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Dear Friends,

As COVID-19 restrictions are nearly gone, travellers are making plans to pack their bags and leave the country for something they have dearly missed for two years now, visiting new destinations abroad. As we hear, even travel and tour operators are witnessing a surge in inquiries and bookings, which is a good sign.

Our September 2022 issue features plenty of outbound travel players ready to tap the potential of the upcoming festival season and winter holidays. We have also been witnessing that the long waits for tourist visas to Europe and the US are forcing many Indians to shift to alternative destinations for vacations, opting for destinations that offer e-visas or visas on arrival. Outbound travel sentiments are indeed strong now!

The issue also covers a few pages on the upcoming TAFI Convention in Kuching, Sarawak from September 20-23. This most anticipated industry event is likely to boost Indian outbound travel to Sarawak, marking a significant potential for Sarawak to tap into the India market.

So while the going is good, we at TTJ hope the festive and holiday season ahead gets all of us the opportunity of excellent business compared to the previous two years.

Happy Reading!



Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma
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Editor's Desk

Thailand grants visa extension for tourists to stimulate upcoming high season

Thailand's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) approved the proposal by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to extend the period of stay to 45 days for tourists from countries/territories entitled for visa exemption, and to 30 days for those eligible for a Visa on Arrival (VOA). This will be in effect from October 1, 2022, until March 31, 2023.

During the specially granted six-month period, the length of stay per time will be extended from 15 days to 30 days for passport holders of the following countries/territories who may apply for a VOA: Bhutan, Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Malta, Mexico, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, and Vanuatu.

Also, during the same six-month period, the length of stay per time will be extended from 30 days to 45 days for passport holders of the following countries/territories who may enter Thailand under a tourist visa exemption scheme: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany,

Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Monaco, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovak, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UAE, UK, Ukraine, and USA.



UAE announces multiple-entry tourist visa for FIFA World Cup ticket holders

The UAE has announced an integrated programme supporting holders of the 'Hayya' Card issued by FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which will take this year from November 20 to December 18, 2022.

The programme comes within the UAE's initiatives aiming to support the state of Qatar, in hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Through the Multiple-Entry Tourist Visa options, the UAE will be hosting the world cup fans, allowing them to enter UAE multiple times over a period of 90 days.

The Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security, explained that the programme includes granting a multiple-entry visa to the UAE for a total period of up to (90) days from the date of issuance of this visa. The visa fees are reduced to Dh100 and will be paid once for the whole period.

The Authority indicated that holders of 'Hayya' card, can enter the UAE by applying for this visa starting November 1, 2022, and it will allow them to enter the country several times during the validity period. This visa can be extended for another 90 days according to the conditions, procedures and the normal fees followed in the current visa system in the UAE.



Qatar scraps mandatory quarantine for those travelling for FIFA World Cup

Qatar has scrapped its red list for travellers and cancelled quarantine requirements for foreign visitors as it prepares to host the 2022 World Cup in November.

Quarantine is no longer mandatory for all travellers arriving from abroad, however, travellers who test positive for COVID-19 after arriving in Qatar must undergo quarantine measures in accordance with the procedures followed in the State of Qatar.

However, travellers arriving in the Gulf country must bring a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test certificate with a negative result valid for 48 hours or a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) certificate valid for 24 hours, from the scheduled flight to the State of Qatar. Rapid antigen self-test is not valid for travel purposes.

Travellers must download the Ehteraz mobile app and activate it on their mobile phones using a local or international SIM card. They must register in the pre-entry online registration system through the website (www.ehteraz.gov.qa) within at least three days before arrival.





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Finland to target 3,00,000 overnights from India

Boasting perhaps the largest Archipelago in the world, 2,00,000 freshwater lakes, home to our loving Santa Claus, his ministry of Elves, and Rudolph the reindeer, Finland is a natural paradise like no other that enamors you with its wonders, as the alchemy of the Wizards of North, magically illuminate its night skies with the mysterious Northern lights.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Having gained a strong foothold in the Indian outbound travel market, Finland is set on its way to being on the bucket list of every seasoned Indian traveller, whose hunger to explore newer experiences, quest for adventure, curiosity to discover new destinations and natural wonders takes him to newer lands.

Finland is well aware of the potential offered by the Indian outbound market and has been actively pursuing the Indian traveller over the last many years. With 1,02,000 annual overnights, India was the 17th-largest source market for Finland in 2019.

Recently the Finnish tourism delegation led by Tarja Koivisto, Account Manager – Global Sales Promotions, Visit Finland, was in India after a hiatus of almost two and a half years due to the COVID-19 meltdown to rekindle the travel bonds between the two countries by organising roadshows at New Delhi and Mumbai. Accompanying her was a delegation of representatives of Finnair India PLC, Tallink Silja Line, Eckerö Line Safartica Oy, Northern Lights Village Saariselkä & Levi, Santa's Hotels, Visit Rovaniemi, Arctic TreeHouse Hotel/Lapland Luxury, Kämp Collection Hotels, Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort, Northern Savo Lakeland, GreenEscape Oy.

Speaking to TTJ, Tarja shared, "India is among the fastest growing markets amongst our 13 target markets and has a very strong

potential to become a top source market for Finland. India showed a 27 per cent growth in 2019 vs 2018. In January to February 2020, overnight stays increased by 24 per cent compared to 2019."

Sakari Romu, General Manager (India), Finnair informed, "On August 6, 2022, Finnair launched its second service to India, with a direct flight connection between Mumbai and Helsinki. This trice a week service will supplement the already operational daily flight connection between Delhi and Helsinki."

Finland has a total population of about 5.5 million spread over an area that is almost equivalent to the size of the state of Texas in the United States of America. Most of the population is concentrated around the city of Helsinki. Up north in Lapland, it's the reindeer outnumber the human population. Finland boasts of great natural vistas and activities that put you closer to nature.

Sauna is almost a religion in Finland and you will always be just a door-knock away from one. A steaming hot sauna session followed by a dip in the ice-freezing waters is a must-do activity and a

great way to get your blood racing. Finland offers great winter experiences and unique snow activities like Husky Sledging, Cross Country Skiing, observing the Northern Lights staying in unique special glass villas or glass-domed igloos, or perhaps spending a night in an Ice Hotel.

Finland also happens to be Santa's home and no visit to Finland is complete until you get your sack full of joy and happiness. Santa Claus Village, close to Rovaniemi in Lapland, offers the unique opportunity of meeting Santa Claus.

"Finland is a safe destination for peaceful and relaxed holidays and a country known for its sustainable development. We greatly look forward to welcoming more Indians and are hopeful to take the number of overnights from Indian travellers to 3,00,000 over the next three years," signed off Tarja.



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Rijal Alma, Asir
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Welcome
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Dubai flaunts world of experiences to rekindle wanderlust of travellers

In the post-pandemic world, Dubai has transformed into a destination of surprises and has opened up with unlimited attractions for tourists. Bader Ali Habib, Head of Region-South Asia International Operations, Department of Economy and Tourism, Dubai opens up about the current offers for travellers and the world-famous attractions in the city.

Swaati Chaudhury

A global destination of unlimited possibilities, safety, fun and culture that serves as a paradise for travellers heading to the United Arab Emirates is obviously Dubai. Aimed to make the new-age Indian travellers aware about the latest tourist attractions that have come up in Dubai during the pre and post-pandemic era, the Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Dubai hosted its second roadshow in India including cities such as Kolkata, Bangalore, Kochi and Chennai in August, this year.

Interacting at the event, Bader Ali Habib explained, "India is undoubtedly our largest tourist market and we are quite familiar with the India market. With MICE making a comeback, we are showcasing new hospitality setups that have come up in recent times in Dubai. Today's Indian travellers vouch for Dubai as a tourist destination but not many are aware of the latest attractions that have been unveiled in the city before the pandemic and post-pandemic times. India has tremendous potential in terms of MICE and leisure tourists. We want to update the travellers that Dubai is an all-round destination that has lots to offer to tourists."

Travellers need to plan out a five-night tour of the city to make the most of the experiences offered by Dubai. The summer season marks the off-season period for travelling to Dubai. Habib said, "The destination is highly affordable once summer sets in. The ideal time to visit the destination in terms of value is during August and September. Dubai Tourism has rolled out the Summer Campaign offer where travellers have to shell out for three-night tours and enjoy five-night stays or stay for seven nights and pay for only five. The offer is valid till September 2022, and interested tourists can avail the offer by logging on to the Visit Dubai website."

There are 11 golf courses in Dubai. Habib further said, "Golf tourism is a growing market in India. The upcoming DP World Tour Championship, Dubai will



▲ Bader Ali Habib

be held in Jumeirah Golf Estates from November 17-20, this year."

The Department of Economy and Tourism, Dubai is actively promoting a host of bucket-list destinations with the Indian travel trade. Habib added, "The Museum of the Future has opened its doors this year. There is Aura Skypool in Palm Jumeirah that figures as the world's highest 360° swimming pool and has

kicked off this year. The beach destination of La Mer that offers stunning views of the city skyline came up in 2017. The Palm Jumeirah offers breathtaking 360° views of Palm Jumeirah, the Arabian Sea and the city skyline."

India is the largest outbound travel market for Dubai. "Oman comes next to India in terms of tourists count. Our new B2B and B2C markets are Turkey and Pakistan. We are eyeing the upper-middle class segment of travellers in Pakistan. As a destination, we have to be agile. We continue to evolve and scout for different segments with our trade partners. We are organising webinars and familiarisation trips for the Indian travel trade. Our global campaigns are all online. Mumbai has the largest share of outbound travellers to Dubai followed by New Delhi," further added Habib.

Nearly 1.8 million Indian tourists headed to Dubai in 2019. "We have received around 8,58,000 Indian visitors in the first half of the current year. We are quite confident that we would maintain the pre-pandemic figures. There were 7.1 million global visitors in the first half of the existing year that has contributed to 183 per cent rise in global footfalls," signed off Habib.



Museum of the Future

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India numero uno international market for **SHARJAH**

As the beacon of Emirati culture, learning and values, Sharjah stands out amongst its neighbours in the Emirates by not only preserving its heritage but also sharing it with the world. Sharjah is a great draw for arts and culture enthusiasts, especially for those looking to get a rich glimpse into the Emirates Bedouin past. Sharjah has always been on the Indian travel circuit and has a large Indian community base. TTJ spoke to the Chairman of Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority, H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, on his recent visit to New Delhi to learn more about this third most populated Emirate of the UAE.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Much different from its more flamboyant and touristy neighbours of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Sharjah has continued to evolve and develop while preserving its cultural traditions and values. It has maintained a more conservative approach to modernisation while staying anchored in its past and using it to shape its future in a world full of technological razzmatazz.

Sharjah has emerged as a great center for education and learning with its universities, colleges, and schools. It has good infrastructure facilities, malls, housing, and hospitals and all of this is much more affordable in Sharjah as compared to the other Emirates. This makes it hugely popular among the expatriate community in the Emirates who have opted for Sharjah as their home base.

Speaking on the importance of the India market, Khalid said, "This is our first roadshow in India post the pandemic. It is nice to be back. We have had our presence in the India market since 2014, and even during the pandemic



▲ H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa

we were constantly aware of the market dynamics through our representative office in India which was always operational." He further elaborated, "The COVID situation gave Sharjah a tremendous opportunity to carry on developmental work on its road network and infrastructure and exercise, the results of which are now visible."

"Sharjah enjoys a unique position in the UAE, as it has access to the east coast as well as the west coast, and the three east coast destinations of Khor Fakkar, Dibba and Kalba are now ready to welcome guests to experience their unique offerings," explained Khalid.

Also, a noteworthy unique experience that was introduced in February 2022, is the Sharjah Safari, the largest safari experience outside continental Africa, currently spread across an area of 9 sq. km. Sharjah Safari is host to more than 120 species of animals, which live in Africa and up to 50,000 animals, ranging from birds, reptiles and mammals, such as lions, elephants, giraffes, black and white rhinoceros, crocodiles, deer, and many other endangered animals.

The safari park area will also increase in the future as the park grows. All this is very carefully managed and monitored by experts who ensure

the checks and balances for the well-being of the animals. This experience is a one of its kind adventure and educational activity for families and nature enthusiasts to observe the endemic wildlife in Africa. Native African faunae roam without fences in an environment similar to their natural environment.

Sharjah currently has 105 hotels across various categories, offering 7,782 room nights per day to its visitors. In the first half of 2022, the hotels in Sharjah exhibited a 66 per cent average occupancy. India has emerged as the top global market for Sharjah with a 13 per cent market share and accounting for 81,513 room nights in the second quarter of 2022.

With the forthcoming FIFA World Cup in Qatar, hotels in the Emirates are bullish about a fair share of business due to the operation of shuttle flights between the UAE and Qatar and the special visa being offered by the UAE to football enthusiasts.

The focus of Sharjah continues to be to position itself as a cultural hub, a family destination, and a destination that promotes responsible tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism activities, and sports. Khalid elaborates, "We have noticed Indians love to travel as a family group. A vacation is just not about partying or shopping for them. They are interested to know more about the destination, its culture, its history, customs, its past so that they and their children take back these learnings and experiences with them. We love this aspect of Indian travel and so the entrance tickets to our attractions, monuments, and museums are kept very affordable, enabling maximum people to experience them."

The love for cricket bonds fans worldwide, and Sharjah Cricket Stadium is a living testament to that, given the top tournaments hosted here. Sharjah also hosts numerous world-class events and competitions year-round, such as the Sharjah Biennial, Xposure International Photographic Festival, Sharjah World Music Festival, Sharjah International Book Fair, and the awe-inspiring Sharjah Light Festival, an epitome of human creativity where the city landmarks of Sharjah get transformed into a different dimension.





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SPAIN offers a mosaic of value-for-money travel experiences

It doesn't matter what the motivation is for travelling to Spain. Art, culture, museums, monuments, beaches, cities, fiestas, routes, cuisine, and natural spaces, you will find them all in this exotic country of Europe. Elisa Robles Fraga, Director, Tourism Office of Spain in Mumbai (Embassy of Spain in India) shares some of the current motivational factors for outbound travel from India to Spain.

Prashant Nayak

Spain is a destination for everyone. Whilst there have been popular cities that people tend to commonly visit during their trip to Spain, the new highlights and experiences that are packed for an upcoming fascination great trip to Spain are the celebrations of the Xacobeo 2022 (Jacobean Holy Year), Picasso 2023, Unique Accommodation Settings of Paradores, Wellness Tourism like Spas and High-end Fitness Centers, Adventure Tourism activities like Skydiving, Scuba diving, and finally, the Spanish Fiestas are back with a bang. Some of the most popular ones are the La Tomatina of Buñol, San Fermín (Running of the Bulls of Navarre), Las Fallas of Valencia, and Los Carnavales (Carnivals) of the Canary Islands, amongst several others.

With outbound travel showing strong recovery, Spain Tourism is maximising its efforts to unlock the potential of India's leisure and business travellers. Elisa says, "Spain Tourism has always tried to employ a variety of channels to promote the destination. During the difficult phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, we promoted the destination through online campaigns, highlighting various tourism products such as gastronomy, art and culture, shopping, and leisure, among others, to keep our beautiful destination at the top of the mind of travellers. Having realised the importance of such campaigns, we will continue our efforts in that regard. Now with the situation



▲ Elisa Robles Fraga

of pandemic coming under control, we are also looking forward to bringing back other marketing activities such as physical events with media and travel trade, familiarisation trips to Spain, in addition to those already underway like online training programs, online campaigns, webinars, among others."

To facilitate travel to Spain, the Spanish Embassy and the Spanish Consulate General in Mumbai continue to make improvements to make the visa process faster and more efficient. Also, with commercial international air travel being resumed this year, they are witnessing more and more travellers

interested in traveling to Spain. "Spain has regained its normalcy in this era of the 'new normal,' with all the tourist spots ready to welcome visitors, albeit some basic health and safety measures are still in place," points out Elisa.

According to Elisa, Spain is

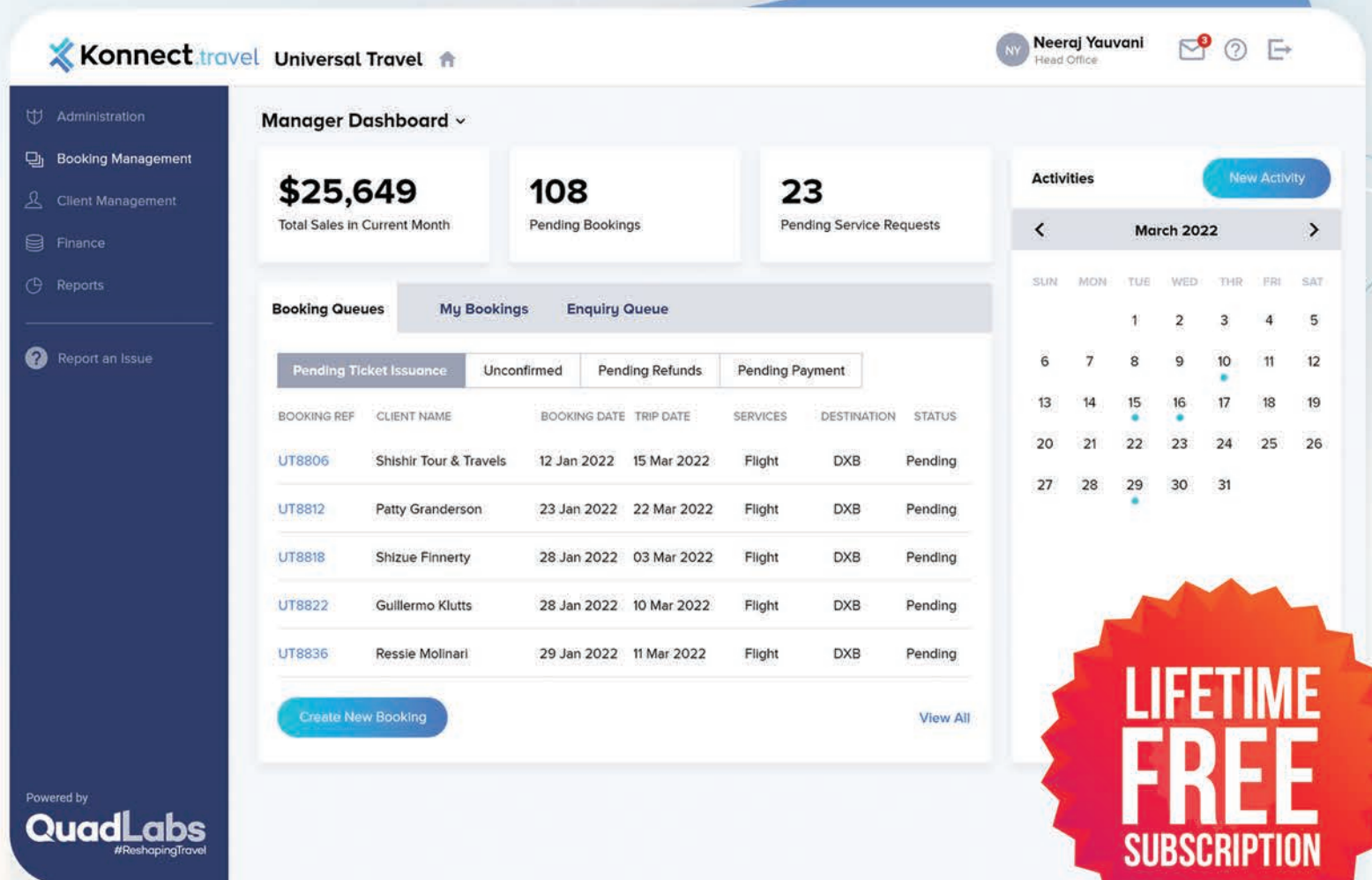
a more value-for-money experience for Indian tourists. She explains, "Spain suits all tastes and budgets, it is a high-value proposition destination compared to most other European countries, thanks to the competitive accommodation options offering great quality and comfort, cutting-edge infrastructural facilities, easy and reliable commute options, economical in-destination activities like exploring famous touristy places, rich and varied gastronomical options at affordable pricing, shopping of brands at the most competitive cost and full VAT refund benefit on shopping, favourable weather, and sunshine throughout the year."

