



Travel Trade Journal

**TRAVMART**

Connecting travel partners  
with new opportunities

**GUWAHATI**  
April 4

**KOLKATA**  
April 6



# Travel Trade Journal

Vol. 12 | Issue 05 | March 2022 | Pages 52 | ₹100



Travel Trade Journal

GET NEWS  
DELIVERED  
TO YOUR WHATSAPP



To subscribe to us  
Give a missed call to  
**9560264443**

Save this number in your contacts

We've delivered over **50,000** exquisite experiences!

*And you've played a big part in it.*

Since the first day the Empress set sail, together we've made weddings, birthdays and countless celebrations come alive amidst the picturesque seascapes and destinations.

Come be a part of this journey!

REGISTER NOW!



# EXPERIENCE A WORLD BEYOND



VISITQATAR.QA

قطر  
QATAR  
للسياحة Tourism



### Team Sampan

Editor & Publisher	:	Ravi Sharma
Consulting Editor	:	Gurjit Singh
Bureau Head (West)	:	Prashant Nayak
Contributing Editor	:	Rachita Sehgal
Contributing Editor	:	Sonia Dutt
GM - Marketing	:	Sonika Bohra
Sr. Designer	:	Subhash Chaudhary
HTML Developer	:	Jitender Singh Shekhawat
Bureau Head (East)	:	Partha Chatterjee
Contributing Editor	:	Swaati Chaudhary
Manager PR	:	Ankit Dixit
Cordinator (West)	:	Bharti Kalia
Consultant (West)	:	Sameer Montario
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, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Safdarjung Enclave, Near Sukhmani Hospital, New Delhi – 110029 Ph: 9560264443, ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

All information in Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. Opinions / views expressed by third parties in abstract or in interviews are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced in whole or in part(s) without prior permission. The publisher assumes no responsibility for material lost or damaged in transit. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code. The publisher will not be liable for any loss caused by any delay in publication, error or failure of advertisement to appear.

Owned and published by: Ravi Sharma, Editor & Publisher, 18/3, Railway Colony, Sarojini Nagar, P.S. Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021 and printed on his behalf at Polykam Offset, C-138, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi-110028.



Dear Friends,

We at TTJ are truly excited that India is all set to resume scheduled international flight services from March 27, 2022. So, there is light at the end of the tunnel!

As part of our industry focus, in our March 2022 edition, we touch upon a few women leaders in our industry who are making incredible strides in the work while showcasing resilience and dynamism. In our inspiring feature, 'Women in Lead,' we share with our readers their strengths, learnings, contribution, and their thoughts on empathy in the workplace.

This issue also features some informative pages on Wildlife Tourism, highlighting Northeast India. The rich natural beauty, serenity, and exotic flora and fauna of this region are invaluable resources for tourism development, especially wildlife and eco-tourism.

We are sure both features will make a mark on you!

Happy Reading!

*Ravi Sharma*

Ravi Sharma  
ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk





**2<sup>nd</sup> GTF**  
GUJARAT TRAVEL FAIR  
14,15,16 April 2022  
Ahmedabad (Guj.)

**Gujarat's Leading Travel & Tourism Exhibition**  
(Exclusive B2B Show)

**Exhibits:** B2B & DMC, HOTEL & RESORTS, WATER PARK, STATE TOURISM BOARD & INTERNATIONAL TOURISM BOARD

**ASSOCIATION WITH**
















**MEDIA SPONSOR**



**SUPPORTED BY**







For More Details : Mr. Kamal Shah (GTF Chairman) Mobile : 9687628966 | E-mail : info@gtfexpo.in | Website : www.gtfexpo.in



## The resumption of scheduled international flights is great news for the industry

The recent announcement by the Centre for resumption of international flights from March 27, 2022 to/and from India comes as a huge respite for travellers, airlines, and other stakeholders in the industry after a break of two years.

The Centre has decided to resume international travel after deliberation with stakeholders and to keep in view the decline in the COVID-19 caseload.

To begin with, its great news for all travellers, especially with the Indian skies opening before the peak summer season. The demand for international travel is increasing, and in the last two years, there has been a considerable increase in travel search inquiries for prominent overseas destinations. Passengers will now have a far wider range of travel options.

The resumption also comes as wonderful news to the airlines as it will be an opportunity for them to earn back their revenues. The pent-up demand for international travel would also help airlines utilise their capacity, add more flights and bring in additional revenue.

This also comes as a big relief to stakeholders with airport lounges, duty-free shops, transport and cab services, etc., who have been deeply affected by very low passenger footfalls. Overall, it will provide impetus to the economic recovery of the

sector and the nation, with borders opening for tourists.

The only cause for worry will be the air ticket prices, considering the high crude oil prices, which could go higher than pre-pandemic levels. However, more flights in the skies could result in a lowering of airfares on some international routes.

The resumption of international passenger services implies reversion of the bilaterally agreed capacity entitlements and the end of air bubble arrangements.



## Fiji lifts travel restrictions; now open for Indian travellers



India has been included as part of Fiji's 'Travel Partner' country list by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport – Fiji, effective March 2, 2022. Thus, Indian Tourists can now travel to Fiji via the currently open transit routes of Singapore and Australia, to enjoy a 'quarantine free'.

Travellers from India to Fiji must be fully vaccinated (children under 18 can travel with a vaccinated adult), providing a negative PCR test taken within two days prior to departure or a negative RAT test taken within 24 hrs prior to departure. Once they arrive on Fiji's shores, travellers can enjoy the best of Fiji knowing that everyone they interact with is adhering to the highest health and safety practices.

"We are delighted to be able to welcome visitors from India once again. India continues to be one of our most prominent emerging markets and we look forward to receiving Indian travellers seeking premium and personalised experiences. In the coming months, we aim to capture a greater share of India's outbound travel market which will help shore up the long-term prospects of both our tourism sectors. From breathtaking sunsets to luxury vacation stays and our warm hospitality, we can't wait to welcome our Indian visitors to experience what it feels like to be in Paradise. Fiji is now open for happiness!" said Brent Hill, CEO Tourism Fiji.

## Malaysia to reopen borders for fully vaccinated travellers on April 1



Malaysia will reopen its borders fully from April 1, 2022, and allow entry without quarantine for visitors fully vaccinated against Covid. The tourism-reliant Southeast Asian country, will now require only a negative Covid test to enter.

Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob in a press conference said, "The government has decided to open its borders on April 1, 2022. We believe this decision will boost our economy and help revive our ailing tourism sector."

He further informed that travellers would need valid travel documents to enter and exit the country. He said, "Taking into account the Omicron variant, which is still in our country and other countries, there are some mandatory steps for both Malaysians and travellers."

The reopening follows similar steps taken by neighbours Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia, with quarantine waived for vaccinated travellers with negative COVID-19 tests before departure and after arrival.





# FUR AVERI

MALDIVES

Experience The Authentic Maldivian Hospitality



Raa Atoll, Maldives | T: +960 6581111 | E: [info@furaveri.com](mailto:info@furaveri.com)

[www.furaveri.com](http://www.furaveri.com)



## Saudi Arabia lifts all COVID-19 entry restrictions for tourists

The Saudi Arabian government has lifted all COVID-related entry restrictions for holders of tourism visas, making the destination one of the most accessible to travellers in the world. Visitors to Saudi will no longer need to present proof of vaccination or a PCR test to enter the country. Institutional quarantine requirements will be entirely removed, and all travellers from the countries currently red-listed will be allowed entry. Social distancing rules will be lifted across the country, including Makkah and Madinah, and masks will be required in enclosed public places only. Fees for all visa categories will include a nominal fee for medical insurance for COVID-19.

Administering 61.3 million vaccines, 99 per cent of the population over the age of 12 is now fully vaccinated. In terms of total COVID cases per million in the population, Saudi ranks 152<sup>nd</sup> in the world, significantly below the global average and lower than any other OECD country.



## Signature Tours is now Away&Co



The Creative Travel family of brands has been at the forefront of service led experiential travel since 1977. Within that philosophy, the company has announced an exciting transformation of their luxury outbound brand, Signature Tours to its new avatar, Away&Co.

Rohit Kohli, Jt. Managing Director, Creative Travel says, "We are taking our deep knowledge, and the great partnerships across the world, to rewrite the idea of experiential travel in an ever-changing world."

"It will not be a trip, it will be a journey. It will not be just a destination, but an experience. Away&Co is for a highly cultivated traveller with an appetite for the unusual, who are looking for something enriching and authentic, who like to wander, discover new secrets, and find new stories across the world."

Supported by a global network of the finest curators of travel experience in every destination, and as a part of one of India's oldest tourism companies, Away&Co will deliver the world in the most unique ways.

Kohli adds, "The Indian outbound market has matured exponentially over the years. Indians are more aware than ever before, and want to explore the world, but not as tourists. Our legacy of 45 years is built on creating amazing experiences, and that's what we're doing at Away&Co as well. The world is ready to welcome a new kind of Indian traveller, one who is immersed in the culture and the people, not just the monuments and sights."

## One Rep Global to represent Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) in India

One Rep Global has been appointed as the exclusive India representation partner for Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA). One Rep Global will be responsible for driving holistic sales, trade marketing and PR strategies in India for the popular destination.



Commenting on the partnership, Hemant Mediratta, Founder, One Rep Global said, "We are delighted to be representing Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) in India and are looking forward to working closely with the tourism authority to position Ras Al Khaimah as an attractive leisure destination for Indian travellers. The emirate has something to offer for travellers of all age groups and is also an attractive choice for the large scale 'big fat' destination weddings from India. MICE is another crucial segment that we will target for Ras Al Khaimah from India."

The UAE's northernmost Emirate offers a wealth of diversions between its miles of white sandy beaches and turquoise sea, majestic Hajar Mountains and magnificent desert sand dunes. Named the Gulf Tourism Capital in 2020 and 2021, much of Ras Al Khaimah's popularity comes from the increasing ease of accessibility. Located a few short hours by flight from India, the emirate is just a 45-minute drive from Dubai International Airport.



# Get back on track with Eurail!

GSA

Enjoy a

**10% OFF**

**Eurail Global &  
One country Mobile Passes!**

***Book – 01st March 2022 until 10th April 2022***

In association with

**RAILEUROPE®**

**Eurail**

**Book on TBO Portal**

For more information:

**Email us: [europe@tbo.com](mailto:europe@tbo.com)**

**[raileurope@tbo.com](mailto:raileurope@tbo.com)**





# UTAH

## WELCOMES WOMEN WANDERERS!



We have all questioned while watching movies like ‘Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara’ or ‘Dil Chahta Hai’, why Bollywood movies are not made on women friends travelling together. However, the scenario has changed with strong and self-dependent women reigning the social media. Yes, some real-life women don’t wait for movies to be made on them or inspire them. They are way more ahead and are inspiring themselves as well as their fellow women peers to open their wings and fly high (metaphorically speaking). Women travellers are making headlines and turning heads every day.

Utah loves to welcome all types of travellers to embark on an outdoor adventure journey which is best suited for women groups or solo women travellers.

### Why should women travel together?

New age women know how to live their dreams besides being available for their families. They know how to juggle their meetings, passions and priorities. So, nothing stops them from making their own decisions. And when it comes to traveling, she is her own boss.

Utah salutes and welcomes such fierce, wild and bold women travellers to explore its wilderness and adventurous activities.

### Where and what is Utah?

Utah is best known for its magnificent red rocks canyon and scenic byways, but The Beehive State is also having its history of embracing the independent pioneer spirit in business, technology and outdoors. Utah ignites a spark in you to explore the place of alpine forests and slick rock plateaus and embark on a journey of adventure and thrill. Women travellers will find exciting things to do in Utah, from skiing the Greatest Snow on Earth®, hiking in the Mighty 5® national parks, attending Sundance Film Festival to witnessing illuminating Dark Skies. There is so much more that one can explore in Utah.

### Utah for women!

**Adventure in Utah** – Utah is home to some of the most breathtakingly beautiful national parks. Zion National Park, Arches National Park, and Bryce Canyon National Park are the





most well-known. You will also find around these national parks some amazing resorts with world-class amenities and various adventure activities. Weekend camping retreats for women are held at Moab, located in central-eastern Utah and is world-renowned for its adrenaline-filled adventures. Most of these parks provide adventure activities like hiking, mountain biking, skydiving, and canyoneering. So, ladies put on your shoes and get ready for the hike!

**Utah's wilderness** - As they say, wild women surrender to mother nature to heal...

And when it comes to Utah, every corner calls onto you to explore the unique wilderness, heal your inner soul and re-kindle your relationship with nature. Utah has a wide variety of natural elements ranging from steep rocky terrain, dry deserts to lush conifer forests and a couple of concrete jungles.

**Mighty 5®** - All the national parks like Arches National Park, Zion National Park or Capitol Reef National Park provide beautiful landscape and natural beauty. The rugged wilderness of Canyonlands National Park in the Moab area of Utah is a must-visit for all kinds of travel lovers. Bryce Canyon National Park is a series of pink cliffs filled with delicate red rock hoodoos.



#### Lake Powell -

Discover the history and geology of Lake Powell along with the fascinating boat tours. You may choose from a variety of experiences like scenic boat tours, kayaking, camping/ glamping or enjoy an unforgettable sunset dinner cruise with unbelievable scenery.

#### Slot Canyons

- Take a passage through narrow gorges known as a

slot canyon in Utah, which is another out-of-the-world experience. From an easy roadside stroll to guided canyoneering, you can choose your adventure!

### Utah's unique women's history

Utah has a unique history of women and their legacy about women's rights, suffrage and other issues. There are historical women-driven places that celebrate the value of their female ancestors and entrepreneurs. Here are some of the places that are a must-visit:



**Monument Valley** - This place has been featured in many Hollywood movies and is one of the most photographed places in the world. Louisa Mary Wade Wetherill ran a trading post in Ojita near Monument Valley in the early 1900s. She mingled with the local Navajo tribe and learnt their language, promoting the Navajos' ancient culture within the region. To date, this place showcases the rich culture and history of the Navajo tribal women.

**Heritage House Museum in Kanab** - On the east side of Zion National Park and within a short distance of Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument and Lake Powell, you can stop by this museum located in Kanab near the Utah-Arizona border. In 1911, the first all-women city council in Utah was elected in Kanab for the 1912-1913 term. Today, the Heritage House is a museum, showcasing the history of Kanab.

**Temple Square** - Utah women played a major role in the national suffrage movement during the early 20th century and received the right to vote in 1870. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, two prominent leaders of the national suffrage movement, visited Utah in 1871 and spoke to a large gathering of Utah women at the old Salt Lake Tabernacle inside Temple Square. Even though the building was torn down, Temple Square to date remains as one of the National Historic Landmarks.

**Council Hall in Salt Lake City** - This building holds a special place in Utah's history as this is where the first woman voter of Utah (which wasn't a state back then) and local school teacher, Seraph Young, officially cast her first ballot. The building was moved from its original location in 1961 but was reconstructed using all the original materials. You can witness here various artistic and historical displays honouring the first election.

### Support women entrepreneurs of Utah!

While exploring the red rocks canyon or a restaurant, you will surely come across some of the most successful women entrepreneurs in Utah. What's better than supporting another woman who is following her passion and serving the community at the same time?

#### Jackalope Trading Company, Monticello

The shop was started by Melinda Redd and her husband, Adam in 2017. It is a popular gift shop featuring locally-made artisan goods and jewellery in Monticello, Southern Utah. It represents about 40 local artisans who are talented in their own field of craft. By shopping here, you can directly support these local artisans and the community.



#### Red Iguana, Red Iguana 2, Taste of Red Iguana, Salt Lake City

Owned by Lucy Cardenas, it is a family-run group of Mexican restaurants. Red Iguana 2's massive iguana statue by Utah artist Stephen Kesler is a tribute to the loyal locals. Do not miss the famous mole sampler Red Iguana, as it is considered to be a culinary work of art all on its own.

#### KB Horses at Red Ledges, Heber City

It is run by Brenda Metzger who left her 25 years of career in tech companies and followed her passion to start KB Horses. KB Horses is the kind of authentic trail riding and wagon ride experience that most travellers dream about when they book their ticket to the West.

So, what are you waiting for? Just plan that girl trip you have been dreaming about all this while and be the HERO of your own girl's trip movie shot in UTAH!!!





# WOMEN in LEAD

Walking the tightrope, balancing personal responsibilities with career and business goals, women leaders have established their mettle across industries and roles. Each of their journeys is unique, as they carve their own path, find their balance, and establish their identity and legacy.

**Gurjit Singh Ahuja and Prashant Nayak**

**W**omen leaders have created more collaborative organisations and led more socially responsible companies. Both creative and task-focused, women leaders have taken bold and wise decisions and created a perspective that brings competition and collaboration to organisations and teams. This helps make the team environment less authoritative and more cooperative, bringing a family-like feel to the team and thus boosting teamwork.

As part of our 'Women in Lead' industry focus, we share with our readers the vision, strength and leadership qualities of a select group of path-breaking, persistent, consistent, and resilient wonder-women, from our industry who lead their organisations and continue to inspire us.

In the interaction with these women, the topic of empathy stood out. It showed that during the pandemic, there was the need for more compassion and empathy. Currently, these qualities are necessary for leaders to care for their people in crisis and set the stage for business recovery.



## Rupinder Pannu Brar

Additional Director General  
Ministry of Tourism, GOI

**Rupinder Pannu Brar, an IRS cadre officer with over 31 years in varied roles and functions with the Government of India, is the type of person who wishes that everyone on this earth has a decent living, a roof over their heads, good clothes to wear, and good food to eat, and then be able to go to school and get themselves educated.**

**R**upinder believes that learning removes all barriers that come in the way of success. To achieve success, one needs to learn and really understand the subject and dive deep into it. Over her last few years with the tourism ministry, she has been able to delve deep into the subject and understand the nuances and pain areas and do her bit to smoothen and find resolution, despite the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A self-professed 'risk-taker', she feels that the years of experience and learnings behind you help develop more confidence in the ability to be able to juggle and handle situations and take risks.



*"If senior people don't take the risk, and don't venture out to try different things, then there will never be any innovation. So yes, I think I have over a period of time become more risk-seeking in my professional space."*

Rupinder is a true believer in the power of teamwork and believes it to be the single most important learning of her administrative career. Working with people is the most crucial thing when it comes to delivering outcomes. No one person can ever be a substitute for 10 people working as a team, and if each one of

them delivers their optimal, the organisation will grow. No individual can ever match the synergy that group work brings.

Working in the government can be sometimes a very ambiguous space to work in but what drives Rupinder and keeps her charged, focused and going is the very fact she's making a difference to people's lives and has been entrusted a position, a certain place in the hierarchy and that her action or inaction, both are going to impact a lot of people's lives.

She believes that creating space for innovation, creating space for change is a very crucial part of any good professional journey and therefore people need to step out of their comfort zones and need to experiment with new ideas and in that process also upskill and learn. The world is a world of great change these days, so you have to be very fleet-footed, looking at different workspace scenarios and acting and reacting to those changed circumstances fast.

According to Rupinder, no leader can be a good leader if they lack empathy. When one takes decisions, one needs to factor in all aspects. The world will be impacted by one's actions or inactions and therefore all decisions have to be empathetic. The need is to create those kinds of human neural networks literally, where empathy is a very key component and extremely essential to us humans remaining human.

**Next Vacation:** Rupinder is looking forward to going to the Andaman's within India, and has Jamaica on her mind internationally.





## Radha Bhatia

Chairperson  
Bird Group

Today, heading one of India's largest and diversified travel conglomerates, specialising in aviation and hospitality, Radha Bhatia started her career as a teacher. Armed with a Master's Degree in Psychology, she has a passion to train the generation next and mentors and guides young upcoming entrepreneurs. Over the years, she has held many significant positions. Radha Bhatia is the founder member of the World Travel & Tourism Council India Initiative and is its former Chairperson.

**Next Vacation:** Radha enjoys holidays with family and looks forward to destinations that cater to all generations. London is one of them.

Radha Bhatia holds the prestigious diplomatic position as the Honorary Consul of the Solomon Islands in India. In India, she is the first woman to hold this distinction. She is the Vice-Chairperson of Export Software Council, North India, and also deeply associated with various professional associations such as CII, EBG, ASSOCHAM, FICCI, PHD, IACC, FIEO, Export Software Council North India, Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, and the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce. She currently holds the position of Chairperson, Tourism Committee at PHDCCI.

She was also the force behind The Bird Academy, an IATA and DGCA approved travel and aviation institute, formed in the year 1998. Since its inception, the institute has trained over 20,000 professionals.

A recipient of many prestigious accolades, she also holds the distinction of being awarded The Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award for nine consecutive years. Shri. Atal Bihari Bajpai conferred the prestigious award on her. Delhi Management Association bestowed Radha Bhatia with the 'Women Entrepreneur Lifetime Achievement' award for the year 2018-19.



*"I like to interact closely with people. I patiently observe their skills and capabilities and guide them in a light and playful manner. Teaching them how things need to be done, how they should engage with colleagues, customers, and people around them. I learned things the hard way, starting from the grassroots, working hands-on, taking on challenges every day, keeping my chin up, and overcoming them with diligence and patience, treating them as opportunities. With my vast experience, came vast patience. I communicate and engage with people with ease and try my best to encourage and empower everyone around me."*

According to Radha Bhatia, leadership is not a position or a designation. Patience, knowledge, communication, and perseverance make a good leader. When leaders are mindful of mutual dignity and empathy towards their team members and everyone around, they foster everlasting bonds which are naturally stronger and lead to joyful work culture and environment. This undoubtedly results in achieving goals and growth. Empathy should be ingrained in our DNA, not something that surfaces in challenging times alone and it must reflect in every thought, word, and action.



