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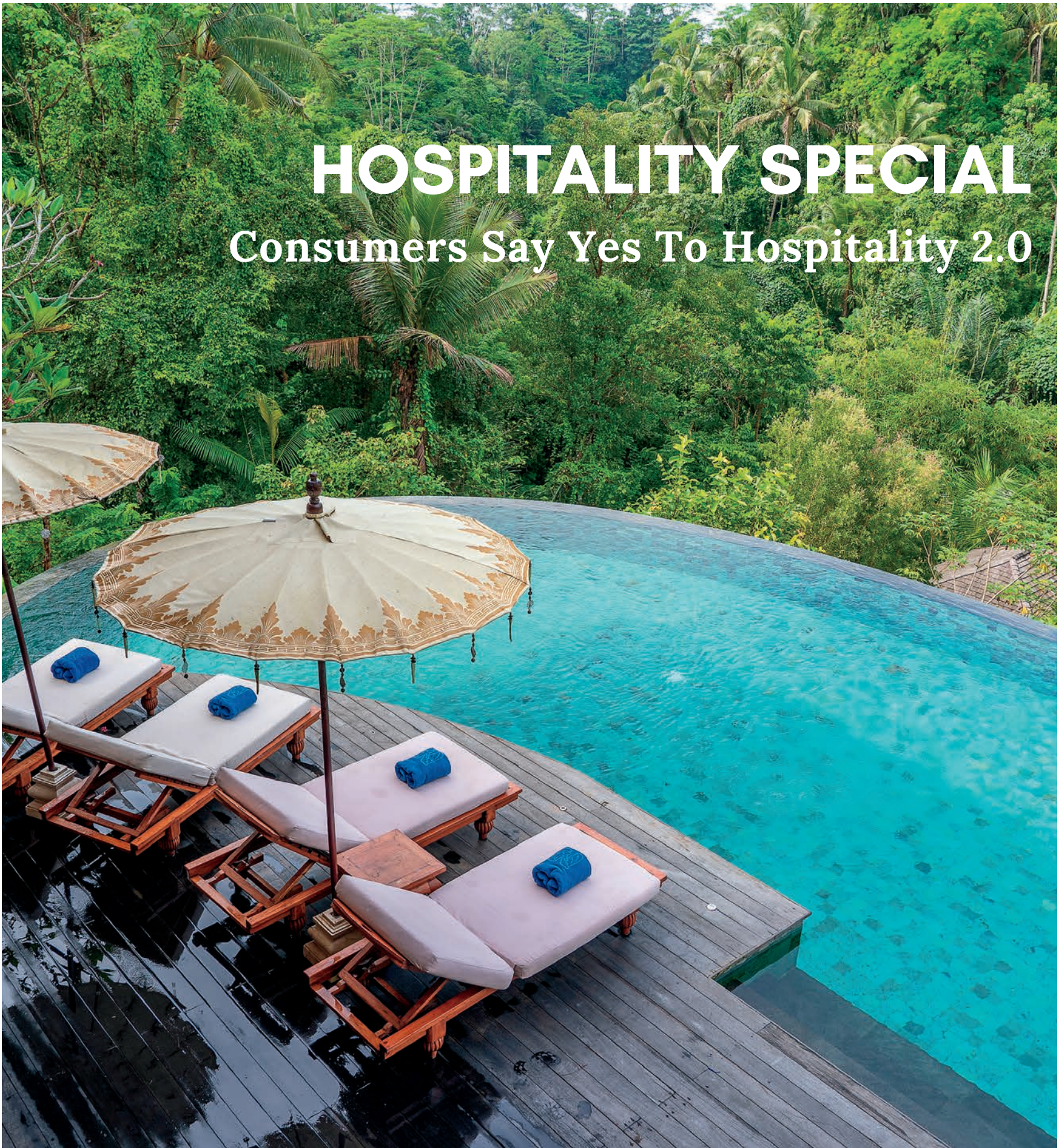
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Dear Friends,

Across most holiday destinations, hotels and resorts are now witnessing over 80 per cent of room occupancy.

With the advent of monsoons, the season tends to slow down the hospitality business, but the industry is upbeat as the travel demand is increasing month on month. There is optimism amongst the hospitality stakeholders, and that is strongly reflected in our July 2022 issue. Also, many are working hard and innovating for the next few months to tap the new trend of monsoon breaks and getaways.

Indeed, this issue has generated quite a response from the hoteliers and relevant people in the industry, and it has been nice to know their insights. This issue is nothing less than a hospitality special feature.

So, while the monsoons are on, get going before it is gone! Travel is still in the air.

Happy Reading!



*Ravi Sharma*

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## Portugal now permits restriction-free entry to all travellers

**T**ravellers from all nations are no longer required to follow COVID entry rules when entering Portugal, as the latter has dropped all of its restrictions.

Visit Portugal said that all incoming travellers are no longer required to present a proof of carrying out a test to screen for SARS-CoV-2 infection with a negative result or to present a COVID-EU digital certificate or vaccination or recovery certificate issued by third countries, accepted or recognised in Portugal.

While all entry rules have been dropped, the Portuguese authorities note that some general Coronavirus rules will remain in place.

According to Visit Portugal, the requirement to wear a face mask will remain mandatory in mainland Portugal when accessing public transport, taxis, and other means of transportation. Moreover, the requirement to wear a face mask also remains mandatory for those entering nursing homes and other health facilities.



## Singapore Airlines to restore pre-COVID connectivity to India



**S**ingapore Airlines will restore its Indian network to pre-pandemic levels and increase services to points across Japan and restore in the coming months.

This is in response to the strong demand for air travel and will offer customers more flexibility and options in the Northern Winter operating season (October 30, 2022, to March 25, 2023). Together with other adjustments to the SIA and Scoot network, the SIA Group capacity is projected to be at around 81 per cent of pre-pandemic levels by December 2022.

The Airline will progressively operate 17 weekly services to Chennai, up from the current 10 flights per week. Kochi services will go up to 14 times weekly, up from the current seven flights per week. Bengaluru services will go up to 16 times weekly, up from the current seven flights per week. SIA will operate almost 100 per cent of its pre-COVID operating capacity to India by October 30, 2022.

SIA will operate five weekly flights to Ahmedabad, 16 weekly flights to Bengaluru, 17 weekly flights to Chennai, twice daily flights to Delhi, daily flights to Hyderabad, twice daily flights to Kochi, daily flights to Kolkata and 16 weekly flights to Mumbai.

## 'Embrace German Nature' campaign to target Indians seeking outdoor experiences



**R**ecognising an increased demand for outdoor experiences this summer among visitors from the India market, the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) is debuting the brand-new Embrace German Nature campaign that focuses on highlighting sustainable, open-air activities.

Germany is home to more than 130 protected natural landscapes, including a plethora of stunning forests, lakes, valleys, and hiking and cycling trails just waiting to be explored. It also boasts three UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites, 16 UNESCO biosphere reserves, 16 national parks, and 106 nature reserves.

Romit Theophilus, Director German National Tourist Office, India (GNTOI), said, "Indian travellers are keen to visit countries that possess ideal summer climates with a wide range of things to do. Germany's diverse selection of outdoor activities ensures something for everyone, from hiking trails to relaxing spa towns. Our Embrace German Nature campaign will improve access to and information about these opportunities even further, in a sustainable way."



# ALL ABOUT FIJI IN A COCONUT SHELL



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## Banyan Tree appoints Tekla Maira as Regional Director of Sales–India



**B**anyan Tree Hotels and Resorts has appointed Tekla Maira as the Regional Director of Sales–India for its five key hotels and resorts in Thailand, namely Banyan Tree Bangkok, Banyan Tree Phuket, Angsana Laguna Phuket, Cassia Phuket and Himm Bliss Southbeach Patong.

“We are pleased to have Tekla, a well-known industry professional joined our team as Regional Director of Sales. Having created successes for different hotel brands in the luxury and premium space, Tekla’s expertise and rich experience will see her implementing innovative sales and marketing strategies for our Thailand hotels post-COVID and create greater awareness for the global multi-brand ecosystem of Banyan Tree Group in India,” said Benjawan Meksakul, Regional Director of Sales and Marketing – Thailand and Laos of Banyan Tree Group.

Currently, with direct flights operating to both Bangkok and Phuket and relaxed entry guidelines, these five distinctive hotels will be very attractive to the Indian travellers seeking purposeful travel – by catering personalised experiences to the wedding, meeting and leisure market segments alike.

## Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort and Spa now open, appoints One Rep Global as its India representative



**H**ilton Maldives Amingiri Resort and Spa opened doors on July 1, 2022, marking the expansion of Hilton’s award-winning flagship brand into the Maldives. The all-villa resort features an array of thoughtful amenities which are new to the archipelago, setting a new benchmark in hospitality that will captivate the next generation of travellers. Hilton Maldives Amingiri is the fourth resort under the company’s portfolio of brands in the country. The hotel is owned by Amingiri Holdings and managed by Hilton.

Nestled in Amingiri Island in the North Malé Atoll, Hilton Maldives Amingiri is directly accessible from Velana International Airport via a scenic 20-minute premium speedboat ride. The resort features 109 expansive beach and overwater villas, each offering a private pool and enticing views of the surrounding turquoise lagoon.

Home to six distinctive dining concepts, Hilton Maldives Amingiri will take guests on a culinary sojourn. From Origin, a dining experience that celebrates sustainable seafood sourcing, ageing techniques and a food-upcycling approach, to all-day dining restaurant Habitat, to rustic beach restaurant Beach Shack with its feet-in-the-sand dining experience, the resort’s dining offerings are thoughtfully curated to satisfy every palate.

One Rep Global is now the Indian representative for the newly launched Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort and Spa. Led by seasoned hotelier Hemant Mediratta, One Rep Global will lead the sales and marketing representation in India.

## Ethiopian Airlines commences direct flights between Chennai-Addis Ababa

**E**thiopian Airlines, Africa’s leading airline, launched direct flight connectivity between Chennai and Addis Ababa with thrice-weekly operations to/from Chennai on July 2, 2022.

Chennai has joined the vast Ethiopian network as a fourth destination in India after New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Ethiopian started its service to India with a debut flight to New Delhi in 1966, just 20 years after the airline was founded. Ethiopian pioneered the air transport linkage between Africa and India. Recently, the Ethiopian marked its 50th year anniversary of uninterrupted service to Mumbai, the commercial capital of India.

Lemma Yadecha Gudeta, Chief Commercial Officer, Ethiopian Airlines, said, “It is a great honour to be here in Chennai today as we launched our 4th destination in India and the first new destination after the pandemic. After a very tough journey in the last three years, we are now able to overcome the challenges and embark on a new growth path. Currently,

we are operating 38 weekly Cargo and Passenger flights to/from our destinations in India and the commencement of flight to Chennai is a testimony of our commitment to serve Indians in all corners of the country.”





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# India among top ten incoming travel markets for Fiji

Fiji has a very strong India connection with a large Indian diaspora, a legacy of the British colonial era when indentured labourers were brought to the islands by colonial rulers between 1879 and 1916 to work on Fiji's sugar plantations. Today, Fijians of Indian origin account for approximately one-third of the total population. TTJ spoke with Kathy Koyamaibole, Regional Director- Asia, Tourism Fiji, who was on a visit to India to learn more about the island nation's plans to woo the Indian traveller post the COVID-19 reopening of its borders.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

**F**iji was no exception like the rest of the world when it sealed its borders to international travellers due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now that a major chunk of the global populace is double inoculated and a large number of global savvy Indian travellers have already taken their third vaccination shot. Fiji is all set to welcome back the Indian traveller.

Kathy explains, "Tourism is important for Fiji, and as per pre-pandemic 2019 figures, tourism generated three billion US dollars' worth of revenue from about one million visitors. A major chunk of the whole business comes from neighbors. Australia and New Zealand are the closest strategic markets, followed by North America, primarily the USA and Canada, followed by the UK, Europe, and China."

With 6000 visitors, India is among Fiji's top ten inbound leisure markets. India is a long-haul and high-yield market for Fiji. With China still not opening its borders, the inflow of tourists is frozen from that market, further enhancing the importance of a well-vaccinated and mature travel market like India. "We aim to achieve our 2019 figures by 2024. Travel to Fiji is now quite easy. Indians get a visa on arrival in Fiji. Fully vaccinated travellers older than 16 must show proof of vaccination at the airport check-in prior to departure for Fiji. They have to carry travel insurance and undergo a pre-booked RAT test when they arrive in Fiji. The RAT test must be pre-booked on [entrytestfiji.com](http://entrytestfiji.com) and conducted between 48-72 hours of their arrival in Fiji.

"Currently, the idea is to work the grassroots again with the agents and get demand up to the 2019 levels. Leisure and family travel segment remains our strong focus, but surprisingly a lot of players evinced



▲ Kathy Koyamaibole

interest in FIJI for their high-end MICE movement," elaborates Kathy.

Flight connectivity is still a concern, as there are no direct flights from India to Fiji; however, connections do exist out of Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand. As flights open up, seats to Fiji will increase.

To increase product knowledge and awareness among industry stakeholders, Tourism Fiji launched its revamped Matai Specialist Program in May 2022 in the India market. The program has received a great response across global markets and in the India market within a short span has achieved 500 plus registrations and 180 qualified Matai specialists to serve the Indian traveller. The newly introduced Matai is a three-tier program with the Bronze level taking just two hours to complete. The silver takes approximately two and half hours to complete. The lucky Matai specialists completing the programme before July 31, 2022, also hold an opportunity to win a free trip to Fiji. These lucky winners will get an opportunity to feel and experience

the country and all it has to offer.

The Indian film industry, like Bollywood, Kollywood, and Sandalwood, has shown interest in Fiji for its picturesque locations. Hindi movie Table 21 was filmed in Fiji, as were a couple of Kannada and Telugu movies. Movies create a lot of aspirational value for a destination and are a great way to take a destination to the masses.

Fiji offers great golfing opportunities for avid golfers, world-renowned, champion Golfer Vijay Singh is a Fijian. Fiji boasts of five championship golf courses. Two of the golf courses are on private island resorts. The focus is on golf tourism, and Kathy reports that a group of 50 female golfers from Chennai who primarily visited Fiji to experience the golfing delights the country has to offer.

Lying at the crossroads of Polynesia, Fiji has a strong Polynesian influence, a fact visible in its people, food, and clothing. Fiji offers vacationers the sun, sea, and sand combined with tropical forests and mountains. Kathy suggests that if someone is coming to Fiji from India, a six to seven-night vacation spread over the sea and mountains is a must. Fiji offers true value for money and top luxury offerings for the discerning traveller. The best time to visit Fiji is June to October, making it a perfect fit for Indian summer school vacations and Dussehra holidays, with temperatures ranging between 16-32 degrees Celsius. This period is Fijian winters.

For the active holiday seekers, Fiji offers scuba diving, hiking, turtle tagging, manta ray tagging, quad biking, zip lines, and whale watching, not to miss out on the authentic Fijian Rum, both the white ones and the dark ones. So, with great value offers, Fiji should again be on the radar of the Indian vacationer.