"Spain, a year-round travel destination, has something for everybody in Spain, from fascinating museums to top-of-the-line luxury and shopping, from enthralling flamenco performances to unique small towns full of history and culture, from delicious gastronomy to rich and colorful festivals. This offers the traveller something unique in this post-COVID era, the opportunity to enjoy a wide variety of experiences without having to travel to multiple countries," shares Elisa. Spain will continue to maximise their product offerings via various promotion projects that are currently in pipeline.

Understanding the Indian outbound travel market is important for tourism boards to chalk out their marketing plans. Sharing her observations about the Indian outbound travel market, Elisa shares, "India is indeed a large country with a rich and wide variety of culture and traditions which in turn reflect in the variety we observe in the needs and preferences of the Indian outbound traveller. Unlike in many other outbound markets, one single success formula cannot be applied to the entire Indian market. For instance, some travellers try to explore history, art, and culture while visiting another country while there are segments that are more interested in luxury and shopping or sports (including adventure sports). Then again, the travel cost sensitivity differs among different segments. So, it's important to offer a customised mix of tourism products and experiences that would appeal to each segment of this market."



CONSOLIDATE CUSTOMER, BOOKINGS & ACCOUNTS



The screenshot shows the Manager Dashboard for Universal Travel. The dashboard includes a sidebar with navigation links: Administration, Booking Management, Client Management, Finance, Reports, and Report an Issue. The main content area displays key metrics: Total Sales in Current Month (\$25,649), Pending Bookings (108), and Pending Service Requests (23). Below these metrics are tabs for Booking Queues (My Bookings, Enquiry Queue) and a table of Pending Ticket Issuance. The table lists bookings with columns for Booking Ref, Client Name, Booking Date, Trip Date, Services, Destination, and Status. A calendar for March 2022 is also visible on the right side of the dashboard.

Manager Dashboard

\$25,649
Total Sales in Current Month

108
Pending Bookings

23
Pending Service Requests

Activities [New Activity](#)

March 2022

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Booking Queues **My Bookings** **Enquiry Queue**

Pending Ticket Issuance **Unconfirmed** **Pending Refunds** **Pending Payment**

BOOKING REF	CLIENT NAME	BOOKING DATE	TRIP DATE	SERVICES	DESTINATION	STATUS
UT8806	Shishir Tour & Travels	12 Jan 2022	15 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8812	Patty Granderson	23 Jan 2022	22 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8818	Shizue Finnerty	28 Jan 2022	03 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8822	Guillermo Klutts	28 Jan 2022	10 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8836	Ressie Molinari	29 Jan 2022	11 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending

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Los Angeles Tourism aims to reach beyond the metros of India



Los Angeles has continued to push the envelope on creativity throughout the pandemic, bringing new experiences to travellers. Seema Kadam, Regional Director, India, Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board, gave some fresh insights about the current initiatives in India and new tourism offerings in the City of Angels.

Prashant Nayak

Los Angeles remains fully committed to the India market. Los Angeles Tourism is the only U.S. Destination Marketing Organisation with full-time staff overseas, including one team member based in Mumbai. To better help Indian trade partners understand the destination, Los Angeles Tourism presently offers a refreshed version of the L.A. Insider training program found at insider.discoverlosangeles.com. This B2B platform highlights Los Angeles through three chapters and educates the travel trade on selling and promoting L.A.

"We also have a dedicated B2B Facebook page to keep the travel trade updated on what's new in the destination, as Los Angeles is a creative city that is constantly evolving! Moreover, we will continue working with partners like Brand USA, participate in niche travel shows and collaborate with the travel trade in India to ensure that itineraries are structured and customised to suit Indian travellers' tastes and demands in the coming months," says Seema.

Amid the long visa wait issue, the concerned US government authorities are taking active steps to reduce wait time and backlogs. "The U.S. Embassy is resuming routine in-person tourist visa appointments in September 2022 and has been fast-tracking study and work-related visas. Demand is extremely high, so they are experiencing extended wait times, which we expect to be streamlined in the coming months. Also, effective June 12, 2022, visitors are not required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test before boarding a U.S.-bound flight if double vaccinated," informs Seema.

Highlighting the destination's new experiences for a great time, Seema mentions, "At Los Angeles Tourism, we are optimistic about the future of travel. A decade of unforgettable sports events is underway with



▲ Seema Kadam

our state-of-the-art venues, including SoFi Stadium, which has been selected to host the FIFA world cup in 2026. The arts and culture scene is back with new offerings, including The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, which opened its doors in September 2021, telling the stories of moviemaking through immersive and dynamic exhibits." Los Angeles also has more accommodation options for travellers than ever, with the opening of many new hotels including the iconic Fairmont Century Plaza as well as a crop of boutique properties in Downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood, including the Thompson Hollywood and Downtown L.A. Proper.

Post-lifting of travel restrictions and resumption of flights, Los Angeles Tourism believes that India is well-poised to retain its pre-pandemic position as one of the fastest growing international markets to Los Angeles

in the coming months. "The demand for travel to Los Angeles is supported by excellent air connectivity, high-tech infrastructure, and immersive experiences for the evolved Indian traveller. As part of our growth and marketing efforts in India, we are now looking at reaching out to source markets beyond the key metros of Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore and creating awareness on the destination via road shows and other initiatives," shares Seema.

Post-pandemic, people have become more aware of discovering niche destinations and experiences. Indians who have not been able to travel in the past couple of years want to use their savings and utilise their valid U.S. visa. Seema says, "Travellers make the long-haul trip to L.A. to visit their family, friends, and relatives and explore the destination beyond the regular sites. Los Angeles offers plenty of ways to uniquely experience the city at any budget with many inexpensive, or even free, options to immerse yourself in the City of Angels. Several museums in L.A. offer free admission, including the Getty Center, MOCA, and the California Science Center, and some of Los Angeles' best food can be discovered at affordable hidden gems and food trucks. You can't put a price on the city's amazing weather as well, with free experiences such as hikes in Griffith Park or beaches in Venice and Malibu as the perfect way to enjoy Los Angeles' sunny days."

According to Seema, with a growing economy, a young population, and a strong middle class, India could become one of the most lucrative outbound tourism markets in the world. This is also an excellent opportunity for destination marketers who can reach India's young population comprised of Gen Z and millennials who have a propensity to travel abroad. Thus, the rate of growth that they are experiencing in India for outbound travel is huge. The world is excited to welcome Indian travellers.

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UTAH TOURISM

Reinforces its presence in India market

The state of Utah in the USA has established itself as a premier outdoor and adventure destination and benefits from its growing popularity that attracts both young and well-travelled tourists looking for a unique experience. Zach Fyne, Global Markets Specialist, Utah Office of Tourism, shares his views on Utah's newest draws that attract global tourists and how his organisation continues to promote the destination in India.

Prashant Nayak

The allure of Utah has grown in recent years and new experiences in Utah appeal to every type of traveller and group size, starting with the new luxury Rocky Mountaineer train that connects Denver, Colorado with the adventure hub of Moab, Utah, crossing through the Rocky Mountains and red rock desert over two days. All five of their Mighty 5® national parks have recently been declared International Dark Sky areas. Utah now has the largest concentration of dark sky areas in the world for star-filled night sky viewing across 24 areas and towns.

Glamorous camping, or glamping, has taken off across all parts of the state with new opportunities to stay in luxurious safari tents, Conestoga wagons, tipis, and cabins surrounded by red rocks and tranquillity for a more unique lodging offering. Additionally, since the pandemic, there have been more opportunities to learn about Native American culture and historical preservations. These include new options for outfitters, lodging, and spas that give visitors new ways to interact with the native tribes, explore historically sacred monuments and areas, and enrich their experience with culturally relevant tours.

"What makes a visit to Utah so appealing to a wide demographic is that you can customise your experience every step of the way, depending on your budget," says Zach. For those on a once-in-a-lifetime trip, there are options to secure private shuttle drivers and vehicles, stay in luxury lodging and glamping options, and get a more in-depth learning experience with outfitters to guide you across the national parks and most of the wild places across the state.

Sharing more, Zach adds, "If you're looking to experience all of these same beautiful areas on a lower budget, then there are significant



▲ Zach Fyne

savings from the national parks pass for all five of our national parks and more from the National Parks Service along with 44 Utah state parks on our state parks office's pass, the affordable rates offered at the locally-owned inns and boutique hotels, and the freedom of driving one's vehicles along our state's 28 scenic byways makes the trip to Utah very attainable. For the ability to see some of nature's most incredible beauty, wide-open spaces, and jaw-dropping landscapes at a bespoke rate, then the value-for-money experience for Indian tourists is undeniable."

Also, the proximity to the international airport in Las Vegas, as well as the revamped and newest international airport hub in the U.S. in Salt Lake City, has allowed Utah to be very accessible to international flights from India.

Utah is entering into its second year of activities along with AVIAREPS in the India market which will include an increased presence as they further solidify their approach. AVIAREPS India oversees its account, intending to distribute its efforts to reach direct consumers, the media, and local tour operators. Last year, their destination participated in SATTE and OTM for the first time, hosted a travel trade FAM to Utah, and organised various pieces of training, information seminars, and events over the year.

"We intend to continue those efforts, with additional plans of organising an India Sales Mission across Mumbai and Delhi in January, participation in the Brand USA road show, hosting various Indian influencers in Utah, and additional PR efforts that will broaden our presence in the market as the year continues," shares Zach.

With the travel trade, the Utah Tourism Office has engaged in various co-op marketing agreements to increase the number of Utah travel packages and familiarity with their product. In autumn, they will be launching a new B2B e-learning platform to help train frontline agents with everything they need to know to sell Utah to their clients. These actions align with their efforts to visit various cities and regions across the country for in-person training and events, as well as participate in tourism expos throughout the year.

Zach also announced, "We'll be hosting events across India to more closely work with media and influencers, showing them the offerings of Utah to pique their interest to visit and cover our destination. Additionally, our social media, media buying, and other marketing mixes of actions are all closely integrated to present Utah as a new, off-the-beaten-track destination to the direct consumers throughout the year."



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Strongly collaborating and strategising to encourage visitations from India



Australia has witnessed a growing appetite and interest to travel among Indian travellers, with the easing and removal of border and COVID-19-related travel restrictions, thus, indicating the propensity of Indians to embark on long-haul vacations. Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager India and Gulf, Tourism Australia, is delighted to share the fresh developments, new initiatives and innovative campaigns to keep the visitation numbers up from India.

Prashant Nayak

Tourism Australia continuously monitors changing traveller sentiments and interests as part of their strategy to feed into current trends and keep Australia at the forefront of the Indian traveller's consideration set. In line with this, Tourism Australia launched a new campaign in collaboration with its key airline and distribution partners to encourage Indian travellers to visit and holiday in Australia. 'Yours to Explore' is a direct-to-consumer campaign, promoted through a diverse mix of print, digital and social media mediums and supplemented by a variety of PR activities and initiatives.

Going forward, Tourism Australia will leverage the opportunity to showcase Australia's many attractions and experiences through curated familiarisation trips with leading lifestyle publications, prominent influencers, and niche content partnerships to build a stronger resonance in key markets. "We are also keen on pursuing partnerships and collaborations with OTT platforms to integrate Australia-specific destination messaging. We will continue to forge engagements with key personalities and celebrities, who have a strong connect and resonance in India, from our 'Friends of Australia' portfolio," said Nishant. Through these celebrities' influence and massive fan followings, Tourism Australia can reinforce its destination messaging and highlight Australia's wide range of offerings.

Nishant also outlined Tourism Australia's six key strategic priorities to ensure that they bounce back strongly and achieve their pre-COVID-19 status.

Brand and Marketing: Building brand Australia will be their top priority for the year ahead and all their marketing and public relation campaigns will focus on building Australia's awareness and consideration amongst the high

yield traveller.

Conversion and Aviation: Commercial partnerships with airlines including Singapore Airlines, Air India, Qantas, etc., and key distribution partners such as Thomas Cook, MakeMyTrip, PickYourTrail, Kesari, Veena World, etc, will be critical to driving the intention into actual visitations.

Advocacy and Famils: Leverage the power of advocacy to drive interest and fashionability for the destination and build strong people-to-people links.

Indigenous and Sustainability: Capitalise on the growing importance of indigenous tourism and sustainability in travel, and deliver on a range of initiatives that will help build on these passion points for the new-aged travellers

Industry Partnership: Partnering with industry is central to everything they do – now more than ever. Becoming a platform for industry, a source of information and insights, and an advocate with stakeholders.

Major Events and MICE: Capitalise on the contextual media and PR opportunity presented by the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, Australian Open, etc., and continue to drive Australia's consideration for organising incentive trips (MICE) for corporates.

Australia has lifted all COVID-19 border restrictions, and travellers no longer have to provide evidence of vaccination or complete the Digital Passenger Declaration. "Encouraged by this development, the Australian High Commission has already seen a bounce back in visitor visa lodgements, which are significantly higher than 2019 levels. Hence, we are requesting that everyone lodge their tourist visa applications at least eight weeks before the intended date of departure, as we enter the peak



▲ Nishant Kashikar

lodgement periods," informs Nishant.

The Australian High Commission will continue to offer personalised and streamlined service for MICE agents and corporates, as well as those intending to travel for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. This is supplemented by the Visa Application Charge (VAC) waiver, which allows travellers who have obtained Visitor visas (Subclass 600) that have expired between March 20, 2020, and June 30, 2022, to re-apply for a future visitor visa free of charge before December 31, 2022.

Over the past two years, Australia has opened over 100 new accommodation options, as well as over 72 new tourism products and experiences across the country covering food and wine; aquatic and coastal, indigenous culture, walks and hikes, cycling tours, day cruises, and more.

"Through our Signature Experiences of Australia portfolio, we are encouraging our Aussie Specialist Agents to curate and cultivate itineraries that spotlight some of Australia's newer and more premium experiences. These itineraries feature experiences from eight expertly designed collectives including Discover Aboriginal Experiences, Great Fishing Adventures of Australia, Great Golf Courses of Australia, Luxury Lodges of Australia, Ultimate Winery Experiences Australia, and Great Walks of Australia," asserts Nishant.



Get more out of INDONESIA

Explore its new iconic Super Priority Destinations

With beaches on one side and mountains on the other, Indonesia offers the best tourist places and experiences around the year. With spiritual temple visits and never-ending nightlife, from activities that will have your muscles sore to spas that will relax every part of your body, this place is a paradise of contrasts. In addition to Bali, which is one of the most preferred islands, Sanjay Sondhi, Country Manager, Visit Indonesia Tourism Office (India) says that they are now very keen to promote the five Super Priority Destinations of Indonesia in India.

Prashant Nayak

Indonesia, an archipelago with about 17,000 islands, has everything to offer in terms of tranquillity, activities, wellness, luxury getaway, budget holiday, mouth-watering cuisine and fun. There is something to enjoy for everyone over here, regardless of age, gender or interests. Apart from its magnificent culture, tourists also enjoy the variety of natural beauty, adventure, and wildlife in spectacular Indonesia. This should be a must-visit for every tourist who is looking forward to experiencing something new and amazing and thus is the best country brand for value for money.

The Indonesian government has now identified and begun to further prepare five Super Priority Tourism Destinations, namely Lake Toba in North Sumatra, Borobudur in Central Java, Mandalika in West Nusa Tenggara, Labuan Bajo in East Nusa Tenggara, and Likupang in North Sulawesi.

Lake Toba is a world-class geo-park-based tourism destination located on the island of Sumatra. This natural wonder is a magnificent caldera formed from a mega volcano eruption some 74,000 years ago. It is the second-largest lake in the world that offers the charm of green mountains that pamper the eyes, shooting fresh and clean air.

Borobudur is getting onto the bucket list of many travellers visiting Indonesia. Sanjay said, "The magnificent Borobudur is the world's biggest Buddhist temple located on the island of Java. The monument sits majestically on a hilltop surrounded by the beautiful scenery of lush green fields and distant hills. Built between AD 780 and 840 during the reign of the Syailendra dynasty, the temple's design in the Gupta architecture reflects India's influence



▲ Sanjay Sondhi

on the region. However, enough indigenous scenes and elements are incorporated to make Borobudur uniquely Indonesian."

Mandalika is the ultimate paradise in the heart of Lombok. Because of its location in the coastal area, Mandalika is blessed with a row of stunning beaches. The special tourism economic zone also boasts vibrant bars, nightclubs, and all high lifestyle facilities. Also known as the city of sunset, Labuan Bajo on the island of Flores was only a small fishing site but has flourished to become the gateway to many exotic destinations in East Nusa Tenggara. The Komodo National Park was listed as UNESCO's World Heritage Site in 1991. The park consists of Komodo Island, Rinca Island, Padar Island, and numerous smaller islands around.

"North Sulawesi is a province in Indonesia that is well known for its stunning natural attractions. One of the best places you can find here is Likupang Beach. From the first time you lay eyes on Likupang Beach, you will be stunned by its marvellous and vast white sandy beach. It also has beautiful clear seawater and also offers several other tourist attractions. In addition, you can also dive to witness the underwater scenery that will hypnotise you," Sanjay shared about the fifth destination.

Besides the above five destinations, Bali is no exception, as most of the local's livelihoods depend on the tourism sector. Sanjay said, "We are promoting Bali through #ItsTimeforBali campaign. Through this campaign, we would like to tell the world that Bali is ready to welcome you back to the island of God with new guidelines and new experiences to explore."

On the promotion front in India, in the next four months of 2022, Visit Indonesia Tourism India Office will conduct different digital activities throughout the year as they did in the first quarter of 2022. Additionally, they will keep organising FAM trips for Indian influencers, celebrities, travel bloggers, and journalists as they cater to a large number of audiences of avid and discerning travellers. "This year, we will be more active in the market by conducting different activities such as multi-city roadshows, and workshops, participating in Trade Fairs like OTM, and will continue organising B2B and B2C FAM trips. VITO India also is working closely with MICE agents, Event management companies, Wedding planners and film/OTT, and TV production houses to enhance the visibility of the archipelago," informed Sanjay.

SOUTH KOREA

eyes the Indian luxury traveller

Korea is now open to travellers and promises an all-immersive luxury experience to visitors. The country has already made it to the headlines for its K-Dramas and K-Pop, topping the wishlist of international travellers. Read more to know all about the strategy and offerings Korea has for its travellers - ranging from luxury stays and wedding destinations to breathtaking sightseeing.

Vartik Sethi

South Korea has geared up to welcome Indian travellers and offer them an experience like never before. Famous for its scenic beauty, aesthetically pleasing sights and K-Drama fandom, Korea has meticulously handpicked and promised an immersive experience to its travellers. In a conversation with Trade Travel Journal, Jane Han, CEO, Jane DMC Korea, shared that Korea has a plethora of offerings for visitors - ranging from weddings to corporate meetings and FITs, looking for a luxury stay. Jane DMC



▲ Jane Han

Korea aspires to tap into these offerings and boost the luxury segment. She added, contemporary travellers from India can be categorised as exchange students, students willing to visit South Korea for higher studies, along with corporate stalwarts and tourists travelling with families. Going forward, Korea also wishes to extend its world-class luxury experience to the Indian traveller.

