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# EXPERIENCE A WORLD BEYOND



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Dear Friends,

Presently, as the pandemic fear wanes, and international travel opens, many corporates are now gathering their steam and teams together for various activities such as team building, strategic planning, and rewards and recognition events, which were on halt for the past two years.

At TTJ, since we believe there is going to be a further pickup and escalation in demand for MICE in the second half of 2022, we have brought out a MICE special edition in our May 2022 issue. The positive indicators from MICE stakeholders, including NTOs, hotels, associations, and operators, have been overwhelming, and this issue features their MICE sentiments and perspectives.

Also, despite the scorching heat, May 2022 is a busy month for the travel industry as we all look forward to big events such as Kerala Travel Mart, Arabian Travel Market, SATTE, etc. At TTJ, we have also resumed our B2B travel show Travmart, which has received an excellent response in the cities of Guhawati and Kolkata, with more cities to follow in the coming months.

So, as things look bright, hoping things change even better for the future.

Happy Reading!

*Ravi Sharma*

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Editor's Desk



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## Fiji drops pre-departure COVID-19 testing requirements

Full vaccinated visitors into Fiji will no longer be required to produce a COVID-19 pre-departure PCR or Rapid Antigen Test.

The change applies to all international visitors entering Fiji by air or sea and is a move that is in line with best practice entry requirements among highly vaccinated communities. It will save costs for travellers and make travelling to the Pacific Island destination that much easier.

All visitors aged 16 years and above must be fully vaccinated. This change comes as more people globally are now vaccinated and it is to support not only international travellers but Fiji's local communities. International travellers entering Fiji will now only need to follow the below entry requirements.

- Be fully vaccinated if you are 16 years old and above with a Fiji recognised dose

- Book an in-country COVID-19 RAT prior to departure to Fiji. The test must be completed within 48 – 72 hours of arrival into

Fiji. These can be booked at [entrytestfiji.com](https://entrytestfiji.com)

- Have trusted travel insurance with COVID-19 coverage

Brent Hill, Tourism Fiji CEO said, "this is yet another

significant step for Fiji, making it easier than ever to travel to our idyllic shores from around the globe. The Fijian Government has continued to respond to data and science, and moved quickly to make these changes, as more countries around the world also relaxed their protocols. There has never been a better, simpler time to come to Fiji than now."



## Vietjet relaunches flights between New Delhi and Vietnam's Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City



Vietjet has officially reopened its flight from New Delhi to Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi. The Ho Chi Minh City – New Delhi flight departed from Tan Son Nhat International Airport on April 29 and the Hanoi – New Delhi service took off on April 30, marking the airline's return to the country for the first-time post-pandemic.

Dinh Viet Phuong, Vietjet Managing Director said, "Our relaunch of direct routes from India to Vietnam, shortly after the pandemic and other international services to South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia among others reaffirm Vietjet's efforts and commitments to offer flying opportunities for everyone, working as a bridge for cultural, economic and social exchanges among the countries while leading the wave of strong post-pandemic recovery."

Following the relaunch of New Delhi routes, Vietjet is also set to operate new direct services between Mumbai and Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi this summer while routes from New Delhi and Mumbai to Phu Quoc will start in September 2022.

Earlier this year, the airline successfully reconnected Vietnam's major cities namely Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang with APAC's key destinations such as Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bali, Tokyo, Seoul, etc.

## Ethiopian marks 50 years of service to Mumbai



On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest airline group's non-stop operations in Mumbai, the airline organised a press conference and hosted cocktails and dinner on April 28, 2022, at ITC Maratha, Andheri. The events were graced by Lemma Yadecha Gudeta, Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), Ethiopian Airlines, Tigist Eshetu – Regional Director India Sub-Continent, Ethiopian Airlines, Her Excellency Ambassador Doctor Tizita Mulugeta and Subhash Goyal, Owner & Chairman of STIC Group.

Partners of Ethiopian Airlines, travel trade partners, media, travel bloggers and over 150 guests from the aviation sector also attended this grand event. It was announced that the airline will soon connect Chennai to Addis Ababa and thereafter to 127 other international destinations starting July 2, 2022, with three weekly flights. A highlight at the event was the time capsule to commemorate this milestone where thoughtful messages will be taken from their staff and partners and will be passed on to generations.





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## SriLankan Holidays launches cutting-edge website

**S**riLankan Holidays has launched a new, state-of-the-art website with enhanced features and convenience in partnership with GoQuo, a Malaysian online travel retail platform provider. Passengers can plan and book their entire holiday through the multifunctional website including air tickets, hotels, transfers, tours, and ancillary services as a package or separately. Furthermore, the website is user-friendly, multilingual, mobile compatible, and offers a comprehensive inventory of options designed to fulfill customers' every travel need.

Passengers get the best of both worlds with access to a plethora of hotels through SriLankan Holidays' own hotel partner contracts and aggregators such as Agoda, Expedia and Hotelbeds. Hotel searches could be sorted by price or popularity, and passengers may further evaluate their options based on real-time ratings and TripAdvisor reviews which are also visible on the new site. Customers who book their air tickets and hotel at the same time have the opportunity to unlock significant overall savings, an advantage that they would not otherwise enjoy. Additionally, customers may also arrange transfers and tours and purchase ancillary services such as excess baggage and advance seat reservations through the site.

The site supports several internet payment gateways and accepts Visa and Mastercard payments currently, while American Express, Discover, and Diners Club card payments would be enabled by May 2022. Customers

have the option of viewing prices and paying in their preferred currency out of 31 international currencies. A customer will receive an instant booking confirmation once the payment is completed. The site also has a promo code feature and thus passengers could look forward to further savings during periodical sales promotion campaigns.

The backend of the website is equally advanced and allows SriLankan Holidays to generate management information reports, update content through a content management system, and foster relationships with customers as its CRM-powered.



## Karnataka Tourism to organise multi-city roadshows to increase domestic footfalls



**W**ith an aim to increase domestic footfalls, the Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka along with Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation shall organise multi-city roadshows from May 2022 to November 2022 to promote Karnataka Tourism and Travel Industry, like various tourist places, hotels, resorts, homestays, tour operators and other service providers from Karnataka. KSTDC has identified 19 cities across the country, which are the key source market for domestic arrivals. Guwahati, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nashik, Pune, Goa, Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Chennai, Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Nagpur are the few select cities for hosting the roadshows.

The first leg of these B2B roadshows will take place on May 17th, May 21st, May 23rd, and May 25th in New Delhi, Chandigarh, Jaipur, and Lucknow, respectively. Over 15 stakeholders from Karnataka will connect with over 100 travel agents/tour operators from the respective cities at this B2B roadshow.

The roadshow will have B2B interactions and presentations that will showcase the destination and also open up new avenues in bringing the destination in a new light to the travel and trade community. The cultural performances will be organised to showcase the vibrant art forms that Karnataka is known for. The roadshow will bring together different aspects of Karnataka tourism such as nature, wildlife, adventure, pilgrimage, heritage and cultural heritage, and many more.

## Lily Hotels hosts product update and networking lunch in Chandigarh



**L**ily Hotels in association with LINKIN Reps, recently hosted an exclusive lunch for the travel trade partners in Chandigarh. The resorts operated by Lily Hotels in the Maldives are the pioneering leading all-inclusive resort, located in the central Maldives – Lily Beach Resort and Spa at Huvahendhoo, a large island hideaway resort located in the northern Maldives with privacy at its core – Hideaway Beach Resort and Spa, and its collection of elevated and curated luxury beach villas with dedicated butler service as a 'resort in a resort concept' – The Signature Collection by Hideaway.

Following the networking session, Komal Seth, Founder and Director, LINKIN Reps, gave a product demonstration. The presentation highlighted the key features of luxurious properties. The response to the session was extremely encouraging, and it was heart-warming to witness the enthusiasm for Lily Hotels' products among the Chandigarh trade partners.

Highlighting the importance of north India's travel market to Maldives, Desislav Gospodinov, Group Director of Sales and Marketing said, "I would like to thank all our travel trade partners in Chandigarh for their continuous support towards promoting the luxurious resorts under Lily Hotels. Chandigarh is one of our most important markets and we eagerly look forward to welcoming travellers from the region."





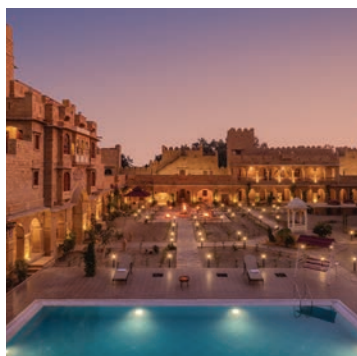
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# Innovating risk management for today's traveller

Hedging risk has always been a prudent way forward to cut unforeseen losses. Travel Insurance for domestic and international travel has gradually but firmly entrenched itself in the Indian travel market over the last two decades.

Multiple brands and products have entered the market with their plethora of offerings. The last 30 months and the uncertainty created in the travel space have warranted a re-look at the travel risk management aspect. Hence, companies are responding with new products and innovations, now best suited to the current times. TTJ interacted with Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO of Asego, a company with a strong foothold in the travel and health insurance sector, to understand the current dynamics and innovations.



Gurjit Singh Ahuja

**D**ev Karvat is no stranger to the Indian Travel insurance space, with almost two decades behind him in this specialised space growing from a staff of 10 to a current team of 450 spread across 47 offices pan India. Over the decades, he has constantly innovated and grown to deliver new-age travel ancillary services to clients with innovation and customer-centricity at the core. Recipient of numerous national and international accolades, his company has served reputed brands across retail, corporate, and e-commerce segments, including Indigo, GoAir, Yatra, FCM, Dnata, and many of their products are underwritten by renowned insurers such as ICICI Lombard, Aditya Birla, Liberty and Cholamandalam MS.

Dev is a young and dynamic visionary and is determined to revolutionize the Indian Insurance sector with his new venture - Asego.

**What's new with Asego, and how is it different from your previous business model?**

The COVID-19 pandemic was the first truly global crisis we ever witnessed in our lifetime. With rampant uncertainty related to health, mobility, and the economy, businesses worldwide had a hard time adjusting to its impact. However, the pandemic created positive disruption also, providing a plethora of opportunities spearheaded by technology and innovation. We are glad that Asego is also a part of this great revolution. We are about to launch our all-new tech platform, allowing our partners to issue policies on the go in just three clicks. Furthermore, we have moved to a multiple underwriter model, which will provide our partners with more flexibility and freedom to customise products and services as per their customers' needs.



▲ Dev Karvat

**Please elaborate on your product offerings and how it has been helping your clients?**

Our bouquet of travel assistance services and new-age bundled products have always been customer favorites. Nevertheless, we realized that tailoring offerings at a micro-level is the need of the hour. We are now offering an array of relevant standalone products, such as quarantine cancellations, visa refusal, flight delay/interruption covers, gadget protection, etc., pertinent to the current scenario. This will help our partners design customised, relevant travel protection plans for their customers and give them an up-selling edge to increase revenue.

**Today's travellers seek products and services that can help them during unforeseen situations. What's your plan of action for this?**

What differentiates us from other

companies is the way we work. During emergencies, we immediately bring together all stakeholders, such as the affected family, the underwriter, the hospital, etc., on the same platform. Everyone is kept apprised of the progress and gravity of the situation. This helps us maintain complete transparency amongst all stakeholders and ensures that assistance is provided with the fastest TAT. Apart from providing cashless claims and reimbursement facilities to the customers in need, we also provide relevant assistance services to travellers, including doctor on call, support during baggage loss and missed flights, advice on COVID-19 protocols in different countries, and other related services.

**How different is the travel insurance market when compared to the pre-COVID times?**

Awareness and need for the right travel protection have increased multifold. Many countries have made it mandatory to travel with the right insurance coverage, and it is no longer limited to the United States, Canada, and the EU. Also, on analysing customers' recent buying patterns, we realized that they have now grown highly product sensitive. They now seek more value rather than just going for undervalued and inexpensive ones.

**Being a pioneer and visionary in the field of insurance, what's your message for the travel trade?**

The pandemic did affect our travel business radically. Still, it also allowed us to take a step back, reassess ourselves, figure out what was missing, and integrate the lessons learned to come out stronger than ever. Ultimately, I feel that it's just a matter of perceiving things differently. Because when we change the way, we look at things, the things you look at change!



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# QuadLabs launches on-cloud Travel CRM and Mid-Back-Office with Lifetime FREE Subscription!!



QuadLabs Technologies has launched 'Konnect.travel', the world's most affordable and most powerful on-cloud Travel CRM and Mid-Back-Office. With a lifetime free subscription, QuadLabs is inviting all travel agencies globally to be a part of the change and maximise the use of technology in their operations. While its features will be revealed at ATM Dubai on May 9, 2022, Gaurav Chiripal, CEO, QuadLabs Technologies is happy to share more details on Konnect.travel, which can now empower travel agents with the best technology and they can manage their operations from a single system.

## Prashant Nayak

**QuadLabs has been providing technology for the travel industry for many years, what is your focus in terms of developing new technological solutions?**

Quadlabs has always been at the forefront of bringing new technology to the travel industry. During the last 15 years, we have given the most comprehensive and highly scalable platforms to some of the largest players in the industry. During the last two years of the pandemic, our team took up the challenge to build a technology stack that is easy to use and needs almost no human intervention to deploy, operate, and scale up. Thus, bringing down the initial implementation cost to the customer. Our focus was on providing the technology used by large companies affordable to the small and medium businesses so they can compete effectively in the market.

**What is the reason behind the launch of Konnect.travel, and how will it benefit the travel agent community?**

Konnect.Travel is an all-in-one suite that provides the capability of a travel CRM, Mid office, and accounting system in a single interface. Travel agents today struggle to manage their operations, bookings, leads, and accounts. They end up buying or subscribing to multiple technologies, which creates a big issue of reconciliation and collaboration. Especially when their staff is working from distributed locations, managing operations effectively becomes impossible. Konnect.Travel will provide

all features of a travel operations system in a single place at absolutely no cost. This will empower agents to collaborate more effectively with their teams, have control of their leads and bookings, have a seamless reconciliation with suppliers, and can open up more selling opportunities to grow their business.

**How excited are you to launch Konnect.travel at ATM Dubai?**

ATM Dubai has always been a launchpad for various technologies offered by QuadLabs. Our marquee product Xchange ERP was first launched in ATM Dubai in 2008. Travog - Corporate SBT and expense tool was launched in ATM Dubai in 2016. We see many customers from Australia to Europe take part in this show. I am very excited about Konnect. Travel as it is a futuristic product and can change the way the travel agents sell and fulfil travel bookings. It will provide a level playing ground for smaller travel agencies to compete with the giant.

**What are some of the unique and exciting features of Konnect.travel?**

First, Konnect.Travel is an absolutely free system for SMEs providing up to three free user licenses for a lifetime. It provides the capability to manage all customers (Retail or Corporate) in one place, manage and process all bookings centrally with customisable business rules, and has a very comprehensive accounting system with automated BSP and supplier reconciliation. Soon, we are also launching analytical dashboards on

the product. Travel Agents can also sign up for Travog (corporate self-booking tool) or retail website (Internet Booking engine) to distribute travel products to a global audience. Our team of product experts will be available 24/7 to help and train our travel agents to make the best use of the technology.

**How important is technology in the modern tourism industry, especially as it tries to bounce back after a two-year hiatus caused by COVID-19?**

Technology has always been the enabler in the travel industry. We have seen large companies become larger by adopting automation engines and bringing their teams together on a single platform. Customers are more inclined to book directly unless they need opinions or help with multi-product itineraries. Soon even the complex bookings will be created and processed directly with the technology and it will remove the need for a physical human being on the other side of the phone. Travel agents have realised that without technology they cannot survive for long in this industry. Almost 20-25 per cent of travel agents have shut shop or moved to a different profession during the pandemic. Now, when the industry is bouncing back, there is an opportunity for the rest to pick up more business with limited resources. Good technology at an affordable cost can really help them scale up quickly.

**Travel agents can sign up for a free lifetime subscription at [www.Konnect.Travel](http://www.Konnect.Travel).**



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# MICE – Hybrid is the way forward

An industry on a fast-track growth mode, MICE generates almost three times more revenue per capita than the leisure market. Worldwide, business travel accounts for almost 40 per cent share of the travel business, with MICE chipping in big time. India is one of the world's top economies, with the largest consumer market and the second-highest spending, making it a natural choice for the world to converge. Although our current share of the global MICE business is less than one percent, initiatives by all stakeholders, the Ministry of Tourism Government of India, and ICPB are targeting to take it to three per cent by 2030. To better understand the existing and future dynamics of the industry, TTJ met with Amaresh Tiwari, Vice Chairman, ICPB, and Director - Meetings and Incentives World.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

**D**espite the travel industry's slump over the last two years, the MICE industry was swift on its feet to re-evaluate the situation at hand and reinvent itself. Though physical meetings and travel almost came to a standstill for some time, global conferences, events, and exhibitions had to be put off for the first time in many decades. However, the world had to be on the move, as all breaks cannot be pulled simultaneously. Work is central to human nature and existence. Work generates activity and lockdown or not, work from the home model was soon in place, and so did come along Virtual-Conferencing and meetings! Then how far could the world of virtual conventions and exhibitions be?

Amaresh shares, "The last two years were very difficult for the industry but the PCO, ICPB members, the meeting planners, event organisers, were fairly busy, conducting virtual events and hybrid events, as innovation is the key. many inbound operators branched out into domestic business in the absence of the traditional inbound business, innovating and using their expertise for the domestic market."

He further adds, "We began creating hybrid models. The ICPB-CIC, which was held at Delhi, Bangalore, and Greater Noida, was a combination of physical and virtual meetings. Also, ITM for FAITH, which I co-chaired, was held virtually and was a success, with over 100 inbound operators in participation, 272 foreign buyers and tour operators, and close to 3000 meetings in three days."

As the world opens up, things have started looking better for the MICE



▲ Amaresh Tiwari

industry. Even so, events like the impending, uncertain, fourth wave of COVID, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and a few pockets like Hong Kong, China, and countries where COVID is still a challenge, holding back the playing field of MICE operators. So, Amaresh and his team at 'Meetings and Incentives World' innovated and focused on the GCC countries due to their track record in managing COVID and safety precautions and norms. This resulted in them organising the 'The International Fire Operation Congress-2022' in February in Riyadh with Saudi Aramco as a partner. The Global Health, Safety, and Environment Conference & Exhibition, which will be held at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre

in Muscat in 2022, is the next event on the schedule.

India is home turf for the Meetings and Incentives World. The Global Organic Expo, to be held at the Indian Agricultural Institute in New Delhi in May, is the next mega event. Amaresh anticipates around 1000 exhibitors and 3000 registered delegates. Also, in July 2022, the GDEC-Global Destinations Expo & Conference, Weddings & Films, a premier event, is scheduled to target the Destination Wedding and Film Shooting industry. One hundred exhibitors from India and overseas are expected, including about 600 hosted and invited buyers.

