specialist Program, which is run in conjunction with Australia's State and Territory Tourism Organisations, has been given a new look and feel in its 32nd year and the new program has greater personalisation, faster qualifying times and shorter more interactive training modules.

Tourism Australia Managing Director Phillipa Harrison said the investment comes after many frontline travel sellers turned to the Aussie Specialist Program over the past 18 months to learn and position themselves as champions for Australian travel once borders re-open.

"Australia remains one of the most desirable travel destinations in the world and the Aussie Specialist Program helps to ensure we will be in the best possible position to convert travel demand into bookings as soon as borders re-open," Harrison said.

"We now have more than 26,000 qualified Aussie Specialists worldwide and hope the new program will allow more agents to complete their learning so they too can best sell Australian tourism experiences."

The improvements to the Aussie Specialist Program were made in conjunction with more than 400 stakeholders and 1,000 existing Aussie Specialist agents.

Tourism Australia South & South East Asia Regional General Manager, Brent Anderson said, "The Aussie Specialist Program is one of the world's leading destination training programs. This refresh ensures it will continue to be a vital tool for travel sellers in South & South East Asia. During the pandemic, the program has also allowed us to continually engage with agents and the Australian industry, with the community created demonstrating enhanced skills and knowledge to lead the recovery for inbound tourism to Australia."

Govt allows domestic flights to operate at full capacity from October 18



Domestic airlines will now be able to operate at 100 per cent of their pre-Covid capacity from October 18, 2021, according to a govt statement issued on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation had capped domestic airline capacity since May 2020. Currently, the cap on the capacity for domestic flights was at 85 per cent.

The official statement said, "After review of the current status of Scheduled Domestic Operations viz-a-viz passenger demand for air travel in terms of the purpose specified in the initial order dated May 21, 2020...it has been decided to restore the scheduled domestic air operations with effect from 18-10-2021 without any capacity restriction."

"The airlines/airport operators shall, however, ensure that the guidelines to contain the spread of Covid are strictly adhered to and Covid appropriate behavior is strictly enforced by them during the travel," the order said.

Sikkim lifts curbs on inter-state travel

The Sikkim Government has lifted inter-state travel restrictions in the festive season allowing people to enter the state without producing negative RT-PCR test reports or vaccination certificates at the border, as the COVID-19 situation has improved, according to a state notification. The notification was issued by Sikkim's Home department, reported news agency Press Trust of India.

This will help both homegrown and outstation tourists who want to travel during the festive season.





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Fiji to reopen to international travellers in December



On October 10, 2021, the country's Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama announced that after nearly two years of being closed, its borders will once again be opened to international visitors from December 1, 2021.

This official announcement comes off the heels of Fiji reaching its goal to get 80 per cent of its eligible population vaccinated with both doses. While travel restrictions will be lifted in December, travellers from India keen to visit Fiji shores may need to wait a little longer due to the continued travel restrictions in place between the two countries.

Travellers to Fiji must be fully vaccinated (children under 18 can travel with a vaccinated adult) from a 'Travel Partner' country (defined as one with high vaccination rates and low-test positivity rates), as well as providing a negative PCR test taken 72-hours prior to departure. Once they arrive on Fiji's shores, these travellers can holiday in designated travel-safe areas, where they can enjoy the best of Fiji knowing that everyone they interact with will be fully vaccinated.

Teardrop Hotels Sri Lanka appoints BRANDit as India Representative

Teardrop Hotels, a chain of luxury boutique hotels in Sri Lanka, has appointed BRANDit, a specialist in tourism marketing, as its representation partner in India. BRANDit will be responsible for shaping the travel trade strategy, promoting sales and executing PR campaigns. This marks a new chapter for Teardrop Hotels as it looks to invest and strengthen its presence in the Indian market.



▲ Lubaina Sheerazi

Teardrop is a collection of small, stylish, service-driven hotels that prides itself for contemporising centuries-old heritage buildings and vintage tea bungalows-with-views in distinct regions across the island nation. Each property is defined by its atmospheric destination, encouraging guests to engage in experiences that shape their own narrative of Sri Lanka.

"We are delighted to be able to promote Teardrop Hotels, especially at this juncture. Travel trade and consumers are both yearning for new experiences as we begin planning our next escape. With great connectivity, scenic landscape and a number of attractions, Sri Lanka has always been a perfect short-haul getaway for Indian travellers. Now, with borders re-opening, we are committed towards accelerating demand and increasing visitation by putting Teardrop Hotels on the radar of the travel trade and media stakeholders in India," said Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO & Co-founder, BRANDit.

Kerala Govt sets up Revolving Fund to support tourism sector workers

Kerala Government has set up a Revolving Fund to provide interest-free loans up to ₹10,000 to those employed in a wide range of activities in the tourism sector without any collateral security, as part of schemes to revive the pandemic-hit industry that provides jobs to thousands across the state.

The Revolving Fund has an initial corpus of ₹10 crore. Those who are employed in a range of activities related to the tourism industry with membership in any of the registered tourism sector organizations will be eligible for the loan under the scheme. Those engaged in units registered under the Responsible Tourism (RT) mission are also entitled to apply for the loan.

Accordingly, assistance will be available to those working for tour operators, travel agencies, tourist taxi operators, houseboats and shikara boat operators, hotels, resorts, restaurants, serviced villas, tourist farms, ayurveda centres, adventure tourism ventures, micro units under RT mission, performing and martial arts troupes and tour guides holding licence of India Tourism or Kerala Tourism.

In order to get the benefit, the employee should be working in an entity which has approval of State Tourism Department/Tourism Ministry or membership of Kerala Travel Mart Society or any other recognised tourism-related organisation. The beneficiary will have to repay the loan within two years after the one-year moratorium period. The scheme will be implemented through the RT Mission. The application has to be submitted online, for which a digital platform will be set up soon.

A panel with Tourism Director as Chairman and RT Mission Coordinator as Convener has been formed to consider the applications and sanction loans. The panel has, as its members, Finance Officer of Tourism Department, Deputy Director (Marketing), Tourism, two nominees each of KTM, ATTOL, home-stay owners association and Tourism Care Foundation, president or nominee of Kerala Tourism Professional Club, a representative from adventure tourism sector, Tourism Protection Council president/nominee and a representative of licenced tour guides association.

Prateek Hira awarded by UP Government



Uttar Pradesh Government on the occasion of World Tourism Day and to mark 50 years of the Department of Tourism in Uttar Pradesh Government recognised the efforts of Prateek Hira in the field of Tourism. Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath on 27 September conferred the State Award to Prateek Hira and his company Tornos, declaring it as the best tour company in the state of UP. Prateek has been in the travel trade for the last 27 years and apart from being in the business of operating tours he also chairs the FICCI's Tourism Committee in Uttar Pradesh and UP Chapter of IATO.

The Government of Uttar Pradesh in its citation has recognized his efforts in promoting the state of Uttar Pradesh and taking it to new heights in the field of tourism. His cooperation with the department of tourism and involvement with tourism academia and researches is commendable.

FICCI's report on the potential of Culinary Tourism in Uttar Pradesh authored by Prateek Hira, Manish Ahuja and Anirban Chatterjee was also released and launched on this occasion by the Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath, in presence of Urban Development Minister, Ashutosh Tandon, Jal Shakti Minister, Dr. Mahendra Singh, Mayor of Lucknow, Sanyukta Bhaita and the Principal Secretary Tourism & Culture Mukesh Meshram.

Starscapes launches second astronomical observatory in Uttarakhand



Starscapes, India's first and only chain of observatories, has launched its second public observatory in Uttarakhand. The new observatory 'Stargate Observatory Bhimtal' by Starscapes Experiences is located at Bhimtal, Naukuchiatal Main Road, and is easily accessible from all the main tourist sites in the district. Additionally, the new observatory is only a 7-hour drive from Delhi for anyone looking to spend a weekend away from the city. The observatory adds a new dimension to the list of must-visit attractions in Bhimtal. Apart from trekking, sightseeing, paragliding activities during the day, tourists can now experience the enigma of stargazing at night.

The new observatory will offer tourists a holistic astronomical experience, with a number of activities both during the day and at night. While the Night Show is the observatory's main attraction, there will be plenty to do during the day. From sun observations to audio visual shows of the night sky, and stargazing safari to astrophotography, Stargate Observatory Bhimtal will offer an integrated astronomy experience to travel enthusiasts. The observatory also has an in-house store that offers merchandise related to astronomy.

Germany removes India from the list of high-risk areas

The German Government has lifted all travel restrictions for persons residing in India. Travel to Germany for all purposes is permitted again from India. However, proof of vaccination, proof of recovery from COVID-19, or negative test result is still required for entry.

All Indian travellers 12 years and older who are entering the Federal Republic of Germany must either show that they are fully vaccinated or fully recovered or have tested negative prior to departure.

Travellers who received all the required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine cited on the website of the Paul Ehrlich Institute are considered fully vaccinated. A period of at least 14 days must have elapsed since receiving the last vaccine dose.

Persons vaccinated with Covaxin or any other vaccine which is not recognised by the Paul Ehrlich Institute have to carry a negative PCR test report which is not older than 72 hours on entry in Germany.

Vaccinated travellers must additionally show no relevant symptoms. Travellers who can prove they were previously infected with COVID through a positive PCR test, taken at



least 28 days but no more than six months prior, and who show no relevant symptoms are considered to be fully recovered.

Travellers who are neither fully vaccinated nor fully recovered must continue to present a negative COVID test prior to departure. Both PCR tests and rapid antigen tests are accepted.



Resumption of international visa services comes as a big relief to the tourism industry

In what came as the most awaited news in the tourism industry, the Central Government has considered resuming issuing of tourist visas in a bid to boost the economy as daily COVID-19 cases in the country have come down. The move was well-received by the tourism stakeholders.

Team TTJ

As the vaccination rate goes up and the number of COVID cases continues to decline steadily, India is finally decided to allow foreign tourists to travel to the country since COVID struck last year. As per a recent official announcement which came following a high-level meeting by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), India will issue fresh tourist visas, from November 15 to foreign nationals. From October 15, tourist visas will be granted to those traveling on chartered flights to India.

According to a government statement in June this year, free visas will be issued to the first five lakh foreign tourists or till March 31, 2022, whichever is earlier, with a total finance implication of ₹100 crore.

This should act as a jumpstart, especially at the beginning of the peak tourist season of November and December.

However, to get to this point, almost all travel trade associations regularly engaged with all the stakeholders at the government and tourism ministry and constantly emphasised reopening the borders for international tourists to begin issuing e-tourist visas once the situation came under control and vaccinations picked up. Even the MHA agreed and stated that they had been receiving representations from several State Governments as well as various stakeholders in the tourism sector to start Tourist Visas also, to allow foreign tourists to come to India. Therefore, the MHA consulted all major stakeholders like the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of

Civil Aviation, Ministry of Tourism and various State Governments, where foreign tourists are expected to arrive.

Meanwhile, care has to be taken by tourism stakeholders that all due protocols and norms relating to COVID-19 as notified by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare from time to time, shall be adhered to by the foreign tourists and carriers bringing them into India, including all other stakeholders at landing stations.

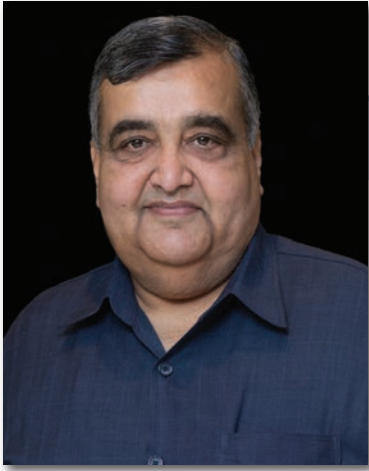
So, with the restrictions earlier placed on visas and international travel eased, many tourism association leaders and stakeholders believe that the positive decision to restore tourist visas is expected to revive the tourism sector. Let's read what some of them had to say on this development:



Nakul Anand
Chairman, FAITH

We are thankful to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism for constantly dialoguing with the tourism industry and taking up the issue of

tourist e-visa resumption at the highest level. We look forward to a healthy start to inbound tourism and, given no third wave, hope all countries encourage visitation.



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

This could happen due to aggressive and tireless follow-up by IATO and other associations and with support from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and I would like to thank the entire team in the

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for this. This is very encouraging for the tourism industry and we hope the inbound tourism would start to some extent and will give a sigh of relief to the tourism industry stakeholders.

Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

We welcome the move as a date has finally been given by the government to resume inbound travel and we are happy to acknowledge the announcement of resumption of Tourist Visa to foreigners coming to India on charter flights from 15th October & further for others effective 15th November 2021. We hope commercial flights

will start beyond air bubbles effective 15th November to facilitate seamless travel. TAAI, along with FAITH, have submitted numerous representations requesting the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Tourism, Health and External Affairs on the subject. Our results have now finally yielded some relief and members can start planning.



Dipak Deva
Managing Director, Travel Corporation of India



We heartily welcome the government's announcement on the restart of tourist visa issuance by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for international guests travelling to India starting October 15, 2021 (charter flights) and from November 15, 2021, for regular commercial flights. This coupled with the earlier announcement of free visas for

the first five lakh inbound tourists, is a critical move that will give fillip and accelerate a much-needed revival of inbound tourism - a sector that plays a critical role, with over nine per cent contribution to India's GDP and US\$30 billion in net foreign exchange receipts; equally a force multiplier in terms of employment generation and skill development across allied sectors.