Jaemin An, CEO, JEJU Ent. and Seoyun Gong, Marketing Manager, JEJU Ent. shared with us snippets of their plan to offer the immersive Jeju-experience with Travel Trade Journal. Korea's spectacular Jeju Island is opening its market for travellers looking for a



▲ Seoyun Gong

luxury experience. The island is an emerging destination for weddings and K-Drama sites. Jeju Island is a UNESCO natural heritage site and one of the very popular destinations in South Korea. JEJU Ent. promises a luxury experience ranging from luxury hotels, casinos, golf to exquisite cuisine - available in attractive packages.

If you're looking for a destination for family trips or weddings or some solo hopping, Jeju Island has something to offer to all its travellers. The connectivity is seamless - with luxury buses and limousines (for internal travel) to a possibility of direct flights from India to Jeju Island. For lovers of nature and culture, one can soak in the warmth of the traditional folk villages or witness a traditional wedding. There are innumerable activities and sports offered at Jeju. If you're a vegetarian or looking for drool-worthy Indian food - Baghdad Restaurant is your go-to place (thank us later!). They have also onboarded influencers to keep the socials buzzing with information to be shared with the travellers.

Young Geul (Ian) Choi, Director, Korea Tourism Organization, New Delhi Office, mentioned some very important focus areas to ensure revenue-recovery in the post-

pandemic world. He shared that a luxury traveller stays for about nine days in Korea, which is relatively higher than an average traveller - all thanks to Korea's offering in the luxury travel segment. The strategies include the curation and offering of high-quality customised services to ensure a luxury experience. The tech-savvy country is now carving its niche in the luxury travel segment by focusing on boutique weddings, wedding anniversaries, golf tours as well as beauty and wellness tourism and exquisite gourmet travel.

Korea offers a garland of luxury options. From pristine nature, culinary culture, activity-based tours, to luxurious hospitality second to none. Korea Luxury Travel Mart has been instrumental in promoting the destination to the well-off Indian traveller. A myriad of online and offline business consultations, global luxury travel conferences, and luxury FAM trips are being organised by the board to establish Korea as a formidable luxury destination.

The Environment Social Governance (ESG) project in Korea aims to open about a hundred destinations, managed by the government, as sustainable hotspots. The government has been planning to reduce the overall carbon footprint, suggesting alternatives to reduce wastage. The tech hub is now emerging as a giant in the luxury tourism market. The rich heritage and culture of Korea is a unique blend of the local traditions along with an eagerness to adapt with the ever-changing modern world.

Choi shared that the pandemic hit the revenue flow and the strategy now involves targeting niche travellers and visitors to Korea. While they have revived 30 to 40 per cent of the pre-pandemic revenue, the strategy is to boost the economy and generate revenue. The move is to target high-income travellers and build the luxury segment. They expect normalcy by next year - projecting revenue levels to reach the pre-pandemic inflow. The organisation is active in hosting both B2B and B2C events across India. A roadshow has been planned for Delhi and Chennai, followed by a B2B roadshow sometime next year.

MAURITIUS

invites Indians to explore beyond its beautiful beaches



Mauritius has witnessed a pent-up demand from all their tourism markets, and the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) is confident about the India market, which has been the sixth largest outbound market for Mauritius. Arvind Bundhun, Director, MTPA, says that Mauritius continues to be an aspirational destination considering its diverse products and attractions and expects to see a boost in Indian arrivals from the honeymoon, weddings, families, MICE and other segments as well.

Manisha Patel

The island nation of Mauritius is known for its crystal-clear waters, picture-perfect beaches, beautiful mountain vistas, and opulent resorts. It is also home to a diverse mix of cultures and races. While Mauritius has long been popular as a honeymoon destination, there is much more to the island than that. MTPA is promoting the island to welcome all segments of tourists such as leisure with affordable luxury, MICE including weddings, FITs, adventure sports, international-level golf courses, filming facilities, wellness, solo travellers, millennials and more.

In order to reach the target audience and inspire travellers to visit Mauritius, MTPA continues to promote the destination with an emphasis on digital platforms and social media in addition to traditional consumer-engaging activities, including mall promotions, radio advertising, and more. "We will continue organising FAM trips for Indian influencers, bloggers, journalists, golfers, film/OTT, and television production houses as they cater to a large number of audiences of potential tourists. We will be more active in the market by conducting different B2B activities such as workshops, participating in premier trade shows like SATTE and OTM, conducting familiarisation trips for tour operators, MICE agents, event management companies, and wedding planners," says Arvind. MTPA in due course is coming out with an advertising plan, B2B joint campaigns, and campaigns with airlines.

A few months back, MTPA launched a campaign "Where Else but Mauritius," which was designed to attract more Indian travellers to explore the wide variety of offerings that make Mauritius one of the most popular travel destinations for Indians. The campaign



▲ Arvind Bundhun

portrayed various facets of the destination and addressed various target groups.

Sharing his views on the Indian outbound travel market, Arvind says, "With a growing economy, growing middle class, and young population, India is ideally positioned to become one of the most lucrative outbound tourism markets in the world. The COVID crisis is nearly at an end and India's economy is slated to grow by over 7 per cent during FY22-23 as per reports published by international economic bodies. As many other economies in the world are not doing so well, the outlook looks buoyant, and India will once again become a sought-after source market. India's sustained economic growth, a large and growing young population, and rising income levels are key factors that will be driving tourism demand in the coming decades."

Presently, Air Mauritius, the flag carrier of

Mauritius, has six weekly direct flights between Mumbai to Mauritius. In addition, there are other air connectivity options available through other hub airports. Visa is free on arrival for Indian passport holders. "Mauritius is open to everyone, both vaccinated and unvaccinated. No testing is needed before flying to Mauritius or on arrival. You do not need to wear a face mask during your holiday. It is only mandatory in airports, during airport transfers, and on public transport, plus in all public places," shares Arvind.

Many hotels in Mauritius have undergone refurbishment and are welcoming guests to their refreshed offerings. The two new attractions of Mauritius - The Splash N Fun Leisure Park, a thrilling and exclusive water-themed park, and Odysseo Oceanarium, the first Oceanarium of the island nation, are not to be missed by travellers visiting Mauritius.

For Indians who are ready to explore and revisit the sun-kissed beach destination, Arvind reminds us, "Mauritius is popular for its long stretches of white sandy beaches, turquoise blue and crystal clear sea waters, natural lagoons, and an exciting variety of underwater life. Beyond beaches, Mauritius offers lots of thrilling land activities for adventure lovers like skydiving, biking, zip lining, trekking, paragliding, and helicopter and seaplane trips. For food lovers, the island offers an impressive array of tantalising dishes from various cuisines and a wide variety of flavoured rum and wine. Mauritius has several natural parks and leisure parks, offering to grasp the wealth of local flora and fauna. Mauritius offers heritage and cultural tours, golfing, wellness, dazzling nightlife, and overall a 360° experience on and beyond the beach. Mauritius offers a customised range of holiday options both in the budget and luxury experiences.

TOURISM MALAYSIA

Showcases lesser-known enchanting getaways

With the adoption of COVID-safety measures being its topmost priority, Tourism Malaysia has geared up with a slew of fascinating and lesser-known destinations for Indian travellers. Datuk Seri Dr. Santhara J P, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia, provides useful insights into the current trending destinations in the country.

Swaati Chaudhury

Be it leisure or business, Malaysia today is open for all segments of travellers. In an attempt to entice Indian leisure and business travellers to Malaysia in the post-COVID world, Tourism Malaysia in association with MATTA (Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents) hosted the Malaysia Travel Exchange in Kolkata on August 19, 2022. Supported by Batik Air and Sabah Tourism, this was the second leg of Tourism Malaysia's roadshow in India which was also held in Visakhapatnam, Cochin and Tiruchirappalli.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Santhara J P explained, "We all have been the victims of the pandemic and have encountered a plethora of challenges. We opened our international borders in April this year. There is visa-on-arrival for Indian tourists heading to Malaysia from South-East Asian countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Brunei and Indonesia. Malaysia is a unique destination starting from Langkawi in the North to Johor Bahru down South. There are exciting destinations, such as Kota Kinabalu in Sabah and Kuching in Sarawak. Once tourists visit these destinations, they will come across a wide range of cuisine, music, art and culture and one-of-a-kind hospitality. There are enchanting destinations, including Genting Highlands and golf courses. The fascinating beaches of Langkawi serve as destination wedding venues for Indians. There are over 200 golf courses in the country that have been



▲ Dr. Santhara J P

rated as one of the best golf destinations in Asia. The best time to jet-set to Malaysia is all round the year."

Tourists contemplating flying down to the country need to plan a holiday for a week and spend a couple of days in Kuala Lumpur, two nights in Malacca and the remaining few days in Penang and Langkawi. They can take a break for shopping and stroll along the beaches. A five-day visit to Malaysia would cost starting from \$300. The Deputy Tourism Minister said, "India is a big source market for Malaysia. Around 60 per cent of Indian travellers visiting Malaysia come from South India owing to better flight connectivity, historical background and geographical position. With a sizeable population of South Indians having settled down in the country, their relatives tend to visit them. Besides, South Indian travellers travel to attend the weddings of their relatives settled in Malaysia. With changing times and several airlines connecting New Delhi and other cities in North India with Kuala Lumpur, the high-spending Indian tourists

are from North India." He also pointed out that West Bengal contributes around 30 per cent of Indian travellers to Malaysia.

"Malaysia is emerging as a popular destination for medical tourists from Kolkata. We are pushing a slew of destinations with our trade partners such as Desaru Coast, Kota Kinabalu, Malacca, Genting Highlands, Langkawi and Terengganu in West Malaysia," further said the Deputy Tourism Minister. Terengganu is close to Taman Negara National Park, a premier national park in the country.

To provide assurance to global visitors and instill confidence among them on COVID-safety norms, MATTA has formed an alliance with the Malaysian Association of Hotels, Malaysian Aviation Group, Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers to set up Travel Safe Alliance Malaysia (TSAM) that has rolled out an extensive global safe travel solution certified by Bureau Veritas Certification. This has been approved by the Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia.

For double-dosed travellers, travelling to Malaysia is quarantine-free without any hassle of undergoing RTPCR tests before departure and on arrival. Dr. Santhara added, "Nearly 7,35,811 Indian tourists toured Malaysia in 2019. We had around 1,55,000 arrivals from India in 2020. As of now, we have received around 70,000 Indian travellers in the current year and we are targeting to have about 1 lakh Indian visitors by the year-end. We usually target about 2 million global visitors and the global footfalls will be 5 million by the year-end. With 3.9 million arrivals, China contributes the highest number of global travellers to Malaysia. We are engaged in both traditional physical campaigns and online promotions for our trade engagements." South-East Asian countries like Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei and India are the five major tourist markets of Malaysia.

To tap the outbound tourism potential in the eastern region of India during the upcoming festive season, Batik Air (formerly known as Malindo Air) is all set to resume its flight operations in the Kolkata-Kuala Lumpur sector from October 1, 2022.



Malacca



FRANCE:

Quintessential and endless tourism experiences

France has remained a coveted destination in Europe for the Indian traveller and its capital, Paris is a dream city for many to visit. Sheetal

Munshaw, Director, Atout France India feels that the country is positioned as a most sought-after destination through its repertoire of versatile opportunities to discover or rediscover. Some of the most iconic places as well as some of the most unparalleled experiences can be indulged through adventure, cuisine, oenology, fashion, savoir-faire, art de vivre, and the living legacy of all the values that France stands for.

Prashant Nayak

Vistara operate direct flights to Paris

There has been a noteworthy increase in the number of venues, restaurants, and installations and re-openings of renowned institutions across France in the recent past. For instance, Paris saw the re-opening of the emblematic department store Samaritaine, which has been completely redesigned in its new avatar. The historic Hotel de la Marine has also seen a complete refurbishment and has been open to visitors since June 2021. In the chic seaside resort of Deauville, the Franciscan Sisters Convent has been reinvented as a hybrid cultural venue that is part museum, part media library, and part performance space. The town of Dijon, famous for its mustard, is also now a proud home to the prestigious International City of Gastronomy, which pays homage to French gastronomy. In the historic Roman city of Arles, located in South France, stands proud and tall, the Luma Arles - a 21st-century factory for the visual arts. The Luma Tower contains exhibition spaces for major events, archives and seminar rooms, a library, a café-restaurant, and a terrace with breathtaking views of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

To promote and position the destination as one of the most preferred destinations for Indian travellers, Sheetal says, "We aim to showcase France's signature areas of expertise such as gastronomy and wine, its innate art de vivre, savoir-faire, nightlife, sustainable tourism and its signature destinations through our various collaborations and initiatives. Our target audience is primarily the FIT traveller and our campaigns are more oriented towards families, the indulgent traveller, and friends on a holiday, and women travellers in addition to the niche segments of weddings and incentives."

No sooner than the borders opened up and the restrictions to travel were relaxed, Atout France started to engage on the B2B front with key stakeholders from the travel trade this included highly targeted familiarisation trips, B2B showcases in France, their first collaborative event with their Middle East and Israel office at the World Expo held in Dubai which had an Indian delegation as well. Influencer trips, media FAMs, digital campaigns and select events were also initiated.

"In the coming months, we have our flagship event, our B2B showcase, Explore France that will take place in Udaipur next month after a gap of three years. For the first time, we have record participation of 42 French suppliers motivated to interact and engage with the Indian travel trade. In addition, we are also actively going to engage with the trade through our global E-learning programme scheduled to launch towards the end of the year. On the communication front, we are very active on our social media platforms and have a slew of communication initiatives and collaborations planned from now till the end of the year ensuring an active and sustained recall of Brand France through online and offline platforms," shares Sheetal.

Moreover, in the last few years, at Atout France, they have seen a rise in the number of marriages taking place in Paris and the South of France. Keeping this in mind, they are actively engaging in a showcase of France from this perspective. In the last seven months, at least two large-scale Indian weddings have taken place in Paris and Cannes with the privatisation of exclusive venues. In addition, France is also gaining appeal as a destination



▲ Sheetal Munshaw

for film and OTT shootings. "Last November, an episode of the very popular OTT series, "Made in Heaven" season 2, was shot entirely on the French Riviera. The Department of the region also financially backed the project. We are actively engaging with both domains to reinforce France's positioning in these two domains," informs Sheetal.

France lifted all COVID restrictions for international travellers on August 1, 2022. There is no longer a requirement for RT-PCR or vaccination proof to enter France. Visas are being issued as promptly as possible, considering the current circumstances. Flights are regularly operating to France from different Indian hubs. As of now, Air France, Air India, and

'Value your team and rest all is taken care off'

Battles are fought by soldiers, but the wisdom of battle-hardened generals set the dice rolling with their battle plans, strategy, and scenarios. The corporate world works on similar lines, and organisations and companies of today are run by CEOs, CCOs, COOs, CTOs, and CFOs. The travel industry is no different today. We have a battery of professional senior executives who bring in their vision, expertise, and knowledge combined with years of understanding of market dynamics to the table. TTJ had a tête-à-tête with Aarish Khan, Chief Commercial Officer – India Business, TBO.com, to know more about him and his journey in the industry over the last 18 years.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

What motivated you to choose travel industry as a career? How do you view your professional growth over the years?

From an early age, I was fascinated to travel and see the whole world through my eyes, observing and experiencing varied cultures, landscapes, and people, and then, as destiny would have it after completing my BBA, I joined the travel industry. I adore my profession and have now been associated with the industry for over 18 years.

Over the years, I have personally

observed that the travel industry has a huge potential and so much more can be tested and tried in this dynamic industry. This keeps me charged and always on my toes.

My effective 18 years have been very fascinating and challenging, having observed various changes, advancements, and new evolving ideas, which have now made customised travel products available instantaneously with a click of a button.

Professionally, my journey from a Reservations Manager to Chief

Commercial Officer – India Business of TBO has been in and around brilliant minds who indeed boosted my career and groomed me personally on my soft skills and behavioural aspects. I believe various on-the-job exposures and learnings are the real opportunities that every individual should capitalise on and learn from.

My hunger for performing and delivering is hand in glove with various teams and people across the industry that I get connected with. The more you expand your horizon, the more is the learning.

Analysing competition, their approach to the market, viewpoints, and their best practices helps me learn and contribute more to my team and organisation.

What are the three key challenges within your workspace?

Hiring the Right Talent

I believe hiring the right talent is the most critical task for any organization. I participate at all major industry events, to spot and identify talent and ensure that identifying the right talent is never missed. I focus on the will, skill and zeal of the individual. This at times is very challenging but it keeps your ear close to the ground and opportunity to bond with the team you hire.

Time Management

I make an effort to stay connected with all, even during my personal time, however, there are times when even I could be hard pressed for time. Nevertheless, I ensure that I address this challenge by connecting back at the very next available window or opportunity.

Ensuring a WOW Delivery every time

When excellence becomes a habit, is easier said than done, and delivering a WOW every time is challenging. Nevertheless, all efforts made in this direction are worth the time and energy spent. Excellence lies in details and has a direct impact, not just on the existing but future business. I maintain my connection with all my colleagues and stakeholders at all levels. This ensures me a detailed insight into the cause and effect of action and learnings for future realignment.

What is the most valuable lesson that your career has taught you so far?

My mantra is: Value your team and rest all is taken care of.

What leadership lessons have you learned from the pandemic? How do you keep your team motivated and inspired?

- The lessons that I have learned are:
- Always practice self-awareness
- Be willing to talk about difficult subjects
- Serve as a role model in all situations

Lead from within and go with your gut feeling

For the team we ensured:

- We empower our managers to Lead Change
- Maintain consistent communication with industry and partners

- Being supportive to our employees and engaged on a daily basis
- Focused on learning and development

What do you enjoy most about your job?

The very fascinating aspect of my job is its ever-dynamic nature, as it keeps me and my team constantly on our feet. Exchanging brilliant ideas across teams and with industry colleagues is the major driving force behind the spinning wheel.

What are your greatest accomplishments so far?

My vision has been very clear, and I work upon them diligently, without losing focus. I feel blessed that all planned activities have been accomplished well to date.

My desire to lead by example has yielded results, and efforts made were well recognised across the board by CEO Insights magazine which listed me among the top 20 CCOs of 2021.

Balancing the personal front is indeed critical, and I put sincere effort to ensure my family life and work life do not conflict.

What do you hope to accomplish in the travel industry over the next five years?

There are a lot of things that need alignment or improvement within the supply chain. I do not intend to spin the wheel in a different direction but enhance upon capitalisation of existing resources through the use and incorporation of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, which I foresee will shape the future.

What is the best way to communicate with your team and business associates?

Listening to your team is very critical to any business. It provides you with insight and market feedback. Creating a receptive environment thus becomes very critical and articulating this feedback and insight into actions is what I believe in by displaying confidence and seriousness across the team. I brainstorm at every turn with my team to understand the opportunity and scenario and formulate ideas that can be used.

How do you use your downtime between travel, at airports, layovers, or in the air?

I spend a lot of time reading during these hours and pondering over the various reports, business insights, industry views, and studying the competition. This not only supports me to utilize my time but keeps me updated too.

How do you find a balance between work and personal life?

I acknowledge that there is no perfect work-life balance or an ideal scenario, but I ensure that my personal time is well shared with loved ones, my two lovely kids, and my wife. I ensure that catering to my family and friends is my natural healer and they rejuvenate me for the next challenge. I appreciate my wife's endeavors to be hand in glove with me on this journey all this while.

As a travel industry professional, tell us about the 'Power of Travel'?

Travel is no more a luxury. It is a necessity that is so dynamic that it demands grooming every single day. Thus, we observe various mediums and products that have emerged, catering to the minutest of details of an individual with various permutations and combinations. The industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry worldwide, and the same applies to its contribution to our domestic economy. It not only creates multiple jobs, empowers people, improves the standard of living, and enhances infrastructure, but also unites everyone.