## Priya Paul

Chairperson  
Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels

Priya Paul is one of India's most prominent businesswomen, and one of the most respected personalities in the hospitality industry. Over the last 27 years, her unique innovation and contribution to the hotel business have

been greatly recognised. Her spirit for hospitality and flair for design awarded her India's fourth highest civilian honour, the Padma Shri in 2012.

Priya Paul is the creative powerhouse and an innovator behind the country's leading collection of contemporary luxury boutique hotels, THE Park Hotels, Zone by The Park, THE Park Collection, the newly launched Zone Connect, and the 95-years old iconic patisserie brand Flurys. Almost close to three decades, she has worked hard to create experiences that are different and inexplicable. She also believes in contemporary concepts with a modern look for her hotel business.

Apart from the Padma Shri, as a successful entrepreneur woman of India, she has received several awards for her great services. The President of France granted her Insignia of Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite in 2014 for her significant contribution to strengthening links between India and France. She has consistently been recognised in India's 50 Most Powerful Women by Fortune for 10 consecutive years.



*"I am glad that COVID-19 has brought empathy to the forefront. Good leadership reflects empathy. Listening to your people, understanding their values and pressures, and building a trusting relationship are key to building teams. Empathy is a simple yet powerful leadership trait that today's workforce needs."*

**Next Vacation:** Priya looks forward to visiting Thailand.





## Rajni Hasija

Director Tourism & Marketing  
IRCTC

Having played a pioneering role in the inception and development of perhaps one of the largest e-commerce sites in Asia, 'www.irctc.co.in' the internet ticketing site of Indian Railways, Rajni Hasija has contributed immensely to grow the IT business of IRCTC which is one of the major revenue segments of IRCTC and today books an average of 11 lakh tickets a day.

Rajni Hasija has worked tirelessly to develop IRCTC into a full-fledged OTA with its travel and tourism portal, offering a host of tourism products for the customer. In a latest, with her initiative, IRCTC also started online bus booking through its tourism portal, thus achieving the target of offering travel solutions through all means of transport. Hasija has taken over the additional charge of Chairman & Managing Director of IRCTC in February 2021.

A firm believer of participative leadership and an open organisational culture rather than being a leader in the traditional mould.



*"It is important to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and open dialogues within the organisation. The business environment has been very dynamic even for Public Sector organisations like IRCTC. There is a Japanese Term, 'Itai Doshin', which means 'Many in Body, One in Mind'. If an organisation works on the principle of Itai Doshin encouraging*

*the thoughts of the employees in an open environment, it is bound to succeed in its business."*

According to Hasija, the term "Empathy" can be easily understood as "walking in someone else's shoes". Although a nonfigurative concept, it is important for the team leaders at all levels to practice empathy to encourage their team to perform better. In this fast-changing world where we spend a majority of time in our workplace, it is not possible to separate our personal life from work life.

She feels that one's private life always casts an effect on work life, and vice versa. It is extremely important to empathise with their teams, especially in the shadow of the ongoing pandemic. Sometimes, just a few words of encouragement or a patient hearing works wonders in resolving issues.

It is important to create an atmosphere of openness, mutual respect and trust within an organisation. The spirit of empathy would be imbibed automatically on all levels. The ongoing pandemic has proved that organisations which empathised with their employees during this testing phase have shot back to prominence faster.

**Next Vacation:** Ladakh and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.



## Jyoti Mayal

President  
Travel Agents Association of India

A candid and forthright spokesperson and leader of the travel fraternity, Jyoti Mayal holds the rare distinction of justifying and juggling multiple responsibilities simultaneously. Currently, the President of TAAI, Vice-Chairperson of FAITH, Board Member at CII National Committee on Tourism & Hospitality. Jyoti has led the charge in

**one of the most critical of times in the History of the Indian Travel Industry.**

A proven leader with forward-thinking, innovative management, and dynamic abilities, she has a burning desire to contribute her services and expertise for the betterment of the travel trade and a vision to raise the standard of the travel and tourism industry. Awarded time and time again for "Woman Entrepreneurship" and "Woman of Substance" by multiple organisations and forums, Jyoti is indeed a champion and shining beacon of the Indian travel industry. A graduate from Delhi University with a degree in Interior Designing and Diploma in Travel and Tourism, Jyoti Mayal is a Director at New Airways Travels, Delhi since 1980.



*"Good leadership produces more leaders than followers. As a leader, I try to find potential in each employee of mine and then assign them to work accordingly. Empowering someone begins with finding the right kind of work*

*one can do, and then utilisation of that talent. I have been in the industry for long and the industry is my extended family and thus prefer taking everyone along, in both small and big decisions as a team. A woman always has a natural instinct to follow her mind and heart."*

Jyoti attributes her success to her two major traits being Flexible and Firm. It may sound way too oxymoronic, but this is the way it is. Flexible in a sense, that she does not confine herself to limited notions and perceptions of people when it comes to trying something new or going an extra mile, and firm in a way, that she sticks to her values and ethics and tries to be as positive as possible, to tackle unwarranted situations and catastrophes like the one we have witnessed in the guise of COVID.

Jyoti believes that a good leader needs to be full of empathy, understand the need and requirements of their employees, and build a safe environment for them to function. Empathy motivates employees by making them feel valued, generates goodwill with business partners, aids career advancement, and finally fosters a productive work culture.

**Next Vacation:** Sri Lanka, for the 66th TAAI Convention from April 19-22, 2022.





## Shilpa Gupta

Additional Managing Director  
Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board

An Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from the 2008 batch, Shilpa Gupta is a staunch woman with the right mix of leadership, drive, personality, discipline, and skill. Prior to joining MPTB, she served as the Collector of Shivpuri and Morena in Madhya Pradesh, making her the first woman Collector of Morena.

**Next Vacation:** Shilpa has to travel wherever and whenever required for official work, but she has yet to decide the destination for a vacation.

Shilpa Gupta, over the years, due to her nature of work, has grown up into a fearless but calm personality. She is admired for her work as she deals with everything in a firm and fair manner.

Shilpa believes in including the team in decision making, giving them participatory roles, and motivating them. That is what empowerment means for her. Inputs from every member of the team matter a lot to her. It not only motivates them but also increases their sense of commitment to the organisation. All these factors overall increase the success rate of the mission. It also helps create a second level of leadership. Shilpa points out that it is also important how you respond when an employee makes a mistake. Mistakes create the best learning opportunity.

Self-awareness is the most important thing to follow, according to Shilpa. It is important to understand one's strengths and weaknesses.



*"It is important to have trust in your team and try to engage them. Sharing ideas and information freely and the power of listening also resonates a lot. This can lead to more motivated employees and better results. We have to nurture the ambition and aspirations of a young employee."*

Empathy, according to Shilpa, is one of the most critical leadership skills to possess. Due to COVID-19, people face multiple kinds of stress, anxiety, and other health issues. So empathy can be an antidote for them. She says that we have to understand the needs of others and should be aware of their feelings and thoughts. Empathy not only motivates people but also creates a positive workplace. Thus, increasing their morale, productivity, and loyalty too.



## Vasudha Sondhi

Managing Director  
Outbound Marketing & Connect Worldwide India

One of the most recognisable faces of the Indian travel and hospitality sector, this dynamic Chennai-born Leo, learnt her ropes in Mumbai and put her skills and learnings to practice on the corporate chessboard of New Delhi. 35 years and counting and this auto-winding persona continues on her journey of discovering newer opportunities and juggling multiple hats simultaneously.

**Next Vacation:** Norway, to enjoy the Northern lights and bring back the sparkling colours and spread it all around to make lives more vibrant and colourful.

Apart from being an entrepreneur who's always ahead of the curve, Vasudha is a fiercely independent woman with steely grit and resolve. As the Regional Director, Sales and Marketing for Le Meridien Hotels for 15 years, she effortlessly delivered a wide gamut of branding concepts, strategies, and campaigns. At the peak of her career, Vasudha took the plunge to start her own venture, Outbound Marketing, to cater to the demand for new market approaches. She and her highly motivated team are responsible for delivering the client's contractual obligations. Vasudha is the driving force behind the sales and strategy in her company.

She's an avid reader, likes to experiment with food, and loves an element of mystery and adventure in her travel. Over the weekends, she is usually found at her village hideout where she mentors art and artists. Through Annapurna Foundation, she is active in girl child education and more recently worked on self-employment and sustainable tourism projects in Peora, Uttarakhand. She is also a very active member of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce Ladies Organization (FICCI- FLO), which is the largest body of Women Entrepreneurs in Asia.



*"Every day is a new day, and every challenge is new. You can never have a boring day syndrome. Passion is what drives me and I like to believe it percolates down to my team as it reflects in their outreach. A leader must have a clear vision about the goalpost and I'm very clear that the trajectory I choose cannot compromise my belief system. This is my way of setting an example for my team on the path I require them to take in achieving our common goals."*

According to Vasudha, a good leader can be set apart from the herd if they look after the interests of the team. Finally, decisiveness is crucial. Consensus building is necessary, but there is a time to take action for which one needs a very broad set of shoulders to handle any risks.

Vasudha believes that empathy is one of the most beneficial attributes a leader can possess. It is an ability to understand and even anticipate the needs of others, an awareness of their feelings and their thinking. It is not about agreeing with their point of view, but it means an effort to understand and appreciate it. Empathy is the key part of leadership as it is the ability to listen, relate, connect and build a bonding with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.





## Pinki Arora

Executive Director  
Direct Representation

Pinki Arora has been associated with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) for nearly 28 years. Spearheading the company, engaged in public relations and marketing, representing the amazing destination in North and East India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan,

Pinki's efforts have seen Thailand rise to become one of the top outbound destinations for Indian tourists.

Pinki was born and brought up in Thailand, and hence she has an immense love for the destination. Fluent in Thai language, she is also well versed in cultures and customs of both Thailand and India. Having an inherent knowledge of Thailand and its culture on one end, paired with a similar understanding of India on the other, added to her strength. Her dream project of Indian weddings in Thailand has been overwhelmingly successful and today Thailand is the numero uno destination for Indian weddings and celebrations. Apart from being a tourism and hospitality professional, she is also an expert in Thai cuisine and was associated with The Oberoi Group of Hotels as a consultant for their Thai restaurant, Baan Thai, for a few years. Promoting Thailand is a passion, and not a profession for Pinki.

Pinki believes in empowering her team by giving them more responsibility, accountability for their work, and authority to make independent decisions and see their work to completion.



*"I strongly believe in practicing empathy, working honestly and taking responsibility for action. This builds trust within the team and promotes a sense of fairness that is essential to an engaged and positive workforce."*

Pinki elaborates that effective leadership requires a mix of skills to create an environment that promotes engagement and good performance. Empathy tops that list. People are experiencing multiple forms of stress worsened by the current pandemic. Extending empathy is crucial for a positive work environment that, in turn, influences performance.

**Next Vacation:** Koh Samui has her heart. She would love to spend a few days at a local resort, enjoy the beach and visit the wellness centre to treat herself.



## Sheema Vohra

Managing Director  
Sartha Global Marketing

As a successfully established industry veteran with over two and a half decades of experience, Sheema Vohra's work expertise spans domains, including - tourism, hospitality, and public relations. One of the most successful women in the travel and tourism industry in the country, she is also an inspiration for many women in the industry.

An avid traveller, Sheema's wealth of knowledge ranges from developing comprehensive strategies for tourism development of destinations, leading effective hotel sales and marketing initiatives, and maintaining relationships with significant industry stakeholders.

Sheema has lived, studied, and worked in the USA for over eight years, and is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Hotel School). After her educational stint in the USA, she fell in love with the country, and from the very beginning, she wanted to represent the USA in India. She still shares a love for the country, is quite enthusiastic about spreading knowledge on the destination, and inspires people to visit the USA.

Before Sartha Global Marketing, Sheema worked for The Oberoi Group of Hotels and Marriott International. Her current professional affiliations include IAC Chair for IPW since 2001; Industry Co-Chair for U.S. India Travel & Tourism Working Group for AMCHAM India.

For Sheema, being collaborative is important. They follow a flat management structure, encouraging other opinions, creative inputs, and critical feedback. She

also believes that all team members have different strengths, and it is important to assist them in discovering their potential. This helps in building self-confidence and trust, which is important. Additionally, they like to appreciate and elevate those associates who contribute and show a strong sense of responsibility.



*"Integrity, honesty, and commitment to the team are very important for me. Additionally, a leader must be decisive and provide vision and guidance to their team."*

Empathy has always been an essential part of good leadership. However, Sheema also explains that in the past, several associates experienced difficult situations like family emergencies and other personal problems. But during this pandemic, health complications and working from home have led to rising mental health issues and added more stress. At Sartha Global, their approach has been to deal with each situation individually, work together to find a solution, yet make sure that they are fair to everyone in the organisation and their clients.

**Next Vacation:** Sheema took a few days of vacation while on a business trip to the USA. She wants to plan a longer US vacation this summer, including the outdoors, unique music and entertainment, and local cuisine.





## Priyanka Nijhawan

Director  
Nijhawan Group

With an Honours degree in Mathematics combined with Masters in Computer Sciences, Priyanka Nijhawan is an alumnus of Lady Sri Ram College, New Delhi, and Kings College London. Building further on her sharp, analytical abilities and logical thought process, Priyanka leads the representation business vertical of the Nijhawan Group.

A seasoned professional with over 12 years of experience, Priyanka ensures that her representation clients benefit from local market knowledge and expertise combined with maximum market reach and true value. Fostering strong relationships with key luxury trade partners, luxury concierges, airlines, niche event and wedding planners, media houses, influencers, celebrities and cricketers comes naturally to Priyanka.

Having the rare distinction of working with top tier international luxury hospitality and travel brands and launching them in India for the HNI travellers, Priyanka's core competence is to provide personalised sales, marketing and communication strategies for luxury hospitality and tourism brands and to build top of mind awareness amongst the desired traveller segments.

A keen observer and learner and coming from her past learnings, Priyanka is a believer of change.

**Next Vacation:** Sri Lanka. She can't wait to explore what the island country has to offer.



*"I believe in building a changing culture, wherein adaptability and sustainability are the key players in long-term success, and always being prepared to accept the changes and fight all obstacles together as a team."*

Leadership is just not a word or a figurative title for Priyanka, it is all about the balance a leader brings to the team while challenging them to raise their sights with every task, lifting their morale and encouraging them to exceed themselves. According to Priyanka, appreciation, empathy and consideration go a long way in promoting a good and balanced work culture. Empathy has been long regarded as a soft leadership skill, but when you consider it in the human context, in the hands of a skilled leader, it is an effective management tool.



## Lubaina Sheerazi

CEO & Co-founder  
BRANDit

Lubaina Sheerazi spearheads BRANDit to make it a trusted partner for her clients and help them navigate the diversity, scale, and complexity of India. She brings with her in-depth knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of outbound travel. She provides deep insight, sound counsel, and seamless execution to numerous tourism boards and hospitality brands.

An innovative outlook gives Lubaina's strategies and associations a creative edge over her counterparts, resulting in remarkable outcomes across brands. Her first success story was branding Oman as an exotic leisure destination in India, which involved a shift from its well-established image as a mundane destination for Indian labour. Lubaina's strength also includes bringing a fresh perspective for existing popular choices – taking Thailand as an example – by repositioning the destination through various PR and marketing activities; the team managed to sustain Thailand's position as the top holiday destination choice amongst Indians.

While it is difficult to establish a rapport at all levels, Lubaina tries her best to be close to the team. One upside of the pandemic was that it gave her time to connect with the team at a grassroots level. She believes in measuring and balancing employee productivity, keeping them highly motivated and engaged while also maintaining a work culture, even as they gravitated towards remote working. To her, the true foundation of an organisation is not just its leader, but the team as a whole. So, she believes in empowering each individual by honing their

skills and helping them recognise their full potential in creating value and delivering results, not towards clients alone, but themselves too.



*"As a leader, one must be self-aware. Your attitude and response towards those around you define your energy and how it affects others. I also believe that one must be agile; be quick to adapt to changing circumstances and seize the opportunity with the determination to thrive outside one's comfort zone."*

Empathy is a critical leadership skill that one needs to practice, even more so in today's time, feels Lubaina. The key is to listen, observe, and act appropriately in a given situation. However, she cautions that it is important not to get trapped by emotion but to initiate a supportive, solution-driven approach that helps an individual achieve great success. She reminds us about the quote the famous American poet Maya Angelou once said, "people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

**Next Vacation:** She sees herself planning a European vacation for her next holiday.





## Neliswa Nkani

Hub Head – MEISEA  
South African Tourism

Neliswa Nkani, a South African national, has a holistic tourism experience that includes marketing, strategic government relations, negotiating, tourism, sales, and investment facilitation. Fluently able to converse in seven languages, she exudes passion, drive and commitment, and a never-ending quest for learning.

**Next Vacation:** Neliswa is not thinking of a vacation, but she is excited to be back in India after two years! She has missed the country, the people, the food, and the vibrance it exudes.

Neliswa Nkani is currently at the helm of affairs, spearheading initiatives of the South African tourism board in the Middle East, India, and Southeast Asia. She has in-depth expertise in national government and local government positioning and familiarity with legislation, strategies, and policies pertaining to the travel & tourism sectors.

Neliswa believes in giving her teams the creative freedom to explore new territories, make bolder choices, to experiment and grow. She feels people tend to enjoy work better when they are invested in it and challenged to go beyond the ordinary. The other thing that her team does well is –communicate. Effective communication is key to better collaborations and synergies.

She has also learned to look within. As a leader, one can only give what one has! So, to make an impact at places of work, leaders must first work on themselves. Along with professional development, Neliswa says it is also important to constantly work towards personal growth and focus on all dimensions of wellness – physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional.



*“I firmly stand by one principle – always put people first. In South Africa, we center our belief system around the ideology, Umntu Nguntu Ngabantu, which translates to ‘I am who I am because of others’. This calls us to look out for our colleagues, our communities, and each other. Even at South African Tourism, our citizens and visitors are the top priority.”*

There is another simple mantra that Neliswa follows, “Be Present Completely.” When she works, she gives it her 100 per cent and ensures no distractions. She has a space designated solely for work. When she is done for the day, she leaves her workstation – both physically and mentally – to switch off and spend quality time with her son or with herself.

Neliswa says that there cannot be good leadership without empathy. Little things matter, and it is important to reach out to colleagues and actively listen to what they have to say. It allows one to connect and relate to people and brings in a nuanced understanding of what makes them operate optimally and what empowers them.



## Claudia Matias

Director - India  
Visit Portugal

Claudia has extensive experience in a variety of functional areas and industries, ranging from information technology to innovation and entrepreneurship to organisations. She has a strong understanding of international business and the visitor economy.

**Next Vacation:** Claudia will travel to her home country, Portugal, for a vacation. She has yet to try many of the new experience in her home country.

Claudia worked for VisitBritain for 12 years, first as a Marketing Executive and then as a Country Representative in the Portuguese market, before joining Visit Portugal. In the role, she was instrumental in raising destination awareness and establishing strong business partnerships within the travel trade and stakeholders to support consumer destinations campaigns.

Claudia feels that communication is a very important factor in empowering everyone. It's important to share common aims with others around to work towards the same goal. Claudia believes it is more the role of a mentor to guarantee that everyone is on the same page and working toward a same objective. Having everyone involved and ensuring that all will make a difference is important. All are contributors and part of the equation. Being accountable and having ownership of one's contributions is also a must.

For Claudia, it is also important to be a good listener and to be open to accepting and delivering feedback and suggestions. When this happens, all will feel like they are part of something bigger and will be in tune with each other.



*“Along with communication, it is also necessary to appreciate the team's work and express gratitude on a timely basis. Always celebrate achievements, for when people are happy, the work environment is also happy.”*

Claudia believes in a willingness to devote time, effort, and patience towards colleagues, peers, and the people around without expecting anything in return. This is the mantra she attempts to live by every day.

In Claudia's opinion, empathy is one of the most important leadership qualities. The pandemic had us making quick working adjustments while dealing with professional and personal challenges. It was like managing a different work and life balance. Adding on, Claudia shares that empathy is like self-awareness, being able to place yourself in other people's shoes. Empathy bonds people. It creates trust and the ability to express one's respect and gratitude towards the other.





## Munnmun Marwah

COO  
Think Strawberries

Munnmun Marwah has a year-on-year track record demonstrating growth and has profound knowledge and hands-on proficiency in strategy building for new product launches, product positioning, and brand management. She has proven credentials in building effective relationships with ultimate decision-makers, seizing control for rectification of critical problem areas, and delivering on customer commitments.

**Next Vacation:** New Zealand and Australia are destinations that top Munnmun's bucket list right now!

Munnmun is responsible for the overall business development of the organisation. With 25+ years of varied travel industry experience, she has successfully developed partnerships and maximised revenues for some of the world's leading tourism products and destinations.

On engaging and empowering people, Munnmun shares a familiar phrase: "people leave managers, not companies." Thus, for her, each member of the team is different in terms of their skills, personality, and needs – both personal and professional. It is her responsibility as a leader to work with them closely, allow them to use their strengths every day, be sensitive to their needs, and try to bring out the best in them. No one likes to be micromanaged, and therefore, her endeavour always is to have an adaptive mindset and inspire the team to be accountable besides giving them the space to take ownership of their work.

Munnmun believes that an organisation with truly empowered employees reaches levels of productivity otherwise not achievable, and that is what she has always sought and strived for – to empower her team while focusing on their purpose.