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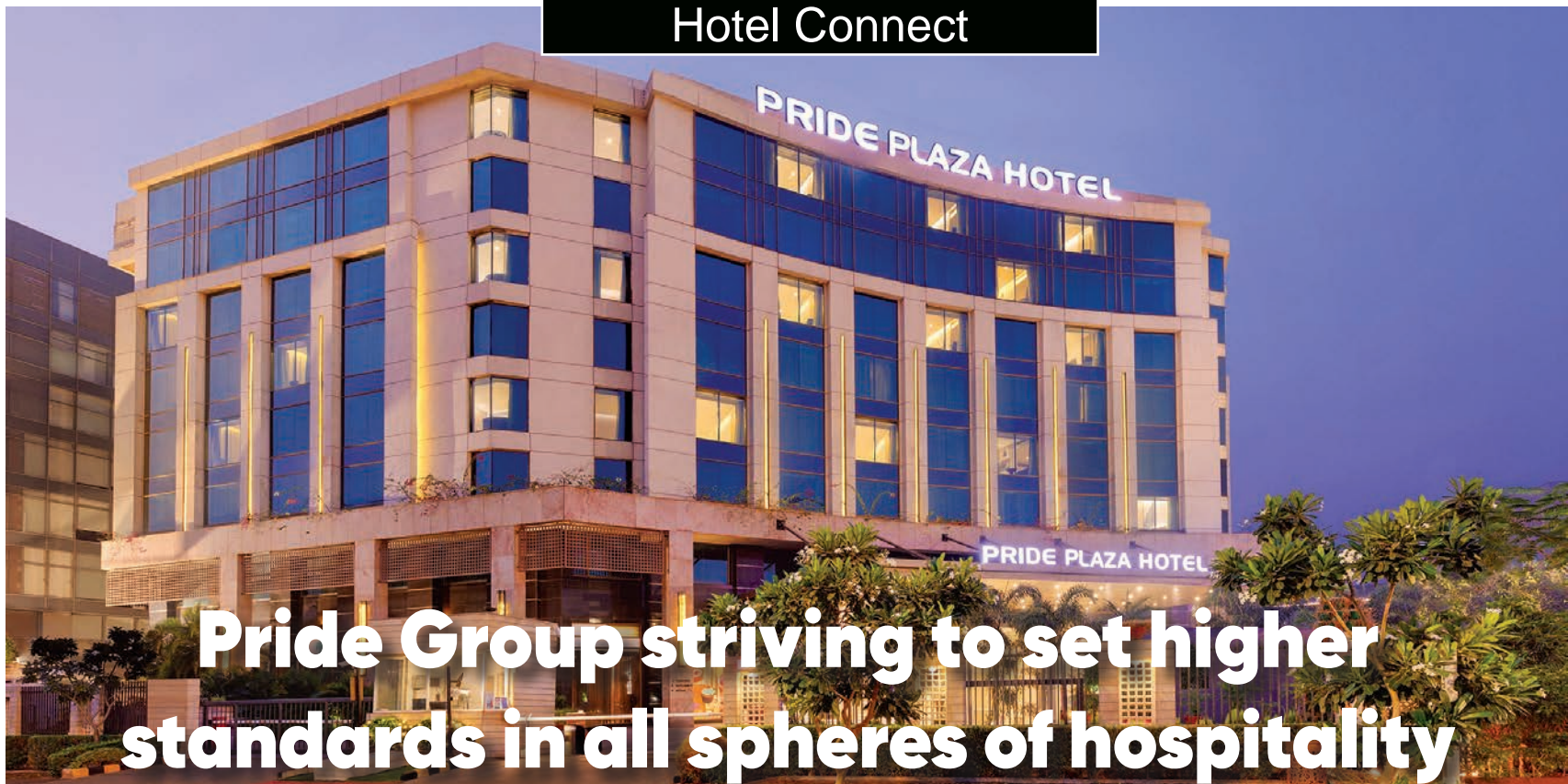
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# Pride Group striving to set higher standards in all spheres of hospitality

Satyen Jain, CEO, Pride Group of Hotels, has always shared his father, SP Jain's passion for hospitality. His father has been a true motivator and guiding force for his entry into the hospitality sector. In this interaction with TTJ, Satyen talks about strengthening their 'Truly Indian' hospitality experience that resonates with comfort and warm hospitality and their major expansion plan primarily targeted towards tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

Prashant Nayak

Pride Hotels operates and manages a chain of hotels under the brand name 'Pride Plaza Hotel,' which is essentially an Indian Luxury Collection. The 'Pride Hotels' are conveniently centrally located business hotels, while one can find the 'Pride Resorts' at mesmerising destinations. They also have a mid-market hotel brand suited for the business traveller, the 'Pride Biznotel'. All four brands are well appreciated and frequented by corporate clients and domestic and foreign tourists. Recently, they have forayed into the premium service apartment space with the launch of their new brand 'Pride Suites,' with the first property signed in Gurugram.

Subsequent to the challenges due to the pandemic in the past two years, the hotel group has witnessed exponential growth. They have performed much better in 2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021. They have almost doubled their turnover. The ADR and occupancy have gone up from 43 per cent to 65 per cent for 2022-2023.

While speaking about the scope of budget hotels and the 3-4-star hotels in India, Satyen says, "While five-star hotels in India are at par with global competitors, there is a near absence of internationally acceptable three-star and four-star hotels. Also, there is a great scope in the budget hotel category and all the leading hospitality players are eying this segment."

As mid-market segment hotels like Pride Hotels also receive international corporate and leisure guests, the lack of inbound travellers should make some difference in their revenues. On this, Satyen shares, "I think the worst is over. The inbound travel segment is staging



▲ Satyen Jain

a significant revival post-pandemic. The government has recently announced a target of 80 new airports by 2025, which in turn will be a major boost to the tourism and hospitality sector as the demand for rooms will increase manifold. The number of new hotel signings too is seeing a significant increase as compared to the previous years. The growth in room supply is likely to increase to meet the growing demand of the inflow of tourists, primarily in tier 2 and tier 3 cities."

Pride Hotels is a homegrown brand that resonates with true Indian hospitality. The group's vision is to establish Pride Hotels as the best Indian hospitality chain. Pride Hotels

plans to expand its presence to 100 properties with over 10,000 keys spread across various geographical regions, primarily in tier 1 and tier 2 markets. The focus is on an asset-light model for expansion with a major slice of the portfolio managed directly by the company. "Most of the new properties will be located in popular leisure destinations with great tourism potential. We would be focussing on the domestic market at present. While we will have 50 properties by the end of this year, we plan to expand our footprints nationally by doubling our portfolio to 100 hotels by 2030," shares Satyen.

Satyen thinks it will take a couple of years for the industry to stabilise fully. The Government of India has lately introduced various economic reforms to revive the industry. The measures that the hotels want the government to take include conserving cash flow, GST withholding, and compulsory directive to be given to the banks to extend principal and interest payment for two quarters. Also, some tax credits for payments, some waivers on property taxes, and other measures to uplift the industry are expected.

Satyen, like his father, is acknowledged for his contributions and achievements in the hospitality industry. When asked about the qualities of a successful hotelier, Satyen said, "I believe that one shouldn't get too comfortable with success, nor get too bogged down by failure, as both are transient. Having a vision and a point of view is necessary which one should stick to. I also believe that the ability to take risks and to understand the ever-changing environment is extremely important. People who understand change and adapt to it are the ones who will thrive."





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# Summit Hotels and Resorts: Where incredible hospitality and tradition coexist amidst the mountains

As a premier leisure hospitality brand, exceptional value and service are at the core of everything they do at Summit Hotels and Resorts. Right from when guests book their hotels, they connect them with an 'Incredible Himalayan Hospitality' they long for. When they walk into any of their hotels, they are greeted with a traditional Himalayan welcome after which, a complete Himalayan experience is in store for them. Santosh Agarwal, Chairman, Summit Hotels and Resorts, shares more about the hotel group and the brand, which is distinctive from the other hotel groups in India.

Prashant Nayak

**S**ummit Hotels and Resorts have their presence in the Eastern Himalayas of West Bengal (Darjeeling and Kalimpong), North-East (Sikkim and Assam), Uttarakhand (Rishikesh and Lansdowne), and Himachal Pradesh (Shimla). Summit Hotels is the first brand to have its hotels located all across Sikkim, be it Lachung, Lachen, or Pelling. The brand has a strong presence in this scenic state.

"We wish to introduce people to the incredible Himalayan hospitality. To have 22 properties sprawled in the foothills of the Himalayas is not easy but as we understand mountains, terrains, hills, and the Himalayas more than anyone else that's why we are the largest hotel chain in Eastern Himalayas," explains Agarwal, the reason for having most of their hotels at a higher altitude.

With the pandemic ebbing, the current occupancy levels at their hotels are picking up well, but with inbound travel still on a low and not steamed up, they are focusing on domestic travel for the time being. Their focus is on the staycation circuits. Guests who arrive in Darjeeling almost always have plans to visit Kalimpong and Gangtok as well and Summit has properties in these places. Likewise, Rishikesh, Shimla, and Lansdowne complete the staycation circuit, which is why they have their properties stationed there too. With this advantage, it becomes easy for them to keep focus and flow with the domestic travel market.

Summit Hotels and Resorts operates in a hotel lease model, so its properties come under managed ones. They lease a property and then manage accordingly to carry forward their hotel business.

Each of their properties is distinct and



▲ Santosh Agarwal

set at a different location covering the most beautiful places around. All their hotels have an in-house multi-cuisine restaurant and amenities that beautifully relate to Himalayan hospitality.

In this context, Singalila Club, the flagship property of Summit Hotels and Resorts, is the first club in its league to amalgamate the concept of lifestyle, luxury, sports, and well-being. Besides that, the location, which is just a distance away from Bagdogra Airport, accounts for a perfect transit lunch for guests arriving or going to or from Bagdogra Airport. The club, apart from inducting one of the kinds of amenities, is also a regular ground for hosting events and functions. It is, in short, a perfect abode to enjoy a lifestyle that a guest dearly deserves. Also, all their properties are designed to offer guests exceptional MICE services to host their itineraries.

Speaking about marketing initiatives and

strategies for exploring new business and retaining their loyal customers, Agarwal says, "We use technology along with a personal touch to keep our customers with us. We have made great use of social media to share their experiences and they feel satisfied seeing them on our page. The overall process is like adding value to their experience. We are the first brand to introduce the B2B website to connect with our trade partners. Also, our consistent participation in national and international travel fairs like BTM, OTM, SATTE, MICE Affairs, and TTJ reflects our will to connect with travel partners so our brand status gets due elevation. The initiation of coupon code, travel packages, and offers all are travellers and trade partners oriented that reflects our initiative to flow with the course of the market."

Digital marketing is a great source for reaching the world and introducing ideas to stakeholders and consumers alike, and that's what they do at Summit Hotels. Email marketing and content have still not lost their importance. Hosting bloggers and vloggers during the cooling-off period as a part of brand promotion and awareness is also an aspect of their marketing strategy.

Regarding their upcoming hotels and expansion plans, Agarwal states, "We are constantly inspecting the ideas and till now have identified a few locations reflecting different relief of the landforms like Dooars - a magnificent location known for flora and fauna due to unspoiled beauty of the surroundings, Sundarbans - an exotic land of mangroves and Royal Bengal Tiger, Deolo - the wonderful ridge of Kalimpong, Kurseong - a magnetic land of white orchids and Mirik - an inviting region within Darjeeling known for its humble hospitality and inspiring lake."



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# 'Being environmentally sensitive is not a business or marketing gimmick'

Having launched and being the driving force behind the phenomenal growth of the Fern brand, Param Kanampilly, CMD, Concept Hospitality, is regarded as one of the most poignant and impactful professionals in the hospitality industry and has been affiliated with numerous hotel groups. He is also credited with founding the eco-friendly concept in the hospitality sector and played a very important role in educating the hotel industry about sustainability. To get fresh insight into how the Fern brand is faring, we at TTJ interacted with the visionary and formidable environment champion who has been treading the sustainable path as a part of their brand commitment.

Prashant Nayak

**W**hen Param Kanampilly came to Mumbai in the 1970s to pursue his career in Dentistry, he accidentally got into hospitality at the Dadar Catering College. The college was offering courses in Hotel Management with accommodation and hostel facilities, which he needed at that time, as he was not a resident of Mumbai.

Param took an opportunity to make a difference to the environment with regard to the hospitality business when he went on to set up and operate Asia's first Ecotel Hotel- The Orchid Mumbai, which is now considered the hallmark of environmentally sensitive hotels. Thereafter, in 1996, he started his own hospitality management company - Concept Hospitality. The brand, Fern Hotels and Resorts, is now a leading environmentally sensitive group of hotels and amongst the fastest growing hotel brands in India, with 88 hotels and resorts currently operational under management or opening shortly across 72 locations in India and internationally.

With the decline in COVID, the hospitality business is looking up lately and the occupancy levels have begun to get better with business and tourist travel increasing. "There has certainly been a lot of improvement as far as the occupancies are concerned. In fact, the weekend destinations and our jungle and forest resorts have been doing very good business. Even they are touching the pre-COVID ARR's and in certain cases surpassing them as well. The problem is more of the city hotels. Their ARR's have to improve significantly. However, it is the problem with all the hotels and not limited to Fern Hotels," shares Param.

Concept Hospitality is a part of CG Corp Global, a multi-dimensional Nepalese



▲ Param Kanampilly

conglomerate. With major brands like The Fern and The Fern Residency, Zinc by The Fern, and Beacon Hotels in its portfolio, Concept Hospitality is a market leader in hotel management in India and has seen impressive growth. With an aim to reach its goal of managing and operating 100 hotels shortly, each project of Concept Hospitality aids in establishing brand philosophy as well as delivering end-to-end solutions, starting from design conceptualisation to viable operational management of each hotel.

When asked if the group is considering looking at new business models due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Param responds, "We are a hotel management company and we charge management fees for managing the hotels. We have been there in the business for a long and we are here to stay. Our business model is good and sustainable. The model is going to remain the same with a little tweak here and there."

Fern Hotels and Resorts is a premium standard of amenities and services with a true passion for the environment. Luxury with elegance and personalised service, and all the contemporary facilities packaged together with minimal impact on the environment. "We are an environmentally friendly company, and take sustainable development seriously. Our tagline is hospitality with responsibility. For us, being environmentally sensitive is not a business or marketing gimmick. We are committed to the cause of the environment. We try to inculcate it among the entire staff," reminds Param.

Despite the pandemic, India's hotel business saw several new establishments, including the Fern brands. Adding to the scope of the hotels in the mid-market and budget segments, Param says, "India is a huge market and the biggest chunk of the market is in the budget and medium level hotels. The burgeoning middle class has become very brand conscious and is ready to shell out a little more if it comes to getting services. The biggest growth is happening in this segment. Even during the pandemic, we opened quite a few properties. That speaks highly about the Fern brand."

Fern Hotels and Resorts has been expanding its portfolio across all brands. This year, they launched a few properties and will be opening at least six to eight more properties by the end of 2022.

On a final note, when asked what traits a successful hotelier should possess, Param advised, "Practicing the One Minute Manager Principle with the element of human touch and treating every guest/customer as God and inspiring your team to believe in this mantra is what I believe in. Secondly, being honest and sincere in your profession is what matters the most, and it is significant in every field."





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# 'Proactive and prepared to garner more footfalls'

As the hotel strives to bring more to the city and offer distinctive experiences and sustainable practices along with unique curated events for their guests, Sumeet Suri, General Manager, JW Marriott Kolkata, highlights some of the hotel's strategies for the upcoming months to generate more revenues.

Manisha Patel

**J**W Marriott Kolkata saw a good rise in the occupancies in the past few months, along with the revenue increase across the hotel departments. Sumeet is happy to mention that, as of May 2022, they have begun crossing the 2019 numbers. He anticipates that they will begin to surpass and achieve higher figures if this trend holds.

