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Dear Friends,

The festive season has uplifted the spirits of travel enthusiasts, ushering in much-needed cheer in the travel and tourism sector and indicating a shift in consumer travel. Travellers are now planning travel for the upcoming winter holidays of Christmas and New Year. Flight searches have risen 25-30 per cent for leisure travel during holidays, and last-minute airfares for popular routes still see a steep jump due to high travel demand.

While the going is good, the TTJ November 2022 issue takes note of the visa fiasco in the UK and Canada, and the visa appointment delays in the US, which is ruining thousands of travel plans to and from India.

This issue also covers domestic and international trip reports, reflecting the magazine's popularity. We have extensively covered TTJ Travmart at Raipur, our milestone 40th B2B travel mart in our series of Travmarts. TTJ Travmart launched its first mart in Raipur in 2017. Also, you will find many more topics to keep you engrossed and updated.

As you read, we hope you are all geared up for the next festive rush!

Happy Reading!



Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma
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Editor's Desk

Kata Group And Beyond Resorts



Beyond Resort Kata, Phuket



Beyond Resort Krabi, Krabi



Beyond Resort Khaolak, Phang Nga



Pamookkoo Resort, Phuket



Phuket Orchid Resort & Spa, Phuket

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Tourism New Zealand kickstarts trade incentive campaign ‘If You Seek’

Post the successful launch of their first 100% Pure New Zealand global campaign since 2019, IF YOU SEEK, Tourism New Zealand unveiled its first global trade incentive campaign (bit.ly/3fDRI7n) for travel trade on November 1, 2022. IF YOU SEEK is a call to curious travellers who wish to seek more through extraordinary travel experiences.

As part of the campaign, two lucky Indian travel sellers will get to experience New Zealand first-hand and will be joined by travel sellers from Australia, Germany, Japan, North America, Singapore, South Korea and the UK. The travel sellers will get to indulge in New Zealand experiences that have been highlighted as part of the ‘IF YOU SEEK’ campaign. The trade incentive

campaign will end on February 28, 2023.

To qualify:

1. Subscribe to Trade Newsletter by filling out the form on the Tourism New Zealand trade website: bit.ly/3fDRI7n
2. Achieve bronze NZSP status (100% New Zealand Specialist Program)
3. Register for Marketing Hub and download at least one If You Seek campaign asset
4. Attend at least one If You Seek webinars between Nov 2022 – Feb 2023

Roseate Hotels and Resorts acquires The Dunstane Houses in Edinburgh

Bird Group's burgeoning hospitality vertical, Roseate Hotels and Resorts has acquired The Dunstane Houses, a luxury five-star boutique hotel in the heart of Edinburgh, Scotland, a fascinating addition to the unique collection of hotels in the United Kingdom.

The Dunstane Houses, winner of ‘Best Boutique Hotel Experience in Scotland 2020’, is dated circa 1851 and is situated in Edinburgh's West End. The property is set across two villas and offers 35 bespoke guest bedrooms and suites, a bar and restaurant, lounge, garden conservatory and private gardens. Refined, relaxed, luxurious and intimate, The Dunstane Houses, spreads across two newly refurbished, heritage Victorian townhouses. It is a relaxing sanctuary that seamlessly blends the story of the Scottish capital city, its history and lineage with contemporary, modern luxury and comfort.

Roseate Hotels and Resorts known for their understated charm, elegant interiors and mindful restoration of heritage properties promise to add their signature touch to The Dunstane Houses both in terms of interiors, an exemplary dining experience and a very fine experience for its guests. The Chefs at Roseate Hotels and Resorts have curated an exemplary menu, a blend of the finest seasonal Scottish produce with a contemporary edge. The Bar at The Dunstane Houses is poised to offer the widest and best selections of rare and vintage whiskies in Edinburgh.



Resorts World Cruises commences cruises to Phuket

Resorts World Cruises will start its 5 Night and 3 Night cruises to Phuket from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (via Port Klang) aboard the Genting Dream, commencing from November 2022 onwards.

Vacationers can now enjoy a cruise to Phuket with the option to embark from Singapore for the 5 Night Kuala Lumpur – Penang – Phuket cruises departing on November 20, 2022, and March 12, 2023. Alternatively, vacationers may choose to depart from Port Klang on November 21, 2022, and March 13, 2023, for a 5 Night Penang – Phuket – Singapore cruise. Bookings will also soon be open from November 15, 2022, onwards for the 3 Night Phuket cruises from Singapore and the 3 Night Singapore – Phuket cruises from Port Klang with sailing dates available between May 2023 and April 2024.

Cruising with the Genting Dream to Phuket will be a breeze, offering unique and memorable vacation experiences from ship to shore. With ample stopover time on the island, vacationers will have many opportunities to discover the best of Phuket. Explore one of Thailand's popular islands free and easy or sign-up for the Resorts World Cruises guided shore experiences, bringing you to the hotspot attractions of Phuket. These include visiting the smaller beautiful islands such as Phi Phi Ley Island, Phi Phi Don, Bamboo Island and more; interacting with the elephants at the jungle sanctuaries; visiting various cultural and religious sites such as Wat Chalong, Big Buddha, Phuket Old Town and more; as well as shopping at the bustling street markets and well-known malls like Pothip, Central Department Store, etc.



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The Anam appoints BRANDit as its representative in India

Pioneering in the India market to redefine luxury and create brand awareness, The Anam ties up with tourism and hospitality representation company BRANDit, as its in-market representative. The team will contribute towards positioning and showcasing the properties' undeniable charms and increasing their visibility in the travel and hospitality industry.

In a statement regarding the appointment, Martin Koerner, Group Commercial Director, stated, "We are pleased to have BRANDit on board to help us establish a strong foundation for The Anam in India. With their track record, they have demonstrated an in-depth understanding of travellers' preferences and sensibilities. Our joint efforts will enable us to gain greater visibility and penetrate the vast and diverse India market. The brand is confident that it can capitalise on this opportunity to elevate the India traveller's experience with the highest standard of hospitality that we can offer."

A sanctuary of contemporary luxury that harks back to earlier times, The Anam is Vietnam's first five-star colonial-style beach resort. The Anam Group owns and operates two luxurious five-star resort hotels. The first is The Anam Cam Ranh, launched in April 2017, followed by The Anam Mui Ne to be launched by the end of 2022.



Visit Tri-Valley appoints Sartha Global Marketing as its Representative in India

Visit Tri-Valley, the official destination marketing organisation for the cities of Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin, and the town of Danville in the Alameda and Contra Costa counties in California announced the appointment of Sartha Global Marketing



as its representative office in India. Sartha Global Marketing has been tasked with setting up a robust travel trade and public relations program, creating greater inspiration for the destination amongst potential Indian leisure travellers.

Located approximately 35 miles from San Francisco (approx. 45 mins drive from SFO), Tri-Valley comprises of classic California downtowns and an expansive wine country boasting of 55 wineries with tasting rooms and is one of the oldest wine regions in the country. The region is full of globally inspired and contemporary California cuisine and fine dining, fast casual, and everything in between. The region also features a Beer Trail showcasing visits to top breweries, alehouse and taprooms, the Ice Cream Trail offers a delicious year-round activity for all ages, a Caffeine Trail which features a collection of cafes, coffee houses and tea rooms, among a host of other hidden gems. Additionally, opportunities for golfing, biking, hiking, shopping, art and culture, a range of 40 hotel options, and top brands make Tri-Valley a great destination to visit.

Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival returns in November

This November, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) has brought back its signature event – the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival. With about 700 participating restaurants and bars, the Festival this year has prepared a smorgasbord of drinks and dining promotions that invite food and wine lovers to enjoy a 'Taste Around Town' of succulent Hong Kong flavours. Furthermore, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the HKTb will be,



for the first time, offering the public a total of 50,000 free Wine and Dine Festival e-coupons via the e-platform on the Discover Hong Kong website. By surprising the public with delicious offers, the promotion is hoped to enhance the atmosphere of the local dining scene and provide support to the trade.

Dane Cheng, Executive Director, HKTb, said, "The Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival is one of the most iconic events on the city's events calendar, loved by both the local public and visitors. This year, the HKTb will continue to celebrate the Festival all over the city. Using Hong Kong's quintessential flavours and mesmerising harbour views as inspiration, we have invited many well-known restaurants and bars to come up with innovative gourmet experiences for the event, including the thematic 'Creative Cocktails Citywide' and 'Wine on the Waterfront' programmes. In addition to delighting locals and visitors with unique experiences, we will be showcasing Hong Kong's gastronomic treasures to the world to encourage travellers to plan their long-awaited Hong Kong trip to enjoy the tastes they have been missing."

To show support for the two events that will take place in Hong Kong around the same time, namely the Global Financial Leaders' Investment Summit and the Hong Kong Sevens, the HKTb has reserved a number of Wine and Dine Festival e-coupons as gifts for the participants of the two events, so that they can also have a taste of our city's culinary offerings during their stay.

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VISA Situation

Playing spoilsport and adding to Travel Woes!



The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on the travel, tourism and hospitality industry for over two years, and then, just as the world started to reopen, international travel has been hit by another bump! Issuance of Travel Visas is a task to reckon with today; from getting appointments, to processing times, situations fluctuate from being bad, to nightmarish. TTJ spoke to the captains of the industry to understand the situation and their efforts to resolve the deadlock.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Perhaps the consular sections of embassies and visa processing agencies who had gone into deep hibernation did not fathom or visualise the task at hand once the world of unrestricted International travel reopened.

From downsizing of operations to losing key knowledge workers to other industries, it appears the Visa Processing Regime was caught totally unawares and unprepared for the unprecedented backlog of visa requests. This today translates into unavailability of visa appointment slots or slots available up to two years, down the line! Even if you are a lucky one whose application is accepted, actual processing time from two weeks to two months from acceptance to actual delivery of the stamped visa is common and not unheard of.

Uncertainty of the timelines combined with super expensive airfares, high cancellation charges and limited

availability of airline seats are a major irritant and cause of concern causing a traffic jam of sorts both for the Inbound Travel into India and outbound travel from India. This translates into loss of business opportunity and revenue for an industry that has already suffered many hits below the belt thanks to the COVID-19 meltdown.

The current visa situation has caused a lot of disruption. Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association



of India (TAAI), shares, "Non issuance or limited issuance of visas has badly affected our businesses. We facilitate travel from the perspective of ticketing, touring, destination management, etc., the pre-requisite is the visa. No visa means no business of travel and we at TAAI have been sharing our sentiments on various platforms. For us, the travel trade professionals, the pandemic is still ON! Both inbound and Outbound travel fraternity and the travellers are struggling."

Going by the details based on data from the Union tourism ministry as reported in a leading national daily, the World Heritage Sites in Delhi witnessed a 90 per cent drop in foreign tourist visits in 2021-22 as compared to 2019-20.

The three world heritage sites of Qutub Minar, Red Fort, and Humayun's Tomb come under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) Delhi Circle and according to ASI, Qutub Minar received 8,456 foreigners in 2021-22 against 2.5 lakh earlier. Red Fort received

5,579 foreigners in 2021-22 against 91,364 in 2019-20. Humayun's tomb also witnessed a 97.5 per cent decline in foreigners, with just 4,892 tourists visiting the monument last year.



The figures are a clear indication of the current challenges being faced by the Inbound tourism industry as Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), explains, "Many of our foreign tour operators are threatening our Indian tour operators that if the situation does not improve, they will stop selling India tour packages. Due to the non-availability of e-Tourist Visa for travellers from the UK and Canada, we are losing huge business and tourists from these countries are avoiding visiting India and opting for alternative destinations. If this situation continues, it will be a big loss for the Inbound tourism business, thus loss of foreign exchange earnings and loss of employment. The industry is trying to recreate jobs for the trained tourism professionals who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19, but under the circumstances when there are a lot of problems in getting an Indian Visa, it is difficult to achieve the goal of recreating employment in the tourism sector and to contribute for the economic development through inbound tourism."



Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel and Air Charter Group mentioned, "When I was President of the Indian

Association of Tour Operators, I left no stone unturned to get e-visa introduced for Inbound Tourism into the country. It is because of this facility that in 2019, we had about 11 million inbound tourists and India earned about 30 billion dollars in foreign exchange. Unfortunately, now the Govt. of India, for reasons known best to them, has stopped e-visa for two of the most important source markets of the UK and Canada. Therefore, our Inbound Tourism has been adversely impacted and we are losing millions of dollars."



Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel, adds, "The UK and Canada are in our top three Western source markets. The strictures on their applying for an e-visa have a direct negative repercussion on the arrival numbers. That is a fact. For us as a company, both are key markets, and we are completely at a loss on how to make up for the shortfall."

IATO has taken up the issue of restoration of e-Tourist Visa for international travellers from the UK, Canada, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, etc., and requested that the validity of 5 lakh free tourist visas be extended till March 2024. IATO has written to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Tourism Minister, High Commissioner of India to the UK and Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Tourism.

Touching on the subject of some countries promoting express/fast-track visa services at premium costs to hasten the visa process, Jyoti Mayal strongly reiterates, "Some countries like the UK do have high fee fast track policies which travellers are utilising if there is an urgency of travel. I think this process is truly extortion."

Subhash Goyal also agrees, "I think this is the unhealthiest practice, and it needs the government's intervention. If someone has to travel in an emergency, he definitely feels he is being exploited

by paying extra money. The embassies should look at the merit of the case and not give preference to people who can pay extra money. This is most unethical."

When asked to quantify the business opportunity lost due to the visa situation, Rajeev Kohli shares, "It is hard to say, but the opportunity lost to us is at least 20-25 per cent of targeted sales for this financial year. No place to make up for that. So it's a clean loss and will end up putting many DMCs in the red, in a year when they needed a win so bad."

The situation precipitated by the visa issue both inbound and outbound has a direct impact on all stakeholders and support industry associated with them and hence as elected representatives of their members the association leaders are under immense pressure to seek urgent and immediate remedial action and relief from the concerned authorities.

Jyoti Mayal points out, "TAAI delegations have been invited from time to time to share and submit their inputs to further improve the systems. Although no timeline was given, we were told that things would improve, especially to handle the ongoing and upcoming festive season."