In a nutshell, travel and tourism has become one of the most important sectors in the world economy, accounting for 10 per cent of global GDP. UNWTO has also recognized that this sector employs 1 in 10 people globally. Harnessing innovation and digitalization, embracing local values, and creating decent jobs for all, especially for youth and women, should be at the forefront of tourism recovery.

A seismic shift in traveller needs and demands post-pandemic is now visible. What will be the key factors that will shape the future of travel in India?

Hygiene has been a part of our personal grooming but is now a critical part and aspect of travel need which has emerged post-COVID. The pandemic created a major shift towards domestic travel and to various tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Travellers have discovered newer destinations, and are now exploring relatively unknown small, remote locations, with family and friends expanding the travel horizon.

I have always believed in innovative ideas, tools and technology, thus I feel that artificial intelligence and machine learning will really be the key factors in shaping the way we see the future of travel.

TAFI 2022 Convention aimed at boosting India and Sarawak's tourism ties

After a four-year hiatus, the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has announced its Convention in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia from September 20-23, 2022. TAFI had previously held conventions in Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu in 1999 and 2007 respectively. This will be its third convention in Malaysia. Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI believes that TAFI Conventions are always eagerly awaited and they expect an excellent turnout of delegates and speakers. With us, Ajay shares more on the Convention.

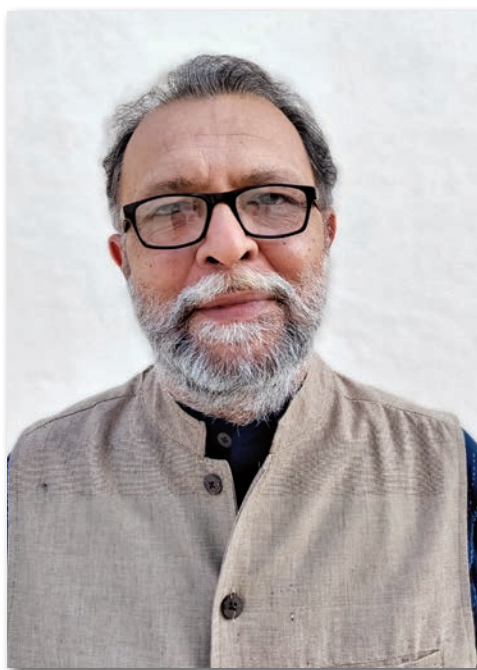
Prashant Nayak

The agenda of the TAFI 2022 Convention is to help the Indian travel trade discover the untapped province of Sarawak in Malaysia. The Convention will feature several speakers, which include industry players, state government representatives, as well as leaders from the tourism industry who will be engaging in stimulating dialogues as well as ways to build resilience as the tourism industry moves beyond the pandemic.

Stating the reasons as to why the Convention is being held in Sarawak and at this time of the year, Ajay says, "We have not had a TAFI Convention since 2018. With the pandemic receding, flights resuming and restrictions easing, our members were looking for a convention in a new and unexplored destination. Also, the support of Tourism Malaysia, Sarawak Tourism Board, Business Events Sarawak, and Malaysia Airlines has made it possible to hold the Convention."

Focusing on building a more resilient tourism industry and responsible tourism post-pandemic, TAFI Convention 2022 has incorporated 'BUILD BACK BETTER' as its theme to promote sustainable and responsible tourism practices, conservation, and advanced greening efforts. Elaborating on the theme, Ajay shares, "Essentially, it's a call to the travel and tourism industry to heed the lessons of the pandemic. We have all suffered unimaginably over two years and we have to realise that Mother Nature has a way of getting back if you do not respect her. The industry needs to evolve business practices that are more sensitive, responsible, and sustainable."

The pandemic has led to travellers rethinking how they experience the world and are now looking to visit often overlooked destinations and locations. Ajay thinks Sarawak as a destination has the potential to generate more interest among TAFI members and get the



▲ Ajay Prakash

required mileage from the convention. He amplifies, "Sarawak is a relatively unexplored destination for the Indian traveller. But it's a great destination for family travel, adventure activities, film shoots, destination weddings, and corporate events. The Borneo Convention Centre in Kuching is state-of-the-art and I see great potential. Also, Sarawak is at the forefront of responsible, sustainable eco-tourism and is the ideal destination to begin our journey to BUILD BACK BETTER."

Sarawak is located on the island of Borneo, the third largest island in the world, and it is the largest state in Malaysia, covering an area of nearly 125,000 sq km in the Borneo land mass. Sarawak, while revealing another side of Asia unlike anywhere else, offers an alternative for those seeking humble authenticity far from the tourist-trap clichés. The place has developed its own very distinctive culture, completely different from what you would find in mainland Malaysia.

As per Ajay, stimulating knowledge

sessions with lively discussion, exciting pre and post-Convention FAM tours, a productive and instructional B2B interaction with the Malaysian travel trade, member networking, bonding and some great entertainment are the highlights to watch out for at the Convention.

TAFI organises workshops, seminars, and conventions for their members in different parts of the world and India, and preference is given to destinations where TAFI members can offer some new options to their clients for leisure travel, MICE and weddings. Each destination has experienced exponential growth in numbers after the TAFI Convention. Sarawak Tourism Board was promoting Sarawak to India since 2019 and this was a wonderful opportunity to strengthen and boost respective tourism industries.

Anticipating new and fresh ideas for recovery, the Convention this year is slated to have greater participation and create a major impact on the TAFI delegates. Ajay states, "We have had an excellent response from our membership and we should achieve our target. TAFI Conventions have always been well attended and this will be no exception."

Sharing his observations on the current Indian outbound travel market, Ajay shares, "The outbound market here is very strong. It is three times the number as compared to incoming tourists. The high airfares and visa log jam has been a hurdle to the full revival of outbound travel, hopefully, that will ease in time for people to travel during the holiday season later in the year. Another unique fact is that families travel together. Often you might have three generations travelling together, that doesn't happen so much in other markets. The rising dollar and the visa backlog have led to people opting for more affordable destinations or destinations with no visa/easy visa regulations. I expect we will surpass pre-COVID outbound numbers by next summer."

'TAFI Convention, an added value for Sarawak's foray into India market'

Sarawak, a less-crowded destination in Malaysia with an abundance of natural resources matches the travel behaviour of post-pandemic traveller in selecting the destination of choice. Dr. Fency Sivadasan, Senior Manager, Research Division, Sarawak Tourism Board (STB), says that the tourism board is expecting the TAFI Convention as a pull factor to attract Indian outbound travellers to Sarawak due to its low population density, sustainable ecosystem, and authenticity.

Prashant Nayak

Sarawak Tourism Board has taken various steps to create a sustainable tourism industry since 2011. Given its rich multi-ethnic culture, vast geographical landscape, and impressive biodiversity, Sarawak is a haven for modern tourists who prefer tailored tourism products that suit their interests and passions. STB's primary focus during this post-pandemic travel is based on responsible tourism through sustainable actions.

Sarawak's unique selling points are Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festival (CANFF). These are their signature products as well. For the cultural aspect, the state has 28 ethnic tribal communities. Tourists can able to experience their culture, traditions, food, and way of life. For adventure lovers, Sarawak offers a wide range of activities such as cave tours, mountain climbing, hiking in the national parks, trekking, and forest walk. Sarawak has been blessed with 47 national parks, and out of these, 34 national parks are open for visitors.

Stating the USPs of the biggest state of Malaysia, Fency shares, "The Gunung Mulu National Park, which is gazetted as UNESCO's world heritage site in the year 2000, consists of one of the oldest caves around the world situated in Sarawak. The state has the oldest rainforests and different species of birds and animals. There are a lot of activities the tourists can enjoy and experience the rich flora and fauna of Sarawak through activities like bird watching, frog tours, forest walks, photography, and fishing. Sarawak's longhouse and stay provide the tourists an abundance of joy and they can completely immerse themselves in the authentic culture and nature of Sarawak. The warm hospitality of the local communities gives an add-value to this experiential travel. The state's two iconic festivals are Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF) and Borneo Jazz Festival, where tourists enjoy the festivals in a unique venue in Sarawak Culture Village surrounded by dense rainforest."



▲ Dr. Fency Sivadasan

The main driving force of STB hosting the TAFI Convention 2022 in Kuching is to strengthen Sarawak's presence in the India market and to enhance the visibility of Sarawak among Indian outbound travellers. "TAFI Convention is a platform for Sarawak tourism industry stakeholders to get to know about the trends and patterns of the Indian outbound tourist market, their food habits, and product preferences in Sarawak. Through this convention, our tour operators, travel agents, and accommodation providers might learn and understand "how to cater to Indian tourists" in the near future. We want to motivate Indian consumers to include Sarawak in their travel bucket list and to make it one of their favourite destinations. The convention will also work as a better platform for STB's plan of direct airline connectivity from Sarawak to the tier 2 cities in India. Thus, the TAFI Convention gives an added value for Sarawak's entry into the India market," says Fency.

"Through TAFI Convention 2022, the Indian tourism stakeholders will also have a chance to understand that this lesser-known destination has a lot of tourism potential to explore. They can identify

Sarawak's political stability to make the state a business-friendly destination. STB foresees that, for the future events of TAFI, its members can able to choose Sarawak as the venue without any hesitation," adds Fency.

The India market is one of STB's new market focus since 2018. The statistics of visitor arrivals to Sarawak showed that this biggest consumer market placed as the top five contributing visitor arrivals to Sarawak. Hence, the Board gives topical importance to the marketing and promotion of Sarawak in the India market. Their data shows that 26,791 Indian tourists visited Sarawak in 2019.

The airline connectivity to Sarawak from India is via transit, either in Kuala Lumpur (KUL) airport or at the Singapore airport. Indian tourists who wish to visit Sarawak can use a Malaysia visa, which will be provided by the Malaysian consulate offices in India. They can use a tourist visa to enter Sarawak.

The current marketing strategy of STB is an integrated marketing approach (online and offline) for their promotions. Based on this, they promote their tourism products and activities to Indian outbound markets through product updates, webinars, and B2B sessions.

STB conducted the 'Indian Tourism Stakeholders' response survey about Sarawak during ITB India. About this survey, Fency reveals, "The survey results indicated that the Indian consumer's tourism interests in Sarawak are, experiencing rainforests and mountains, national parks and wildlife tours, visiting caves and waterfalls, MICE/ Team building activities, adventure tours such hiking and mountain climbing, beach tour and sunset, orangutan rehabilitation and wildlife conservation. Hence, Sarawak Tourism's tailor-made packages for Indian visitors are a mix of these offerings with warm hospitality and nature-friendly accommodation as well. With the same, Indian visitors can experience a fantastic holiday in Sarawak."

Sustainability to be the heart of TAFI Convention 2022

There is certainly a great deal of excitement about the upcoming TAFI Convention 2022, where more than 500 TAFI members are expected to attend the event at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCKK). TTJ takes this opportunity to interact with Seeraj Sabharwal, Convention Chairman, Jigar Dudakiya, Deputy Chairman, TAFI Convention Committee, and Anil Kalsi, Joint Secretary, TAFI to get feedback on the destination and highlights of the most anticipated Convention.

Prashant Nayak

The TAFI managing committee visited Kuching in July 2022 to conduct multiple site inspections and visit YB Dato Sri Haji Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, Minister of Tourism, Creative Industry, and Performing Arts Sarawak (MTCP). After their recce, the committee felt that Sarawak had a great potential to become a popular destination in the India market because after the pandemic the present generation is greatly concerned about the planet, conservation, and sustainability. Hence, the sustainability factor will be the heart of the Convention.



▲ Seeraj Sabharwal

Speaking about the host destination, Seeraj Sabharwal said, "Sarawak is famed for its astonishing national parks and biodiversity, rich cultural heritage, and nature reserves. Sarawak's rich ethnic diversity offers a uniquely local experience at the very moment you step off the plane. TAFI has often organised conventions in unique and unusual locations to expand the portfolio of travel agents and tour operators of India and Sarawak simply amazed us."

According to Seeraj, the response so far has been great as the TAFI Convention is happening after a gap of four years. At the Convention, they will be having extensive business sessions for two days with some great speakers and are actively looking forward to the B2B engagements with the Malaysian travel agents. The Convention package will be inclusive of 3 nights' pre or



▲ Jigar Dudakiya

post-Convention tours to beautiful places within Malaysia. Hence, the Convention committee anticipates many more members registering.

"We have received a lot of support from our Convention partners i.e. Tourism Malaysia, Sarawak Tourism Board, MyCEB, Malaysian Airlines, Business Events Sarawak, BCKK, The Pullman Hotel, and The Waterfront Hotel to name a few who are as excited and awaiting the arrival of the travel agents from India," affirms Seeraj.

The Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCKK), with its state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, is the first international purpose-built Convention centre in Kuching. The centre can host up to 5000 people with uninterrupted Wi-Fi internet services for up to 8000 simultaneous users. Both the host hotels, The Sarawak Waterfront Hotel and The Pullman Hotel, offer panoramic city and river views.

Sharing more about the destination, Jigar Dudakiya said, "After we visited Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, I found simply the city to be very unique. No other city in Malaysia has such a romantic and unlikely history, nor displays its charms with such easy grace. The residents of Kuching take great pride in their fascinating city, which is reflected in their attitude to visitors. Kuching's city centre is well preserved and very compact; virtually everything worth seeing can be reached on foot or by sampan."

Regarding the 3 night's pre or post-Convention



▲ Anil Kalsi

tours, Jigar informed, "We are going to cover 4 pre tours like Kuching, Kuala Lumpur with Genting, Melaka (Mallaca) with Port Dickson, and Selangor and 4 post tours to Johor, Langkawi, Penang and Kota Kinabalu. Each tour covers the main sightseeing places, along with upcoming tourist attractions. All tours are for 3 nights, 4 days. So members will have a great experience during the 7 days, including the Convention and tours."

On speaking to Anil Kalsi about the Convention, Kalsi had similar opinions to share, "TAFI is always focused on adding value in multiple terms to its membership. Our Convention is one of our initiatives in the same direction. We keep the price very realistic for our members. The inclusions are tremendous, as the cost includes the ticket, visa fee, and business session. For a very insignificant add-on, we also offer pre and post-tours to members, so that they get to experience the destination closely and imbibe hands-on experience to market it better in their area of work. Our business sessions are good learning experiences in a focused environment."

"Our convention theme, 'Build Back Together' underlines our focus. Travel is evolving and so are the remuneration and marketing patterns. We will try to disseminate as much relevant knowledge as possible. Our delegates are travel professionals and they will become ambassadors of the host country on their return. Malaysia will see a resurgence in arrivals from India post the convention," assures Anil.

Today's travel scenario demands dynamic travel protection solutions

Asego's vision is to bridge the gap between static offerings available in the market and the traveller's true needs. In an exclusive interview with TTJ, Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO, Asego, assures us of their commitment to providing partners and customers with a wide range of innovative and tailor-made travel protection solutions.

Team TTJ

What are the benefits offered by Asego to travellers attending the TAFI convention in Malaysia?

Ensuring a safe trip for travellers, be it on land, air or sea, has always been our foremost priority. Being TAFI's preferred travel protection partner for over a decade, Asego is offering complimentary global assistance with insurance to all delegates attending the upcoming convention in Malaysia.

With our exclusively curated protection cover, all delegates can avail of benefits such as medical emergency cover including COVID-19, emergency medical evacuation, protection against loss of valuables like passport and baggage along with relevant assistance services including doctor-on-call, medical services provider referral and much more.

Could you elaborate on the vision that drives Asego?

Right from the inception of Asego, our vision has been to bridge the gap between static offerings available in the market and the traveller's true needs. We have always worked towards being a dynamic travel ancillary solutions provider not only to customers but also to our clients with a strong focus on their business growth. We aspire to lead product innovations beyond insurance and our experience in the global markets has been instrumental in achieving this for an emerging market like India. Moreover, we are constantly moving towards upgraded technology to empower our customers with dynamic offerings. We are also constantly enhancing medical assistance capabilities, which are at the heart of our business.

What do you think are the major risks today's travellers are facing, and what role does Asego play in mitigating those?

Recent travel volumes have skyrocketed with the gradual dissipation of COVID-19 around the globe, and so has travel related risks. Eventualities such as missed/delayed



▲ Dev Karvat

flights and hotel/ flight cancellations are inevitable when it comes to travel. However, we have recently witnessed a huge spike in newer travel risks such as loss and damage of gadgets, cyber security issues, identity theft, credit/debit card fraud, etc. amongst travellers.

Asego has been working tirelessly to identify and mitigate these risks with comprehensive travel assistance and insurance solutions. Our bouquet of offerings not only takes care of medical emergencies and other travel-related inconveniences but also ensures that travellers are protected against the aforementioned travel risks. Further, our carefully curated standalone products offer travellers an opportunity to customise their protection plans as per their needs and preferences, rather than opting for a plain vanilla travel insurance product.

New travel insurance products by various companies are being introduced in the market every day. What are the factors that differentiate Asego's offering from the rest?

Asego has always strived for customer delight. And to achieve that, it is imperative to understand the travellers' needs and provide them with tailor-made solutions to

ensure a hassle-free trip. Some factors that differentiate Asego from the rest are:

Fast track claims support: Our travel assistance and insurance products are powered by 24/7 fast track claims support and expert teams present across the globe ensure that the travellers are fully protected, no matter where they are.

Customisable protection plans: Our bouquet of travel assistance services and new-age bundled products have always been customer favourites. Nevertheless, we realised that tailoring offerings at a micro level are the need of the hour. We are now offering an array of relevant standalone products, such as emergency OPD expenses, quarantine cancellations, cruise cover, and flight delay/interruption covers, pertinent to the current scenario.

Cutting-edge technology platform: As we all know, AI and machine learning are key to the ever-evolving Insurtech market. Asego has been leveraging these tech capabilities to create a specialised system which helps us understand our customers more deeply and creates a customised user experience, helping them choose the right plan for their needs.

What kind of global assistance services does Asego provide to its customers?

We are one of India's leading global assistance and travel insurance providers. Asego's services are not just limited to facilitating claims processes, but also provide real-time assistance services to travellers. Our services include 24X7 global medical assistance, roadside assistance, family protection and concierge assistance, along with insurance. During these unprecedented times, we also provide doctor-on-call services, support during baggage loss, missed flights, advice on COVID-19 protocols in different countries and other related services.

Furthermore, we provide medical service-related referrals to customers requiring hospitals, clinics, chemists, diagnostic centres, etc. This is not just for the traveller but also for their family back home.

Sarawak

A Journey Awaits



Revealing a side unlike anywhere else in Asia, Sarawak welcomes you to start on an unforgettable lifetime journey as they emerged beyond the pandemic. Find out what it means to encounter diversity in Sarawak's culture, adventure, nature, food and festivals while traveling responsibly. Come; let's discover the undiscovered in Sarawak!

Team TTJ

Welcome to Sarawak, the Land of the Hornbills

Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia with, as of 2020, a low-density population of 2.9 million people. Home to one of the largest

pristine rainforests in the world with 28 ethnic groups living harmoniously together against a backdrop of age-old heritage and elements of modernity, Sarawak is a destination blessed with a plethora of culture, adventure, nature, food and festivals unlike anywhere else.

Sarawak offers an alternative for those seeking humble authenticity far from the tourist-trap clichés. A traveller to Sarawak can choose to experience Sarawak in a variety of ways – whether it's sharing in the lifestyles of the many indigenous

tribes at their longhouses, exploring gigantic caves at the iconic Gunong Mulu National Park which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, chasing the adrenaline rush of kayaking through Sarawak's rivers or revelling in the architectural splendours of colonial buildings across all regions in the state.