The hotel has also observed an increase in overall travel, primarily domestic travel. The pent-up demand coming in from domestic travel is far more than what they saw in 2019 and is by far making up for the inbound travel, which has not picked up to the extent they had expected.

Sumeet adds, "Since we are a business hotel and though we are not getting inbound corporate clients at present, we certainly see a good amount of domestic corporate companies coming to us. We have seen a good number of groups along with pharma and cement companies doing events with us. MICE and Awards ceremonies for employees are some of the biggest events that we have been witnessing and which are helping us compensate for the loss of inbound travel."

During the monsoon, the JW Marriott Kolkata experiences lower occupancy rates than during the winter, as the travel prospects are reduced. There are no weddings during this season, but to compensate for that, the hotel has started to promote Staycations, which are getting very popular. Additionally, they have various offers coming in via Marriott.com that are hotel specific. This helps them make up for the slowdown they usually observe during the monsoon season.

The hotel is also known for its food and beverage experience. Sumeet



▲ Sumeet Suri

informs, "The hotel has started doing a few musical evenings which have become very popular among the local residents and have helped us to add to our revenue. The food and beverage space has become more popular and innovative than ever before and these are the months where the hotels spend some time doing significant promotions in the food and beverage area to make up for the revenues."

While they are trying hard that get back to the pre-COVID levels in their work areas and start exceeding them, they are also working for the next 2-3 months to get maximum footfalls. Sumeet shares, "Our primary focus is on promotions, and how we can cater to the locals. There is a huge amount of pent-up demand within our community, the city, and the

state, and the idea is to do innovative concepts and events that will help us bring in that extra revenue. We are doing a few pop-ups for restaurants and a few innovative events in our banquet halls which are helping us generate revenues."

Sumeet adds, "We are also focusing on bringing in groups. Here, our strategy is to ensure that we get room and banquet business together, and only if we do not have any room business that we sell banquets closer to the date. This method has helped us bring in more revenue for the hotel in totality."

JW Marriott Kolkata's other focus is increasing awareness

of the new Executive Lounge and Boardroom on the 23rd floor, which is unique and can be used as a restaurant and event venue. The idea is to focus on the elite class to book them so that they can use the lounge or even get them to do some niche events.

"We have also developed some innovative promotions for the Spa and Salon to add to the revenue with some great success. Our focus continues on 'Marriott Bonvoy on Wheels', which was extremely popular during the lockdown period. We have continued to keep that as one of the main businesses. Our focus is also on hampers and gifting, which gets us a big chunk of business, especially during festive seasons such as Diwali," concludes Sumeet.



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# Fortune Park Sishmo, Bhubaneswar displays powerful signs of recovery

After an exceptional summertime booking season, Fortune Park Sishmo Bhubaneswar eyes supporting avenues to sustain the high influx of travellers.

Vartik Sethi

**T**he post-pandemic comeback for the hospitality industry had been long-awaited. Welcoming this anticipated rebound, Sushant Lamba, General Manager, Fortune Park Sishmo, Bhubaneswar, shared that the recent busy booking season has outperformed even the pre-pandemic period. Set off by the pent-up demand over the two years of lockdown, summer occupancy for hotels fared an astounding response by the Indian traveller. Highlighting this extraordinary occurrence, Lamba said, "We have outperformed our monthly goals, and I'm delighted to report that we're on schedule to finish the first quarter of the fiscal year strong."

Subsequently, this gratifying upswing has also yielded benefits in all areas of business for the hotel, including - hotel occupancy, leisure, corporate bookings, and restaurant dining.

During COVID-19, the tremors of decreased inbound travel were felt throughout the industry. This uncertainty was a precursor to the potential fall of industry giants. However, recent developments have given the industry some respite. Contrary to the slow but much-needed recovery of inbound travel, the MICE segment has shown impeccable and speedy results. Moreover, the MICE movement has stirred ancillary demand for hotels. Individuals are ready to step out and embrace the joy of having in-person conversations and shaking hands with their peers. Fortune Park Sishmo has facilitated successive jumps in the



▲ Sushant Lamba

demand for residential and non-residential business events.

For hotels in Bhubaneswar, the leisure segment undergoes a significant fall in the number of inbound travellers during the monsoon. The trend this year was no different, as it translated into lower occupancy rates for hotels. To brave this adversity, Lamba banks his hopes on domestic business and local tourism. He said, "We are hopeful that this time the domestic business segment will continue its pace. We are also creating special and enticing room packages targeted to attract our local community."

While room reservations account for the chunk of the revenues for hotels, the young traveller today

invests heavily in experiences, which have subsequently led to the rise of demand for the local culinary experience. To capture their attention, Fortune Park Sishmo, Bhubaneswar, aims to nurture an excellent dining experience within their facility and

raise convenience for their consumers by providing services such as home deliveries, take-aways, and outdoor catering.

Acknowledging the general price-sensitive nature of the modern traveller, Lamba shared that post-COVID travellers are inclined towards branded and luxury hotels for their safety and hygiene protocols. The change in consumer behavior is linked to the need to ensure the precaution and safety of consumer's loved ones. Fortune Park Sishmo, Bhubaneswar's new age protocols to ensure cleanliness and hygiene, have proved instrumental in attracting more customers towards them. Adapting to the needs of evolving consumers, Lamba touched upon Fortune Park Sishmo's outlook on this situation. He said, "Our strategy has drastically evolved over the last two years, particularly in light of consumer behavior and visitor expectations. The criteria used to select a restaurant or reserve a stay have changed, and we have followed suit."

Working round the clock to secure safe surroundings for their consumers, Fortune Hotels introduced the 'Safe Stays at Fortune Hotels' program, which offers uninterrupted safety and hygiene protocols. A seamless experience across the consumer journey is ensured from pre-checkout to checkout. This is made possible by contactless check-ins, sanitised facilities, and meticulous staff. Huge amounts of effort, work, and time is invested to improve the consumer experience. "We have further strengthened our commitment to this program by obtaining the ISO 9001:2015 certificate," added Lamba.

The gravity of the challenges faced by the hospitality industry has collectively been a testimony for most hotels. Sharing his insights on how Fortune Park Sishmo, Bhubaneswar is preparing to tackle these challenges, Lamba spoke extensively about how hotel alternatives are here to stay and it makes it imperative for the hotel to put certain practices in place. Lamba said, "We are building our food and beverage strategy on three strong pillars, critical attention to upholding the highest standard of Hygiene and safety, contactless delivery and take-away service, and an at-home hassle-free premium dining experience by means of outdoor catering."





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# Justa Hotels: luxury on-budget experience

Ashish Vohra, Founder and CEO of Justa Hotels and Resorts, began his career with Oberoi Hotels in 1990. His final role with them came in 2005, when he was appointed Corporate Director of Marketing for the Group. By then, he had decided to become an entrepreneur and pursue his passion for the hospitality business by setting up a business from scratch. Ashish keeps a very low profile. Being in business, he believes that the brand should speak for itself as opposed to the individual. We spoke to Ashish to learn about the brand, business model, and strategies to sustain in the ever-changing hospitality scenario.

Ravi Sharma

**J**usta Hotels and Resorts was founded on August 15, 2005, and since then, it has been gaining traction. The company currently operates 18 hotels and is set to expand to newer cities in the next few years. They also successfully manage banquets and restaurants and have proven to be the best luxury boutique product in the mid-market segment.

As one of India's top luxury boutique resort brands, Justa has years of successful expertise in the hotel business. They have their deep-rooted expertise in the hospitality sector, guiding, inspiring, and briefing architects, interior designing of the hotel, and completely suggesting a particular vision, look, philosophy, concept, space, layout, and financial forecast of a particular property.

Their properties offer the opportunities to experience architectural marvels, authenticity, unique accommodation options, and pioneer locations across India. Ashish says, "The differentiating features of our hotels are undoubtedly their distinctive offerings in distinctive locations. Our hotels are not located in crowded areas but rather in quieter parts of Dharamsala, Mukteshwar, and Mashobra. Second, the interiors and design are the main points of interest. So, most of our hotels are normally tucked away, small and inward-looking, with a serene interior and productive service-driven kind. So far, the boutique concept is working in our favor."

In this clutter of international and local brands, Ashish aims to create a niche for small luxury hotels, allowing Justa to be international in every way, with an Indian identity. "The whole idea is that we give you a great room and great product and service at almost half the five-star rates. We are targeting Rs 7000 to 12000 kind of average clientele. I think there's a



▲ Ashish Vohra

big vacuum in that particular category," affirms Ashish.

Like everyone else, the pandemic badly affected the company, and they had to relook at their business model. They eventually fine-tuned it, evolved it, and are now in a lot better position than before. "I think every hotel company has made a loss, but what matters is how you coped with the situation and the strategy implemented to come out of it. We shifted our focus to the hills. We kind of balanced the portfolios of the city hotels and thought about newer locations, such as Goa, Rameshwaram, and Munnar. So, we've done more leisure in our offbeat destinations, but it's not that we are not doing cities," shares Ashish.

Justa works on a revenue-sharing model and doesn't own any assets or have any managed hotels. They control the experience. They control the costs and the customers. They manage the hotel in its entirety. Ultimately, they give the owners a percentage instead of charging them.

According to Ashish, in the small hotel space, a lot of business is still transacted in the lease model. However, Ashish believes that over time, the lease model has killed many companies. He has seen three to four decent midsize hotel chains close down. So, one has to be wary about this model as it may not work in the long run.

Most Justa properties have 50 rooms or lesser, but Ashish says it works to their advantage. He mentions, "It's not only business but also about how you relate to your customers and create a unique stay experience. Also, some of our locations really help you connect with your soul. Connecting to the soul is our key motto."

Despite having limited rooms, they are also tapping the MICE market. Though boutique, they host a fair amount of small and medium MICE businesses at their properties. They have some properties which can comfortably accommodate 300 - 400 people. In their smaller hotels, small conferences and events are regularly conceptualised.

Speaking of strategies for the upcoming months, Ashish says, "As witnessed during the pandemic, you have to balance your portfolio in every form, you will need your city hotel, you need your resorts, you need Rajasthan, you need Goa, you need north and also the south. You need everything that can help you to sustain yourself and also take the risks to the best possible. You can't say I will only do international and not domestic. Nor only leisure and not MICE. I think that's the only way to survive because, at some stage or another, every business will be under some threat. So, you need to keep fine-tuning your strategy, and it is an ongoing process. Strategy is almost an everyday job because the world and the environment are changing on a daily basis."



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## Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa strives to give undivided attention to every guest

Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa, is located on the fine white sands of Uttorda Beach in South Goa. The hotel is a paradise for tourists because of its low-rise architecture, which features breathtaking vistas, dramatic sculptures, and artwork in an elegant Goan style. These aspects make the resort a choice for every vacation. Anand Chatterjee, General Manager, Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa, shares some more interesting reasons why you should stay at the property whenever you are in Goa.

**Prashant Nayak**

**A**fter a lull of two years, Goa regained the title of India's favourite holiday destination with Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa at the forefront of a much-awaited boom. As more tourists venture out and with schools on break, there has been a significant demand for domestic travel during summer.

"The clientele at our resort has always been largely domestic as well as a percentage of international guests who live in India. As the number of domestic guests visiting has increased, there has been not much impact and our focus on catering to domestic tourists has only increased," shares Anand.

At Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa, each block of rooms features a different theme of the

Hollywood genre through contemporary art-form memorabilia. Thus, guests can stay in a different block on every visit.

In Goa, the monsoon brings with it unending tranquilly and the potential for extraordinary experiences. "The monsoon season has traditionally been considered off-season in Goa, but the pandemic has rewritten this rule. The hotel is riding the MICE wave with bulk group bookings, keeping the revenue stream sturdy and providing stability," informs Anand.

On asked about a few immersive experiences introduced at the property to cater to the demand post-COVID, Anand shares, "Generally, due to the effects of the pandemic, experience-driven hotels are in vogue where the traveller will want assurance of safety and quality. Guests look for

memories that are ever-lasting. Personalisation is discreet, thoughtful, and unique. Seasonal and local produce combined with fresh on-site cooking is a huge factor. Focus on sustainability with the ban on single-use plastic and water filters replacing packaged drinking water. A good spa and relaxing therapies have become common factors for any resort's success. However, the luxury is to be able to offer spa therapies at a time and place of guests' choice. These unique offerings make a resort stand apart. All these are factored at our property."

"Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa is a pet-friendly holiday destination, is a significant perk for families looking for a break along with their furry friends. A lot of our guests travel from neighboring states for an inclusive holiday," concludes Anand.



▲ Anand Chatterjee

## Domestic travellers filling the void left behind by international travellers in Goa

Just a leisurely walk from the pristine Benaulim Beach, the quaint and tranquil 96 keys Fortune Resort Benaulim, Goa comes with a mosaic of authentic indigenous experiences and a gamut of vantage venues, making it a perfect destination for dreamy weddings and a breathtaking tropical holiday. Som Parkash Malik, General Manager, Fortune Resort Benaulim, Goa, is delighted to share the highlights of a successful summer and their proactiveness for the ongoing monsoon season.

**Manisha Patel**

**B**y the end of the winter season in 2021-22, Fortune Resort Benaulim, Goa, had observed that the recovery of travel demand was gaining momentum due to the removal of restrictions, positive traveller attitudes, and the restart of domestic and international flights. As a result, they enjoyed the best summer season so far and the highest occupancy of the season. The trend continues.

However, it might take another year for incoming travel to Goa to return to normal. International travel is extremely low this year because there were no charter planes, but, again, at the resort, they have seen a good and fast recovery in the MICE segment.

"MICE is assisting in filling the weekdays. Given that we have a variety of indoor and outdoor venues available, we are concentrating

on corporate offsites, weddings, and MICE. Apart from MICE, we have benefitted from new trends that have emerged - staycations and somewhat of a 'revenge travel'. It does seem like people were just too overwhelmed to be at home for so long that they are coming out with full force thereby, supporting hospitality. Local leisure travellers and even domestic business travellers are filling the void tremendously well that has been left by international business travellers. Due to the shift, the Goa market continued to maintain pre-covid occupancy level and revenues," informs Som Parkash Malik.

Unlike a few decades ago, Goa has become a popular weekend destination for everyone and is open all year long. Hospitality stakeholders certainly see a slowdown during the monsoon. To attract guests during the low season, Malik says, "At Fortune Resort

Benaulim, we have created unique packages that feature authentic local experiences like village tours on e-bikes, monsoon walks to the beach, visits to spice farms, sightseeing in south Goa, indoor activities and movie shows for kids, cooking classes for everyone, etc. which keeps our guests engaged and enjoys their holidays at its best."

Fortune Hotels had introduced the 'Safe Stays at Fortune Hotels' programme, which offered round-the-clock safety and hygiene protocol, from pre-arrival to check-out, ensuring the guest stay was safe, seamless, and stress-free. They further strengthened their commitment to this programme by obtaining the ISO 9001:2015 certificate. Fortune Hotels believes in Responsible Luxury experiences which address the needs of wellbeing and safety through responsible practices which are in harmony with the environment and society.



▲ Som Parkash Malik



## Hyatt Regency Dehradun, a new family getaway in the Himalayan foothills

Hyatt Regency Dehradun opened its doors to guests on March 16, 2022. Though, they started with hosting events, they have now been pleasantly surprised and overwhelmed by leisure travellers. Harkaran Singh, General Manager, Hyatt Regency Dehradun, gives insights on the newest hotel located at the foothills of the Himalayas and which has been getting a super response from driveway cities such as Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Meerut, Karnal, and Delhi.