Rajiv Mehra adds, "We at IATO, have taken it up with the H.E. Vikram K. Doraswami, High Commissioner of India to the UK, Foreign Minister, Tourism Minister, High Commissioner of India in London and Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Tourism and the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. The government of India is very keen and proactive in improving the situation at the earliest."

Efforts are underway and although bureaucracy and governments move at their own pace, based on their agendas, some initial remedial measures appear to be in sight.

Almost at the time of going to press, VFS issued an official press release announcing VFS Global opening a new India Visa Application Centre in central London to help deal with the surge in demand for visa applications to India at the same time, VFS Global has introduced more appointments. The Indian High Commissioner to the UK, Vikram Doraiswami, announced, "The number of appointments we have been able to do has increased to about 40,000 per month thanks to our partners at VFS Global."



Grow your Travel Business with QuadLabs' Suite of Products

Gurgaon-based QuadLabs is truly #ReshapingTravel with its host of offerings for various travel agents and travel providers. QuadLabs offers a comprehensive, all-in-one solution, powered by AI to take care of a travel agent's as well as the corporate consumer's end-to-end needs. With products like Xchange, Konnect.travel and Travog, the tech organisation is set to reshape and redefine the travel market. Read on to know more.

Vartik Sethi

QuadLabs aspires to change the way business is done in the travel industry. The organisation has not only begun fulfilling this aspiration but also has shared a crystal clear plan to exceed the expectations in the industry. The tech organisation has launched XChange, a travel ERP system for TMC, OTA and travel agencies, with Konnect.Travel as an integrated as well as an independent module of the same. Travog is their self-booking tool (SBT) and expense solution, primarily suited for corporate employees.

Speaking with Travel Trade Journal, Gaurav Jeena, Manager, Product and Training at QuadLabs shared, "The mantra is simple — to empower and enable a travel agent's business, where one can measure growth on tangible parameters, like increased efficiency and reduced cost — and to help them double their business."

An All-in-One Solution: Quadlabs

In the suite of offerings, Konnect.travel focuses on travel agents emerging after COVID-19; agents handling multiple manual systems to monitor bookings, accounts and finances. Konnect.travel provides these agents with an all-in-one platform that automates manual tasks and reduces the handling time per user by 60-70 per cent, thereby increasing efficiency. The product has received an overwhelming response from domestic as well as international agents. The offering

can be taken as a standard plan (free of cost, limited edition) and as a premium plan. Adding to this, Jeena shared, "QuadLabs has introduced a free plan for life for their first 500 customers, post which the plan will be offered at attractive offers. This is a good chance to grab this offer, after which the premium plan will be available, priced at USD 50 per user and comes with a host of features for agents."

Xchange ERP

Speaking about Xchange ERP, Jeena shared, "Xchange ERP, on the other hand, is an all-in-one product that aims to empower business travel, retail sales and B2B reseller intermediaries. The power of AI along with seamless integration with API makes Xchange an indispensable product for the travel intermediary. Along with leveraging the costs, increasing efficiency and enabling the agent, the product also customises the offerings and discounts for the customers based on their data and AI-generated profile."

Travog

Travog is QuadLabs' offering for business flyers and travellers. A tool that can be used to cater a business client, Travog's dashboard displays, at a glance, the bookings and nearby places for any customer.

Helping Hand in the post-pandemic world

With recent shifts in the travel market in the post-pandemic world, agents are now facing immense pressure to

adapt and address these changes. QuadLabs, here, proposes the need to help the intermediary mitigate this pressure and adapt to the new world. With over 270+ registrations, QuadLabs aims to close about 1000 customers by the end of March 2023. The key is to provide an intuitive tool, backed by seamless customer care services and 24*7 assistance to the customers.

Jeena also shared with us the strategy to chase the 1000 users target by the end of March 2022. "We are looking at simple, yet powerful ways to chase the target. We will attend more events and interact with travel agents from the country and across the globe. Our email marketing is in full force. Moreover, we believe in the power of word of mouth and would like our existing customers to vouch for the product."



Jeena highlighted the complex and dynamic nature of the travel industry and the need for tech to solve some very important problems faced by travel intermediaries. He foresees a bounce-back like never before in the travel sector and has geared up to face the immense demand generated by this bounce-back. He believes in tech is the future, and rightly so. We are approaching a world where tech is the backbone of anything and everything and that travel and tech will go hand in hand. In any sector, tech should be able to enable the client, is affordable and helps the client scale their business. QuadLabs' offerings, clearly, are aligned with Jeena's vision.


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Pending Bookings

23

Pending Service Requests

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 |

Create New Booking

Activities 

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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 |
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Cleartrip to disrupt OTA market, signs agreement with InterGlobe Technology Quotient

In a landmark moment for the online travel agencies (OTA) market, Cleartrip signs an agreement with Travelport's distributor for India, InterGlobe Technology Quotient. Under the agreement, Cleartrip will benefit from Travelport's travel technology solutions to further solidify its presence as a travel-tech giant in the OTA market. Read on to know more.

Vartik Sethi

Cleartrip, one of India's premier online travel agencies, has taken another step towards becoming an industry leader and has signed an agreement with Travelport's distributor for India, InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ). With a clear vision to disrupt the OTA market and provide its customers with some of the 'firsts' in the industry, Cleartrip will further enhance the services provided to its customers.

Under the agreement, Cleartrip will benefit from the use of Travelport's platform to provide enhanced services to its larger customer base. ITQ, the official distributor of Travelport in India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan, will provide Cleartrip access to its huge travel technology.

In a press conference at Gurugram, India, Ayyappan Rajagopal, CEO at Cleartrip, Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Operating Officer, ITQ and Mark Meehan, Global Vice President and Managing Director for Global Operators at Travelport signed the landmark agreement, followed by a round of Q&A with the press. Speaking of the agreement, the stalwarts termed it a 'landmark' deal that will pave the way to future alliances and an enhanced customer experience.

"We believe in simplifying the travel space. This partnership with ITQ will be another step towards using innovation to accelerate travel technology. This partnership will go a long way," said Ayyappan Rajagopal, CEO, Cleartrip.

Taking questions from the press, Rajagopal shed light on how travel post-COVID has undergone a metamorphic



change and has developed new trends. "These challenges are, in fact, opportunities for Cleartrip to tap into the potential and give some of the firsts to the industry. This is where Cleartrip sets the bar high", he added. Speaking of the firsts, Rajagopal highlighted the offerings by Cleartrip such as CT Flexmax, CT Flex, and CT Upgrade that focussed on increasing customer satisfaction by converting a challenge into an opportunity. "Cleartrip has grown 3X and we will not stop here. We will be the largest OTA in the air space, simultaneously scaling up hotel accommodations and on-ground services to be an all-in-one place for our customers," added Rajagopal.

When asked about any two trends that will rule the travel industry, Sandeep Dwivedi, COO, ITQ, shared, "Customers now want flexibility and are also looking to explore like never before. These two areas should be given maximum priority. Customers would now like flexible booking plans, instant cancellations, hassle-free refunds and an enhanced experience."