MICE movements and real-time events create a lot of activity and generate ancillary employment and spending on hotel nights, transport, tour guides, entertainment, venue, and shopping. "Virtual events cannot take away from them the real excitement of a physical event, one-to-one meetings, handshakes, eye-to-eye contact and peer group bonhomie and are in no way a replacement for the real event. Yet, they had opened up an opportunity to interact and do business when none was possible. Now it is to increase and economise the event's footprint when combined to create a hybrid module. Technology will evolve and grow, and the MICE industry has clearly and conscientiously accepted and absorbed that into its working model for the future," explains Amaresh.





## VISIT OMAN Shares Oman's tourism potential with the world

**V**isitOman.om, the Sultanate of Oman's online travel booking gateway for trade partners, recently embarked on a regional roadshow to promote the platform to tour operators and travel agencies. Ending the tour with an exhibition at Expo 2020 Dubai, the digital portal reached thousands of industry insiders, travel managers and potential holidaymakers from within the region and further afield.

This is just the start as VisitOman.om continues to gain traction amongst the travel trade industry and seeks to propel Oman onto the world scene. At Expo 2020, VisitOman.om unveiled its latest addition to the platform – a series of 10 luxury weekend getaways and adventure holidays which will take full advantage of Oman's natural gifts and spirit of exploration. The new packages are just some of the hundreds on offer through the portal which continues to grow, offering a unique proposition for travel partners from around the world.

### An authentic experience

VisitOman.om promotes registered local suppliers and unique products which can be booked as part of pre-built tour packages or included in bespoke travel activities for clients around the world. The chance to see the country through the eyes of a local, learn the history and hear stories from the past adds a rich vein of understanding not offered by the standard tour. Local guides know the area and can show visitors their country with pride and knowledge of hidden gems that may otherwise go unexplored and unseen.

The easy-to-use platform has been designed to be a window into Oman's natural beauty and tourism potential and brings together a wide range of opportunities to allow partners to tailor packages to their customers' needs. With everything available to view in one place, each representative can advise clients towards the most suitable option to create the perfect trip to Oman.

### Oman has so much to offer

Shabib Al Maamari, VisitOman Managing Director, said, "Ahead of a busy 2022 season, we are now engaging with travel partners in key markets to champion the capability of Omani suppliers registered with us and showcase the potential of Oman to offer an authentic experience. As international travel returns, VisitOman.om aims to encourage more agents from across the sector to book trips to Oman."



"Oman has so much to offer and we want to share our nation and what it has to offer with the world," adds Al Maamari. "VisitOman.om allows operators to search for, filter options and instantly guarantee bookings for customers, making the process seamless and secure. We have worked with registered tour operators in Oman to share the very best recommended offerings at all price points, ensuring that every partner is a reputable and reliable supplier, as well as engaging with specialist companies and independent operators to add unique customised aspects which allows visitors to delve deeper into our rich heritage and curate a trip of a lifetime."

As well as allowing service operators to register, VisitOman.om also provides a wealth of high-quality storytelling information resources to help guide international agents and unlock Oman's limitless possibilities. The portal allows agents to tap into growth of niche tourism, which allows specialist companies to cater to smaller groups, offering personalised activities and help to create a brand-new market in Oman for overseas guests.

### Limitless potential

The growth of VisitOman.om is helping to ensure the entire industry nationwide is able to compete on a global scale. Oman's potential as the 'next big thing' in travel and tourism has bubbled under the surface for many years now, and now the expanded reach of VisitOman.om has created countless untapped opportunities for service providers to play an integral role in the prosperity of one of the country's key industries long into the future.



## 'India has global potential as a MICE destination'



▲ Chander Manshramani

MICE business in India is poised to grow, buoyed by recent initiatives by the Ministry of Tourism and India becoming a rising economic power in the region. MICE has been a priority area, and if you look at the recent trends, the development has been unprecedented, whether it is an offsite program for the corporates or national conventions and exhibitions.

**Chander Manshramani**

The recent trend shows that the MICE Industry is intimately linked to economic development as increasing priority is being given to boosting infrastructure. It generally requires significant public funding to build Convention and Exhibition facilities and improve access to public transport, highways, airports, and rail and hospitality infrastructures, which in turn improves the MICE sector.

We in MICE industry are now fully prepared to cater to the client. During COVID, it was a big challenge for all of us to come back and adopt the new normal, focus on risk-based approaches, avoid knee-jerk reactions and collaborate and coordinate with as many related stakeholders as possible to benefit the MICE Industry.

What makes India interesting for MICE tourism is that we have excellent facilities for meeting up to 1000 delegates in our key cities, apart from big convention and exhibition infrastructures. As per ICCA statistics, 80 to 85 per cent of the events held the world over have less than 1000 delegates. So, we are well-positioned to service bigger events. In addition to the infrastructure, there is also an added attraction of cultural diversity, and India, as knowledge capital, has great potential as a MICE destination.

With the pandemic ebbing, the factors which are going to drive and impede the growth of MICE tourism are:

**Market creation:** we need to prioritise the source markets and the same should be developed in the form of an annual Marketing

Calendar.

**Confidence building:** Industry bodies and Government need to work closely in creating the perception of safe tourism.

**Measuring the economic importance of MICE:** It will be very important for the Ministry of Tourism to initiate steps for measuring the economic importance of the Meeting Industry.

(a) Assessment of the Market

(b) Cost analysis and economic assessment.

(c) Size of the MICE Industry.

India's prospects for MICE Tourism are numerous. India can capture world attention as a World MICE Hub. There is also a dynamic business opportunity, as our splendid venues for MICE Tourism are no less than global standards.

## 'The future looks very bright for the MICE industry'

The Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) is a conglomeration of MICE operators from around the country who work together for the growth and betterment of the industry. Established in 2014, NIMA is the only not-for-profit network dedicated to the benefit of MICE operators in India, and it doesn't charge any membership fees from its members. Jagdeep Bhagat, National Coordinator, NIMA, shares his views on the current MICE market sentiments.



▲ Jagdeep Bhagat

**Prashant Nayak**

The main objective of NIMA is to empower members with the desired knowledge, useful resources, and vital connect. The dual objective is to bring the large MICE facilities and resources available in India for the world to know India as a MICE-friendly destination and open up global opportunities for Indian MICE agents. NIMA solicits to have state tourism boards and convention bureaus as its destination partners with whom it will collaborate and contribute to mutual growth for the destination and the members.

While MICE stakeholders are anticipating demand and pick-up in MICE inquiries and queries in the past few months, Jagdeep says, "Though we are experiencing increased demand for MICE business in the last few months, it is a continuous challenge for our members to capture such opportunities due to ever-changing entry

requirements and covid protocols by the countries. For domestic destinations, the guidelines are now somewhat streamlined, and hence the regular business can be seen."

Jagdeep also informs that it was the weddings segment that led to the restart of the tourism industry in India after the pandemic. On the other hand, the demand for cruises is very low globally, and in India, it is no different.

"Till the time overseas destinations open up fully and airfares to international destinations come to pre-covid levels, domestic MICE business is the only and recommended option for all of us. Our expectation is that the MICE business in India which is showing a steady restart will gain momentum in Q3 and Q4," shares Jagdeep.

NIMA works closely with all the leading organizers of Travel Trade Events in the country

and actively represents the Indian MICE industry during such events. NIMA had been instrumental in conducting various training sessions and knowledge workshops for the betterment of various strata of MICE.

Innovation is the key to adaptation to the new normal post-pandemic. NIMA has also been training its members during covid to embrace the latest technologies for smooth execution of events and conducting incentive tours.

Jagdeep concludes, "The future looks very bright for the MICE industry. Besides the successful conduct of conventional MICE business, the future will see more dependence on digital tools, hybrid platforms, and venues that can accommodate the necessary strength of delegates maintaining the social/physical distance in mind."





## The New Generation of Hospitality

Experience Swiss hospitality at **Revier Hotel - Dubai**. Located in Business Bay with close proximity to the iconic Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall, the **4-star lifestyle hotel** offers a city retreat like no other and a meeting point for the modern and tireless explorers.

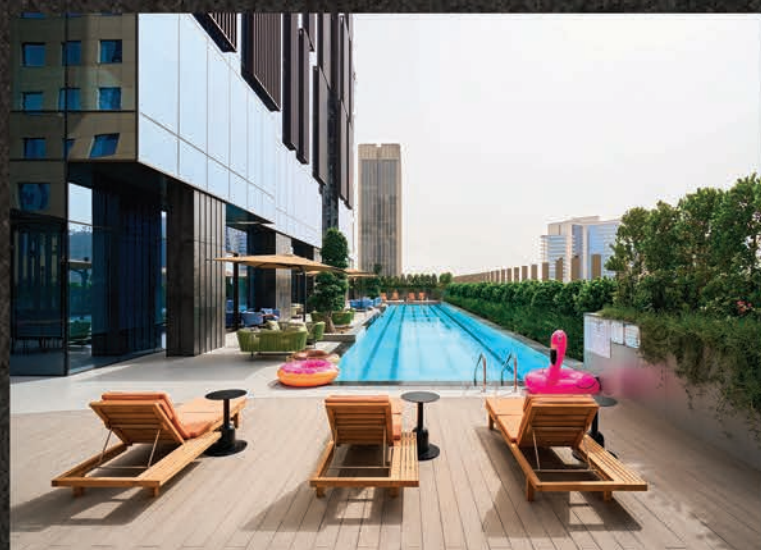
The **230 rooms & suites** are edgy, cosy and functionally designed with everything the modern nomads need - flexibility, Instagram-able spots and fast Wi-Fi.

When the sun comes out to play, guest can relax by the gorgeous **30-meter-long outdoor swimming pool** is surrounded by lush greenery. The **fitness centre** offers state-of-the-art equipment that allows travellers to maintain their fitness regime while away from home.

Our **international menu and Swiss signature dishes** will tickle your fancy and tantalise your tastebuds. Whether you choose to spend some time at **Alphorn Restaurant, Allegra Bar, Shisha Lounge or Lobby Café**, Revier always promises an unforgettable experience.

The newly appointed **General Manager** at Revier Dubai, **Mickael Chevalier** said *"Dubai is a world-class city, and Revier Dubai with its modern and edgy accommodation, young and fresh ambiance, and unique culinary concepts, is the perfect place to provide outstanding and innovative guest experiences to all UAE visitors."*

For bookings, please contact +971 4 574 7555 or email [info.dubai@revierhotels.com](mailto:info.dubai@revierhotels.com)



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# Kerala Tourism on a resurgent mode, all set to bolster tourism in the State

Alongside its emphasis on KTM 2022, Kerala Tourism is stressing its renewed post-pandemic activities such as Caravan Tourism, Champions Boat League, and Responsible Tourism, while looking forward to more international and domestic tourists visiting the state soon. Along with keenly promoting the Malabar region this year, VR Krishna Teja IAS, Director, Kerala Tourism, shares about a slew of initiatives taken up to woo tourists back to the State.

Sonika Bohra

**What role will Kerala Travel Mart 2022 play in boosting tourism in the state?**

KTM 2022 will not just chart the way forward for tourism, but impact other vital segments of the economy. With buyers from 69 countries and 25 states from India attending, and around 55,000 buyer-seller interactions already scheduled, KTM 2022 will open Kerala's tourism windows to the entire world.

Unlike the previous editions, KTM 2022 has more specialised segments with sellers who are into core tourism activities such as caravans, houseboats, ayurveda, adventure, plantation and backwater resorts besides destination weddings and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) operators, taking part.

Following the opening up of the state post, and the lifting of all COVID-induced restrictions, KTM 2022 promises to impart greater momentum to the entire spectrum of tourism activities in the state.

**With the launch of the Kerala government's Caravan Tourism project 'Keravan Kerala' what is your outlook for this project?**

Kerala Tourism's Caravan Tourism policy has been launched with a vision in mind. A vision that conforms to the government's keenness in unlocking the whole of Kerala for tourists, who get to explore the unexplored.

After its launch in mid-Sept 2021, many potential investors have registered, evincing an interest in setting up 147 caravan parks, while 440 entrepreneurs have registered for running caravans in the state

This mode of vacation will offer the visitors a customized experience by facilitating their travel through a circuit of their choice through any part of the state. They can stay close to nature, move leisurely in a healthy ambience and enjoy the local flavours in all their variety before heading back home with enduring memories.

Our globally acclaimed Responsible



▲ VR Krishna Teja

Tourism initiative has a central role in this unique initiative. The Tourism Department will be there as a facilitator and regulator to see that all activities are environmentally and culturally sustainable.

**What are your views on Inbound travel into the country? How is Kerala Tourism marketing itself to keep the destination alive and relevant to the foreigners?**

We are confident that inbound travel to Kerala will pick up this year. The Government of India has lifted all pandemic-induced restrictions on international flights. The year-end and new year foreign tourist season are going to be hectic this year. We expect KTM 2022 to clinch a lot of B2B tie-ups, which will speed up the inbound travel.

**What are the other tourism projects and initiatives envisaged for the international tourists when they come back in huge numbers to your state?**

We have rolled out many highly attractive projects that will meet the demands of the post-pandemic tourist. These include 'exploring the unexplored' that unveils the untapped areas of the state. The Malabar

region figures prominently in this initiative. Farm tourism, adventure activities and cultural tourism have also been reconfigured to make them more appealing to visitors from different parts of the world.

**Which are the new destinations/attractions/festivals the department is promoting to bring the essence of Kerala to both domestic and international travellers?**

The year 2022 is going to be the year of Kerala Tourism, packed with a hectic schedule of absorbing events including Kerala Travel Mart in May, Champions' Boat League (CBL) in August-November and Kochi Muziris Biennale in December-March. Also, several cultural and literary fests and adventure tourism activities will keep the state vibrant throughout the year.

From a focus on achieving targets in arrival numbers, Kerala has now pitched itself strongly as a safe and riveting all-season long-stay destination. From a location-specific approach, Kerala has firmly marked itself as a destination for extended holidays for all segments of visitors, with a bouquet of refreshing experiences stacked across the state.

**What are the new initiatives of Kerala Tourism on the marketing front?**

Kerala Tourism will launch a new campaign targeting summer holiday travellers in India and which aims at the expected summer school holiday season in North India. The multimedia campaign will appear in traditional and contemporary media like print, TV, OOH, digital, online, Social-Media, OTT, etc.

Kerala Tourism will take part in all major national B2B events, such as SATTE New Delhi, IITM Mumbai and the TTFs. We will also organise Partnership Meets in tier 1 and tier 2 cities across India to reach out to the travel trade industry in these cities. A similar exercise that reaches out to the international travel community is also being planned, and Kerala Tourism will market itself with renewed vigour in the international market.



# Relish your holidays with gypsy and tree camping in Madhya Pradesh

Planning a camping trip to utilise your summer holidays in the lap of nature? Madhya Pradesh, the “Heart of Incredible India” has something unique for you.

**P**itching a tent on the ground, sleeping under the stars, having fun with friends and enjoying a bonfire with celestial stories. This is what you may have experienced in the past during your camping trip, but what if Madhya Pradesh invites you to experience all these activities in a unique way?

You just must forget the traditional camping in favour of something more thrilling and better in the jungles of Satpura Tiger Reserve (Satpura National Park). Madhya Pradesh Tourism has introduced the newest and most exciting ways to camp out - ‘Tree Camping’ and ‘Gypsy Camping’.

You will also experience stargazing, bonfire, and dusk drive, swimming, riverside jungle trail with bird watching and tribal cuisine with a barbeque in Satpura National Park.

One more thing that needs to be added is, with tree and gypsy camping, you should not be worried about the creepy crawlers that might intrude inside your tent at night.

## Take your trip to next level with tree camping

To pitch the tent, you don't need to find any flat, level land. All that's needed are some large, stable trees, and that's all. You can enjoy this camping sitting in your tent just above the water or on steep terrain.

All you have to do now is decide how high you want your tent to be hung from the ground. You will be able to explore a better view if you choose to set your camp at a height to witness the picturesque grandeur of Satpura all around.

## Gypsy camping – Night on wheels

Here you are going to experience a night on wheels nestled deep in the forest of the Satpura National Park. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, these camps offer a balanced blend of adventures and tranquillity. With delights of riverside camping and stargazing, this trip would take you on a rollercoaster of so many experiences, like a campfire just beside a river, witnessing the twinkling sky and talking about the secrets of these dense forests.



## Experience a perfect morning

The locations for camps are both thrilling and safe. Whether you wish to see a riverfront or a valley vista, or schedule a meeting with Satpura's tribal culture and jungle, the choice is yours.

The Dhoopgarh hilltop, at the summit of the Satpura range, is a fantastic site to see breathtaking sunsets and sunrises.

Your morning in Satpura will be the best in your life as you will be able to witness the spectacular sunrise while sipping tea and eating breakfast while listening to soothing nature sounds.

## What to carry?

Nothing! You will be given all the required camping gear and equipment along with the tents. So just pack your bag, keep the essentials and head to Madhya Pradesh to experience tree and gypsy camping.

## Locations

### Gypsy Camping

**Pachmarhi** - A riverside/ forest campsite in the buffer zone of Satpura tiger reserve.

**Madhai** - A forest/riverside campsite in the buffer zone of Satpura tiger reserve.

**(Near Denwa Backwater)**

**Tree Camping Pachmarhi** - A riverside/ forest campsite in the buffer zone of Satpura tiger reserve **(Near Dehariya and Panarpani)**

## How to book

Email: [thegypsyncampspachmarhi@gmail.com](mailto:thegypsyncampspachmarhi@gmail.com)

## Contact details:

9205515652/ 8989421281

## Booking platform:

Call/ WhatsApp/Website/Email

**Experiences:** - Stargazing, bonfire, dusk drive, swimming, riverside jungle trail with bird watching, tribal cuisine with barbeque.

## What is offered?

- Authentic customised jungle experience

- Accommodation in 'three-person' tree tents along with sleeping bags

- Bonfire and stargazing with celestial stories

- Authentic local BBQ/ dinner, breakfast

- Early morning guided trek with Bird watching

If you're planning on camping in the Satpura Tiger Reserve, don't forget to stop at Pachmarhi (also known as the Queen of Satpura), one of India's best summer and monsoon destinations. It is also an attractive destination for film shooting.

## Places to explore in Pachmarhi

• Apsara Kund, Priyadarshini - Forsyth Point, Mahadeo Temple, Chauragarh Temple, Rajat Pratap (Silver Fall), Jamuna Prapat (Bee Falls), Jalawataran, Ramaya Kund (Irene Pool), Handi Khoh, Pandavas Caves and Jata Shankar Cave, Herbal Garden, Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve and many other herbal parks.