**Prashant Nayak**

**H**yatt Regency Dehradun features 263 guest accommodations, including 24 spacious suites and interconnecting and balcony rooms, each overlooking the picturesque Malsi Forest or the majestic Himalayan mountains.

As inbound travel has still not picked up in India, domestic travel has been a key source of revenue for all hotels. "With a hotel like ours, which is a destination in itself, with scenic views from everywhere, we can see leisure domestic travel on an uprise week-on-week, along with being patronised by corporate segment by catering to their meetings and events," says Harkaran Singh.

Monsoon amidst the hills is an experience in itself. Especially at Hyatt Regency Dehradun, one can see lovely floating clouds and the cloud-covered mountain peaks and thus enjoy the

rains around the inspiring settings of the hotel. Harkaran adds, "Since we are at the foothills, accessibility to our hotel does not get hampered during monsoons, and we are expecting leisure travellers to make the most of the monsoon. They do not need to do a rain check before their travel, as the Hyatt Regency Dehradun can be enjoyed to the fullest during the lovely monsoon season. Rain or no rain."

Hyatt Regency Dehradun offers immersive local area experiences such as food trails, adventure sports, cultural sights, guided hikes, and nature walks. The property offers guests various onsite and offsite activities to help them make the most of their stay in #HeartOfTheHills.

"We make our guests experience the real aura of the hills, through rustic experiences and energising interactions with the locale. Families

can enjoy Hyatt's signature kids' program, Camp Hyatt, while at the hotel. The program introduces a range of engaging experiences for kids including the introduction of the local Camp Hyatt mascot – DODO, offering a personalised check-in experience for kids, along with craft projects, pottery making, kite flying, and treasure hunts, and more," assures Harkaran.

Further, Harkaran drives home one more important aspect as he states, "When we say families can enjoy at the hotel, we mean it as we understand and respect the feelings of all the pet lovers who often are not able to take their pets along on vacations due to restrictions at many locations. Well, we are happy to share that Hyatt Regency Dehradun is a pet-friendly hotel, and we love to welcome our furry friends and ensure we look after their needs while on the property."



▲ Harkaran Singh

## 'Expecting more demand from the domestic market'

The relentless pursuit of excellence and dedication for achievement by Cygnett Hotels is acknowledged in India and around the world. The group wants to be known as a smart hotel brand across upscale, mid-scale, and economy brands, offering value-conscious domestic travellers a comfortable and safe stay. While discussing the recent developments, Sarbendra Sarkar, Managing Director and Founder, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts shares that the group is actively working to open 100 plus hotels across 75 plus cities in India and to operate in more than six international locations within the next five years.

**Manisha Patel**

**C**ygnett Hotels is a technology-driven hospitality brand that continues to invest in leading technologies to drive better ROI for its owners and deliver a great experience to its guests. It offers Franchise Plus and Management models to provide support to hotel partners.

The summer holiday season has always been important for the domestic hospitality sector, with the demand shooting up during the period. "This season, our properties across destinations such as Dehradun, Nainital, Jaipur, and Gangtok are witnessing an influx of guests travelling with families. Our properties have recorded average occupancies of about 85 per cent. This year has been very positive for the industry, with the pandemic situation improving and demand across segments like leisure, corporate, and

MICE on a rise," said Sarkar.

Cygnett Hotels and Resorts has a diverse portfolio of hotels from the economy and mid-scale to upscale properties. It is in 18 great locations in India, having 1,000+ rooms, restaurants, and banquet facilities, thereby establishing itself as a one-stop destination for MICE.

According to Sarkar, inbound travel has been picking up slowly since the Indian government allowed operations of scheduled international flights a few months back. Currently, domestic tourists are driving the occupancy of their properties. These tourists are staying longer and spending well on F&B offerings available in the properties. Given that, there has been no impact on the revenue at their properties because of the slow demand from international markets.

Cygnett strives to create memorable experiences for its guests, and it's no different this time in the monsoons. Regarding their plans to leverage sales in the next two to three months, Sarkar says, "Monsoon tourism has been growing in the past few years. Some tourists now love to explore destinations like Goa, the Northeast, and Uttarakhand during the monsoon period. So, we will continue to utilise our internal marketing team, technology platform, and trade partners to reach out to our prospective clients."

At Cygnett, they expect a very strong demand throughout this year, especially from the domestic markets. Gateways by Cygnett offers great staycation experiences for everyone right through the year. All their brands are keen to offer a comfortable and safe stay to the value-conscious domestic travellers in India.



▲ Sarbendra Sarkar



# Hospitality sector revenue rebounds

Since the pandemic, a lot has changed in the hospitality industry. This summer season witnessed a robust occupancy in hotels and in an attempt to entice monsoon travellers, the hospitality groups are going the extra mile to float attractive concepts. Low inbound travel has given rise to high footfall in domestic tourists, which has emerged as an advantage for the hospitality industry. TTJ delves deep into the hospitality sector of Eastern, North-eastern and Central regions of India in an attempt to gather info on the current trends prevailing during monsoon and the innovative concepts rolled out to cater to the post-pandemic travel demand.

**Swaati Chaudhury**

**T**he Indian hospitality sector is poised for a unique re-emergence after the pandemic. With the ease of travel norms, more and more travellers are focusing on safe and healthy travel. The well-established hospitality groups in today's times are witnessing a steady rise in the footfall of domestic travellers, be it leisure or business.

Bhubaneswar's Mayfair Lagoon, one of the most distinguished hospitality groups in the east, throws light on its current occupancy rate and the attractive monsoon packages on offer. Sanjeeb K Pattnaik, Assistant Vice President - Operations, Mayfair Lagoon commented, "Mayfair Hotels has experienced a steady rise in occupancy level in the post-pandemic era. All our properties are destination-oriented hotels nestling on beaches, mountains, and islands. We do have heritage properties and a one-of-a-kind tea resort. The flow of tourists in all our properties was beyond our expectations. MICE and destination weddings have a substantial contribution to business growth. The occupancy in our hospitality

group has crossed 80 per cent with an average daily rate hovering around Rs 8,500 to Rs 11,000."

Although COVID-19 restrictions have been minimised considerably on foreign shores, destination weddings are still confined within the country. Pattnaik said, "Domestic tourism is at an all-time high and our hospitality property receives a major chunk of its business from domestic travellers. Once destination wedding tourists were jet-setting to foreign shores, but now these events are happening in our country. Hence, there is a high demand for rooms leading to a higher average room rate. Inbound travellers have been replaced by domestic tourists. The concept of the lean travel period is passé. With the rise in disposable income and high purchasing power, any leisure period makes a sound holiday vacation. At times, monsoons act as a barrier during natural calamities such as cyclones, floods, and landslides. We provide lucrative packages for leisure tourists to enjoy the monsoon. MICE tourism has a significant contribution in bolstering the revenue of our group and our well-equipped, sprawling indoor banquets form a perfect destination for hosting such events. Revenge tourism does not require any sales strategy. It is our hospitality brand and keeping with stringent COVID protocols that have generated confidence among our guests to vouch for our properties."

The hospitality group has been moving a step ahead to cater to the needs of its visitors in the post-pandemic period. Pattnaik further said, "We have taken a slew of initiatives to instil confidence among our guests who are hygiene-conscious and are concerned about COVID-safety measures. Our group has geared up with fully vaccinated staff and has on offer exclusive dining options, health food and beverage menu options. The stress is on contactless service and online documentation,

and several awareness campaigns are hosted. Our group also has on offer Yoga and wellness experience with spa therapies for guests. Besides, there are customised packages on offer for visitors."

Take the example of Kolkata-based Vedic Village Spa Resort that has witnessed a commendable growth in its revenue and an increase in its occupancy level with the setting of this fiscal. Rajib Roy Choudhury, Senior General Manager, Vedic Village Spa



▲ Rajib Roy Choudhury

Resort, stated, "There has been a big jump in our revenue during the summer of this fiscal. Our property has witnessed 23.75 per cent growth in occupancy in the first quarter of this fiscal. We have the most number of FITs as visitors. While our growth has been close to 90 per cent as compared to last year and the first quarter of last fiscal, we are experiencing double gain. There has been a significant rise in hotel occupancy over the past few months. When it comes to inbound travel, there is no doubt that our revenue would be hampered, since our property is a resort. Having said this, we are demographically



▲ Sanjeeb K Pattnaik



blessed. Our property has been hit by the pandemic and there is a revenue shortage of 15 to 20 per cent which we are not earning owing to lack of inbound travel.” Nestling in the outskirts of the city and away from the hustle and bustle of the metropolis, the resort is nearest to the airport as well as to the latest developments of New Town. It is best described as a biodiversity zone replete with four natural lakes, medicinal herbs, flora and fauna.

The wellness resort has drawn up some novel plans to entice guests during the monsoon. Roy Choudhury added, “Since our property is by and large an inland resort, the advent of monsoon brings down the occupancy level. Leisure travellers and corporate visitors reduce movement owing to inclement weather conditions. Social events are on hold. We are targeting those groups who thrive during the monsoon period like those in the field of photography and film shootings. We would like to create more bundle packages with stays that have more indoor activities and water sports. The focus will be on residential conclaves.” The resort has floated several interesting concepts to entice travellers. Roy Choudhury further added, “We have rolled out room check-ins for our visitors and in-car checks for guests availing of our transportation facilities from airports and railway stations. We have satellite or check-in personnel for MICE travellers and resident guests as part of the social distancing norm. Open-air restaurants with attached air-conditioned extensions have caught the imagination of visitors.”

Some of the other interesting concepts introduced in the resort include stargazing, angler’s package, paintball game and the revival of archery. Roy Choudhury quipped, “We are looking ahead to kick-off a nature therapy centre- Sanjeeva Wellness Centre sometime in August, this year. Our destination wedding offer- Shaadi by Vedic takes care of all wedding requirements of our guests.”

Changes have occurred in the dynamics of global business after the pandemic, with the travel and tourism industry being the worst hit. Deval Tibrewalla, Chief Executive Officer, Hotel Polo Floatel, informed, “Regular monitoring and sensible strategy could pave the way for complete recovery. The hospitality industry is gradually coming back on track with a plethora of new challenges. There has been a paradigm shift in the behaviour of travellers and expectations in the new normal world. We have to position our



▲ Deval Tibrewalla

group strategically and effectively to encounter new challenges and cash on business opportunities in the changing environment.”

Be it the monsoon or the scorching heat of summer, today’s new-age travellers are ready to pack their bags all round the year. Tibrewalla said, “After two years of staying in confinement and keeping with social distancing norms, tourists are frequently planning their tours. Around 37 per cent of travellers are going on trips to recharge their batteries, 18 per cent tourists are travelling to meet their family and friends and 10 per cent to experience a change of environment. This kind of revenge travelling is a positive step for the hospitality sector. Health and hygiene are of the topmost priority in the minds of travellers and tourist destinations will not be the same as in pre-COVID times. Travellers will give preference to domestic destinations that form safe weekend getaways. Undoubtedly, the presence of inbound tourists will add more value to the growth of the hospitality industry. Overall, we are looking forward to a gradual and stable rise in the revenue growth curve.”

The hospitality entity does not believe in formulating short-term strategies, but remains consistent to provide memorable experiences. Tibrewalla added, “The peak travel season in Meghalaya is monsoon but it is a 365-day destination. Being the largest hospitality player in the Northeast, we intend to provide a safe and unforgettable experience. We have devised a one-of-a-kind concept for our visitors, including ‘boat ride’ at Polo Floatel that offers a lifetime experience on the river Ganges. The boats are replete with bygone instruments like a gramophone and an English teapot et

al. Visitors can get to savour a number of delicacies on their boat ride. Besides, we have come up with our own delivery fleet for direct delivery in order to keep with the safety norms. There are a host of customised offers for our visitors like early check-ins, late check-outs and customised packages for each visitor to suit their requirements at our nine properties across the country. We have unveiled our new website- [www.hotelpolotowers.com](http://www.hotelpolotowers.com)”

Opened sometime in September last year, Radisson Bhopal has been quite successful in clocking a fair share of the business. According to Gaurav Shanker, General Manager, Radisson Bhopal, “Occupancy has shot up in the past few months owing to greater demand to host social events with the lifting of the pandemic restrictions. The corporate and online segments were productive in the second quarter



▲ Gaurav Shanker

of this calendar year. Inbound travel certainly has an impact on the revenue of the hotel since overseas travel depends on the Global Distribution System (GDS) for accommodation in the hotel, which has a significant role in contributing to a higher average daily rate. With the approach of monsoon, travel movements in the corporate world and social segments become limited, leading to a downward trend in business. The accent will be more on leisure and residential conclaves.” Shanker also informed that with the rise in demand of domestic tourism, the property has rolled out creative and immersive experiences catering to all segments of its guests. These include lounge access, upgrades and transfers, city tour and sightseeing.



The pandemic has made domestic tourism soar to great heights that has, by and large, benefitted the hospitality sector. Vinod Tripathy,



▲ Vinod Tripathy

General Manager, Sayaji Hotel Bhopal said, “Our hospitality group performed better in the first quarter of the current fiscal than at the beginning of this year. Social events make up our significant segment. With the relaxing of pandemic restrictions, there has

been a turnaround in the number of social events and banquet activities. More number of visitors are heading to our hotel. Our hotel rooms are running with around 95 per cent occupancy in this quarter. Leisure tourism is on an upward trend owing to summer breaks. The current global scenario is largely responsible for inbound travel. However, this is a positive sign that has been a game-changer, leading to higher footfall in domestic travel. With limited travel options to foreign shores, visitors are focusing on social events. COVID cases are at an all-time low and with no signs of an upsurge in the upcoming period. We are anticipating that brighter days are ahead for the hospitality sector.”

Monsoon has an impact on the occupancy level of the hotel since business slows down, affecting corporate travel. Tripathy further said, “The pandemic posed a tough challenge for the hospitality sector, making it quite robust. We have emerged touching new segments of the market that are more likely to focus on sports events and production houses for group checking. A number of corporate houses are working on new product launches, new training and development and this, in turn, opens up new avenues to stress

on MICE. During trying times, we have witnessed that visitors offering preference to our competitors have begun choosing our brand that we have delivered in the past. This has enabled us to reap rich benefits. The newer segments that we have explored earlier and kept open to explore new business verticals have emerged to be a better strategy. Our increasing number of visitors and high occupancy level has depicted the outcome of our innovative concepts.”

The hospitality group is going digital in the post-pandemic world. Tripathy added, “We have come up with online hotel booking in the current year. Visitors can book a table online or call up our hotel. All our restaurant tables are sanitised, and once the diners leave, the tables are re-sanitised. The baggage of our resident guests is also sanitised. We have spa service and city tours for our resident guests depending on the demand. We have customised packages suiting the needs of our guests. Our newest concept for wedding guests, Shubh Vivaah by Sayaji, has struck a chord, and the response is terrific. Our group takes care of all amenities of destination wedding guests.”

## Monteria Village gets you ‘The Kabila’ experience

With immersive art experiences like bamboo and khaat weaving and games like lagori, Monteria Village, the new day-outing destination offers visitors of all ages a holistic experience of being in a quintessential village

Team TTJ

A two-hour drive from Mumbai and Pune, Monteria Village in Khalapur, Raigad District, now offers a quick weekend vacation with ‘The Kabila’ experience. Inspired by the banjaras, the wanderers, ‘The Kabila’ is an attempt to recreate the wandering experience far

from the city’s hustle-bustle. It is a perfect balance between simplicity and modern life comfort that gives you the much-needed reason to take a break and recharge your energies.