Addressing Travel Trade Journal in the press conference on Cleartrip's cornerstone of the strategy for 3X growth, Rajagopal spoke of the innovations that

helped Cleartrip nail this experience, "The idea is to introduce one innovative idea every quarter and not look back." With post-COVID recovery and pre-COVID demands, prioritising customer satisfaction has been the OTA's single most focus and the center of their strategy.

Talking about the expectations from the partnership, Rajagopal instantly replied that Cleartrip would like

to be the leader in the OTA space. Adding to this, Mark Meehan, Global Vice President and Managing Director for Global Operators at Travelport, responded, "India is an important market and the possibilities of innovation and scaling up in this market are immense. One has to get as creative as possible to ensure they stay ahead."

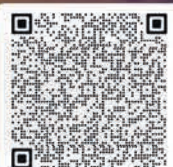
Speaking about Cleartrip's rebranding, Rajagopal summarised the quarter-wise innovations by Cleartrip and the sole focus on enhancing customer experience. With offerings like CT Flexmax, CT Flex, and CT Upgrade, and the CT Big Billion Days and CT Advantage, Cleartrip wants to bring innovations that the Indian OTA market deserves but clearly lacks.

On questions about changes in the aviation industry and the travel industry as a whole, Dwivedi talked about the dynamic nature of the Indian OTA space where demand is followed by supply and how the market has immense potential to offer to the travel industry. "People don't want to wait anymore. Staycations have become a common weekend activity. Hotels have never seen a surge like this before. The industry is truly changing," said Dwivedi.



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Simplifying travel for the Indian Traveller to USA

Established in 2010 in Atlanta, Discover Destinations is a receptive tour operator, catering to the special needs of the Indian traveller and the finer nuances to make travel within the USA simpler and hassle-free. TTJ spoke to Umang Malbari, President, Discover Destinations, on his recent visit to India to know more about his expectations and experiences from the India market and his company's roadmap for the future.



Gurjit Singh Ahuja

North America holds a great allure for the India travel market. USA and Canada primarily lead the charge and have always been high on the aspirational list. May it be for tourism, studies, business, work or even immigration.

Almost five hours of flying time from the east coast to the west coast, the USA is a huge geographical entity and spread over four time zones. Travel within the USA for a first-time traveller can be quite an intimidating experience. Hence, the need for local expertise to guide you and hand-hold you through your endeavours makes your travel experience smooth and hassle-free.

As Umang explains, "Focus on the India market was the ideal choice for Discover Destinations. I was born in India and grew up in Mumbai and moved to the US at an early age, I knew and understood the Indian perspective and saw India as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and possibly surpassing China in terms of inbound so we stay committed and focused on India as our largest source market."

Discover Destinations is perfectly placed to handle all segments of travel into the US, from FIT, Family Groups, MICE Groups, Student Travel, Budget Travel to top-end Luxury Travel. In its 12 years of catering to the India market, Mumbai was the largest market pre-pandemic, but post-pandemic Gujarat has emerged to be on the forefront and now North India with the opening of the New Delhi office headed by Veena Robinson, has established a strong presence and is targeting high-value business and making inroads into student, MICE and even VFR traffic.



▲ Umang Malbari

In terms of yield per passenger, Mumbai stands out in the FIT market both in terms of numbers and yield, and Delhi is strong in the MICE segment. Umang explains, our average FIT guests look at 10-14 days' itineraries and the MICE groups are usually in the 4-5 night segment targeting two cities with average spends from 800 to 2000 US\$ per person. The average size of MICE groups pre-pandemic used to be 80-100 pax post-pandemic things have changed and sizes now are in the 30-40 pax group size.

"Fresh visas are now a big challenge with a long waiting time, so primarily the current market is limited to holders of existing visas. Hopefully, the situation will improve both on the visa front and the airline front and we will soon be handling big MICE groups of 400 plus pax as we have handled in the past," reiterates Umang.

Talking about their business mix, Umang informs that India is their biggest source market and accounts for almost 85 per cent of their revenues but they have made rapid inroads into the GCC market, South East Asia and the UK.

Being a company that specialises in the India market the emphasis is on clearly understanding and delivering on the Indian customers' needs, as a company with Indian management and an India sales presence they work towards managing customer expectations and sensitising them to the ground realities as they exist in the USA. Food is a very important and integral part of any holiday and they ensure that the Indian customers' dietary preferences are best accommodated even for FIT customers. The Discover Destination team guides guests to Indian restaurants within walking distance of their hotels and even assists with food delivery services. Their team speaks Hindi, Gujarati and some South Indian dialects, and this ensures a comfort zone for their clients.

Schools in India have shown great interest in student programmes from Kennedy Space Center, Space Camp in Huntsville and college visits, where students visit different universities and college campuses to shortlist the ones best suited for their wards.

Speaking about growth from India market, Umang is optimistic about doubling their numbers year on year starting 2023, given that the visa issuance situation gets sorted out soon.

'Learning and Evolving is the way forward'

A hotel management graduate with almost three decades under his belt, Sandeep Khetarpal, Founder and CEO, The Global Rep, has covered a lot of ground over his many years in the industry. From being a hotelier to shifting gears by joining Thomas Cook followed by International Travel House as their Business Head followed by Paul Merchants and then TSI-Yatra and then the entrepreneur in him surfaced leading to the establishment of his own company, Central Asia Guided Tours until the thunderbolt of COVID-19 struck followed by a period of major rethink and restructuring that led to the emergence of his new business avatar.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Conceptualised as a global representation and distribution company and now having completed one year since inception in October 2021, The Global Rep was born. Sandeep elaborates, "Currently we represent 25 destinations across the globe with DMCs from CIS countries, Central Asia, Europe, Balkans, South Asia, India, Nepal, Bhutan, an adventure yacht cruise in Greece and a 110-room luxury wellness resort in Mussoorie Hills. It is our target to add a total of 50 DMCs to our portfolio by the end of this financial year, i.e. March 31, 2023."

Business and travel business, in particular, today cannot be envisaged without the incorporation of technology and Sandeep realises the importance, advantage, and leverage technology can provide. He shares, "We have launched a technology platform, a private marketplace, where we connect our DMCs with the select and closed group of travel agents and tour operators who we register. The product is called Zo Trav."

Zo Trav is a CRM and product builder built together where individual DMCs can load their customised products and agents and tour operators can search and find their requirements instantly or request modifications and customisations. The exchange happens directly between the DMC and the agent, drastically reducing turnaround times and communication ambiguities. Zo Trav is a closed B2B marketplace and no B2C business can be transacted on it, neither will the end traveller be able to see the products offered on it.



▲ Sandeep Khetarpal

The platform serves as a marketplace for both outbound and inbound business. They are looking at rapid expansion with sales teams stationed in major cities to service the local and adjoining markets. They have currently identified India, the UAE and the CIS countries as their major outbound source markets and are also in the advanced stages of discussions for aligning with European markets. They will soon have agents specialising in outbound from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland joining them on the Zo Trav platform.

India is undoubtedly their biggest source market and they currently work with 15,000 agents. While not all of them are consistently productive, they do occasionally bring in business. Nearly 500 agents have already signed on for Zo Trav, and they are targeting 5000 agent

registrations by end of the year. Sandeep adds, "Currently we are pretty strong in North and South India and are rapidly making inroads into West and East India."