Prateek Hira
President & CEO, Tornos

Opening of visas to India has indeed elevated the somber mood of the tourism industry. The industry has got its best festive season gift and the mist around the inbound tourism has cleared. The way we saw domestic travel recover, surpassing all predictions the moment the states opened their borders, most of us in the inbound travel

too are looking forward to a similar recovery. With this most awaited announcement, the queries have surged and so have the activities in our offices. The decision to open Visas for India is the most appreciable move of our government and it brings back life to the inbound travel that was in comatose.



Prashant Pitti
Co-founder, EaseMyTrip



There are so many people, travel agents and guides whose livelihood depend on international tourism and our tourism economy has almost dipped. This will be a relief for all if the government is considering it. We hope our industry will rise again as we

have a huge number of who connect to us on a daily basis and ask about foreign trips and are eagerly waiting to know when will the restrictions lift up. This is the remarkable thinking of government and we are waiting that when it will be turned into reality soon.

We're open. What next?

So, the D-day has arrived. The much-awaited re-opening of Indian tourism has been announced.

After 19 months, 599 days, and for us in tourism, what was 862,000 gut-wrenching sorely counted minutes, India has announced that all tourist visas will be back from November 15th.

Rajeev Kohli

Now, I am not one to gush and adulate the government on this move, as it was simply their job and one done far too late. But I will express appreciation for finally doing it.

The irony is that India never enforced a complete closure of our borders. While many other countries shut down their boundaries for all, irrespective of passport or status, India decided to operate bubble flights, ironically to countries that were worst affected by the virus. It allowed NRIs and OCIs to come and go. It continued to issue business and medical visas to anyone who applied. So the logic of banning tourists had no scientific grounding other than to pay lip service to symbolic actions of governance. Bizarre.

Nevertheless, INDIA IS BACK BABY! So, let's get going folks.

The MHA has announced the restart of the visa process. BUT neither has the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced a schedule for the full resumption of international flights nor has the Ministry of Health made a statement on the requirements and protocols needed to arrive in India. So, the euphoria is sort of hollow in some ways. It's like announcing you are getting married, setting a date, sending out invitations but have yet to find a bride! It would have been better if the GOI got its act together and coordinated between its arms rather than making incomplete pronouncements.

Nevertheless, it's a start. So, let's look at the glass half full. I AM EXCITED!

Here are some things to do –

Step 1 – Dear GOI - tell us what the rules are! Who can come? How? Requirements? So far, information is piecemeal and irregular. We cannot plan our next steps. Get the MHA aligned to what is a practical set of rules to come to India. So far, what we have heard expresses extreme conservatism and some blocks to getting people back to our shores. How does limiting visas to single entry or visitors to 30 days make India any less safe? Fully vaccinated and an RTCP test is all one

needs and, and quite frankly, all one can practically do.

Step 2 – Go to town with a sexy, energetic, clever 60-second video that everyone in the industry can share far and wide (Instagram as a 1-minute limit). Let's match what social media demands. Energetic because we need to get eyeballs. Let's stay away from the cliched Rajasthan forts and the Kerala backwaters. Let's get hip and happening. We need to shout to the world that we are ready, back, and excited. We are waiting for them.

Step 3 – Visas – the government has graciously said they will give 5 lakh visas gratis. That's great. But let's imbibe the values of Athithi Devo Bhava and open the nation for visa-free travel for the next 12 months. Imagine the goodwill and PR value we will generate. "India welcomes you. Visa free". That's positive energy advertising cannot buy.

Step 4 – Dear GOI, please invest in our industry. We are broken, hurt, damaged. You gave us no support. You denied us our rightful SEIS. Consider a 6 month GST holiday for all inbound travellers. As Madam Finance Minister keeps on tooting how well the economy has done, this small break for our cause will not hurt anyone. It will make India competitive in the short term, help us regain some market share and again generate goodwill. Don't be oblivious to the fact that all our competition has been on their toes for a long time. If you expect the private sector to fix things alone, cannot happen!

Step 5 – Engage our diplomatic missions across the world. It is no secret that the financial and physical limitations of the Ministry of Tourism are real. They have neither been given the budgetary nor manpower support to do justice to their overall mission. So, it is time we call every foreign mission and engage their trade teams with a single mission – to reignite the Incredible India brand. Requires no investment other than calls and saying "please". This must be a priority NOW. Do a series of global India days with a cluster of missions coming together to invite local media and trade for a live broadcast from



▲ Rajeev Kohli

India. Think out of the box.

Step 6 – Please please please retire Incredible India. Using a TWO DECADE old set of cliches will not get us anywhere. Let's start afresh with something that captures the world's imagination. We should have used the downtime to come up with a new vision that is relevant to the new younger traveller.

Step 7 – Lastly, and something I have said before, Ministry of Tourism, please engage the trade directly. It is convenient to shield behind a dozen association heads. But talking to your stakeholders is not only your moral obligation, but is just the right thing to do. Leadership is about being present. It is about engaging with your people. It is about listening and sharing, taking input and allowing your forces to express their happiness and pain alike. So far, you've been silent and leadership missing. Don't be an ostrich with a head in the sand. Call a town hall. Let all come. Spend a day to start the healing process. Boosting the industry's morale has to be a priority.

Hey! I am excited. It's our turn to be back!

Rajeev Kohli is Joint Managing Director of Creative Travel and President of the global DMC group, Euromic. He is also a member of the CII National Tourism Council and has held other leadership positions in the global travel and tourism industry.

Happy to get feedback and thoughts on this issue. rajeevcohli@creative.travel

Uttarakhand Tourism prepares for safe and sustainable travel

With Char Dham Yatra opening up, Uttarakhand Tourism is highlighting Winter Char Dham Yatra and is vouching for sustainable development of all its destinations. Vivek Singh Chauhan, Additional Director, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UDTB), brings to light the latest tourism updates and is quite optimistic about tourism bouncing back in the state.



▲ Vivek Singh Chauhan

Here's some good news for pilgrims planning their post-pandemic break to Uttarakhand or 'the Abode of Gods'. Based on the orders of the Uttarakhand High Court, Char Dham Yatra has resumed from September 18, this year opening up the four revered shrines for fully-vaccinated pilgrims. Keeping with Covid protocols, the High Court has limited the daily number of pilgrims visiting Kedarnath to 800, Badrinath to 1,000, Gangotri to 600 and 400 pilgrims to Yamunotri. In the meantime, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) has come up in a major way to boost Winter Char Dham Yatra for pilgrims.

Pilgrims on a trip to Char Dham are prohibited to take a dip in any pools during their journey. Pilgrims must gear up with their double-dosed vaccine certificate or carry Covid- negative reports done at least 72 hours in advance. Pilgrims are required to get the Panchkaran done at the Devasthan Board. Apart from these, wearing masks, keeping with social distancing and regular sanitizing are some of the major norms for pilgrims.

The Winter Char Dham Yatra comprises Yamuna shrine at Kharsali hamlet in the district of Uttarkashi, Ganga shrine at Mukhba hamlet in Uttarkashi, Onkeshwar shrine at Ukhimath and Narsinghshrine at Pandukeshwar temple in Joshimath. According to Vivek Singh Chauhan, "All our destinations are open for travellers. Once banned by the High Court keeping in mind the Covid restrictions, Char Dham Yatra forms the lifeline for those mountain

folks residing in the higher reaches of the Himalayas. As winter heralds, the hamlets in and around Char Dham remain cut off without any connectivity and the livelihood of the masses is badly hit. In an attempt to provide an alternate source of income for this populace hit by snowfall and prevent them from migrating to other places, we are rolling out Winter Char Dham Yatra that will provide job options for the mountain folks and help them to live a better life all around the year. Travellers interested to head to Uttarakhand need to visit Dehradun Smart City Portal to get themselves registered and gear up with double vaccination certificate after a fortnight of receiving the jab." Chauhan was speaking at Travel and Tourism Fair held in Kolkata from September 10 to 12, this year.

The Tourism Board is also offering an impetus to rural tourism in a major way. Chauhan said, "We have come up with DeenDayal Upadhyay Homestay Scheme to offer a thrust on rural tourism and generate job avenues for locals. On offer is ₹60,000 to set up a new room and ₹25,000 for renovating a room on the lines of trekking traction homestay scheme. The scheme has been quite successful in exploring new destinations. With a view to increase the tourists' footfall, we are working on the scheme-13 Districts 13 Destinations to develop 13 novel destinations in each district. In the vertical of adventure tourism, we are stressing on water sports in Tehri, mountain biking in Marchula apart from river rafting in Rishikesh and paragliding in Nainital."

The upper reaches of the land are highly vulnerable to landslides and it is often found

that travellers are stranded during such natural calamities. Chauhan further said, "We have identified the vulnerable areas in the state and arrangements are made for helicopter services to airlift travellers stranded in landslides."

In an attempt to revive the travel industry that was hit by pandemic, the state tourism has doled out ₹200 crore to registered transport companies. Chauhan added, "We have offered ₹10,000 to tour operators and travel agents. Besides, we have provided support to the tourism stakeholders in renewing their licenses. Our focus is to revive the tourism industry at the earliest. We are looking up to popularise the destinations and adventure tourism in the state. Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam and Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam are running the accommodation options at reasonable rates. We are making an effort to support the livelihood of the migrant populace who have returned to their hometown during Covid-induced lockdown through our homestay schemes and Veer Chandra Garhwali."

The tourism board is targeting travellers from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab and West Bengal. "Our state received around 3 crore travellers including domestic and global, during pre-pandemic times. We had nearly 1 crore tourists last year and are looking forward to receive around 60 per cent of domestic travellers of the pre-pandemic figure. Our Char Dham Yatra had nearly 3,20,000 pilgrims in the last calendar year," further added Chauhan.

Revelling in timeless traditions

Amcho Bastar, the newest tourism initiative by the Bastar District Administration, along with the Chhattisgarh government, not only unfolds huge tourist attractions and makes it the most preferred holiday destination but also promises to uplift the economic status of the populace. Rajat Bansal, Collector, District Administration, Bastar shares the latest developmental agenda of the tribal region in the realm of tourism.

Swaati Chaudhury



▲ Rajat Bansal

What was once associated with darkness and Naxalite violence has blossomed into a tourist hotspot in this day and age. Thanks to the novel efforts made by the District Administration of Bastar. The land offers a blend of eco-tourism, heritage splendours, and tribal culture. The district administration has recently set up a one-of-a-kind website—www.travelbastar.com to provide significant info to tourists on the immense tourism potential of Bastar and facilitate seamless travel.

'Amcho Bastar', the latest tourism initiative floated by the District Administration, Bastar is a thematic tourism-based campaign in the land of Chhattisgarh. Rajat Bansal explained, "Launched to offer a major boost to global tourists, Amcho Bastar intends to highlight the region as an enchanting tourist getaway by showcasing the diverse aspects of Bastar, its pristine beauty, heritage, pilgrim points and tribal culture. The campaign is a forward step to showcase one of the most ancient civilizations of India. Being an unexplored destination for global travellers, Bastar today is one of the fastest-growing tourist destinations in the country that holds tremendous potential for pan-India and global travellers. The initiative will instill a sense of pride among the residents who have been instrumental in preserving their culture and heritage for generations." Bansal pointed out that the residents emerge as crucial

stakeholders and contribute to scripting the success story of Bastar heritage and culture on a global level, apart from economic prosperity. In a nutshell, it will be an inclusive development of the region without disturbing the ancient tradition.

Tourism is a sector that can generate millions of job options in Bastar. Bansal further said, "In an attempt to offer a thrust to the livelihood of the residents and blend with tourism, the district administration is rolling out several village-stay options at Chitrakote replete with world-class cottages and dormitories. There are upcoming adventure sports hub at Mendri Ghumar and Tamda Ghumar. The eco-tourism initiatives will spruce up the employment, infrastructure and transport facilities in the state."

But one pertinent question arises—What is the calling card of Bastar that will tempt tourists? Bansal added, "Bastar has some incredible offerings for travellers that are unique in Asia like Chitrakote Horse-Shoe waterfalls, one of the widest waterfalls in the world, adventure activities including trekking on the lap of nature, pre-historic, natural caves, amazing archaeological treasures, indigenous tribes and the three-month Bastar Dussehra. The chief USP of the campaign is that we are targeting the local populace to educate them and highlight the concept of Atithi Devo Bhavah thereby sensitising travellers on the preservation of culture and heritage of Bastar."

The Bastar District Administration is into aggressive marketing of the

destination to scale up the flow of travellers. Bansal further added, "We are quite hopeful of receiving a large chunk of domestic tourists this year. The high-standard campaign has been able to create a sound impact about Bastar being an incredible tourist destination. Bastar boasts of sound connectivity with a domestic airport and well-developed infrastructure. Besides, Covid protocols are being adhered to, such as using masks, social distancing norms and spot testing. Travellers have to carry double-dosed vaccine certificates and Covid negative reports. In case travellers are found Covid positive, the administration has made arrangements for their quarantine and treatment."

The tribal belt of Bastar enjoys a huge advantage in the realm of tourism. Suruchi Singh, Assistant Collector, District Administration informed, "Bastar is a land of fascinating waterfalls and the state government is providing support to homestay options for travellers to get an authentic feel of eco-tourism and tribal culture. Kotumsar cave offers a profound experience of eco-tourism while Jagdalpur Palace is the best destination to get info on Bastar heritage tourism. The district is actively supporting young entrepreneurs in an effort to create a sound travel experience. There is a cost-effective Hop-On-Hop-Off bus service for travellers with online bookings." There are two interesting events lined up in the Bastar tourism calendar- the Darbha Papaya festival and Inktober festival in October.