## Things to do in Pachmarhi:

- Jeep safari, horse riding, ATV ride, land parasailing, zip lining, waterfall trekking and hiking.

## Warm and welcoming place to stay

In Pachmarhi, there are 11 Madhya Pradesh Tourism hotels with 156 beautiful rooms to suit your taste and budget.

- MPT Amaltas, Pachmarhi • MPT Bison Resort, Madhai • MPT Champak Bungalow, Pachmarhi • MPT Club View, Pachmarhi • MPT Devdaru Bungalow, Pachmarhi • MPT Glen View, Pachmarhi • MPT Highlands, Pachmarhi • MPT Karnikar Bungalow, Pachmarhi • MPT Nilamber Cottages, Pachmarhi • MPT Rock End Manor, Pachmarhi • MPT Satpura Retreat, Pachmarhi



# The next most coveted hospitality destination in India for MICE and business

Hilton Garden Inn

Hilton

Located in the heart of India's Silicon Valley, Hilton Hotels & Resorts and Hilton Garden Inn at the Embassy Manyata Business Park are two iconic hotel brands where innovative design meets unparalleled service. With a perfect backdrop for meetings and events, the 619-key dual-branded Hilton properties along with the 60,000 sq. ft Hilton Convention Centre offer an integrated solution for many corporates as they return to business. While the 353-key Hilton Garden Inn Hotel opened for business earlier this year, the 266-key flagship-brand Hilton and the Convention Centre opened on May 1, 2022. Manish Garg, General Manager- Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, in this interaction with TTJ, sheds further insight on India's newest hospitality and MICE address.

**Rachita Sehgal**

**With a vast experience in hospitality and currently holding the reins of Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, what value have you added to the brand?**

With over two decades in the hospitality industry, I have gained well-rounded experience in the hotel business with demonstrated success and expertise in planning, developing, and directing effective business strategies for pre-opening hotels and revenue streams. I believe with conviction that the Hilton values I live- Integrity, Teamwork, Leadership, and Ownership have helped me contribute to Hilton's mission of creating heartfelt experiences for guests, meaningful opportunities for team members, high value for owners, and a positive impact in our communities. Having spent close to seven years in Bengaluru, I have cultivated a reliable network of professional and social contacts that help me bring sharp business acumen, reliable market insights, and robust hospitality competencies to my role as General Manager of Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park.

**You have been associated with the Hilton Group for a long time. How exciting is it to work with new properties?**

I look forward to getting to work every day as it brings new opportunities and challenges

too! This is what makes hotel pre-opening especially rewarding. Engaging with multiple stakeholders who bring a variety of viewpoints, bring about consensus, and make decisions collectively that are efficient and sustainable for the business gives me a great sense of achievement and satisfaction. I am fortunate to have a driven and motivated team of subject matter specialists in their respective domains. Working together has helped us achieve the various milestones successfully thus far, as we are inching close to opening one of South India's largest integrated hotel complexes in the heart of Namma Bengaluru. Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru has already started on a very successful commercial note, and feedback from guests has been equally rewarding. We now look forward to successfully opening the Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park and the Hilton Convention Centre, the largest in North Bengaluru.

**How do you identify factors that shape your brand's appeal to the ever-evolving and changing customer needs?**

We closely follow our customer voice across channels, including social media. We engage with customers, especially before and during arrival, to ensure we can personalise the stay experience. We also learn from our colleagues around various locations globally to adopt best practices from our hotels across Hilton worldwide. Last but not least, we work with local stakeholders like our corporate partners, MICE organisers, and influencers to



understand evolving market needs and trends, which we then plow back into our experiences. So, it is an 'always on' effort. For example, at the Hilton Hotels Embassy Manyata Business Park Bengaluru, we offer integrated Bleisure experiences for customers to experience local and select leisure offerings while on business travel. Across our dual-branded hotels and the vast convention centre that can cater from 2 to 2000 pax seamlessly, we have integrated technology that allows for our guests to carry their plug-and-play lifestyle while traveling too.

## How is the Hilton Garden Inn shaping up in terms of bookings and overall business since the opening?

We have had a phenomenal commercial response from guests and bookers alike to the Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru, which opened in March 2022. We mainly attribute this to our optimal value pricing and friendly, focused service offering. We are proud to share that we have active global event queries for the Hilton Convention Centre too in the pipeline up to 2024. The Hilton Hotels Embassy Manyata Bengaluru offers something for everyone as we can offer an excellent mixed-use product for different price points. So, guests can enjoy the benefit of a full-service complex in the process which is probably the first of its kind in South India.

## What are the USPs of the hotels that you manage?

We are one of India's largest hotel complexes with 619 keys across two Hotel brands: The Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru, five food and beverage outlets and a convention centre spread across nearly 60, 000 square feet housing eighteen versatile venues.

We have the largest twin bedroom inventory in the city with 262 well-appointed twin rooms making it the venue of choice for corporate and leisure events.

With proximity to the airport & easy access to train and metro stations, North Bengaluru now has a great mixed-use hotel complex and convention centre.

A technology-integrated lifestyle is offered in the premise which means customers can carry and use their technology while at the hotel in a plug and play model seamlessly.

An extensive roster of talented and seasoned chefs who have traditional authentic cuisine expertise for leisure events, especially luxe weddings. So, celebrations can be customised to scale.

## Have you noticed a demand or pick-up in MICE inquiries and queries in the past few months? If yes, how prepared is your hotel to capture the upcoming demand?

We have a positive outlook. We are seeing a steady trickle in inquiries for both business travel and MICE inquiries, post-February as the OMICRON wave started to recede. Pent-up demand for social events is visible as people want to get back to the full-fledged big fat Indian wedding celebrations.

Our proactive commercial team is well entrenched in the market to facilitate inquiries -be it business or leisure events. We also

have a strong partner network where service providers like venue stylists, fleet managers, and event planners work with us and execute large-scale events of 1000 guests and above. So, we are genuinely invested in a culture of cooperation and will work closely with local stakeholders to cement North Bengaluru's position as India's newest MICE destination.

## Tell us about your hotel's forte in the MICE business regarding infrastructure and facilities?

We are one of South India's largest integrated hotel complex with close to 60, 000 square feet of convention space. The complex is located within proximity to retail and leisure facilities in North and Central Bengaluru and important commercial business districts. The hotel is conveniently located within a 40-minute drive from the Kempegowda International Airport.

With our dual hotel brands offering direct access to a versatile convention space, guests can enjoy integrated cutting-edge MICE experiences in the heart of North Bengaluru. The hotel complex also offers dynamic pricing options where guests can choose a variety of accommodation options as per the desired pricing and consume all other common offerings available within the premises. The complex is one of its kind, offering seamless scalability for physical and hybrid events powered by best-in-class event technology solutions. This includes an approximate 13,000 square feet pillarless grand ballroom that can accommodate up to 2,000 people and 18 meeting and event spaces. Our culinary brigade only strengthens our offerings further as a MICE destination as we have the talent and seasoned experience of a team of chefs with distinct specialties. We also have the largest twin bed inventory of 262 well-appointed guest rooms in the city, making The Hilton Embassy Manyata Business Park an ideal venue for business and leisure events.

## Please throw light on the dynamics of Bengaluru city when it comes to MICE business?

Bengaluru has traditionally been home to a wide range of heavy and light industries and technology and service industries, including information technology (IT) and electronics, telecommunications, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, banking and finance, and textiles. Marque events such as the Aero India International airshow have made Bengaluru home over the years. However, Bengaluru has tremendous potential to become a MICE destination in its own right as it has the right mix of connectivity, industry and start-up presence, and key industry bodies like NASSCOM based in the city. It is a great boost to see the Government of Karnataka's commitment toward the goal by making key provisions in the 2022-23 budget.

## Presently, with the international connect, are your hotels focused on the domestic MICE market or the international MICE market for the business?

We are focused on making the Hilton Embassy Manyata Business Park Complex the city's best MICE address. We can seamlessly



▲ Manish Garg

engage with our source markets and facilitate queries directly with event organisers for future queries in 2023 and beyond through our above property commercial teams. The domestic MICE market continues to pick the pace and pent-up demand flow, helping us achieve topline as international travel is yet to reach pre-COVID levels. Meanwhile, domestic MICE sentiments reflect a positive outlook and remain a key focus for 2022.

## What are your MICE business expectations from India and the international market by the end of 2022?

We expect the uptick to continue for business from India. Also, we are in a position to offer a reliable alternative to destinations like Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Shanghai, as India is open and functioning to near pre-COVID levels for the international source markets. We look forward to facilitating requirements from these markets.

## What are the upcoming trends and future outlook for the MICE business that you anticipate in the hospitality industry?

We anticipate that there will be a continued focus on technology and safety to address evolving customer needs such as contactless arrival and real-time communications with guests as they plan their travel. Vaccine travel lanes will become a reality for all travellers and stakeholders in the MICE business hotels will become reliable partners in ensuring vaccine travel lanes are maintained effectively. Especially as global business travel picks pace. Last but a critical trend is the scalability of hybrid events, which provides for flexible event participation and evolving travel advisories in the future. This will also cement the Hub and Spoke event model that has emerged post-pandemic as a preferred MICE model that safeguards against force majeure.



# The Leela Gandhinagar gearing up for domestic and international MICE business

The Leela Gandhinagar provides a multi-functional space for cutting-edge, adaptable indoor and outdoor conference facilities to accommodate small and large-scale business and social events. Jaideep Anand, Vice President and General Manager, The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, who successfully oversaw the hotel's launch, gives an insight into the hotel's MICE aspects as he anticipates a rise in MICE business by the end of 2022.

Ravi Sharma

**T**he Leela Gandhinagar, with 318 rooms, is the first luxury hotel to be built on the air space of a conventional railway station and is located in the capital of India's vibrant state of Gujarat, with close proximity to Ahmedabad, the country's first world heritage city by UNESCO.

Within the complex, the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre by The Leela is India's largest purpose-built Convention Centre. Sprawled across 34 acres and built to accommodate 15,000 delegates, the centre is an integrated development comprising a Heads of States Centre, Convention facilities, Exhibition halls, an open-air amphitheatre, expansive lawns, and easy access to The Leela Gandhinagar and Dandi Kutir, India's largest and only museum on the life and principles of Mahatma Gandhi.

For The Leela Gandhinagar, the corporate MICE queries have started flowing in with the market slowly opening again over the last couple of months. "Currently, though the trend is on a smaller scale of the approximate range of 20 to 150 count, there is the potential to go up to greater numbers over the next quarter. We expect more potential larger format corporate events, exhibitions, conventions, etc., in the latter part of the year. Yes, we are slowly gearing up and are excitedly looking forward to this year as it unfolds. Our signature Leela hospitality culture will certainly enhance the value of the potential business flowing in,



▲ Jaideep Anand

further playing a bigger role in the occupancy growth rate over the period of time this year," says Jaideep.

The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre operate one of the country's largest complex corporate conferences, social events, conventions, and exhibition spaces. With over 100,000 sq. ft. flexible events space available, well-supported by the largest 318 room inventory in the twin city of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, they are hopeful of hosting large-scale domestic and international events.

With the domestic MICE segment as their priority market in the early phase of this new financial year, they are also keenly following the developments in the international MICE segment. Jaideep elaborates, "As the global market slowly opens up once more, we are observing a potential rise in both the MICE market segments: domestic and

international. In the case of the international MICE market segment, we are expecting a rise in the number of business potentials, more so towards the last bit of the year. So as a build-up to that, we are expecting a lot of recurrent small FAM trips happening early this financial year."

The global pandemic has presented hotels and MICE operators with the unique challenge of hosting large-scale and small-scale events. This has driven every industry to undergo research and come up with unique offerings that will make the experience even more seamless, with the best technological support. The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre have introduced numerous state-of-the-art technological upgrades that will make the experience of hosting events and conferences here even more seamless.

"Starting with the smooth arrival, check-in and check-out at the hotel and access to various state-of-the-art facilities at the convention centre, elevate your event and conference experience to a new level of luxury. Our efforts for your safety and care are also covered under Suraksha by The Leela, which ensures maximum precaution and safety for all our guests. It's very important to ensure guest safety today and under Suraksha by The Leela, we are and have been successfully able to create a difference in terms of experience in comparison to our competition," assures Jaideep.

Today, MICE business has evolved a lot, especially post-pandemic for the hospitality industry. A lot more flexibility in terms of space and services is expected by guests today. At The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, they are looking to drive bespoke MICE events and conferences to match the par excellence standards that they are known for by their guests. They are hoping to see more rise in the MICE segment of business, with both corporate and social segments engaging with them for bespoke events, coupled with the signature Leela hospitality culture.





# Selamat Datang!

## Malaysia all set to welcome back Indians

Malaysia finally opened its borders on April 1, 2022, marking the end of travel restrictions to visit the country. Leveraging this new development, Tourism Malaysia conducted its first roadshow in six major cities in India from April 18 to April 30, 2022, after a gap of more than two years. To know more about the current developments, TTJ spoke with Manoharan Periasamy, Senior Director of International Promotion Division (Asia and Africa), Tourism Malaysia.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

**T**he six-city roadshow kicked off in Delhi, followed by Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai. Manoharan Periasamy led the trade mission, which included three Malaysia-based airlines, 22 tour operators, four hoteliers, and four product owners.

"This is the right time to be back in India, as the resumption of scheduled international flights from India coincides with the reopening of Malaysia's international borders. Although our overseas offices have always been in constant contact with all stakeholders in India, through virtual conferencing and webinars, nothing compares to meeting with industry players face to face here and telling them that 'We are in Business'. This is the first large-scale overseas roadshow undertaken by Tourism Malaysia since the pandemic. After this, there is ATM and the other events happening, but this is the first overseas initiative to promote Malaysia, despite the Ramadan month," says Manoharan.

India remains and has been one of the top market sources for Malaysia and has contributed 735,309 arrivals (+22 per cent) in 2019. Apart from the objective to instil confidence among Indians to feel safe to visit Malaysia once again, the roadshow aims to provide a platform for the industry stakeholders to rekindle their business contacts and set the process in action to steer the tourism sector back to its former glory between India and Malaysia.

Indian travellers have a lot more to look forward to in Malaysia, with exciting, new value-driven, and action-packed itineraries on the shelf to witness the best and latest on offer. There is so much more to explore after two years, especially the newly opened outdoor theme park, Genting SkyWorld,



▲ Manoharan Periasamy

the refurbished Sunway Resort in Kuala Lumpur, and a magnificent new attraction, the Merdeka 118, the world's second-tallest building. New attractions along with beautiful beaches, exhilarating mountains, and jungles with a plethora of activities will again make a trip to Malaysia, a memorable one.

Since the reopening of its borders, India is on the top four arrivals to Malaysia. The entry procedure requires an RT-PCR test two days before departure and travellers must undergo professionally administered RTK-Ag test within 24 hours upon arrival in Malaysia. Currently, Malaysia eVISA can be applied online and more than 14,000 seats are offered weekly between India and Malaysia through Malaysia Airlines, Malindo Air, AirAsia, IndiGo, and Air India Express.

MICE and wedding businesses are definitely priority segments for Malaysia to generate numbers. Malaysia's proximity to India, warranting short flying times combined with a deep

understanding of Indian sensibilities and competitive pricing, offers an attractive alternative. Malaysia is hopeful that by the coming winter, they can attract quite a good number of wedding and incentive groups. Entry accessibility will also be further liberalised if there are no spikes for the next couple of months. Once the Malaysia-based airlines revert to their full capacity and India-based airlines also add seats, airfares will become more affordable and competitive.

Manoharan further elaborated, "Based on surveys and numerous studies done, we realised that people now want to avoid crowded places. Earlier, everyone wanted to visit the Twin Towers to take a photo, but now they want to explore beyond Kuala Lumpur in smaller niche groups looking for soft adventure and time in nature. Today, we can offer these elements and our operators are ready."

So, although Kuala Lumpur still maintains itself as a shopping and entertainment destination, the tourism board is looking beyond destinations such as Penang, Langkawi Desaru, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and Sarawak. For MICE, Desaru offers good convention and wedding infrastructure for the India market. The setup in Desaru is excellent. One doesn't have to worry about hotel capacities. Desaru has Westin, Hard Rock, and Anantara, where each hotel offers an inventory of more than 300 rooms.

The emphasis for the tourism board now is to regenerate the interest in destination Malaysia and get MICE groups and wedding groups back into the country. Many positive inquiries for groups from India ranging between 300 to 500 guests are already underway and these first movers are being incentivised for their business with various add-on benefits in tandem with the hotels, airlines, and attractions.



# RAKTDA

## focusing and fostering Ras Al Khaimah's MICE offerings, announces new incentives

Al Jazirah Al Hamra

Ras Al Khaimah has positioned itself as a leading MICE destination in the Middle East, hosting several prestigious international and regional events over the past years. The Emirate has made significant strides in strengthening its MICE offering in its key tourism markets. Recently, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) announced new MICE incentives for associations. The initiatives were launched in line with the Authority's strategy to strengthen Ras Al Khaimah's position as a leading MICE destination in the region and to further develop its robust portfolio of events.

### Team TTJ

**R**as Al Khaimah is cementing its reputation as a leading MICE hub in the region, with visitors able to experience a unique blend of culture, nature, and adventure, as well as an extensive hospitality offering and proximity to Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Ras Al Khaimah has a strong track record for hosting big events, emerging stronger from the pandemic, and putting in place measures to ensure the safety of guests and participants at large-scale MICE events. Its facilities include Al Hamra International Exhibition and Conference Centre being named the first safe meeting facility in the world, as certified by Bureau Veritas. There is also the Jais Sky Room, which is a dedicated outdoor event venue, the highest meeting room in the UAE set against the backdrop of the Hajar mountains. With extensive facilities across the Emirate's portfolio of hotels, each venue has specific elements that provide guests with an inspiring overview of Ras Al Khaimah's culture, hospitality, and unique offerings.

Thus, as a growing MICE destination in the region, RAKTDA's new progressive initiatives support the Emirates' MICE offering and further strengthen its position on the international map. To further attract associations and to further support business tourists and MICE groups in 2022, the series of new initiatives include:

- Flexible rates at Al Hamra International Exhibition and Conference Centre facility (2700 sq mt).
- Incentive Program (rebate on accommodation rates\*).
- Waive of Permit fees.
- Free PCR Test for the delegation.
- Free extension of hotel stays and meal plan for those who test COVID positive.
- Free medical coverage for those who need medical attention at Ras Al Khaimah hospital.
- Reduced delegate rates for the attractions.