As Dubai is a mega outbound market from India, there will be a strong and competitive presence of the Dubai products on the platform followed by the CIS countries due to the immense learning and knowledge base Sandeep brings to the table given his deep inroads into these markets since 2010 in his previous avatar with Central Asia Guided Tours. The close proximity of the CIS countries, with their visa-free and e-Visa policies, and shorter flying times translating to cheaper airfares makes them an attractive proposition for the India market and Zo Trav plugs in perfectly by offering its B2B partners multiple options.

Sandeep explains, "Our platform offers convenience, speed, choice, options and cost advantage. Here, the agent interacts directly with the DMC, as there is no intermediary, there is a cost advantage. This cost advantage can be retained by the agent or the benefit can be passed on to the client. The CRM tools on the platform make it user-friendly to interact and follow up with multiple suppliers. The entire workflow is more streamlined and the product and itinerary presentation more professional, with details regarding payments, cancellations, and terms and conditions clearly stated upfront. This makes the process more professional and helps place our partner agents in the esteem of the clients."

Unwind to beachside serenity at **Beyond Resort Kata**

The Beyond Resort Kata, with its unique and pristine beachfront location, sunset views, laid-back ambience and contemporary designs, makes it a great choice for your beach stay in Phuket. Its unique location puts you closer to activities like scuba diving, parasailing, and windsurfing.

Prashant Nayak



On the golden sands of Kata Beach in Phuket, waiting to welcome you in its tropical island embrace lies Beyond Resort Kata, created to bring complete relaxation to the mind, body and soul. The resort is directly set on Kata Bay, Phuket's pride and the most sought-after beach, noted as one of the gems of the Andaman Sea.

Open-air concepts with a touch of sea breeze complement a truly tropical lifestyle here. Offering 275 rooms designed in contemporary style and suites with deluxe resort amenities, one can witness stunning views over the sands, the sea, and beyond. This property is perfect for families or couples wanting a comfortable and relaxing stay.

Beyond Resort Kata also offers the finest venues, facilities, and services for special

events. From executive conferences or receptions of up to 500 guests to exclusive board meetings, seminar sessions, or creative incentive programmes, Beyond Resort Kata will assist with excellent facilities, state-of-the-art technology, and expert support. The resort is also known as a wedding destination. Thai and Western wedding packages offering great value complimented by their absolute beachfront location and luxurious touches make the 'Big Day' unforgettable for all the right reasons. Wedding perfection waits for everyone at Beyond Resort Kata.

Nisha Shrivastva, Head of Team South Asia (India and Sri Lanka), REPS Unlimited, who represents the Kata Group of Hotels, says, "Beyond Resort Kata is a distinctive beachfront resort located on the Kata

beach. The resort is a great value option for a 5-star with facilities and services of the highest standard. The resort is ideal for honeymooners and families. Requests for special celebrations have been a travel trend for Phuket and we are happy to cater to this segment. We have been active in the market and promote the resort amongst the travel agents. India is the largest source market for Phuket. We are confident that our resort will be flooded with Indian travellers as Beyond Resort Kata has everything that an Indian traveller aspires for."

The beach resort maintains a total commitment to environmental conservation and energy saving. Additionally, the resort is proud to sponsor scholarships for children studying at the local community schools in the Kata Beach area.

The St. Regis Goa opens a brand-new world of elite and signature experiences

The St. Regis Goa Resort is the first resort and the second St. Regis branded property in India. This newly transformed property is set to host time-honoured signature and celebrated rituals of the iconic luxury brand, innovative cuisines, and exceptional amenities, including the trademark personalised bespoke butler service for each guest.

Team TTJ

St. Regis Hotels and Resorts, part of Marriott Bonvoy's portfolio of 30 notable hotel brands, features the renowned hallmarks and vanguard spirit of the iconic luxury brand and is set in an ideal location for business, wedding, and leisure travellers.

Located approximately 60 minutes' drive from Goa International Airport,

The St. Regis Goa Resort is nestled in 49 acres of lush greenery fringing the pristine Mobor Beach on the shores of the Arabian Sea. The resort features 206 guestrooms, including 46 suites offering private terraces overlooking the tranquil lagoons or the golf course. For the bespoke luxury of an exclusive kind, there are 20 luxuriously appointed suites and villas with plunge pools, private access to the beach, and indulgent all-day dining at The Manor.

The St. Regis Goa Resort offers four exquisite dining venues and two bars. It also features a swimming pool surrounded by foliage with a scenic 12-hole executive golf course and relaxed beachside

amenities. With more than 32,000 square feet of dedicated event space, the resort offers venues and facilities for iconic celebrations and meetings. The Astor Ballroom is the perfect setting for events, galas, and weddings. The resort can also curate personalised private events on the beach as well as across its picturesque expanses of green lawn.

Satish Kumar, General Manager, The St. Regis Goa Resort, said, "Goa has something for everyone, whether they are interested in historic architecture, uninterrupted expanses of golden beaches, unique fusion cuisines, or exhilarating outdoor activities. Whether indulging, celebrating, or exploring, The St. Regis Goa Resort is a soulful sanctuary where senses are delighted, moments are treasured, and memories are made."



The Red Sea Development Company is now 'Red Sea Global'

The Saudi developer behind some of the world's most ambitious projects evolves into Red Sea Global, intending to set new global standards in responsible development globally.

Team TTJ

The Red Sea Development Company, the responsible developer behind two of the world's most ambitious regenerative tourism projects, has rebranded itself as Red Sea Global (RSG). The company currently oversees the creation of two luxury tourism destinations in Saudi Arabia. THE RED SEA and AMAALA prioritise delivering a positive impact for people and the planet and are on track to place Saudi firmly on the global tourism map.

Following the successful delivery of critical milestones, and with THE RED SEA destination on track to welcome its first visitors in 2023, RSG's mandate has expanded to oversee upwards of a dozen projects stretching the length of the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia, with the potential to expand beyond the Kingdom in the future.

"With THE REDSEA and AMAALA we've proven our ability to realise mega-scale responsible developments that positively shape the futures of both the people who we welcome and employ and the places in which we operate," said John Pagano, Group CEO, Red Sea Global. He added, "The announcement marks the start of our evolution into a truly global developer that can lead the category towards a new archetype for development. We are powered by extraordinary people from the Kingdom and beyond, and have the skills, knowledge, and experience required to succeed on the world stage."

John also stated, "We are not only expanding our footprint to help create massive economic opportunities, valued at hundreds of billions worth of riyals for the people of Saudi Arabia, but we also

want to set new global standards in the development and inspire the industry to do better."

RSG has a growing portfolio of projects stretching along the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia, with more than five additional projects already under a feasibility study, entering the master plan competition phase, or at which construction has already started.

The expanded mandate also includes establishing subsidiary businesses to drive an uplift in the Saudi tourism sector and associated industries. Such RSG-owned businesses allow the organisation to maintain its stringent sustainability standards in the development and operational phases and span the creation of a seaplane company through to hospitality and guest experience brands.

The global multi-project developer's existing two Giga projects under delivery are projected to contribute some 33 billion riyals annually to the Kingdom's economy upon completion, evidencing the economic boon that RSG can deliver as it expands. RSG's projects also focus on enhancing the well-being of communities, including comprehensive training programs for the next generation of Saudi talent.