Novel attempt to preserve age-old heritage and craft

Aimed to save the dying art and craft industry of Uttar Pradesh, the state government has unveiled a unique scheme and teamed up with Discovery India that not only promises to better the working conditions of the craftsmen but also brings an online global platform to market their products.

Swaati Chaudhury

Here's some reason to cheer up for art aficionados across the world. To provide the much-needed boost to the sagging art and craft industry of Uttar Pradesh and sustain the living standards of craftsmen, the Uttar Pradesh Government has joined hands with Discovery Communications India to roll out a one-of-a-kind travelogue themed- "Heritage Trails, One District One Product" (ODOP). The travel documentary brings to light the ancient, rich heritage and art works of tourist destinations in Uttar Pradesh and was launched on September 25, this year.

ODOP is a cherished project of the Uttar Pradesh Government that has been set up in 2018 to revive the dying craft industry of the state. One gets to watch the documentary on YouTube anchored by Gaurav Chopra that highlights the indigenous art forms of the state right from Agra, the City of Taj, to Benares. It explores the rich cultural diversity of the state and takes us on a delightful journey of different tourist destinations of the state.

The scheme was conceptualized to identify a specialized artwork from each of the 75 districts in the state and create a product-based traditional, industrial hub.

The ODOP scheme has taken off in three stages- the initial stage was to provide financial aid to motivate the craftsmen to create new artworks while the state government provided subsidies to the artisans in the second stage. The artisans were supported with tool kits and raw materials required to execute their work. Eventually, the artisans were provided an online global market to promote their stuff. In today's age, craftsmen based in Agra can export their products to foreign shores, thanks to the ODOP scheme.

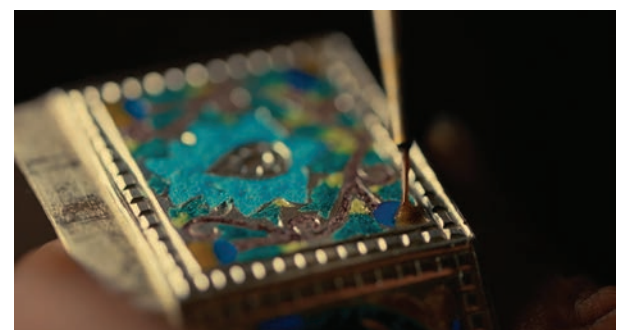
The artworks of Benares are highly revered. Take the example of Pink Legacy or Gulabi Meenakari that are most sought after by art lovers all across the globe.

Agra is reputed for its exotic artworks, including marble inlaid works that are practised by craftsmen for generations. It was during the Mughal period when the Taj Mahal was built, the craftsmen



began the work of marble inlaying that involves long hours of painstaking effort. It takes a considerable period of time to complete the intricate work. The Gulabi Meenakari and marble inlaid works give a unique identity to the state.

The launch of the ODOP scheme has enabled the craftsmen to overcome the financial constraints in their lives and it's been the past three years that the state has recorded an increase in the export of artworks by 38 per cent. Overall, the scheme promises a bright future for the state craftsmen. It has provided job avenues to over 150 million youth and sustained their livelihood.



Pushing plans and policies to give Maharashtra Tourism a major boost

Aditya Thackeray, Tourism and Environment Minister, Govt of Maharashtra, in a recent select media round table interaction on the eve of World Tourism Day, said his government is working to 'create excitement' about the state as a formidable tourist destination. Maharashtra is expected to see a major boost in tourism in the post-COVID era with many projects, plans and policies under implementation.



Prashant Nayak

▲ Aditya Thackeray

First and foremost, Thackeray said that the Maharashtra government was working to promote monsoon tourism in the Konkan region and that the three coastal Konkan districts of Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg were the prime places for the project, further linking them with neighbouring districts. To give a boost to the segment, the department is planning a five-star resort in Sindhudurg,

beach shacks, heritage tourism and local culinary cuisines, among others in the region.

Konkan is the state's gateway and the monsoon in the region is an opportunity to attract visitors to enjoy the rains. "Rains nowadays doesn't mean everything is shut. Places like Lonavala and Mahabaleshwar are teeming with tourists in the monsoon. Konkan's beautiful landscape turns emerald green and the red earth and its aroma entices

travellers and encourages them to explore. They can come to just walk around, or go on treks. Also, the agri-tourism projects, caravans and five-star hotels around will further help promote monsoon tourism," stated Thackeray. He added that monsoon tourism can also be coupled with medical and wellness tourism, where people would like to recuperate with treatments like

Naturopathy or Ayurveda just like they do in Kerala.

The Konkan region is known for its vivid topography, and clubbed with its flora and fauna, offers excellent trekking paths and trails. Along with beaches, art and culture, the popular Konkani and the Malvani cuisine, the region is a delight to explore, making it an ideal destination for domestic and international visitors. To boost connectivity, Chipli airport in Sindhudurg district would be commissioned in November and the road widening project on the Mumbai-Goa Highway is also underway.

Earlier in the year, in a bid to promote tourism, the government had cleared a proposal to permit beach shacks in eight beaches similar to Goa and other international seaside destinations. Thackeray noted that the beach shack policy was awaiting environmental clearance. Similarly, the state government has a recent caravan policy in place which promotes "caravan tourism" at beaches, forts, mountain ranges, hill stations, forests and heritage sites. Under the policy, recreational vehicles, camper vans or motorhomes are allowed at places where permanent construction is prohibited or where hotels and resorts are scarce.

The government can only be an enabler, Thackeray said, while stressing



Aga Khan Palace, Pune



Kelva Beach

more private participation in the tourism sector. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the involvement and interest of the private sector were encouraging, he said. The minister said his department's focus was on how to maximise the tourism sector's contribution to the state's GDP and boost localised employment. He also noted that travel restrictions will last till COVID-19 exists. "Our focus lies on what we can do now. Tourists who are fully vaccinated, as per central government norms, are welcome to the state. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, we are focusing on the non-fiscal aspect of the tourism department. We are working towards pitching our state's tourism to international, domestic as well as inter and intra-state tourists. The long-term aim and hope are to turn this into a revenue and employment generator department," expressed Thackeray.

In ensuring ease of doing business in the domains of tourism, hospitality and travel, Thackeray said the government has brought down the number of applications and licenses required for setting up a tourism-related business from 70-80 earlier to just 10 now. Similarly, 15 NOC required have been brought down to nine self-certifications, and three-month timelines for issuance of different licenses have been doled out by his ministry. Further, the tourism and hospitality sector has been granted the industry status it wished for, pending since 1999.

Thackeray also said they were looking forward to developing the state as a cinema hub with a "single vault" for storing legendary scripts, films and related photographs. He said the government was in touch with key producers from

cruise tourists will explore when they come to Mumbai. Thackeray explains, "What do the tourists do after they land in Mumbai by cruise? We didn't give it a thought earlier. We have now submitted a proposal to the Mumbai Port Trust for tourist activities in the area. Kala Ghoda area near the port is also good for tourists to explore. We are working on illuminating 20 buildings around the Oval Maidan at Churchgate, redesigning the plaza at the Gateway of India and are in talks with the state police for having a beating retreat parade every Sunday, for people to watch the beauty of the police drills. Overall, our endeavour is to ensure international travellers move around Mumbai and the rest of the state for a week, at least after they land in India."

Elaborating further about Mumbai, which is the gateway for Maharashtra, the minister further said that stormwater drainage outfalls at Walkeshwar, Worli, and Dadar were being converted to viewing galleries and a "triangular circuit" was being developed around Mahim, Worli and Bandra forts for people. A cycling track was coming up from Bandra to the Mahim Fort and a cycling

the Hindi and Marathi cinema for creating a hub for tourists. "The government is working on the development of film cities. Netflix has even set up its production and post-production facility in Mumbai," he added.

On promotion of cruise tourism after developing an international cruise terminal in Mumbai, Thackeray said they need to work out what

track was also coming up in the Powai area. The Mithi river banks were also being developed while keeping tourism prospects in mind.

Speaking of forts, Maharashtra's tourism had earlier proposed a state fort scheme to provide basic amenities to the tourists and improve their travel experience at unclassified forts in the state. The draft policy proposes levying charges from the tourists for providing the basic amenities. As per the draft policy, there are 435 forts in Maharashtra, of which 47 are with the Centre's Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and 51 with the state archaeology department. The remaining 337 forts, which are unclassified and unprotected, are with the state revenue and forest department.

Thackeray said he is in favour of developing the whole of Maharashtra as a tourist destination and not just one or two districts. Besides Konkan and Mumbai, regions like Sangli, Kolhapur, Satara, Nashik, Marathwada, Nagpur, etc, too had lots of tourism potential and their own USPs. Thackeray pointed out that despite having the best landscapes and everything needed to be called a remarkable tourist destination, the state never pitched itself so before the country and the world. "We never saw the tourism sector as a department which can increase the revenue and employment potential in Maharashtra. It is about time we start doing so," he opined.

To conclude, Thackeray stressed the need for sustainable inclusive growth in the tourism sector. "The need of the hour is to have the right policies by working with all sectors. We hope to create excitement about Maharashtra," he said and expressed confidence that the tourism sector will pick up post-COVID-19.



Malshej Ghat



A glimpse into Furaveri Maldives .

The Maldivian side of life

A quiet, upscale, luxury resort nestled in the turquoise waters of the Indian ocean, Furaveri Maldives, felt like a dream come true.

Tanya Sehr Godinho

The excitement kicks in high above as the bright blue sky turns into shades of sea green. Flying over the Maldives, it takes a second to realise the magic, allure and thrill you're in for. Even at midday, with the sun burning a disc above, the water is surprisingly cool and clear as glass. As we landed in Male, we had a representative escort us to the sea plane departures and the ride was an adventure in itself! Overlooking the beautiful coral islands, cobalt blue waters and white sandy beaches, the air taxi is the fastest mode of transport to a resort and this 40-minute journey was probably the world's most staggeringly beautiful landscape.

Set in the exotic Raa Atoll, there is a scenic, calm and incredibly bright island, Furaveri Maldives. As we landed in clear emerald waters surrounding the property, we were welcomed in true Maldivian style with a garland and refreshment before the staff guided us in. We had a brief yet engaging conversation about the island, its offerings and the itinerary for our four-day vacation before the buggy took us to our villa. With this kind attention, Furaveri takes personalisation to a higher level and forging emotional connections with guests is their main priority.

The property is a tropical 23-hectare natural and unreclaimed island to embrace coastal vegetation. It is integrated into the natural environment; the architectural styles reflect traditional Maldivian style and coral is not used for construction or decoration. Furaveri is one of the few islands pioneering the future of sustainable luxury. Since its inception, the philosophy and values that shaped this unique resort have been the same - nature,

wellness and culture.

On our way to the Beach Pool Villa, we couldn't help but notice rich greenery and warm inviting white sand with a combination of banana, screw pine and coconut trees spread across the property. The villa has a 13-metre pool, minibar, a designated work area and private access

to the beach. It is ultra-spacious and offers uninterrupted peace and indulgence, just what we needed! If privacy and seclusion matter, this is the place to be. An open bathtub overlooking the first splash of rain with a glass of wine almost felt surreal and perhaps nothing beats the view from the room, where we sat back and watched a starry night reveal itself.



All set to indulge in nature and warm inviting sand.



If privacy and seclusion matter, this is the place to be.

Life on the island is easy. In the Furaveri bubble, we didn't have to worry about getting around, meals or activities. The Wellness Village is built around a unique local village concept that creates a balance for the body, mind and spirit. The pavilions have ponds filled with water lilies and tropical fish, creating a magical environment and the perfect setting for an unforgettable massage. Our exceptional therapists, Hany and Pili, left us a lot more relaxed than the day we arrived. They even gave us a new hairdo with braids and flowers! The ever-smiling staff are always there to greet you and guide you no matter where you are on the property and that's one of the many memories I took home.



Pili and Hany, spa experts at the Wellness Village.

All our meals were taken care of at the main restaurant, Jaafaiy, which offered an interesting mix of international cuisines. Through our stay we tasted everything from Mediterranean and Japanese to Italian and Maldivian, but what made me feel homely was the wide selection of Indian dishes served at every meal. Furaveri also has two specialty restaurants over the reef edge, offering Asian fusion and Mexican food.

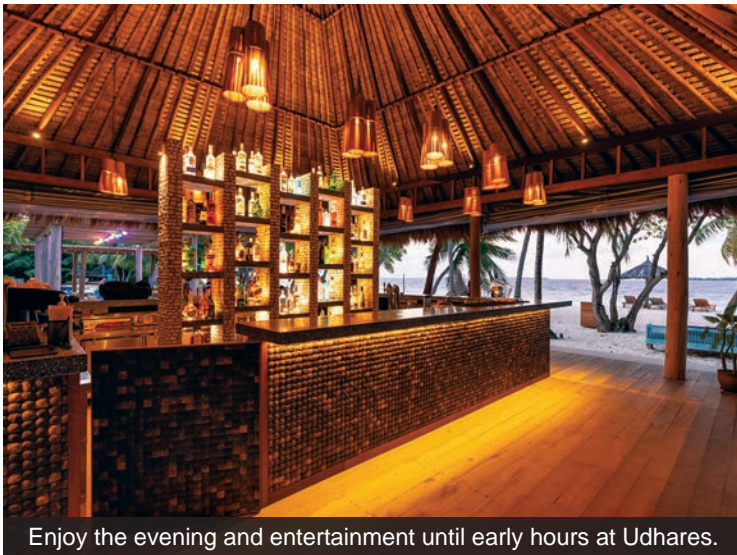
We took the dolphin cruise one evening, along with fellow

travellers from the property, and witnessed the real beauty of Maldives as we sailed through local islands and watched the sun set below the horizon. The cruise started well before golden hour and as we steered into waves of orange, we saw different shades of grey, breaking the water surface rhythmically with soft and shiny skin, a dolphin pod! The crew had organised platters of fresh seafood and drinks to go with this lively experience.