Hornbills are no stranger to



Rhinoceros hornbill



Proboscis Monkey

the people of Sarawak. To see a hornbill, especially in the wild, is an unforgettable experience for tourists and people in the conservation field. The rhinoceros hornbills (*Buceros rhinoceros*), locally known as Kenyalang, is regarded as a bird of significant importance in Sarawak's local cultures. It is also used as the state's emblem. Sarawak or rather, the whole Borneo Island, has eight species of hornbills. Another distinctive animal to be seen in Sarawak is the Proboscis monkey, a large primate with unique characteristic features between its males and females and are exclusively found in the rainforests of Borneo. The male Proboscis monkey is not only one of the largest

mammals, having a long and fleshy nose and a large, swollen stomach.

Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, is simply unique

No other city in Malaysia has such a romantic and unlikely



Sarawak Kek Lapis

origin stories attached to it. The word 'kucing', for example, means 'cat' in Malay. There are several stories as to how the name 'Kuching' came about, but it is unlikely that it has anything to do with cats. The two more likely explanations are that it derives from the Chinese word 'kochin', meaning 'harbour' or that it is named after the mata kucing or 'cat's eye' fruit, a close relative of the lychee that grows widely here.

Kuching welcomes visitors warmly, but it does not put on an act for them. Instead, it goes about its own business in a relaxed manner that hasn't changed in over 160 years. To make the most of your visit, you must put on your walking shoes, take to the streets (and the water), and join in.

Like all towns and cities in Borneo, the focal point of Kuching and the reason for its existence is the river. Hiring a sampan to meander slowly up and down the Sarawak River is the best way to get your first impression of Kuching. From the river, you will see picturesque Malay villages (kampung), the Floating Mosque, a Victorian-styled Fort Margherita, a whole street of 19th-century Chinese shophouses and an imposing wooden-roofed palace, all set against a background of distant mountains.

Kuching's city centre is well preserved and very compact; virtually everything worth seeing can be reached on foot or by sampan. The narrow, bustling streets are crammed with shops selling all manner of goods, from the mundane to the exotic. There are ornate Chinese temples, many fine examples of colonial-style architecture, a beautiful waterfront and a number of interesting museums.

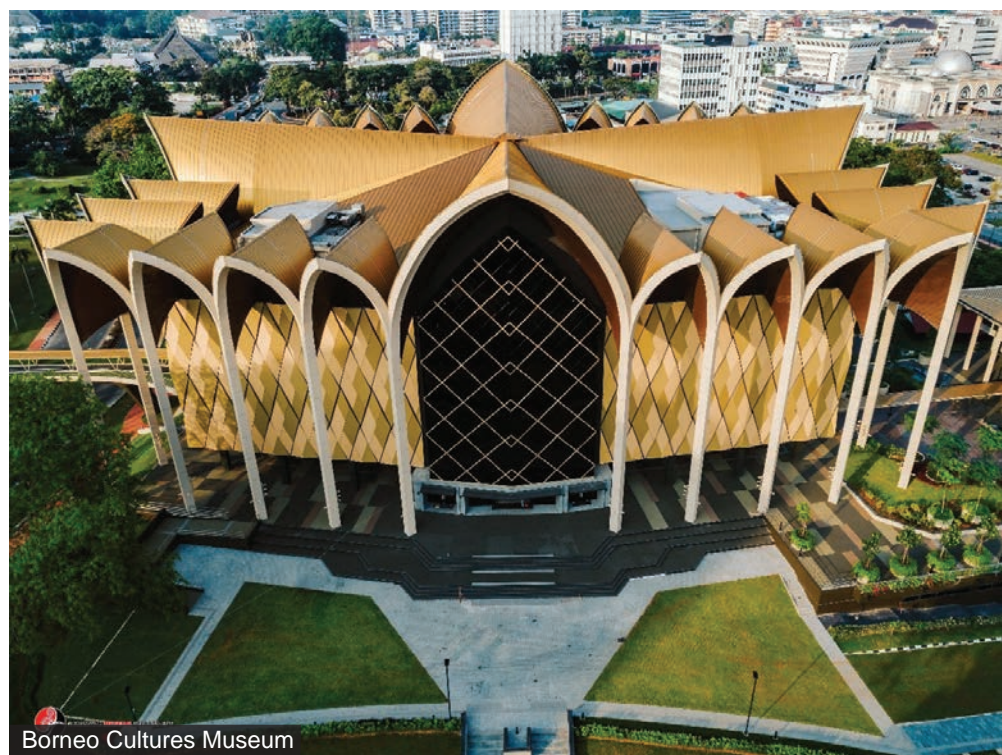
Step into the brand-new iconic



Long House Experience

monkeys in Asia but they are also one of the world's most distinctive

The 'Cat City' of Kuching has an unusual name with a number of



Borneo Cultures Museum



Kuching City

museum building – the Borneo Cultures Museum! The world-class repository is equipped with a state-of-the-art exhibition boasting five levels of gallery and exhibition spaces showcasing over a thousand artefacts that represent Sarawak’s amazing culture. Borneo Cultures Museum is also the second-largest museum in Southeast Asia with a total of 6,726 square metres of exhibition space. It will be one of the best and most inspiring museum visits ever!

There is an excellent range of accommodations, from luxury to boutique to budget, good restaurants, and nightlife to suit most tastes and pockets. You can try local delicacies such as the Sarawak Laksa, dubbed the “Breakfast of Gods” by the late Anthony Bourdain, ‘midin’ a type of jungle fern, ‘Ayam Pansuh’ chicken cooked in bamboo, drink a glass or two of tuak (local rice wine), or feast on a vast array of seafood dishes.

Sarawak is a unique and enjoyable

tourism destination, and Kuching is the ideal base from which to go exploring. The nearby national parks



The Astana, Kuching

include the famous Bako, home of the rare proboscis monkey, Gunung Gading, where giant rafflesia flowers bloom, Kuching Wetlands National Park, a Ramsar site that protects a

fascinating mangrove ecosystem, Kubah, with its rare palms and orchids, and Semenggoh and Matang Wildlife Centres with their resident orangutans. Hundreds of Iban and Bidayuh longhouses are within easy travelling distance. Damai, on the nearby Santubong Peninsula, is Sarawak’s main resort area, and many travel agents offer “two-centre” packages allowing you to explore Kuching, go on a longhouse trip, visit Bako and the rainforest and then relax on the beach after the rigours of jungle trekking.

Sarawak’s biggest and renowned orangutan rehabilitation centre, Semenggoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, which is only 20 km from Kuching City, is a sanctuary for the conservation of the orangutans in their natural habitat.

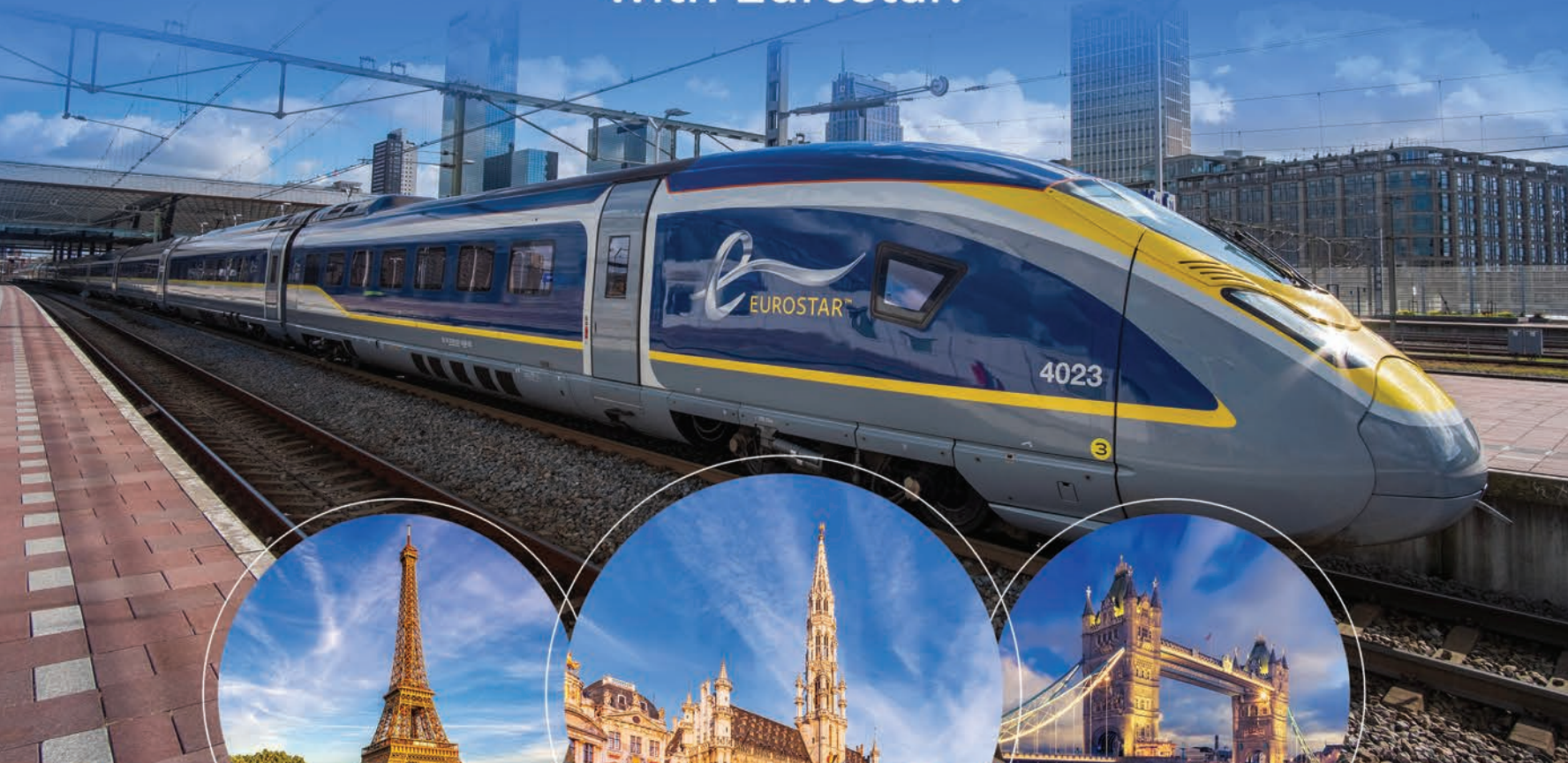
Kuching is also the ideal base for visiting longhouses. Local travel agents have a variety of tours, ranging from half-day trips to nearby Bidayuh longhouses, to week-long safaris, to Iban longhouses on the Skrang, Lemanak and Batang Ai river systems.

The world-renowned music festival, Rainforest World Music Festival (often abbreviated as RWMF), an annual three-day music festival celebrating the diversity of world music is also held in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, with daytime music workshops, cultural displays, craft displays, food stalls, and main-stage evening concerts. The next Rainforest World Music Festival will return next year from 23 to 25 June, so mark your calendars!



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Malaysia Airlines

crafting flexible options to suit different traveller needs

Malaysia Airlines currently operates 29 weekly flights from five major cities in India, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai. Amit Mehta, Country Manager- South Asia, Malaysia Airlines, India, hopes to achieve pre-COVID capacity back for India market. The airline is keen on increasing its frequencies by the year-end to cater to growing demands and will be adding new routes when the opportunity arises.

Manisha Patel

While the reopening of global borders has accelerated air travel recovery, airlines are currently facing significant headwinds with high fuel prices. The current Russian-Ukraine conflict has raised concerns and challenges in managing operational cost, which is directly impacted by the escalating fuel price. All companies within Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) have taken immediate steps to manage the impact of higher fuel costs. Safety remains the top priority for MAG and measures have been taken to avoid conflict zone.

"We continue to closely monitor the level of capacity coming into the market as all airlines rush to ramp up operations. The challenge is to work towards the right level of supply of seats versus the level of demand that is expected to exist in the market. Too much supply and we are likely to see a price war which is unhealthy and unsustainable. The airline is pro-actively managing its capacity to mitigate unprofitable routes due to rising fuel costs," says Amit.

However, with support from sister airlines under MAG: Malaysia Airlines, Firefly, MASwings, and AMAL, they will progressively ramp up capacity and introduce new strategic routes over the coming months given the reopening of borders to international destinations, as they anticipate travel demand for international travel to pick up.

Returning to positive cash flow is a critical milestone on the road to recovery for the airlines. "The restructuring the MAG undertook in 2021 allowed us to repair our balance sheet holistically and address decades-long legacy issues, reducing the group's liabilities of over RM15 billion, and eliminating RM10 billion in debt. Lower operating costs from its cost savings initiatives across the group and lower leasing costs post its successful restructuring further



▲ Amit Mehta

contributed to the improved performance in 2021," briefs Amit.

Since Malaysia fully reopened its borders on April 1, 2022, the airline has seen a positive response from travellers eager to resume their travels and 'reconnect' with the world. Since then, ticket sales have been showing substantial growth with more than 100 per cent. They are currently looking at very encouraging advanced booking on Malaysia Airlines with more than 80 per cent load factor on most flights. Destinations such as London, Australia, New Zealand, and India are among those that have registered healthy load factors for forward booking.

Malaysia Airlines continues to attract customers with its exciting offerings, including the Malaysia Airlines Travel Fair (MATF) which offered holiday goers great deals on airfares to dream destinations like Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand to name a few.

Ultimately, as a premium airline, Malaysia

Airlines takes pride in offering flexibility to its guests. They have introduced various fares for families that offer highly flexible and convenient perks, including free flight changes. For example, their MHflypass ASEAN is a travel pass that allows for three return trips within 12 cities at a fixed rate within one year. They also extended the 'Bonus Side Trip' programme to India, allowing passengers to add an extra leg to their journey and explore cultural gems in Malaysia at minimal costs.

Additionally, the airline has also deployed curated campaigns and product offerings to stimulate and cater to the growing demands in local markets. This includes joint consumer promotions with local OTAs to attract leisure consumers, roadshows with tourism boards, corporate travel programmes through MHBiz Pro and MHBiz Plus, MHexplorer platform for students, attractive flight and holiday package deals via MHHolidays, and other fare products to suit different traveller needs.

As part of their commitment to offering safe, seamless, and digitalised end-to-end travel solutions for their customers, they recently collaborated with IATA to launch MHPay which is a new alternative payment method for consumers to purchase air tickets, ancillary products, and services via malaysiaairlines.com.

To sum up, Amit states, "We are continuously reviewing the opportunities in the India market and will add new routes, increase frequencies or upgrade aircraft wherever needed to meet these demands. We are looking at achieving pre-pandemic capacity back for India by the end of the year. We look forward to welcoming back travellers to experience the enhanced products and services with a range of flexibility and choices, offering convenience powered by digitalisation of the entire traveller journey and keeping our utmost priority to safety."

Oman Air to further expand and recoup market share in India

India contributes a major share of the overall network traffic for Oman Air and is one of the key markets after Oman. India will continue to be a big focus market with the increase in frequencies planned from October and then later in 2023, says Sunil V A, Country Manager - India, Oman Air. In this interaction with Sunil, we also get the gist that the airline also takes an active role in shaping the future of tourism in Oman through its holiday arm.

Prashant Nayak

Oman Air resumed scheduled India operations in March-end of 2022 with a cautious approach, operating flights ranging from one to three times a week from eight key cities in India – Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kochi, Chennai, Goa, Hyderabad, and Kozhikode. This development further boosted their customers' confidence to travel again.

All COVID-19 preventive safety precautions and procedures previously in place at airports and across Oman were lifted on May 22, 2022. As more countries lifted travel restrictions, Oman Air saw rapidly accelerating air travel growth, allowing them to connect with their passengers to the wider Oman Air network from India.

"Our load factor has steadily been increasing. By June, we were operating seven flights a week from seven cities in India, boosting frequency to 110 flights a week between India and Muscat as demand increased. Load factors continued to be 80 per cent with continued demand and an increase in capacity saw the fares getting attractive. Also, we recently had a global promotion to stimulate the demand and to encourage more guests to travel. Between Muscat and operational India destinations, we introduced wide-body service, including the B787 Dreamliner and Airbus A330 in addition to the Boeing 737," shares Sunil.

Currently, Oman Air has been steadily increasing its frequency of operations with growing demand. As of August 2022, they are operating ten weekly flights to Kochi, Delhi, and Chennai, bringing the total to 122 weekly flights between Muscat and eight Indian destinations. "These additions have consistently boosted tourism in Oman. The recent five city road shows at Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Chennai, and Bengaluru were conducted by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman, which received a great response. We are hopeful that this will further boost the



▲ Sunil V A

tourism business to Oman," says Sunil.

Oman Air's present network spans 42 destinations. From eight operating cities in India, the airline offers convenient connections to European points such as Istanbul, London, Paris, Frankfurt, Munich, Milan, Zurich, and the recently launched Trabzon. Extensive connectivity, including major airports across the Middle East and Africa, are their USPs. Through their partners such as Qatar Airways, American Airlines, and Egypt Air, they extend the connectivity to over 15 destinations across US and Canada.

Regarding connecting and marketing with their travel trade partners in India, Sunil explains, "We have constantly been connected with and have always partnered with travel and trade partners in India as they contribute to a major share of our overall business from India. We have finalised plans for this financial year, and are looking at ad hoc projects with our trade partners as and when there is an opportunity." India accounts for a major share of the total Oman Air revenues. Oman Air's strategy is also to grow and

recoup the market share in India.

Oman Air continues to innovate based on customer preferences. Recently, they won the 2022 Passenger Choice Award® for Best Seat Comfort in the Middle East by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). "Our focus is also towards meeting customers' demand through ancillary services based on customer preferences. To meet the growing demand and with changing customer preferences, on our NDC Platform, retailers and travel agents can offer end-to-end booking and ticketing for Oman Air, Interline, and code-share flights with attractive discounts on all fare types and ancillary products," informs Sunil.

The airline also constantly strives toward boosting tourism in Oman and the Middle East. Through Oman Air Holidays, they offer a wide variety of attractive packages in the region. Sharing more detail on their holiday deals, Sunil apprises, "We continue to facilitate travel for football fans to this year's FIFA World Cup in Qatar. We will be operating 48 Match Day Shuttle flights between Muscat and Doha from November 21 to December 3, 2022. Our special and customisable holiday deals include exclusive hotel packages, special rates, and services. Whether you are visiting for a few hours, overnight, or for several days, we have something to make your experience truly memorable. We have also partnered with major hotels in Oman through our holiday department and tourists can continue in Oman with exciting adventures, breathtaking natural beauty, and experience true Omani hospitality."

Sunil concludes, "With strong demand, we see promising growth and soon plan to launch double daily flights from major Indian cities and increasing the frequencies from 14 to 21 flights a week between India and Oman. The network continues to expand along with the increase in flights to India and we are positive to reach full potential by summer 2023."

India signals a healthy and thriving Fly-Cruise segment

It has been almost three months since Resorts World Cruises' flagship, Genting Dream, debuted in Singapore on June 15. Since the company launched its dual home porting in Singapore and Port Klang in Malaysia for its Genting Dream last July, the cruise liner has received a very positive response from the Malaysian market with the 3-Night cruises representing over 50 per cent of Port Klang departures. In this interaction with TTJ, Naresh Rawal, Vice President, Sales and Marketing (India), Resorts World Cruises, we get to know from him about the response and developments in the India market, the popularity of the Fly-Cruise concept, and the exciting itineraries that are in store for Indian cruise aficionados.

Prashant Nayak

After the launch in June 2022, how is Resorts World Cruises shaping up?

Since our debut, we are encouraged by the overwhelming response from the trade and consumers in the region, which led to Resorts World Cruises launching its dual homeport in Singapore with the addition of Kuala Lumpur (via Port Klang in Malaysia) in mid-July. Things are moving at a fast pace and in a positive direction as we ride the wave of building our brand across various international markets and segments. We have also successfully normalised operations to the optimum level in terms of operations, services, and offerings and as a result, we observed a steady increase in passenger demand.

Do you think Indian consumers are looking forward to sailing again on luxury cruise ships? How has the India market responded after the start of the sailing of Genting Dream in Singaporean waters?