Pre-pandemic, RAKTDA has partnered with prominent associations such as the WTTC and Deutscher Reiseverband. The Arab Aviation Summit was the first in-person event to be held in 2021 because of the Emirate's safety and hygiene initiatives implemented across its venues. In addition, the Emirate hosted the Global Citizen Forums acclaimed annual summit in 2021, bringing together some of the world's leading minds, including country leaders, philanthropists, activists, acclaimed artists and athletes, entrepreneurs, and top-tier economists, as well as the Schweizer Reise- (Swiss Verband's Travel Association's) first annual General Assembly since the pandemic, welcoming 180 leading Swiss travel agents and tour operators.

The Emirate recently welcomed the World Tourism Forum Lucerne's International Start-up Innovation Summit and will host several association events and conferences this year, including The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), which will be the first time that the not-for-profit travel trade association's Annual Summit to be held in West Asia.

With safety as the main priority for MICE planners, the Emirate was named the Gulf Tourism Capital for both 2020 and 2021 by the Gulf Cooperation Council and set a global benchmark in becoming the first city in the world

to secure the Bureau Veritas Safeguard Label and World Travel and Tourism Council's Safe Travel Stamp.



**Iyad Rasbey, Executive Director, Destination Tourism Development, RAKTDA**

“With our impressive portfolio of hotels offering an array of first-rate meeting and events facilities, plus our world-class Al Hamra Exhibition Centre, specifically designed to provide a new level of flexibility to host all types of events, Ras Al Khaimah is perfectly suited for the MICE travel sector. With a high profile and successful events behind us, we are focused on further strengthening the appeal of the Emirate within this segment and look forward to welcoming even more business travellers in 2022.



Jais Flight



# Africa's Travel Indaba Durban 2022

## Calls for Africa collaboration to drive tourism growth and recovery

After a hiatus of three years, Africa's Travel Indaba was inaugurated by the ringing of the bell by Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Tourism, Republic of South Africa. 634 exhibitors and 625 buyers from 55 nationalities including 18 African nations engaged in approximately 22,000 meetings scheduled from May 3rd to May 5th. Sisulu called for greater collaboration among African countries to advance tourism on the continent, particularly for domestic and regional travel.

### Team TTJ

This year, Africa's Travel Indaba officially called for the continent to work collaboratively to drive tourism growth, to speed up the sector's recovery. Lindiwe Sisulu said. "Africa's Travel Indaba is a springboard for the continent to achieve even greater levels of recovery. We are here because we have a collective responsibility to reignite the African continent's tourism growth and economy."

Sisulu said all role players in the industry must continue to drive growth in tourism numbers by bringing together a range of Africa's best and unique stories and products from across the continent, and connecting them with buyers from across the world.

Africa continues to struggle with many barriers to tourism growth, which include poor road infrastructure between major cities, limited airlift, and stringent immigration regulations.

"I have had several engagements with my fellow cabinet members in related departments, in a bid to partner and address these challenges as we together work towards our sector's recovery. We have already seen positive developments around the roll-out of the e-visa regime for some of our key source markets. This is not only important for South Africa's tourism sector recovery but also for the greater continent's intra-trade activities," Sisulu said.

During the tourism board's four-city Roadshow in India across Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Ahmedabad, South African Tourism showcased long-term investment and interest in the India market and outlined a strategic roadmap to garner a 64 per cent YoY increase in Indian visitors in 2022. The recently rolled out e-visas for India are expected to



drive a large part of this growth.

At present, several stop-over flights fly from India to South Africa, including Emirates, Air Seychelles, Qatar Airways, Air Arabia, Ethiopian Airlines, and Kenya Airways. Travellers from India to South Africa will be required to produce either a complete vaccination certificate or a negative PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test, no older than 72 hours from the time of departure from the country of origin to South Africa.

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# 'Portugal, a MICE destination that is waiting to be discovered and rediscovered by Indian clients'

MICE tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the Indian outbound travel market and, based on pre-pandemic figures, Portugal is looking forward to attracting and hosting, and continuing to show their event organisers skills. Claudia Matias, Director, Visit Portugal, India, believes that though nearby destinations will probably benefit the most from the Indian MICE market, however with travel resuming and with increasing traveller trust and flexibility, the same will happen with long-haul destinations in Europe, such as Portugal in the medium term.

Prashant Nayak

India is a promising growing market and Visit Portugal is capitalising on India's outbound MICE sector. As Indians are now travelling abroad for work all year, they expect the corporate MICE trend to continue to rise. In recent times, they have seen significant growth in MICE to Portugal from India. They also witnessed a significant growth in the number of travellers arriving from India for business travel in 2021 and 2022, underlining the importance of the India market to Portugal.

"Portugal is the MICE destination that is waiting to be discovered and rediscovered by Indian clients. There are many interesting facts about Portugal. As a country of strategic location with connections over the world, Portugal has become an ideal place to travel, live, study, work and invest. We recently launched a motivational teaser, especially aimed at the meetings industry, which highlights the key characteristics and potential of the country, as a destination for corporate and associative events. Our events industry plays a vital role in our tourism strategy since it contributes to seasonal and regional tourism spread across the country. The video is available on the Visit Portugal YouTube channel. The teaser can be viewed and shared with all stakeholders," informs Claudia.

Visit Portugal also has a website dedicated solely to MICE tourism, in order to provide the most up-to-date information to the travel sector, where it's possible to request directly a proposal directly to their team.

Portugal is one of the powerful players in the global MICE market in terms of infrastructure, network, and accessibility. They have a strategic location with well-served air connections to the main outbound markets, and Lisbon is an international hub to America, Africa, and Europe. The country offers concentrated diversity all at a short distance, ranks second in road



▲ Claudia Matias

system quality and eleventh in the ground transport network. They have five mainland international harbours too. Portugal is a safe and stable country with 900 years of history and UNESCO World Heritage classifications, highly appreciated gastronomy and wines, and world-class hospitality offering a good quality/price ratio. They have the Best European Golf Destinations, with 91 golf courses. Their venues can be an 18th-century palace with 50 seats, a modern museum with a capacity for 250 guests, or a multi-purpose arena capable of hosting thousands of participants.

Adding to this, Claudia says, "Portugal is a country of seven contrasting regions with an amazing culture and heritage, diversity and inclusiveness, warm hospitality and mild weather. With over 300 days of sunshine each year and services and infrastructure that equal the best and most modern in Europe, it's easy to see why large worldwide businesses are flocking to Portugal."

Portugal is certainly an excellent choice for MICE event for an array of reasons. The country has been proving itself as a major event organiser, such as hosting the Web Summit, Europe's biggest tech conference. The country also has amazing conditions to host smaller events, such as business meetings or commercial presentations. This diversity is only possible because of a wide range of highly qualified companies and professionals, as well as a diverse range of quality venues and hotels and multiple international air routes.

"One can have great local experiences in Portugal from our, cuisine and amazing wine tourism experiences, nature, and landscapes to enjoy in a balloon ride, golden beaches with amazing sunsets, water sports, surf spots, dolphin and whale watching, UNESCO heritage and history, monuments, medieval castles, cobblestone villages, for cultural tours. Our cities, besides the trendiness, the Michelin restaurants offering are a must-try. Portugal is also a wonderful tax-free shopping destination with a 23 per cent VAT return. They can club many experiences in our amazing golf courses, for example at the Algarve Motorsports Park. This complex, the tracks, and the facilities provide one of the best motorsport experiences in the world. The options are endless," assures Claudia.

Portugal now welcomes all visitors, regardless of the country of origin or purpose of travel. Visitors arriving on mainland Portugal from India will be required to present the following documents as mandate and no quarantine will be obligatory upon arrival. The document includes a negative RT-PCR Test (or similar NAAT test) – 72 hours before boarding, or a negative Laboratorial Rapid Antigen Test- 24h before boarding (according to the European Commission list). Children under 12 do not need to present certificates or tests.



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# 'India is a vast market with untapped potential'

Israel is a dynamic destination in the Middle East that caters to all types of travellers seeking luxury and relaxation. The cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are popular MICE destinations and have renowned hotels, modern infrastructure, and well-equipped convention centres. The Dead Sea and Eilat are great MICE add-ons, especially with the recently opened Ramon International Airport (ETM) in Eilat, servicing the region. Sammy Yahia, Director, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India and Philippines, tells us why Israel makes for a perfect MICE destination.

Manisha Patel

Since opening the skies to all travellers on March 1, 2022, the Israel Government tourist office has seen over 165,000 tourists travel into the country and they are thrilled and expecting more tourists to arrive there in the following months. While they are happy to see the movement of tourists to Israel, they are even more pleased to receive many MICE queries from their travel partners and corporations as well.

"I have received many queries regarding potential MICE movement to Israel and we are currently working with our corporate partners and tour operators to finalise Israel as their destination of choice. To assist with their decision, we have been meeting with the decision-makers and not only sharing destination presentations with them but also connecting them with the partners, be it DMCs, city/region municipalities, MICE specialists, airline partners, and other stakeholders," says Sammy.

Israel has hosted several international conventions and conferences. Most recently, they held the 70th Miss Universe Competition in the resort city of Eilat, hosting participants from 80 different countries. Owing to Israel's modern infrastructure, impressive hotels, availability of international cuisines-vegetarian, vegan, and non-vegetarian options, as well as the state-of-the-art convention centres and bleisure activities it makes for a great MICE destination.

Organisers have the option to choose from unique venues throughout the country to host unforgettable conferences at venues like kibbutz settlements, hotels, universities, and convention centres that can accommodate from 50 to 10,000 participants, all providing ultra-modern, state-of-the-art facilities.

Speaking of unique MICE venues in Israel, Sammy informs, "We have hospitals, such as the two Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, known worldwide for their advanced medical technology, are perfect locations to hold medical conferences and



▲ Sammy Yahia

meetings. The recently renovated EXPO Tel Aviv-International Convention Center boasts 20 conference halls with 20,000 sqm of exhibition space. Also, the International Convention Center Jerusalem - Binyanei Haoma - offers pressrooms linked to every corner of the globe through excellent communications systems that support international video conferencing and direct access to all major television networks. The Weizmann Institute of Science, one of the world's leading multidisciplinary basic research institutions, ranked sixth in Nature Innovation Index, 2017, and first outside the USA, is an additional institution to host your prestigious event."

In Israel, MICE travellers have a host of activities to choose from on their visit. One can experience a wine and cheese tour to taste some of the best produce; or opt for a mud spa treatment at the Dead Sea; reconnect with your spirituality in Jerusalem; explore the thriving culinary culture of Tel Aviv or swim with dolphins in Eilat. For the adventurous kind, Israel also offers tandem

skydiving, luxury desert camping in the Negev, and winter activities at Mount Hermon in the winter.

About MICE business expectations from the Indian market, Sammy says, "India is a vast market with untapped potential. There are many sectors of Indian industry that we are yet to approach to build our MICE business. While medical, financial, security, technology, and agriculture are industries that have MICE movement to Israel, I am working on attracting alternate industries as well as education, health, and wellness, automotive, FMCG, metalworks, and others."

While the destination is well equipped to welcome MICE groups of all sizes, the India office also provides groups with support. As and when required, the office provides help with visa facilitation (both group visas and individual visas) as well as support at border control, where the group's immigration is processed together.

Since the pandemic, Sammy says he has observed many changing trends in the MICE industry. He has noticed that while many companies are adopting the hybrid work model, working from home and office, not all companies have returned to the requirement for corporate travel. He foresees that this could increase the demand for MICE travel, especially in the Incentives segment to not only show their team members appreciation but also to help with team building.

"Also, in the present landscape, there are many factors that are affecting travel. While the world is ready to resume cross-border movement, the lack of standardisation in COVID protocols, limited connectivity, and increase in logistical costs have created a slight hurdle in the segment's growth. On the other hand, the tourism industry is benefitting from digitization which not only helps save time and money but also adds convenience and ease to the travel process," says Sammy.



# Germany's MICE sector is back in action

‘Made in Germany’ is a guarantee of quality that is recognised worldwide, and the same goes for business meetings in Germany, where the MICE sector is top-notch and of premium quality. Offering the highest levels of professionalism at competitive prices compared to the rest of Europe, German hospitality rates are quite affordable while standards are high. Whether organising a major convention or an elite strategy meeting, a product launch, or a cultural event, Germany has the right setting for every occasion, says Romit Theophilus, Director, German National Tourist Office (GNTO) India, as he shares more details about the current MICE scenario in Germany.

Prashant Nayak

In terms of MICE movements, Germany had witnessed a very positive trend in the first quarter of 2022, which is a good indication that the situation is turning to normal. The current strength for Germany still remains Trade Fairs and Multi-Country group travel, i.e., travellers covering eight to ten countries in 12-15 days.

In Europe, Germany is the most preferred destination for incentives. Germany's prominence as a global MICE destination includes first-class infrastructure, a diverse and strong network of providers, and an effective price-performance ratio. Among the cities, Munich and Berlin continue to be the top favorites and are becoming very popular for MICE visits. The country is now also being included in itineraries for a longer duration. While earlier, most itineraries included only a drive-through in Germany, now many itineraries cover a minimum of two overnights. The most popular region continues to be Bavaria, The Southwest of Germany, and Frankfurt and its neighboring regions.

“Two thirds of the world's flagship trade fairs take place in Germany. More than 6,000 event venues ranging from state-of-the-art congress halls to ultra-professional hotels and unusual locations are available for conventions, conferences, and other events. With outstanding infrastructure, reliable and professional partners, state-of-the-art technology, and high-quality service factors Germany as a strong MICE and travel destination. Germany's wealth of business hotels is among the world's best, along with excellent transport connections, fantastic venues, top-class equipment, and superb service,” shares Romit.

This year, the country, including Berlin, has opened several key attractions, adding to its attraction for Indian visitors. Thus, the MICE segment is likely to continue its steady upward trajectory for the German capital. Germany's diverse mix of cultural,



▲ Romit Theophilus

natural, and leisure attractions is a big hit with Indian tourists. Indian travellers rate overall satisfaction, choice and quality, and accommodation among the highest fulfillment factors in the Quality Monitor Survey done for the German tourism industry.

Romit says, “Germany's biggest and most popular cities attract many visitors from India. Everyone will find whatever they're looking for from business travellers and cultural aficionados to shopaholics and party animals. Indian travellers are sure to be enchanted, whether in a UNESCO World Heritage Site or a lesser-known gem of Germany.”

The country has taken several steps to accommodate safe events in its respective venues. Naturally, they have expanded their hygiene and safety concepts and support event planners with any requisitions that may come up. The events industry in Germany is coming to life again. New regulations by respective states are making small-big-scale events possible again, with congresses and trade fairs occurring once again.

“Germany's perception in India is also slowly changing and we also look forward to offering affordable accommodation and world-class infrastructure in the leisure and MICE segments. While the preferred choice of accommodation remained budget hotels, Indians want to spend more on experiences and exploring the destination as well as shopping, food, and drink. International travel is no longer confined to the rich in India — the middle class is taking the plunge more often and their average spending is increasing. VFR and luxury travel will dominate the first half of 2022, after which leisure and family travel will begin. We will see stronger growth demand from India in 2022. In the coming years, GNTO India has set its target of 2 million overnights of Indians travelling to Germany by 2030,” says Romit.

Indeed, Germany has a longstanding tradition of being one of the most popular MICE destinations. But what makes Germany a unique destination is the world-famous “Gemütlichkeit,” its great connectivity, proximity to nature, cosmopolitan outlook and hospitality traditions, and the country's excellent MICE infrastructure. Many cities in Germany have recently shared exciting news about their city's new hotels, venue openings, and great events awaiting visitors in 2022 and beyond.

“Also, in our one-on-one interactions with DMCs, city tourism authorities, and other potential German partners across the country, we suggested developing new and creative MICE routes in each city. These new and refreshing routes can be very much tempting for those looking for authentic local experiences in the post-COVID era. This can range from local cultural visits, beach activities, historical sites, and mountainous experiences, to exploring rural or suburban regions of big cities which can be then available for extraordinary and re-energising experiences,” concludes Romit.





# TCEB

## Empowering and uplifting Thailand's MICE industry



▲ Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya

TCEB (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau) is a government agency responsible for supporting, promoting, and developing the Thai MICE industry. In this interaction with TTJ, Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, President, TCEB, gives us a fair idea of how TCEB collaborates with stakeholders in all related sectors – public, private, academic, and local communities – to achieve their ultimate goal of making Thailand a preferred MICE destination in the region. They integrate and synergise their strengths to provide high-quality products and services that meet or exceed the demands and expectations of international clientele, whether they are event organisers or delegates.

### Prashant Nayak

**Before the pandemic, how has the MICE industry made a significant contribution to tourism growth in Thailand?**

MICE industry has been incorporated into the government's national strategic development plan, testifying to its significant role in driving the economy. Before the pandemic, the MICE industry contributed around 16.18 billion US dollars to Thailand's GDP in 2019, generated 1,156 million US dollars in tax revenue, and created 321,918 jobs. In the same year, Thailand welcomed 1.27 million overseas MICE travellers, accounting for 3.20 per cent of the total foreign travellers. The expenditure of overseas MICE travellers accounted for 4.9 per cent of the total expenditure made by foreign travellers.

**What makes Thailand interesting for MICE tourism?**

Thailand has always been ranked high on a global scale in various areas related to travel.

Leading destination for medical travellers, the preferred destination for digital nomads, a top-notch destination for wellness, a world-renowned destination for culture, attraction, cuisine, hospitality, world-class accommodation, and shopping. Such a high profile has created trust and strong branding of Thailand. When combining them with Thailand's strategic location in the heartland of Southeast Asia, which hugely contributes to the country's convenient accessibility, the country has a strong foundation for business events or the MICE industry. Furthermore, Thailand has been a multi-faceted economy, a leading exporter of food products, jewellery, and automobile, a potential logistics hub of the region, and a world-class service provider in the medical and tourism sectors. This means vast opportunities for business and professional growth in various areas, which can be fostered through the MICE platform. The presence of government-sanctioned TCEB affirms the

country's commitment to the excellence of MICE. The bureau has always crafted support schemes for events from overseas, provided facilitation, connected overseas clients with domestic service providers and stakeholders, developed destinations and new products, and sharpened the professionalism of the MICE workforce for superb service delivery. Undoubtedly, Thailand has enjoyed recognition as a top-notch MICE-destination.

**Tell us about your destination's forte in the MICE business regarding infrastructure and facilities?**

Thailand is noted for convenient access and an enriched range of products and services. Our accommodation and meeting facilities have long acquired world-class standards and recognition. However, the upgrade and new development never stop in Thailand, despite the pandemic. In September this year, the newly renovated Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in the business



heartland of Bangkok will be opened with expanded capacity - two exhibition halls with a total space of 45,000 square metres and two conference halls with a combined total area of 10,000 square metres. A new satellite terminal of 215,000 sqm at Suvarnabhumi Airport is now complete, which will be able to handle 15 million more passengers a year through 28 contact gates. Bangsue Central Station, the largest railway station in ASEAN located in Bangkok, is now complete, which will serve as a connecting point from Bangkok to other MICE Cities in Thailand, and vice versa. It must be noted that Thailand is now in the investment boom of all modes of transport at a scale never experienced before, be it road, rail, air, or water. A high-speed railway is being constructed linking two airports in Bangkok with U-Tapao airport near Pattaya. Motorways linking Bangkok to other potential city destinations are underway. Dual railways are constructed throughout the country. Travel between city destinations will become even more convenient shortly. Sky trains and underground trains are being expanded in Bangkok, making more time-saving travel between attraction locations possible.