Swing by the ocean.

My vacation highlight remains the 24-hour bar, Udhares, adjacent to the main restaurant and pool area, overlooking the ocean. They have a new theme every night and we thoroughly enjoyed our time here playing billiards, table tennis and dancing until the end of DJ night. The day before we left, the staff had organised a Maldivian special. They came together as a community, in local costumes serving homegrown delicacies with dance performances and group songs. It was the perfect way to end our holiday, with a glimpse into Maldivian culture. Luckily, we chanced upon Neeraj Chopra, Olympic champion, holidaying with his brother at Furaveri and they were happy to be clicked with fans!



Enjoy the evening and entertainment until early hours at Udhares.

Our takeaway from the island was the experience, not just the comfort of rooms, but feelings and interaction along with ambiance and intimacy. Furaveri has an edge in emotional character and all the ingredients for a memorable holiday experience.

'Czech Republic is an ideal destination for the coveted European holiday'

The Czech Republic has welcomed many tourists from India during springs and summers before the pandemic and presently is welcoming fully vaccinated Indian travellers to explore their delightful and scenic country. Arzan Khambatta, Head, Czech Tourist Authority – CzechTourism India, while sharing the latest developments in the country, invites the travel trade to rediscover the 'Land of Stories', a country filled with culture, tradition, lifestyle, charming cities and new business opportunities.

Prashant Nayak

Tell us about the tourism recovery going on in the Czech Republic?

Czech Republic is all set to welcome fully vaccinated Indian tourists. The destination is opening up a variety of experiences in accordance with government anti-epidemic measures and protocols. Heritage sites, museums and galleries, exhibition spaces, castles and chateaux are open to the public under a special regime. Concerts, theatre performances and film screenings are permitted. With safety and hygiene as paramount, certain places such as restaurants and hotels may permit guests who show either a negative test for coronavirus, a vaccination certificate, or a document on having undergone COVID-19.

Currently, what are the requirements and protocols for Indian travellers to visit the Czech Republic?

Czech Republic is pleased to welcome Indian travellers who are fully vaccinated by Covishield vaccine. Indian tourists administered with Covishield vaccine are allowed to visit Czech Republic for non-essential travel.

Travellers must produce their final COVID-19 vaccine certificate and a completely filled arrival form to enter Czech Republic (Children under the age of 6 years). The vaccine certificate must show that they were fully vaccinated at least 14 days before arrival.

For travellers who aren't fully



▲ Arzan Khambatta

vaccinated, when traveling to Czech Republic they will be required to take an RT-PCR test not longer than 72 hours before starting the travel and will have to undergo 10 days of isolation

Tell us, what kind of visitor target are you looking at from India to the Czech Republic by end of 2022?

From wonderful castles and chateaux to world-famous spas, unspoilt countryside, historical cities and legendary cuisine, Czech Republic as a destination has a little bit of something for every type of traveller. Indian tourists are well-travelled and are now open to new experiences in Czech. They are pretty well acquainted with the city of Prague and of course Czech's castles and enjoy trying new experiences and revelling in the local culture and traditions

For 2022, we aim to focus more on traditions and the gastronomy offerings of the destination. Apart from targeting families, experiential travellers, millennials, business visitors, honeymooners and leisure travellers, we will also be aiming to influence the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) segment.

On the tourism front, any new developments in the Czech Republic?

We are proud to have listed another World UNESCO site in Czech Republic-beech Forest of the Jizera Mountains, unadulterated and largely untouched by man. Prague Zoo celebrates its 90th year anniversary this year. In August, Czech Republic also hosted its 55th



Buchlovice

edition of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

In 2021, the spa towns of Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně became UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The number of monuments that the Czech Republic has on the UNESCO List has now increased to 15.

What would you recommend Indian travellers to see and experience on a week-long trip to the Czech Republic?

Travellers familiar with Prague, are keen to visit different regions in the country for unique experiences like the magical castles and Chateaux in Central Bohemia, beer culture in West Bohemia, ancient stud farm in East Bohemia. There is something for everyone in the Czech Republic - cycling tours, wine and beer trails, 1000-year-old gothic architecture in beautiful cities, fascinating UNESCO monuments, winter sports for adrenaline junkies and relaxing spa and medical therapies in Karlovy Vary, a medieval spa town.

There are also a number of indoor and outdoor activities one can do to enjoy a little family fun. For kids, the Czech Republic will make them feel like they have entered into a storybook as they experience fairytale like castles, horse carriage rides through the cobblestone roads, puppet shows, royal gardens, parks and zoos.

Over the years, how is the destination picking up with the Indian travellers?

The Czech Republic has become one of Europe's major tourist destinations and in the past few years has been witnessing a steady growth in Indian tourist arrivals. From the streets of Prague to the central bohemian highlands, the Czech Republic



Karlovy Vary

is overflowing with experiences for every kind of traveller.

Czech Republic is an ideal destination for those that prefer a holiday, combining natural beauty with a fascinating history and unique experiences. While Prague and its attractions remain popular among travellers, an increased interest has been recorded in newer experiences, such as beer spa, glass-blowing and wine tasting, bringing Indian footfall to the newer parts, including the South Moravian region.

Do you curate exclusive Czech packages for the Indian trade for their customers?

Absolutely! We are working on some fantastic itineraries on different regions of Czech Republic, especially curated, keeping their customers in mind.

What are your present marketing strategies and initiatives with your Indian trade partners to promote the destination?

During the pandemic, CzechTourism has pursued several initiatives to stay connected with Indian B2C as well as the B2B market. We have been in touch with Indian Travel Trade via WhatsApp Promotions, e-learning to keep them posted on the destination updates. Newsletters and press releases have worked well with the trade and media every month, apprising on various updates and developments.

We conducted a webinar in September 2021 to share the recent developments where his Excellency H.E. Milan Hovorka, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to India addressed the Indian Travel Trade. Czech Tourist Authority – CzechTourism along with the Embassy of the Czech Republic in New Delhi, organized an on-ground VIP Networking Evening over cocktails and dinner in September at the Czech Embassy in New Delhi which was attended by the Ministry, Czech Tourism India Representative and top management of Travel companies in India.

We have been in contact with the corporate, MICE and weddings segments to discuss ways to restart travel to the destination. We have stayed on the minds of travellers by showcasing the various assets of Czech Republic through our India-specific Instagram handle (www.instagram.com/visitczechrepublic_in). In the following months to come in 2021, we have various promotional activities planned and a few exciting contests as well to look forward to.



Vyšehrad

Localising strategies in varied and diverse locations

Marriott International encompasses a portfolio of more than 7,500 properties under 30 leading brands spanning 132 countries and territories. Gaurav Singh is the Market Vice President, South East India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka for Marriott International. Based out of Bangalore, his leadership entails overseeing and strengthening the market position of the brand across three countries. His effortless flair for the dynamics of the hospitality industry casts him as a virtuoso in the field. In this exclusive interview with TTJ, Gaurav gives an in-depth insight into their business in the region he manages and highlights the importance of localising one's approach and implement strategies accordingly.

Prashant Nayak

Tell us about the overall impact of the pandemic on Marriott International's operations in the regions you oversee?

While the pandemic had a severe impact on the overall hospitality industry due to lockdowns, the resort locations were the first ones to observe a pickup in bookings as travel restrictions eased. This was further accelerated with the decrease in COVID numbers and high momentum of vaccination efforts being undertaken by the Government across the country. Similarly, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka observed varied timelines of lockdown and return to normalcy, with both countries having recently opened the doors to Indian travellers.

While the possibility of a third wave remains a possibility, the worst of it is behind us as we are slowly observing a good return to travel due to the pent-up demand. This is reflected in the bookings as well. With the festive season around the corner, all the markets are clocking their highest occupancies since the second wave, led by resort locations and tier 2 cities. We are also hoping to see improved footfall in metro cities with upcoming long festive weekends which often draw in the staycation crowds.

Due to the pandemic, how have your hotels managed to remain resilient and achieve additional revenue models for their operation and business?

F&B has been the major non-room revenue driver for us in the last 16-18 months. To stay connected with our loyal patrons, we continuously kept innovating with our home delivery service 'Marriott Bonvoy on Wheels'. Hotels like JW Marriott (Kolkata), The Ritz Carlton (Bengaluru) among others were providing specially curated Mood Diets menu, which was well received by

our customers in both the south and east markets.

Staycations and workcations were definitely trending and hotels were providing a holistic experience to guests wherein they could work as well as relax and rejuvenate with limited contact with the outside world. Most of our hotels in both regions have equipped themselves with facilities that ensure the guests won't have to step outside the property for any kind of experience. Attractive Staycation and Social Event packages have been curated by leveraging the Marriott Bonvoy program, Shaadi by Marriott branding and distribution to increase conversions.

How are India, Srilanka and Bangladesh different from each other in terms of leisure and business travel?

India, Srilanka and Bangladesh bring into forefront different sensibilities; however, all were hit largely due to the pandemic, since travel was at a slower pace and international borders were largely closed. From a leisure travel point of view, we are seeing a slow yet steady recovery from domestic source markets. India as such has large domestic consumption and hence can fuel demand, though that is not so similar to our neighbouring countries, which are more reliant on international business and leisure travel. However, the constant decline in active cases, ease of restrictions and the vaccination efforts undertaken by governments have started to reflect in the booking pace. All markets are clocking their highest pick up since the beginning of the 2nd wave and with the festive season just around the corner, we are expecting the bookings to pick up rapidly.



▲ Gaurav Singh

Business travel and MICE make up for a good portion of our revenue in India, considering the presence of corporate and IT offices in the region. MICE in both south and east markets have largely adopted a hybrid model as we see an increase in smaller event formats either virtually or physically. Through our 'Connect with Confidence' program, we are offering innovative solutions and working with partners to help streamline the current processes to personalise and execute events based on individual requirements.

Presently, do you see a revival in business travel which is important to Marriott properties? Does it have the potential to aid your region's hotel recovery growth?

Business travel/MICE accounted for a substantial part of revenue upstream

before the pandemic came into the picture. However, with changing times, Marriott International has been keeping the services on precedence, with meeting rooms available for digital gatherings across properties.

We have been offering curated catering services for business travellers to easily navigate through our hotels across locations. Therefore, we had to largely rely on weddings and other social events and celebrations where too, we had to adhere to the norms laid out by local authorities in cap on the number of people who may take up our service. We do feel domestic demand, particularly in India, will surpass 2019 levels in the coming year, all things being equal and no third wave. Opening of international borders which will bring further buoyancy as we work towards recovery.

How are you strategising and strengthening the market position of the brand across the regions you oversee?

Currently, the impact of the pandemic has been considerable and diverse. In my region, different locations and hotels both have had varying responses. Resorts have high demand and full occupancies, but large city hotels are still to bounce back. Within India, South and East markets did show a considerable spike in cases during the second wave. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka similarly have had varied timelines of lockdowns and return to normalcy. So, there is no one size fits all approach that's possible.

We have continued to operate under guidelines of changing timelines of operations, limited offerings being permitted, and reduced margins. Our Marriott associates have shown tremendous resilience during this challenging period as they continue to drive recovery, adapt smartly, and serve our customers with the same warmth and hospitality that is the trademark of the Marriott brand. We have adapted to digitally enhanced technology, intensified our commitment to clean protocols, constantly upgraded our sanitization levels and localised our efforts. The focus on our talent and associate well-being has been relentless throughout this whole journey.

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

Customers are always happy with friendly, competent, and consistent service when it comes to the hotel industry and they also seek the development of new technologies,

which increases their expectations. One important element today is also ease of transactions. Hence, we need to make things simpler, easier and be aware that we cannot have rigid cancellation policies and complicated terms and conditions.

Customers want more efficient service than ever before, best levels of cleanliness, sanitisations and safety. Since consumer behaviour is constantly changing, companies must keep pace with customer expectations. Modern customers are very discerning having travelled all over the world, they have much higher expectations when it comes to service delivery, such as proactive service, individual interactions, and connected hotel experiences in all areas. In these modern times, with the growing presence of digital and social media, our agility and adaptability to this new digitalised world is what will help us navigate and better serve the new age customer.

The way we consume travel has shifted significantly. Today, people have realised and imbibed core values of sustainable living, conscious spending and unique experiential traveling, and we are guiding our mechanisms towards these esoteric experiences. They have become increasingly conscious of the personal impact they have on places they visit and want to establish a meaningful connection. Last year we launched an APAC led campaign called 'Good Travel with Marriott Bonvoy'. This program offers meaningful travel across 3 distinct pillars – environmental travel, marine conservation, and community engagement. Programs like this are guided by the company's social impact and sustainability platform – Serve 360. The initiative reaffirms the company's commitment to supporting the local communities where our hotels are operating in.

Tell us about Marriott International's future plans? Can you let us know about the hotels in the pipeline and are there plans to introduce new brands in your region?