*"It is important to understand that as a leader, you don't manage people; you lead people and manage the work and this is what my leadership motto is. Successful leaders are enthusiastic, empathetic, have a flexible mindset and are willing to try new ideas."*

Munnmun also mentions that praise and recognition have always been crucial in improving employee productivity. The workforce thrives in an atmosphere where appreciation is well regarded! One of the biggest learnings for her over the years has been that one's success is directly proportional to the amount of effort one puts into managing and developing the individuals in the team.

According to Munnmun, empathy is a vital leadership attribute. Empathy has taken on a new definition and priority as a result of the life-changing COVID-19 pandemic. As her team navigates new personal and professional challenges brought on by the pandemic, she firmly believes it's more important than ever to lead with empathy.



## Christine Mukharji

Market Manager India  
Austrian National Tourist Office

An Indophile to the core, Christine Mukharji has been representing the Austrian National Tourist Office in India for the last 20 years. Born in Salzburg and educated at Salzburg University, she is a strategist with a strong entrepreneurial streak.

**Next Vacation:** Travel to Austria will be her top priority!

Christine and her team have been instrumental in organising many innovative programmes and events across India over the last two decades. She is a woman on a mission! A mission to promote Austria as a multifaceted travel destination from India across various segments and strengthen the place for Austria in Indian hearts and brighten the sparkle in the Indian eyes at the mere mention of "Sound of Music".

An enthusiastic traveller Christine loves to explore India and its hidden wonders and loves the variety, flavours, aromas and textures of Indian Cuisine.

A team leader who believes strongly in the democratic style of leadership. She delegates work and authority and strongly believes that trust plays a huge role in empowering her team to perform to their best.



*"What has always worked best for me is letting my team know that I am there when they need me, but having them take the lead and go about taking decisions for day-to-day happenings on their own."*

A firm decision-maker who is appreciative, encouraging, trusting, Christine believes that every relationship requires a degree of empathy to make it successful. Being empathetic is definitely one of the key requirements of being a successful leader.







## Ellona Pereira

Head  
AVIAREPS India

Ellona Pereira's multi-dimensional approach, armed with analytical data, travel trends and insights, helps her develop effective sales, marketing, PR and communication strategies that exceed goals and objectives. Ellona is a team player who leads, inspires, and has the right leadership attributes that motivate and empower the team members.

**Next Vacation:** Ellona's very first 'bleisure trip' will soon be to the beautiful, adventurous state of Utah in the United States.

Ellona has over 20 years of active professional experience, including time with Jet Airways and a few years in banking and finance. She subsequently moved into the tourism industry and worked with leading tourism boards across sales, marketing and PR portfolios, handling accounts such as ENIT-The Italian National Tourism Board, Destination Canada followed by the Netherlands Tourism Board, Philippines, Florida and Brussels, Belgium.

Keeping her very own personal experience at the forefront, Ellona was always given the opportunity to make certain decisions, share ideas, and most importantly, have never been micromanaged. She does believe that each one of her team members has their individual strengths and contributions to make, and therefore, it is her duty and responsibility to bring out the best in them.

In this context, she does encourage her team to share their ideas as well as come up with creative solutions so that together project expectations are clearly defined and achievable goals set. This automatically ensures that they enjoy a certain level of autonomy in their decisions making process as long as it lies within their company's strategic priorities. Finally,

Ellona does make it a point to make them feel that she genuinely trusts and values their contributions to the overall success of the project.



*"At the very core of Ellona, you will see and experience that I am truly a people person and hence resonate with a more people-oriented leadership trait."*

Unfortunately, the year 2020 and 2021 had everyone's lives and work turned upside down, leading everyone to experience multiple kinds of stress. With employees spending over eight hours at the workplace, it's natural for people to consider the office as their second home. Therefore, Ellona insists that during difficult periods like the pandemic, it becomes even more important for the management to listen, to be open, and to understand the feelings and emotions of a particular person within the team or organisation. There is no doubt that strong teams build strong organisations and, by being an empathetic leader, one shows deep respect and care for their co-workers.



## Veena Patil

Founder & Managing Director  
Veena World

A leader who knows the way goes all the way and shows the way. A go-getter, a lifelong learner, a prolific writer, and an optimist to the core, even after having travelled the world, Veena believes in holding on to her roots. She takes pride in the fact that she's in a business of happiness and considers herself blessed, for she's able to do her bit in showing the world to many travellers.

**NEXT VACATION:** Ladakh, Manali, and Pahalgam are on her agenda in India. She also looks forward to visiting Los Angeles, Scotland, and a few small towns in Switzerland.

Veena Patil, with over 35 years of experience in travel and tourism and seven years at Veena World, has established herself as an exceptional entrepreneur and is a role model for thousands of women from all walks of life, including women entrepreneurs, who idolize her for her grit, hard work, perseverance, determination, business acumen and business ethics.

Veena empowers and engages with the people she is leading by being with them. She feels it is her responsibility to nurture the talent that she sees in the organisation irrespective of tenure or hierarchy. She always feels that a good human being can do wonders if leaders put effort to bring them up. So, a lot of her time is invested in sharing knowledge, training strategies, decision-making, and getting things done the quicker way. She teaches when needed, at the same time, she distances herself to observe how things are taking shape and if people are getting that sense of achievement as well as satisfaction.

Veena believes that every leadership trait that resonates with her should resonate with her team too. It should flow smoothly in the organisation. She is forthright in stating

that she is truthful, ethical, transparent, polite, firm, and self-assured. She believes in learning from the past, being in the present, and keeping an eye on the future. She connects, motivates, and innovates and is also organised, decisive, and quick.



*"We at Veena World have our own ten commandments and six principles that we zeroed down from the management jargon which is suitable for us. We use it every time while solving problems or making decisions or when we are stuck with to be or not to be kind of a situation."*

Veena says that every leader must be an empath. Unless and until they sense how their team feels, how their guests or customers feel, how their associates feel, and how their family feels, they are not going to be good leaders. In their organisation while working on any small or big project, they always think about other person's point of view, which makes things easier, more result-oriented, and satisfying. True empathy is the foundation of successful leadership.





## Neerja Bhatia

VP - Indian Subcontinent  
Etihad Airways

With over 30 years of experience in the aviation industry, Neerja Bhatia oversees one of the most dynamic markets in the world – India, where she has played a key role in the expansion and growth of Etihad Airways. In her leadership role, she has been responsible for the successful introduction of the airline to 11 Indian cities over the years and has been a mainstay to its evolving

### business model of becoming an airline of choice.

Neerja Bhatia joined Etihad Airways in 2004 and has since climbed the corporate ladder to her current position, spearheading the award-winning airline's commercial activities in India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Seychelles and Sri Lanka.

Neerja believes that women are capable of bringing about change differently and successfully, and their determination to challenge the paradigm in every detail is crucial. This has truly helped her airline in creating a benchmark in aviation industry standards.

Neerja has always been inspired by her team's drive, creativity, and commitment to the organisation. She believes that one needs to unlearn every day, be disciplined, curious, and highly ambitious while listening to people with an open mind and being ready to be challenged by their opinion.

At Etihad, they work as one team and not in isolation. With the new normal of working from home, Neerja ensured her team and she connected virtually every morning and remained connected despite working remotely. Now, with things coming back to normal, she makes it a point to meet

every member of her team first thing in the morning. This not only helps them remain engaged but also helps them effectively manage work.



*"I believe women leaders can bring about change differently and successfully, as our determination to challenge the paradigm in every detail is crucial. A good leader is one who recognises that there is no shortcut to success. There's only hard work, passion and commitment that goes behind the scenes."*

Neerja also mentions that she has always believed in the concept of personal enhancement and wellbeing. To strike that right balance, it is important to take care of one's own physical, emotional, and mental health. Personally, her yoga and meditation have helped her immensely and have been her support system through these difficult times.

At Etihad, they have been mindful of maintaining a conducive work culture and employee experience. They have learned that it is important to focus on the fundamentals and pivot as per changing circumstances.

**Next Vacation:** Neerja loves spending time in the little island oasis, Maldives.



## Zelum Chaubal

Director  
Kesari Tours

Kesari Tours enjoys immense loyalty from its customers and has been a leader and pioneer in conducting tours at the national and international levels. Zelum has been at the helm of its touring business and is an inspiring leader. She is an ambitious, assertive, and empowered woman who always builds a way forward to realise her vision. She

### visualised the MICE concept in India and successfully established that with Kesari MICE.

Zelum joined Kesari Tours in 2001 and developed Pune and surrounding markets for Kesari and developed Kesari MICE, a corporate division. Moving on to greater challenges, she has developed new destinations for Kesari and specialised tours like agro tours for farmers, Student specials tours to science centers in Switzerland, and NASA, USA. Zelum is currently a chapter lead for the women's initiative in Tie Pune, which fosters entrepreneurship.

Zelum believes that if employees see the passion in their leader's work, it automatically replicates. Good employees catch this aspect very fast, and then they love to work integrating with the leader's philosophy and remain with the organisation.



*"If people see growth in what they are doing, they will love to work and their engagement will increase day by day. Growth, self-responsibility, and love are*

*the ingredients to empower and engage people you are leading."*

Zelum is open to diverse ideas, but she is also decisive. She listens to stakeholders and then takes her decision. Listening gives one a perspective of how others think, and sometimes one gets a better outcome. To connect and collaborate is also her approach in her dealings. The tourism business is about great networking, and if one is good at it, it helps a lot. The capacity to be adaptable and flexible is another trait she resonates with. Being self-aware and getting things done, no matter the challenge, are also some other leadership qualities of Zelum.

Zelum firmly believes empathy is more important than intelligence, especially when one runs a service organisation. Due to the pandemic, people have become more fragile and vulnerable. Understanding their needs before they demand is the key. She also feels that being empathetic is one of the top leadership qualities irrespective of pre-or post-pandemic. But during the pandemic or after, it is more so because people have suffered financially, emotionally, and mentally. In such a situation, empathy works more than anything else.

**Next Vacation:** Paris. Bhutan is another place where she wants to take her family.





## Isha Goyal

Executive Director & CEO  
STIC Travel Group

An alumnus of the Indian School of Business, Isha took over the management team at STIC ten years ago after undergoing hands-on training through different roles in the organisation. A second-generation business leader, Isha spearheads a nation-wide team of STIC Travel

Group, a company established in 1973 by Subhash and Gursharan Goyal.

Well-versed with aviation, corporate and leisure segments of the travel industry, her mission has been to build upon STIC's strong foundation as one of India's leading GSA companies into a first-choice brand supported by professional systems, highly trained individuals and top-notch infrastructure. Her priority is to nurture a culture geared to adapt to changing industry dynamics and customer demands.

As a business leader, Isha identifies empathy, courage and honesty to be her key traits. She believes in empowering her team and feels that the best way to empower people is to step back and let them do what you have hired them to do. More often than not, she has found that approach to be reliable and rewarding. Empowering comes from trust, courage, and open communication. Trust yourself first to bring together the best team for the job, communicate freely and often, ensure that you understand your team

**Next Vacation:** Isha looks forward to taking a road trip in New Zealand someday, a destination that has been on her bucket list for years.

as much as they understand you; and finally, have the courage to let go.



*"Engagement, for me, is about relatability and a personal connection. During the pandemic, more than ever, we found that by simply listening, understanding and respecting the unique circumstances and challenges of our employees, we became more united and stronger in our resolve to grow and prosper as a team. My approach is always to keep a dialog open, and ensure communication happens through multiple channels and often."*

Isha believes that empathy sits at the heart of good leadership – it comes from a place of respect and humility. A leader can't always solve every problem or remove every roadblock. Sometimes there are no solutions to be provided. But a leader can always listen, understand, and empathize, and that alone can go a long way in instilling the confidence and courage required to keep going.



## Seema Roy

Area Managing Director for South Asia  
Middle East & Africa  
Preferred Hotels & Resorts

Since joining Preferred Hotels and Resorts in 2010, Seema Roy has played a key role in successfully amplifying the brand, and oversees hotel retention and development efforts of the brand's growing portfolio in the region. She is a person with clarity of thought, and the adaptability and willingness to learn

and grow at every stage have helped her navigate through her journey in all these years.

Prior to her current role, Seema has spearheaded efforts towards developing and executing the company's marketing, advertising, loyalty program, regional alliance, and partnership efforts in the Asia Pacific, providing strategic consultation and support to more than 150 hotel members.

According to Seema, for any leader to be successful, they need to be able to inspire and connect with their co-workers and associates in a meaningful and authentic manner. Seema further opines that, looking at ways to grow and develop together as a team, setting up colleagues for success, encouraging participation in decision making helps in building confidence and trust and making the work environment a lot more autonomous. Other than that, effective and honest two-way communication, being open to feedback, willingness to adapt and change is key in creating empowered and engaged teams.

Some of the key leadership qualities Seema values the most are clarity of vision and focus, humility, ability to inspire,

motivate and trust. Demonstrating respect, compassion, empathy, open and cross-cultural communication and a high level of integrity and a strong work ethic is a must.

Seema feels that, as a business leader, being empathetic is not a choice. It is having the ability to understand someone from their perspective and being aware of the feelings and thoughts of people around oneself. These are the very people who make a leader and they deserve their leader's empathy and understanding in return. However, this can happen only if it is consistent and genuine. It is a soft skill and hence, perhaps, usually overlooked.



*"This pandemic has created the time to reflect and learn. Younger generations especially want to be heard, understood, and guided in the most constructive ways."*

Seema further mentions that, with changing times, leaders are now looked upon more like coaches and guides and not mere instructors, making it imperative for them to have this ability to bring forward genuine support for the professional and personal development of people they work with.

**Next Vacation:** Seema took a fabulous family holiday in the Maldives last November and she is already looking forward to the next one and hopes to make it happen soon.





## Meena Bhatia

Vice President & General Manager  
Le Meridien New Delhi

With over four decades in the hotel industry, Meena Bhatia currently heads the strategic planning, brand management, and business development of the hotel and has been at the heart of driving transformational change in Le Meridien New Delhi from being a pure five-star property to an iconic luxury hotel.

Meena Bhatia started her career with The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata and thereafter moved on to spearhead the Sales as Associate Director of Sales in Hyatt Regency Hotel Delhi. Meena has been on the panel for various tourism and hospitality events, guest speaker at Hospitality Institutes and is actively involved with various CSR activities, especially initiatives taken for 'Women Empowerment' and 'Save The Girl Child.'

A strong supporter of team building and empowering employees, Meena has initiated various programs and initiatives that engage, encourage, and empower employees to be more creative and nurture them to grow and succeed. Educational empowerment is provided to encourage employees to develop new skills through training, courses, and development programs. Employees are empowered to take decisions and are supported for their actions, which creates confidence and trust. Rewards and recognition keep the spirit high.

Meena says that to create a positive mindset, one has to reframe their thoughts, be willing to face the challenges that come their way, have realistic expectations from oneself and others, and take steps even if small to restore balance in life. It is also necessary to look after one's physical and

emotional health. They should channelise all their energy towards finding solutions, being innovative and productive.



*"As we navigate through the crisis and adjust our sails to the VUCA world, I strongly believe our success lies in adopting a positive mindset and being resilient, both in our personal and professional life."*

Meena also advises everyone to stay connected to one's family and friends and reach out for their support. It is important to believe in oneself and express gratitude. Also, support others and be ready for change all the time. A person's positive mindset will help others to follow them and find solutions amidst the chaos.

Empathy is the very foundation for strong, respectful interactions and relationships, according to Meena. The previous year was a phase of unparalleled challenges and the uncertainty still continues. It was empathy and support that kept us going. Meena says that a simple and genuine "How are you?" and checking on the well-being made a difference like never before. Thus, an empathetic and collaborative team means a more comfortable, successful work environment for all.

**Next Vacation:** Meena looks forward to meeting her daughter and her close family in the US, as well as exploring Arizona and Hawaii. Peru is also on her bucket list.



## Pratima Badhwar

Head of Commercial  
Accor India & South Asia

Pratima Badhwar is known for her passionate and enthusiastic outlook towards bringing about the desired results wherever she works. Her strong suit is building and leading high-performing teams that provide intangible products to help translate her

ideas into reality. Pratima has worked with numerous hotel leadership teams as a collaborator, excellent communicator, and results-oriented individual, driving business success through exemplary organisational talents throughout her career.

Bringing over 19 years of expertise in the sales discipline, Pratima Badhwar has a remarkable history of working in the field with major hospitality brands. Presently, Pratima leads India and South Asia Commercial Team to achieve business targets for all Accor brands and hotels in the region while ensuring the execution of global strategies.

According to Pratima, empowerment and communication are strong tools, imperative to lead high-performing teams. She has always trusted her teams to execute their vision through strategic initiatives. She strongly believes that through open and transparent communication, errors along the way can be effectively resolved and realigned.



*"Every leader has their own traits that make them unique. But as leaders, we need to be able to change our approach depending upon the situation."*

Some key leadership traits that fundamentally resonate with Pratima are - effective communication, integrity, active listening, empathy, and in the wake of the hour - resilience tops the chart.

Pratima believes that empathy is an essential aspect of good leadership. Being empathetic, one can understand the challenges being faced and the solutions provided become more relevant and acceptable. Empathy helps leaders to connect with their associates in a stronger manner, making them feel more involved and heard.

**Next Vacation:** After COVID-19 struck, Pratima is on her first international trip to Dubai for work, and that makes her equally excited as she gets to meet and connect with her colleagues.





## Radhika Khanijo

CEO & MD  
Welgrow Travels

With over 23 years of rich and varied experience, Radhika started her stint with the travel industry wanting to curate travel experiences of a lifetime. She

**Next Vacation:** Later this year, she intends to visit London to meet her sister.

wanted to plan each step of the journey, and every moment on the trip for her discerning clientele, so that the holiday experience would be a really memorable one.

Doing what she loved, she did not even realise when did she transform her entire business to crafting travel experiences rather than just selling them. “Every person is unique. And so are their perceptions and preferences. As such, there’s no reason why there should be a travel itinerary that suits everyone.”

Emphasising the need for team empowerment, Radhika elaborates that it is very important to find ways of ensuring high performance and productivity while helping the team to maintain their energy, drive, and mental and physical health. Being caring and concerned for employees’ well-being personally and for their families is touchpoint for them.

As a leader, she feels it is important for her to take her team along both in the ups and downs of her business she is forthright and genuine with her team so that they can relate to her actions even when they have to bear the storm together.

“

“Empathy is a soft skill for many, but I feel I was taught by my parents at every step of my life. May it be home workers or staff working with my dad. The lesson of empathy came as a gift from them and has always been my strong skill.”



## Akanksha Garg

Founder  
Waxpol Hotels & Resorts

Akanksha Garg started her entrepreneurial journey at the age of 18. Since her foray into the travel and hospitality industry, she has championed sustainable tourism as one of her guiding business principles, evident in all her operations even after all of these years. She constantly strives to work for the upliftment of the local people and woman empowerment.

**Next Vacation:** Akanksha would like to visit various national parks in Africa.

In recognition of her efforts in the industry, Akanksha has won several high-profile tourism awards. She received the TiE Tiger Award in 2008 for her tourism development initiatives in the Sundarbans, and the Rotary Club Award for CSR and the East India Travel Awards ‘Face of the Future’ Award in 2016.

Empowerment and team engagement are crucial to an organisation’s success, and Waxpol empowers team members by giving them the ability to make decisions as well as the authority and ownership over their assigned duties. Akanksha says that when communication channels are open, decisions may be made swiftly and slipups can be corrected. Their staff believes that every day is a fresh chance to learn and grow, and they demonstrate this by treating everyone, especially their co-workers, with dignity.

“

“Over the course of last two decades in the sector, managing and running multiple resorts, I believe the most important qualities of a good leader include integrity, accountability, empathy, humility, resilience, adaptability, and vision.”

As Steve Jobs said, “Management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could.” Akanksha lives by these leadership principles and motivates her team to diligently discharge their duties.

Akanksha believes that an empathetic leader has a genuine interest in his/her team members’ lives, the challenges they face, and their overall feelings. Such kind of leaders make an effort to understand their employee situations and what they are going through, to offer support and help. The world has changed, and leaders must adjust. Mental health, stress, and burnout are now viewed as organisational responsibilities.

Akanksha senses that for today’s leaders, being empathetic has become critical. Empathy can boost employee engagement and loyalty while also encouraging greater innovation and diversity in the workplace. Empathy, according to Akanksha, is one of the most important qualities a leader can have; however, it is frequently underestimated, and empathy ranks first on the list of what leaders must get right.





## Shoba Mohan

Founder  
RARE India

A chance foray into travel and circumstances for Shoba Mohan led to enterprise and entrepreneurship. The result was RARE India in 2004. Shoba's myriad interests and evolution in travel run parallel to that of RARE, yet writing about issues, nature, and conservation continue to be areas of personal interest.

**Next Vacation:** Shoba has been travelling quite a lot in the pandemic, of course, with necessary protocols. She has just finished a Central India FAM, been to Goa, and now she is headed for a Rajasthan intensive.

With over 20 years in the travel industry, Shoba Mohan sits on board of several associations such as RTSOI and has recently been appointed as the Brand Ambassador for Transformational Travel Council. Often called upon for her views and vision for a conservation and community-based tourism economy, Shoba has moderated sessions on Indian tourism, trends, luxury and sustainable tourism while having rendered keynote addresses on conscious luxury travel, over-tourism and impact tourism.

She has worked with schools and designed programs to educate and inspire children about nature and their role to preserve and protect the planet. She works tirelessly to uphold the image and beauty of the country through the strengths she sees as a powerful narrative to promote every aspect of the country.