## According to you, which are the most dynamic and upcoming MICE destinations in Thailand?

We have a rich choice of city destinations, a total of ten MICE cities in all four key country regions. Each city has its unique character, like the stunning oceanic setting of Phuket, refreshing ecological backdrop and fascinating culture of Chiang Mai, lively ambience of Pattaya, and metropolitan and energetic Bangkok. Of course, Bangkok is the most selected location due to its role as a gateway to the country and a hub of flight connection, plus its varied choice of world-class venues and accommodation. Every MICE City is working closely with TCEB to sharpen its selling point, upgrade fundamentals for MICE, and equip itself with new infrastructure, especially hybrid and digital platforms and health protocols, to meet overseas clients' shifting needs and requirements.

## According to you, what factors can help in the faster recovery of MICE tourism?

After two years of tight control and prohibition of international travel and event organisation, the industry longs for restriction-free travel or minimum requirements. They are the prerequisites for increased volume of travel. Anyway, the availability of practical or least-hassle arrangements for health and hygienic safety in a destination remains key to enticing more travel and events. This guarantees that travel and event can run smoothly from start to finish. New products or any arrangement that can contribute to revitalising purposes and meaningful engagement of events also play a part in stimulating attendance at events as they can compensate for the loss of face-to-face experience during the pandemic. To help facilitate incoming MICE travellers and make them feel comfortable as much as possible,

TCEB has expanded MICE Lane Service for even VIPs to Don Muang Airport in Bangkok and, on a case-by-case basis, to Phuket airport and Chiang Mai airport. Besides, TCEB and its stakeholders collaborated with the Ministry of Public Health during the pandemic in developing COVID Free Setting as a health-compliant framework for organisers, venue operators, and event attendants to ensure hygienic safety for running the events in Thailand. We run the MICE Winnovation project, creating a platform for organisers and venue operators to pair up with tech entrepreneurs in using the latter's tech products or services to hold safe and hygienic events. We now have a long list of tech entrepreneurs ready to serve the MICE industry.

## Given the impact of the pandemic, is TCEB working with MICE and tourism stakeholders in Thailand and global partners in developing new products or attractive incentive programs?

The pandemic is a golden opportunity for TCEB to intensify the development of the MICE industry. As said earlier, any products serving revitalising purposes and creating meaningful engagement are key to events. In this regard, we collaborated with DMCs and local communities in all 10 MICE Cities to develop new MICE routes: cuisine, natural trail, culture, and traditional way of life. Now they are all ready to serve MICE groups. We implement the Festival Economy initiative, helping potential cities develop festivals based on their cultural roots and natural assets so that they have mega-events as a magnet for travellers. On the part of attractive incentive programs, we have crafted SMILE scheme to incentivise local experience of meeting and incentive groups. To be in line with new requirements on hygienic concerns, we have incentives for event organisers to secure tech products that can help ensure the health safety of their events.

## As a government agency tasked with promoting and developing the business tourism sector in Thailand, are you working out any new MICE marketing initiatives or strategies?

To create confidence in the prospects of the Thai MICE industry, we are targeting to attract mega-events to Thailand to create large-scale economic impacts. We are now successfully winning the rights from the International Association of Horticultural Producers to host the International Horticultural Exposition in 2026 in Udon Thani, a new MICE City. It will showcase the capabilities of our new destination outside Bangkok in hosting global events. The event hosts are the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and Udon Thani. The success is part of our initiative One Ministry, One Expo. TCEB acts as a national bidder and involves



the related ministry hosting the mega-events to ensure our government backs the overseas market. Under such an initiative, we also focus on driving home-grown mega-events to serve the national strategic plan in cultivating future industries. From 2025 to 2027, we will be organising the Thailand International Air Show at U-Tapao airport near Pattaya. The aim is to drive the area to become a new aviation hub in the Eastern Economic Corridor.

## What is your take on the virtual events platform? Will it affect the MICE business in the long run?

We are running the 2HY program to enable venues to run hybrid and health-compliant events as part of our effort to help Thai MICE suppliers respond to shifting requirements induced by the pandemic. So far, we have 100 venues achieving 2HY standards. We also have a support scheme for running hybrid events to keep business going when the situation is not yet fully recovering to the pre-pandemic stage. Anyway, we believe that MICE industry players are longing for in-person events and direct experiences, as they can create more trust and strengthen the connection. Virtual and hybrid platforms can be an alternative for any circumstances that prevent physical attendance or can be a complement to face-to-face meetings.

## How significant is the India market for MICE tourism in Thailand?

We are thankful to India for being one of Thailand's top market sources of MICE travellers since 2013. They play a significant part in the growth of the Thai MICE industry. That's why TCEB has Indian representatives to keep us abreast of the development in the India market. During the pandemic, we always keep engaged with Indian agents through virtual platforms to affirm our connection. We just concluded the first international familiarisation trip in two years in March with the inspection trip in Bangkok and Phuket. Of course, we invited Indian agents to join the trip and enabled them to get to know our new products and services. Before the pandemic, we always held a roadshow in India every year. With the improving situation in Asia and the impressive projection of India's economic growth, we look forward to landing in India again with Thai MICE suppliers. India remains on our key market list, and we will continue to look for ways for Thailand to deliver the best value for our Indian clients.



# Ajman well positioned to be the next MICE destination

The Ajman Department of Tourism Development (ADTD) aims to promote touristic attractions across the Emirate and shed light on the unique elements that Ajman offers as one of the leading travel destinations in the UAE. Ajman is also fortunate to have a diverse range of venues and destinations, many of which serve as MICE tourist support attractions, offering a diverse range of activities, whether heritage, culture, or adventure. Khadija Mohammed Turki, Acting Director-General, ADTD, discusses MICE tourism in the Emirate.

Prashant Nayak

Ajman closed the year 2021 on a very positive note on all its major KPIs, exceeding its expectations and outperforming not only 2020 figures but also 2019 (pre-pandemic) ones. The different market segments, including MICE, have contributed to this success and Q1 2022 is also showing the same positive trend.

Currently, MICE is the least growing out of all market segments in Ajman, but ADTD works closely with its strategic partners to attract more MICE business into the emirate. Meanwhile, during the past few months, they noticed the growing demand for medium size groups and destination weddings to Ajman.

Sharing some of the destination's strong points, Khadija says, "The location of Ajman among its neighboring Emirates sets it right in the middle. The proximity to major airports allows easy access to Ajman from the different airports all over the country (for example, Dubai and Sharjah airports). In addition, the advanced infrastructure and technology services provided by the Ajman Government facilitate and enhance all tourism-related operations to improve the overall experience for tourists and visitors whether from inside or outside the UAE."

The heritage and culture-focused Heritage District, including the Ajman Museum and Al Manama Museum, is one of several places of interest, attractions



▲ Khadija Mohammed Turki

and experiences that can be clubbed with a MICE event in Ajman.

"Not to forget the massive attention we give to the sports activities and we have world-class facilities in Ajman, like Al Zorah Golf Club, and also for kayaking, cycling and mountain biking, and of course water sports as we have some of the world's most beautiful beaches. I'd also like to highlight the bespoke spas and health clubs, the high-end shopping malls, and the exquisite dining experience, as we are keen to offer Ajman's visitors a time to remember," reminds Khadija.

Ajman Tourism has been providing easy procedures to execute many exhibitions and events, easy access for tourists from all over the world, innovative solutions for investors in the

tourism sector, and ensuring that all facilities adopt covid-related protocols that guarantee the safety of both employees and visitors in the emirate. They are well-prepared to capture all the upcoming demand and their strategies set for this year already reflect their intention to attract more visitors.

The India market has always been the main source market for tourism in Ajman. With India, one of the priority markets for Ajman, post the pandemic, they are chalking out ways to establish and expand their presence in India with their country representative.

Indians represented around 12 per cent of the total number of visitors to Ajman in 2021 and has been significantly growing year over year which eventually manifested in an increase in the number of visitors in 2021 by 55 per cent compared to 2019 and by 26 per cent compared to 2020. "According to this indication, we expect the MICE business segment to grow in harmony with this overall growth. To enhance the Indian market growth, we have established a strategic partnership and signed an MOU with a highly reputed professional marketing company in 2022 to promote the tourism and culture of Ajman in India and increase the destination visitors through different marketing and commercial activities," shares Khadija.

As per their leadership's directions, they are now studying the MICE market and how Ajman can enhance its presence there and they are performing all required studies to invest, develop, and attract this huge segment into the Emirate to become one of the most attractive MICE destinations in the region.

On a final note, Khadija says, "Ajman boasts an array of touristic features and destinations that are convenient for many travel groups. We are able to confidently target all types of tourists according to their needs and meet their expectations, whether they are seeking business, leisure, or entertainment."





# REVIER DUBAI

## The New Generation Hotel

**E**xperience Swiss hospitality at Revier Hotel – Dubai, located in Business Bay in close proximity to the iconic Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall. The 4-star lifestyle hotel offers a city retreat like no other, with Instagrammable spots and an authentic Swiss/ German dining experience.

The tech-savvy hotel boasts 230 rooms and suites which are edgy, cosy and chic with an unmistakable Swiss touch embedded into the style. The ethos of the heritage of the hotel flows seamlessly into the tapestry of presentation such that you are transported to the Swiss Alps without even realising it. Fitted with leather strappings, cowbell lanterns, copper finishing in every corner, the rooms are modern, functional and authentic.

The third floor, also known as the “Leisure Floor” is where you will find most guests. When the sun comes out to play, guests can relax by the gorgeous 30-meter-long outdoor swimming pool surrounded by lush greenery and high vibes. The floor is also home to the two unique venues, Alphorn Restaurant and Allegra Shisha & Bar.

The hotel is also home to a 24 hours operational fitness centre that offers state-of-the-art equipment’s to maintain fitness regime.

All in all, the hotel is a love letter to Switzerland and stands out by being totally honest and transparent in its intentions. It is a haven for today’s nomads, allowing them to unwind and escape - a perfect vacation or staycation spot unique to others in the area.

**Alphorn Restaurant:** Alphorn Restaurant is where the culinary journey takes you to the Swiss heritage. Swiss, German, Italian and other international dishes are featured on Alphorn’s decadent à la carte menu.

Guests can enjoy unique theme nights such as Cheese Fondue Night, Bocca Felice Night and Beef It Up Night.

**Allegra Bar & Shisha:** One of the newest hotspots in the area that offers amazing cocktails, small bites and a unique shisha experience on the iconic terrace by the pool.

### Allegra Bar & Shisha Happenings

• **Happy Hour** – For AED 45 only, enjoy a 2-for-1 deal on select drinks with a variety of options such as grape, hops and spirits!

Happy hour takes place daily from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

### • Foxy Ladies

#### Night – Taking

place every Wednesday from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm for only AED 100, ladies are offered 3 drinks and 1 food option from a specially crafted menu. Meanwhile, the DJ will raise the bar of current vibes at our renowned venue. Her beats blended with Swiss poetry will create the best mood for the lively new ladies’ night in Business Bay.

The cosy outdoor Shisha Lounge located at the poolside features standard and special flavours starting at AED 90.

### About REVIER Hospitality Group AG

The REVIER Hospitality Group has built two very distinct brands: REVIER Hotels and the PRIVÀ Lodge & Living Concept. As a subsidiary of the Swiss real estate developer Fortimo Group, it is fully owned and managed by the families of Philipp and Remo Bienz. Following a Swiss vision and expertise, REVIER has demarcated itself by creating a unique idea that revolves around providing their valued guests with outstanding service based on the essentials - nothing too complicated, just authentically simple and of high-quality. The group is on its way to expand to new horizons after launching their first property in Lenzerheide in 2017 - a ski station in winter and a bike destination in summer. In 2020, the second property in Adelboden was launched - another renown resort located in a beautiful mountain zone in Switzerland, all based on the same concepts: simple rooms, stunning views and a varied, delicious menu. The time will come to eventually launch the first “city” hotel in Schaffhausen, a very traditional and historic town in the north of Switzerland that will offer a unique spectacle and views of the famous “Rheinfall”. The first property based abroad - besides Dubai - will be in the ski region of Montafon in Austria. Overall, REVIER can be condensed in a few essential aspects - a young and dynamic symbiosis that merges classic accommodation and optimised working processes with a real and honest design. Everything is practical, simple, comfortable and sustainable.



▲ Mickael Chevalier  
General Manager at Revier Dubai







# Atlantis, The Palm

## Always more to explore, new experiences to indulge in

2021 has been a transformative year for Atlantis, The Palm Dubai. Home to the largest waterpark in the world, 31 restaurants and bars, the largest open-air aquarium in the Middle East and Africa, the resort offers a vast array of unforgettable activities and experiences. Kyp Charalambous, VP- Sales, Atlantis, The Palm Dubai, assures that when travellers return to Atlantis, there is something new and extraordinary to experience at every turn.

Prashant Nayak

**D**espite the challenges posed by the pandemic, I hear 2021 was a great year financially for Atlantis, The Palm Dubai?

It was. Q4 was the best quarter we've had in history. Other than a slight dip when the country went into lockdown, we are thankful to say that business has been consistent throughout. Because we're a global brand with such a diverse offering, we welcome guests from more than 80 countries around the world, meaning if one market were not able to travel, we were able to focus on another.

India and Atlantis, The Palm Dubai have always been a fantastic success story, yet despite challenges posed by the pandemic, we still welcomed over 30,000 Indian guests over 2021, which we are incredibly grateful for.

We're very thankful that our occupancy has remained buoyant into 2022. In March, the resort achieved the highest room revenue and highest resort total revenue in the 13-year history of Atlantis. We are breaking our records every month.

**Atlantis, The Palm Dubai recently underwent a full resort refurbishment of the rooms, suites, and other areas of the hotel. What were the factors that led to this decision?**



▲ Kyp Charalambous

That's correct; during the pandemic, one of our strategies was to keep building and creating. Our goal is that we always want to ensure we have new enhancements and things to do and see for returning guests who visit season after season and year after year. Despite the pandemic and everything that was taking place, we held true to this core value and continued to work on various projects throughout the resort to enhance its positioning, not only for today but for the future.

We focused on a broad spectrum of updates across the resort, but the common denominator is that it's all about experiences, and as we appeal to such a vast demographic of international visitors and guests (from over 200 countries), we want to continuously ensure we have the right facilities, upon which we can build these extraordinary experiences around.

**Atlantis, The Palm Dubai is a destination in itself. Is your team focusing on longer lengths of stay for your patrons?**

2021 has been a transformative year for the resort, and we have continued to evolve to ensure the best for our guests. We're now home to the largest waterpark in the world, 31 restaurants and bars, the largest open-air aquarium in the Middle East and Africa, plus a vast array of unforgettable activities and experiences that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. The waterpark alone requires at least two to three days to try every slide. With this in mind, a longer length of stay is now almost a must for our guests to truly experience the resort to its fullest.

**You also have a global partner booking rewards programme for agents. Please throw some light on it?**

We invite our valued Indian travel trade fraternity to join our Global Booking Rewards Programme



atlantisresortsincentives.com in 2022, which we've designed to enable us to thank our trusted, handpicked partners for their continued loyalty in choosing Atlantis as their preferred resort destination. The platform essentially allows us to reward Agents making reservations for Atlantis, The Palm with a host of special incentives for every night booked.

## What are your communication and marketing strategies and what kind of trade interactions do you do with your travel partners in the India market?

We work very closely with the travel industry and cannot thank the trade enough for their incredible support and fun promoting Atlantis, The Palm. We hosted multiple trade events and trade familiarisation trips, and individual travel trade partners. Atlantis also launched 'Atlantis on Tour', where we visited many cities in India; we attended large roadshows and smaller client events and have worked very closely across market segments and geographies. We also have lots in the pipeline for the Indian travel trade, including some really exciting partnerships with entertainment, luxury retail, automobile, and financial sectors.

## Tell us a little about the role the Indian tourists play for Atlantis, The Palm Dubai?

We have worked closely with the India market since pre-opening, both in terms of sales and marketing, and media relations, and we're proud to have built a tremendous brand among consumers and travel industry partners in metros and tier II and III towns. The customer response has only grown and been solidified over the years based on a solid business relationship and mutual respect. We work very closely with the travel industry and cannot thank the trade enough for their incredible support and fun promoting Atlantis, The Palm Dubai.

## What is your expectation from the India market post-COVID and which segments of the business are you eyeing? Will you also be targeting the MICE and Weddings business from India?

India is one of the top five source markets, so you can imagine how important it is for us. Having an inventory of about 1546 rooms and suites, we consider each segment to be significant. We rely on all the segments—leisure, MICE, and weddings, and we specialise in all of them.

Destination weddings are crucial for Atlantis, with over 40 per cent of all wedding business coming from India; a share we are actually looking to increase in 2022 and beyond. To support this, we have recently completed a \$3.1M



refurbishment of our ballroom, giving the space a brand-new neutral and fresh look and feel that suits all styles of weddings and events. We've also added a host of new experiences and activities that are great additions to the wedding experience, including the largest waterpark expansion in history, making Atlantis Aquaventure the biggest waterpark in the world and we've launched the region's only licensed nail salon Nailology, which is the perfect size for a private event such as a bridal shower and the space can also be completely customised.

## What is the next focus for Atlantis, The Palm Dubai?

I think I speak on behalf of everyone when I say it's opening Atlantis The Royal (Q4, 2022). We describe it as the most ultra-luxury experiential resort in the world in that it's a little more modern and sophisticated in its presentation, but that still captures the essence and experience of Atlantis. The property will also be home to 795 resort rooms and suites, 44 of which include soaring private infinity pools. Further enhancing the region's culinary credentials, the property will also introduce a further 18 restaurants to the destination, including eight by celebrity chefs, including Heston Blumenthal and Jose Andres, as well as a world-first beach/pool club by Nobu.

We are just working through the Grand Opening plan now and our intention is, in the fourth quarter of this year, to host one of the most unforgettable openings the world has ever seen.

We will also continue our journey to become Aquaventure World, which will see our waterpark transition into the number one theme park in Dubai, featuring the largest waterpark in the world. It will be the first fully-fledged integrated aquatic theme park in the region and will contribute to Dubai's objective to be the number one entertainment destination in the world.