We recently announced the signing of 22 new hotels in the last 18 months. This continues to reaffirm our faith in the longevity of travel and the hotel business. In India, we have a robust pipeline of hotel openings in the country that includes a mix of luxury, premium and select serve openings that will add to our portfolio.

In 2021, we have a strong opening lineup of hotels in South Asia. Having recently launched the Westin Goa and the Fairfield by Marriott Benaulim in

Goa. We are expecting to add further hotels into our portfolio over the next few months in Dehradun, Mahabaleshwar, Trivandrum, Vadodara and Dhaka.

One should be able to find a Marriott brand in over 36 cities in India today, which includes a substantial number of hotels in tier 2/3 cities. Having said that, as part of our future pipeline we will be debuting in newer cities.

2022 Pipeline – Fairfield by Marriott Goa Calangute Village, Courtyard by Marriott Navi Mumbai, Courtyard by Marriott Trivandrum and Tiruchirappalli, Marriott at Bengaluru International Airport, ITC Narmada - Luxury Collection Ahmedabad, JW Marriott Prestige Golfshire Resort and Spa, Bengaluru, & Le Meridien Amritsar to name a few debuts expected.

By when do you think the global hospitality business will stabilise?

The way travel is consumed is changing. We know there is a lot of pent-up demand for travel. It will take some time to come back in its pre-pandemic capacity. However, when it does resume, we know that guests will be more comfortable returning to a brand that is familiar to them and trusted.

Guests now prefer traveling in smaller groups, with their families and choose drivable destinations instead of opting for flights. These trends/observations do indicate that full recovery will be led by leisure demand, followed by transient businesses and groups. Despite the crippling effect the pandemic had on the industry, there has been a tremendous showcase of resilience, agility, and creativity. Fewer restrictions, increasing pace of vaccination and pent-up demand, which resulted in revenge travel, are helping the sector bounce back. With vaccinated numbers growing by the day, resulting in a significant drop in active cases, we are seeing demand grow at a cautious pace. Our brands are developing new programming to further embrace the destination — from home-cooking experiences to master classes in culture and cuisine to transformed public spaces. Hotels are also becoming a community hub, championing the local arts, supporting regional restaurants and chefs, and increasing charitable efforts as a part of the hotel experience.

We do anticipate steady growth in demand through 2022 and domestic demand to fully recover and then should these recovery patterns hold as borders open, we aim to reach pre-COVID levels for our markets in South and East India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka by early 2023 overall.

Palladium Hotel Group, an attractive choice for diverse Indian travellers

An internationally renowned Spanish hotel chain, the Palladium Hotel Group, has a strong presence around the globe and is keen to establish its mark and nurture its growth further in India. They are working with Mumbai-based Global Destinations to achieve this goal. Sandra Polo Canudas, Asia & ME Commercial Director, Palladium Hotel Group shares more about the Group, as they look forward to promoting and establishing their luxury chain of hotels across FITs, Honeymooners, Wedding & MICE groups from India.

Prashant Nayak



▲ Sandra Polo Canudas

Can you please brief us about the Palladium Hotel Group's global portfolio?

With 50 properties in six countries, our portfolio consists of music-themed, city and beachfront hotels in prime destinations worldwide: Ushuaia Unexpected Hotels, BLESS Collection Hotels, TRS Hotels, Grand Palladium Hotels & Resorts, Palladium Hotels, Fiesta Hotels & Resorts, Only You Hotels, Palladium Boutique Hotels, Ayre Hotels and our two Hard Rock Hotels, both franchises

of the HR International brand, operated by Palladium Hotel Group. Throughout its history, our company has been truly committed to international expansion, originality, and development, integrating design, state-of-the-art technology and lifestyle innovations.

Spain is open for Indian travellers. Tell us about the current tourism and hospitality scenario in Spain?

The scenario is such that the hospitality sector has implemented protocols given by the respective country's government

authorities as well as the local community and its government measures. In our case, such measures and protocols are being implemented in collaboration with SGS, which is a company that certifies all our health and safety procedures, and all hotels have to show a seal that proves that the hotel is certified. All brands and hotels then adequate all procedures accordingly and all information related to COVID measures and new operational procedures is what we have been continuously transmitting to the trade. This is to keep them informed about how we have been evolving resiliently all the time to keep the safety of our clients, as well as our hotels and workers.

One of our main targets all this time has been, and it will be to protect, keep safe and confident both workers and clients. Spain now is in the process of recovery, trying to live with COVID in the safest way possible, implementing all workable procedures. As of now, the result has been successful, and we expect it to be the same as well in 2022.

Tell us about your hotels in Spain, and what are the USPs of these properties?

Our commitment and USP is to offer great guest experiences going beyond expectations and turn clients into our fans. One good example in the India market would be the Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel, the unexpected experience!



Grand Palladium Sicilia Resort & Spa

Since 2008, we have worked on positioning Palladium Hotel Group to achieve well-defined product differentiation within our portfolio of 4-star, 5-star, Boutique Hotels, Premium and Luxury Hotels in cities as well as beach destinations. Each brand has its strong identity to deliver a personalised experience.

Palladium Hotel Group is a name that is synonymous with hospitality, originality, amazing destinations, entertainment beyond expectations, innovative F&B with Michelin Star Chefs cuisine concepts and exclusive options.

Before the pandemic, which were the destinations in Spain that were trending with the Indians, and according to you, what attracts Indians to Spain?

The top trending destinations within Indians have been always Barcelona and Madrid. During the last pre-COVID years, some other destinations have started picking up depending on the segment of client, like Ibiza for instance.

I think what most attracts Indians to Spain is the local festivities that we have, the friendly environment, our music and local dances, the differences from North to South and East to West going through the Balearic and Canary Islands as well. Spain is small but a country with many experiences to discover which would be translated as well into India, which is also very different from North to South, East to West.

What is your expectation from the India market post-COVID and what kind of customer mix are you targeting?

We have seen arrivals from Indian clientele in our Hotels in Ibiza in August and Sept in Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel, Hard Rock Hotel Ibiza, Bless Hotel Ibiza and even our properties in Mexico. We have not seen any relevant demands different from the usual. We do not really know how the demand is going to be by 2022 because it will depend on the evolution of the pandemic. Our expectation is the India market to enter a continued recovery process surpassing 2021 and be on the path of what it was in 2019.

We have different brands experiences that would be dedicated to a different segment of clients who are searching for premium and luxury properties. That would gather either: adults only, families, honeymooners, groups of friends, and even weddings.

With Global Destinations as your representation partner in India, what are your combined marketing, sales



Ushuaia Hotel Ibiza - Tower

and promotion strategies to leverage your hotels?

Thanks to the collaboration with our Reps, Global Destinations, we have continuously maintained our contact with the trade. We have strived to maintain our visibility and communication to the India market since the pandemic started in 2020, as we considered it important to maintain and keep the trade informed about what was happening in Palladium Hotel Group, especially in terms of health and security measures.

We are planning activities according to the circumstances. There are some actions that are already planned for next year to reconnect physically with the market, but still, it needs to be seen when all this will take place according to the evolution of the pandemic.

Spain is active in MICE offerings with plenty of venues. Are you focusing on business and weddings from India in the near future? Also, which other segments of tourism are you banking on?

In Spain, we are focusing on small groups, either business or leisure, that would like to enjoy quality and premium out-of-the-pocket experiences. Regarding weddings, we are focusing on two destinations where we are already holding Indian weddings: Mexico and Jamaica. We have a team who specialise in Indian weddings. We are focusing also on premium and luxury leisure for either adults only and for family friendly segments.

Tell us more about the group's expansion plans and the roadmap beyond 2021?

We have maintained our expansion plans during 2021 besides the pandemic. We opened two hotels in Sicily: Grand Palladium Garden Beach Resort & Spa and Grand Palladium Sicilia Resort &

Spa located in Campofelice di Rocella, next to Cefalù. Two 5* family-oriented Hotels, beachfront and with our INFINITE INDULGENCE®, Its All Included (Drinks, breakfast, lunch and dinner, Xtra Time Sports Bar open 24h, Snacks, homemade ice cream and a la carte restaurants for dinners as well as room service, minibar, hammocks and parking). In Spain, we opened in June, our Palladium hotel Menorca, in the Balearic Islands. A 4-star property located in a crystal-clear beach area with unique local cuisine, magnificent beaches and cultural heritage. A perfect getaway for relaxation and quietness for couples, friends or families. Last, but not least, we opened an Only You Boutique Hotel in Valencia, a former Ayre Hotel and we are now about to open an Only You Boutique Hotel in Málaga and soon another Only you in Seville.

In 2022, we are to open TRS Ibiza in the Balearic Islands. Our luxury resorts are tailor-made exclusively for adults with a wide range of premium services. A brand landing in Europe after our successful result in Latin America (Mexico & Dominican Republic). We come now into 50 hotels across the globe and with expectations to keep growing.

How do you see the global hospitality industry evolve in a post-COVID world?

The industry will come out more digitalised and evolved in security and healthy measures prevention. I must point out that the hospitality sector has proven itself to be successfully resilient to the evolving circumstances and was very quick on implementation of necessary measures as it has been a challenging time for the hospitality sector as everything, including rules and regulations were changing quickly. I believe in most countries, the hospitality situation has been the same.

Turning obstacles into opportunities

For Mamta Pall, the travel representation business had always been close to her heart, and she dreamt and had plans to start her venture and that's how 'Footprints Worldwide' was established. Remarkably, she launched her business just less than a year ago, a daring business move during the pandemic. TTJ speaks with Mamta to know more about her new venture.

Prashant Nayak

Mamta has completed close to two decades in the tourism and hospitality industry. She started with domestic hotels, and throughout her journey, she has been associated with several international as well as domestic hotel brands and has handled Global Sales Offices for many top brands too. She had the opportunity of working with some of the most well-known travel companies in the business during the course of her career, such as SOTC Kuoni, TUI, and Uniglobe. Furthermore, she has experience of working with Tourism Boards as well.

When asked about her motivation behind launching FootprintsWorldwide, despite the travel industry struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mamta says, "FootprintsWorldwide is a company that focuses on not just providing sales and marketing solutions to hotels and resorts, but also positioning brands effectively in the market based on their unique features. Because of the current situation, we started with domestic hotels, a couple of boutique resorts and have now started signing up international brands too, into our portfolio. We will be looking at adding a few tourism boards into our product line too, and are also open to taking on the execution of roadshows and sales missions for companies on a project basis. We are in no hurry, nevertheless, we are extremely focused on our goals. My motivation to launch FootprintsWorldwide was mainly the fact that though I am well aware that COVID-19 showed us the worst phase of our lives, I also firmly believe that from here onwards, things will only get better in the future. Travel will boom like never before, in the coming years."

The initial challenge for Mamta was to be able to have a mindset that could tackle the nuances of a new venture during completely uncertain times. She

says, "Once someone adapts to that mindset, rest of the things just fall into place automatically." Speaking of challenges, she further adds, "The main part of tackling the challenges posed by the pandemic is to remain resilient and calm. And I think that's what each one of us has been trying our best to do. Plus, one has been promoting only the places where travel was beginning to start gradually. Keeping all these things in mind, it becomes easier to concentrate despite all the challenges that one faces."

Currently, FootprintsWorldwide represents Desert Tulip Hotel & Resort in Jaisalmer, two properties in Kanatal, Uttarakhand, which are the 7 Hills Resort and Kings Paradise Resort. The other is the Omniyat Hospitality Management, which has three verticals, viz, Omniyat Tours, which is an incoming tour operating company that specialises in providing elite and luxury top-of-the-line products and services in Jordan and adjoining countries. The BookingWhizz Premium Hospitality Solutions is about CRM, Channel Manager, Booking Engine and more of unique products and services, while under the Omniyat Hotels Management, they manage multi unique categories of hotels and resorts.

As the pandemic ebbs, Mamta is looking for opportunities to enhance her business, as many hotels will be keen to seek services from companies like hers. They are already working in that direction and they are in discussions with a few brands and hotel companies and will be soon announcing some new additions to their portfolio shortly.

While the pandemic has its limitation on people's movement and visitations,



▲ Mamta Pall

currently, they are reaching out to their clients and business associates over the phone, emails, and video calls. So, it's still more of virtual interaction. However, Mamta says she has started stepping out for meetings and trade events now and has been interacting with a few key agents and operators.

Mamta's agenda for 2022 is to enhance the visibility of their brand, as well as the brands that they represent. "The idea is to grow as well as to enhance the portfolio of FootprintsWorldwide, though we will look at quality products only. Part of the agenda is also to get some new products to showcase, and that will, of course, be a continuous exercise. I think the ultimate goal for any company is striving to be the best in the business, and at FootprintsWorldwide, we believe the same. As we move further in achieving our objectives, our ultimate goal is to strive towards making our brand the best in the business," concludes Mamta.



SriLankan, capitalising on the tourist movement from India and the world

◀ Dimuthu Tennakoon

The SriLankan government has reopened the island nation to fully vaccinated Indian tourists, which comes as a big relief for the international holiday seekers. Currently, India accounts for over 120 million fully vaccinated citizens, which means a huge potential in the tourist segment for Sri Lanka. For the same, SriLankan Airlines is strengthening its presence in India with more destinations and frequencies offering travellers to enjoy the freedom of travel.

Dimuthu Tennakoon, Head, Worldwide Sales & Distribution, SriLankan Airlines shares more about the airline's adaptability, strategies and present progress in the pandemic.