Demand and trends indicate that consumers in India are very much ready to sail again with a luxury and dynamic lifestyle cruise brand like Resorts World Cruises, especially through the Fly-Cruise segment. Within the first 2 months of launching from Singapore, we had received over 20,000 cabin bookings from the India market, signalling a healthy and thriving Fly-Cruise segment. We also observed that the MICE segment is gaining strong traction and we are optimistic that the MICE segment will further contribute to the growth of the overall Fly-Cruise market in the coming months.

Do you think the escalating and high airfares will deter holidaymakers from booking a Fly-Cruise in the upcoming holiday season?

Airfares have yet to normalise but we are optimistic that this will change soon. Having said that, many travellers still see the value of a Fly-Cruise package as the cruise voyage itself is value for money with the many inclusive



▲ Naresh Rawal

offerings. As such, demand for Resorts World Cruises Fly-Cruise packages continues to be strong and we foresee the momentum picking up as we enter 2023.

COVID-19 has brought about a change in the cruiser demographics. What is the current demographic of your guests?

At Resorts World Cruises, we are observing younger travellers joining us for a cruise, which includes millennials, couples, young families, groups of friends, as well as families and multi-generation families. We are also gaining traction towards other segments, including the Muslim and Indian markets and across the region as the Genting Dream is the World's First

OIC/SMIIC Standard Halal-Friendly Cruise Ship with certified vegetarian and Jain cuisine. As mentioned, another segment on the rise is also the MICE group.

The Palace is indeed a unique product of the Genting Dream. How are you promoting this product in the India market?

There is a continuous strong demand for luxury cruises in India and at Resorts World Cruises; we pride ourselves of over 50 years of affiliated experience in the hospitality and cruising industry with a deep Asian heritage, enabling us to cater to this growing luxury segment. We are working with key partners in the trade and media to target and promote The Palace – a luxury accommodation, that features a luxury ship-within-a-ship private enclave with exclusive amenities. Our Palace guests will enjoy a seamless experience from check-in at the cruise terminal and throughout the entire voyage with a variety of all-suite accommodations, including the Palace Villa, an all-butler 24-hour service, exclusive on-board dining experiences, and restaurants, private sundeck, gym, spa, pool, and other facilities and amenities. These are attractive USPs that appeal to high-end markets. In addition to our Asian roots and vast affiliated experiences, what will set us apart is our ability to offer a personalised lifestyle cruising experience, enhanced with our renowned Asian hospitality and service, which is best-in-class.



What are the current sailing itineraries of the Genting Dream? Do you have some specially formulated itineraries for the Indian cruise enthusiast for the festival and the upcoming holiday season?

With the dual homeports from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (via Port Klang), we are concurrently offering several itineraries from each homeport. From Singapore we are offering the 3 Night Kuala Lumpur-Penang cruise (Sundays), the 2 Night Weekend Getaway Cruise (Fridays), and the 2 Night Kuala Lumpur cruise (Fridays). From Kuala Lumpur, we are also offering the 3 Night Penang-Singapore cruise (Mondays) and the 2 Night Cruise to Singapore (Thursdays and Saturdays). In addition, we are also offering one-way cruises between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

Besides that, we have also introduced a series of monthly thematic cruises that will offer unique experiences, such as Light Meets Night thematic cruises starting in September filled with colourful glow-in-the-dark and interactive displays, special cruises for Diwali in October, a special Christmas celebration with Jelilo, Singapore's homegrown toy and art creator and so much more.

How are you engaging with your travel

trade partners in India?

Engaging our travel partners and consumers at different levels will be vital in promoting Resorts World Cruises. We will continue to provide more familiarisation cruises for our partners for them to experience our offerings personally and in return promote the brand effectively. Regular updates and training with the necessary 'marketing tools' are also essential to strengthen our presence in India and grow the Fly-Cruise market.

How important is India market for Resorts World Cruises? What aspirations does the company have from the India region in the 2023 cruise season?

India is one of the key markets and a major contributor to the growth of Resorts World Cruises. As such, we hope to continue to work closely with our partners to tap and grow the Fly-Cruise market, which has still tremendous potential as we have barely scratched the surface. We are highly optimistic that the Fly-Cruise market will continue to appeal to a large segment of the Indian market and with much room to grow in different segments, including the

MICE segment.

Tell us about your expansion plans.

We will continue to capitalise on our valuable experience to innovate new offerings and unique experiences that would cater to the Indian market; from our on-board thematic cruising offerings to certified and authentic vegetarian cuisine, including Jain menus. In addition, we will further reinforce our brand presence in India by expanding our B2B and B2C network. We will also strive to strengthen our presence in India and across Asia, gradually exploring new opportunities to expand our fleet of 'Resorts Cruising at Sea' in the region with new and exciting itineraries in the future.



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Experience Seoul

The Beating Heart of South Korea

-Sonika Bohra

“What is it about Seoul that you love the most?” Upon hearing this question, I would often refrain from answering. In my failed pursuit of finding the apt words, I knew I wouldn’t do justice to what a gem Seoul truly is. For most who have witnessed the city know Seoul isn’t ‘words’ but a feeling, an epiphany of thousand inexplicable emotions, a tender hug, and yet, one would happily embrace the mystery that comes with it for it brings a unique side of everyone who goes there.

Its vast amount of travel offerings makes it somewhat challenging for first-timers, so here is a curated list of not to miss experiences when you’re in Seoul

The obsession with Seoul and South Korea at large is truly evident across the world. Everyone today has a yearning to experience something or the other - some wish to pick up the latest trends in Korean fashion, others want to get their hands on quality Korean skincare products, many are hooked on the music and television dramas and almost everyone, including me, is in awe of the food. Needless to say, a huge chunk of the world population is emotionally and curiously driven by Korean music and films, while K-pop and K-dramas are now internationally known and loved genres.

The economic, cultural and political heart of South Korea, Seoul, is one of the most modern vibrant cities in Asia. More so after the sun sets and its population comes out to play. South Koreans genuinely know how to have fun and delve deeply into the local nightlife culture. In this South Korean capital-land, one will find a wonderful mixture of old-heritage sites and contemporary life narrating tales of deep-rooted history while the other side speaks of urban lifestyle, technology, and insanely loved pop culture, hence, Seoul attracts an abundance of international attention today. Let the journey begin!

Han River Cruise- One of those things that you have to do when in Seoul

The Han is the main river that runs through Seoul, the river and the land beyond played a vital role in Korean history more than 2000 years back as the three kingdoms fought to take control of this area because the river played a vital part in doing trade with China. Cut to today, the river is voted the second



most scenic spot in Seoul. One of the best ways to enjoy the Han River and admire the Seoul skyline is by onboarding one of the Han river cruises. The attractions along the way, namely 63 square, Bamseom Islet, Jeoldesan Park, Namsan Seoul Tower, and the Jamsil stadium, are sure to keep your eyes static. The spectacular 20 minutes of Moonlight Rainbow Fountain Show gives the night its utmost glory!

Namsan Tower at Night - Let’s see the bigger picture!

Only when you take a look at Seoul from 237 meters height, would you realise how big Seoul is, and you would easily give credit to the Namsan Tower. Located atop Mount Namsan, it is not only a top tourist attraction but also the highest point of the capital. It offers an amazing panoramic view of Seoul’s skyline, both during the day and at night. Besides the jaw-dropping view, it offers all the ingredients to make for a perfect day - fun ambience, shopping, entertainment, food, games, and much more. Additionally, its central location makes it easily accessible to locals and tourists.



Gyeongbokgung Palace- Wear a hanbok and beat the queues!

In Korean, its name translates to 'Palace Greatly Blessed by Heaven'. First built in 1395, Gyeongbokgung Palace is the largest of Seoul's five grand palaces built during the powerful Joseon dynasty. Destroyed and rebuilt several times over the centuries, it was restored to its original glory after the Second World War and restored in the 1990s.

Despite the singular form of its name, the palace isn't just one building; it's a gigantic complex that includes throne halls, banquet halls, bridges, pavilions, courtyards and more gated entrances than you can count. Thanks to the Hanbok rental service, one can skip the entry queues to the palace by wearing a Hanbok and enjoy the chance to dress up like Joseon-era royalty. For first-timers, here is a fact- Hanbok is formal clothing worn during Korean holidays or on special occasions. In addition to Hanbok, complimentary hairstyling is also provided and accessories are available for rental. When you're ready, pose for photos in front of different sets and historical locations- a full package of fun!

Insadong- The heart of Seoul's artistic identity

Insadong, a buzzy neighbourhood in Seoul, is a must-visit destination for first-timers. Its main drag, Insadong Street, is best known for its traditional tea houses, souvenir shopping and street food scene, special mention goes to Ssamziegil Market for creating a bustling atmosphere on the street. This part shopping centre, part outdoor bazaar comprises over 70 shops across four floors, and features everything from local handcrafts, like ceramics and furniture, to traditional Korean goods and clothing. Whether you're hoping to buy souvenirs, take a pottery class or just try some of Korea's famous fried chicken, Ssamzie-Gil is the place to be.

To have been in Korea and missed the tea experience is too strong a guilt, thankfully, Insadong has a lot to offer as it is famous for its tea houses – at Shin Old Tea House, you enjoy a wide array of tea varieties like plum and ginger, plus sweet treats including rich rice cakes and puffed rice. The authentic



tea house is small and cosy with floor seating exclusively – as you'd expect to find in a traditional Korean tea house. It will take you back in time with its wooden shutters, painted lamps and colourful tapestries, and you can sip from dozens of varieties of tea as you recline on floor pillows and enjoy the ambience of a traditional Korean tea house.

Itaewon Nightlife- Relish the freedom to party without worrying about closing time

Itaewon is a bustling nightlife hotspot. Around 20-minutes by bus from Myeongdong or Seoul Station, Itaewon is an excellent place to wander around and just lose yourself in the energy of the city. It is well-known for its party atmosphere and vibrant nightlife. Foreigner-friendly clubs, bars, and lounges line the streets and there is a party happening every night of the week- diverse music, neon lights, and an energetic crowd will set you up for an unforgettable night of revelry.



Ziplining and Cycling Tour at Nami Island- Go off the beaten track!

It wouldn't be wrong to say that the Nami Island Zipline is one of the best adventurous activities to experience in Seoul. It is not every day that you plan to ride along an almost 1 km piece of wire at great heights, through the middle of the forest, feeling the air and the wind flowing against you so strong that it is scary and refreshing at the same time. However, having experienced it myself, I would recommend this thrilling experience to you when you visit Seoul. You can also take a stroll or optimise your time by renting a bike to see Magnolia Garden, the Central Korean Pine Tree Lane, and the Maple Lane of True Love.

To all this and much more, Seoul has something for everyone, every time!



Get spellbound

The incredible natural rock and geographical formations of AlUla

The deserts of AlUla continue to astound visitors with a variety of striking rock and topographical formations, including Elephant Rock, Fish Rock, Face Rock, Volcanoes, and Lava Flows.

AlUla, in northwest Saudi Arabia, is a city with a remarkable natural and human heritage and is about 1,100 km from Riyadh. The vast area, covering 22,561km², includes a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains, and ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years to when the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms reigned.

The most well-known and recognised site in AlUla is Hegra, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. A 52-hectare ancient city, Hegra was the principal southern city of the Nabataean Kingdom and comprises 111 well-preserved tombs, many with elaborate facades cut out of the sandstone outcrops surrounding the walled urban settlement. Current research also suggests Hegra was the most southern outpost of the Roman Empire after the Romans conquered the Nabataeans in 106 CE.

In addition to Hegra, AlUla is also home to ancient Dadan, the capital of the Dadan and Lihyan Kingdoms and considered to be one of the most developed 1st millennium BCE cities of the Arabian Peninsula, and Jabal Ikma, an open-air library of hundreds of inscriptions and writings in many different languages. Also AlUla Old Town, a labyrinth of more than 900 mudbrick homes developed from at least the 12th century, and Hijaz Railway and Hegra Fort, are key sites in the story and conquests of Lawrence of Arabia.

AlUla is home to a wide range of flora, fauna, and human communities for thousands of years. Centered around its famed oasis and framed by sandstone mountains, AlUla's geography, environment, and climate have enabled human communities to flourish here.

AlUla has a unique and extraordinary landscape because of the three distinct geological eras packed together in one region. The earliest of the geologic ages which formed the rocks of AlUla was during the Precambrian Arabian shield rocks, which are marked by different layers of sedimentary rock. Laid down over millions of years, these rock layers contain a permanent record of the Earth's past, including the fossilised remains of plants and animals buried when the sediments were formed.

The area's underlying sandstone was created during the Cambrian period over 485 million years ago, and tectonic activity has helped further shape its dramatic geology, creating volcanic

landscapes, basalt plateaus, and sandstone massifs. These geological features enable the area to act as a water catchment basin with an area of nearly 700 sq. km, allowing the valley to flow southwards towards AlUla's settlements. Trilobite trace fossils discovered in AlUla's sandstone date to at least 252 million years ago and provide evidence of some of the earliest life in the area. The soft and porous rock, perfect for carving, also acts as an aquifer that can store the vital freshwater resources required to sustain life in an arid environment.

Following that was the black basalt layer formed by volcanic eruptions creates the dramatic plateaus called the Harrat. The desert of AlUla is famous for its several geological rock formations, formed over millions of years by the hands of the best sculptors, the wind and the water, to form natural shapes untouched by human hands, and to become exceptional natural shapes that are unseen except in this vast natural desert. With the contrasts of these colours and the lush green oasis running through the middle, AlUla is like no other place on earth.

Here are AlUla's nine most incredible natural rock formations

Elephant Rock

The Elephant Rock is one of the world's most popular rocks and the highlight of the region of AlUla. Looking at it from afar, this rock seems



like an elephant with a ground-bound trunk. The Elephant Rock is also known as Jabal- AlFil in the Arabic language. Standing at a height of 52 meters, the giant rock climbs three stories into the Arabian sky. The beauty of this mighty elephant increases at nightfall when it becomes more lifelike in the warm lights that have been installed at the site.

Mushroom Rock

You can find several Mushroom-shaped rocks in the deserts of AlUla. The most famous is located in Sharaan Nature Reserve. Mushroom rocks are a wonderful natural phenomenon usually formed as a result of the erosion of sedimentary layers over millions of years.



The remaining part of these layers is exposed again to wind, resulting in the lower parts of the layer breaking down more quickly.

The Fish Rock

This Desert Fish was recently gone viral on social media through a photo taken by the photographer Khaled AlEnazi, as he spotted a rock in the form of a fish in the desert sands and transformed through



millions of years ago into one of the most important ancient archaeological inscriptions and strange rock formations that marks the lands of AlUla.

The Face Rock

Amongst the monumental tombs of Hegra, next to Jabal AlAhmar (Which means The Red Mountain due to the colour of its rocks), you will notice a formation that resembles the profile of a human head gazing out over the desert landscape. As with all of AlUla's rock formations, sunrise and sunset are prime times to visit, when the light plays on the sandstone, seeming to illuminate the rocks from within — a magical sight for observers and photographers alike.

The Arch Rock

One of AlUla's most recognisable rock formations, The Arch (also known as Rainbow Rock) is well worth the 90-minute drive from the centre of the city. Its bridge-shaped structure, which resembles a rainbow flanked by two clouds, is a rare sight indeed. The Arch Rock



hosted Symphony Under the Stars back in March 2022 as part of the AlUla Skies Festival events, which was dedicated to the spectacular starry night of the desert of AlUla.

The Dancing Rocks

The Dancing Rocks are so-called because these formations are sculpted by nature to appear as if they are swaying in unison. Located in the Raggasat Valley, the rocks seem to dance together, slightly removed from the surrounding rock formations. This place is famous for hiking activities and dune buggies experience.

Besides these attractions, Stargazing packages welcome tourists to gaze at Gharameel's stone pillars and follow their spires upward toward the twinkling stars. In the remote desert areas of AlUla, find stark, black volcanic rock and inactive volcanoes which stand atop sandstone and are surrounded by seas of golden sand to make for truly dramatic, other-worldly sights. Khaybar, the neighbouring Oasis in the south of AlUla, is well known for its two famous; The White Volcano and the Black Volcano. Harrat Khaybar includes a spectacular 100 km long vent system containing lava domes, tuff rings, basaltic cones, and the Jabal Qidr stratovolcano. The last eruption in the Harrat Uwayrid is believed to have occurred around 640 CE. The best way to see these formations is by taking a helicopter tour to see incredible formations from a panoramic sky view.



The White Volcano

Resurgence of Indian outbound travel

The Indian outbound travel is a growing market in the post-pandemic world but is battling challenges on several fronts such as the visa issue, cash flow, soaring travel expenses and steep airfares. TTJ takes a look at some of the most distinguished outbound travel houses in Kolkata to gather info on the ground reality, the trending outbound destinations and the road ahead for outbound travel.

Swaati Chaudhury

With the festive season round the corner in the eastern belt of India and particularly Bengal, once again it's that time of the year when upwardly, mobile-class of travellers pack their bags and fly down to foreign shores. The global destinations have opened up and with the ease of travel norms, a strong force of Indian travellers are holidaying in international waters. Riding high on wanderlust, the outbound tourists are ready to brave all challenges. Having said this, the outbound travel groups are grappling with a plethora of issues ranging from cost-cutting and increase in travel costs to soaring airfares and delays in procuring visas of Western countries.

Europamundo Vacations, headquartered in Madrid and owned by JTB Group offers over 3,000 global tours every year. According to Aparna C. Basu Mallik, Country-Head, Europamundo Vacations, "Our global travel organisation offers the largest selection of brochured tours. We have tours in several languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic. We work exclusively on a B2B platform and our tours are sold out in more than 150 countries through travel agents."

The global travel group will soon be unveiling its new products in September, this year. Basu Mallik said, "There are several issues plaguing the Indian outbound travel market, including the visa issue, but the Indian traveller is quite resilient. Spain has emerged as a promising destination while Turkey, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom have climbed the popularity chart."

The outbound travellers have already started availing of the year-end tours of the group. "We have inducted tour managers in our organisation and imparted training to them in order to cater to new-age travellers in post-pandemic times. We have achieved 80 per cent growth of the pre-pandemic times," added Basu Mallik.

Take the case of Kolkata's Aryan Leisure and Holidays, an old-treasured travel house that came up way back in



▲ Aparna C. Basu Mallik

2002 and is in constant quest of new outbound destinations. Starting from air ticketing to procuring visas and devising both outbound and domestic tours, the group offers all kinds of travel services under one umbrella. Sanjeev Mehra, Director of the travel organisation said, "The current trending outbound destinations are Kenya, Maldives, Mauritius and South-East Asia. There are visa issues for travellers heading to European destinations and Canada. Students are travelling abroad for higher studies. We have popularised Bahrain for outbound travellers in the eastern zone. At the moment, we are focusing on Myanmar. Besides, there are other emerging outbound destinations, like Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Ras-Al-Khaimah and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. Destination weddings are happening in Ras-Al-Khaimah and travellers opt for a three-night tour of the destination. Tourists also prefer to spend seven nights in Oman which has come up well and is replete with deserts, beaches and mountains. Indigo operates direct flights from Kolkata to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh." Cambodia is a bucket-list destination for travellers since it has the age-old Angkor Wat shrine.

The Indian travel sector has



▲ Sanjeev Mehra

encountered a plethora of challenges in the post-COVID era. Mehra further said, "We have gained a lot of info and we need to change with time and technology. Personalised service is significant for Indian travellers. The Indian outbound travel market and hospitality groups will grow steadily and will rebound in the next fiscal. We are looking for a great travel season. In today's era, there are more FITs, solo men and women travellers, families, honeymooners and kids travelling." Mehra pointed out that lowering the airfare will not solve the ongoing issue instead more direct flights from Kolkata to Western countries need to be introduced.