To date, across the two live projects, the company has awarded more than 1300 contracts worth nearly 32 billion riyals (\$8.5 bn), with some 70 percent of the total value awarded to Saudi companies reflective of the organisation's ambition to impact the local economy positively.

RSG's ground-breaking approach toward responsible development has seen the company explore and, in some cases, implement experimental technologies

and pilot programs to help solve some of the world's most complex and pressing challenges, such as off-site manufacturing and modular construction methods at scale, green concrete to limit emissions, destination-wide clean mobility strategies, and even sustainable food production through new farming approaches.



The company also revealed a stunning new logo concept and brand inspired by the Red Sea, home of the organisation's flagship projects, and the company's global aspirations to impact development worldwide positively.

In a league of their own, both destinations promise to change the face of luxury travel. As part of its strategic expansion plan to build destination awareness, RSG has joined hands with India's leading tourism representation company, Think Strawberries, as its in-market representative to develop the country's burgeoning outbound luxury travel market.

Recently, RSG hosted a gala Curtain Raiser in Delhi and Mumbai. Think Strawberries brought in a select group of top travel agents, OTAs, industry association heads, leading airlines operating in the sector, and other prominent industry stakeholders for the exclusive events. Here, they got acquainted with the spectacular destinations, The Red Sea and AMAALA, and got a closer look at the grandeur and scale of the exceptional luxury destinations.

Creating a mark in the global wellness industry

Overlooking the azure waters of Andra Lake in Maharashtra and surrounded by dense green lands with a plethora of flora and fauna, Fazlani Natures Nest is a luxurious haven to immerse in nature and to rejuvenate and rebalance the body, mind, and soul. This luxury retreat, nestled amidst 68 acres of lush greens, offers guests a holistic wellness experience that combines alternative medicine approaches and which brings balance and improves one's general well-being. In this exclusive interaction, we get to know from Asif Fazlani, Managing Director, Fazlani Natures Nest, more about the immersive retreat.

Prashant Nayak

Fazlani Natures Nest is creating a niche for itself as a wellness retreat. How do you see the popularity of the retreat growing in the future, considering the immense competition in the Indian wellness tourism market?

Undoubtedly, the competition in the wellness space is growing in India, with many wellness retreats opening and catering to different segments. I believe that Fazlani Natures Nest is all set to create a niche in the competitive market by curating unique retreats and delivering our guests the desired results.

For example, Equine Therapy, a form of Animal-Assisted Therapy, is our unique offering that no other retreat offers in India. Enough scientific studies have been carried out to establish that Equine-Assisted activities are an appropriate therapeutic approach for children, teens, adults, families, and groups. Some conditions or disorders that respond well to EAP (equine-assisted therapies) include substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, PTSD, stress, trauma, eating disorders,



▲ Asif Fazlani

behaviour disorders, traumatic brain injury, dementia, learning challenges, ADD/ADHD, autism, Asperger's, among other conditions. Our unique offerings are not limited to Equine Assisted Therapy. Still, with the expansive area of 68 acres in which the retreat is spread with more

than 35 acres of organic farming, we have designed various eco-therapies.

Kindly share with us the aims and vision the brand holds.

My vision for Fazlani Natures Nest is to establish it as the world leader in the field of holistic wellness retreats. We ensure that everyone who walks in through our gates returns as a better version of themselves. The aim is to provide our guests with an amalgamation of pure nature and customised wellness therapies that meet their specific requirements.

What does your brand offer to its customers?

Fazlani Natures Nest offers an integrated healthcare approach that complements modern medicine, with alternative medicine and therapies after in-depth diagnosis in the lush surroundings of nature and luxury. We look into wellness not just from a perspective of physical well-being but also mental and spiritual health is of great importance in our retreat.

We have brought together age-old Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy

practices along with physiotherapy, traditional Chinese medicine such as acupressure, acupuncture, motion cupping, apothecary shots, and curated therapeutic meals under one roof. We also offer unique approaches to wellness, like eco and animal-assisted therapies.

What are your marketing initiatives and strategies thought of in exploring new business and retaining your loyal customers?

We depend on a mix of approaches like digital and traditional media activities, participating in travel marts and roadshows to create awareness about our property. The loyalty of guests is of great importance to us. We have retained our guests by keeping them abreast of the latest special offers through mailers and social media marketing.

The travel trade is another important



Does India have a great opportunity to establish itself as a must-visit wellness destination considering how people have become health conscious post the emergence of the pandemic?

As I have mentioned earlier, India is the home and place of origin for Ayurveda, yoga, and various naturopathy approaches. It is well-positioned to establish itself as "The

Wellness Capital of the World." Looking at the immense popularity of yoga and Ayurveda across the world. We need to market our wellness products in the global markets aggressively, and we shall see an overwhelming demand.

How do you see the demand for

wellness tourism shaping up in the next few years?

As per recent projections by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), in the pre-pandemic year of 2019, wellness tourism reached a record \$720 billion but then took a devastating hit in the pandemic year of 2020, falling to \$436 billion. However, the future looks very bright. The GWI forecasts that the market will reach \$817 billion in 2022 and soar to \$1.3 trillion by 2025, the fastest growth rate of any wellness market through 2025.

Like its global counterparts, the wellness segment in India is also one of the fastest-growing tourism segments. As mentioned, India is the hub of traditional wellness therapies, including



segment that has helped us attract a new customer base. In a vast country like ours, travel agents and tour operators are of paramount importance, especially in reaching smaller Indian cities and towns. We also engage in many PR and marketing activities in overseas markets to attract international travellers.

Any expansion plans for the brand?

Currently, our focus is on establishing Fazlani Natures Nest as one of the best world-class wellness destinations. However, when the time is right, we will also expand to other parts of the country.



Ayurveda, naturopathy, and yoga. Wellness retreats like ours are already witnessing strong domestic demand with international demand, also catching up with the pandemic situation under control globally. I strongly believe that 2023 will be a very strong year for the Indian wellness sector, especially considering the focus of the Indian government to promote traditional Indian wellness approaches like Ayurveda.



A refreshing cocktail for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts: *Jeju Island*

You just can't have enough of Jeju Island, even if you spend a lifetime there! Its picturesque peaks, glorious nature, immersive museums, and eccentric theme parks will always leave you salivating for more. In this article, I share some of the unique must-visit attractions in Jeju. Read on to know more.

Sonika Bohra

Snoopy Garden

While there is a plethora of picturesque locations that you would not want to miss at Jeju Island, the Snoopy Garden just hits different. The place hides in plain sight, a Garden House where you might just bump into the adorable characters of the 90s comic series 'Peanuts.' If that was not all, it also has an outdoor garden where episodes from the comic strip are re-enacted in Jeju's lush surroundings.

At the Garden House, you will also find some interesting themed halls which I observed are actually pieces that constitute a healthy and balanced life: relationships, daily life,

relaxation, happiness, and dream. Through a variety of displays, including comic strips and animations, you will find yourself completely immersed in the Snoopy universe. You can even take home Peanuts-themed gifts for your loved ones who share similar interests as you! As far as eating options are concerned, there's an American Café to satisfy your tummy with a hearty meal.