For Shoba, empowering and engaging with the people she is leading is the easy part, but how it is perceived is the challenge. Ownership and constant learning are something she advises her team. She also encourages them to learn from each other as each one of us has

unique skills that they can contribute to the strength of the team. She constantly reminds her team of the fundamental of being together; "We are all in this together. We work together and have each other's back. Enjoy the spoils of all the hard work together." It works with some and not with others. Especially in the pandemic, the thing they had to battle the most is the employee perception and their sense of entitlement.

“

*"I am in the ranks and work as one of the team, I don't give orders. I also report like they should all do to the senior team. I also give complete freedom to people to lead a function without interfering."*

Empathy, according to Shoba, is essential for leadership. In fact, without empathy, one cannot manage anything, not even a small home. But empathy, especially in the Indian context, in small businesses, is taken as a weakness and often employees have an entitlement complex that works against the principle of empathy.



## Nidhi Gupta

Founder & Director  
Numen Hospitality

A multi-talented sales and marketing professional with over 20 years in the hotel industry, Nidhi, a seasoned hotelier has worked with some of the most renowned hotel brands like Park Plaza, Country Inn and Suites, Sarovar Hotels, Fern Hotels and Keys Hotels. Nidhi founded Numen Hospitality in 2018.

**Next Vacation:** Nidhi looks forward to travelling to Europe with her family.

Numen Hospitality specialises in providing a diverse range of hotels and resorts to the ever-expanding India market, as well as a variety of marketing services to promote their properties and experiences in the region, with a strong focus on corporate, leisure, MICE, events, and weddings.

Nidhi believes in giving creative freedom to her team. Her team is fully empowered to take decisions in regard to their business. However, all strategic decisions are taken collectively after a detailed review of their merits and demerits. She engages with her team every day and exchanges with them ideas, suggestions and regular updates on their business focus and the market developments.

Integrity is a paramount quality that Nidhi values and inculcates in her team. She emphasises that we all have to be honest towards ourselves and our work and this will give us dividends in the long run. Also, the importance of good communication, ongoing learning and skill enhancement can never be underplayed. You continuously learn, evolve and grow or perish like dinosaurs.

Acknowledging the importance of digital marketing in the coming times, Nidhi used the pandemic period to learn and hone her digital marketing skills. Now this newly acquired skill has helped her scale up her operations and enhance customer acquisition in newer markets.

“

*"Pandemic has been very harsh time for all. Tourism is the first one to suffer and always the last one to recover. It is imperative to protect our team in such times of crisis. I tried to make sure that my team remained intact and paid them regularly to cover up their livelihood and their costs, ensuring their physical and emotional wellbeing."*







## Geeta Maheshwari

Director  
Hospitality & Marketing Services

A computer science graduate, Geeta began her career in the hotel industry's Electronic Data Processing segment. She has come a long way in the last 26 years, establishing herself as a serial entrepreneur. Her penchant

for meeting new people and creating experiences drew her into the world of hospitality and travel in 2003.

Geeta established Hospitality & Marketing Services and Aapt Alliances. The former provides marketing services to standalone hotels and resorts and latter specialises in destination weddings. Not one to be deterred by obstacles, she has successfully juggled to be a homemaker and an entrepreneur. Managing this delicate equilibrium has given her utmost satisfaction and made her a stickler for time management.



*"Integrity, honesty, professionalism, and compassion are all values that I hold dear. We must remember that dealing with people is mixed with complex and varying needs of humans, making it an uphill and yet a*

*rather engaging task. In the hospitality industry, a person with a higher EQ is always preferred to someone with a high IQ."*

A team leader with a mother's heart, Geeta strongly believes that a humane approach is essential to address concerns of the team members. They need to be supported both economically and emotionally during these challenging times. According to her, empathy is an integral part of a compassionate approach. COVID-19 has brought mankind together as never before and we stand united to fight this pandemic.

Her team is trained to keep the customer as the focus of all that they do. They exist to serve the customer and create experiences that put a smile on his face. A word of appreciation, a smile, or a thank-you letter expressing their satisfaction is the most valued and prized possession for Geeta and her team.

**Next Vacation:** Geeta wishes to visit the United Kingdom to meet her daughter who is studying at the University of Oxford.



## Shirly Thomas Bajaj

Director  
Snow Leopard Adventures

A keen adventure sports enthusiast herself, Shirly Thomas Bajaj is part of the Snow Leopard Adventures' think-tank and heads the administration, booking, and office operations in Delhi. A former journalist with the Times of India, she has handled the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of

Tourism beats and wrote several articles concerning the policies of both ministries.

Shirly Thomas Bajaj has experienced adventure sports in several countries, including India, Africa, South Africa, Turkey, Thailand, Mauritius, Austria, Switzerland, the US, Vietnam, and Mongolia. She graduated from Miranda House, Delhi University, with a post-graduate degree in English, an MBA from Amity University, Delhi, and a Post-Graduate diploma from the Times School of Journalism.

Over the last two years, Shirly's focus has been on engaging with team members and keeping them motivated. With the hospitality and tourism industry almost at a standstill due to COVID, morale was down and she knew it was important to stay connected with them and support them during these difficult times. Each of their team members was carrying their own burden, whether it was financial, physical, or mental health issues.



*"Empowering has taken on a whole new meaning during the pandemic. Asking colleagues to upskill themselves while they had some off time (online courses etc) through the pandemic helped them feel like they had a sense of purpose."*

Motivation and effective communication are the two leadership traits that resonate with Shirly the most. With empathy comes a better understanding of a person's perspective. That's very important for communication and problem-solving, according to Shirly.

**Next Vacation:** Shirly would like to travel to the US to meet her daughter, who is studying at the Wharton School of Business.







## Kanika Tekriwal

CEO & Founder  
JetSetGo Aviation

A pursuer of optimism, drive, and excellence, Kanika Tekriwal, is redefining what it means to fly through JetSetGo, which manages and operates India's largest private jet and helicopter fleet. Her dream is to enable the fastest possible connectivity from point A to B. Her focus is on using the third dimension, the sky, as the future of transport.

For Kanika, women's empowerment as a subject has a special place in her heart. She is actively involved in coaching young women who want to start their entrepreneurial journey someday. Through her personal experiences, she began speaking to women and mentoring them. She has had the opportunity to meet more ladies like her on a daily basis, and she has never failed to encourage, educate, and address their issues.



*"Today, I spend six hours a week mentoring young women and helping them overcome obstacles in early stage businesses. I mentor young businesswomen, whom I hope will drive the next era of business. My efforts have brought about a positive outcome in the business development of over six budding businesswomen."*

Kanika is honest to mention that she only feels truly empowered when she can help others, so developing equitable hiring practices and maintaining safe working environments at JetSetGo has been a very important goal to her. There are several initiatives that JetSetGo as a company takes

towards empowering women. She likes to lead by example, so sharing her story is critical for inspiring the future generation.

Kanika feels leaders are the most looked up to, where they are achieving business objectives and inspiring a lot of people around. She believes in the two mantras that helps her keep going and keep inspiring, "You got to keep believing in yourself, because if you don't why will the world believe in you?" and the second one, "Be the best at what you do and there's nothing in the world that can stop you from conquering the world!"

Because of COVID, mental health has become a very important aspect as a part of the organisational value and employee welfare and even conducting business practices. Kanika views empathy as the key representation of good leadership, especially during such times. Given the pandemic, people and organisations have started recognising and valuing it even more. Empathy has now become an integral organisational value that can't be ignored. Kanika recognises the emerging need to adopt empathy as a part of their constant efforts in making their organisation and business practices more empathic while they continue to deliver performance excellence.

**Next Vacation:** Kanika is going to Courchevel in France to ski and get the last snow.



## Mamta Pall

Founder & CEO  
FootprintsWorldwide

A seasoned professional with two decades in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry, Mamta has held key positions in several top multinational travel brands in India. A people person who leads by example and has a keen eye for detail, Mamta is a team player and believes in involving and carrying along her team in her decisions.

Mamta Pall is the owner of FootprintsWorldwide, a company that manages sales, marketing, and public relations for a number of boutique resorts and hotels in India as well as several international DMCs.

Mamta has been awarded and acknowledged for her work at various trade forums and platforms and has been inspiring many people around her. She has also been a part of several panel discussions at industry events.



*"I believe in 'Walking the Talk'. This is something that has earned me the respect and goodwill of my team, as well as my industry colleagues and friends. Other than that, I think self-belief, self-confidence, effective communication, honesty and integrity, compassion and always taking my team with me towards the path of growth are the traits that I would resonate with the most."*

Mamta believes that empowering someone by definition means giving

power to them, and that is done by making them feel stronger and more confident about themselves. She empowers her team by giving them complete freedom to lead as well as execute any initiative that they choose to undertake. She, however, continues to engage with them and guide them through meetings and regular discussions, as it ensures constant involvement amongst all team members.

Mamta feels that it is extremely important to understand what everyone is currently going through or has been through in the past. Sensitivity to team members and their circumstances is essential; it also fosters a sense of camaraderie. Because of the pandemic, empathy has become a hot topic of debate. Empathy and compassion, in my opinion, are and have always been crucial attributes in a leader.



**Next Vacation:** The US, to visit family.





## Sara Sodhi Juneja

Country Manager – India & UAE  
Visit Finland

Sara Sodhi Juneja is passionate about travelling and believes experiencing new places to be a way of life. A food lover at heart, a career in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry came as a natural progression to her. Sara has spent more than a decade in the tourism sector and has marketed some of the finest hotel chains and attractions in the World.

Sara Sodhi Juneja has a rich background in the tourism and hospitality industry. As the brand custodian of Visit Finland, she is currently working to develop Finland's travel destination brand, market Finland to travellers abroad and help companies in the travel industry go global. Visit Finland cooperates with travel destination regions, businesses in the travel industry and other export promoters and embassies.

Working with Finns, Sara has learnt about the beautiful concept of SISU- The Finnish art of inner strength. SISU is an ancient Finnish concept that dates back to the 1500s. It is all about an attitude of turning challenges into opportunities, where one has the fortitude to not give up in the face of a challenge, big or small. She is a firm follower of SISU and she believes in a very honest, transparent and inclusive work culture where feedback can be shared and appreciated on both sides. To empower her team, she likes to give them ownership through simple and effective communication. To engage with them, she focuses on how best to develop, coach, and motivate them

as individuals to obtain the greatest outcomes from them.



*"I think during the pandemic, my most effective skill has been my ability to be flexible, agile and respond effectively to these changing environments. Circumstances during the pandemic have been very dynamic, both to the expected and to the unexpected. Hence, the capacity to improvise when necessary, and to be open to change and new challenges, has been my key strength."*

According to Sara, empathetic leadership entails being able to understand others' needs and being mindful of their feelings and thoughts. Unfortunately, it has long been a soft skill that's overlooked as a performance indicator, but she certainly feels it is an integral part of good leadership and the pandemic has certainly increased the discussion around the same. Sara also feels being empathetic allows leaders to help struggling employees improve and excel. Empathy also encourages leaders to build and develop relationships with those they lead.

**Next Vacation:** Sara is off to the happiest country in the world – Finland.



## Shruti Shibulal

CEO & Director  
Tamara Leisure Experiences

Shruti Shibulal has carved a space for herself in the niche hospitality segment and through her hospitality venture, Tamara Leisure Experiences, she is at the forefront of promoting sustainable living and responsible tourism in India. She is one of India's next-generation entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry and was named as one of the five World Economic Forum's YGLs (Young Global Leaders) from India in 2017.

Shruti Shibulal strives to make Tamara synonymous with responsible tourism by incorporating principles of sustainability into the development and operations of each of Tamara's properties and creating impactful employment within their respective communities.

She is also involved in many organisations and foundations that provide educational opportunities and healthcare assistance to underprivileged sections of society, uplifting young women from vulnerable backgrounds and those focussed on industry-relevant skilling, building careers, and creating communities.

About engaging and empowering people, a few key areas of impact which are especially close to Shruti's heart include building businesses that will benefit future generations.

She finds that climate responsive policies, human capital building, and gender parity are among the components essential to this vision. Therefore, she strives to engineer hiring frameworks and social initiatives that allow them to seek out and collaborate with people who are similarly motivated.

Given the talented, diverse teams she has established through these efforts, now she is able to rely on dedicated work and a commitment towards innovation that is driven and managed by their own people. She is able to catalyse this through continued investment

in their teams. This includes setting up tech-enabled solutions for pan-organisational communications, knowledge sharing and skill-building.



*"People are at the heart of all my endeavours. Our values centre upon harmonising people, profit, and the planet. It is exactly why I invest so heavily in our teams and work closely to support local communities to establish an entire ecosystem of human-centric operations. Therefore, I have enormous admiration for leaders and organisations that cater to the holistic well-being of present society as well as future generations."*

Empathy, according to Shruti, is central to our lives as individuals. The pandemic highlighted the importance of this by showing all of us the strength of community support and unity. It is essential to leadership and especially powerful when moulded into conscious business models because it has the ability to significantly impact a great deal of people including employees, guests and vendors. As a responsible hospitality group, thoughtful operations that prioritise people and the planet have been integral to their vision at Tamara. Their offerings and operations at large are rooted in empathy. It is a quality that is foundational to Shruti's personal and professional definition of leadership.

**Next Vacation:** Croatia, an exceptionally beautiful country with the ideal mix of history, beaches, and culinary gems.





## Komal Seth

Founder & Director  
Linkin Reps

A result-oriented professional with rich experience in corporate communications, operations and client servicing in the travel, tourism and hospitality space. Since 2004, Komal has held marketing and sales portfolios at reputed brands such as

Kuoni India, TUI, Philippines Tourism Board and Intercontinental Group of Hotels.

As the Founder and Director of Linkin Reps, she has closely worked with various travel and hospitality brands such as SriLankan Airlines, Furaveri Resorts, Jazeera Airways, Turkey Tourism Board, Sochi Tourism Board and luxury hotel chains like Amaya Resorts & Spas, The Kingsbury Colombo, and Asia Leisure Hotels Slinky.

A graduate from Delhi University with a degree in travel and tourism, Komal has attended numerous professional training programmes, and is also the Alumnus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA.

As a team leader, she encourages her team members to develop goals that are closely connected to the set targets. She concentrates on monitoring their progress and helping them to overcome any impediments or roadblocks.

**Next Vacation:** New York.



*"I've discovered that making myself available to my team and encouraging their accomplishment helps them to stay focused and supported. The key to empowerment is to listen to your colleagues."*

Komal never runs away from taking responsibility or owning up to mistakes and believes in providing equal opportunity to her team members, to learn, to enhance their skills and understand the importance of patience and a smile.

She feels that the current change in our work environment, social distancing and remote working has created an urgent requirement for corporate executives and business leaders to be understanding of the people's circumstances. Everyone is concerned about the pandemic, and everyone is experiencing it differently, therefore everyone must empathise that the world and companies will now work with a different mindset. The need of the hour is to be humane and sensitive.



## Sucheta Nagpal

Director & CEO  
Travstarz

Sucheta began her career in design after graduating with honours in English from Delhi University and earning a Professional Degree in Interior Design and Architecture. She immediately followed her passion for travel and has worked in the business for over two decades. She began her career in 1999 with International Club Systems, a Holland-based company, and later moved into the immigration

and MICE industries before co-founding Travstarz with her husband in 2009.

As an initiative to empower women, she took on the mantle of General Secretary for Business and Professional Women Organisation, India, an organisation representing professional Women in over 90 countries. She also contributed to Women's Cricket in the past as the Deputy Convenor for Women's Cricket Council, Delhi and District Cricket Association under the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). She also dedicates her time to educating children in slum areas as and when possible besides supporting a Blind School and sponsoring education for the girl child in various NGOs, including Save the Children.

Her ability to identify the strengths, interests of her team members allows her to engage them in tasks complementing their talents and abilities. Her philosophy is to engage her team by supporting them, offering feedback, and by recognising achievements. Once she has delegated out the task or project, she prefers to step away and let them show what they can do.

Communication is critical when empowering an employee to work on a

new task or project. Sucheta always keeps herself available for questions, comments, or to help them bounce ideas around.



*"I'm also open to mistakes and have given them the confidence to come to me. Mistakes happen, but when the employee also knows they will be supported by their organisation or manager when it does come up, they'll be more encouraged to learn from the situation and do better next time, rather than fear the repercussions."*

Strategic thinking, innovation and continuous personal development are an ongoing agenda for Sucheta, but she focuses on using her learnings on developing and grooming her other team members, empowering them to perform more efficiently.

Empathy is a vital leadership competency, according to Sucheta. She says, "One must have the ability to understand the needs of others. Today, especially post-COVID, one must be more person-focused and be able to work well with people from varying teams, departments, countries, cultures, and backgrounds."

**Next Vacation:** Sucheta is waiting to go to the beaches of Thailand very soon.





## Ekta Watts

CEO  
Equator Tours

Ekta Watts is a travel professional with over two decades plus to her credit in the travel industry. The only lady Executive Member in ADTOI and the Chairperson for its Women Empowerment and CRS wing. Ekta is a crusader for women's empowerment, and instrumental in initiating the position of a LEO in each of the 10 chapters of ADTOI.

**Next Vacation:** Visiting her family in the US and London. She also looks forward to visiting Canada for her a wedding celebration.

Committed to enhancing and highlighting women's power and contribution in the travel industry, Ekta's efforts were to identify key women from various ADTOI chapters and empower them with product knowledge, soft skills, and social media expertise. Mother of triplet daughters, Ekta feels herself to be the luckiest mother and believes that the only way to be a successful woman is to be a strong woman.



*"As the Chairperson of the Women Empowerment and CSR Wing and with the support of other Governing Body Members of ADTOI, we created the position of a LEO- Lady Entrepreneur Officer in 2019. This pioneering step was taken with the mission to connect and empower women in tourism and also give a boost to tourism."*

Her efforts have resulted in an exclusive Facebook Page and Instagram account for ADTOI lady members last year, where ADTOI lady members are encouraged to promote

their business and network with other members. She has also reached out to the budding and future women tourism professionals by initiating online training lectures to encourage more women to join the tourism sector and acquaint them with the finer nuances of the tourism industry.

She has initiated efforts to raise many more issues and concerns affecting women in the tourism industry like equal pay for women professionals, respect for intellectual investment in an organization, maternity leave concerns, liberty of working online for women, sensitisation on acceptance of a lady professional's balance between work and family and a safe work environment.

According to Ekta, delegating is crucial as a leader. It facilitates teamwork, promotes better decision-making, and inspires and motivates the team members at various levels. It is very crucial for healthy work culture, a work environment where employees feel valued, comfortable and flush with growth opportunities.



## Madhuri Verma

Director  
Intrepid Marketing & Communications

A seasoned industry professional, Madhuri Verma has spent three decades (and one global pandemic!) honing her craft in the travel industry. She is recognised in the industry for her remarkable business acquisitions, establishing strategically beneficial partnerships, and front-ending campaign-driven client initiatives. Her core skills include critical analysis, stress-testing ideas, and theories,

brand positioning, long-term projects, strengthening of brand recall, and development of business relations.

Madhuri's business acumen of creating entities, starting from conceptualisation to execution and growth, has made her an efficient team leader. She truly believes in working collectively towards achieving organisational goals.

At IMC, they maintain a very horizontal team structure wherein the directors and employees operate without hierarchical boundaries. Madhuri personally believes that no matter how many years of experience one carries under their belt, there's always something new to learn. The youngsters at IMC are provided the liberty to make decisions and spearhead campaigns, which have been extremely impactful and important for their individual growth as well as the company.



*"Our engagement often transcends beyond work, and I take some opportunities and time to engage with them on my learnings from the Buddha way of living. I share past personal experiences, excerpts from biographies of leaders and discuss the Buddhist philosophy, which is "Respect and Dignity of Life" to inspire each team member."*

Out of hundred attributes that define a leader, Madhuri preaches and practice 'compassion' the most. While they all continued to put their best foot forward at work, Madhuri ensured that the team maintained a proper work-life balance by providing them with flexible work hours and permitting them remote operations as per their personal requirements. This has helped in maintaining the harmony amongst such trying times and brought them closer as a team who respects each other's needs and boundaries without compromising work efficiency.

Based on Madhuri's former response on compassion, it is established that she values empathy and kindness and believes they are crucial to shape a company's ethos. Ever since the emergence of work-from-home culture, conversations around toxic traits in the workplace and their impact on mental health have been on the rise. At IMC, they ensure that employees are not burnt out and often share the load irrespective of the task assigned or our designations.

Empathy doesn't indicate leniency, and that is something that leaders need to remember. In her personal experience, empathy has opened doors for mutual understanding, honest conversations, and higher work productivity of employees, thus creating a healthy work ecosystem.

**Next Vacation:** She is keen on exploring Azerbaijan's unique culture, history, food, and art with her family on their long-coveted vacation.





## Dilshaad Buhariwala

General Manager - Singapore  
Travelbullz

A travel and tourism professional with almost 24 years in the industry, to her credit, Dilshaad is responsible for the PNL of the TravelBullz Group's DMC locations in Singapore and the UAE. She also has the added responsibilities, new marketplace

initiatives, global GSA network, global tourism board relationships and global marketing strategies.

**A**ppreciative, cooperative, and a supportive team leader, Dilshaad tries to always lead by example and empowering her team. According to her, the word empower, by its definition, means "to put power in to"—therefore, in empowering people, she endeavours to enable her team to do things themselves. She does not give them the answers all the time, but instead helps them to find the answers. Point them in the right direction and encourage them to try to solve the problem on their own.

Values are the guiding beacons for Dilshaad. She believes in integrity from her very core and trusts that if one is not doing the right thing, even when no one is watching, no real success is possible. She appreciates accountability and gives credit where credit is due and takes responsibility for blame when necessary. A confident and humble individual, she stands by the mantra that "Pride makes

us artificial and humility makes us real". The true grit of a good leader is not how they perform during good times, but how they roll up their sleeves and produce when times get tough.