We also have some amazing initiatives planned as part of our sustainability programme Atlantis Atlas Project. In the next couple of months, we will be taking our pledge to eliminate single-use plastic bottles by next year to the next level but completing the build of our own bottling plant. We are also concluding a Solar Panel Project intending to reduce energy in Aquaventure Waterpark. Most excitingly, over the last year, 1USD for every marine mammal interaction went into the Atlas Project fund. From next month, we will be awarding our first set of projects, which will essentially see Atlantis invest in local initiatives that protect wildlife in the UAE and Arabian Gulf.





# Caesars Palace Dubai creating awareness focused on luxé offerings



Being positioned on the western edge of Bluewaters Island in Dubai means that Caesars Palace Dubai guests can enjoy an idyllic island setting with incredible panoramic ocean views. Paula Tannous, Commercial Director, Caesars Palace Dubai, was eager to share information about the opulent property and provide additional insight into their MICE portfolio.

Prashant Nayak

Caesars Palace Dubai has had a great start to 2022. Occupancies are stronger than expected, and that has set them on a good pace for the remainder of the year.

Their reputation and awareness in key markets have strengthened due to the entire hotel team consistently delivering amazing service, and this has helped deliver good results. Also, they are witnessing their international guests returning.

"Bluewaters is also a new destination, and our location is a major selling point. Our five chilled pools, an array of restaurants and leisure spaces, and our 500 meters of private beach offer something for everyone. The community of Bluewaters is literally on our doorstep. It has a beautiful seaside promenade and is filled with entertainment for kids and adults and exploration for food in cafes and restaurants," mentions Paula.

Caesars Palace Dubai witnessed a peak in MICE demand during the first quarter of the year and continues to see interest for the entire year. Their 495 rooms and suites, with their luxurious spaces and amazing sea views, are a perfect fit for small and mid-size groups, and up to 200 exclusive rooms with an array of event and conference facilities for large events and conferences, meetings, gala dinners, cocktail receptions, and more.

Speaking about special MICE venues, Paula mentions, "The 'Caesars Forum' is a beautiful, 850 sq. m ballroom with stunning floor-to-ceiling glass windows, stunning ocean views, and a garden terrace that overlooks the JBR and Marina skyline – it's incredible! Caesars Forum is really an inspiring venue that can



▲ Paula Tannous

host one-of-a-kind meetings and events with the flexibility of built-in customisable offerings. Personalisation, privacy, and exclusivity for large meetings, special events, dinners, cocktail receptions, and more are all available here."

Along with the Caesars Forum for wedding events, their beautiful, private beach with unrivaled views of the Arabian Gulf is also a popular venue, especially for sunset weddings and ceremonies.

"In terms of MICE, groups, weddings, and social events, India has been a key feeder market to Dubai in terms of MICE, weddings, and social events. We are looking to further

develop the India market in the summer period with a great value proposition, aiming to attract sophisticated guests from India to stay at Caesars Palace Dubai during the summer season," says Paula.

Paula also adds, "Groups and MICE bookings play an important role in the summer strategy, whereas weddings and social events are crucial in the first and last quarters of the year, particularly on the auspicious dates based on the Hindu wedding calendar. India offers a mix of segmentation opportunities such as leisure, celebration groups, and incentive groups, and this is where we lay our strategies to develop business from each segment at the right times during the year."

In the upcoming initiatives at the hotel, they are gearing up to introduce their new Beach Club Rooms and are also further enhancing their specialty suites and terraces to offer more space and comfort. They will soon announce more exciting projects such as the development of a kid's program, CSR and wellness projects, new dining experiences, lifestyle and entertainment programs, as well as major announcements on their range of accommodation.

"Our initiatives revolve around raising awareness of Caesars Palace Dubai as an immersive luxury lifestyle resort where every guest is treated like a king. Our suites, with their luxurious spaces, stylish design, and amazing sea views, are always a favourite with our Indian guests. We've developed partnerships with MICE and corporate agents to raise awareness of all that Caesars Palace Dubai has to offer in order to attract more and more guests from the Indian market," concludes Paula.



# Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort

## Reflecting the hospitality, warmth and flavours of Mauritius

Nestled in the nature reserve of Bel Ombre in Mauritius and 45 minutes from the airport, the Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort encourages guests to 'Escape Ordinary' with Outrigger Signature Experiences, which reflects one of the most exotic and diverse cultures of the Indian Ocean. Cyrille Carmona, General Manager, Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort, shares more about the property while aiming to build a strong Outrigger brand presence in the India market along with Global Destinations, its sales, and marketing arm in India.

Prashant Nayak

**C**yrille Carmona is a goal-oriented leader with experience in all aspects of hotel administration, including front-of-house, rooms division, food & beverage, and revenue management. Since leading Outrigger Mauritius, they have developed it as a family-friendly resort, a home away from home with spacious rooms, acclaimed food, and beverage, and tailor-made service.

Perfect for families and couples, groups, and MICE, the stunning deluxe property with 181 sea-facing rooms, suites and villas offers a breath-taking beachfront location overlooking a postcard-perfect turquoise lagoon in the south of Mauritius. Speaking more about the USPs of the resort, Cyrille says, "We are in the beautiful south of Mauritius, surrounded by national parks, forest reserves and marine conservation areas. Apart from nature, we are in the ideal location to discover the Le Morne Brabant and Old Grand Port heritage villages, which were both voted among the world's best villages by the UN World Tourism Organization. Our other USPs include great MICE facilities, excellent for families; a kids' centre; and four swimming pools, including adults only. We also have the first-class Navasana Spa. Our highlight is arguably the Plantation Club, a colonial-style restaurant and pool retreat which gives a genuine sense of place. It is ideal for small to medium-size upscale events."

In terms of bookings and overall business in the past few months, Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort has been experiencing a good market mix with bookings coming through OTAs and wholesalers. They have had average to good occupancy since the beginning of 2022. With covid mandates being lifted rapidly in most source markets, they are optimistic for a continued and substantial bounce back.



▲ Cyrille Carmona

Regarding the MICE business, Cyrille feels that the demand for the sector will take more time as it requires a continued and stable operating business environment and for national and international supply chains to get back to normal. So, it's not a surprise that leisure group requests are coming back first.

At Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort, the property offers various venues for events, each one breath-taking with a unique appeal. They can stage events on their magnificent beachfront, in one of the restaurants. Private pre-dinner receptions and cocktails, live entertainment and music, and special theming of venues can be arranged. They have 181 guest rooms and also have a dedicated salesperson to assist the event from start to finish.

"Before the pandemic, the focus for MICE was South Africa, Reunion and the French market. Now our focus has shifted more to

the India market and South Africa. India is important to us - leisure, wedding, corporate and MICE. The hotel has a dedicated Indian Chef with an Indian corner in our premier restaurant. We work in collaboration with the local DMCs and our representative in India to deliver experiences that Indian customers prefer. Our expectation from India is for a modest comeback in 2022," explains Cyrille.

Cyrille further adds, "For the India market, Outrigger Mauritius has been taking part in virtual shows to promote our offering. We've been following up with flyers, sales calls and meetings with our local DMC. We've also generated new collateral that gives a full 360-degree picture of the property."

As an established tourism destination, Mauritius has good air connections via Air Mauritius, Emirates, Turkish Airlines and Saudia Airlines. Mauritius has developed into a niche 'incentive' destination focused on wonderful beaches and nature, and a diverse cuisine reflecting their multicultural heritage.

On business trends and expectations, Cyrille mentions, "At first, the trend will probably be for small leisure groups and mini-conference groups because of COVID protocols. As COVID recedes, I expect demand will likely come from companies that have done well during the pandemic. We can therefore expect business from big tech, IT-related, and online retail brands and pharma. MICE offerings will have to be built around fast broadband. I also expect MICE programmes to include a lot of 'giving back' community support elements and carbon offsetting and recycling considerations on the environmental side. Happily, at Outrigger Mauritius, with our ongoing Green Seal certification process, we are in an excellent position to satisfy those needs, too."



# The Kempinski Hotel The Dome Belek

## Combination of an idyllic seaside holiday with business

The Kempinski Hotel The Dome Belek, an architecturally remarkable boutique hotel, is situated directly on the Mediterranean beach in Antalya, Turkey. The property is a luxurious golf and wellness resort with a private beach that offers elegant and tastefully furnished rooms equipped with all modern conveniences. Aysen Ince, Director of Sales and Marketing, Kempinski Hotel The Dome Belek, gives us an update on the hotel's recent developments and tells us what makes it special for MICE business.

Manisha Patel

**K**empinski, Europe's oldest luxury hotel group, marked its 125th anniversary on April 5, 2022, and the celebrations continue in many of its hotels across the globe. The history and the rich tradition of Kempinski date back to 1897 with the founding of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft in Berlin by Berthold Kempinski.

To commemorate the occasion, the company launched a dedicated website, 'kempinski-125.com' that will introduce the 125 Anniversary Special: a collection of generous offers that include discounts of up to 25 per cent on hotel stays until September 30, 2022, with a flexible cancellation policy.

The Kempinski Hotel The Dome Belek opened in 2005. The hotel is situated on 70.000 metre square land next to two golf courses. It is an all-inclusive luxury hotel with 157 rooms and 19 villas, with an additional six villas set to open on June 15, 2022.

"Every year around the anniversary, we plan a special event where all employees come together at our hotel and celebrate our growing business," Aysen explains when asked how the hotel was commemorating its 125th anniversary this year. We have a reputation for excellence, and this reputation shines through in all our people, who come from more than 130 nationalities and tirelessly deliver the highest service quality. As a Kempinski brand, we aim for excellence and guest satisfaction."

The hotel has been exceeding its budgeted target, with numerous bookings from different online sources, agencies, and individuals. Even though the pandemic has affected tourism, the revenue of the hotel has been growing significantly. Aysen also points out that, since being loyal to their guests is of high importance to them, it is one of the main reasons that they have a significant number of repeat guests.

Speaking about MICE business, Aysen shares, "Lately, we have been witnessing an increase in MICE requests and our hotel is very well equipped and ready for the demand. We



▲ Aysen Ince

have six meeting rooms, each with different offerings and specialties. Since we are an all-inclusive luxury hotel, our MICE concepts are also based on the all-inclusive factor, where guests can have memorable meetings and experiences. Therefore, we make sure that our guests have exclusive experiences."

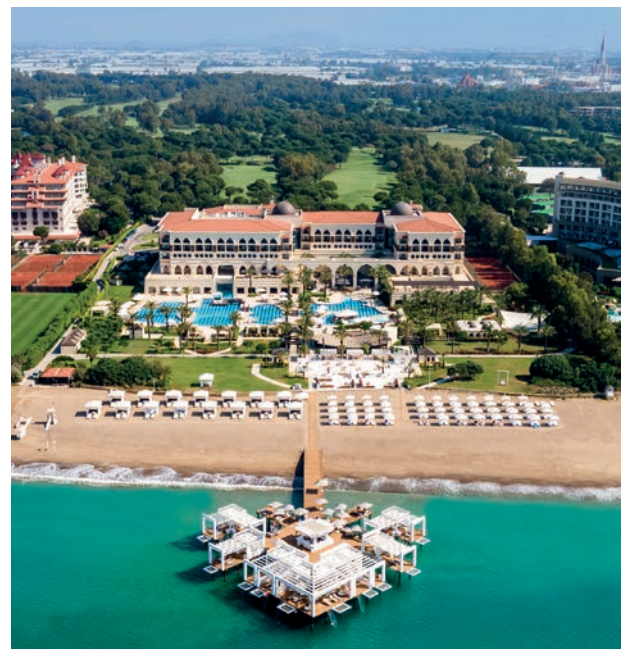
Antalya is one of the most popular tourist cities in Turkey. Antalya is an attractive holiday getaway with palm-lined streets, beautiful parks, a picturesque marina, and an abundance of accommodation, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Because of the archaeological and natural riches of the area, Antalya is also known as the Turkish Riviera.

For years, Antalya has been a popular tourist destination, particularly for leisure travel; but, in recent years, Antalya has also become a MICE destination for corporations and agencies looking to provide meetings with more entertaining attractions, unique points of interest, and wow moments. Antalya has gradually established itself as

one of the major MICE destinations, combining a relaxed vacation with business meetings. It's also gaining traction in the Indian MICE industry.

"Before the pandemic, our focus was on incentives. Right now, because of increasing demand and the people's desire to travel again, we also have been receiving meeting requirements from companies that work in other cities. Our MICE business expectation is to capitalise on incentives and meetings that we cater to effectively. We also have Karatay Ballroom for wedding celebrations and one can conduct wedding ceremonies outside on our lush green lawns. We have hosted Indian wedding events in the past and still receive queries," informs Aysen.

Because of the pandemic, many corporates now want to conduct meetings in unique spaces where their employees can have their meetings and also enjoy a different experience without bothering much about COVID protocols. Since Kempinski Hotel The Dome Belek is situated on an enormous expanse of land parcels and with wide-open areas besides nature, it has the advantage over other hotel properties in the region. And also, as they host boutique groups, the COVID protocols are diligently taken care of without any issues.





# Marina Bay Sands Singapore

## Transforming the MICE landscape with game-changing meeting experiences

Marina Bay Sands Singapore continued to lead the business events industry in Singapore by hosting over 870 events in 2021. The new offerings they have introduced in the past two years give event organisers the ability to customise and provide a more holistic experience for their delegates. The team is excited to see and immerse themselves in the action with the return of larger events at the resort. The integrated property has been keen on enhancing all aspects of the MICE business and leisure tourism and increasing revenues from both segments.

Prashant Nayak

As an integrated resort, Marina Bay Sands is not just a venue with state-of-the-art convention and exhibition facilities. It is a one-stop destination offering a luxury hotel, a theatre, attractions, world-class entertainment, luxury shopping and gastronomic culinary experiences for its visitors. Marina Bay Sands' multi-faceted offerings make it a perfect location that combines business with leisure.

An award-winning venue, Sands Expo and Convention Centre is also Singapore's only carbon-neutral MICE venue offering 1.3 million square feet of flexible convention and exhibition space. Be it small intimate meetings to large-scale events, our highly versatile space can be customised to the needs of the event organisation. As a leader in the MICE industry, Sands Expo and Convention Centre leverages technology to help its clients pivot toward adopting a hybrid business meeting format that is the new normal in the post-pandemic world. Their state-of-the-art Hybrid Broadcast Studio (HBS), launched in 2020, provided event planners with an industry-ready solution to capture the attention and imagination of their virtual and in-person audiences. A first-in-the-industry, the HBS changed the MICE landscape by equipping event organisers with broadcast-quality live streaming capabilities, holographic and mixed reality functionalities for their events.

Marina Bay Sands has also embraced the merits of virtual and hybrid events to launch the Virtual Meeting Place (VMP) in October 2021, becoming the first venue in the MICE industry to launch such a platform globally. An extension of the physical venue, it allows organisers to scratch-build their virtual venue and replicate real-life event spaces at Marina Bay Sands and offers live streaming capabilities, exhibition booths and a content library, to connect both online and offline

audiences seamlessly. The VMP also gives clients an opportunity to leverage an omnichannel strategy and capitalise on additional revenue streams.

During the last two years of the pandemic, Marina Bay Sands was quick to realign its business strategy to focus on the domestic market, developing new and innovative experiences for locals. Introducing various travel arrangements, such as Vaccinated Travel Lanes (VTLs), encouraged the gradual return of international travellers. In the last two years, Marina Bay Sands has also taken the opportunity to adopt technology in key areas with more investments being committed to automating processes and boosting efficiency.

As they continue to reinvent themselves to give visitors something new to look forward to, Marina Bay Sands' ongoing US\$1 billion reinvestment programme, the biggest since their opening in 2010, will see extensive upgrading of all rooms and suites in Towers 1 and 2 of the Hotel, transforming the design and significantly elevating the hospitality experience in the luxury travel segment. They will also introduce new signature experiences across the 55th floor of all three hotel towers, including a revamped Executive Club Lounge, premium fine dining, and health and wellness offerings. The reinvestment programme is a testament to their confidence in Singapore and their ongoing commitment to the country's tourism industry. It also allows them to capitalise on the increase in demand for luxurious and experiential travels, which is predicted to lead the tourism recovery.

Marina Bay Sands has a whopping capacity to accommodate over 45,000 delegates. Even as restrictions ease, ensuring the health and safety of their visitors is the new baseline at Marina Bay Sands. They go above and beyond prevailing safety



guidelines and seek certifications that affirm their commitment to meeting best-in-class international hygiene and safety standards.

On the MICE front again, Marina Bay Sands has a team of Sales and MICE professionals who have upgraded themselves with the Digital Event Strategist (DES) certification to better assist clients with conceptualising, planning and co-creating the ideal hybrid meeting. They can also create engaging content and immersive experiences for audiences. With this new certification, they are now more equipped to manage an increasingly digital and hybrid MICE industry.

T&A Consulting is the official representative of Marina Bay Sands in India and was appointed to increase the share of MICE and small leisure group movements, and promote MBS's value proposition to tour operators, online travel agencies, and corporates in the India market.

The Marina Bay Sands team is excited to welcome visitors from India. Incentive groups typically make their bookings with an eight-to-nine-month lead time and leverage the resort's multifaceted offerings to plan their stay. Their highly customisable meetings and events packages give event organisers the flexibility to tailor their entire stay on the property, including dietary specific menus, team-building ideas, accommodation, and entertainment.



# 'We want India to become our top three feeder market'

Three world-class hotels with unparalleled amenities grace Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection by Hilton. It draws on the Habtoor name and the Hilton brand's tremendous legacy. Its hotel collection comprises Habtoor Palace Dubai–LXR Hotels & Resorts, Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City, and V Hotel Dubai–Curio Collection by Hilton. Fredrik Reinisch, Complex General Manager of Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection by Hilton, shares more about the luxury hospitality destination that offers both immaculate and distinctive service with its classic and upscale brands.

Prashant Nayak

**T**he Habtoor Palace Dubai, LXR Hotels & Resorts offers a sophisticated authentic palatial experience with 52 opulent suites (A custom made Bentley Suite and Sir Winston Churchill Suite), 234 lavishly appointed guest rooms, [a] signature butler service, and manicured gardens making it the perfect location for luxurious weddings and corporate events.

On the banks of the Dubai Water Canal, the iconic Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City offers guests a vibrant stay, with every aspect transformed into a refreshing experience. From 1,004 guestrooms, including 142 spacious suites to Elixir Spa and a variety of delicious cuisines to choose from Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City, the hotel ensures an enlivening stay.

V-Hotel Dubai is dedicated to guests who want to inject fun into their travel with a retro-futurist concept. Vacation at the Sky Villa, which is surrounded by enticing activities. Going further, Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection has a plethora of MICE options, including outdoors at the Winter Garden, three rooftop pools, and grand ballrooms that can cater to a large crowd.