Mehra added, "The eastern region was once neglected by the Central government, but now things have started looking up. Tata Group is revamping its flight operations and is all set to launch direct Air India flights from Kolkata to London and other destinations in Western countries next year. Vistara and Indigo will launch similar flight services from Kolkata to Western countries in 2023."

Globe All India Services Limited, a major outbound travel group based in Kolkata with an annual turnover of Rs 750 crore has spread its wings across

eight destinations in the country. In the context of the outbound travel market, Kaushik Ghosh, Chief Operating Officer of the group, said, "There will be a decline in corporate travel in the outbound market in the upcoming period. Since most corporate groups have incurred losses over the past couple of years, they do not intend to shell out on travel anymore. The corporate sector has apprehended that the most convenient way to manage a business without coughing up a huge amount is through online mode. With uncertainty looming ahead in life, people intend to experience touring different destinations and spend quality time with their family and friends. Hence experiential travel, holiday travel and MICE activities will surge ahead. There will be more conferences in the upcoming period." In a nutshell, the corporate world is looking at reduced-cost structures.

Ghosh averred that South-East Asia remains the most sought-after destination owing to the price factor. Turkey as a destination has picked up momentum and European destinations like London, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy are quite promising for both MICE and leisure travel.

There is a high demand for both



▲ Kaushik Ghosh

domestic and global travel in current times. The pertinent question is: what are the challenges encountered in the sphere of outbound travel? Ghosh further said, "The biggest challenge for travel groups is managing cash flow. With rising airfares and hotel expenses, the overall travel expenditure has drastically gone up. At the same time, banks are a bit reluctant

to pay credit limits to travel organisations because travel is an uncertain business. The corporate world is pushing for higher credit limits. The rising cost is making investment steeper for travel companies. It is quite unfortunate that the Central government has not taken any concrete steps to provide financial support to the travel fraternity during the COVID-19 outbreak and to get the COVID-ravaged travel economy back on track. Several financial aids have been announced, but the tourism sector has been completely sidelined. The tourism sector generates high employment options and contributes around 10 to 12 per cent of India's GDP." Revival of the tourism sector has to be the topmost priority of the government.

As a reputed travel organisation, the group is on track and has strategised well. It is no longer engaged in business fields that are not profitable. Regarding the issue of high airfare, Ghosh said, "It is high time that the Central government steps in to create a congenial environment for the airlines, hospitality sector and travel industry to work together. It is next to impossible to lower the airfares in the wake of high fuel prices. The government should closely monitor to bring down the fuel prices."

It's time to live it up!

Arshdeep Anand, Executive Member, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), shares her views on current outbound travel and member engagement activities at OTOAI.

Prashant Nayak

In the post-pandemic world, there is a huge pent-up demand for outbound travel. The comeback is much faster than expected, warranting delays in visa processing. People want to live in the present and not wait till after.

"There is a lot of demand for bucket-list tourism, like watching the spectacle of Northern lights on board a luxury cruise. There are many new offers and options available today which encourage people to pay after their holidays are over, which is a big attraction. There is a demand for more active, experiential, and sustainable travel as today's traveller is more responsible. The focus has shifted to more about tasting the local cuisines and living the experiences like a local. The operators should look at generating revenues by selling less trodden journeys, using concept properties, and offering local or farm fresh foods enabled with technology. It's time to live it up," expresses Arshdeep.

Air connectivity is also the biggest boost to the success of any tourism destination.

Arshdeep says, "Recent initiative by Vietnam to start direct flights between various cities of India and Vietnam has jumped up the number of travellers visiting Vietnam. Every destination which has direct flight connectivity does wonderfully well. Direct flights generate volumes for MICE movement to the destination, etching its success story."

According to Arshdeep, the UAE generated a lot of interest due to its ease of travel and myriad offers. Visa on arrival and e-visa offered by Vietnam and Malaysia are also game changers. FIFA has made Qatar the current hot destination.

The wait time for the visas has created havoc in the entire industry and acted as a dampener this holiday season. "OTOAI has been continuously writing to embassies and consulates to ease visa processes. Among other things, this pandemic has certainly taught us a lesson to not put all eggs in the same basket. It would be advisable to look at other destinations which are quite aggressively promoting themselves, such as Oman, Dubai,



▲ Arshdeep Anand

Mauritius, Vietnam, and Malaysia," emphasises Arshdeep.

After almost a two-year hiatus, OTOAI recently organised a networking meet in Mumbai, which was a great success. "We had another one in Chennai which was a focussed affair with members sharing their valuable insights. New members are being added every day, hence new opportunities for collaborating. OTOAI has held very informative virtual sessions with VFS. Destination training workshops with Switzerland and Atout France have been conducted. We have brought back the physical destination training workshops with Korea Tourism Sales Mission, held in Chennai and Kolkata," informs Arshdeep.

Rising like a Phoenix

True calling of an Entrepreneur

The life of an entrepreneur is tough, and one is often hit by many a roadblock. Like it or not, building an empire from scratch requires all of your heart, soul, blood, and sweat. Despite those hardships, every year thousands of people embark on an entrepreneurial journey, determined to bring their vision to fruition and fill a need they believe in. TTJ recently spoke to one such young and dynamic rising star of the industry who has stood his ground and created his brand with his sheer grit.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Vineet Srivastava, Managing Director, Yorker Holidays Services, recalls, "It all seems so recent when having completed my MBA in Tourism from Kanpur University in 2008, I plunged neck deep into the whirlpool of travel, starting my first job at a salary of mere Rs 1500 per month. I got my foothold in the industry and I soon found my calling in the cruising segment of the industry."

After a couple of job hops and a few years in the industry, the entrepreneur within could not be held bottled up and in 2011, Vineet launched his entrepreneurial venture, Cruisewala.com. However, all was not hunky dory, and he had to shut down this venture just one year after having started it. Not one to be pinned down by failure, the cricketer and fast bowler in him pushed him to establish Yorker Holiday Services in 2012. Calamity struck once again in 2013 and he had to shut down this partnership venture.

Not one to give up, and taking inspiration from the way a Yorker is bowled and placed in the game of cricket, Vineet relaunched Yorker Holidays Services in 2013. Since then, there has been no looking back. He knew his capabilities; he knew his limitations, and he read the need of the market. He knew it was impossible to compete with the big boys and deep pockets and reach. So he created his own playing field.

He focused on the B2B space, and targeted smaller agents in tier 2 and tier 3 cities of India, provided product knowledge, and positioned his product with a promise of



▲ Vineet Srivastava

qualitative and prompt service. He assured minimal turnaround time from query to quotation, and faster turnarounds translated to more conversions for his partners, resulting in them flocking around him and thus growing his portfolio of products and services.

For a business that had started with a pure focus on cruises, destinations such as Malaysia and Singapore were soon added, followed by Indonesia. They received recognition from Malaysia Tourism as top performers in 2017 and 2019. In 2019, they were appointed PSA for Star Cruises and now, in 2022, they are the PSA of Resorts World Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Cordelia Cruises.

Vineet shares, "Full product knowledge and correct product details are the biggest challenges faced by sellers of travel and Yorker prides in providing the same to its business partners."

The Maldives was a god-sent destination for the Indian traveller and Yorker was one of the first movers and did great business from India to the Maldives. The island nation will continue to be a focus for Yorker as they now have a registered office in Maldives and numbers are constantly on the increase. They are currently doing about 500 pax a month to the Maldives.

During the pandemic, Yorker also looked within and focused on domestic travel destinations like Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kashmir, and Leh-Ladakh and was fairly successful on this initiative. This has laid the groundwork for further development of their domestic portfolio and a vertical in its own right within the Yorker ecosystem.

Vineet sincerely hopes that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us and we all are looking toward progressive growth in the coming years. He has great plans for his expansion in South East Asia, the Middle East, and European markets and is in the process of ramping up his team too.

Technology is integral to the success of any business and plans are already underway at Yorker to automate processes, ensure partner loyalty, reduce time to market and increase efficiency.

Currently headquartered out of New Delhi, Vineet is supported by his wife Enna Srivastava, Director, Sanjeev Gosain, Associate Director, and a team of over 50 dedicated and committed travel professionals, a team that is growing on a daily basis.



Embrace ultimate adventure at Kwantu Private Game Reserve

Kwantu Private Game Reserve offers more than just Big 5 game viewing in a luxury setting. The award-winning private game reserve offers world-class safari accommodation, exceptionally close wildlife encounters, personal service, and delicious cuisine. With its location situated at the start or end of the famed Garden Route, it is an ideal destination Big 5 resort for guests to experience Africa's wildlife as well as enjoy a host of other facilities, making their holiday even more enjoyable.

Prashant Nayak

Kwantu Private Game Reserve is located at ideally situated close to Port Elizabeth, in the malaria-free Eastern Cape. Apart from the Big 5 game viewing and five-star facilities, Kwantu offers great food options and amenities which would be ideal for the India market. They have several accommodation types to suit couples, families, smaller and larger groups. They have six restaurants with kitchen access and they serve vegetarian and Jain cuisine prepared by Indian Chefs. Additional facilities such as swimming pools, a cricket field, tennis courts, an entertainment room, and much more are also available, which are normally preferred by Indian travellers.

Sharing more about the reserve, Dr. Shakir Jeeva, Chief Executive Officer, Kwantu Private Game Reserve says, "Kwantu, being located where it is, lends itself to exploring the famous Garden Route of South Africa, which not only offers breath-taking scenery, but a host of activities to do and sights to see, such as bungee jumping, zip lining, shark cage diving, and a lot more. Of course, Gqeberha (previously known as Port Elizabeth), is also a short distance away for those looking to explore the area or either fly in or out of the Chief Dawid Stuurman International Airport located in Gqeberha."

The Garden Route provides a coastline of some 300 km between Mossel Bay and Plettenberg Bay and is one of South Africa's most popular holiday destinations. Along with interesting stretches of coastline, it has a temperate landscape of sandy

beaches, indigenous forests, rocky shores, and interesting quaint towns where you can do everything from savour fresh oysters to watch southern right whales at play. It is very popular with self-drivers and families visiting South Africa.

Coming back, the highlight at Kwantu is about the Big 5 game viewing, which takes place in specially equipped game viewers with trained expert game rangers. Dr. Shakir mentions, "This is an exciting and exhilarating experience with an abundance of animals to see. Game activities range from early morning to morning, to afternoon and evening game drives, depending on the length of stay that the guest is at Kwantu. Apart from this, since Kwantu is a safari resort, there are other activities available, such as swimming pools, a jungle gym area for the kids, an entertainment room, and much more. Kwantu Private Game Reserve will also be adding some exciting activities soon."

The reserve is also known for weddings, groups, and MICE events. Apart from the various facilities on offer, Kwantu has many larger venues, which can cater to around 2000 guests. Private venues, including kitchens and restaurants, are available for larger groups to allow for intimate experiences while at Kwantu. This is coupled with the various conference rooms, wedding facilities, and many accommodation types, allowing Kwantu to be an ideal destination for weddings, MICE, and groups.

Speaking about the marketing initiatives and strategies and exploring business for Kwantu from potential markets in India, Dr. Shakir said,

"We believe firmly in the partnership model, using the existing value chain through DMCs both in India and South Africa. Therefore, we continue to build our relationships with strategic partners, as well as create market awareness directly to the consumer such that it allows for increased demand via the DMCs and travel agents." In India, Kwantu Private Game Reserve is represented by IRIS Reps.

South Africa is blessed to offer an abundance of wildlife and is well known for this. Conservation and wildlife tourism is an important part of the growth of the country that relies upon tourism as a segment. "Wildlife tourism contributes to several jobs and creates employment for local communities, which allows them to uplift themselves and their families. This is apart from the skills transfer which occurs. Kwantu Private Game Reserve is proud to be part of this segment which not only contributes to the GPC of the country and employment but also allows us to share our natural and wildlife beauty with guests from all parts of the world in a luxury setting," concludes Dr. Shakir.



Udaan Hotels and Resorts

#goodstay #goodfood #goodpeople



In a very short time, Udaan Hotels and Resorts has been able to establish its brand in the Darjeeling and Sikkim region. Nishi Kant Agarwal, Managing Director, Udaan Group talks about the company's expansion plans to strengthen its hospitality base and experience in the popular tourist region.

Team TTJ

Udaan Hotels operates a chain of pure vegetarian hotels in Darjeeling and Sikkim. After its humble beginning in 2017, with the opening of its flagship hotel, Udaan Woodberry in Gangtok, Udaan Hotels today is proud to operate a collection of eight hotels and resorts, with another two opening in 2023.

Their hotels are conveniently located and are pure vegetarian leisure hotels. Guests can find themselves surrounded by a distinctive array of tourist attractions, splendid views, eccentric antiquity stores, and a multitude of tea plantations. The hotels are well designed with modern facilities and unique local essence. "We are also very careful about the hygiene factor in our hotels. All our hotels are well appreciated and frequently visited by domestic tourists. Recently, we have ventured into the luxury segment with the opening of our new hotel, The Himalayan Suites and Spa, a luxury hotel in Darjeeling," informs Agarwal.

Following the major challenge due to the pandemic in the past two years, Udaan Hotels has witnessed tremendous growth and performed very well in 2021–2022. Currently, they are operating eight hotels of which three are in Darjeeling – Udaan Himalayan Suites and Spa, Udaan Dekling Resort and Udaan Nirvana Resort, two in Gangtok - Udaan Woodberry and Udaan Alpine Resort, two in Pelling - Udaan Olive Hotel and Udaan Pine Crest Hotel and one in Siliguri- Udaan Clover Hotel.

Udaan Hotels intends to grow into a chain of 25–30 hotels and establish itself in more cities. Agarwal shares, "Most of the properties will be located in popular leisure destinations with high



▲ Nishi Kant Agarwal

domestic tourist traffic. The group's vision is to make it the best vegetarian chain of hotels. As we understand comfort and hospitality very well, our motto is to make every stay a memorable stay, and that's why our slogan is #goodstay #goodfood #goodpeople for our guests."

Darjeeling and Sikkim are endowed with incredible natural beauty, and the majority of tourists who want to visit them always have an itinerary that includes Darjeeling, Gangtok, Pelling, Lachen, and Lachung, making an incredible circuit. So, to cater to this demand, Udaan Hotels has properties in Darjeeling, Gangtok, Pelling and Siliguri.

Udaan Clover Hotel in Siliguri makes for a great choice for a transit stay for the onward

journey to Darjeeling and Sikkim. Conveniently situated in the business district of Siliguri, this property puts travellers close to attractions such as the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary and interesting dining options. However, each of their properties is unique in its way and located differently to make it convenient for the guest to cover beautiful places around. All the hotels have an in-house vegetarian specialty restaurant 'Grains'.

On the marketing front, Agarwal mentions, "We use all the digital tools on social media and also participate in many travel fairs such as OTM, SATTE, TTF, and TTJ Travmart to stay connected with our B2B partners. As we understand that sales and marketing is an important factor for any company to create awareness for any product, so we use different marketing channels for the promotion of our hotels. We also have our sales team in some major cities of the country."

In recent months, Udaan Hotels has received accolades from a variety of groups, including 'Fastest Growing Hotel Chain,' 'Best Boutique Hotel Chain in North Bengal and Sikkim,' and 'Best Hotel chain of Darjeeling and Sikkim.'

"This year has been very positive for the tourism industry and the demand for leisure tourists has significantly increased. We are expecting very strong demand in the coming months. On the expansion front, we regularly search for unique locations and soon we will be opening hotels in more cities. The success of Udaan Group is entirely attributable to its belief in the principle that every customer is God, as well as its commitment to working with honesty, sincerity, discipline, and hard work," concludes Agarwal.

Rock Art

A secret treasure in Madhya Pradesh



The heart of
Incredible India

The heart of incredible India, Madhya Pradesh possesses wealth of prehistoric art painted on the walls of rock shelters



In November 2016, a report appeared in many news platforms that petroglyph rock art at Daraki-Chattan (hillock) near Bhanpura in Mandsaur district of Madhya Pradesh is the "world's oldest rock art" and is almost 2 to 5 lakh years' old.

There are several such findings that have showed how wealthy Madhya Pradesh is when it comes to rock art.

While the World Heritage Site of Bhimbetka is well-known, Madhya Pradesh has many other equally glorious examples of ancient art. Indeed, rock art has a unique beauty – the stylised deer of Hathitola, the great bison of Adamgarh, the mythical beast of Bhimbetka, the vigorous and playful – but what makes these paintings truly valuable is the link they forge with a human past as distant as a half-forgotten dream.

In 1958, the archaeologist Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar happened to be travelling by train from Bhopal to Itarsi. As he gazed out of the window at the landscape of green fields and low hills, something caught his eyes. A series of rocky outcrops were jutting out in startlingly unusual shapes on a low hill in the near distance. The archaeologist got off the train at very next station and made his way up the hill. What he discovered were Bhimbetka rockshelters- today, a UNESCO world heritage site and one of the most eminent examples of pre-historic art in the world.

Bhimbetka is under 50 kms southeast of Bhopal on the National Highway 69, which makes it a comfortable day trip even for travellers with limited time. The town nearest Bhimbetka is Obaidullaganj, 6 kms from the Highway Treat Hotel and restaurant, which is located at the foot of Bhimbetka Hill.

Here the paintings show men, women, boys, girls, infants, dancers, hunters, cattle herders, charioteers, weapons and decorative motifs and offer insights into the way of life and the environment, of that era. There are various animals and hunting scenes depicting rhinos, bison, deer and even camels.

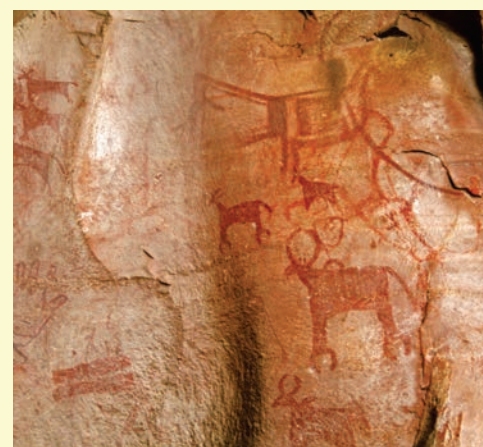
Scholars have also found rock shelters on the Betwa River's banks decorated with several images, including the hunting images, hunting elephant and of bison.

The Vindhyas that rise and fall in bursts of dense green across Bhopal, Raisen, Sehore, Vidisha and Chanderi districts of Madhya Pradesh contain a vast network of rock-shelters- more than any other region in India. Apart from this, many places in Pachmarhi, Adamgarh, Mandsaur and Rewa are adorned with beautiful rock art paintings.



Over times these soft sandstone hills were carved into shelters so ideally suited to habitation- with floors and ceilings and dimensions of just the right size that you need only look at them to understand why these were the most popular habitation 'complexes' of prehistoric times.

Jungles of Ratapani near Bhopal are home to some of the oldest and unique rock art. Ran Bhausa Chittauri in Ratapani



is Bhopal's best kept secret, which has one of the largest single rock paintings. Located near Dahod Dam, the rock art galleries in Kathotiya and Ran Bhausa Chittauri have several paintings, which belong to Mesolithic as well as Neolithic age.

Another example of this art can be found at Chaturbhujnath Nala. Situated in Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary near Bhanpura of Mandsaur district in Madhya Pradesh, Chaturbhujnath Nala Rock Art Shelters, named after Chatur-bhujnath Temple, are considered the longest rock art gallery in the world. This site was discovered in 1977. It is now under care of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). This site is home to around 2,510 paintings on 800-metre-long site. These paintings offer a glimpse of the everyday life of the then native inhabitants of the area and how it progressed with time. This is a depository of rock art images in 12 different styles and time periods, starting from the Upper Palaeolithic period (50,000 – 12,000 years ago) to early historic period.