Prashant Nayak

Despite a global aviation slowdown, SriLankan Airlines continued adding new destinations in 2020. The airline resumed flying to Nairobi, Korea, Russia, Frankfurt, Sydney during the pandemic. They are looking forward to beginning their flights to Paris and also planning to add Kathmandu soon. Their global network is expanding and they have been carefully adding new

destinations, keeping into consideration the factors like traffic, frequency, and travellers' response.

Just like every other airline, SriLankan too adapted several ways to survive the pandemic since early 2020. Dimuthu shares, "This has been a difficult time for the entire world, including SriLankan Airlines. With global restrictions in place, we engaged actively to operate repatriation flights across key sectors, which kept us occupied and generated revenue. Cargo was another key segment that kept us hopeful. Like many carriers around the world in the COVID-19 crisis, we also turned to cargo, which helped us keep our aircraft in service and generate revenue. Cargo operations have proved so successful that the carrier will prioritise cargo in terms of future network and fleet planning."

Presently, SriLankan is looking at maximising the tourist movement that has begun all over the world. India is the biggest source market for SriLankan Airlines and many Indians are looking forward to travel. "The vaccination drive in India is being done at a great speed and there is a considerable chunk of the population that is fully vaccinated. We are also accepting those who have taken the Covaxin vaccine. We are looking at engaging them and opening borders for them. The airline is increasing frequency so that it could be easier for more people to travel," says Dimuthu.

SriLankan is launching only those new flights which are helping them generate revenue. They first analyse a destination with a calculative approach and then go for the launch, ensuring to not lose on profitability. Cargo is also a big revenue earner for them and they are going places with SriLankan Cargo.

SriLankan Airlines currently operates four flights a week from Chennai, three flights

a week from Mumbai, and once a week from Bangalore to its hub in Colombo. To strengthen ongoing operations, SriLankan has introduced a host of frequency enhancements out of key Indian cities into Colombo effective September 1, 2021. The airline will be resuming services between Colombo and the Indian points; Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Trivandrum, and Cochin with flights once a week, whilst Hyderabad and New Delhi will be connected to Colombo with twice-weekly flights.

Further, the Airlines' operations out of Chennai and Mumbai will expand up to five times a week whilst its Bangalore-Colombo services will be enhanced to flights three times a week. Before the outbreak of the pandemic, the airline operated an extensive network out of 11 Indian cities over 120 flights a week to Colombo, connecting travellers to the resplendent island and beyond.

SriLankan Airlines currently holds the highest attainable 'Diamond' status from the recently concluded APEX Health and Safety Audit, thus affirming its stature as an airline with the highest focus on passenger safety and wellbeing throughout the passenger journey. There will be further emphasis on strict safety protocols in place, with staff and crew maintaining sanitization, social distancing and special kits. On relatively empty flights, passengers will be assigned alternate seats to maintain distance. These steps at the airline will further help them to encourage more people to travel.

Dimuthu remains optimistic about aviation's long-term future as he says, "Though the aviation industry all over the world has suffered, it continues to be the most trusted mode of transport for many. People are willing to travel. Once the situation settles a bit, air travel will regain its glory."

10 Classy Ski Experiences that are Uniquely Utah



© Jay Dash

Beaver Mountain

Utah is a unique ski destination where visitors can experience Life Elevated®, a place where adventurers can easily access vast stretches of pristine and rugged backcountry in the morning and enjoy polished luxury amenities in the evening. Below are the top picks for Utah luxury lodging, fine dining, spas, and winter culture.

Visit Utah

From airport to alpine in less than an hour

For those flying in, Salt Lake City International Airport (SLC), features a stunning and spacious new airport terminal with high-tech and touchless amenities throughout, one of Delta's newest and largest Sky Clubs and nonstop flights to most major U.S. cities and several international ones, including Amsterdam, London, Paris, and Toronto. From SLC, 10 resorts are within an hour's drive. Accessibility is at the heart of Utah's luxury experience, where you can spend more time enjoying your vacation and less time getting there.

Loosen up at the world's only ski-in distillery

Yes, Utah is home to world-class spirits and chocolates, but that's another story. For lunch or après ski, ski right down to the

High West Distillery & Saloon for a flask or flight of small-batch local whiskeys paired with the saloon's sophisticated, Western-inspired menu. Then, cross the street and catch the Main Street Lift for some more Park City pow. Turns out, Utah's got a long history of distilling. The High West Distillery & Saloon is even on the National Register of Historic Places as the first legal distillery in the state since 1870, and it's probably the only place on Earth where you can get a decent Old Fashioned while still wearing your ski boots.

Ride in heated luxury on OBX

At Park City Mountain, the Orange Bubble Express, known locally as OBX, is the original heated bubble chairlift in North America. The seat radiates enough warmth to keep you toasty from the Canyons Village base to mid-mountain Lookout Peak, terminating at the northern edge of the resort. On windy or snowy days, pull down the distinctive orange plexiglass shield to keep your lips moist and your jacket dry.

Experience champagne powder

In Utah, it's called champagne powder snow, so light and fluffy that you can clear the sidewalk with a leaf blower instead of a shovel. Situated between the Great Basin and the Rockies, the state's high altitude and uncommonly dry air provide up to 600 inches, (15 meters), annually of lightweight, almost moisture-free snowflakes at its resorts, when layers of this perfect snow accumulate, skiers experience "flotation." We like to believe it's magic. Even the state's license plates proclaim it to be The Greatest Snow on Earth®.



© Marc Piscotty

High West Distillery, Park City

Embrace Life Elevated® at one of the highest resort towns in America

Spanning two peaks and over 650 acres of terrain, Brian Head is small but mighty. With a base at 9,600' and a summit at 11,307', above sea level, it epitomizes the Life Elevated® landscape and lifestyle and is home to the largest selection of powder stashes in relaxed and rustic Southern Utah. Locals sneak down or over to Brian Head to avoid holiday crowds or capture favourable weather patterns, making this a hidden gem.

Relax at a swanky celebrity-built resort

You know the one we're talking about: Sundance Mountain Resort. Founded by Robert Redford, this is the place where you can ski black diamonds in the morning, take a glassblowing class in the afternoon and watch a premiere in an onsite screening room before bed.

Even with its new owners, Sundance remains the epitome of 'rustic chic' with rough-hewn log cabins outfitted with high thread-count linens and accompanied by the highest quality services and amenities. The resort features Utah's famed skiing set amongst the stunning, snow-capped Mount Timpanogos, full-service spa, eponymous retail shop, and fine dining including, The Tree Room.



Take in a Snowbasin vista

Feel unworthy of sitting in a ski lodge chair

Enjoy a world-class gondola system that allows you to ski 3,000' of vertical? Earn some turns and giggles down the 'lost in translation' run called No Name? With a background steeped in the luxury hospitality business, Snowbasin Resort (like its sister, Sun Valley) brings a classically Alpine experience and four-star service to Utah without the jet-set budget.

Snowbasin's lodges are nearly as legendary as its lengthy groomed runs. These aren't little warming huts serving canned chili. Walk into any of Snowbasin's three timbered lodges and you'll be treated to fine dining and service, illuminated by grand chandeliers hanging above.

Ski, where bigger is better and less, is more

Sometimes luxury is defined by size. And space. And solitude. Set skis to an uncarved slope at Powder Mountain and look around you. No one else around? This is luxury. Realize there's

no way you can ski even a fraction of the resort in a day? All that space is yours to explore.

At 7,000 skiable acres, Powder Mountain is among the largest resorts in the United States but caps its daily lift tickets to 1500, and its limited season passes are among the state's most coveted and, in keeping with Pow Mow's egalitarian spirit, most affordable.

Status is measured on the mountain. Powder Mountain's girth is matched with an impressive 500 inches (13 meters) of annual snowfall. Best of all, thanks to its cap on lift tickets, and the proximity of other resorts with higher name recognition and marketing budgets, there's rarely a lift line. Oh, and it has a snowcat that offers online ticketing for about \$25 per ride.



Deer Valley

Ride a funicular to a ski beach

St. Regis at Deer Valley boasts the United States' first ski resort funicular, a monorail tram that transports visitors up a steep hill from Snow Park Lodge at the base of Deer Valley to the hotel. From there, the valet will take your skis so you can lounge by the outdoor fire garden, private "ski beach," or infinity pool and spa. There's a good reason former NBA basketball star Karl Malone chooses to luxuriate at the St. Regis when he returns to visit Utah.

If you're looking to take advantage of Utah's Ski City, the cosmopolitan crown jewel of Salt Lake City luxury accommodations is The Grand America, a AAA Five Diamond Hotel award winner located in the heart of downtown.

See three generations of one family working an entire mountain just for you

The Seeholzer family's been running Beaver Mountain since its inception in 1939. It's said to be the longest family-run ski resort in America, and it's definitely the only place where you can see three generations of Seeholzers working hard to make your winter dreams come true.

Throughout the resort, visitors become friends, and friends become an extension of the Seeholzer Family, who pride themselves on a personal touch over corporate branding. This old-school approach is not only nostalgic but smart, creating a loyal base of ski and outdoor lovers who return year after year to "ski the Beav!"

From sheer proximity and the biggest mountains to a ski-in distillery and a celebrity-built owned resort, these are the reasons to ski Utah now.

Captivate the magical canvas of Kenya beyond Masai Mara

Your long-coveted family holiday is just a 6-hour hassle flight and an RT-PCR test away as Kenya is now welcoming Indian tourists' sans quarantine but with heightened safety measures and COVID-19 protocols, to ensure the best of health and hygiene for both visitors and service providers.

Team TTJ

Kenya is renowned amongst Indians as an iconic destination for adventurous safaris; while there is no doubt about that, there is also so much more in store beyond Masai Mara. It is a year-long destination with an array of attractions and activities ranging from wildlife to marine life, safaris to sundowners, historical sites to cityscapes and luxurious stays to local experiences.

While wildlife will continue to be Kenya's signature offering, the destination has a gorgeous coastline with the cities of Mombasa and Watamu offering the true taste of its culture and varied cuisine. Magical Kenya Signature Experiences is one such product portfolio introduced by Kenya Tourism Board that enlists such marquee experiences in emerging regions that make Kenya truly majestic.

Mombasa: Deeply rooted in history, Mombasa is a fascinating destination that offers diverse attractions

including marine life, world-class hotels and a friendly atmosphere. The year-round tropical climate makes it a great destination filled with activities for all ages. Mombasa is an island connected to the mainland by bridges and ferries and overlooks a wide harbor, where commercial shipping mingles with traditional sailing dhows. Historical sites like Fort Jesus, a historic Portuguese fort that stands watch over the harbor, and Old Town where the air is always heavy with the scent of spices, are some of the attractions that define Mombasa. Modern Mombasa is a city of great diversity, rich in the Swahili culture, where all are welcomed and quickly absorbed into the great coastal melting pot.

Nairobi: Kenya's capital city, Nairobi has risen in a century from an uninhabited swamp-land to a thriving modern capital. It is now one of Africa's largest, and most



Mombasa



Nairobi

interesting cities and one that never seems to sleep, but continues to grow. Despite Nairobi's growth into a modern urban center, the iconic Nairobi National Park makes the city the undisputed safari capital of Africa and beyond. It remains the only national park in the world to be found within a capital city. The Park is home to large herds of Zebras, Wildebeests, Buffalos, Giraffes, Rhinos, Leopards and a large number of Lions all found here, living wild within 20 minutes from the central business district. The city's multicultural, natural and historic features undoubtedly make it an amazing destination. The city has not lost its sense of the past, with an excellent museum and the historical home of Karen Blixen, author of "Out of Africa", open to visitors.

Lamu: Lamu is a place like no other, a peaceful tropical island, with a magic of its own. Made up of a collection of idyllic islands at the northern end of Kenya's coastline, the Lamu Archipelago is living history. A visit to Lamu promises nothing but an original, authentic coastal experience; there are four main islands: Lamu, Manda, Pate and Kiwayu. The Old Town's narrow alleys, Arabic



Swahili Culture

vehicles on the islands. Activities include dhow cruises, water sports, fishing and birdwatching. The main festivals include the Lamu Cultural Festival and the Islamic Festival of Maulidi.

Watamu: Watamu means 'sweetness' in Kiswahili. It is a small town approximately 20km south of Malindi and boasts of being among the best beaches in Africa. The name translates to "sweet people". Enjoying a beautifully blinding white-sand beach and a soft breeze together makes it the perfect escape for water sports and marine ecology with activities for the whole family. Watamu makes an excellent base from which to explore the nearby Gede ruins, Arabuko Sokoke forest reserve and the mangrove-fringed waterways of Mida Creek. It's a gorgeous slice of the coastline and one that includes its own marine national park, which is now part of a UN, recognised World Biosphere Reserve.

Mount Kenya: For climbers, there's no experience quite like Mount Kenya. With towering spires, sheer cliff faces, jagged ridges and snow-capped peaks, Mount Kenya boasts the second-highest peak on the African continent. The diverse range of terrains and conditions makes Mount Kenya a haven for climbers, hikers and trekkers alike. Batian and Nelion, Mount Kenya's main summits, can only be reached through a rigorous technical climb over rock and ice. Point Lenana, the mountain's third-highest peak, is popular with trekkers who want the spectacular views without the rigors of an adventurous climb.