Located within the 36 acres of Monteria Village, The Kabila offers 50 well-equipped tents planted in starstruck authentic rural imagery. The campsite is lined with 26 well-equipped toilets and bathrooms for the guests.

“The Kabila further amplifies our village experience offering to guests. It provides you a well-deserved break from the daily urban schedule and takes you down memory lane through a banjara living setup. From lazing around the periphery space around the tent to relaxing at the

group hammocks under tree covers, The Kabila is a perfect setting to soak into nature’s beauty and relive the moment of life. Go back to your roots with this refreshing getaway at Monteria Village,” said Rahi Vaghani, Managing Director, Monteria Resort.

Monteria Village offers several unique experiences and attractions for the campers. The property is spread across 36 acres and provides the guests a sneak peek into the village life through art, culture, and traditional activities. The guests can also experience farming and plough soil with the help of our expert staff who are fully equipped to take you through a holistic one-of-its-kind farming experience at Dhanvantri Garden in Monteria Village.





# MP is all set!

## Let the adventure begin this monsoon

Are you a passionate traveller who loves to explore adventurous activities? If yes, then let's get started and watch out for all the activities that you can enjoy during the monsoon season in Madhya Pradesh.



The heart of  
Incredible India



The wonderful earthy smell and the refreshing breeze after the first rain of the monsoon season is something that we all want to enjoy. The rainy season is the best time of the year to travel and Madhya Pradesh could be the best choice for anyone who wants to explore rural and tribal culture, natural beauty, historic architectural wonders, wildlife, water sports, soft adventure activities, wellness, and more.

Monsoon season is also a blessing for all travel bugs who love to explore nature along with enjoying different activities right from trekking to camping and from river rafting to exploring wildlife or participating in marathons and breathtaking multi-day cycling tours, there is something for everyone in this lovely season in the heart of incredible India.

### Explore Satpura 2022: 3-day cycling tour

A 3-day fully supported multi-day cycling tour through the Satpura Hill ranges in Central India. The tour will start in Bhopal and end in Pachmarhi. It will involve 3 days of riding through breathtaking hills and picturesque forests. Participants will be riding roughly 100 km daily. There will be a competitive segment every day which will be treated as individual time trial. Destinations for stay would be Tawa, Madhai and Pachmarhi.

**When** - August 27-29, 2022

For bookings, contact 9370772227, 9284652501

### Pachmarhi Monsoon Marathon 2022-23

Madhya Pradesh's most verdant charm, Pachmarhi, also known as 'Satpura ki Rani' (Queen of Satpuras) is all set to host Pachmarhi Monsoon Marathon. Nestled in the hills and filled with scenic beauty all around, Pachmarhi not only has spiritual spots and gushing waterfalls but also has a lot of adventure. Tourists will be able to witness mountains, trees, and grass all bright green and gorgeous during monsoon. The marathon will be conducted in four categories: 5 km run, 10 km run, 21 km run and a 42 km full marathon with a lot of challenges.

**When** - August 7, 2022

For bookings, visit [www.adventuresandyou.com](http://www.adventuresandyou.com)

### Wildlife safaris in the buffer zones

There is a delight for wildlife lovers in Madhya Pradesh during the monsoon season. When the core areas of the forests remain closed for tourism till October, tourists can enjoy wildlife safaris, and bird watching along with the thrill of spotting various species in the buffer zones of all tiger



reserves in Madhya Pradesh.

**When** - Monsoon season

For bookings, visit [forest.mponline.gov.in](http://forest.mponline.gov.in)

### River Rafting

Nestled across the Betwa River, with rugged mountains and dense forests, Orchha also known as the 'Ayodhya of Bundelkhand', is a beautiful town to experience the lush greenery of Vindhya hills. If you are planning to visit this beautiful destination during the monsoon, do not forget to experience river rafting on the gushing rapids of the Betwa River.

The flow of water will take you to the weirdest, wildest and wackiest area. The expedition will take you to the Orchha Wildlife Sanctuary, further downstream to the Kanchan Ghat. Monsoon is the best time to raft in Madhya Pradesh. Tourists will also be able to see enormous architectures and sculptures that are placed on the edges of the Betwa River. Kayaking is also another adventure.

**Best time to do river rafting:** June to August (Monsoon)

For bookings, contact 7680252618, 9893378581 (For both – rafting and kayaking)

### Camping

If you are an adventure lover and want to experience camping and trekking, Madhya Pradesh has it all for you. The state tourism board is also promoting tree and gypsy camping, so no need to worry about creepy crawlers that might intrude inside your tent at night. During rainy days you can witness the real beauty of nature in Satpura National Park and the flow of water near riverside camping. MP Tourism is also set to conduct forest trail trekking in the monsoon this year.

### Camping in Orchha

**For bookings, contact** 8527044855

**Gypsy and tree camping** in Pachmarhi and Madhai

**For bookings, contact** 9205515652/ 8989421281

**Email:** [thegypscampspachmarhi@gmail.com](mailto:thegypscampspachmarhi@gmail.com)





# Deltin redefining the stay and entertainment ecosphere



Deltin is India's largest gaming and hospitality brand apart from its iconic floating and land-based casinos. In India, it has two 5-star hotels in its portfolio: 'Deltin Suites'-Goa is an all-suites casino hotel, and 'The Deltin'-Daman, a 5-star resort, awaiting its casino license. Anil Malani, CEO, Deltin, shares more on the hotel properties that promise an ideal mix of entertainment and hospitality, reflecting luxury and innovative lifestyles that match some of the best in the world.

## Prashant Nayak

'Deltin' is predominantly a luxury gaming and entertainment company, and the hotels act as feeders to their gaming business. As per the law, live casinos can only operate in Goa and Sikkim in India, while Daman is on the anvil based on the Government approval.

Deltin Suites-Goa is a 5-star casino hotel mostly occupied by regular gaming patrons. It's located five minutes from Candolim beach and is known for its intimate and stylish ambience. The Deltin- Daman is a standalone resort/hotel until they receive the casino license; it's a very popular wedding and MICE destination. It is an unrivalled wedding venue, offering a range of distinctive and magnificent amenities for wedding ceremonies to accommodate as many as 2000 guests.

In the current context of hotel occupancies, Anil shares, "Deltin Suites-Goa mostly caters to our regular gaming clientele. We noticed a great demand this summer. The Deltin-Daman is nestled between Gujarat and Maharashtra, and is a preferred destination for weddings and events. Both the hotels have reported an occupancy rate that has been substantial during the period of April-June."

Tourism in India is facing a huge pent-up demand. Goa, one of the most preferred tourist destinations, saw a huge uptick in tourist numbers; as the COVID restrictions eased down across the nation, people were yearning to step away from their work routines



▲ Anil Malani

and put their feet up and have a good time.

"After the pandemic, there has been an explosion of pent-up demand, and domestic tourism is expected to increase further in the upcoming festive season. Mercifully, the new infections are not as fatal as their earlier variants. As the effects of the pandemic wanes and travel gains more momentum across the globe, the country should receive around 75 million international tourists annually by 2035. Currently, of the total tourist traffic in India, in volume terms, only around 7 per cent is

inbound travel, which is expected to increase to 16 per cent by 2035 (as per the prediction from various tourism bodies). As far as our hotels are concerned, international travellers are a very minimal part of our target market. Here, the demand is mostly domestic, and post the lockdowns, both the hotels are doing well," shares Anil.

Monsoon has its fan following for the Deltin properties. Both their hotel locations, Goa and Daman, fall into the category of weekend destinations that receive traffic throughout the year; monsoon also has a special charm in both these destinations, which attract a lot of visitors; especially their gaming clientele in Goa enjoys spending time at the casinos during the monsoon where they can have the thrill of live gaming, world-class entertainment, and lip-smacking food and beverages while it rains outside.

"Deltin offers an experience to remember which is a mix of thrill, excitement, entertainment, good food and beverages, and great service. Our patrons belong to various segments: some seek the thrill of gaming, some visit for the experience, and some just want to have a good time. We cater to everyone with our finest offerings and service. Not to forget our trademark safety and hygiene protocol #BestAssured, which is followed across all our properties. All our staff is vaccinated and we also abide by all government guidelines," assures Anil.





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# Eastbound Group staying relevant and logical till inbound tourism recovers

Eastbound Group's USP has been to cater to discerning travellers looking for 'Journey beyond usual', experiential and special interest travel. Their reach in this segment has been across continents, including Australian, European, and US markets. We at TTJ interacted with Manish Pratik, Director, Eastbound Group, to get some insights into the inbound travel in the country. He tells us that even while travel looks positive, there is still a long way to go before inbound travel fully recovers.

Prashant Nayak

Over the past two years, a lot has happened over the last two years in the Indian travel and hospitality industry with new destinations and products, including a fresh crop of boutique resorts, new concepts like 'staycations,' improved infrastructure – roads, flight connectivity, etc. This has allowed Eastbound to reboot its product profile for inbound travellers. With such varied quality options in various parts of the Indian sub-continent, they also educate their staff with training and FAM trips. The same is now being done for their international partners as well.

With scheduled international flight operations gradually gaining momentum, Manish feels that there are some positive signs at this stage. However, there is still a long way to go before inbound returns to its good old days of glory. "It's primarily because the disruption has been so severe that it has affected the whole supply chain. We still do not have sufficient flight connectivity, airfares are very high and visa processing is severely backlogged for many countries. FTOs are busy with international summer destinations, which are an easier sell for them than India. They too have constraints on staff, as many of their India experts have left the industry. Having said so, tourism has always seen a V-shaped recovery that we are already witnessing in Indian domestic leisure and MICE markets. We remain hopeful for similar traction in inbound as well," informs Manish.

While outbound tourism is gaining traction and many countries are looking at faster visa application processes, there seem to be challenges in the faster recovery of inbound tourism in India. On this, Manish says, "If I had to pick one major challenge, it would have to be the lack of initiative at the central level. Historically, the voice of the Indian tourism industry has never been a loud one with a



▲ Manish Pratik

negligible say in policy matters. It has never been a priority sector for the Governments across party lines due to reasons better known to them. Smaller countries whose priority is inbound tourism are making more efforts to remove hindrances. They are also making better marketing efforts in promoting their countries. DMCs such as us, who have been the ambassadors of Indian tourism, have our own limitations with depleted resources as a result of the business is at a standstill for the last two and a half years."

At Eastbound, their optimistic estimation is that by 2023-24, the industry may see a full recovery; however, one cannot predict, as it remains subject to many pre-conditions. Presently, the world has, by and large, accepted the COVID-19 pandemic as a part of life and is not going to be wiped away so soon. "We must learn to live with it and life must go on. With uncertainties of life, people want to travel sooner than later and tick through their bucket lists. So, unless there is another severe wave, I don't think

the pandemic will be a deterrent to travel. Instead, the revival of inbound would most likely depend on logistical reasons such as seasonality, flights, visas, etc.," assures Manish.

On their latest offerings in experiential travel to attract international travellers to India, apart from creating innovative itineraries based on experiential travel in lesser-known parts of the country like Northeast, Central India, Sikkim, or Orissa, where infrastructure has taken large strides over the last few years. Eastbound has been focused on creating innovations through activity-based programs like cycling tours, hiking, wilderness trails, and day-to-day interest-based experiences in several parts of the country.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping the staff motivated has been a major challenge for the industry, apart from convincing international partners to start selling India again. At Eastbound, they spend a lot of time training the sales force of their foreign partners. They have also spent a lot of their energies on technological advancements, which will likely be a game-changer for inbound tourism.

Regarding technological advancement, Manish mentions, "The world is more fast-paced now and the next generation of travellers and operators will prefer better technically equipped DMCs. Due to access to high-speed internet, OTAs and the desperation of the industry to get back into business, margins will definitely come down and the answer to all this is technology, now. We are working on tech innovations to become faster-paced and have wider offerings for our partners at better pricing along with a better support system for their operations. Travel is designed to bring the world closer and so our eyes are set not on regional dominance but on becoming a global player."



# AVIAREPS betting on the India opportunity

Headquartered out of Munich, with 27 years under its belt, a network of 64 owned offices worldwide supported by a team of 500 employees who manage relationships with 2,50,000 industry contacts and average an annual turnover of one Billion US\$, AVIAREPS' business model goes beyond promotion, as they seek to influence where people go, how they get there, and what they do when they're there. TTJ spoke with Robert Obolhogiani, Executive Vice President, CIS & South Asia, and member international board of AVIAREPS on his recent visit to India to know more about his perceptions of how the industry is headed and the role they seek to play.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

With a global group of local sales, marketing, and communications experts and a structure in place to launch targeted local initiatives, as well as multi-market campaigns that benefit from the powerful synergies across the globe, AVIAREPS strives to have its finger on the pulse of the industry to effortlessly adapt its clients' message to the subtle nuances of the respective markets, cultures, and demands.

India is a multi-dimensional, multi-cultural fast-growing market of well-informed, affording, and curious travellers who constantly need to travel and discover and experience something new. Besides being an enigma of cultures, religions, languages, cuisine, and topography itself, India lures the world to itself to experience its mysteries and hidden wonders. This makes India a focus market for AVIAREPS.

Robert explains on his India visit, "Currently, we promote a lot of international travel products with an outbound focus, however, one of my key agendas for this visit to India is to look at enhancing and promoting inbound business into the country and I will be engaging with the Indian government agencies and industry stakeholders to look at working together to enhance international arrivals into India in this post-pandemic era. This shift to work on the inbound aspect will be a first for AVIAREPS."

Talking about the work culture and dynamics at play at AVIAREPS, Robert elaborates, "For someone who would get restless every three to four years working for any company



▲ Robert Obolhogiani

in my earlier days, I have now been with AVIAREPS for over 23 years, and I am also a part of its International Board."

Robert, The Finnish Gold Medalist - 2017 in-flight aerobatics, in his spare time takes part in various ongoing competitions in his Extra 330LX aircraft and the rush felt by him in the skies is the way he feels working at AVIAREPS. Every day is new, with new challenges, new goal posts, and never a dull moment, and the same ethos percolates to each team member in the organisation.

Talking about global travel trends, Robert shares, "Global travel distribution, buying and selling patterns have seen changes and shifts over the last two decades which vary from country to country, continent to continent. Online market share has been on the rise, but so has the market size of travel products

and services. Online players continue to grow and evolve and so are the traditional travel agents evolving. Their role as travel advisers and consultants is now more valued than before. Online products offer instant gratification but there is no substitute for authenticated travel advice of a specialist travel consultant who provides you with the essence of the travel product something more akin to the feeling you experience by really touching and feeling the fabric or experiencing how the shoe really fits you."

Russia and Ukraine are big markets for AVIAREPS, and the current hostilities have impacted the business significantly. The uncertainties associated with this military conflict will take some time to stabilise, and all hope the armed conflict will end soon.

For India, AVIAREPS' focus remains to enhance its client portfolio. For them, aviation is a major part of their global product mix, and they want to increase the size of this vertical for their India business. Besides, they have strong plans to be an integral player in the India inbound business. They will meet with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India officials to develop a customised plan and roadmap to enhance inbound tourism.

Reminiscing about the milestone moments Robert has experienced with AVIAREPS, he mentions, "There have been many down the years but the one that really stands out was when I was awarded the General Manager of the Year Award and this was in the very first year this award was instituted."