The success of Dubai EXPO 2020 has been overly positive, with around 20 million visitors over the past six months flying down to Dubai with a direct, constructive impact on the hospitality sector. "Now is the occasion for hospitality leaders from Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection to reflect on the EXPO 2020 success stories as the ideal transition to a no lesser exciting year ahead. EXPO 2020 has given the chance to Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection to host some of the most highly expected private and corporate events since Dubai has catapulted to the number one business travel destination," remarks Fredrik.

May 2022 welcomes another large international hospitality event, the Arabian Travel Market, taking place at the Dubai World Trade Centre. On this



▲ Fredrik Reinisch

Fredrik says, "This is a huge opportunity for Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection, as we get to position ourselves as 'The 1001 Arabian Nights' destination, since we can hold groups of both leisure travellers and group guests of over 1,000 in a single property at Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City. We have 1,600 rooms and suites across the three hotels of our complex—by adding V Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton and Habtoor Palace Dubai, LXR Hotels & Resorts."

MICE has not only given Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection business through banquet bookings but even hotel rooms, especially for events that include dignitaries and tourists from overseas, such as The World Police Summit that took place at Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection. In addition, MICE events have brought them leisure business as guests return to their hotels with families. Since Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection has it all, from over 20 dining venues, two rejuvenating spas, three rooftop pools, a fun-filled kids club with its own separate pool, it is the only

destination that can host over 1000 rooms for Arabian Travel Market, along with conferences and entertainment such as the famous La Perle show by Dragone all under one roof.

MICE tourism is constantly evolving and has changed during the pandemic. At Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection, they have adapted and understood the changing market environment in which MICE industry professionals operate. This varies from market to market and they are always alert to these diversities.

A lot of Indians in leisure and corporate segments look at Dubai as an exciting destination. Fredrik says, "India has always played an important role during the pre-COVID period and contributed around 25 per cent of the business, including FIT and MICE. Recently, with the travel restrictions, sales from the India market dropped drastically. However, we are projecting an increase in demand during summer when we foresee the combined business (groups and corporate) to increase at a certain level. Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection will introduce Indian theme nights at Level 7, V Hotel Dubai. This will play a huge role in our MICE business, as guests will dine and enjoy the Bollywood night after a long day of events. We want India to become our top three feeder market. Our ambition is simply to be recognised as the preferred destination for most Indian travellers. The India market is very promising with their luxurious destination weddings, and Al Habtoor City is ready for them."

While the guests and their employees are top priority, Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection has dedicated sales team leadership developing the sports and luxury industry segment, working with renowned agencies across the world such as Red Dot Representation in India, to ensure they create tailor-made itineraries for guest requirements, dietary restrictions and much more.



## 'The current MICE trend is very encouraging'

Bengaluru is witnessing a steep increase in residential inquiries predominately due to ease in restrictions and backlog for almost two years. Shangri-La Bengaluru is open to business with all its facilities and services in place. Saharsh Vadhera, Director of Sales and Marketing, Shangri-La Group and Shangri-La Bengaluru says that with a plethora of banqueting and cuisine options under one roof, the hotel remains one of the top choices for MICE in the city.

**Prashant Nayak**



▲ Saharsh Vadhera

**S**hangri-La Bengaluru is the perfect place to take in the charm and character of India's Garden City. Perched high above the horizon, offering a bird's-eye view of Bangalore Palace, the hotel is ideally located between the business district and historic attractions.

As a premier international luxury hotel in the city, Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru offers comprehensive meeting and event facilities, including a wide range of customizable floor plans and arrangements. "These versatile spaces are ideal for grand events and celebrations, and our world-class Shangri-La service will ensure that your business event or special day is a memorable success. Shangri-La is the ideal destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE), weddings, and gala dinners. Our dedicated events team

assists in planning and conducting meetings and celebrations from start to finish, with style and attention to detail. Venues include one of the largest ballrooms in Bangalore, a sunlit junior ballroom with a foyer, and seven flexible function rooms covering a total of 1,996 square metres," says Saharsh.

For Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru, the MICE business is opening up in phases, with the current focus on the domestic market. It is also expected that Bengaluru will host international exhibitions from May onwards, which definitely will be a much-needed boost for hotels. Saharsh also mentions, "The current MICE trend is very encouraging, and 2022 will get better numbers than the last two years put together for the city."

The Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru has also been working out innovative concepts for ease

of access, facilities, Covid protocols, etc. It is encouraging hybrid solutions for people who cannot take part in mass events. According to Saharsh, guests are embracing technological development in terms of live streaming and videoconferencing, which definitely is good for the outreach, and also safety protocols are there to stay keeping in mind government guidelines and guest sentiments.

Speaking of upcoming trends and future outlook for the MICE business in the hospitality industry, Saharsh says, "Contrary to pre covid times, organizers are looking at weekend residential conferences with a leisure element to them. Even business destinations like Bengaluru are now being looked upon as an alternate to incentive destinations owing to the abundance of options."

## SKAL Kolkata rolls out largest global youth chapter

The launch of Young SKAL Kolkata will help to check the influx of the best hospitality professionals from Kolkata to other parts of India.

**Swaati Chaudhury**

**A**imed to facilitate the resurgence of COVID-ravaged tourism industry, SKAL International Kolkata comprising travel and tourism professionals took the initiative to kick-start the largest global youth chapter-Young SKAL Kolkata in April, this year. The youth chapter was launched in association with the Union Ministry of Tourism and West Bengal Tourism.

SKAL International figures as the largest global association of travel professionals. Looking back, SKAL International Kolkata took shape in 1954 and in today's times, it is one of the most active SKAL clubs in the country. Carl Vaz, President, SKAL India, said, "We nurture the talent of young professionals and we look at future leaders at Young SKAL. In the upcoming period, India will make a strong presence in the global travel platform."

West Bengal has a plethora of job options for the younger lot in the sphere of travel and hospitality. Sanjeev Mehra, President, SKAL International Kolkata 127 stated, "In an attempt to prevent the migration of hospitality professionals from Bengal to other parts of India in search of better job avenues, we have come up with Young SKAL Kolkata." SKAL Bhubaneswar chapter has been opened sometime in March, this year. Plans are on to open the doors of three new chapters of SKAL India in Chandigarh, Lucknow, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

"We are

contemplating to form MoU with various job portals of India. We intend to make the hospitality professionals robust, provide them with various opportunities, and make them highly professionals. We are striving to bring World SKAL Congress to Kolkata in 2024," further said Mehra.





# Discover Switzerland's best train journeys

with  
**Rhaetian Railway**

With a history dating back to 1889, the Rhaetian Railway is Switzerland's leading meter-gauge railway. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, its core products - the premium panoramic trains "Glacier Express" and "Bernina Express" are marketed globally. The Rhaetian Railway serves a number of major tourist destinations, such as St. Moritz and Davos. Sebastian Blaettler, Market Manager - Asia-Pacific, Rhaetian Railway, was recently in India to meet and greet travel trade partners and help them successfully promote their products, thereby providing Indian travellers with an outstanding travel experience of pristine and picturesque Switzerland. In an exclusive interview with TTJ, Sebastian shares more about these iconic train journeys in Switzerland.

Sonika Bohra

**H**ow important is the India market for Rhaetian Railway?

Rhaetian Railway has two major products: The Glacier Express connects Western Switzerland with Eastern Switzerland, whereas the Bernina Express connects Eastern Switzerland with Italy. The India market, like the other markets in the Asia-Pacific region, is still growth markets, which means the numbers are already there. A large number of FITs are travelling on our network from these regions. Even before the pandemic, the Asia-Pacific region was on our growth markets list, and year on year, the bookings have increased. It is clear that after COVID, these markets will pick up again, which is why we are investing in the market and visiting agents on a regular basis.

**Train journeys in Europe are an exciting concept for travellers across the world. How unique or different are the journeys of Rhaetian Railway from other rail operators in Europe?**

Travel agents who are new to our products perceive train journeys as just another mode of transportation. However, at Rhaetian Railway, we clearly focus on touristic products. Glacier Express and



▲ Sebastian Blaettler

Bernina Express are premium panoramic train journeys. With a part of the network of Rhaetian Railway featuring in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, we have this touristic significance attached to us. So, this is one of the highlights in the itinerary of Glacier Express and Bernina Express. It is the most significant selling feature for us.

In terms of scenery, it cannot be compared to any other rail journeys in

Europe, especially on the Bernina Express, where one travels to the highest crossing of the Alps at 2253 meters. It means one can see the glaciers and the eternal ice all year round. At the same time, one travels from the Italian-speaking region to the German-speaking region, so you see a lot of diversity just condensed down into two hours. I definitely think it's one of the most iconic rail journeys in Europe.

**Among your rail experiences like Glacier Express, Bernina Express, etc., which are the most popular with the Indians?**

The Glacier Express route is longer than Bernina Express, but it depends on where Indians want to visit in terms of the itineraries. As Glacier Express runs from Zermatt to St. Moritz, it is more popular for people staying in Zermatt. On the other hand, Bernina Express connects Switzerland with Italy; it is more popular with travellers who want to travel from Italy to Switzerland. It depends on the choice of the customer. However, a part of the stretch of Glacier Express and Bernina Express is the same, and it runs on this UNESCO World Heritage route. We also have quite a few brands under our umbrella which customers choose depending on their choice of itinerary.



**What are your current marketing initiatives with your travel trade partners in India? Are you looking at expanding your travel partner network in India?**

We have a selection of travel trade partners who may book directly through us or have access to our system. Many of our travellers also have a Swiss Travel Pass, and we are looking forward to expanding our network. For direct collaborations, we primarily focus on travel agencies who specialise in Switzerland or those who have strong rail expertise. In terms of our marketing initiatives, we are beginning to understand that many of our agents must have lost touch and knowledge of our products because of the pandemic, and it is important to get back on track with them. Our India representative, Kunal Kothari, has a lot of first-hand product knowledge, so we constantly strive to educate our trade partners on our products, the Swiss Rail Travel System, and those promoting the Swiss Travel Pass. We are always looking for a win-win situation for all our stakeholders.

**The Rhaetian Railway is known for its selection of culinary and historical experiences. Can you throw more light on these offerings?**

Onboard our trains, the gastronomic experience is a key differentiation. The Glacier Express provides full meal service as well as something truly unique and local. We also offer “Excellence Class,” the first and only luxury travel pass in Switzerland. Travelling between Zermatt and St. Moritz in the Excellence Class takes eight hours, and during that time, passengers can enjoy premium environmental service. A seven-course meal with local wine pairing is included in the package. It is strictly limited to 20 seats per way per day, which means it is only available in one carriage of one train. This service naturally distinguishes the Glacier Express from the norm.

Passengers in the first and second classes of the Glacier Express can pre-book their meals. It’s included in Excellence Class. The best part is we also offer one Indian option in the meal. In the main course, we have Indian veg and Indian non-veg option. While the rest of the menu is international, one Indian main course is always there, to the delight of Indian customers. Also, starting this year, every passenger on the Bernina Express gets an exclusive gift, a tin box in the shape of Bernina Express for each



passenger, in collaboration with Lindt.

The historical experiences are woven throughout the train journey. The reason behind being credited as a UNESCO World Heritage Site was because of the pioneering engineering spirit when the line was built and how it’s embedded into the landscape. Our first rail route started in 1889. The last route to open was in 1914, so even that has a history of more than 100 years old. We also have a small railway museum located along with our railway network. This small boutique museum covers the history of the Rhaetian Railway. We have found an increase in international tourists visiting this museum.

## Scenic Cruises on Lake Lucerne



### UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

Combine sightseeing with tranquil relaxation and take a cruise on Lake Lucerne. The elegant ships will take you to the heart of Switzerland and allow you to get up close with the fantastic natural setting of this region. Refresh your senses and enjoy the comfort of the cutting-edge yacht „Saphir” or the catamaran “Bürgenstock” during a one-hour cruise or hop on the modern motor vessel “Diamant” or one of the nostalgic paddle steamers to reach the numerous lakeside railways.

### 1-HOUR ROUNDTRIP PANORAMA YACHT SAPHIR

Experience Lucerne Bay aboard the panoramic motor yacht. Enjoy a refreshing drink or take advantage of the informative audio guide, which is available in 12 different languages (including Hindi) and will narrate the top attractions around the Bay of Lucerne.

#### Schedule

15 April until 25 Mai 2022	Saturdays and Sundays
Departures:	12.45h, 14.00h, 15.15h
16 Mai until 11 Sept. 2022	Saturdays and Sundays*
Departures:	12.45h, 14.00h, 15.15h, 16.30h

\*Daily departures between 11 Juli until 21 August 2022



Lake Lucerne Navigation Company  
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# Discover sheer chocolate-induced joy at Lindt Home of Chocolate



The Lindt Home of Chocolate in Switzerland opened its doors to chocolate lovers and those eager for knowledge on September 13, 2020, making the world another chocolate-themed attraction richer. Since its inception, the modern three-story museum attraction has become a tourist magnet sitting next to the historic Lindt & Sprüngli factory building in Kilchberg. Kai Spehr, Managing Director, Lindt Chocolate Competence Foundation, in an exclusive interaction with TTJ, takes us on an enthralling journey into the world of chocolate.

Prashant Nayak

**T**he word “Swiss” has long been synonymous with the enchanting world of chocolates and delights, and what better reason to travel to Switzerland than to visit the Lindt Home of Chocolate, the world’s chocolate capital!

As we understand from Kai Spehr, The Lindt Home of Chocolate is the home of the renowned Master Chocolatiers, inviting guests from around the world to immerse themselves into the whimsical world of chocolate. The Lindt Home of Chocolate features a 1500-square-meter museum that takes visitors on a trip through the history of chocolate, in addition to a research plant with an open-view production line.

There are a series of interactive displays and life-like illustrious models to showcase the chocolatier’s journey. Guests get a first-hand experience of chocolate history, starting from the cultivation of the cocoa pod to its metamorphosis into exquisite, fine chocolate. After absorbing all these stimulating facts about chocolate, visitors complete the tour in the tasting room, where numerous masterpieces await to be sampled and devoured. The exhibition also provides a glimpse into some of the secrets of chocolate



▲ Kai Spehr

production. Below is our interaction with Kai Spehr, which gives us an insight into one of the world’s finest chocolate brands and the newest landmark in Switzerland.

**Please tell us about Switzerland’s chocolate museum (Lindt Home of Chocolate), its inception, USPs, and the reason behind the project?**

Founded in 2013 in Kilchberg (Zurich),

the Lindt Chocolate Competence Foundation aims to sustain, cultivate, and promote Switzerland’s long-term standing as a business location for chocolate and further strengthen Swiss chocolate-making expertise. The Foundation’s aim is the non-profit promotion of science and research, education, culture, and information to the public about chocolate. A major project of the Foundation is the Lindt Home of Chocolate. This competence center in Kilchberg offers an infrastructure (museum and pilot plant) that will further expand knowledge and expertise about chocolate production and really brings the reputation of Swiss chocolates to life for visitors from all over the world.

## Lindt Home of Chocolate

The Lindt Home of Chocolate is a state-of-the-art experience for all chocolate lovers. The building is designed by celebrated Swiss architects Christ & Gantenbein, and houses an interactive chocolate world that will delight all traveller types, be it young or old. With a nine-meter-high chocolate fountain, a multimedia museum, café, various chocolate courses, the building houses the biggest Lindt chocolate shop in the world, offering a unique and an exciting chocolate experience for the whole





family. The Lindt Home of Chocolate offers the following activities:

### The Chocolate Tour

An exciting tour through the world of chocolate in six themed areas:

**Cocoa Cultivation** – We take guests to our plantation.

**Chocolate History** – How did chocolate become so popular?

**The Swiss Pioneers** – Why is Swiss chocolate so famous?

**Chocolate Production** – How is chocolate produced?

**Chocolate Heaven** – Chocolate tasting!

**Pilot Plant** – What can be done in terms of innovation?

### More on the Pilot Plant

After more than five years of planning and preparation, the highly complex research facility was successfully brought into operation at the beginning of 2020. The facility combines maximum flexibility and functionality with the highest quality implementation and is available to chocolate producers and research institutes, as well as universities. For the visitors, however, the highlight is the impressive open-view production taking place in the so-called molding line. Here, the making of a filled chocolate square can be followed step by step.

### The Chocolate Courses

In the Chocolateria, guests can see what it's like to be a real Lindt Master Chocolatier and take their chance to make their own chocolate creations. We offer daily courses and seasonal event courses for Christmas, Easter, or Valentine's Day.

### The Chocolate Fountain

The unique chocolate fountain is the largest free-standing chocolate fountain in the world (over 9 m high). There are 1500 liters of real chocolate flowing in a closed circuit. 94 meters of piping connect the

fountain to a tank in the basement, where the chocolate mass is stirred and heated before being pumped back up into the fountain. The aroma of fresh chocolate fills the entire Lindt Home of Chocolate.

### The Lindt Chocolate Shop and Lindt Café

The Lindt Home of Chocolate also houses the world's largest Lindt Chocolate Shop with over 500 sqm of space. Switzerland's very first Lindt Café offers exceptional sweets and savories. Both the delightful places, and the Chocolateria where courses are offered in chocolate making, are operated by the subsidiary Lindt & Sprüngli Schweiz AG.



### What are the highlights and some of the delights at the museum that raises the bar for the visitors' experience?

While enjoying the six different parts of the museum, guests can get to know all the details about chocolate and there is ample to try and taste. Guests can experience the history of chocolate, its popularity, why Switzerland is famous for chocolate, and much more.

The chocolate museum with its fantastic architecture is the newest and largest of its kind in Switzerland. Once you step your foot into the building, the aroma of chocolate enchants you immediately. In the brand new and interactive museum guests have the chance to do an audio guide tour, which is available in six languages, or they have the possibility to book a guided tour where they can also taste several interesting components such as juice from the cacao fruit.

The museum is reached easily from the city of Zurich and can also be accessed by boat, which provides a very scenic tour.

### Events are also organised and planned at the museum. Tell us about the meeting places, venues, capacities, and other facilities at the museum?

The specialties are that we can tailor every event according to the requirements of our guests. Lindt Home of Chocolate offers an entire facility for an interactive guided museum tour to enhance knowledge about chocolate and its Swiss history. The experience is enhanced by a Chocolateria where guests get a chance to create their own chocolate figures. The building also offers several rooms that can be used for food and beverage. Catering can also be provided for guests if required.

### How unique and experiential can an event at the museum be when compared to conventional or other themed events?

Guests can feel like a Master Chocolatier and experience unique chocolate moments that they themselves, their customers, colleagues, business partners, or family will never forget. They can create their own chocolate delights under the expert guidance of our Lindt Master Chocolatier. They learn all the ins and outs of chocolate, go on an exciting chocolate tour, and dive into the world of our chocolate museum.