Mount Kenya

architecture, fort and mosques speak of age-old culture, while the surrounding beaches and reefs sparkle in the sunshine. Lamu Old Town was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001. It is the oldest and best-preserved Swahili settlement in East Africa. Lamu has been inhabited continuously for over 700 years and it has preserved its culture and traditions. There are no

**Neeti Bhatia**

Director

Intrepid Marketing & Communications

"As the Indian travelers and travel trends keep evolving, to cater to customised travel needs, Kenya is undoubtedly an ideal destination to visit with your friends and families because it has something in store for everyone. While Mara will continue to be Kenya's signature destination, the coast provides the true testimony to the destination's vibrant culture. Although borders were shut for over five months this year, Kenya has been successful in emerging as one of the most desired destinations through our sustained efforts comprising of month-long outreach campaigns on digital media, social media and radio to promote Kenya beyond Masai Mara. We shall continue to direct our marketing and communication endeavors to ensure Kenya on the wish lists of all outbound travellers in the foreseeable future."



A FULL CIRCLE

After 68 years, Air India is all set to return to the Tata fold. The Tata Group's holding company, Tata Sons, through its wholly-owned subsidiary Talace Pvt Ltd, submitted a winning bid of ₹18,000 Crore as the Enterprise Value of Air India. The government aims to complete the transaction by December 2021, when it will transfer its shares and hand over the airline to the new buyer.

Team TTJ

JRD Tata was 15 when he took a joyride in a plane in France and decided he would become a pilot. In 1932, he pioneered the aviation industry in India, when he set off on the inaugural flight from Karachi to Bombay.

"On an exciting October dawn in 1932, a Puss Moth and I soared joyfully from Karachi with our first precious load of mail, on an inaugural flight to Bombay. As we hummed towards our destination at a 'dazzling' hundred miles an hour, I breathed a silent prayer for the success of our venture and for the safety of those who worked for it. We were a small team in those days. We shared successes and failures, the joys and headaches, as together we built up the enterprise which later was to blossom into Air-India and Air-India International," then JRD Tata had stated.

JRD Tata inaugurated Air India international at the time when familiar international airlines like Imperial Airways, KLM and Air France were ruling the aviation industry on the India-United Kingdom route.

75 years ago, the creator of its 'Maharaja' brand, Bobby Kooka's idea, was to create an image for Air India's notepad that would resemble chivalrous, royal and stylish living. These thoughts made the Maharaja's creators give him a distinguished appearance, heavy coal-black moustache, hooked nose and a typical Indian turban. In due course, the majestic figure gained popularity and became Air India's mascot for its sales, advertising, and marketing activities. Gradually, the brand and product collaborated to give travellers the 'magic carpet service,' which the world desired.

As a passenger, one felt so welcome and wanted. Those were the glory days and years of Air India.

However, the national carrier began making losses since it merged with the state-owned domestic operator, Indian Airlines, in 2007 and relied on taxpayer-funded bailouts to stay operational. The government said it was making a loss of nearly 200m rupees (\$2.6m) every day to run the airline.

However, according to Jitender Bhargava, a former Executive Director of the airline, "Air India suffered for its inconsistent service standards, low aircraft utilisation, dismal on-time performance, antiquated productivity norms, lack of revenue generation skills and unsatisfactory public perception."

Despite its colossal losses, the Maharaja continued to spread its wings and fly across continents and continued connecting places throughout the world. Presently, the Maharaja has been actively involved in the government's 'Vande Bharat Mission' and has flown to more than 54 nations.

Meanwhile, the government was seeking to sell 100 per cent of its stake, including Air India's 100 per cent shareholding in AI Express Ltd and 50 per cent in Air India SATS Airport Services Private Ltd. The stake sale process, which began in January 2020, faced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2021, the government asked potential bidders to put in financial bids was September 15. Tata Group was among the multiple entities that had put in an initial expression of interest for buying the Maharaja.

The government had set the minimum reserve price for national carrier Air India's

disinvestment after final bids were submitted by Tata Sons and SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh earlier this month. However, the Tata Group emerged as the successful bidder of the divestment process of the national carrier. Consequent to the acquisition, the Tatas will own a 100 per cent stake in Air India and also 100 per cent in its subsidiary Air India Express and 50 per cent in the joint venture Air India SATS (airport services on ground and cargo handling). The total permanent and contractual employee strength of Air India and AIXL is 13,500.

Commenting on the development, N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons Pvt Ltd said, "This is a historic moment, and it will be a rare privilege for our group to own and operate the country's flag bearer airline. It will be our endeavour to build a world-class airline that makes every Indian proud. On this occasion, I would like to pay tribute to JRD Tata, pioneer of Indian aviation, whose memory we cherish."

The Tatas will get ownership of iconic brands like Air India, Indian Airlines and the Maharajah. Air India has a fleet of 117 wide-body and narrow-body aircraft and AIXL has a fleet of 24 narrow-body aircraft. A significant number of these aircraft are owned by Air India.

Air India provides a unique and attractive international footprint. More than 2/3rd of Air India's consolidated revenues come from the international market. It is the number one player from India in the international market having a strong footprint across geographies like North America, Europe, and the Middle East with attractive slots and bilateral rights. The Air India frequent flyer program has more than 3 million members.

MoT, RTSOI and UNEP launch 'Responsible Traveller Campaign'



On World Tourism Day, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI) joined hands to sign a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate and promote the cause of sustainable and responsible travel in India as well as the launch of 'The Responsible Traveller Campaign'.

Team TTJ

While the historic MOU is the beginning of a new era of sustainable and responsible practices in the Indian Tourism Industry, speaking on the occasion, Rakesh Mathur, Founder Member and President of RTSOI elucidated the journey of RTSOI which started in 2008 as Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) with the Tourism Ministry's blessings.

Delivering a strong and passionate address, Mathur shared how RTSOI stands for the cause of sustainability and listed its achievements, which include establishing the Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI), in association with MOT, publishing environment handbooks, conducting workshops and many more. In an impassioned address, he gave a clarion call to the industry to join hands with RTSOI to make tourism a more inclusive and sustainable sector. Seeking support from all the stakeholders in the industry, Mathur said, "I seek unqualified support of the industry in

achieving our mission. See this as CSR."

Speaking on the occasion, Atul Bagai, Head, UNEP said, "UNEP will not only support the Responsible Traveller Campaign but will also support the cause of transforming tourism in India." Bagai also elucidated on the UNEP's program on reduction of usage of single-use plastics in all sectors, including tourism and also informed that UNEP has declared this decade as the decade of Ecosystem Restoration and that goes hand in hand with Sustainable Tourism.

The Secretary Tourism, Government of India, Arvind Singh formally launched the 'Responsible Traveller Campaign' after the historic signing of MOU between MOT, UNEP, and RTSOI. Adding his thoughts about the Responsible Traveller Campaign, he said, "It will be activated throughout the country with some part of it already active on social media. It is important that development through tourism is sustainable, responsible and inclusive. He hoped that this crisis shall be an opportunity to rethink the Tourism sector and its contribution to

the sustainability of people and planet."

In that sense, the 'Responsible Traveller Campaign' is quite significant. While the tourism industry across the world has started understanding the significance of sustainable and responsible tourism and adopting the concepts into their business, the adoption is sporadic and not very systematic or universal.

The Secretary Tourism earlier had said that sustainable goals set by many industries can reflect positively on the tourism sector. But the sector has to find solutions to its own footprints in food and plastic waste on its own. These measures require coherence and cooperation among different segments of the travel and tourism ecosystem, he said. Singh had also spoken on the National Strategy and Road Map on Sustainable and Responsible Tourism and the various proposals contained in it to improve sustainability and responsible tourism. Overall, stakeholders need to acknowledge the gaps in the tourism ecosystem which make India lag behind the world in tourism.



New Skål International-Kolkata team gearing to bid for Skål World Congress 2024

In an attempt to revive tourism and reboot the travel business in the eastern part of India, Skål International- Kolkata elected its new management team for the next season, 2021–2023.

Team TTJ

Skål International clubs worldwide comprise travel and tourism industry company owners and decision-makers, thought leaders, and industry influencers at the highest level. At present, India has 14 Skål International clubs that work very closely under a national leadership team with all the global tourism entities in support of their members' good business.

At its Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Kolkata on September 23, the new Skål International -Kolkata committee re-elected Sk Sanjeev Mehra as the President, Sk Amin Asghar as the First Vice President, Sk Punam Arora as the Second Vice President, Sk June Mukherjee as the Secretary, Sk Nilesh Mukhi as the Treasurer, Sk Jay Saraogi in Membership Development, Sk Pramod Lunawat and Sk Avanti Chatteraj as Auditors, Sk Sreemoyee Mitra in PR & Communications, Sk Avijit Sarkar in CSR and Sk Ritu Jolly in charge of Young Skål.



With an ambitious objective ahead to bid for the Skål World Congress in 2024, the new team will now work towards bringing the world travel community into the city of joy. Sk Manav Soni, the past President of the Club, is now the Skal IPP and represents Skal at the international level.

The Skål International India President Sk Carl Vaz was present in the occasion held at the Taj Bengal Hotel and expressed his confidence that the young and dynamic Skål International- Kolkata team will not only take the club to a newer height but will also make a significant contribution to the overall sustainable tourism industry revival.

Skål International- Kolkata President Sk Sanjeev Mehra, who was re-elected for a second term, said, "For the last couple of years we are giving our best efforts towards making a voice that cannot be unheard. Due to some sincere efforts by our members, the presence is being felt in the national and international arena. Now the national and international tourism players want to come to Kolkata and work with us as we have been able to project the true potentials of Kolkata and Bengal at large as a travel market hotspot. We intend to intensify our efforts with more inclusive partner activities in the coming days to restore our business growth."

Skål International - Srinagar elects its new Office Bearers

The Election Committee of Skål International- Srinagar has announced its new Office Bearers during the Annual General Meeting held on 30th September 2021, wherein Skål International - Srinagar delegates voted their new Executive Board.

Team TTJ

During the AGM held at 7 C's Cafe n Fine Dine, Sangarmal, the new Executive Board was formed. The following members were elected as Office Bearers:

Sk Manzoor Ahmad Pakhtoon is the new President, Sk Adil Hussain, Ist

Vice President, Sk Noor M Shangloo is elected as 2nd Vice President. Sk Aijaz A Wani will hold the responsibilities as Secretary and Sk Maqbool Pakhtoon as treasurer. Membership Development will be taken care of by Sk Haseeb Khan and Sk Waseem Gosani is the new Director PR and Communications.

The delegates welcomed their new Skål Executive Board and assured full support to the Board elected. The new board members also assured their members that suggestions and recommendations of every Skål member would be valued.

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Get ready for an Educational Adventure with Signum Hotel Academy

Signum Hotels, a fast-growing hotel management company, is soon set to launch a hospitality learning academy. The Signum Hotel academy will focus on training and preparing the entry-level workforce in hospitality. The well-researched educational courses will offer an integrated approach of theoretical knowledge and practical training across Signum properties pan India. Mehul Sharma, Founder & CEO, Signum Hotels & Resorts, an experienced leader with a demonstrated history of creating and scaling the Hospitality Business, interacts with TTJ to discuss the upcoming Academy.

Prashant Nayak

Signum hotels operate properties on lease in India & abroad, and they are open to takeovers if the property is really valuable. During the pandemic, the hospitality industry was amongst the hardest hit and so was their business. But they are gradually picking pace and have opened six hotels after the first wave of the pandemic. They currently have five properties operational in India and seven properties are being readied for launch over the next one month, in addition to their international expansion.

About launching their own learning academy, Mehul says, "Signum Hotel Academy is scheduled to be formally launched on 15 October 2021. Embodying the outlook of the modern generation by emancipating the gift of knowledge at a reasonable rate is something Signum Hotel Academy strives to achieve while providing its prodigies an experience of a lifetime. Our focus lays in the idea of creating world-class leaders and hoteliers. We are different from other academies in the way that we are value for money, provide the best resources and we provide placements."

Signum Hotel Academy's mission is to be the most preferred destination for the aspirant of a career in the travel and tourism and hospitality industry across the world by assimilating global improvement in education and adopting the most up-to-date technology. Also, their vision is to be a vibrant and innovative academy for students with defined information and provide opportunities to recognise their full potential and thus shape them into responsible and good human beings and professionals.

Speaking about the courses, eligibility

and criteria to get enrolled in the Academy, Mehul shares, "A selection committee will pick up students based on various parameters like communication skills, education background, etc. The courses at the Academy will be online which are segmented into Room Division, which is further categorized into Front Office, Housekeeping, Food Division (Food Production and F&B Service) and Soft Skills where behavioural skills, negotiation skills, etc, will be taught."

The duration of the course is of three months, which is further divided into one month of online and two months of on-the-job training in the student's core area of interest department.

"The pandemic has indeed taught us more about the importance of upgrading our skills and personal career development. A lot of jobs were lost due to the pandemic reflecting on the need to be flexible enough to adapt and contemporise our skills, to deal with this dynamic new normal. It is ever so important to upgrade our skills to remain relevant with the changing times. We at Signum Academy, not only focus on enhancing the technical skills of our students but also ensure their intellectual, emotional and social evolution along with their employability. We aim to provide employment and life skills to our students to kick start their journey with us," explains Mehul to highlight the importance of skill and personnel development in the post COVID world.

Hotel businesses have had to develop more efficient approaches, innovate and employ bold new strategies. Last



▲ Mehul Sharma

year saw unprecedented growth in the adoption of digital technologies for hotels and the hospitality industry. When asked about, if the growth of technology due to the pandemic will affect the personal touch element, a prime requisite of the hospitality industry, Mehul opines, "The hospitality sector is indeed known for giving a personalised touch to its guests. But it's equally important to stay ahead with technology as it helps drive efficiency in operations and service delivery. Hospitality remains a people-first business and the personal touch may be restricted due to the pandemic but the human warmth will continue to reflect in the new initiatives and strategies rolled by hospitality teams."