*"Empathy is key to simply being understanding of the people you work with. Be open-minded enough to understand their dreams, motivations, and problems. Without a motivated and dedicated team that ends up being more productive, a leader will not thrive on her own."*



**Next Vacation:** She is extremely busy facilitating the world's travel plans before planning her own. But she often thinks about the holiday she couldn't make it to in Q1 of 2020. A Cruise from South America to Antarctica.



## Ruchi Uberai

Director  
Amritara Hotels & Resorts

Having worked her way up, Ruchi initially joined Amritara as General Manager for Amritara Poovath Heritage Haveli, and was heading the operations of the property for three years. Having learnt the ropes, Ruchi took on the mantle of the hotel brand as its Director. The brand has grown by leaps and bounds under her leadership.

**A**mrithara Hotels has come a long way from its inception as a hotel marketing and representation firm fifteen years ago and is now a full-fledged hotel brand with a network of thirteen functioning hotels across India.

When Ruchi joined the board in 2018, the thinking caps were donned by the management and soon the results started showing up with an even spread of properties across the country. Ruchi explains, "The focus was not on plain standardisation of product across a star rating or category but to create experiences."

Even during the tough times faced by the hospitality and travel sectors over the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ruchi rolled up her sleeves and took advantage of this low period to Improve their Internal systems, reservation and property management systems, enhance computing technology and train their staff.

As a leader, Ruchi believes in listening to her employees' ideas, she offers feedback and values their inputs. This not just empowers your team, but also builds a high-performing team. Ruchi considers the ability to control emotions and stay calm and collected when faced with hardships,

the key quality of a leader. This is especially true today when many teams are turning to their leaders for the optimism that they are rapidly losing. When it comes to empowering people, one needs to maintain positivity at all times.



*"The emotions you express will affect those around you. If you want positive, enthusiastic team members, then you have to show up as a positive and enthusiastic individual too."*

She strongly believes that leaders now must thrive in an atmosphere that's fluid and more democratised. Connecting and collaborating intensively across the organisation is necessary for success. Today, teams are cross-functional and can connect and interlink through virtual platforms and tools in increasingly authentic and intuitive ways that were previously unimaginable. According to Ruchi, a collaborative leader should place team needs and priorities above personal needs and priorities. A successful leader today actively involves others in making decisions that affect them and, likewise, they give credit to others where credit is due.

**Next Vacation:** She is travelling to Sydney for a month to visit her sister, who she hasn't met in over two years.





## Rashmi Chadha

Founder & CEO  
Wovoyage

**Built on the foundation of Women Friendly Travel, with Wovoyage, Rashmi's vision is to build an accessible and safe platform for women's wanderlust worldwide. With her entrepreneur prowess and business acumen, she carved the niche for herself in the travel industry.**

**An avid wanderlust, Rashmi Chadha is also a TEDx speaker and has won many accolades lately for the leadership role across the industry.**

Rashmi's woman-centric travel start-up, Wovoyage, creates women-friendly customised packages and assigns them expert women guides. Making it safe and fearless travel for women, at the same time, the organisation also empowers Indian women with employment.

Rashmi engages with industry leaders, peers, travellers as a speaker at many platforms to communicate and have a deeper engagement. A few places where she has been a speaker include TEDx, Harvard University, OTM, ITB India, Digital Travel Apac, etc.

Rashmi says, at work team members inspire each other, and that is how the team functions through innovative, fresh, and creative ideas. Industry-wise, being women's travel aggregator platform, they have collaborated with many local women in tier II and III cities who run this business module. It is to support and encourage them and build a strong and

safe community for everyone. They have trained women partnered with them, including group tour leaders and women cab services. This is empowering many women to come forward and contribute to the travel and tourism industry, create employment, and provide safe and smooth travel for women. Rashmi mentions that they have a lot of women content creators who are now joining them to take on this journey and encourage many other women.



*"I believe having a clear vision for the future and adapting with time is the most I resonate with. I don't believe in hierarchy; my focus has always been on creating an equal and safe platform."*

Rashmi believes that empathy is essential in every aspect of life, from business to personal life. Having a great team and believing in them with one's vision, and trusting them with it, is the key. In the end, all of us are humans. So, a mixed bag of business practicality and empathy does wonders and benefits both.

**Next Vacation:** Rashmi is travelling to Japan to see cherry blossoms.



Leadership is about the team – the culture they keep and embrace, it's about empathy for your customers, clients, employees and the communities where you do business, it's about doing the right thing for the right reasons, being confident enough to take risks and responsible enough to think of those who your decisions and risks may affect.

– Kat Cole, President and COO, Athletic Greens



# Flying to Kuwait & beyond

from

Delhi | Mumbai | Hyderabad | Ahmedabad | Kochi



Delhi 011-43640481/82 | Mumbai 9122-49701181 / 9122-49700865  
Hyderabad +91 40-48529552/53 | Ahmedabad +91 -079-26425014/15  
Kochi 0484-4863640 / +91 9847843300

  
jazeeraairways.com

الجزيرة  
**Jazeera.**





# Anticipating the post-COVID tourist surge

Sankha Subhra Devbarman, Regional Director (Northeast), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has been dedicated and sincerely looking after the tourism industry's promotional activities and developmental work. While each of the eight Northeastern states, including Sikkim, has specific unique features, Devbarman is confident the Northeast region is starting to get its due attention and the post-COVID era is going to be a promising time for tourism. TTJ interacts with him as he speaks about his achievements in his tenure and throws light on some surprising tourist offerings in the region.

**Partha Chatterjee**

**T**he Northeastern region of India, comprising the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim, is endowed with diverse tourist attractions and products. The region's varied topography, its flora and fauna, the ethnic communities with their rich heritage of ancient traditions and lifestyles, its festivals, arts, and crafts, make it a holiday destination waiting to be explored.

While everyone has understood the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry not only in our country but all over the globe, Devbarman emphasises that the Northeast region, being one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country, has suffered even more. However, in the post-COVID scenario, they all hope that the region will make a remarkable recovery as there are huge prospects for tourism.

First of all, revenge tourism will be at the forefront as people are expected to move out of the four corners of their homes after the stressful and gruelling times in the pandemic. Secondly, with people wanting to stay away from crowded places, the Northeast has tremendous potential because ninety per cent of tourism products in the region are all nature-based. So, the respective tourism

departments of the states are anticipating a surge in tourists who would love to be on their own and enjoy the rolling hills, cascading water sources, untouched and verdant greenery, and the amazing and endemic flora and fauna.

An author of several books, Sankha Subhra Devbarman is also one of the most celebrated poets and novelists of contemporary literature in Northeast India. He won the prestigious Stellar Icon award of Times of India and was awarded the title of "Pride of North East" by another leading organisation for his literary contribution to the region. His work relies heavily on nature, flora and fauna, the struggle for survival of indigenous communities, their nature-based culture, folklore, etc. Devbarman, throughout his literary journey, has received several notable and prestigious awards and continues to be recognised as a leading voice of indigenous literature by literary organisations.

Devbarman also says that there are still many unknown or lesser-known places in the Northeast, e.g., in Assam, everyone knows about the Kaziranga National Park. However, there are still many tourists who don't know about Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, which is nestled in the grasslands of Assam. This is also the dwelling place of the Greater Indian one-horned Rhinoceroses with its highest population worldwide. It is landlocked by

Assamese villages with the traditional Assamese culture on every side of it. It is also a place where many migratory birds stop over for winters. Overall, the terrain of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is a breath-taking experience for a traveller or an admirer of nature. The seven sister states of Northeast and Sikkim are filled with many lesser-known destinations and great experiences.

Earlier, the Northeast has historically suffered from poor transport connectivity within and between the seven states as well as with the rest of India. Presently, the government of India is very keen on developing road, rail, and flight connectivity. Currently, all north-eastern states barring Sikkim are getting connected through rail. While capitals of Assam, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh are already connected, work to extend similar connectivity in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya are underway.

So, with gradual improved infrastructure and connectivity, it is sure to draw many tourists to India's north-eastern States and, looking at the current traction, footfalls in the picturesque region are expected to grow multi-fold. Also, the second or third-time travellers, who are now discovering the attractions of the Northeast, are now embarking on their journey to understand the region's lifestyle, culture, and cuisine.

Speaking of his nature of work and responsibilities while heading the region,



Devbarman says, "First of all, let me tell you, it is quite a challenging task for me. As in-charge of the India Tourism Office, it is up to me to promote and organise marketing activities like tourism events. The Northeast states hold the International Tourism Mart (ITM) an annual event with the objective of highlighting the tourism potential of the region in the domestic and international markets. It brings together the tourism business fraternity and entrepreneurs from the eight Northeastern States. We had organised ITM in 2018 in Agartala, Tripura. Basically, the state has almost zero or no heavy industry, and so infrastructure wise it is completely nil. But considering the magnitude of the Mart, we had organised it successfully with our limited resources. Of course, I got huge support from my colleagues and from the Minister of Tourism and without their support and assistance, it would not have been possible."

ITM witnesses the participation of tour operators, resort proprietors, travel and tour companies, and vloggers who do travel and food shows. Thus, organising it in a place like Agartala is bound to get international mileage and exposure. Because in the ITM, many international buyers also come, and along with the media and vloggers, it becomes a platform to highlight and publicise the state's tourism potential, which otherwise is not much known to others.

Devbarman continues, "We once again have successfully organised ITM in 2021 in the month of November in Kohima, Nagaland. So, during my tenure, both events were very successful. But the important aspect is that you should not forget these states are having zero infrastructure and limited resources. Even in these circumstances, we managed to do pull the shows successfully. Money was not a problem, but infrastructure certainly was. It is due to our strong will that we could attempt this feat in both states."

During his tenure, the NE Regional Office Guwahati organised the first plogging trek along the Bailey trail in West Kameng and Tawang districts in association with The Arunachal Mountaineering and Adventure Sports Association (AMASA). The week-long trek-route-cleaning-drive, touching nearly 15000 ft above sea level, was organised as a part of the 'Paryatan Parv' to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi from 3 to 12 October. The 12-member team led by the famed mountaineer Anshu Jamsenpa comprised three members from Ladhak, two from Assam and seven from host state Arunachal Pradesh. Anshu Jamsenpa became the world's first woman to scale

Mount Everest twice in five days in 2017. Arunachal-born Jamsenpa was honored with the Padma Shri award. The most satisfying thing for Devbarman, is that the honourable Prime Minister specially mentioned this particular adventure tour in his 'Maan Ki Baat' program.

Another thing that Devbarman wanted to highlight was the village of Vangchhia. Hundreds of megalithic stone sentinels or menhirs have stood guard in this little village for years. As in 2010, Indian archaeologists recently made an exciting discovery in Mizoram and the jungle-clad remains of a lost civilisation that may hold the key to hitherto unknown facts about northeast India. Located close to the Myanmar border, the lush forested village of Vangchhia lies nestled in the Champhai-Farkawn mountain range of Mizoram. Devburman is keen and trying to put the village on the tourism map of the Northeast.

Also, there is Bat viewpoint at Bagma in Tripura. Nowhere in the world can one see such a unique park to preserve one of the most interesting mammal species. To attract more tourists to the state, the Tourism department and the state Forest department of Tripura have set up a bat viewpoint at Bagma in Gomati district, about 55 km from the state capital Agartala. Bats play critical roles worth billions of dollars as pollinators, seed dispersers, and agents of pest suppression like eating mosquitoes. As bats are very important to maintain the ecological balance and environment, the State Government has taken initiatives to save those bats and develop this place as a tourist destination.

One more destination that Devburmann mention is Mayong village. Mayong, popularly known as 'Land of Black Magic', is a small but strange village on the bank of the Brahmaputra, full of mysteries and prevailing silence. The village is situated 40 km away from Guwahati in the Marigaon district of Assam. For many years, the village has been attracting the attention of tourists because of its mysterious past.

Another sight to behold is that of the migration of Amur falcons over the northeast region. Every year, thousands of Amur falcons descend upon the Doyang reservoir of Nagaland. Sheltered by hills that are steep and surrounded by water, the falcons roost here for about a month, foraging on insects and building their body mass so they can fly across the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean into Africa. These seasoned travellers journey annually, from Siberia and northern China to Somalia, Kenya, and South Africa. Studies show they cover



upwards of 20,000 km every year.

According to Devbarman, the Northeast is a treasure trove for the wildlife and certain wild animals are exclusively available only in that region. You cannot see them in other parts of the world. The rare two horn rhinos, spectacled monkeys, marbled cats, clouded leopards, yellow-throated marten, and snow leopards are exclusive to the region.

Another important aspect that Devbarman noticed in his tenure was that, in the states of Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, there were no tour operators or travel agents, or hoteliers who are approved by the Ministry of Tourism. Devbarman has now taken a personal interest and is trying to convince tourism stakeholders and to get themselves approved by the Ministry of Tourism. Due to his efforts, barring Mizoram, all states in Northeast India now have Ministry's approved tour operators, travel agents, hotels, and B&B establishments.

With the same, their business can have some credibility and authenticity. Once approved, they are likely to be on a global mailing list, and the people will connect with from every corner of the globe. Tourists, travellers, and other stakeholders will come to know about their existence. It will certainly enhance the status and prestige of their business and credibility.



# Sighting the Rare, Elusive, and the Endemics of Northeast India

Animals are hard to spot in Northeast India due to the dense forest and canopy in the region, and sighting them creates a buzz with wildlife enthusiasts, conservationists, photographers and tourists alike.

Prashant Nayak

If you speak about wildlife, and especially rich wildlife in terms of both fauna and flora, you will love to pronounce Northeast India as the ideal place in India for its wilderness and beauty. This region, rich in diverse flora and fauna, is among the last remaining dense rainforests of the Indian Subcontinent. During the trip to the Northeast, there are chances to see numerous restricted-range species of animals and birds. Here is an account of some interesting animals and birds out of the many across the region, which make a rare and truly memorable sighting.

### Snow Leopard: the grey ghost of the Himalayas

One rarely sees the endangered snow leopard in the wild. The Indian snow leopard population was estimated at roughly 200–600 individuals living across about 25 protected areas and around 4000 individuals in the Indian Himalayan ranges. Potential snow leopards habitat in the Northeast is in the states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

Snow leopards show several adaptations



for living in a cold, mountainous environment. Their bodies are stocky, their fur is thick, and their ears are small and rounded, all of which help to minimise heat loss. Snow leopards' tails are long and flexible, helping them to maintain their balance, which is very important in the rocky terrain they inhabit. Their tails are also very thick due to fat storage and are very thickly covered with fur, which allows them to be used as a blanket to protect their faces when asleep. They are known for being extremely secretive and well camouflaged. In the Himalayas, it preys mostly on bharals (Himalayan blue sheep) or the Ibex.

### Red Panda: the arboreal red fox

Red pandas, like giant pandas, are bamboo eaters. Despite these similarities and their shared name, the two species are not closely

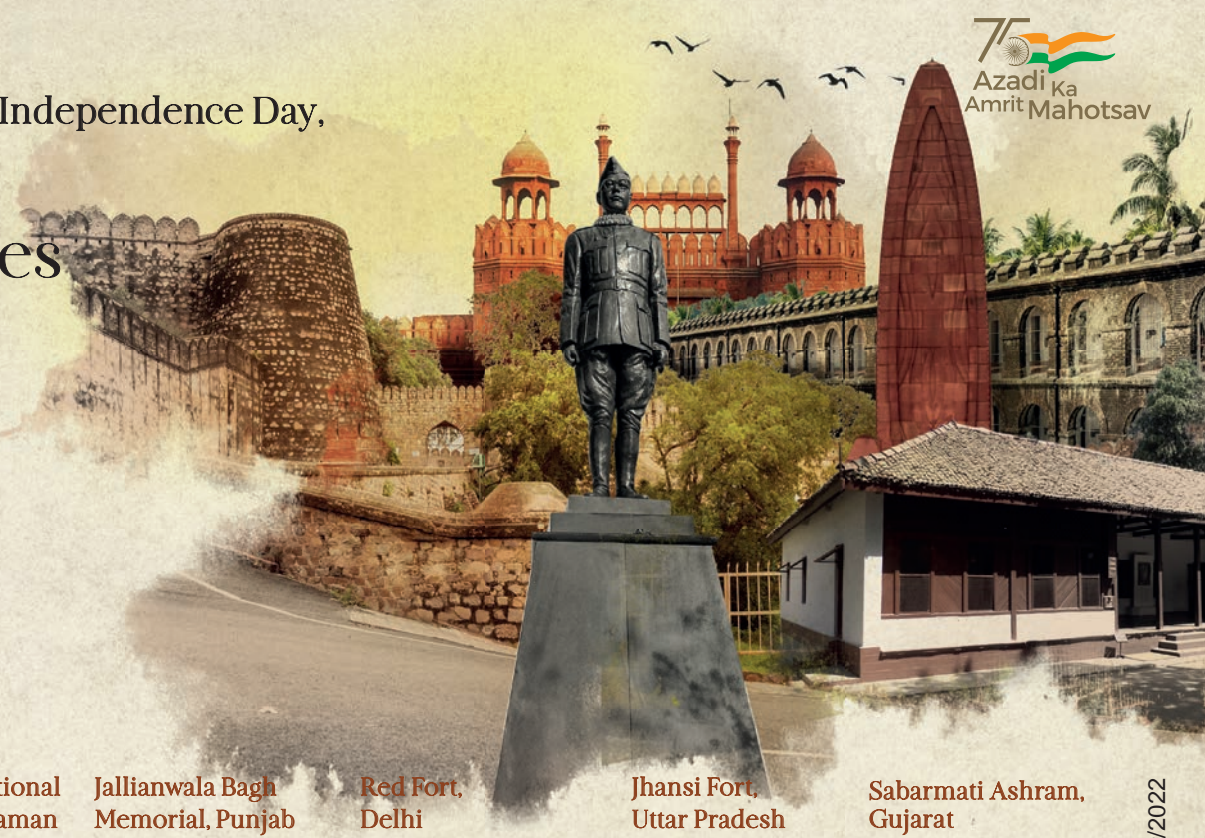


related. Red pandas are much smaller than giant pandas and are the only living member of their taxonomic family.

The endangered red pandas live in temperate climates, in deciduous and coniferous forests, usually with an understorey of bamboo and hollow trees. Of the two kinds

As India celebrates the 75th Independence Day, Let's revisit the incredible stories of courage and valour.

On the 75th anniversary of our independence, let's set out and explore those historic sites that stood witness to our freedom struggle and remember the countless sacrifices done by those who dedicated their lives and resources for the country.



#### INA Memorial, Imphal

Dedicated to the soldiers of the Indian National Army, it pays tribute to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the nation.

#### Cellular Jail National Memorial, Andaman

A former British prison, the Cellular Jail now serves as a shrine to the political dissidents it once imprisoned.

#### Jallianwala Bagh Memorial, Punjab

This sacred pilgrimage site honours the fallen victims of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.

#### Red Fort, Delhi

On August 15, 1947, India's first Prime Minister hoisted the national flag at the Lahori Gate here.

#### Jhansi Fort, Uttar Pradesh

The Fort stands as a tribute to the warrior queen Rani Lakshmbai who fought against the British.

#### Sabarmati Ashram, Gujarat

Home to Mahatma Gandhi and the ideology that set India free - non-violence.



Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

Incredible India

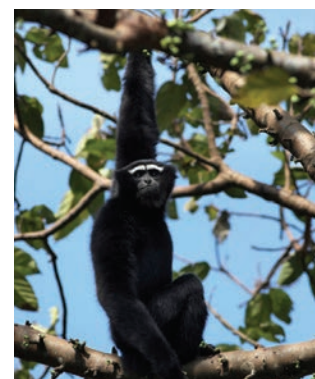




of red pandas in the world, only one variety is found in India. The beautiful and endangered species, the red panda is also known by the name of red fox or the fire fox in China. The red panda, because of their low-calorie diet, do little more than eat and sleep. Similar to the giant panda, the red panda cannot digest cellulose and therefore needs to eat massive quantities of bamboo to survive. They also feed on small mammals, insects, flowers, and berries.

Red pandas are declining over much of their range due to habitat loss and fragmentation. India has protected areas with Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal exclusive for these animals. Outside these national parks, the Red Panda is also spotted in some wildlife sanctuaries, such as Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary, Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary, Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary and Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary. But given their overall small number, it is indeed difficult to spot them in the wild.

## Hoolock Gibbon: the only ape found in India



Often confused and also debated as one species, both western and the eastern hoolock gibbon inhabit different ranges in India. The western hoolock gibbon has a much wider

range, as it is found in all the states of the Northeast, restricted between the south of the Brahmaputra River and east of the Dibang river. The eastern hoolock gibbon inhabits specific pockets of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India. Outside India, it is found in China, Eastern Bangladesh, and northwest Myanmar.

Known for their vigorous vocal displays and with long and slender arms, hoolock gibbons are swift creatures, barely needing to step on the ground. They swing from tree to tree, covering up to six meters in just one swing! Their diet comprises mainly of fruits, but they sometimes also consume leaves, shoots, and flowers.

## Clouded Leopard: the smallest of the world's big cats

Named after a cloud-shaped pattern on their skin, clouded leopards dwell in the cloud forests of Southeast Asia and are one of the most ancient cat species. However, they are neither a true great cat nor a true small cat, because they cannot roar or purr. In India, it occurs in Sikkim, northern West Bengal, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. It is the State animal of Meghalaya.