# *Experience the aesthetic goodness at* **InterContinental Phuket Resort**



Bjorn Courage joined InterContinental Phuket Resort in 2018 as the pre-opening General Manager and opened the resort in October 2019. He sees great potential in this Thai architectural-inspired luxury resort and the destination, Kamala Beach. With his vast experience working with multiple luxury international brands across countries, he has brought considerable hospitality expertise at the resort. He is still keen to enhance the outlook of the flagship property in Phuket. Bjorn foresees the resort to rise as the preferred luxury destination within Phuket, which delivers an unparalleled holiday experience to all the guests.

## Prashant Nayak

In 2021, Bjorn was elected President of Phuket Hotel Association, a non-profit organisation with 72 member properties on the island. During this initial recovery period in Thailand, he has been proud to serve their member hotels, community, and destination to the best of his ability. He further strives and continues to evolve the great work done by the association, working groups, and member hotels to date, especially regarding their association's four key pillars: Destination Marketing, Environment & Sustainability, Education, and Government Liaison.

Phuket is among the world's finest beach destinations, with fine white sands, nodding palm trees, glittering seas, and lively towns. Phuket is blessed with more than 30 amazing beaches to choose from. Patong Beach, Kata, Karon, and Kamala, where they are located, have always been the most popular, but the north of the island reveals some hidden gems for travellers searching for a private atmosphere. It has something for a wide array of tastes and budgets, with several activities and sightseeing options, an eclectic choice of dining, and plenty of partying options.

At the InterContinental Phuket Resort, their occupancy has only seen an upward curve since the beginning of this year, and they have a good mix of both domestic and international travellers. As Thailand and



▲ Bjorn Courage

many more countries ease restrictions, they are witnessing a healthy surge in international travellers.

The InterContinental Phuket Resort is unique in many ways, particularly in the design concept. They have created on a vacant land a visual and architectural representation of 'Thai-ness.' The hotel became a platform to re-tell the 'Traibhumikatha,' the oldest Thai book, which sets out an explanation of three

planes of existence as per Thai mythology - Underwater world, Human World, and The Heaven. Renowned Thai artists have re-interpreted the Traibhumikatha (Thai mythological story) through painting and sculpture from many perspectives, and they are displayed throughout the resort.

Bjorn shares, "We offer 221 exquisitely appointed rooms, suites, and villas over an expansive land extending from the beachfront to the hills of Kamala, with amazing views of the Andaman Sea, and surrounded by tropical mountains. All guest rooms offer breathtaking views of the ocean, the lagoon or the surrounding mountains and the very best in luxurious amenities. We have many things to offer to the visitors. Five restaurants, six crystal clear pool options, spa treatments, tennis courts, Planet Trekkers kids club, to customised excursions for families/couples/ solo travellers."

The resort's restaurants include Jaras, a modern Thai cuisine restaurant, perfectly combining traditional service and stunning views of the Kamala beach for an unforgettable experience. The Pine Beach Bar is a vibrant, sophisticated, and chic beach bar and lounge, while the Sunset Beach Bar is well known for its exquisite pizzas, Sunday brunch, and specially crafted cocktails. The Devas' Lounge is a luxurious and impressive





Pinto Restaurant

venue with an authentic high tea experience, and Tengoku offers veritable Japanese cuisine inspired by the ancient techniques and presentation of Osaka's cooking masters and brought to you with a contemporary and fun twist. The marketplace-inspired dining venue, Pinto Restaurant, offers lavish buffet breakfasts to freshly prepared lunches and dinners, thus offering exquisite dining experiences throughout the day.

Guests who wish to stay longer than five nights have a Stay Longer and Save or Resort Long Stay offer, which provides up to 20 per cent discount and value ads like breakfast. For MICE and weddings, they have tailor-made solutions which are carefully crafted basis the individual needs of the client.

The pandemic has changed the way the world now makes purchases and showcases its products and presence. The focus has shifted lock, stock, and barrel to the digital world. Bjorn explains, "From the dream phase to advertising to purchase, the customers now prefer everything on their fingertips and fast. Hence, our marketing strategy is steered in that direction as well. In addition, the age-old way of doing marketing, hearing from our guests, is still relevant and valid to retain our loyal guests and also to bring in new businesses. The channel of communication has changed to digital but the philosophy is the same."

Speaking about the India market, Bjorn said, "As the India market is coming up as a top feeder market to Phuket, the InterContinental Phuket Resort has been working to grow

more awareness of the brand and the resort in the Indian market through key opinion leaders, business partners, partnerships, and celebrities."

InterContinental Phuket Resort's goal is to help shape the future of responsible travel with those who stay, work, and partner with them. They support their people and make a positive difference to local communities while preserving the planet's beauty and diversity, not just today but long into the future.

For this purpose, the resort is involved in many projects that have helped and continue to improve the community, such as partnering with 'Oceans For All Phuket Foundation' and 'Head Start International School' for a monthly contribution to the 'License to Clean 001' project, the world's first eco-friendly coastal cleaner catamaran invented from 100 per cent of recycled plastics.

The catamaran will collect rubbish daily at Kamala Beach's waterfront before reaching the shore. They have also partnered with 'Scholars of Sustenance Thailand (SOS)' for food donations to villagers by preparing 500 meal boxes to distribute to their Kamala village community on World Food Day. They aim to relieve the food hunger and have zero hunger in their community. They also support the local community by donating life bags for



Premium Ocean View Room



Bedroom Club IC Pool Villa

people who need them, educating the local kids on sustainability by giving recycling turtle bins to the local school, and organising regular beach clean-ups.

When asked about some noticeable and upcoming trends that he has witnessed in the Thai hospitality sector, Bjorn says, "In over two years with COVID-19 restrictions, I have seen many upcoming trends like the rise in sustainable travellers. Travellers are now conscious of sustainable tourism. They prefer to stay in a resort/hotel where they can participate in various activities like giving for good, community service, beach cleaning, associating themselves with green travel, etc. Travellers today are more concerned about hygiene, safety, and local experience. The guests tend to look for a resort/ hotel that can offer hygiene and safety together with a variety of entertainment activities. Wellness is another trend that is making waves. Holistic wellness focusing on mind, body, and soul is something customers are looking for to get away from their daily stress."





# Love permeates the air at OBLU SELECT Lobigili A perfect romantic getaway

In the Maldivian language of Dhivehi, ‘Lobi’ means love, and ‘Gili’ means island. Lobigili is, in essence, the island of love. Blessed with verdant foliage, OBLU SELECT Lobigili, a five-star adults-only resort, features 68 contemporary beach and water villas – all assuring gorgeous views of the incandescent turquoise-blue lagoon. The ‘Island of Love’ is open now to dazzle guests with vibrant tropical design, pristine beaches, and blissful relaxation. Once-in-a-lifetime experiences await you at the newly opened Lobigili island.

**C**LOURS OF OBLU, an Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts brand, offers vibrant destinations that bring the magical beauty and big-hearted hospitality of the Indian Ocean alive. The COLOURS OF OBLU portfolio include—OBLU SELECT Lobigili, OBLU SELECT Sangeli, OBLU NATURE Helengeli, and OBLU XPERIENCE Ailafushi.



SunNest Beach Villa



SunNest Water Villa

Conveniently located in Malé Atoll, OBLU SELECT Lobigili is just a 15-minutes speedboat ride from Velana International Airport. With the resort’s exclusive Lobi Plan™, guests can enjoy a blissfully carefree stay. This generous plan includes specialty fine dining, unlimited beverages, spa services, Indian Ocean excursions, a selection of non-motorised water sports, and a fully stocked minibar replenished daily.

With the sun, sea, and ocean views, it’s the perfect spot for couples to relax and soak in the endless ocean views! They are sure to ignite a romance with sparkling champagne and delicious bites in a cosy setting. They can also choose to stroll over to neighbouring Ailafushi island and mix it up with a different world of enchanting sights, sounds and culture. It’s time to escape to the island of love in the Maldives and revel in a gorgeous palette of experiences.



# The OBLU SELECT Lobigili Island Chiefs and Island Hostess Reflecting the he(art) of Maldivian hospitality

Maldivians are very friendly and highly spiritual and dedicated. They have great respect for each other and the guests. They are very warm and welcoming, and the culture of the Maldivian people reflects a blend of tradition and modernity.

In Maldivian culture, each island has a leader who is the Island Chief. The Chief looks after the island and cares for its resources. An Island Chief can be a great leader, but all the leaders cannot be an Island Chief. As a great leader, the Chief must strongly believe in process-driven results, possess a clear vision, be courageous, and have integrity, honesty, humility, and focus. And of course, he should be a strategic planner and believes in teamwork. Further, each island also has a women's committee, which plays an important

role in extending hospitality to important visitors from the government and foreign delegates. They organise warm welcomes, dining experiences, accommodation plans, and farewell ceremonies.

Similarly, Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts have the same Island Chief or Island Hostess concept at their properties. These people are first in line to provide guests a tranquil, unforgettable, and valuable experiences that will last for a lifetime. Its motto is to provide prompt, efficient, and responsive service to all resort guests to achieve a high level of guest satisfaction. Being the first in line to contact the guests, the Island Chief or Hostess creates a memorable first impression and projects a favorable image of the resort at all times. The philosophy of

this concept is to exceed guests' holiday expectations and have a relaxing, enjoyable, memorable holiday, no matter who they are or where they come from.

The Island Hostess is at the heart of this amazing concept. She looks after the guests during their entire stay from arrival to departure. She is available for the guests whenever they need her, and she curates' services for them as per their liking. An Island Hostess has the very delicate and vital task of providing a courteous, professional, efficient, and flexible service consistent with OBLU SELECT Lobigili Standards Policies and Procedures to maximise guest satisfaction.

Get to know the Island Chiefs and Island Hostesses of OBLU SELECT Lobigili.

## 'Everything about OBLU SELECT Lobigili is love'

### Island Chief Nasrulla Mohamed



Nasrulla's growing up years in the Maldives differed from the ones kids experience today. Then, they were surrounded by a cohesive community where everyone was like family, with strong cultural influences. He was a professional butler up until 2015, rising the ranks from Junior Butler to Executive Head Butler. His journey with Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts began in 2015 when he joined the pre-opening team as an Assistant F&B Manager at OBLU NATURE Helengeli. Since then, he has worked at OBLU SELECT Sangeli, OZEN LIFE MAADHOO, and now in this amazing Island of Love – OBLU SELECT Lobigili. He is always keen to share a brief history of the Maldives with his guests.

**"As an Island Chief, I am here for the comfort of my guests. I think of it as a simple idea: the island is my own home. The guests are staying in my home so, I ensure they are looked after well. At the same time, it is my responsibility to look after my team as they make it possible for our guests to have a memorable time."**

## 'What makes Lobigili so magical is the island itself'

### Island Chief Sribanta Kumar

After earning a degree in hospitality management in 2008 and with hotel stints in Bengaluru and Dubai, Sribanta's next chapter of his career brought him to the Maldives in 2014. He came to the island nation to take up a new challenge in a different environment, and it has been his home since. He joined OZEN LIFE MAADHOO in 2016 as a Head Butler and was involved in the hotel's pre-opening phase. Later in 2017, he was appointed as Guests Service Manager. When OBLU SELECT Sangeli opened in 2018, he joined as Assistant Front Office Manager. In 2020 took over as Front Office Manager in OZEN LIFE MAADHOO as a lifestyle luxury resort. Eighteen months later, he was appointed as the Island Chief for OBLU SELECT Lobigili, which has continued until now. For Sribanta, the island hostess concept and the majority of an all-female team – from hostesses, housekeeping, F&B attendants, waitresses, and even island security which is not common in the Maldives, is new and unique.



**"I believe that every island has its own soul, and the guests feel this connection the minute they step foot on the property. And this is not just my perspective, but something that I hear repeatedly from our guests. The combination of a beautiful pristine island with a team that breathes life into it makes up the essence of Atmosphere Hotel and Resorts."**

## 'The job is not your work, what you do with your heart and soul is the work'

### Island Hostess Hawaa Sara



Hawaa Sara hails from a small island called K. Huraa near the capital, Malé. For her, it was amazing to grow up on an island amidst nature. The sea, a life-giving force, was a big part of her childhood. She gained inspiration from her father, who has worked in the hospitality industry and has been running his guesthouse and restaurant since 2005. She moved to Sri Lanka to pursue her studies in 2007 and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Back in the Maldives and after working with Pearl Sands Maldives and with an international brand, she looked for further professional challenges, which led her to OBLU XPERIENCE Ailafushi and OBLU SELECT Lobigili, which she joined in January 2022. Here she loves the concept of two Island Hostesses taking care of the guests throughout their stay, which she finds unique.

**"As an Island Hostess, I feel that women are capable of achieving anything that they put their minds to. It's all about interest and passion! I work with a diverse team with unity and great leadership."**



# Live exquisite at The St. Regis Mumbai

The St Regis Mumbai is the city's most premium address, renowned for its tradition of innovation and commitment to impeccable service. A proud winner of 80 awards, The St. Regis Mumbai is perfectly situated at 'The Best Address' in the city. The hotel, launched in 2015, is the first St. Regis in South-East Asia. Following in the tradition of the St. Regis brand's legendary New York hotel, The St. Regis Mumbai creates a timeless legacy of impeccable living.

## Team TTJ

At The St Regis Mumbai, residential elegance transcends in the 395 guest rooms and suites where guests can enjoy captivating views, enveloped in the comfort of their exquisite accommodation. The elegant rooms, equipped with state-of-art technology, signature amenities, and opulent decor, are a sanctuary of luxuriant comforts.

Complementing the bespoke tradition are the award-winning dining venues, a collection of exquisite art and the signature St. Regis Butler Service, making the country's tallest hotel truly beyond expectation.

Whatever entices your palette is at The St. Regis Mumbai. The hotel features an array of epicurean venues to suit your mood.

selection of wellness with the Iridium Spa and state-of-the-art Athletic Club or enjoy a dip in our outdoor swimming pool and unwind in one of our cabanas.

Personalised service, beautiful floral arrangements, captivating venues and a unique ballroom with exclusive décor make for memorable celebratory occasions.

The culinary team craft and curate experiential menus with attention to detail, laying out a gastronomical feast

with appetizers of freshly tossed salads and tempting Mezzes that are crafted with a blend of contemporary and traditional



Bar at Sette Mara



Lounge at Sette Mara

aligned with the theme of the occasion. Every need is flawlessly met, allowing guests to relax and luxuriate in elegant surroundings.

## The Sette Mara: A Middle Eastern Voyage

The Sette

recipes. The place comes alive under the magnificent navigational constellation compass suspended above the dining area.

The energetic bar and lounge features a collection of handcrafted artisanal cocktails and Negronis, freshly concocted by interactive and spirited bartenders. Reminiscent of the exciting Middle Eastern ports with burnished rusts, burgundies and cinnamon tones reflective of the precious cargo of spices, wines and perfume. The intricate mural behind the long bar and the iconic motifs harken on the stories of dancing against flickering candlelight and unbelievable adventure in exotic locales.

Embark on culinary indulgences as the venues provide authentic cuisine, innovative experiences and exemplary service against breath-taking bayside views.

The St. Regis Mumbai, where luxury is a way of life, embodies the signature brand rituals and programs setting a new bar for modern elegance. The delectable Afternoon Tea Ritual, the famed Champagne Sabering, The Violet Hour and the renowned St. Regis Butler service are among some of the unique features of the St. Regis living.