36th IATO Annual Convention to take place in Gandhinagar from 16 -19 December 2021

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), the national association of inbound tour operators in India, has announced their 36th Annual Convention in Gandhinagar from December 16 to 19 this year. The venue of the convention is The Leela Gandhinagar.

While announcing the decision of the Executive Committee, Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, said, "We planned to have our convention in Gujarat in September 2020 but had to postpone the same due to COVID-19. Since the situation is improving now day by day and vaccination going full swing, we believe December would be the appropriate time to have our convention. This will give time to the stakeholders to get their second dose, who have not taken it so far and be ready to attend the convention. All SOPs and norms would be strictly followed and all delegates who will attend the convention will have to submit a copy of full vaccination certificate and based on that, their convention registration will be accepted."

More than 900 delegates are expected for the 3-day event. Various post-convention tours would be organised. Concurrently with the convention, there will be a Travel Mart, which will be an opportunity for the exhibitors to showcase an exciting and diverse range of destinations, conference and incentive venues, especially by the state governments.



▲ Rajiv Mehra

Now 7-day stay for Sandbox tourists from any country in the world



Under the new quarantine regulations approved by the Royal Thai Government, the quarantine time for fully vaccinated international travellers arriving in Thailand, including the pilot reopening destinations through the Alternative Quarantine (AQ) system, will be reduced from 14 to seven days.

The reduced quarantine time applies to those visiting under the "Sandbox" programme to Phuket, Surat Thani (Ko Samui, Ko Pha-ngan, and Ko Tao), Phang-Nga (Khao Lak and Ko Yao), and Krabi (Ko Phi Phi, Ko Ngai and Railay Beach).

It also means that fully vaccinated tourists can now travel straight to the designated areas of Phang-Nga and Krabi upon landing in Phuket and stay there for seven days.

In order to be eligible to enter Thailand, vaccinated international travellers still need to have all of their advance arrangements in good order for arrival and entry.

These include a valid visa or re-entry permit, a Certificate of Entry (COE) issued by the Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate, a COVID-19 health insurance policy, confirmation of Alternative Quarantine (AQ) hotel booking, and a medical certificate with an RT-PCR laboratory result indicating that COVID-19 is not detected issued no more than 72 hours before departure.

No quarantine in UK for Indians fully vaccinated with Covishield



Indians who are fully vaccinated with Covishield or any other UK-approved vaccine will not be quarantined when they arrive in Britain, ending a row over what was perceived as an unfair imposition of COVID-19 quarantine rules.

"No quarantine for India travellers to the United Kingdom fully vaccinated with Covishield or another UK-approved vaccine from 11 October. Thanks to the Indian government for close cooperation over last month," British High Commissioner to India Alex Ellis tweeted on October 7, 2021.

"I'm also making changes so travellers visiting England have fewer entry requirements, by recognising those with fully-vax status from 37 new countries and territories including India, Turkey and Ghana, treating them the same as UK fully vax passengers," Britain's Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps tweeted.

"The decision was taken after close technical cooperation between our ministries taking public health factors into account," a British High Commission spokesperson said in a statement on Thursday.

16 million international visitors visited Turkey between January-August 2021

The government of Turkey is carefully and efficiently spearheading the vaccination drive across the country. The tourist inflow numbers in Turkey between January-August 2021, despite the pandemic, was recorded at 16 million. Out of this, the number of international visitors who visited Turkey in August is around 4 million.

By October 8, 2021, Turkey vaccinated a total of 112 million of its citizens in different stages. While 55 million people have received their first dose; 46 million people have received the second dose and 11 million people have received the third dose. This is impressive vaccination data considering that the total population of Turkey is 83 million.

As per the latest travel guidelines issued by the Turkish Embassy in India last month, the passengers fully vaccinated with WHO or Turkish Government-approved doses will be exempted from mandatory quarantine, provided at least 14 days have passed since their last dose. The travellers will need to carry a negative Covid-19 RT-PCR certificate along with them done 72 hours before arrival. Travellers from India vaccinated with Covishield or Sputnik V can travel to Turkey without any restriction or quarantine. After Covaxin gets approval from WHO, travellers vaccinated with the same will also be able to visit Turkey without any restriction.



Indian nationals with valid US, UK, Ireland and Schengen visas can apply for e-visa hassle-free in less than 5 minutes via www.evisa.gov.tr/en/. The visa applications are also open at the Gateway centers in respective cities. The Visa consulates are working with full capacity for sanctioning sticker visas for Indian travellers.

Air Mauritius secures funding to meet growing demand as Mauritius re-opens international borders



Air Mauritius has exited voluntary administration and is increasing flight capacity to cater to travellers from all over the world who are planning to visit the Indian Ocean paradise island for work and pleasure.

The government of the Republic of Mauritius is injecting US\$280 million into Air Mauritius via a loan to provide long-term stability for the company as international air travel and tourism rebuilds following the Covid-19 pandemic. Air Mauritius is a strategic national asset central to the government's tourism and investment strategy and provides Mauritius with its own passenger and cargo connectivity to meet market demands. The new loan arrangement was overwhelmingly supported by Air Mauritius' creditors.

Passenger and cargo flights will operate between Mauritius and Paris, London, Johannesburg, Mumbai, Antananarivo and Reunion with connecting services available globally. Additional capacity and international routes will be added to meet demand. Air Mauritius expects Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Perth to be introduced at a later date. Domestic services to and from Rodrigues will resume in November 2021.

American Airlines and IndiGo announce codeshare agreement providing more options and seamless connectivity across India



American Airlines is opening new doors across India this fall thanks to a new codeshare agreement with IndiGo, India's leading airline. The agreement, announced today, will place American's code on 29 of IndiGo's domestic routes in India, providing a convenient option for American Airlines customers arriving on the carrier's new Bengaluru (BLR) and Delhi (DEL), India, flights. The codeshare, which will require U.S. and Indian governments' approvals, is expected to begin in October, as American launches new service between New York (JFK) and DEL on Oct. 31 and between Seattle (SEA) and BLR on January 4, 2022.

As the codeshare agreement begins, members of American's AAdvantage® loyalty program will earn miles when traveling on American codeshare flights operated by IndiGo. Customers who aren't yet members of the award-winning AAdvantage program can enroll online and enjoy immediate benefits such as Group 6 boarding on flights operated by American.

Customers traveling in American's Flagship® Business cabin on DEL-JFK or BLR-SEA will have access to IndiGo partner lounges in their originating city where they can relax, unwind and enjoy hot food, beverages, Wi-Fi and more. Customers can learn more about lounge locations and offerings on the IndiGo website.

Tourism New Zealand says 'Kia Ora' to Indian agents through their newly launched marketing hub

Tourism New Zealand recently launched its 100% Pure New Zealand Marketing Hub in India, housing free and professionally designed marketing assets, so that when international travel resumes, the travel trade will be well prepared to convert sales for New Zealand.



▲ Venessa Chen

The hub aims to keep the New Zealand travel dream alive by providing agents with an extensive digital toolkit. The free marketing tools include emails, images, print ads, sales flyers, web banners, sharable Facebook posts and more. Agents will be able to customise these marketing assets with their own sales message, logo and contact information.

"India is an important market for New Zealand. In launching this self-service Marketing Hub we aim to empower our agents with the right kind of information and assets that will creatively engage their customers and ultimately help make their job easier and more effective," says Venessa Chen, Regional Marketing Manager-Asia, Tourism New Zealand.

Tourism New Zealand is also launching a new season of its Virtual Road Trip webinar series, which supports the travel trade with New Zealand information that's most relevant to Indian consumers. The webinars will highlight trade tools and resources that will help agents to qualify and become a 100% New Zealand specialist, along with popular themes like self-drive campervan, adventure and adrenaline, culture, food and wine, to name a few.

Ain Dubai, world's largest and tallest observation wheel, to unveil on October 21, 2021



Ain Dubai, the record-breaking monument and the latest addition to the extensive Dubai Holding entertainment portfolio, is all set to open for public on October 21, 2021. Starting at AED 130 (approx. INR 2600), tickets are now available to book on www.aindubai.com.

From sundowners, dining in the sky and exclusive celebration packages to bespoke corporate and event offerings, Ain Dubai brings 19 truly unique and customisable experiences, all against the backdrop of Dubai's dazzling skyline for breathtaking land and seascapes. Open both day and night, Ain Dubai visitors will experience two very different sides of Dubai, from stunning Bluewaters views to a host of night-time entertainment. Gaze at the sunset's golden rays glittering across the skyscrapers or watch Dubai's spectacular LED lights switch on as darkness falls.

Offering unique views of Dubai's iconic landmarks from indoor, air-conditioned cabins and a huge range of entertainment to keep visitors coming back for more, the experiences are split into three main categories: Observation Cabins, Social Cabins and Private Cabins, with experiences starting with one rotation of approximately 38 minutes, up to two rotations of approximately 76 minutes.

The Observation Cabins provide the perfect platform for those never-seen-before Instagrammable 360-degree views of Dubai as guests climb steadily through the sky on the world's tallest observation wheel to create a magical photobook memory of one of the world's most iconic cities and all its incredible landmarks.

Wyndham further cements presence in India with new build hotel at Mumbai International Airport

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts recently announced plans to further cement its presence in India with a 300-room new build hotel located at Mumbai International Airport. Expected to open in summer 2022, the new property will be operated by hotel management company Masa Hotels.

Conveniently located minutes from Terminal 2, the main terminal serving international flights, Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Mumbai Sahar will offer guests direct accessibility to the second busiest airport in the country with close to 50 million passengers passing through annually. The hotel will offer comfortable accommodations and modern amenities to suit both business and leisure travellers visiting Mumbai.

Upon opening, Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Mumbai Sahar will complement Wyndham's already strong presence of nearly 50 hotels all across India and add to the company's current Mumbai portfolio with properties in Juhu, Powai and Navi Mumbai. This hotel is the latest in Wyndham's continued

growth across the Indian sub-continent, with 34 additional hotels in the development pipeline.

Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Mumbai Sahar will offer guests

sophisticated interiors and modern rooms, suites and amenities. The property will boast expansive meeting and event space, a business centre and lobby lounge as well as an outdoor swimming pool, wellness centre, all-day dining and a kids' entertainment centre.



ABTO to celebrate its 4th International Convention in Bodh Gaya

In collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, GOI, and with all the partner organisations of the Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (ABTO) spread across Asia, the Association will be celebrating its 4th International Convention on December 10-12, 2021, in Bodh Gaya.

The Association has invited G. Kishan Reddy, Hon'ble Minister, Tourism, Culture and Development of North-Eastern Region of India, Government of India as a special guest, which is being considered.

ABTO is organising three programs this year, the 4th ABTO International Convention, 4th International Buddhist Travel Mart -IBTM, and an international conference on the 2566 Year Seminar of Buddhism.

All the events will be held from December 10 to 12, 2021, at Hotel Oaks and Maya Garden Sarovar, Bodh Gaya. Like every year, this time also Lord Buddha Peace and Tourism Mitra Awards will be given internationally, including the BBIN Countries of (India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan) and others such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Indonesia



and Malaysia. Simultaneously, there will be an award for every state of India.

The award is given to those who have done or are doing work in the field of tourism, environment, honor, peace. This time the focus and attention of ABTO will be on Lord Buddha, Bodh Gaya (India) and Borobudur (Indonesia). Many of Asia's Travel Trade Organisations and universities are also anticipated to participate in the 3-day affair.

Ibis opens its 20th hotel in India, Ibis Mumbai Vikhroli



Ibis, a smart economy hospitality brand from the Accor portfolio, has launched its third and largest property in Mumbai – ibis Mumbai Vikhroli. Strategically located in the corporate hub of Mumbai, Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg, the new-generation design hotel reflects symbols inspired by 'Aamchi Mumbai' culture for the new-age traveller. The hotel is conveniently situated 10 km from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport and 5 km from Ghatkopar Metro Station. The property is opposite the 247 Park, one of the most prominent commercial establishments in the region and in close proximity to the city's key attractions such as Creek Flamingo Sanctuary, Powai and Vihar lake, R City Mall, and Vikhroli Sarwajanik Temple.

The 15-floor ibis Mumbai Vikhroli features 249 comfortable rooms with large windows, stylish wardrobes, sleek TV panels and the much loved 'Sweet Bed' by ibis. The rooms are designed in six different themes, featuring the city's heartbeat - the local train, its pride- the Dabbawalas, the beautiful Mumbai skyline, royal lifestyle of the Maratha empire, flamingos- migratory birds that flock to Mumbai, and Kolam- a traditional form of art drawn using rice flour.

ADTOI WB Chapter and India Tourism Kolkata celebrate women empowerment during Durga Puja



ADTOI West Bengal Chapter in association with India Tourism – Kolkata organised a learning experience on October 11, for the women entrepreneurs and executives in tourism to explore the festivity during this Durga Puja with the well-known lady tour guide Bratati Saha covering some of the traditional, aristocratic heritage houses with an introduction to the great culinary culture across the streets of North Kolkata with the Celebrity Food Star Indrajit Lahiri.

Shortlisted female participants from the ADTOI member organisation under the leadership of ADTOI Lady Entrepreneur Officer (LEO) Puja Karar and tour operators approved by the Ministry of Tourism - Government of India explored the possibilities to promote the Great Autumn Festival of Bengal combining with an adventure with the Bengali gastronomy in the days to come.



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