According to research, these paintings were done not at one go but over centuries and are representative of the evolving human ability to depict and document their lives through.

Japan Airlines makes amends to adhere to SDG goals

The post-pandemic world has brought a ray of normalcy and hope for the travel and tourism industry. The industry has geared up to revive the pre-pandemic revenue plans.

TTJ was recently in talks with Shinya Naruse, Vice President and Regional Manager (India), Japan Airlines, touching upon some important aspects of their back-to-action plan.

Read on to know more.

Vartik Sethi

When COVID-19 wreaked havoc all over the world, Japan Airlines (JAL) was one of the first airlines to adapt its services to cater to the needs of its passengers. JAL swiftly adapted its services to ensure the utmost safety of its customers and adhered strictly to the motto of “Your safety, Our Priority” as it continued to serve the communities by operating repatriation flights.

In a welcome move by Japan Airlines, their policies regarding refunds of cancelled trips, as well as permitting free changes to bookings, during these adverse times are a testament to JAL’s loyalty towards their esteemed guests. The pandemic, in fact, impeded their plans to launch a daily direct flight from Bengaluru to Tokyo in March 2020, but they operated flights under the well-established Air Travel Bubble between India and Japan when they flew their first repatriation flight from Bengaluru to Tokyo on April 12, 2020.

On being asked about the ground situation now, they responded that currently, Japan Airlines is operating four weekly flights from Delhi and two weekly flights from Bengaluru to Tokyo. Effective October 2022, they will be increasing Delhi flights to five weekly and three weekly flights from Bengaluru, offering seamless connectivity to key destinations in North America too, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver and more, via Tokyo. In terms of the destinations, Japan is arguably one of the most amazing tourist destinations in the world, offering a wide variety of unique experiences.

The “golden route” of Japan which is Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hiroshima, is a popular way for



▲ Shinya Naruse

new visitors to check out Japan, but for repeat visitors, Hokkaido, Aomori and Yamagata in the north, as well as Kagoshima and Okinawa in the south of Japan each have its own unique beauty and wonders to experience. JAL operates an extensive domestic network within Japan, and visitors can cover more places with ease using JAL’s Japan Explorer Pass that are as affordable as just JPY5,500 one-way on certain routes. When asked about their plans on expanding into tier 2 and 3 cities, they responded that an increase in demand would be a sure-shot path to expansion.

JAL takes its carbon footprint seriously and has made remarkable amends to fulfil its SDG goals. JAL is one of the only seven airlines to receive APEX’s inaugural WorldClass 2022 certification, a testament to its industry-leading approach to safety, sustainability, and guests’ overall experience. JAL also introduced a complimentary COVID-19 insurance plan so that passengers can travel

with peace of mind. Inclusive of excellent products, JAL believes in continuous innovation and investment in technology to create magnificent experiences for passengers.

Adding to the sustainability goal, JAL started a program that visualises the volume of carbon emissions produced by business trips with “JAL Carbon Offset”. In response to requests from customers who are highly interested in environmental preservation and the prevention of global warming, the JAL Group has been offering JAL Carbon Offset since 2009 as an option to offset the CO2 emitted by boarding aircraft. In the newly launched program, the volume of CO2 emissions consumed during business trips by air travel will be visualised for each company and organisation. When you participate, monthly CO2 emissions quantities will be provided by email, and your company or organisation can set up an account and access the dedicated website.

JAL shared that the post-COVID traveller displays certain trends and patterns that are important for the airlines to cater to. Buying patterns and perspectives of travellers today have markedly shifted in some aspects compared with pre-COVID times. People are now more willing to pay a higher price for ticket flexibility, such as fares that allow free changes and refunds, as it provides them with greater peace of mind in times of uncertainty and sudden changes. The pandemic has also acted as an impetus to go digital and they see an increase in direct bookings over the airline’s online platform. Having said that, they also see people turning to offline bookings as they feel more at ease to have someone support them through the complicated process of preparing all necessary documents and procedures prior to travel.

SSR Travel Solutions forays into representation business

With a successful track record spanning a decade, SSR Travel Solutions has now entered the representation business. Sapneal Rao, Founder and CEO, SSR Travel Solutions, gives fresh insights into the company which now aims to capture the post-COVID revenge travel traffic by providing holistic solutions to luxury and adventure seekers in India.

Prashant Nayak

SSR Travel Solutions has added two leading Destination Management Companies – Wild Trek Safaris, Kenya and Tanzania, and Eihab Travel, Oman to its portfolio. While the company's focus is on island destinations, their current wholesale business is focused in Maldives, Bali, Mauritius, Bahrain, Oman, Kenya, and Cordelia Cruises. They are now looking at expanding their wholesale sourcing to additional locations and nations, with a particular emphasis on the Caribbean Islands.

A prominent name in the travel industry as a Wholesale Tour Operator, SSR Travel Solutions is now pursuing the goal of providing quality holidays and first-class personal service. "We strive to maintain our wholesale concept in all fields, constantly strive to bring in new products, achieve maximum perfection and consistency of service, diversification by enriching our vocabulary of products, presentation formats, and innovative ideas," says Sapneal.

Sapneal's primary responsibilities as the company's founder and CEO include expanding the agency network and introducing new products to corporate travel agencies. He also contracts with new and existing suppliers, destinations, and products and presents the same to their 13000+ growing travel agency network. "SSR Travel Solutions presently has three verticals and we work as PSA for Cordelia Cruises, wholesaler and inbound company for Bali and Representations and India office for DMCs," informs Sapneal.

On asked about his reasons to venture into the representation business, Sapneal shares, "Bringing in the right partner into India is the key to representation to service the travel agent fraternity and all the partners on board are the top company in that country. Our focus will always be to



▲ Sapneal Rao

bring in the DMC from countries which have a very limited number of DMC in that particular country."

Highlighting his new DMC partnerships, Sapneal says, "WildTrek Safaris is a Kenyan-based eco-tourism company founded 22 years ago in 1997 by Pummy Singh, a fourth-generation Kenyan. Having played a significant role in the Kenyan Tourism sector by running two other tour companies, WildTrek was, within a very short span, awarded several tourism accolades and declared a Category A company by the Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO). With our head office in the leafy Westlands area of Nairobi, Kenya, we have over the years established offices in Tanzania, Hong Kong, India, Europe, and the USA."

Adding on Sapneal further shares about WildTrek, "We own and operate our vehicles, and all our drivers and guides are trained and certified professionals. An IATA accreditation a few years later was another feather in its cap, with WildTrek also operating a full-blown international outbound travel agency led by Tiny Singh. We

understand that an African Safari is a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience; therefore, we always aim to provide unique experiences leaving the guests with a lifetime of memories."

Similarly, Eihab Travel, an established DMC for the Sultanate of Oman, positions India as one of its top source markets and is excited to delegate SSR Travel Solutions as its representative to enhance its market presence and entice more Indian travelers to Oman. Eihab Travels is Oman's leading IATA-accredited agency. Established in 1978, Eihab Travels has grown from its humble beginnings to a comprehensive travel solutions provider over the years. Today, the company offers a wide range of services in the travel and tourism industry, ably supporting an ecosystem of the Oman tourism industry, whilst providing individuals and corporates in Oman, the best of world services when it comes to travel, ticketing, holidays, and ancillary services. Operating three distinct business lines, the company offers airline ticketing, and outbound and inbound travel solutions. Each business line is independently managed by highly trained, dedicated, and motivated professionals to deliver complete and efficient services.

On the business prospects from these DMCs and the expansion of SSR's travel services, Sapneal says, "For Kenya, the current quarter is 'Migration Period' so we are doing extremely well and Oman season starts from Sept to April, so both are products would do extremely well in coming quarters and achieve targets. Owing to our extensive network of B2C players pan India, we will drive our efforts to enhance business and boost sales for both Wild Trek Safaris and Eihab Travels. We are positive about the resumption of travel owing to the pent-up demand that will further lead to acceleration in outbound travel and expansion in business forums."

TTJ TRAVMART Ahmedabad

A ROARING SUCCESS

After hosting incredibly successful marts in Guwahati, Kolkata, Lucknow and Chandigarh, the fifth mart of the fifth edition of TTJ TRAVMART was held in Ahmedabad.

The fifth TTJ TRAVMART for the year was organised at the Novotel Ahmedabad on August 27, 2022. The event was well attended by the travel fraternity from Ahmedabad and adjoining cities with 167 buyers pre-registered buyers, making it a roaring success.

21 exhibitors including Airlines, Destination Management Companies, Travel Technology companies, Hotels, Visa Facilitation Companies and Tourism Boards showcased their products and services. The event was supported and well attended by members and office bearers of leading national and regional trade associations, such as TAAI, ADTOI, OTOAI, TAFI,

IATO, ETAA, TAG and GTAA. Trade stalwarts and dignitaries present were also honoured and presented mementos by Ravi Sharma, Convener and Gurjit Singh Ahuja, Co-Convener of TTJ TRAVMART.

Lucky draws were conducted and Chocolate Hotels gave away room nights at their hotels in Jaipur and Goa to multiple lucky winners. A sense of positivity and bonhomie prevailed during the mart as all industry stakeholders were optimistic about business opportunities in the coming holiday season and winter months.



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The Clarks Hotels and Resorts to expand internationally

The Clarks Hotels and Resorts is at the pinnacle of Indian Hospitality, with an expansive base in India. The brand is now spreading its wings into international markets such as the Maldives and Sri Lanka. In an insightful conversation with TTJ, Rahul Deb Banerjee, Vice President, The Clarks Hotels and Resorts, shares about the brands' growth strategies, USPs, expansion plans and more.

Ravi Sharma

The Clarks Hotels and Resorts operate hotels in every segment, including luxury, mid-scale and economy. With a presence in almost all the states in diverse locations, they have different offerings, with each of their brands having its own distinction.

As a growing hotel group, The Clarks Hotels and Resorts has an ambitious expansion plan. To expedite the expansion, the group is focusing on operator contracts and franchise models. They have an in-house technical and interior team, and various other capabilities such as design consultancy, sales, and marketing, Human Resource Development and Training, revenue management, etc., to assist partnering hotels. They facilitate in building and managing of the hotel from the first brick to the first guest. Over 15 years, they have grown at a rapid pace, and its goals are of having 150 plus hotels by 2023, with an average key size of 50 rooms and above. They will be targeting the lease, third-party management, revenue share, and brand acquisition models as well.

Like every brand has its ethos, the hotel group is focused on hospitality with an Indian soul. "The Clarks Hotels and Resorts is more than just a name; we have a legacy to live up to. We ensure that all our properties follow the same ethos. We have efficient processes in place. This helps all the properties offer a similar touch of hospitality to our guests. We have strict compliances in place when choosing our partners or signing up properties, as we go for the hotels where we can add value. Another unique aspect of our group is that we are present in all tier cities, providing quality hospitality in the remotest of destinations from North to South," said Rahul.

'The Clarks' is their newly launched ultra-luxury brand, which will be operational in 2023. 'Clarks Exotica' are resorts, and they recently launched Exotica in the Maldives. 'Clarks Safari'



▲ Rahul Deb Banerjee

focuses on nature and wildlife and 'Clarks Inn Suites' is their lifestyle brand. Clarks Inn is one of the most popular multipurpose hotels in India. They have a total of eight sub-brands. From the services, amenities, and amenities to the size of the rooms and the F&B options, they have tailored the guest experience in each of their brands.

On asked about how they are catching on the domestic travel market, which is growing after the pandemic, Rahul says, "Safety and hygiene are our two key priorities along with technology. As a brand, we believe in delighting our guests, more focus is extended to designing experiential itineraries. We are aggressively building our capacity, and none of our properties is facing a staff crunch. We understand the importance of highly trained staff in elevating the guest's experience. Secondly, we are building a strong digital infrastructure and investing substantially in digital innovation. Aside from streamlining processes and personalising the guest experience, we have invested in digital analytics; this has helped us in locating

opportunities for differentiating our services."

The hospitality sector is changing at a fast pace. Guests have started looking beyond the rooms. They prefer to select properties based on the amenities and experience. The Clarks Hotels and Resorts have always been synonymous with great food, and now they are specifically developing their F&B brands by adding new offerings and cuisines based on the destinations. They are hiring specialised Chefs, like at Raaj Bhaavan Clarks in Chennai; they have Chefs hired from across the state and especially from the Chettinad region, as the property serves Tamil and Chettinad cuisine.

"We are witnessing a steady growth in experiential tourism. As a group policy for each of our destinations, we are getting destinations specific itineraries designed for the travellers. In Kurukshetra, we have started the Mahabharata trail, where all the important places associated with Mahabharata are showcased to travellers. We have received a phenomenal response to these experiences. Experiential travel will be the mantra for the hospitality sector," says Rahul.

Presently, The Clarks Hotels and Resorts has 110 hotels in their portfolio, 70 are fully operational and 40 are under development, additionally, they are adding a minimum of four assets per month, July being the highest signings at seven hotels. "We are focusing in a balanced fashion between midscale and upscale hotels now with a larger inventory, for example recently, we have signed 500 room projects in Gujarat, and are firmly establishing our dominance in five stars and four-star segments. Our focus is on metros and international expansion. We have set up one office in Sri Lanka from where we will take care of the Asian market and another office in the Netherlands for entering Western and Eastern Europe," concludes Rahul.

Simran Awasthy appointed Head of Island Hopper

Simran Awasthy has been appointed as Head of Island Hopper, under the TBO umbrella.

With over 17 years of extensive experience in the travel industry, Simran has been a proud team member in FCM Travel, Thomas Cook, Oberoi and Le Meridien.

She has had an impressive career having led various initiatives in implementing strategies towards enhancing business volumes and growth.

Speaking on the appointment, Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder TBO.com, said, "I wish her very successful innings at Island Hopper and I am confident she will prove to be an important pillar of strength in our team."



Skal International Bombay (144) to host the Skal National Congress in Mumbai

With the support of the National Board of Skal International India, the Skal National Congress will take place from September 16-18, 2022 in Mumbai. Founded in 1934, Skal International boasts of having 12,250 members from over 322 clubs, spanning almost 100 countries. India alone hosts 1,200 members.

The Congress is a milestone event and is a great opportunity for all the stakeholders to showcase their best and at the same time; it is an invaluable opportunity for those attending, to be able to network with the best and with like-minded colleagues and friends from across India.

The B2B Conclave will showcase many domestic and international tourism boards, travel partners and hoteliers. Keeping with the theme of Unity and Recovery, they have carefully curated a stellar panel of motivational speakers, panel discussions and ample time for networking and B2B interactions. There will also be a lot of emphasis on Young Skal at the Congress. The inaugural sessions will kick-start the Congress on September 16 amidst huge fanfare and celebration.

Sk. Sunil VA, President of Skal Club of Bombay, said, "We are looking at welcoming fellow skalleagues from 16 clubs across the country along with several of our travel colleagues. The registrations are on, and we look forward to meeting all of you at one of the largest Skal events of the year."



Norwegian Cruise Line officially welcomes leading-edge Norwegian Prima

Norwegian Cruise Line christened its newest ship, the Norwegian Prima, earlier this month in Iceland with Katy Perry serving as the godmother of the Fincantieri-built vessel.

The first of six ships in the groundbreaking Prima Class, Norwegian Prima, debuted to more than 2,500 guests who enjoyed an immersive experience in the beautiful Icelandic capital and a christening celebration like no other.

At 965 feet and more than 142,500 tons with capacity for 3,100 guests at double occupancy, Norwegian Prima offers the highest staffing levels and space ratio of any contemporary or premium cruise ship. She also boasts the largest variety of suite categories available at sea as well as a redefined The Haven by Norwegian, NCL's ultra-premium keycard only access ship-within-a-ship concept. Her variety of recreational activities, including the fastest slides at sea – The Rush and The Drop – and the Prima Speedway, the first three-level racetrack at sea, provide guests with adrenaline-pumping moments. Spaces like Ocean Boulevard, the 44,000 square foot outdoor walk way which wraps around the entire ship; The Concourse, which boasts a multi-million dollar outdoor sculpture garden; and expansive pool decks and infinity style pools at Infinity Beach, offer guests a chance to slow down and relax.

Norwegian Prima departed on inaugural voyages to Northern Europe from the Netherlands, Denmark and England on September 3, 2022, before making her way to the U.S. She will then sail voyages to the Caribbean from New York City, Galveston, Texas, and Miami in October and November before settling into her homeport of Port Canaveral, Fla., and Galveston, Texas for the 2023 and 2024 cruise season.



OTOAI conducts 'Members Meet' in Mumbai in partnership with Saudi Tourism Authority

In collaboration with the Saudi Tourism Authority, the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) hosted a "Members Meet" on August 20 at the Sofitel, BKC, in Mumbai. The event, which attracted up to 200 members, proved to be a great opportunity for OTOAI members to learn more about "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" as a developing tourist destination and to engage in quality networking with other members of the travel industry.

The Saudi Tourism Authority India team provided strong support for the event, presenting the destination with all fresh perspectives on The Kingdom and educating the travel community on many facets of Saudi Arabian culture, adventure, heritage, gastronomy, and much more. Saudi has immense potential to attract tourists in the coming years and it has some mega projects coming up like the Red Sea and Amaala in 2023.

The destination presentation was followed by an interesting Q&A, followed by an interactive quiz. It was a great networking evening, attended by some senior members of the Mumbai travel fraternity.



Saudi welcomes Hayya Card holders during FIFA World Cup

Saudi Tourism Authority welcomes the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs' introduction of a new multi-entry visa to Saudi, available to visitors holding the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Hayya Card. The Hayya Card is required for all World Cup attendees and provides entry into Qatar and the stadiums.

Saudi is a gateway to the World Cup and home to destinations waiting to be explored. Holders of the Hayya Card will be able to apply for the new visa online and book a trip to the authentic home of Arabia with confidence, before, during and after the World Cup. Visas will allow a 60-day stay in Saudi beginning 10 days before the tournament.

The announcement encourages first-time and returning visitors alike to explore destinations in close proximity to the World Cup. Saudi is a short hop away, making it a practical and convenient destination for World Cup attendees to visit or make a home base during the games. Saudi is expecting to welcome football fans from around the world.

To increase air connectivity, Saudia will be operating 40 shuttle flights daily to Doha from both Jeddah and Riyadh, increased to 60 daily flights on the Saudi team's match days. Doha is only a 90-minute flight from Riyadh.



Grand Hyatt Gurgaon now open

The 442-room luxury hotel is the first Grand Hyatt property in Gurgaon and the fourth Grand Hyatt-branded hotel in the country. Grand Hyatt Gurgaon is conveniently located in the commercial hub of the National Capital Region, amid high-end residential and commercial spaces.



The hotel is part of a 29-acre complex and will feature 442 luxurious guest rooms, including 45 suites and 55 service apartments, providing guests with a comfortable respite. Grand Hyatt Gurgaon is home to a variety of distinct dining venues. The Parlour offers guests a curated tea menu of over 20 loose teas to choose from, while also hosting an Artisan Coffee Program with COHOMA coffee. Bar Musui is the ideal sophisticated setting for an evening drink, offering spirits, wines, beers and carefully crafted classic cocktails from across the globe and accompanied by live jazz and blues music. Seasonally inspired menus can be found at Maison Maiya, which presents a theatrically-themed selection of Asian and European flavors and incorporates locally sourced products with a delicate blend of dietary options to appeal to a wide range of palates.

Grand Hyatt Gurgaon also features an expansive event space, including The Grand Ballroom and The Campus. The 7,500 square foot Grand Ballroom welcomes guests with two live, interactive kitchens. The Campus, a 17,760 square foot space, is a meeting space segregated into a Lecture Hall, Classrooms, Library, and Common Spaces.

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