Discreet and discerning, their amenities create an atmosphere of exquisite, immersive experiences. Indulge in a diverse

Mara is the perfect place to unwind, relax, and enjoy the sumptuous fare. Helmed by Chef Paul, the culinary director, the menu is curated with deep nuances of aromatic spices and wholesome ingredients from The Levant. The menu with 'The Cold Kitchen' and 'The Hot Kitchen', opens



Dining at Sette Mara



# Witness the wonders of the marine world

Home to some of the best beaches in the world, the Maldives offers an assortment of unrivalled luxury, white sandy beaches, and a supreme underwater world, making it the perfect choice for a trip of a lifetime. Both The Residence Maldives at Dhigurah and The Residence Maldives at Falhumaafushi define many people and the idea of balmy perfection: blissful blue lagoons, coral reefs, and seclusion, offering privacy like no other.

Surrounded by a beautiful, untouched reef and set on one of the deepest and untouched atolls, with more than 250 species of coral and 1,200 species of marine life, both Falhumaafushi and Dhigurah are must-visit resorts for keen snorkellers and divers. The waters are home to hard and soft corals, sponges, sea fans, triggerfish, parrot fish, fusiliers, tunas,

turtles, and barracudas. There is also an array of sharks including grey reef sharks, white and black tip reef sharks, nurse sharks, leopard sharks, eagle rays, and sting rays.

Offering some of the best and most remote diving spots in the world, the resorts have their own PADI 5-Star Dive Centre, and are surrounded by exceptional dive sites. With some of the best diving and snorkelling in the world, the clear waters of Maldives are a magnet for anyone with an interest in marine life. The Residence Maldives offers a variety of sea-borne experiences, suited to those who love life inside and out the water. From sunset dolphin cruises and scuba diving experiences to big game fishing and local island excursions, the beautiful island offers it all.

The team can also accommodate a number of different diving levels and provide all the tools for those who want to secure an official

qualification. From Discover Scuba Diving to Dive Master, the team offers a variety of specialties. What's more, it is suitable to dive all year around at The Residence Maldives with the water temperatures around 28-30°C. There is also the option to explore



Dive Centre



Dolphin Cruise on Dhoni

the underwater beauty in the house reef, or journey by dhoni, a traditional Maldivian boat, to several amazing dive sites within a one-hour radius.



Swimming Pool - Overlooking the Ocean - The Residence by Cenizaro Maldives Dhigurah



The Residence by Cenizaro Maldives





# Living a dream

## The high sea life on the Genting Dream

Not to be classified as a cruising novice, I have to admit, that I had never been on a Mega Cruise ship before. Cruising has always fascinated me, so when I was offered the chance to spend two nights on-board the “Genting Dream” on its inaugural voyage by Resorts World Cruises, I was exhilarated. I had heard of this incredible ship but now was my opportunity to get a feel of the ship and write about it. I’d love to say that my cruise experience on-board the Genting Dream was mind-blowing. I can go on raving about the ship, the amenities, and the awesome time I had on the voyage from Singapore to the high seas and back.

**Prashant Nayak**

**W**ith the Genting Dream, Resorts World Cruises made its international debut as a new luxury and dynamic lifestyle cruise brand from Asia. This is the first ship of a planned fleet under “Resorts Cruising At Sea,” and marks the beginning of a new milestone in cruising history.

The Fly-Cruise idea has captured my heart, and I love Singapore. For an avid traveller, this is an opportunity to experience the finest of the air, sea, and

land. For those who are busy, it’s a great way to enjoy a short sail and get back home or to work.

Around 15 people were travelling in our group from across India, mostly from the media and some from the travel fraternity. We took a late-night flight out of Mumbai and arrived in Singapore early the next morning. We had already completed the procedural requirements to enter Singapore like e-visa, airline tickets, a negative ART result, SG arrival cards, TraceTogether app, etc., so the entry was simple and smooth. We can only thank our friends at Resorts World Cruises India office, Singapore Tourism Board, India office, and Guideline Travels for all their help and constantly striving to ensure a smooth passage.

Singapore was humid, but the city is always a visual delight. One must complete the required online check-in at Marina Bay Cruise Center, which closes 24 hours before to sailing, and then pick up their cruise key card on the day of sailing. Once you arrive at your assigned check-in time, the staff will assist

and direct you through the process from checking your passport and vaccination records to providing your key card. Then it’s immigration time again, and you are ready to board the ship once you are cleared!



Ship leaving Marina Bay Cruise Center



Inaugural Ceremony







Palace Pool Sun Deck



Tributes - Salsa Night Party

We were allotted the balcony staterooms, which made for a perfect cruising experience for me. I cannot visualise sailing without the ocean on my side. Over 70 per cent of the staterooms on the Genting Dream feature private balconies. My balcony stateroom had a comfortable bed. There was a sofa and a writing desk. The bathroom was beyond my expectations, with a big sink and a bathtub. The cabin provided comfort after a long flight, however, I was short on time because we had to be at the inaugural event. After freshening up, I headed to the event venue and then thought of exploring the rest of the ship.

The theme of the inaugural event was Fiesta Latina, and everyone at the inaugural ceremony, including members of the foreign media and the travel industry, was spellbound by the various spectacular opening performances and the exquisite dishes served at the gala dinner, besides the charged environment and merrymaking.

Following the inaugural speeches, it was time for networking and entertainment, and it was nice to know the stakeholders behind the new venture. Michael Goh, President of Resorts World Cruises, was the star of the event and was seen interacting with a lot of people for the next two days. Since India was one of the major source markets for the Fly-Cruise segment prior to the pandemic, Naresh Rawal, Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Resorts World Cruises, who was also on board, is confident that Indian passengers will enjoy an exciting cruise vacation aboard the Genting Dream, filled

with diverse international offerings.

Kishan Biyani, Managing Director, Ark Travel Group, and Pradeep Saboo, Chairman and Managing Director, Guideline Travels, the top cruise specialists from the India market, were also on-board and extremely buoyant about the new opportunity offered by Resorts World Cruises. Renjie Wong, Area Director, India and South East Asia, Singapore Tourism Board, shared some great insights about Singapore city. Singapore Tourism Board had showcased a few new attractions such as the Museum of Ice Cream and SkyHelix Sentosa earlier in the day and was very keen to show us a few more at Changi Airport on our way home.

As the fun and festivities happened, on the night of July 15, the Genting Dream silently un-docked and set sail on a two-night cruise to nowhere, which actually means just sailing on the high seas. We only had a general sense of where we were traveling—between Malaysia and Indonesia.

We went to a press briefing the following morning, and after a round of questions and answers during which we learned more about Resorts World Cruises' plans, we were at ease to explore the ship. Every day, a newsletter with various show and



Zodiac Theatre - Yin Yang

programme schedules is provided in your cabin so that you can plan your itinerary for the day.

Guests can indulge in a feast for their senses with Resorts World Cruises' all-new reimagined onboard entertainment concept featuring multicultural professional performances at different venues with dedicated themes. For the two days that we were on-board, the entertainment organisers created an immersive experience for guests so they could interact with the performers even, off stage. There were also the Hollywood meets Bollywood nights, and the DJ rocked the boat for two nights. Many entertainers and dancers were seen prompting and teaching people a step or two while dancing to their heart's fill.

The Genting Dream boasts of more than 35 restaurants and bars on board and a wide range of onboard activities and amenities. There's no shortage of drink locations onboard the Genting Dream. Deck 8 is home to the Tributes, Whisky House, Bubbles Champagne Bar, Mixt Cocktail Bar, and Wine Vault. The Tributes has indoor and outdoor seating coupled with entertaining performances. The Lido, a buffet restaurant at Deck 16, is a complimentary dining outlet that was my favourite, with amazing ocean views. The Lido had many diners during meal times as it serves halal, vegetarian, and Jain vegetarian



Foam Party at Zouk beach club



Shanghai Bund Music Show at Bar 360





Lido Restaurant



Halal kitchen



Indian media and trade

food. The second complimentary dining outlet is the Dream Dining Room, which is divided into two floors, the upper and the lower. Besides these restaurants, on payment, you can grab some meals at Blue Lagoon, Gelateria, and other restaurants.

There is also a super fun activity called the foam party at sea at the Zouk Club. Equipped with a giant foam spraying machine, and water guns, all guests had a blast blowing foam at each other. There are many indoor and outdoor activities on the ship that guests can indulge in, like the painting workshops, arcade, bowling, karaoke, casino, and workout classes.

The main pool deck on Deck 16 is the centre of attraction for outdoor fun on the ship. If one needs to get wet, you must head for the water park, where slides are accessible from Deck 18. There are six water slides, including a bowl and a speed slide. On Deck 18, you will also find the ropes course. But if you don't want to get wet, try the zipline, rock-climbing wall, high obstacle course, ping-pong, a game of giant chess, table tennis, a climbing wall, and a basketball court. The zipline gives some incredible views from the top of the ship. There are also pools and hot tubs for guests to enjoy! There is a mini-golf course as well.

Another unique "Ship-within-a-Ship" concept on-board is "The Palace", with special floors on-board the ship that feature

larger accommodations, European-style butler service, and exclusive facilities. The Palace, showcases uber-luxury for affluent cruise clientele. The Palace guests have access to an exclusive private pool and dining space.

One highlight not to be missed during the evenings is the Zodiac Theatre. The Yin Yang performance is truly amazing. Blending eastern and western entertainment, the performances feature a superb display of balancing acts and contemporary dances. The audience was deeply impressed by the stunningly dressed Tong Shaohan, with her unique double vocal performance in male and female voices. Later, all were startled to find out that this beautiful lady with a delightful high-pitched voice was actually a man.

Genting Dream also has the world's first internationally Halal-certified kitchen, though it is not the first cruise ship to serve halal food. This kitchen is per the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) and SMIIC (The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries) standards. The cruise also holds a vegetarian certification by Global Vegetarian Certification Services. A few of us visited the Halal kitchen to understand how the food is prepared and delivered and how utensils are washed, so there is no contamination! To maintain the Halal standards,

the ship even has a dedicated Halal lift for transporting food between floors in the kitchen.

The 150,000-ton Genting Dream can carry 3400 guests and 2000 crew members, giving it better-than-average guest-space and crew-to-guest ratios. For a start, the Genting Dream will offer short high sea sailings to mark the return of international cruising in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Starting July 1, 2022, Resorts World Cruises will be the first cruise line to sail from Singapore to Indonesia, offering the 2-Night Bintan and Batam Islands Weekend Getaway

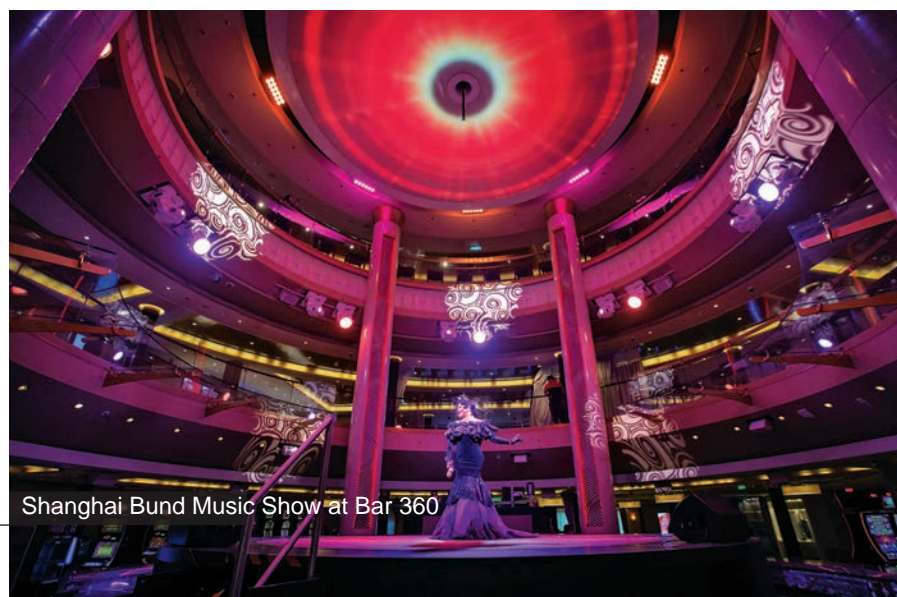
Cruise. Subsequently, the Genting Dream will sail from Singapore to Malaysia with 2 and 3-Night cruises to Kuala Lumpur, Malacca (via Port Dickson), and Penang.

Beginning October 2022, Resorts World Cruises will add a series of new itineraries with more destinations to Malaysia (Langkawi), Indonesia (North Bali, Surabaya), and Thailand (Phuket, Krabi).

So, get ready for an awe-inspiring and memorable journey onboard this fun-filled cruise ship! With brand new scintillating performances, fun-filled indoor and outdoor activities, water games, delectable cuisine, unlimited ocean views, and impeccable service, you're sure to fall in love with the Genting Dream, just as we all did. So, start dreaming!



Zodiac Theatre Yin Yang



Shanghai Bund Music Show at Bar 360





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# From **White Coral Sands** to the **City of Angels**

What does it take for a sojourn to be a memorable one? Is it the luxurious stays, or the exuberant getaways, is it the sumptuous cuisine or the exceptional people we meet, or is it the religious respite or perhaps the breath-taking sights? One would gladly say, it's the medley of all that makes for a memorable retreat and that's when I picture 'Phuket' and 'Bangkok' in my mind for they are truly a package of all. While the former is considered one of the finest beach destinations on the planet, famous for its beautiful palm-fringed beaches, the latter is the larger-than-life capital city of Thailand, popular for its magnificent Buddhist temples, world-class shopping hubs, skyscrapers, and rooftop bars. From a little-known idyllic town, Thailand's lush and mountainous island, Phuket has become a modern and bustling hub for tourists, and Bangkok with its blend of traditional and modernity continues to lure us all. So, when the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi hosted a FAM trip to Phuket and Bangkok, I was elated and why, let me walk you through my journey!

**Sonika Bohra**

It was when I exchanged smiles with my fellow journalists at the Delhi IGI airport that I realised the excitement was mutual and it's only going to snowball from there on. From Delhi, we flew to Bangkok. Up in the sky, the journey was all about getting to know my fellow writers, who were thankfully intrepid travellers like me, believing that some of the most stunning and breath-taking views of this planet can be seen from planes, so we all 'clicked' instantly. In the back of our minds, however, each of us secretly wondered in curiosity about what Phuket and Bangkok had to offer?

On landing in Bangkok, the Suvarnabhumi Airport was huge and expressive. The aura, cheerful noise, and happy faces made the layover bearable and joyful. In no time, we geared up to take our next flight to Phuket!

Upon reaching Phuket, we first checked in and took complete comfort in the pool view room of the elegant Phuket Marriott Resort and Spa. It was located at the mellow Nai Yang Beach. Post settling in, I almost succumbed to a short nap and

the effect of the calming breeze from the white sandy beach was to blame.

A few relaxing hours later, we were just in time for lunch at the exquisite Big



Fish restaurant in Phuket Marriott Resort and Spa. The freshest seafood and traditional Thai dishes here would make you go slow with every bite so you can savor the taste of each to the fullest. I personally went ahead with Fresh Prawn Spring Rolls, Pumpkin Soup, Spaghetti Chicken Bolognese, Pizza Nai Yang Seafood accompanied with Classic Chicken Caesar Salad, and needless to say, it was divine! Freshly caught seafood is not hard to come by in Phuket: from an open-air beachfront restaurant to a local eatery hidden in plain sight, the options are ample to tantalise your taste buds. I was glad to have experienced the best at Big Fish restaurant.