There are 11 zones in the Outdoor Garden with iconic scenes from Peanuts, including Charlie Brown's baseball field, the blanket forest for Linus, and the pumpkin patch for the Pumpkin King.



The garden blends in perfectly with Jeju's natural surroundings. It makes for a perfect place for an evening walk and would be a dreamland for someone looking to get pretty shots for the gram!

Seongsan Ilchulbong Peak

A Seongsan is a hill in the shape of a castle, and Ilchulbong is a high point with a view of lovely sunrises, therefore the name of the peak, Seongsan Ilchulbong. The peak lives up to its mystical name and has magnificent views to offer.



At first glance, Seongsan Ilchulbong’s slopes might scare you, but there are stairs up the crater to make the climb fairly convenient. The ascent to the peak, which is 182 metres (600 feet) above sea level, shouldn’t take you more than 45 minutes. If you’re on the fence about wanting to go on this hike, I promise you that the refreshing breeze at the summit and the breathtaking panoramic view of the ocean, Udo Island, Hallasan Mountain, and the volcanic landscape of the east, are worth the sweat. That’s enough incentive.

Arte Museum

I had to pick my jaw up from the floor as I entered the magnanimous Arte Museum. This museum was nothing like I had seen before, the 3D immersive museum places you in the middle of pretty much your prettiest dream. Words would seldom



be enough to explain how beautiful the museum is. I can only explain it as one of the greatest technological achievements by the Koreans. It looks thrilling, beautiful, larger than life, crazy, and amazing – all that at once.

Overall, it was an amazing day at the museum. Arriving at the show was like stepping into another zone. It is where you want to be if you’re looking for an escape from the mundane routines of daily life.

My experience at the Garden room where I enjoyed the sweet flower breeze along with the soft flower rain is still a memory I treasure. The endless space was covered in flowers that communicated the liveliness of nature from a distance, using a combination of visuals and reflections.

I was (pun-intended) star-struck by the Star show. A musical feast of lights beaming between works of art made of paper was a sight to behold. The experience of entering the core of the universe’s star lights through the lighting display of paper art that glows in a place that is infinitely expanding by mirrors is unforgettable.

The next 3D immersive experience at the museum was the beach. The best part of my experience there was when I turned towards a massive wave that was coming at me from behind. It was nothing short of a fantasy to experience the reverberation of a paradoxical wave that furiously gushed to devour the surroundings while being stuck inside a foreign area made



larger by the anamorphic illusion. It was an ideal spot for me to relax on the floor, to hear the sound of the waves. It felt like a daydream. The museum deserves to be seen! For the best experience, consider going there on the weekends to avoid crowds.

9.81 Park Jeju

If you’ve ever been go-karting before, you might be aware of the awful odour of gasoline that generally lingers around in the arena. At 9.81 Park Jeju, however, you have electric-powered go-karts which help you inhale clean air, which doesn’t spoil the tranquil views of Aewol Beach and Hallasan Mountain.

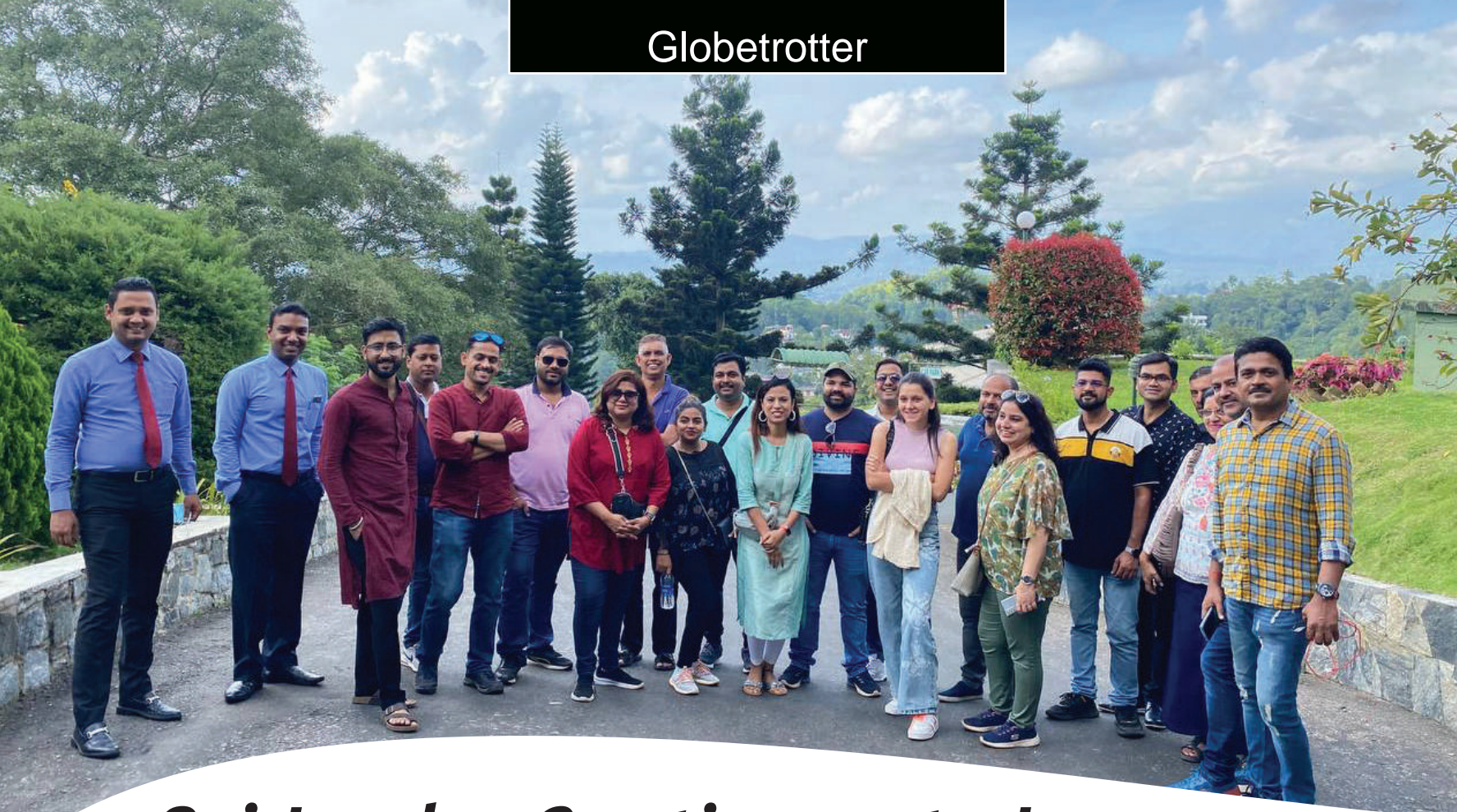
Each car employs GPS and ICT technology to record lap times, speed, acceleration, and other pertinent racing



data directly to the park’s app, which makes racing at 9.81 Park Jeju unique and technologically advanced. My glory moment occurred when I was announced MVP (winner) of a fun Laser Tag game.