Like all wild cats, clouded leopards are carnivores. Their chief preys are gibbons, macaques, slow loris, small deer, birds, wild boars and rodents, which they ambush from the trees or stalk from the bushes. Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, it has been added to India's Recovery Programme for Critically Endangered Species to aid more research and strengthen conservation efforts.

## The Indian Rhino: the battle for survival is on for the grey gentle giants

Once widespread across the entire northern part of the Indian sub-continent, the greater one-horned rhino or 'Indian rhino' populations plummeted as they were hunted for sport or killed as agricultural pests. This



pushed the species very close to extinction and by the start of the 20th century, around 200 wild greater one-horned rhinos remained.

The recovery of the greater one-horned rhino is among the greatest conservation success stories in Asia. Thanks to strict protection and management from Indian and Nepalese wildlife authorities, the greater one-horned rhino was brought back from the brink of extinction.

# ASSAM

A hotspot for wildlife tourism with over 25 national parks and sanctuaries, Assam is home to the one-horned Rhinoceros, Tiger and lush green tropical rainforests. It spans the fertile plains of the mighty Brahmaputra. Fine silk, woven mats, cane and bamboo furniture, and world-class tea are some added attractions. Local events and festivals include Bihu, Baishagu, Ambubachi Mela, etc.

**Places To Visit** Dibrugarh, Guwahati (Kamakhya Temple, Nabagraha Temple, Umananda Temple, Museum Zoo), Jorhat, Madan Kamdev (Vaishnavite Monasteries), Sivasagar (Rang Ghar), Sualkuchi, Tezpur, etc. Wildlife sanctuaries in Assam include, Kaziranga, Manas, Orang, Nameri, Pobitora, etc.

**Capital** Dispur

**Website** <http://www.assamtourism.gov.in>

अतुल्य ! भारत  
Incredible India

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav



**Indiatourism Guwahati**  
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

Asom Paryatan Bhawan, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati-781008, Assam

Tel: 0361-2737554, 0361-2737556

Email: [indtourguwahati@nic.in](mailto:indtourguwahati@nic.in)

Website: [www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org), [www.tourism.gov.in](http://www.tourism.gov.in)

**North-Eastern Region**

Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim



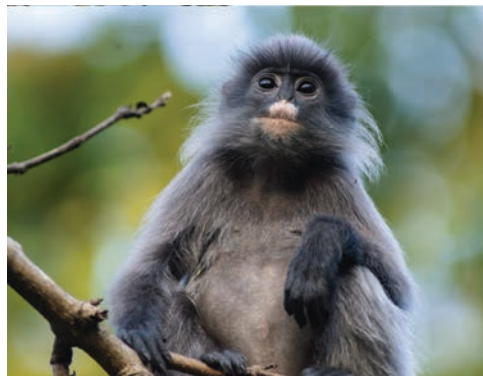
Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India



The Indian state of Assam is home to the largest population of greater one-horned rhinos, with more than 90 per cent in Kaziranga National Park. Since 2008, the Indian government has been locating these rhinos from Kaziranga National Park and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary to Assam's Manas National Park on the India-Bhutan border.

## Phayre's Leaf Monkey: the spectacular one

Phayre's Leaf Monkey is known for its beautiful 'spectacled' looks and was once widely distributed in Southeast Asia. However,



this species is listed as endangered as it has lost more than 50 per cent of its population in the last 35 years. This is mainly because of loss of habitat due to cultivation, timber logging, and hunting.

The only single species in India prefer primary and secondary evergreen and semi-evergreen forest, mixed moist deciduous forest, but is also found in bamboo-dominated areas, light woodlands, and near tea plantations. This is a predominantly arboreal,

diurnal, and leaf-eating species.

Tripura is a stronghold of this species in India where it is found mainly in three protected areas: Sipahijala, Trishna and Gumti wildlife sanctuaries.

## Sangai Deer: Manipur's dancing deer

Sangai, or the Indian Eld's deer, or the brow-antlered deer or the dancing deer, is one of the three subspecies of Eld's deer found in South and South-East Asia. The deer was thought to have gone extinct in 1951 in India



until a remnant population was rediscovered in the 1950s at the south-eastern fringe of Manipur's Loktak lake in a survey conducted under the auspices of the IUCN.

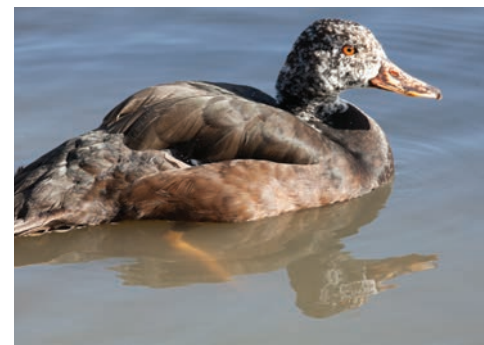
Sangai is found only in Manipur. It lives in the marshy wetland in the Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLNP), the only floating park in the world, thus feeding on a variety of water-living plants, grasses, herbaceous plants, and shoots. The KLNP is an integral part of the Loktak Lake and is characterised by many floating decomposed plant materials locally called phumdis. Sangai is the state

animal of Manipur and has been listed as an endangered species by the IUCN.

## White-Winged Wood Duck: more heard than seen

One of the most endangered birds in the world is the white-winged wood duck. It was once distributed widely across Northeast India and south-east Asia. But now, only about 800 survive in the wild, of which about 450 are present in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. In India, the duck is limited to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Due to its ghostly call, it is called 'Deo Hans' or Spirit Duck in Assamese, which spooks villagers who often come to collect firewood in the forests.

This is an odd shy duck with a distinctly 'farmyard' appearance. It is not easy to sight a white-winged wood duck, as if you make even the slightest sound, these shy birds will disappear. Extensive white wing patches are most noticeable when the bird is in flight. The white-winged wood duck is no ordinary bird. For Ornithologists, sighting one is akin to winning a lottery. Every year, the Nameri National Park in Sonitpur District is thronged by birders who come just to see the 'blackbird with the white patch'.



# SIKKIM

Infused with ancient history and Buddhist mysticism, Sikkim's mountains are a paradise for trekkers and adventurers. Trekking trails lead to hidden lakes and ancient monasteries. The state has some of the world's wildest rafting spots.

**Places to visit** **East Sikkim** - Gangtok (Do Drul Chorten, Enchey Monastery, Himalayan Zoological Park, M.G. Marg. Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Ridge Garden, Tashi View Point) Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary, Kyongnosia Alpine Sanctuary, Nathula Pass, Rumtek, Tsomgo Lake, etc.

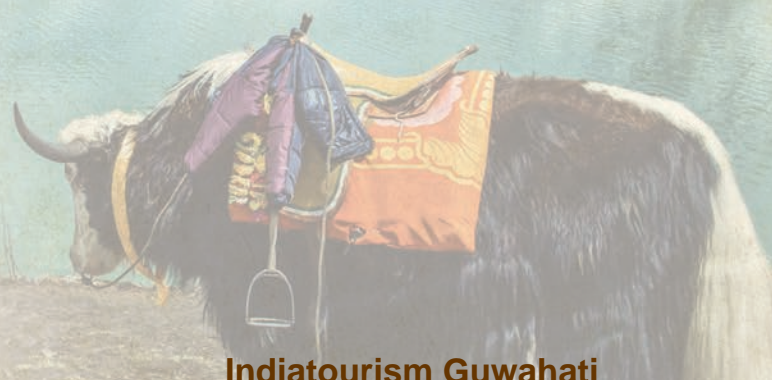
**North Sikkim** - Chungthang, Khangchendzonga National Park, Singba Rhododendron Sanctuary, Yumthang (Gurudongmar Lake), South Sikkim - Namchi, Tndong Hill, etc, West Sikkim - Pelling, Pemayangtse Monastery, Rabdentse Ruins, Yuksom, etc.

**Capital** Gangtok

**Website** <http://www.sikkimtourism.gov.in>

अमृतमहोत्सव  
Incredible India

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav



**Indiatourism Guwahati**

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

Asom Paryatan Bhawan, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati-781008, Assam

Tel: 0361-2737554, 0361-2737556

Email: [indtourguwahati@nic.in](mailto:indtourguwahati@nic.in)

Website: [www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org), [www.tourism.gov.in](http://www.tourism.gov.in)

**North-Eastern Region**

Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim



Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India



# Unveiling the astounding wildlife at Tripura's amazing sanctuaries

Tripura may be a small state, but it is loaded with richness and boasts of varieties of nature and diverse cultures. About two-thirds area of the state is under forest cover, where different species of trees, orchids, birds, and wildlife are found. Tripura offers excellent opportunities for eco-friendly tourism, and the different wildlife sanctuaries in the state offer various attractions to tourists.

**Prashant Nayak**

**L**ocated in the Northeast of India, Tripura is surrounded on north, west, and south by Bangladesh. To the east, it borders Mizoram and Assam. It is a wonderland of natural beauty, complete with meandering streams, rivers, deep valleys, and mountains. Tripura lies in hilly terrain with plenty of rain and is thus rich and abundant in flora and fauna. The many wildlife sanctuaries in Tripura are an abode to many animals, birds, insects, and plant kingdoms. There are four well-known sanctuaries in the state: Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary, Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary, Rowa Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Gumti Wildlife Sanctuary.

Located 45 minutes out of Agartala, Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary is a major attraction in Tripura, particularly for wildlife enthusiasts. The area has been developed as a wildlife sanctuary, national park, and academic and research centre. The Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary is the home of Rhesus Macaque, Jungle Fowl, Pigtailed Macaque, Clouded Leopard, Capped Langur, Slow Loris, Barking Deer,

Civets, Wild boar and many more. The crab-eating mongoose, last sighted about 72 years ago in India, can be seen at the Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary. Here, one can also find the unique bespectacled monkey, Phayre's Leaf-eating Monkey. The Clouded Leopard National Park, India's first dedicated wildlife park to Clouded Leopards, is located inside the Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary. There are varieties of flora and fauna found here, apart from 150 species of both local and migratory birds. It is a great place for indulging in bird photography.

The Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary, 111 km from Agartala, established in 1988, has several perennial water rivulets, water bodies, and grassland. The Indian Gaur (Bison) is an attraction of this sanctuary. The Rajbari National Park is situated in the Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary with an aim to conserve the gaurs surviving here. Apart from it, there are varieties of Birds, Deer, Hoolock Gibbons, Golden Langurs, Capped Langurs, Pheasants, and many other animals and reptiles. It is also one of the strongholds for Phayre's Leaf-eating Monkey.

Another important wildlife reserve in Tripura, the Rowa Wildlife Sanctuary, is situated on the northern fringes of Tripura. Despite its small size, it has gained a great deal of popularity over the years because of its natural beauty, restored with the active cooperation of the local community. Around 150 km from Agartala, the sanctuary is particularly rich in birds and reptiles. The sanctuary is also home to a bewildering variety of plant species, including several species of medicinal value. The Rowa Wildlife Sanctuary is a place full of nature and peace, tranquillity, and a nice place if one is looking to relax amidst nature.

Located amid lush greenery in the Southeast corner of Tripura, the Gumti Wildlife Sanctuary pleases everyone with its varied species of flora and fauna. Some 100 km from Agartala, the sanctuary shelters elephants, sambar, bison, barking deer, serow, wild goat, and many more. Reptiles have also found a home in the sanctuary. While in the sanctuary you can also spot different residential and migratory birds like the lesser adjutant stork, darter, and many more.

अद्भुत!भारत  
Incredible India

## MANIPUR

Manipur's rich culture excels in martial arts, dance (the Ras Leela) and theatre. Apart from breathtakingly beautiful orchids and Sangai deer, the state is famous for its hand-woven textiles, local pottery and Manipuri dolls. One can savour the Kabok cuisine and enjoy the festivities during Yaoshang, Chelraoba (New Year), Halkru Hitongba (Boat Race Festival), Ningol Chakouba, KUT (Festival of Kuki-Chin-Mizo), etc.

**Places to visit** Bishnupur (INA Memorial at Moirang, Keibul Lamjao National Park, Leimaram Falls, Loktak Lake, Loukoi Pat), Chandel (Yaingangpokpi-Lokchao Wildlife Sanctuary), Churachandpur, Imphal (Ima Market, Kangla Fort, Lagthabal's Palace. Shree Shree Govindajee Temple, War Cemeteries, Manipur Zoological Garden), Tamengiong (Bunung Meadow, Tharon Cave, Zellad Lake), Thoubal (Khongjom War Memorial), Ukhrul, etc.

**Capital** Imphal

**Website** <http://www.tourismmanipur.nic.in>

**Indiatourism Guwahati**  
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India  
Asom Paryatan Bhawan, Paltan Bazar,  
Guwahati-781008, Assam  
Tel: 0361-2737554, 0361-2737556  
Email: [indtourguwahati@nic.in](mailto:indtourguwahati@nic.in)  
Website: [www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org)  
[www.tourism.gov.in](http://www.tourism.gov.in)

**North-Eastern Region**  
Arunachal, Assam, Manipur,  
Meghalaya, Mizoram,  
Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim

## TRIPURA

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

Tripura has a long historic past. It is delicately beautiful with a legacy of fine palaces Hindu and Buddhist monuments, projected forests and offers numerous cultural experiences. One can also enjoy festivals and events such as Kharchi, Orange Festival, etc.

**Places to visit** Agartala (Benuban Vihar, Gadu Mia's Mosque, Jagannath Temple, State Museum, Tribal Museum, Ujjayanta Palace, Uma Maheswar Temple, Malanch Niwas, Rabindra Kanan, Portuguese Church), Deotamura, Dumboor Lake, Jampui Hill, Kamalasagar, Neermahal, Pilak, Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary, Udaipur (Bhuvaneswari Temple, Tripurasundari Temple), Unakoti, etc.

**Capital** Agartala

**Website** <http://www.tripuratourism.gov.in>





# Extraordinary and unique wildlife encounters that make Northeast India more memorable

Due to its fair share of lush greens and thick jungles with ample marshes and water resources, Northeast India is home to a breath-taking amount of rare species of plants, animals, and birds. Attracting nature lovers and wildlife admirers, Northeast India gives one a chance to witness some of the most magnificent creatures and mesmerising sights. So, when you plan your next visit to the seven sister states, ensure that you get a chance to see the wildlife marvels listed below.

**Prashant Nayak**

## Be there to witness the epic journey of one of the world's smallest raptors

Every year, from late September till the end of November, the Doyang reservoir in Nagaland, India, gets its due share of attention as tourists flock to witness the spectacular stopover of almost one million Amur Falcons on their longest winter migration of almost 22,000 km from the Amur region of Northeast Asia to Southern Africa and back.

After arriving in Nagaland, they spend around two months feasting on insects. Pangti, a small village closest to the Doyang reservoir, is famous for its Amur Falcon roosting site. The congregation of these raptors is a sight to behold as Doyang reservoir probably hosts the single largest congregation of Amur falcons recorded anywhere in the world.

In 2012, Pangti received global criticism over the

reported killing of thousands of the migratory Falcons which come to roost here. A year later, Pangti made headlines again, and the number of Amur Falcons hunted in the region that year had gone down to zero. The village locals have recounted the story of this transition from hunting to conservation in the documentary The Pangti Story, which won a National Film Award in 2018 in the category of Best Environmental Film. Amur Falcons are a protected species because of many conservatory efforts and global outcry over the years.

Amur Falcons breed in Southeast Russia and northern China, migrating to the west through India and across the Arabian Sea to southern Africa, where they spend their winters. They make a round-trip of at least 20,000 km every year and travel between their breeding and wintering grounds. In between, they also take a break near the western

coast of India before starting their non-stop flight to Southern Africa and Kenya.

Amur falcons also congregate in other parts of North Eastern India, like the Tamenglong district in Manipur during the passage migration.

## Spot the lovely Shirui Lily, endemic to the Shirui hills of Manipur

The State Flower of Manipur, Shirui Lily, also called Siroy Lily or Liliun Macklinae, is a rare pinkish-white flower found only in the Shirui Hills range in the Ukhrul district of Manipur, approximately 83 kilometers away from Imphal. The flower was named after Jean Macklin, the wife of Dr. Frank Kingdon Ward, who spotted the flower in 1946 while collecting botanical specimens.

The Shirui Hills is known for this unique species of land-lily, which grows at the height of about 8,500

अतुल्य!मिरा  
Incredible India

## ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Arunachal Pradesh offers picturesque peaks and scenic rivers. Beautiful Buddhist monasteries and almost impenetrable deciduous forests add to the mysticism possessed by this 'Land of Dawn Lit Mountains'. It also provides excellent opportunities for adventure sports like camping and rafting. While here, you can enjoy a sip of the local drink 'Apong' or be a part of events like Losar and Saka Dawa.

**Places to Visit** Akashiganga, Bhisimak Nagar (archaeological ruins), Bomdila (Crafts Centre), Itanagar (Ganga Lake, Jawaharlal Nehru, State Museum, Ita Fort), Malinithan, Namdapha National Park, Tawang (Buddhist Monastery, Nuranang Waterfalls, Sela Pass, Sangetser Lake), Tezu (Parshuram Kund), Ziro (fish-cum-paddy culture, Apatani tribe), Tippl, etc.

**Capital** Itanagar

**Website** <http://www.arunachaltourism.com>

**Indiatourism Guwahati**  
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India  
Asom Paryatan Bhawan, Paltan Bazar,  
Guwahati-781008, Assam  
Tel: 0361-2737554, 0361-2737556  
Email: [indtourguwahati@nic.in](mailto:indtourguwahati@nic.in)  
Website: [www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org)  
[www.tourism.gov.in](http://www.tourism.gov.in)

**North-Eastern Region**  
Arunachal, Assam, Manipur,  
Meghalaya, Mizoram,  
Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim

## MEGHALAYA

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

With its enchanting hill stations and picturesque landscaping, Meghalaya, which means Adobe of the Clouds, is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The festivals of the state include Shad Suk Mynsiem, Behdeinkhlam, Nongkrem Dance Festival and Wangala Dance (Harvest Festival).

**Places to Visit** Balpakram National Park, Cherrapunjee (Oainthlen Falls, Mawsmal Cave, Nohkalikai Waterfalls, Nohsngithiang Fall), Dawki, Jakrem (hot water springs) Mawlynneeg Village (cleanest village in India), Mawphlang Sacred Forest, Ranikor, Shillong (Butterfly Museum, Elephant Falls, Lady Hydari Park, Mawkdok, Shillong Peak, Sohpeibneng Peak, Umiyam Lake, Ward's Lake), Tura (Nokrek National Park), etc.

**Capital** Shillong

**Website** <http://meghtourism.gov.in>

 Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India



ft above sea level. The flower is today considered an endangered species. The Lily plant is about a foot tall, and its flower resembles a bell shape. It blooms only from April to June every year. They blossom at their best from 15th May to 5th June, marking it as its peak season and is the best time to visit. The hills of Shirui commands a panoramic view of the district of Ukhrul, and during flowering seasons the bright lilies cover the stretch of the Shirui Hill range. The scenic view of the hill range covered with lilies makes it a wonderful picture-perfect location. The Sirohi National Park in the vicinity protects and preserves the enthralling lilies plants, including the other flora and fauna of the region.

Before the pandemic, The Shirui Lily Festival used to be organised to celebrate the State Flower of Manipur. The event is a part of Manipur Tourism's efforts to develop and implement sustainable and responsible tourism in the State and save and increase awareness about Manipur's Shirui Lily found only in the Shirui Hills.

### Keep a lookout for the spectacular Hornbills

The Northeast region of India has the highest diversity of Hornbills, with five species out of the nine species of hornbills in India.

The Great Hornbill, the largest member of the hornbill family, occurs in north, northeast, and south India, apart from Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. Great pied hornbill has impressive size and colour, found in the Himalayan Forest, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India. It is the state bird of both Kerala and Arunachal Pradesh.

Within India, the rarest hornbills, the Wreathed Hornbill, Rufous-necked Hornbill, and the White-

throated Brown Hornbill or Austen's Brown hornbill are restricted to Northeast India, showing their biogeographical affinity with South-east Asia.

The wreathed hornbill is found in Northeast India with some geographical variation in the appearance of Southeast Asia. The wreathed hornbill looks fierce and not cute. Its cherry-red eyes, almost bare nape and neck, short tail, black wings, a pop of color on the throat, and a large bill make them look intimidating. However, that makes them easily identifiable.

With its huge size, colourful plumage, and conservation status of vulnerable, it is no wonder that the Rufous-necked Hornbill is amongst one of the top birds sought by birders to complete their sighting record list. Like many other hornbills, Rufous-necked depends greatly on mature, large trees for feeding and nesting, as well as large expanses of forest.

The brown hornbill species is also found in the forest of Northeastern Indian states, from lowland plains to deciduous forests. Nandapha National Park of Arunachal Pradesh is the best place to see brown hornbill in India along with Rufous-necked hornbill, Wreathed hornbill and great pied hornbill.

Oriental pied hornbill is found in northern and eastern India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Peninsular Malaysia, etc. Like other hornbill birds, this species is also known for its distinctive beak and casque. The oriental pied hornbills are large, frugivorous, canopy-dwelling birds, inhabiting tropical and subtropical moist lowland forests.

### Discover more at the only wildlife sanctuary

### floating on a lake

Afloat on the waters of the Loktak Lake in Manipur, the Keibul Lamjao National Park is the world's only floating wildlife sanctuary. The park is a wetland ecosystem known for the patches and rings of biomass called phumdis. These phumdis are floating mats of soil, plants, and organic matter at various stages of decomposition, all naturally bundled together. Part submerged, part floating, they are the elements that impart uniqueness to the Loktak ecosystem. These floating meadows dot Two-thirds of the saucer-shaped lake. Tourists who opt for boat rides in the waterways within the phumdis can step on them and feel them pulsate.