Even when coming to Phuket was a whole new relaxing feeling on its own, an extra dose of rejuvenation was something that acted as serendipity as we indulged in a soothing spa experience at the Oasis Spa. And just like they say, it truly felt like restoration of mind, body, and soul. The skilled massage therapists administered unique massage treatments to meet my needs. At that time, I felt like they knew me as a person, for they could hear my body clearer than I could, a truly rare experience and a perfect start to my

sojourn. The time after the spa experience went into taking a stroll around the hotel and embracing my mere presence of being in the lovely destination of Phuket.

The dinner that evening was an absolute delight at the Suay Restaurant.



Phuket Marriott Resort and Spa, Nai Yang Beach



Oasis Spa





Bomb Alaska

However, a special mention to the desserts, because how many times do we get to see the most mouth-watering desserts being prepared right in front of us? Rarely, right? Suay made all so usual for us as desserts like the signature side table flambe Thai banana homemade coffee ice cream and Bomb Alaska were brought right to my table and were prepared on-spot.



Bangrong

On the second day, we left for Bang Rong, a great experience for those interested to learn more about local communities in Phuket. Bang Rong Community is involved in managing community-based tourism with a group of villages where they all make a living out of natural resources and local culture. They engage in artisanal fisheries and farming and host visitors for activities connected to the environment and culture. We got to learn about agriculture and fishing life. Painting Pateh bags was a super fun experience! We learned how to slice Pineapples and also learned about making the famous Thai sweet dish - Kanam Ko, which are sugar dumplings with coconut. This was followed by lunch at a floating restaurant. Owing to the unfortunate rains, we couldn't go for rubber harvesting and coconut picking, but there is always a next time!

Post the Bang Rong tour, around noon, we witnessed the opening ceremony of

Thailand's leading B2B travel industry show, the 'Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2022' at the Angsana Laguna Phuket beachfront resort that is set within the world-renowned integrated resort of the Laguna Phuket. The venue felt



Old Town Phuket

great and so did the event. The event focused on the country's change towards stronger, more sustainable, and more responsible tourism growth. It was indeed enlightening!

The next day, we took a walking tour around the old Phuket town. We witnessed the Sino-Portuguese style shophouses on each side of the streets, small and colorful shops, some excellent local Thai restaurants, and a lot of young coffee shops that have opened lately. Walking around town also gave me a chance to visit both Thai temples and colorful Chinese shrines, as well as a



Andamanda

couple of museums and some beautiful old mansions. For a time being, I kept my eyes still and took a slow, holistic glimpse of it from the outside. However, due to the limited time, I couldn't experience the cafe from inside but again, as they say, there is always a next time!

On our return from the walk, we became a part of the Networking



Aungku Phuket

Dinner by the Phuket Tourist Association at Andamanda, Phuket's largest amusement water park which offered wholesome entertainment, and mouth-watering delicacies in a



Thai Cooking Class by Masterchef Yenjai Suthiwaja

lavish buffet that it was almost impossible to decide what treats to try. Besides everything, I am still in complete awe of this artsy café, Aungku Phuket.



Entertainment at Networking Dinner hosted by Phuket Tourist Association at Andamanda

Here we were, on the last day at Phuket, experiencing the exceptional Thai Cooking class at Yenjai Restaurant by Master Chef Yenjai. There would



have been no better way than that to have known and understood the culture of Thailand with Chef Yenjai's cooking style. Her patience, her attention to detail, her brilliant demo, and the precision she offered all added up to give us the oh-so-tasty 'Tom Yum Goong'- a type of hot and sour Thai soup! I was glad when Chef Yenjai tasted my version of it, she went 'Waoowwww,' which eventually became my favorite takeaway from the experience.

Upon reaching Bangkok, I savored the most delectable Indian food at Indus, a Michelin-plated restaurant that I would highly recommend to someone looking for authentic Mughlai-style Indian cuisine in Bangkok. The ambience was like a treat to the eyes- Rajasthani frames in the doorways, subtle lighting, and lounge music set the mood for the night. With the delicious Hara Bhara Kabab, Papdi Chaat, my beloved Chicken Tikka, Tandoori Broccoli, Rogan Gosht and Rasmalai, Firni, my heart felt fuller than my stomach and I was so satiated. My highest vote, however, would go to Tandoori Broccoli, a must-have! We then left Indus and checked into the Oriental Residence Bangkok and spent the night amidst the beautiful ambience with outstanding service.

We were in Bangkok now and couldn't wait to make the most of our last two



days in Thailand. So the next morning, we went out to explore the capital city on a hop-on hop-off bus tour which was a double-decker Thai Bus Food Tour. As the bus cruised around the old quarter of Bangkok, passing through some significant landmarks including China town, the giant swing, the golden mount, the democracy monument, the grand palace, and beautiful temples, we enjoyed a dining course that was delicately selected from many famous local restaurants being served. Pad Thai Noodles and my forever favorite, Mango sticky rice were delicious out of the lot. Our tour guide enlightened



us with interesting information about the attractions we passed and the dishes we ate.

A few hours later on the same day, we experienced the Mahanakhon Skywalk as we stood on Bangkok's glass tray, built at a height of 314 meters and 78 floors, above ground level. Recognised as Thailand's tallest building, it offered a birds-eye



best excursions by Chao Phraya River. The night view was surreal. The view of Rama VIII Bridge glittering with lights is etched in my mind. Yet the aroma from the lavish buffet distracted me for a while and a few minutes later, I was still enjoying the mesmerising night view as before but this time in the company of many mouth-watering kinds of seafood.

On our way to the airport, we visited the Central Village, an outdoor outlet shopping destination, which was located close to the airport. Featuring over 300 international and local Thai brands, Central Village caters to every shopper, with family-friendly



view of the beautiful skyline below. An adrenaline rush flew through my veins as I looked straight through the transparent walkway beneath my feet, it was scary and breath-taking beyond words.

There's no denying that Bangkok is home to a plethora of shopping centers and malls. But, if I talk about the true epicentre of luxury brands, the mention of the majestic ICONSIAM cannot be missed. ICONSIAM has been the city's haven for the leading luxury brands - Gucci, Versace, Louis Vuitton, and many more enough to awaken the shopaholic in me.

To my heart's content, the best detour was the magnificent luxury-designed cruise journey, one of the

amenities and exclusive savings of up to 70 per cent off.

To summarise Phuket and Bangkok, I would say there were times that convinced me to put down my smartphone as the breath-taking views were best when seen from the naked eye, and at the same time, there was a strong irresistible urge to capture every moment with uninterrupted, limitless clicking. "Am I making sense" - I wondered, on my flight back to Delhi.





# TTJ TRAVMART

## at Lucknow and Chandigarh witness great trade response

In the fifth edition of the TTJ TRAVMART series scheduled for 2022, the third B2B mart at Lucknow and the fourth B2B mart at Chandigarh concluded successfully and were welcomed by industry stakeholders. TTJ TRAVMARTs have been playing a crucial role post-COVID to instil confidence and revive business amongst industry stakeholders

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

## LUCKNOW

The third mart of the series was held at the Fortune Park BBD HOTEL in Lucknow on June 16, 2022. The Mart was well represented by a homogeneous mix of sellers which included, DMCs, airlines, tourism boards, attractions, and tour operators. Trade partners from Lucknow, Kanpur, Varanasi and adjoining cities attended the mart, resulting in 2500 B2B meetings.

The event was well supported by ADTOI, IATO, TAFCA, SKAL, TTAUP, and TTW. The respective chapter leaders complimented the efforts of TTJ to revive and re-generate business opportunities post-COVID through its TRAVMARTS. The Guests of Honour, were presented with TTJ mementos as a token of their support by Ravi Sharma, Convener, and Gurjit Singh Ahuja, Co-Convener of the TRAVMART. A few lucky winners won domestic and international hotel stays and theme park tickets, courtesy of Yorker Holidays, Dubai Holdings, Summit Hotels and Resorts, and Mayfair Hotels.









## CHANDIGARH

**T**TJ TRAVMART Chandigarh, the fourth mart in succession this year, was held on June 24, 2022, at Hotel Mount View in Chandigarh. This B2B networking event received 130 confirmed buyer registrations from travel agents and tour operators from the Tri-City region of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula, and also adjoining cities of Ambala, Karnal, Rohtak, Solan, Amritsar, Ludhiana, and Jalandhar.

24 sellers showcased their products and services ranging from international airlines, cruise lines, domestic and luxury international hotel chains, DMCs and visa facilitation companies. The event was well supported by leading travel industry associations like ADTOI, TAAI, TAFI, OTOAI, IATO, SKAL, ETTA and TACT. Senior office-bearers of the association's present were honoured for their support by Ravi Sharma, Convener, and Gurjit Singh Ahuja, Co-Convener of the TRAVMART. The networking session was followed by a cocktail and dinner.

A few lucky winners won hotel stays, courtesy of Summit Hotels and Resorts and Chocolate Hotels at Gangtok, Pelling, Lachung, Jaipur and Goa. Dubai Holdings offered full-day couple park entrance tickets, Oman Air gave a gift hamper and Sai Holidays offered a stay for two at Solan. The mart was very well received by industry stakeholders, as it set the right pitch for revival and normalisation of travel.









## Canada extends all existing COVID-related border restrictions till September 30

The Government of Canada has extended the current border measures for travellers entering Canada. Requirements for travellers arriving to Canada are expected to remain in effect until at least September 30, 2022.

In addition, the pause of mandatory random testing will continue at all airports until mid-July, for travellers who qualify as fully vaccinated. The pause was put in place on June 11, 2022, and is allowing airports to focus on streamlining their operations, while the Government of Canada moves forward with its planned move of COVID-19 testing for air travellers outside of airports to select test provider stores, pharmacies, or by virtual appointment. Mandatory random testing continues at land border points of entry, with no changes. Travellers who do not qualify as fully vaccinated, unless exempt, will continue to test on Day 1 and Day 8 of their 14-day quarantine.

All travellers must continue to use ArriveCAN (free mobile app or website) to provide mandatory travel information within



72 hours before their arrival in Canada, and/or before boarding a cruise ship destined for Canada, with few exceptions. Additional efforts are being undertaken to enhance compliance with ArriveCAN, which is already over 95 per cent for travellers arriving by land and air combined.

## Bhutan to reopen to international tourists from September 23



The Kingdom of Bhutan will be reopening its borders to tourists from September 23, 2022. But it will do so with a renewed focus on the sustainability of the sector.

The tourism sector will be undergoing a revamp, which will focus on three key areas. They are infrastructure and services, the travel experiences of tourists, and the sector's environmental impact.

Amid the intensifying threat of climate change, Bhutan will also be stepping up its efforts to keep the country carbon-negative and a green destination for tourists. The nation is keenly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as frequent rain and floods.

As such, it will be raising the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of USD 65 per person per night for tourists to USD200, which will go towards activities that promote carbon-neutral tourism and building a more sustainable tourism sector. This includes offsetting the carbon footprint of tourists and upskilling workers in the sector. Indian tourists will pay a previously stipulated fee, which will be revised at a later date.

At the same time, the Minimum Daily Package Rate (MDPR) will be removed. The rate refers to the minimum sum paid by all tourists for an all-inclusive package tour to Bhutan.

The MDPR has in the past often limited the tourist experience, as travellers could only choose packaged tours provided by tour operators. Going forward, tourists will have the flexibility to engage service providers directly and pay for their services accordingly.

## Vietjet to open five more international routes from India to Da Nang



Vietjet has announced five new international routes connecting New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Bangalore to Vietnam's famous coastal city of Da Nang. The new services will operate within the third quarter of 2022 with four to seven return flights per week.

The announcement was recently made at the Da Nang Investment Forum 2022 with the participation of Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. The event also marked Vietjet's announcement to incorporate Da Nang's tourism symbol on its fleet to promote the city globally.

Vietjet currently operates four services between Vietnam and India, including New Delhi/Mumbai – Hanoi and New Delhi/Mumbai – Ho Chi Minh City. It will launch two more routes connecting New Delhi and Mumbai with the island city of Phu Quoc in September 2022. Tickets can be purchased now on Vietjet's website with fares starting as low as US\$18 for one way (excluding taxes and fees).

Da Nang is the world's famous coastal city in central Vietnam thanks to its iconic landmarks of Golden Bridge and Dragon Bridge. It is now also known as a city of modern architecture and gaining huge attraction to international tourists recently. The city also serves as a gateway to surrounding tourism destinations including the ancient town of Hoi An, the former imperial citadel in Hue city, and Quang Binh, home of the spectacular caves.



## Jumeirah Group opens first luxury resort in Oman

Nestled within the secluded cove of Bandar Jissah between the Hajar mountains and Gulf of Oman, just 15 minutes from the capital Muscat, Jumeirah Muscat Bay will offer a true sense of serenity and escapism. With sea, mountains and a historic city on its doorstep, it is the ideal spot to disconnect and spend blissful days on the beach, explore the great outdoors via an array of adventurous wellbeing experiences, or venture out to discover the Sultanate's rich history.

Jumeirah Muscat Bay offers 206 spacious rooms and suites, all assuring breathtaking ocean vistas, with connecting rooms available for the perfect family holiday. In addition, five secluded summerhouses in two- and four-bed configurations, and the exceptional Sanctuary Villa, will provide the ultimate hospitality experience, each with a private pool, dedicated butler service and access to an exclusive private beach.

In celebration of its launch, the hotel is inviting guests to discover adventurous Oman in unsurpassed luxury with a special opening offer. Bookings made before September 30, 2022, can take advantage of up to 20 per cent off on room stays when staying for four nights or more, complimentary stay for one child up to 11 years, staying in the same room or suite complimentary Kids Club access for junior guests and USD



100 worth of credits redeemable across the resort's food and beverage and spa offerings. In parallel, members of Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts' leading rewards programme, Jumeirah One, will receive an additional 5 per cent off their stay plus a complimentary upgrade to the next available room category when booking an Ocean Deluxe Room.

## VFS Global appointed as India Representative for Bahrain Tourism



VFS Global has signed a contract with the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority to serve as their market-based representative in India. In this role, VFS Global will be responsible for building trade relations with regional stakeholders and promoting the destination through online and offline marketing, including social media, as well as public relations.

The contract was signed by Dr. Nasser Ali Qaedi, Chief Executive Officer, BTEA and Arzan Khambatta, Head – Tourism Services, VFS Global. Arzan Khambatta, Head – Tourism Services, VFS Global said, "We thank Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority for their faith in VFS Global, and look forward to promoting Bahrain as an ideal destination for Indian travellers, be it for leisure, weddings or MICE. With rich cultural heritage, relaxing white sandy beaches, eclectic cuisines and adventure activities, the destination is a must-visit for the avid Indian traveller."

## Indian Hospitality Network (IHN) organises buyer seller meet at New Delhi



Let's Connect, a buyer-seller meet, was recently organised by the Indian Hospitality Network (IHN) at The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel in East Delhi on June 29, 2022. With its theme being 'Travel is Back', the event saw over 40 sellers from across the industry verticals such as airlines, cruise, hospitality, representation companies, DMCs, NTOs and allied service providers meeting one-on-one with approximately 100 buyers from luxury, MICE, events, corporates, travel and tourism industry. Speaking to TTJ, Abhishek Garg, Founder of IHN, shared, "IHN was conceived in September 2020 as an outcome of the COVID-19 meltdown. When the environment looked hopeless and desperate, a group of like-minded professionals from the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry came together to synergise and revitalise relationships and leverage strengths. Today we have a membership base of 100 plus members pan India. All our members are invited after due diligence from our end."





# TRAVMART

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