### Since the museum will be a new experience for Indians visiting Switzerland (one of their favourite destinations), what are your promotion strategies for the India market?

Our strategy is to create top-of-mind awareness for the Lindt Home of Chocolate and establish ourselves as a must-visit attraction in Switzerland. We would be targeting travellers from all segments ranging from young to old and will highlight the USPs of the Lindt Home of Chocolate through various targeted media and consumer channels to enhance brand awareness amongst the right TG.

### What is your expectation of footfalls from the India market for the year 2022?

We are expecting an increase in international travellers in general. India has always been an important source market for Switzerland, and we are expecting to see a surge in Indian visitor arrivals at the Lindt Home of Chocolate throughout the year as Switzerland is now accepting all Indians without any travel restrictions in place.



# Resilient MICE market in post-pandemic era

The hospitality industry is on the recovery path after witnessing two years of sluggish demand driven by pandemic restraints. The recovery is at 70-80 per cent of pre-pandemic times brought about by leisure travel and MICE events. Safety, security and hygiene are the three mantras ruling the post-pandemic world and hospitality groups are leaving no stone unturned to cater to the demands of MICE travellers. TTJ interacts with some of the properties in the Eastern region of India to get the ground reality of the MICE movement.

**Swaati Chaudhury**

**W**ith global travel coming back and repositioning the Indian tourism industry, the MICE sector is on the ascending path. If one takes a peek at some of the major hospitality groups in the Eastern region of India, one can come up with a concrete idea about the current status of MICE and the kind of expectations the properties have from the MICE realm.

According to **Kumar Shobhan, General Manager, Hyatt Regency Kolkata**, "There has been a rise in MICE enquiries along with leisure travel over the past few months,



▲ Kumar Shobhan

particularly from banking, finance and pharmaceutical sectors. With the easing of COVID restrictions, the corporate world is gearing up to host conventions and MICE business is picking up pace. We have made an effort to organise a Sales Mission Meet with teams from a host of Hyatt properties across the country to focus on team building, strategic planning, meeting and fostering with our existing customers after a period of two years. Pharmaceuticals, insurance, automobile, banking and finance, sports and entertainment form the strong points of our MICE business. Currently, we are

concentrating on the domestic MICE market and hope to target the global MICE world in the year-end. The MICE business will definitely take a leap and the demand will surge ahead by the end of the current year and next year."

The hotel is poised to handle large MICE groups for hosting conclaves with standard operating procedures keeping with sanitisation protocols and contactless experience including mobile keys, masking up, regular sanitisation and temperature check for both hotel staff and guests at the entrance and practising other hygiene norms. Shobhan informed, "Our major aim is to provide a safe environment for event planners and make health and safety measures our topmost priority. With the relaxation of pandemic restrictions, the confidence of travellers is gaining ground and the corporate world is ready to take its plunge into MICE travel. There is a positive and high demand for domestic retreats and global travel is yet to pick up like pre-COVID times. All we need is the right kind of marketing and promotion to lure MICE opportunities and utilise the upward growth trend."

Take the case of Siliguri-based Mayfair Tea Resort which is incidentally the premier, luxury and one-of-a-kind tea resort in the country. The property is a half-an-hour drive from Bagdogra airport and is well-equipped



▲ Prasant Das

with multiple banquet venues, breakout rooms and the main ballroom that has a theatre-style seating capacity of 1,000 guests. **Prasant Das, General Manager, Mayfair Tea Resort**, said, "Our resort is one of the biggest five-star, deluxe properties in the North-eastern region and has a plethora of facilities for MICE travellers like high-speed internet, seamless power supply, outdoor and indoor venues, fascinating points for meditation and taking a break. We have MICE experts to evaluate the needs of MICE travellers and organise any kind of audio-visual requirements, including 3D screens. We provide utmost significance to safety and our safety staff hosts orientation sessions once MICE kicks off. Our resort has appointed a spiritual and yoga guru to make MICE programmes more interesting. There is a recreation team to take up team-building exercise."

Recently, there has not been any significant demand in MICE enquiries at the resort. Das further said, "We are stressing on both domestic and global MICE business, although MICE is not as robust as it was in pre-pandemic times. We are adhering to COVID protocols and keeping with government guidelines for organising events. All our MICE venues and items are sanitised and we make use of thermal sensors for detecting guests down with high temperatures. Our staff members are double-dosed and are armed with food handler certificates. Most of our staff members have bagged WHO's online certificate to host large conventions. Our hospitality group has formulated a checklist to follow for MICE events. In the upcoming period, Destination MICE will gain ground and the corporate sector will allocate separate budgets. India will emerge as a preferred MICE destination for multi-national groups."

Located in close proximity to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport is Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport which boasts of a strategic location and infrastructure and this constitutes one of its high points in the MICE business. **Bhawna Verma, General Manager, Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport** said, "Our property is the right choice for customers in the context of logistics. Our hospitality set-up is well-connected with the metro's business hub- Sector V in Salt Lake, the special economic zone (SEZ) and commercial hub of





▲ Bhawna Verma

New Town. We have banquets and meeting spaces ranging from 275 sq. ft to 10,000 sq. ft that can accommodate 800 guests for a single event. Our hospitality group has positioned itself at a fast pace to cater to an upsurge in MICE demand. The corporate sector is returning with high expectations and we are determined to cater to their demand. We are emphasising on domestic MICE business and there is a huge pent-up demand in this segment. Global MICE has taken off slowly and, going by the current MICE trend pegged on local business, it involves less travel and environmental issues are of highest concern. Ensuring the safety of our employees and guests and providing green hotel are some of the highly significant concepts.”

Going by the upcoming trends that will dominate the global MICE sector, the focus will be on sustainability. Verma further said, “When it comes to the global hospitality scenario, the MICE segment is laying stress on sustainability and the preference is for organic food, contactless and paperless transactions and less travel duration. Customers are vouching for recycled stuff and green engagements in hotels. Hybrid events and digitisation of MICE are emerging. Venues are booked through digital platforms. The service designs and deliveries have undergone transformation like the absence of salt and pepper shakers on the table, use of disposable cutlery and electronic menus.”

With COVID-19 cases waning and easing of pandemic restrictions, big-ticket conventions and corporate offsite tours comprising MICE business have begun picking up pace. **Rajib Roy Choudhury, Senior General Manager, Vedic Village Spa Resort**, commented, “We have received substantial pick-up in MICE enquiries and bookings over the past one and half months since leisure travel is reviving in a big way with the increasing emergence of revenge tourism. Our resort prides in having large indoor and outdoor banqueting spaces



▲ Rajib Roy Choudhury

that enable us to implement the COVID protocols with ease. With international skies opening up, we are receiving a plethora of enquiries from the corporate segment. Conferences and meetings have started in a big way and our resort has geared up to welcome the Restart, Remodel and Revival mode of the MICE industry. Sprawling over 150 acres of land area, our resort has abundant venues and the banqueting capacity ranges from 10 to 1,000 visitors making our resort a perfect destination to host MICE of varying sizes. The fascinating array of culinary options for diners deserves mention that can be customised for the entire MICE event.” Roy Choudhury pointed out that the main trendsetters for MICE are the automobile industry, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, Information Technology and IT-enabled services that are likely to drive demand for MICE in the current year.

“There will be further pick-up and rise in demand for MICE in the second and third quarter of the calendar year. The corporate groups are organising their teams together for team building; strategic planning, relaxation and recuperation events that had come to a halt over the past couple of years. The period of January was unsuccessful while visitors were hesitant in February, but March was quite robust. Corporate MICE is happening and companies are organising conferences with around 300 guests. We have received queries to host conclaves for 600 visitors. There has been a drastic surge in the number of corporate offsite that are incentive-based, performance-based stays or staycation for reviews and planning.”

Some of the new norms that have been laid out at the resort include sending off visitors directly into their rooms on arrival, the online collection of photo identities of visitors, multiple buffet sections with courses at different points, disposable masks and sanitisation stations all over the resort. “New corporate groups have

emerged in the sphere of technology and transport. Inter-state travel has made MICE appear bolder. MICE is all set to emerge as the main generator of revenue in the coming times,” quipped Roy Choudhury.

Take a glimpse of the existing MICE infrastructure in a five-star set-up in the capital city of Odisha. **Samir Ghose, General Manager, Welcomhotel by ITC Hotels, Bhubaneswar** informed, “At a time when MICE enquiries have begun moving,



▲ Samir Ghose

our hospitality group is looking forward to receiving guests keeping with stringent health, safety and hygiene norms. All ITC hotels across the country have received ‘WeAssure’ business assurance certification for adopting health, safety and hygiene protocols. MICE is a significant event and the demand for a convenient venue is on the rise. Our hotel serves as the right choice for banquets, corporate events, weddings and conclaves. Replete with 107 sprawling rooms, a hall spread over 4,500 sq. ft area devoid of columns and soaring to 22 ft. high and a verdant lawn of 20,500 sq. ft, our hotel has a dedicated team to look after the MICE events.” It offers a magical luxurious experience to guests at the advent of MICE bookings and lasts till it winds up.

The hospitality player emphasises on the well-being of visitors. Ghose said, “We are accentuating more on domestic MICE flow in Bhubaneswar and the major sectors are cement, pharmaceuticals and agriculture. Weddings constitute a crucial part of the MICE sector. Factors like quality of air, water, digitally-enabled services and social distancing are of great significance in our property. The tantalising fare offered at banquet events blends the best of regional culture and cuisine along with global dishes. The presence of social media and technology in our daily lives is another significant trend that offers infinite possibilities.”



# Optimistic and ready to optimise the upcoming MICE demand

Kesari MICE caters to corporate clients of all sizes and is keen on leveraging the rapidly growing MICE industry. Kesari MICE designs and delivers products and services that offer them an edge in an increasingly competitive world. With the pandemic ebbing and provided there are no hang-ups, Zelum Chaubal, Director, Kesari MICE is very optimistic about getting back on track and strengthening their MICE business as they are completely prepared and ready to face the MICE boom once again.

Prashant Nayak

Over the years, Kesari has expanded its original business to encompass customised holidays and specialised business travel for a range of customers. The Kesari MICE division has established itself as one of the leading players in the MICE industry in India.

With the downfall of the travel industry due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MICE industry has also faced immense complications. However, now, corporate travel is witnessing some movement. Hospitality, event, and travel companies have confirmed a substantial pick-up in MICE inquiries and bookings over the past few months and it is in tandem with the revival in leisure travel.

"We re-started our MICE operation a year back and did receive good business. Currently, our MICE business has many inquiries as almost all corporates are ready for business, but they have their own backlog due to the pandemic. We are very prepared as we have retained our core sales team, air team, and operations team, which is the true backbone of our MICE team," informs Zelum.

As corporate tour experts, the Kesari MICE team has the unmatched industry experience, and the expertise required to help companies optimise their MICE programs. Based on extensive research and planning, the services offered by the Kesari MICE team ensure an unparalleled and completely tension-free experience. Stressing more on expertise, Zelum says, "We have been in the business for the past 15 years, so our SOPs are set. Our dedicated team knows



▲ Zelum Chaubal

how to deliver beyond 100 per cent. Every business has to be a success is our mantra and what we promise we deliver."

Domestic travel has been a savior for many tour operators and agents, and once the pandemic is behind us, it will continue to gain traction. "We will focus on both domestic and international MICE business however, the Indian MICE industry has increased threefold. Indian MICE market is growing year on year, and post-pandemic it may be a tsunami, as almost all the corporates are ready to travel. Corporates now should be ready to try out new destinations. After the pandemic and if there is no further COVID wave, the entire tourism industry will see exponential demand," explains Zelum.

While the travel industry is recovering from the impact of the pandemic, it still needs to be cautious in terms of maintaining

some protocols and cannot be caught off guard. The industry needs to leverage technology in creative ways when serving its customers and also needs to develop new policies and reboot its services to focus on health and hygiene. While working for large MICE groups, one has to be innovative and find solutions for ease of access, documentation, facilitation, COVID protocols, etc.

"We are pretty well organised in terms of work and the focus is on digital rather than manual work. COVID protocols have increased our work tremendously, but we have to accept that as the new normal. Every MICE is like a customised tour, so we have to prepare, plan and execute in the best possible manner and our team is already doing it," assures Zelum.

The MICE industry is going and will go through an enormous change with organisers and venues adjusting to the new world that COVID has brought. Speaking of a few trends in the new normal, Zelum shares, "For the start, people will choose places where visa access, airfares are comfortable. Even now, getting a European, American, or Canadian visa on an immediate basis is tough, so planning ahead of time is needed and those corporates planning MICE and incentive trips to these places, have to adjust more to the new normal which has brought in many procedures. Some of the corporates have increased their international budgets as things have also become expensive. However, the MICE industry may break the previous records if there is an ease in the visa process and all domestic and international flights start operating like before the pandemic."



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**PACHAR GROUP**



## Espire Hospitality Group to launch luxury boutique resort brand 'ZANA' this year

**E**spire Hospitality Group has taken a pertinent step to add a luxury boutique resort brand 'ZANA', to the hospitality landscape of India. Just like the name 'ZANA' suggests a rare 'purple lily', the brand will bring a bounty of freshness and exclusivity to the holiday experiences. The first outpost of the brand will be a 30 rooms lakeside resort on the unexplored Udai Sagar Lake, in the romantic city of Udaipur.

'ZANA Udaipur' will be a unique resort with inspiring experiences and nourishing cuisine that will complement its stunning natural setting. With just 30 lake facing guestrooms, the resort will exhibit the true confluence of old-world charm and highly personalised and distinctive 'Victorian' service concepts. It will be at a convenient distance from the airport and in close proximity to key

attractions of the city.

Making this important announcement, Akhil Arora, Chief Operating Officer, Espire

Hospitality Group said, "Our domestic travel market is buoyant and therefore we are meaningfully expanding in India. We are all geared up for this significant launch of our novel brand 'ZANA' which will be positioned among a very few players in the Indian market offering intimate experiential luxury."



## Jatin Khanna appointed CEO of Sarovar Hotels



**S**arovar Hotels has announced the appointment of Jatin Khanna as the new Chief Executive Officer for the brand.

Prior to joining Sarovar Hotels, he worked for Marriott as Vice President-North India, Bhutan, and Nepal, where he oversaw 32 hotels. Jatin earlier served as VP Operations for Hilton Hotels India.

Anil Madhok, Executive Chairman, Sarovar Hotels said, "We have, since our inception, worked towards constantly evolving ourselves and Sarovar as an organization. We clearly established our goals and founding principles on Day 1. Owner as king; an efficient and effective corporate team to support our hotels; and strong S & M contribution to all unit hotels. We value and uphold our core values-mutual respect, fair play, and innovation. We strive to improve each day. In line with our business philosophy, we are delighted to appoint Jatin Khanna as CEO of Sarovar Hotels, effective immediately."

Jatin Khanna, Chief Executive Officer, Sarovar Hotels said, "It's a sheer delight to join one of the leading and fastest-growing hospitality brands in India. I look forward to working with the talented team of Sarovar Hotels."

## The St. Regis Mumbai appoints Pratik Vashisht as Director of Rooms



**T**he St. Regis Mumbai has appointed Pratik Vashisht as Director of Rooms. Pratik brings with him over 14 years of experience in the luxury hospitality business with leading hotels, ensuring service excellence with guest-facing teams. Post his Hotel Management education, Pratik commenced his career in luxury as he embarked on a role with the front office division at The Oberoi, New Delhi. His dedication, eye for detail and guest focus allowed him to grow and rise as he moved up the ranks very quickly with a stint at The Imperial, New Delhi and most recently with The Leela Palace, Bangalore, where he consistently contributed to the guest satisfaction scores and the success of the hotel.

At The St. Regis Mumbai, Pratik will helm the guest-facing teams in Front Office, the famed St. Regis Butler service, the discreet housekeeping department and the discerning concierge teams. He will focus on ensuring bespoke and personalised service, bringing to life the St. Regis rituals and programs while driving Guest Voice, BSA and Rooms Division Profitability.





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## AVIAREPS India appointed as India representative for KKday Singapore

AVIAREPS India has been appointed sales, marketing and PR representative for one of the leading travel experiences platforms, KKday Singapore.

A leading mobile-first-e-commerce travel platform local experiences with a strong presence across key Asia-Pacific markets, KKday's main objective is to make travel more accessible and convenient and safe for everyone.

"Since 2014, KKday has pioneered the digitisation of tours, activities and attractions and brought them to everyone's fingertips. With KKday's app, travellers can discover and book interesting experiences anytime, anywhere. We are excited to appoint AVIAREPS as our Sales, Marketing and PR representative and we believe they will do their best to elevate our presence in Indonesia and India. We look forward to many collaborative opportunities in the months ahead," said Wei Chun Liu, Co-Founder, KKday.

Speaking about the collaboration Ellona Pereira, Head, AVIAREPS India, said, "We are delighted to be given the opportunity to work with KKday Singapore and we will work closely with KKday

Singapore to enhance their presence in the Indian Market. KKday has many enriching travel packages and leisure product offerings and we are confident that they will be well-received in the Indian market."



KKday currently hosts over 30,000 travel and leisure products and services in more than 80 countries and 500 cities. In addition, many of KKday's products and APAC centric focusing on countries such as Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. KKday covers an extensive range of products from attraction tickets to transportation to SIM cards, cruises and staycations. With a multilingual website and mobile apps, KKday supports both traditional and simplified Chinese, as well as English, Japanese, Korean and many others.

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## IndiGo appoints Dr. Venkataramani Sumantran as Chairman of the Board

The Board of Directors (Board) of InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) recently announced the appointment of Dr. Venkataramani Sumantran, an Independent Non-Executive Director of the Board since May 28, 2020, as its Chairman. Dr. Sumantran succeeds Meleveetil Damodaran, who has stepped down as an Independent Non-Executive Director on May 3, 2022, on attaining the age of 75 years. While thanking Damodaran for his services, Rahul Bhatia, Managing Director, IndiGo, said, "It has been a great privilege to have had the benefit of Damodaran's wise counsel and steady hand during the difficult and often turbulent COVID period. We have all learned a lot from him on leading-edge governance practices, and his distinguishing leadership and philosophy have left an indelible mark on the IndiGo Board."



Reacting to his appointment as the Chairman of the Board, Dr. Sumantran said, "I am honoured to be a part of IndiGo, and now, to take on this role. Since its launch in 2006, the men and women of IndiGo, working with Management and the Board, have scripted a globally admired success-story achieved through a focus on customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. Now, as the world moves beyond COVID, we look forward to serving many more customers while offering them a new digital experience; adding new routes, many of them international; expanding our cargo operations, and continuing to augment our fleet with fuel-efficient aircraft including the XLRs and dedicated freighters. I feel privileged to be a part of an organisation that is committed to making the next chapter even more illustrious than the previous."





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