The lake provides livelihood for as many as 4,000 fishermen and their families, who live along its banks in small huts. The Meitei people of Manipur consider the lake their mother and the giver of life. According to the folklore of the Meitei, Manipur's culturally dominant indigenous group, the lake was home to India's very own Loch Ness monster, a mythical horned python called Poubi Lai.

Loktak is also Northeast India's largest freshwater lake. Like a jewel in a crown, it is positioned almost centrally in the state of Manipur, which shares a border with Myanmar. The lake ecosystem lies within the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, with a diverse range of flora and fauna. The Lake is located about an hour's drive away from the capital city of Manipur, Imphal. The Loktak Lake, other than its popular Sangai deer, houses more than 700 species of flora and fauna- aquatic and on the ground. Whether it is the diversity of migratory birds or the unique indigenous animals, the region's natural wildlife is truly astounding.

अद्वितीय!भारत  
Incredible India

## MIZORAM

The poetic juxtaposition of mountains, valleys, rivers and lakes seem to be the inspiration behind Mizoram's beautiful music and dance. Even the traditional handloom shawls, hats and bags live up to its exotic reputation. The state is known for its dances like Cheraw or the Bamboo Dance while the events and festivals include Chapchar Kut, Thalfavang Kut and Anthurium Festival.

**Places to visit** Aizawl (Bara Bazar, Bung, Durtlaag Hill, Luangmual Handicrafts Centre Mini Zoo, Paikhai, State Museum), Champhai, Dampa Tiger Reserve, Hmuifang Tlang, Kolasib, Lakes at Tamdil, Rungdil, Rengdil and Palakdil, Vantawng (Waterfall), Lunglei, Phawngpui Blue Mountain National Park, Reiek, Saiha (for Angling), Tawi, Thenzawl Hill Station, Thorangtlang, etc.

**Capital** Aizawl

**Website** <http://www.tourism.mizoram.gov.in>

**Indiatourism Guwahati**  
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India  
Asom Paryatan Bhawan, Paltan Bazar,  
Guwahati-781008, Assam  
Tel: 0361-2737554, 0361-2737556  
Email: [indtourguwahati@nic.in](mailto:indtourguwahati@nic.in)  
Website: [www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org)  
[www.tourism.gov.in](http://www.tourism.gov.in)



Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

## NAGALAND



Nagaland lies nestled amongst the three mountain ranges of Naga, Patkai and Barail that rise from the Brahmaputra Valley. Unique crafts like colourful woven shawls, mats bamboo works, decorative spears and tribal songs and dance distinguish the various tribes. Nagaland is home to 16 major tribes. The major events of the state are Sekrenyi, Moafsu, Tuluni, Tsukheny, Hornbill Festival, etc.

**Places to visit** Dimapur (Diezephe Craft Village, Medieval ruins of the Kachari Kingdom, Rangapahar Reserve Forest/ Zoological Park), Intaki Wildlife Sanctuary, Kohima (Japfu Peak, Kohima Cathedral, Naga Heritage Village, State Museum, World War II Cemetery) Dzukou Valley, Kiphire (Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary, Caves, Longleng), Khonoma Green Village, Mokochung (lakes & springs); Mon, Paren, Phek (Shilloi Lake, waterfalls, caves), Tuensang, Wokha, Zunheboto (Ghosho Bird Sanctuary), etc.

**Capital** Kohima

**Website** <http://www.tourismnagaland.com>

**North-Eastern Region**  
Arunachal, Assam, Manipur,  
Meghalaya, Mizoram,  
Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim





# WILDLIFE TOURISM picks up steam IN EAST

The sprucing of forest infrastructure and the emergence of luxury accommodation options around national parks and sanctuaries are the contributory factors leading to a spurt in wildlife tourism in India. Today's travellers prefer seclusion, practise new norms, feel safe and comfortable to make a round of national parks. TTJ interacts with a host of travel groups and hoteliers in the eastern zone to gather the current trends and the preferences of travellers dominating the wildlife tourism scene in India.

Swaati Chaudhury

**T**he national parks and wildlife sanctuaries across the country remained closed at the onset of lockdown during the pandemic times. With the easing of Covid restrictions, these biodiversity hotspots opened up once again for travellers.

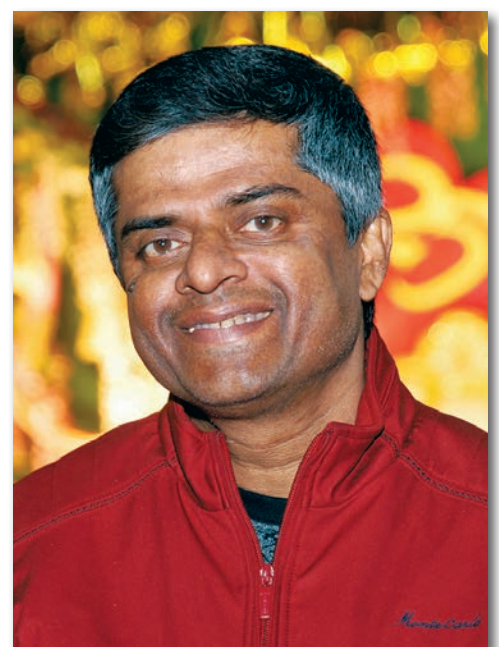
According to Chandramouli Thakur, Proprietor, Miles Tourism, "Wildlife tourism has grown exponentially over the last decade and commands diverse clientele across the length and breadth of India. The four destinations- Bengaluru, Pune, Mumbai and Kolkata have the most number of wildlife travellers. Travellers with sound disposable income spend three nights going for jungle jaunts with the lure of sighting big cats. In the post-pandemic world, when Covid is still raging, more tourists are looking ahead to throng the wildlife sanctuaries since they prefer seclusion. Some of the most happening wildlife destinations for shutterbugs to capture the big cats are Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, Kanha National Park, Bandhavgarh National



▲ Chandramouli Thakur

Park, Pench and Tadoba National Park in the country."

Besides sighting big cats, there are scores of attractions in the national parks that can be made popular. Thakur said, "We have failed to convince the tourists that there exist other wildlife attractions



▲ Rajasish Chatterjee

apart from tigers. God's Own Country has the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve while bird-watching sanctuaries are in Arunachal Pradesh. Tourists throng to Desert National Park in Jaisalmer, Manglajodi Bird Sanctuary in Chilika Lake, Bhigwan Bird Sanctuary and Kumbhargaoon Bird



Sanctuary near Pune. While focusing on big cats, tourists miss out on viewing the jungle landscape and other forests habitat. It is the responsibility of travel companies to generate awareness in the minds of travellers that wildlife is not confined to tiger sightings. Sundarbans Tiger Reserve prides in having sambhars, rare blue crabs and 12 kinds of kingfishers. These days, tourists are quite serious to go for bird-watching, capturing butterflies and lizards in wild with macro photography.”

Wildlife tourism is in high demand in current times. Kaziranga National Park in Assam, Garumara National Park and Jaldapara National Park figure high in the population of one-horned rhinos. Rajasish Chatterjee, Proprietor, Aranya Jungle Resort, informed, “The most happening wildlife destination in the eastern belt of India is undoubtedly Dooars, which has an array of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Leopards can be sighted at Garumara National Park. The population of Indian bison, elephants and one-horned rhinos is on an upward trend in the national park over the last five years owing to high mass awareness created by the West Bengal government and the state forest department. Although Singalila National Park near Darjeeling and Buxa Tiger Reserve have rare sightings of the big cat, their numbers have risen over the past couple of months.” The jungle resort has 16 luxury cottages and organises tours to wildlife sanctuaries with naturalists serving as guides.

Bird-watching is a common practise at Chuk Chuki tower in Garumara National Park. Chatterjee commented, “Bhutan-bound travellers make a brief halt in Dooars. The demand for wildlife tourism will climb in the summer months. There is Gajoldoba wetlands- one of the most cherished projects of the West Bengal government that took off four years ago. Lying in the district of Jalpaiguri, Gajoldoba Wetlands forms home to around 30 species of wetland migratory avian species.”

Wildlife tourism in India is moving on an upward trajectory. Akanksha Garg, Proprietress, Waxpol Hotels and Resorts explained, “Wildlife tourism has grown five-fold in the last decade owing to the major contributing factors like better connectivity, infrastructure and public awareness. Once upon a time, it was the state government and the forest department that made an effort to provide the basic infrastructure like accommodation facilities in forests but in today’s times, be it luxury lodges or eco-tourist resorts, there are accommodation



▲ Akanksha Garg

options for every pocket. At the same time, education is provided to travellers on tree plantation drives and migratory birds in national parks. Our national parks are popularised in the global market.”

When it comes to the hottest wildlife destinations in the country, it is Ranthambhore National Park owing to its proximity to the Golden Triangle. Garg said, “At the moment, Kanha National Park, with its bamboo and mixed deciduous forest figures high in being the most happening destination in the country. The national park scores high with its robust population of tigers and leopards and there are great sightings of swamp deer, barasingha, gaur and jackals all-round the year. The impressive faunal sightings help to generate employment for forest villagers.”

Apart from Tiger sightings, there are other wildlife attractions in national parks that require the much-needed boost. Garg further said, “The jungles of Dooars are reputed for the Indian rhinos and the elephant corridor that are chief attractions for tourists. There is a wide range of butterflies and bees in Dooars forests. Our country is endowed with five big cats, saltwater crocodiles in the Sundarbans, snow leopard in Ladakh’s Hemis National Park, the Royal Bengal tiger in the Sundarbans, Asiatic lion in Gir National Park and clouded leopard in Singalila and Neora Valley National Park. Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary lives up to its reputation across the world, but there are amazing bird sightings in Dooars forests.” Garg also pointed out that wildlife tourism has taken a surge in the pandemic and post-pandemic world since an increasing number of people are adopting hygiene and Covid-safety measures.



▲ Sandeepan Ghosh

Waxpol Hotels and Resorts own luxury lodges in the Sundarbans, Pench National Park and in the vicinity of Chalsa in Dooars. Garg added, “Our resorts nestling in greenery are spread over huge areas and have caught the imagination of travellers since driving holidays are trending in the post-pandemic era. We have contactless service in terms of checking guests at our Sundarbans resort. There are options for bland food for guests at our resort.”

Gone are the days when only discerning wildlife enthusiasts were visiting the national parks. Things have changed a lot. Sandeepan Ghosh, Founder Member, Eastern Meadows Tours said, “Wildlife tourism is picking up well owing to the proactive approach of both the Central and state governments in protecting our national parks. Poachers are unable to harm the faunal populace and our national parks are most tourist-friendly, safe and comfortable. The five most-visited national parks that provide unforgettable views of wildlife are the Sundarbans, Kaziranga National Park, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Jaldapara and Garumara National Park in the East and Northeast region. Wildlife sighting is not the utmost priority of travellers but it is the thrill of being in the heart of the wild. Tourists are keen to visit national parks and most resorts have been booked in advance. Booking through online platforms is the current trend.

The demand has taken a slight dip in the post-pandemic period but is likely to go up in March-end. Bird-watching is a specialised segment and Jaldapara National Park, Kaziranga National Park and the Sundarbans are popular bird sanctuaries.”



# Bodoland Tourism

## *Discover splendid wildlife in virgin forests*

Partha Chatterjee

### Jamduar Reserve Forest

Jamduar is the tri-junction of Bhutan, Assam and West Bengal. It's where you will find yourself overwhelmed by the magnificent Scenic Beauty of the river Sankosh, not to mention its semi evergreen and moist deciduous forest spanning in the foothills of the Great Himalayas. Jamduar also happens to be the place where E.P. Gee first spotted and discovered the golden langur in 1956.



### Manas National Park

Part dense jungle, part grassland, it's at the confluence of Indian, Ethiopian and Indo-Chinese realms. A reason, why Manas National Park is one of the richest region for flora and fauna. Home to elephants, rhino, tigers, gaurs, wild buffaloes, deer, wild hogs, birds, insects, and various types of reptiles, the list also includes some highly endangered species like Pigmy Hog, Golden Langur and Bengal Florican.



Not only is it a significant National Park of India, Manas National Park is also an important migratory corridor for the elephant population of entire Indo-Bhutan region. Just head towards the Mothanguri tourists' site on the bank of river Manas, close to Bhutan, and discover true peace and tranquility, the rarest gift of nature in its finest form.

### Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary

Famous for sightings of Indian bison(gaur), tigers, leopards, capped langurs, sambars, barking deer, hog deer, pigmy hogs, hispid hare, slow loris, dhole and peacocks. Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary is also an important migratory corridor for Elephants throughout the region. Along the foothills of Indo-Bhutan border, it's spread across over 26.22 sq.km and is also a natural abode to peafowl and pornbills.



### Chakrasila Wildlife Sanctuary

Popular for its golden langur, this enchanting Sanctuary is spread across 45580.70 hectares and is specially designated for long-term conservation and preservation of golden langur. But that's



not at all, at Chakrasila luck will surely be by your side when it comes to sightings of leopards, Himalayan giant squirrels, Chinese pangolins, Jungle cats, Burmese rock python and a host of other animals and birds you've never heard of before. Besides wildlife sightings, there's a lot to do around the Chakrasila Wildlife Sanctuary. With excursions to Sikhri Sikhla, Jarnagra, Baukungri/Bakaumari peak, Dibil Thakur Peak, Onthai Gufur, Dangdufur, Dheer Beel, Deeplai Beel, Bhalukjhora and Rubber Garden, there's a lot of adventure in store for you.

### Kalamati

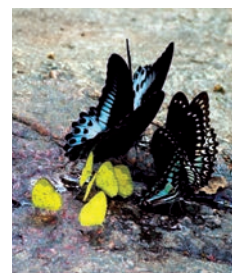
A nature lover's paradise, Kalamati, which literary means black soil, is the western buffer zone of Manas National Park, is also the best place to get lost in the nature and forget the world you've come from. Kalamati derived its name from a distinct band of salty minerals rich black soil that attracts elephants, gaurs and sambars in large numbers to have a lick of this natural salty soil.



Other sightings include dhole-the illusive Indian wild dog and hispid hare. If you're a lover of geological natural beauty, this spot is your heaven. The forest comes alive in spring with the flowering of trees igniting a festive mood. During the colourful spring, a three day Kalamati Festival is held on the glittering sands of the riverbed.

### Ultapani Reserve Forest

Ultapani which literally means 'reverse water' is a larger landscape of Manas Biospere. Around here, you will find butterflies, pied hornbills, and wild orchids in abundance, as it is a rich dwelling place for them all. Nature will also oblige you here with healthy sightings of Asian elephants, golden langurs, capped langurs, tigers, clouded leopards, leopards, golden cats, fishing cats and sambars.



### Kachugaon Reserve Forest

Kachugaon Reserve Forest is popular for its timber treasure of vintage sal trees. And a trip here is incomplete without sightings of Asian elephants, golden langurs, spotted deer, wild dogs, yellow-throated martens and peafowl.





# 'Wildlife tourism is now becoming part of everyone's bucket list rather than just the rich and famous'

Wildlife tourism has showcased year-on-year growth in India, mirroring many countries. Presently, the growth is reflected in the increase of domestic visitors in many of India's protected national parks and birding areas. The many Indian states, hospitality, and adventure tourism stakeholders who promote wildlife tourism are tapping the potential of this segment as it grows in leaps and bounds. TTJ interacts with Geeta VG, Co-founder and CEO, WildTrails to know the latest wildlife scenario and trends in India.

Prashant Nayak

## How would you describe the growth of Wildlife Tourism in India in the last decade?

We have seen tremendous growth in wildlife tourism in the last decade and more so in the last couple of years (due to pandemics) where the travel style has changed largely from "touch-and-go multi-city hopping" to long-stay nature and wildlife holidays. We feel wildlife tourism is now becoming a part of everyone's bucket list rather than just the rich and famous. Also, recent celebrity visits to wildlife parks to celebrate marriages over there (ViKat marriage) are only increasing their popularity. PM Narendra Modi's visit to Corbett Tiger Reserve as part of Man vs Wild has taken wildlife tourism to the next level.

## Have you witnessed a demand for this segment and the destinations during the pandemic?

We saw 5X demand for nature, especially wildlife, during the pandemic. Especially what we call for the "drivable-parks", the national parks that are at the driving distance from major metros like Kabini, Bandipur, Bhadra, Dandeli, Nagarhole, BRT from Bangalore and say Tadoba, Pench, Umred from Hyderabad and Mumbai and Ranthambore, Corbett from Delhi.

Based on the number of footfalls, based on tiger sightings (which WildTrails collects across all national parks and tiger reserves), and also based on its popularity on our social media (our 100K+ following of our Instagram account @WildTrails.in), we see Ranthambore in the north and Kabini in the south are the most happening and most sought-after destinations.

## According to you, other than the thrill of tiger sightings, what are the other popular forms of wildlife tourism or experiences that could be made popular with the tourists?

Tiger takes #1 spot always. Everyone, especially in India, wants to see the Tigers. Fortunately, or unfortunately, that's the



▲ Geeta VG

only thing that determines whether it's a successful safari/trip or not. People come to our sightings portal only to see tiger sightings. Even overseas tourists who we have accompanied literally started crying after sighting the tiger. That's the craze our national animal brings. Having said that, things are changing now. Many are asking for leopards, specifically the snow leopards (in Spiti in Himachal Pradesh) and the black panther in Kabini, the Rhinos in Kaziranga, and also the Red Panda in Singalila & lion-tailed macaque in the western ghats, etc. Also, bird lovers are many in number and are also increasing steadily in India like the overseas and in line with that, we are also planning to bring many destinations into our ambit in the near future.

## Wildlife Tourism also means Responsible Tourism. Give us your thoughts on Responsible Tourism for this segment of travel like visitors' behaviour in parks, benefits to locals, conservation, environment, etc.?

Educating wildlife travellers is one of the key factors that we do in WildTrails. Many

travellers come to these wildlife parks with their kids as kids are showing a lot more interest in Wildlife off lately. We make sure we educate the parents and kids as to why forests and the ecosystem of the forest are very important for us and our upcoming generations. Making them understand that forests are the lungs of the earth is very important. We also explain to them about responsible tourism and how not to leave any wastes in the forests nor feed the animals - as they say - we only leave footmarks and take only memories. At WildTrails we also make that we invest the money in the local community so that those economies will thrive and they will lead a decent lifestyle because of wildlife and they will also work more for the conservation of the forest and its inhabitants rather than turning into poaching.

## Is wildlife tourism a difficult segment to sell? How is your organisation marketing or offering innovative packages when reaching out to your trade partners and desiring customers?

A very tough segment to sell because of the nature of the business. It is still considered as a niche travel segment and also seen as for the rich and the famous. Africa has marketed its wildlife very well and is seen as a must for everyone. It's there on everyone's bucket list and that has helped them tremendously to get enough dollars for their conservation and upkeep and also for the local economy which otherwise would have got into poaching and destruction of the forests. But after the pandemic, the view towards nature and wildlife tourism has changed. Also, we are making things simple by automating and digitising the entire process of discovery, finding the right park, resort, safari, and the naturalist all with just a few clicks empowered with sightings information. We are also automating and digitising for African wildlife and we expect that to release in time for the migration season in Africa (June to October).



# Let the magic of the wild unfold at Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary



The renowned TX2 award recently went to the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu's Erode district for doubling its tiger population. The Tiger Reserve has got a high density and diversity of flora and fauna owing to its location, which is a confluence of Eastern and Western Ghats. This tiger land is one of the popular tourist destinations as families, friends, and adventure seekers visit this reserve to explore the charm of the sanctuary.

## Team TTJ

Tamil Nadu is ecological heaven blessed by Mother Nature herself, celebrating the exuberance of life. The state is home to five national parks, four tiger reserves, fifteen wildlife sanctuaries, two conservation reserves, and fifteen bird sanctuaries, which reflect the strong commitment of the state to wildlife protection.

The Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve is a protected area in Erode district, Tamil Nadu, located along the Western Ghats, between the taluks of Sathyamangalam and Gobichettipalayam. It is a tiger stronghold in southern India. It was first designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 2008, and then, in 2011, it was expanded to encompass further land.

The forest, which spans 1,411.6 square kilometres, is currently Tamil Nadu's largest wildlife sanctuary. As part of the "Project Tiger" effort, it became the fourth tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu in 2013. The Sathyamangalam forest connects the Western and Eastern Ghats, serving as a corridor for the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It is connected to other well-established tiger habitats like Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Bandipur Tiger Reserve and BR Hills Tiger Reserve.

The TX2 awards celebrate the remarkable contributions made by government bodies, NGOs, and local communities to strengthen tiger conservation. To honour a recently notified tiger reserve like Sathyamangalam with the award is a step forward to inspire others to work towards preserving this magnificent species and its habitats. The award has been granted to reserves that have had a significant and quantifiable increase in their tiger populations.

Seeing the elusive tiger is at the top of every tourist's, animal lover, and nature lover's dream list when visiting India's national parks. As one observes the enigmatic black-and-yellow striped shape making its way through the forest, William Blake's famous phrases reverberate in one's mind: "Tyger, tyger, burning bright, in the forests of the night." The tiger is a majestic and royal animal, making every wildlife filmmaker's dream come true of capturing and showcasing the striped spectacle in the Indian forest.

For humans, saving tigers is a source of pride because their well-being directly affects ours. They have preserved the wild landscapes that we admire. Their presence in the forest helps to regulate the seasons, keep rivers moving, offer carbon sinks, and provide food for us and our families. However, we must first learn

about the biology and behaviour of these magnificent creatures in order to conserve them. Only then will we be able to protect their habitat and allow them to mate and live in peace. Tigers are one of the most beautiful creatures that nature has to offer. Forests and humans are products of nature. It is now man's obligation to become the forest's and tiger's guardians, for as they thrive, so do all other living forms surrounding them. -maker's dream come true of capturing and showcasing the spectacle in the Indian forest.

Some of the other notable species of wildlife at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve include elephant, hyena, slender loris, wild boar, sloth bear, civet, jackal, otter, mongoose, blackbuck, barking deer, spotted deer, sambar, four-horned antelope, mouse deer, Indian pangolin, porcupine, jungle cat, langur, bonnet macaque, leopard and gaur. Some of the rare birds include white-backed vultures, trogons, woodpeckers, brown fish owls, etc.

In Tamil Nadu, the adjoining areas such as the Erode Forest Division, Coimbatore Forest Division and the Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka at the Tamil Nadu border were also emerging as important tiger habitats, creating a mosaic that allows the big cats to easily move in search of food and new territory.





# BTM 2022 concludes successfully in Siliguri

Bengal Travel Mart (BTM) is the largest B2B event in East and Northeast India for the Travel and Tourism Community to showcase the brand Bengal as a tourism product and discover the region's potential. The EHTTOA (Eastern Himalaya Travel and Tour Operators Association) successfully launched and concluded the sixth edition of BTM 2022, which took place from March 5-7, 2022, at Mayfair Tea Resort in Siliguri, West Bengal.

## Team TTJ

The sole goal of BTM 2022 was to establish Siliguri as a platform for the inbound domestic market for the Eastern Himalayas. The market available at Siliguri comprises the host city and the Seven Sister States, namely Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim. To expand the circuit, they had included Bangladesh and Nepal in the mart. If Bhutan had participated, the circuit would have been more compact, encompassing all the regions of the Northeast.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of

India, West Bengal Tourism, Madhya Pradesh Tourism, Odisha Tourism, Nepal Tourism Board, and Pokhara Tourism Council honored the event with their presence. Mayfair Hotels and Resorts was the associate partner, Udaan Hospitality was the premier hospitality partner, and tbo.com was the Online Partner. The health care partner was the Lions Club of Siliguri, and the knowledge partner was the IIAS School of Management. All the partners had contributed in a big way to make the mart a great success.

Travel associations who participated in the event included IATO, ETAA, ADTOI, NIMA, Jaigaon Travellers' Welfare Association, Travel Agents' Association of Sikkim (TAAS),

Tour and Travel Association of Andhra, Dooars Tourism Development Forum, Alipur District Tourism Association, and Lataguri Resort Owner Association. The international associate partners were TOAB, NTB, PTC, NATTA.

Singalilla Club, Rufina Hotels, Ramada by Wyndham Darjeeling, The North Star Gangtok, Khurana Group of Hotels, Mount Hotels, Waxpol Hotels and Resorts, Summit Hotels and Resorts, Hotel Mount Siniolchu Gangtok, Courtyard by Marriott Siliguri, Jain Group of Hotels, Jaldapara Inn, Resort Vinayak Murti, Royal Sarovar Portico Siliguri, SDD Hotels and Resorts, The Four Vedas, Golden Hotels and Resorts, Central Park Hotel and Banquet, Delight Hotels, Sunhill Portico, Kin's Hotels, Tripsky Hotels and Resorts, Sumi Yashshree Hotels and Resorts, Hotel Takura Pelling, Debrani International, Pine Tree Spa Resort, and Voyage Hospitality were the Hospitality Partners.

BTM 2022 had 88 plus exhibitors and 80 plus buyers and invitees registered for the event. The event witnessed around 530 travel trade stakeholders from across India and nearby countries.



# TRAVMART

Connecting travel partners with new opportunities

**GUWAHATI**  
April 4

**KOLKATA**  
April 6

For details, email: [kuldeep@sampanmedia.com](mailto:kuldeep@sampanmedia.com)





## Reliving the legends of the Bundelas and Chandelas

Madhya Pradesh lies at the heart of India and it holds on closely to a long list of legends steeped in folklore and history. Some stories have been told and retold, but some still lie hidden in obscurity, waiting to be discovered. Some have been passed on from generation to generation and many are lost in translation and are now best described as myths. Inquisitive that I am, delving deeper, brushing away the cobwebs and blowing away the dust, I uncover the vivid dramas of honour, friendship, valor, sacrifice, devotion and duty that were once enacted on this heartland. Recently I was invited by Madhya Pradesh Tourism on one such voyage, taking me down the corridors of time to dwell on the legends left behind by the Bundelas of Orchha and the Chandelas of Khajuraho.

**Gurjit Singh Ahuja**

**M**y journey started in New Delhi, where I met with my fellow group of writers, bloggers, journalists and tour operators invited by MP Tourism. We set out from Hazrat Nizamuddin Station onwards to Jhansi, passing by Mathura, Agra, Gwalior each city, a city of wonder and awe in their own right and a maze for a person like me to be lost in. I greatly looked forward to being back in Jhansi, Orchha and Khajuraho. Not to miss out on my excitement to run into the ever-elusive 'Panthera Tigris Tigris' or the Royal Bengal tiger at Panna.

Yes, you guessed it right, it was not my first visit to any of these cities, having been schooled in Jhansi, in the 80s, both Orchha and Khajuraho were in easy reach and I have great memories of cycling to Orchha from Babina Cantonment, and swimming in the Betwa and Grand Picnics along the river Ken and at Raneh falls in the environs of Khajuraho. Every time I return to a city, it's like a homecoming for me, irrespective of the destination or the

time duration I spent there. My enthusiasm is never dulled, as every visit warrants meeting old acquaintances, making new friends, clicking that new photograph, under different light or perspective, I always end up discovering and learning more.

So you can understand my excitement of returning to Orchha, Khajuraho and Panna, and this time it was even more special as I was to witness the Khajuraho Dance Festival, something that I had on my wish list for the last 35 years! And imagine the icing on the cake, the Festival was being held inside the western temple group complex with the grandiose Kandariya Mahadev and Devi Jagdambi temples as the backdrop! For me, it revived my memories of watching Yanni live at the Taj. Believe me when I say wishes do come true!

We were accorded a very warm welcome by MP Tourism at the Jhansi railway station as we alighted from the Gatiman Express. They have a Tourist Information Office right within the railway station and is easily approachable by all tourists. We were soon efficiently

whisked away in our waiting Innova's to Orchha where we checked-in at the Betwa Retreat, a cosy property operated by MPSTDC right on the Orchha riverfront and very approachable to all Orchha attractions and temples.

Like Ayodhya, Orchha has a great connection with Lord Rama according to Hindu mythology and belief during the day Lord Rama rules Orchha as its King from his seat at the Ram Raja Temple and returns every night to sleep at Ayodhya. Besides being venerated as a Hindu holy city, Orchha has been a longstanding witness to the many ups and downs from medieval times. It has recorded history which mentions the Afghan-Suri Dynasty, the Mughals, the Marathas and the British. The Jahangir Mahal at Orchha stands testament to the close bond established between Vir Singh Bundela and Mughal Emperor Jahangir at whose behest, Vir Singh killed Abul Fazl and presented Jahangir with his head as a trophy. Also resonating in Orchha are the legends of its legendary beauty and courtesan Rai Praveen, the poetry of Keshavdas and heroics of the Bundela Prince Hardol,





who drank poison willingly to testify his honourable intentions, and clear his sister-in-law from charges of adultery. Even today, Hardol is invited to weddings in Bundelkhand and it is a tradition that people leave him a wedding card to seek his blessings. These legends come live every night at the sound and light show in the precincts of the Raja Mahal.

Orchha becomes surreal at night as its fort, palaces, temples and cenotaphs are illuminated, a different dimension of Orchha comes to life as it transforms itself into a time long gone. I loved my sunrise boat ride on the Betwa as the morning sun cast its golden hue on the cenotaphs of the Bundela kings and the singing minstrel woke up the ghats to his booming chant of the Hanuman Chalisa. Among Orchha's many temples and monuments, the one that signifies Orchha for me is the Chatarbhuj Temple, which is noted for having one of the tallest Vimana among Hindu temples standing at 344 feet.

Post breakfast we all set out for Khajuraho and en route we made a detour to visit Dhubela to relive the legend of Mastani and Baji Rao. Mastani was Maharaja Chhatrasal's daughter and the legendary warrior Veer Chhatrasal built his palace near lake Dhubela, which now houses a museum showcasing his legacy and memorabilia, along with many ancient artifacts and sculptures unearthed in the adjoining regions. No visit to Dhubela is complete without a visit to Mastani Mahal, which is also located close to the main palace. With your vivid imagination running wild, you can still feel the presence of Mastani and Baji Rao in the environs as history comes alive.

Post lunch we continued to Khajuraho and checked into our recently refurbished 'Bundela Resort' our pit-stop, for the next two nights. In the evening, all excited,

we went to the Western Temple Complex for the 48<sup>th</sup> edition of the Khajuraho Dance Festival, an event I was anxiously waiting for. The festival this year was organised from February 20-26, 2022. We were there for the last two days. A carnival and an art conclave were held on the sidelines of the dance festival to exhibit local talent, handicrafts, gastronomy, and delicacies. I loved the *Karela-Matar-Tikki chat*, a flavor bomb and a local Khajuraho favourite priced at a mere ₹20, what a steal!

The dance festival venue was packed to capacity and a clear absence of international visitors was visible due to restricted international travel norms. The Festival had attracted art and dance aficionados and discerning patrons from all over India to witness the performances as the stage came to life with the dancers performing their tribute to art and gods with the magnificent backdrop of the illuminated temples. The whole environment was transformed to a different dimension, something that I have never experienced in my past visits to Khajuraho.

The next morning, we had an early wake-up call as we were off on our early morning safari to the Panna Tiger Reserve. Although the park boasts of a healthy tiger population, sighting the elusive cat remains a challenge. With the river Ken cutting across the reserve, Panna is one of the most picturesque parks. I was busy clicking away my swooping panoramic shots and enjoying the startled Sambar, spotted deer and a wild boar that our gypsy spooked. The big cat remained elusive, and we hoped for better luck next time as we bid adieu to Panna.



Our afternoon was well spent exploring the sculpted treasures that adorned the walls, platforms and ceilings of these grandiose temples made by the Chandela kings of yore as their tribute to the Gods and their own stamp in time to be remembered by. Tired after the visit, we all landed up at the iconic Khajuraho landmark and watering hole 'Raja cafe'. I met up with 'Mr. BO,' that's how he likes to be called, the cafe's second-generation owner, an ever-smiling personality whose cafe satiated my senses with some excellent cold coffee and pizza. At the cafe, we also met up with Ranvir Singh and Akhilesh Mishra, Co-founders of 'K Segway', a company that has just launched Segway exploration tours of Khajuraho.

My evening was again devoted to the Grand Finale of the Khajuraho Dance Festival and the memory of the performances with the temples resonating to the sound, the light effects, the foot thumping and mudras of the performers will stay etched for a long time to come, what a grand ending to a dream trip!





## Cordelia celebrates its 50000 milestone; announces special offers for Defence Personnel and their families

**C**ordelia Cruises commenced operations in India in September 2021. Inching close to serving 50000 guests since their launch, Cordelia Cruises has announced special offers exclusively for defence personnel and their families.

With the strength of over 1.4 million active personnel, India is the world's second-largest military force and has the world's largest volunteer army. It also has the third-largest defence budget in the world.

"We remain indebted to our Indian Navy, Army, and Airforce. They guard and guide us selflessly. At Cordelia, this is our humble effort to extend courtesies and welcome them on board. We hope to serve them with all our hearts" says Vijay Kesavan, Marketing Director, Cordelia Cruises.



## Kerala makes a strong pitch as an all-season long-stay tourist hub

**R**ising to the demands and preferences of travellers and vacationers in the post-pandemic era, Kerala has made a strong pitch as a safe and riveting all-season long-stay destination by rolling out novel products such as caravan tourism while consolidating its time-tested assets to host domestic and foreign guests all through the year.



In a paradigm shift from one-stop location-specific approach, Kerala has firmly marked itself as a destination for extended holidays for all segments of visitors with a bouquet of diverse experiences stacked across the state like homestays, drive holidays, 'Change of Air' based wellness vacations and adventure tourism activities.

The new strategy has boosted stakeholder confidence in Kerala with the travel and hospitality industry sounding confident of a busy year ahead with a steep increase in footfalls.

Shri V R Krishna Teja, State Tourism Director said, "For Kerala, 2022 is going to be the year of Kerala Tourism. The year ahead is packed with a hectic schedule of absorbing events and festivities including the Kerala Travel Mart in May, Champions' Boat League (CBL) in August-November and Kochi Muziris Biennale in December-March besides several cultural and literary fests and adventure tourism activities."

With the pandemic-caused international travel restrictions being lifted, Kerala is in a resurgent mode now and the recently launched products will woo travellers from both inside the country and outside, Shri Krishna Teja said.

## The 66<sup>th</sup> TAAI Convention to be held in Colombo from April 19–21, 2022

**T**AAI shall be holding its 66th Convention in Colombo, Sri Lanka from April 19–21, 2022. A tripartite agreement was signed on February 24, 2022, between TAAI, Sri Lanka Tourism Bureau (SLTPB) and Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO) in the presence of the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Govt. of Sri Lanka along with Chairperson of Sri Lanka Tourism.



The Convention will be rich in its content as well as in offering experiential take home to the delegates. The content would focus on the importance of a 'New Rising' post- COVID-19 and the urgent need for members to rise beyond the challenges.

The Convention will also focus on B2B meetings with over 100 local stakeholders over the region, the valuable opportunity to collaborate for trade and business, with the fast-growing Indian outbound industry, and to promote India as well. TAAI will promote 'Inbound into India' as an important subject at this Convention, to attract Sri Lankans to connect well with India.

There will be lots of post-tour activities, and visitors will be treated to exquisite hospitality as well as networking opportunities. Cinnamon Grand, a five-star hotel, has been shortlisted to be an important venue for the Convention. There are other key attractions that are also being considered for the delegates to experience.

Those looking forward to learning, networking, exploring, connecting to situations and people beyond their current, must immediately plan their participation. This Convention is designed to be numbers restricted. TAAI will be soon be rolling out the registration process.

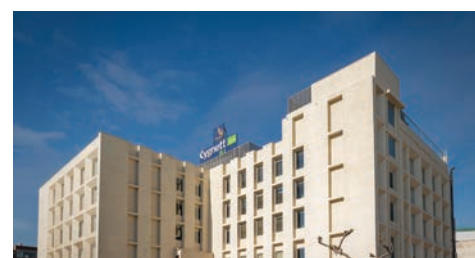
## Cygnett Group of Hotels and Resorts launches 4-star 60-room hotel in Jaipur

**C**ontinuing its aggressive expansion mode and offering a pleasant hospitality experience, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts has announced the launch of Cygnett Park B.L, Jaipur. The 60-room hotel is a mid-scale full-service business hotel, the well-appointed modern rooms, large facility banquets, and an all-day multi-cuisine restaurant makes it a favourable hotel brand for business and leisure travellers. Cygnett Park B.L allows easy accessibility, strategically located at Ajmer Road and first hotel from the Delhi bypass while entering the Royal city of Jaipur, just 12 km from the Airport, 7.3 km from Railway Station and 8.5 km from Sindhi Camp Bus stand.

"Cygnett Park B.L, Jaipur is a state-of-the-art modern hotel that has been built with an ideology and keeping 'guest convenience' in concern. We want to give our guests the best of stay and delicious

dining experience at an affordable price that is easy on their pocket," said Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder and Managing Director, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts.

The hotel features three categories of rooms – superior, club and suites, a restaurant offering world cuisine, and four state-of-the-art banquets and conference rooms that suit all your requirements and a perfect space to organise conferences, meetings, social events and weddings.





## WATCH YOUR FAIRYTALE UNFOLD IN FULL BLOOM

Give your wedding ceremony a regal setting amidst  
nature and feel the romance in the air.

*Harī Mahal Palace Jaipur*

*Heritage Hotel*

*Aaram Baagh Pushkar*

*Relive the bygone era*

*Aaram Baagh Agra*

*Relive the royal era*

*Aaram Baagh Udaipur*

*Resort in the lap of nature*

*Aaram Mahal Udaipur*

*Hotel with musical essence*

*Castle Pachar Shekhawati*

*Heritage Hotel*

*Aaram Baagh Sanchi*

*Heritage Hotel*

*Aaram Baagh Maheshwar*

*Relive the buddha era*

*Aaram Mahal Bikaner*

*Heritage Hotel*

### PACHAR GROUP OF HOTELS

F-6, Tirth Raj, Civil Lines, Jacob Road, Jaipur-302006 (Raj.),

Mobile : +91- 9166531111, +91-9799696962, Ph.: +91-141-2221399, 4004920

Telefax : +91-141-2226920, E-mail : info@pachargrouphotels.com, Website : [www.pachargrouphotels.com](http://www.pachargrouphotels.com)



## WelcomHeritage unveils expansion plans; to open four hotels in 2022

**W**elcomHeritage is forging ahead with the expansion of its hotel portfolio in some of the most exquisite tourist destinations in the country.

Spearheaded by its CEO, Abinash Manghani, is embarking on an exciting expansion journey this year. WelcomHeritage has played an instrumental role in highlighting the storied rich heritage and cultural ethos of the various destinations where its properties are located.

Withstanding all the challenges, the hospitality chain managed to add highly anticipated new hotels, including WelcomHeritage Elysium Resort & Spa, Shimla, WelcomHeritage Badi Kothi, Allahabad and WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa, Bera in its portfolio in 2021. It added 85 keys to its overall inventory in the last year.

"We approach every endeavour of ours with the utmost thought, planning and discernment. The year 2021 was a very successful year for us despite the challenges brought by the ongoing pandemic. We are looking at 2022 with much optimism as we plan to open a number of new properties and continue to create experiences that bring people together to celebrate life," said Manghani.

WelcomHeritage is planning to continue the brand's expansion around the country with four planned openings in 2022

including WelcomHeritage Azora, Fort Kochi, WelcomHeritage Ayatana, Ooty, WelcomHeritage Desert Resort, Mandawa and WelcomHeritage Parv Vilas, Solan. When operational, these properties will add 171 keys to the existing inventory of 903 keys of WelcomHeritage.

"We are very excited about our new hotel openings across the country. We are optimistic that business will continue to grow at the same rate as in pre-covid times. Going forward, we expect to clock generous three-digit growth in 2022. As we turn the page to 2022, we're excited to build on the growth of the previous year by offering more options to our guests looking to explore diverse destinations," added Manghani.

Some of the other destinations that WelcomHeritage is targeting for expansion in the near future include Kufri, Chail, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Luni, Chikmagalur, Goa and Wayanad.



## JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa debuts in Bengaluru



**J**W Marriott, on March 5, announced the opening of JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa. The luxury resort is nestled within the tranquil Nandi Hills region of Bengaluru, once an ancient hill fortress and the summer retreat of Indian royalty.

The 301-room resort is nestled in the rolling greens of the 275-acre, award-winning Prestige Golfshire course and luxury residential development, and within a 20-minute drive from Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport. The resort's wide range of activities, including yoga and meditation sessions, cycling expeditions to explore the beautiful surroundings of Nandi Hills.

JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa houses a fully equipped Convention Center, spread over 35,000 sq ft, accommodating up to 4,000 guests. The Convention Center is the first and largest of its kind in Bengaluru, with a 24,000 square foot, pillar-less ballroom, an ideal venue for large-scale events and lavish weddings. An additional 66,000 sq ft of open lawns and a range of smaller halls and breakout rooms provide the flexibility to accommodate transitional event set-ups, large-scale global conferences, exhibitions, outdoor music concerts and more.

## Karma Group introduces Karma Munnar, a Southern Indian escape



**I**nternational Karma Group continues to cement its status as one of the world's leading resort companies with its latest acquisition of not one, but two new locations. Joining its new Egyptian-based addition, the elegant cruise ship Karma Kanak, is Karma Munnar, a destination nestled among the famously green rolling hills of the state of Kerala in India. Karma Munnar offers guests a chance to escape to the village of Munnar, a place famed for its collection of evergreen tea plantations. Not to mention it's the meeting place of a trio of major local rivers.

The resort itself is perched among the rolling hills of the region, with many of its 22 designed suites and amenities boasting unforgettable views of the surrounding landscape. Visitors are welcome to spend their time exploring the trekking trails which wind their way through the surrounding area or make the most of the ample amenities at their disposal, from badminton courts to spice garden tours.





## Alluring Destination

Immerse in timeless tradition at the St. Regis suites.  
Discerning service, effortless luxury & impeccably crafted experience  
transports you to a world of the signature St. Regis Living.

*The St. Regis Mumbai*

462, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai, Maharashtra, 400 013, India  
t. +91 22 6162 8000 | [stregis.com/mumbai](http://stregis.com/mumbai)

Stay exquisite at more than 40 St. Regis hotels and resorts worldwide. | [@stregishotels](https://www.instagram.com/stregishotels)





## Favourite Seat

Settle into a seat that's right for you, and choose where you prefer to sit on board before you fly.

Starting from\*

**Economy Class**

**INR 559**

## More Bags For Less

Did you know that the Excess Baggage Calculation has changed? You can now book our Excess Baggage Allowance starting from 5kgs, available at special prices.

Starting from\*

**Economy Class**

**INR 1929**

\*Terms & conditions apply

Visit **omanair.com** to book, buy or check-in online or call our call center on **+91 62729000**, **+91 1149970000** or email **res.del@omanair.com**; **res.bom@omanair.com**; **res.hyd@omanair.com**; **res.maa@omanair.com** or your local travel agent.