Even when you’re inside strolling around the 9.81 Park, the enjoyment is endless. There are several additional activities to take to keep you entertained at all times. For skeptics, the language never poses a problem, as instructions are available for both English and Korean speakers.

While I had a thousand experiences that I would have loved to share, the most important was the hospitality of the Koreans. I found them to be one of the most generous and humble people I’ve ever come across. The warm welcome left in me a lingering want to go back and experience everything again!



Sri Lanka Continues to Impress

Immovable Might of the Island Country

You just cannot write off Sri Lanka, the country has a big heart, alluring scenic beauty, and a luxury experience that is second to none. Despite the recent tragedies, the country seems unaffected and is operating the tourism industry in full swing. The cultural riches and the ever-smiling faces of Sri Lankans will keep you wanting for more. From my stay at a luxury Gem Suite in Nuwara Eliya to an exhilarating boat ride through the mangroves, there is a lot that I cover in my article. Read on to know more.

Vartik Sethi

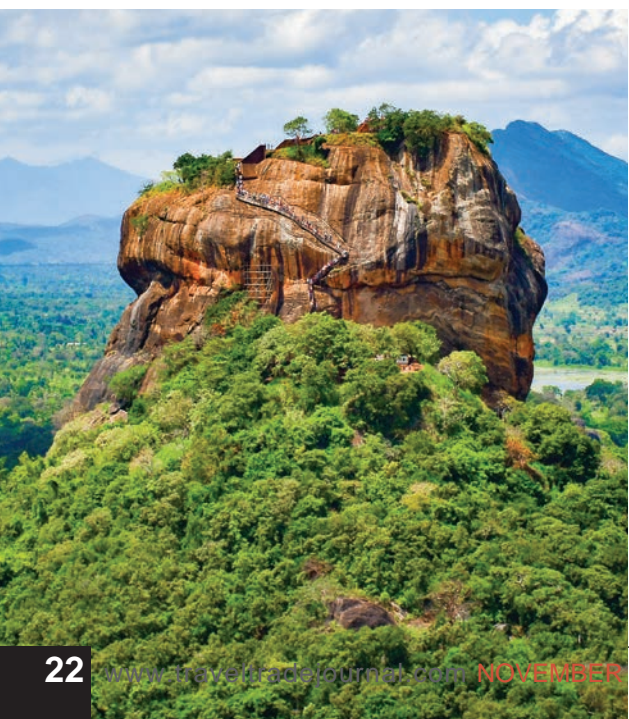
One may not have many expectations from Sri Lanka after two consecutive blows from COVID-19 and the subsequent economic slowdown. However, the ground reality begs to differ. The country has shown relentless composure amidst tough conditions and it would only be fair to say that the Lankan tourism has bounced back and is looking as good as ever. In total honesty, there was not much to separate my recent visit to Sri Lanka from when I visited the country back in 2019 when the economic and healthcare situation was perfectly fine.

than fiction. This 1,144-foot high rock finds itself in the middle of an absolutely flat terrain. A good look at the Sigiriya Rock and its surroundings might make you wonder if someone has scooped out a hill and placed it in the middle of a vast expanse of grassland. The uphill trek took us a water bottle, sturdy shoes, and three hours to climb up and back down the Sigiriya Rock. This UNESCO Heritage site is believed to be King Kashyapa's palace, who ruled the country from 473 to 495 CE, while others believe this palace to be the legendary King Ravana's golden abode.

Though, if you are even remotely like me - you will find yourself more interested in enjoying the lush green view from the top of the rock, the water bodies surrounding the rock palace, and the thrill of the trek than to solve its origin theories. The trek was amazing but tiring. A hearty meal at the Jetwing lake and a dip in the swimming pool at the Cinnamon Lodge, Habarana, set me up for a soothing sleep imperative for recovering from a long day!

An excitement-packed start!

A warm reception at the airport followed by a smooth but long five-hour ride got me standing at the foot of the gigantic Sigiriya Rock! Nature's wondrous manifestations like such remind us how reality is actually stranger

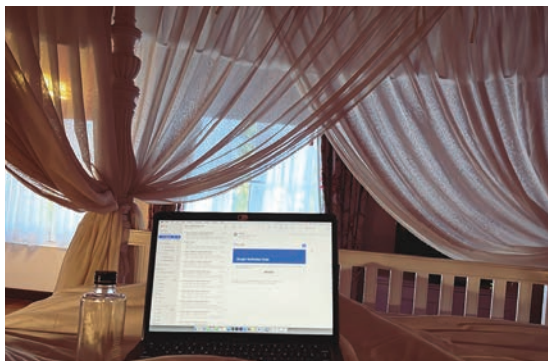




Sri Lanka beyond beaches

An interesting yet overlooked feature of a visit to Sri Lanka is how rich the country is with its cultural heritage and scenic beauty. The Dambulla caves and

the Temple of Sacred Tooth Relic pay testimony for its cultural riches. A predominantly Buddhist country, the ancient Dambulla caves in Sri Lanka guard ancient murals, art, fascinating stories, and uncountable idols of the Buddha in various poses and positions. This place is an unstoppable



force of literature and spiritual knowledge which only seeks to entertain your curious mind with endless, interesting information!

If you thought that this island country may only have consistent tropical weather across its geography, then you might be in for a surprise. To break this seemingly widespread myth, Nuwara Eliya, a hill station of a city, offers temperatures close to zero degrees Celsius on its coldest days and maintains an average of about 10-15 degrees Celsius on a normal day. Damro Tea Gardens came in as a god-sent angel to give us just what we wanted to beat the cold – their lip-smacking variety of hot tea!

Nuwara Eliya, along with a display of beautiful green hills, also has a beautiful Hanuman temple reverberating waves of positivity on top of a hill. I took those vibes back to my GEM suite at Jetwing St. Andrews. The property has an architecture similar to that of a British hotel, and the interiors looked quite modern with shades of pastels which made the property look quite aesthetic overall. Though as a vegetarian, eating options in Nuwara Eliya were quite limited.

Let the adventure begin

A motorboat ride at Nuwara Eliya kickstarted our watersports adventures in the country, which only got better with each passing day. Green hills, clean water, an overcast weather, and a chilly breeze packed together is the experience you get to conclude your trip in Nuwara Eliya.



On our way to the Spice Garden in Tangalle, we also witnessed the charm of the famous Ramboda Falls. Water flowing down from a considerable elevation was a sight to behold and the waterfall stood up to its hype! I had the luxury of tasting the globally renowned Ceylon Cinnamon tea, which tasted quite different (in a good way) from regular cinnamon. The island of Cinnamon,

Sri Lanka, cultivates its cinnamon in a way unique to the region – the cinnamon bark is separated from the branch and is air-dried for up to eight days until it is made available for consumers.

Right out of an exotic movie

As the sky cleared and the sun started to set, it made for the perfect setting to voyage on a boat excursion through the mangroves. An exotic view of the mangroves has made itself a special place in my heart. It came in as a calming hug from nature felt like it was earth's way of displaying love towards the living beings that are lucky enough to witness the sight.

I also found myself fortunate to contribute to the Kosgoda Turtle Conservation and Research Centre, where they treat diseased turtles who suffer due to human intervention. The noble cause is something that humanity truly needs and deserves recognition on a global scale.

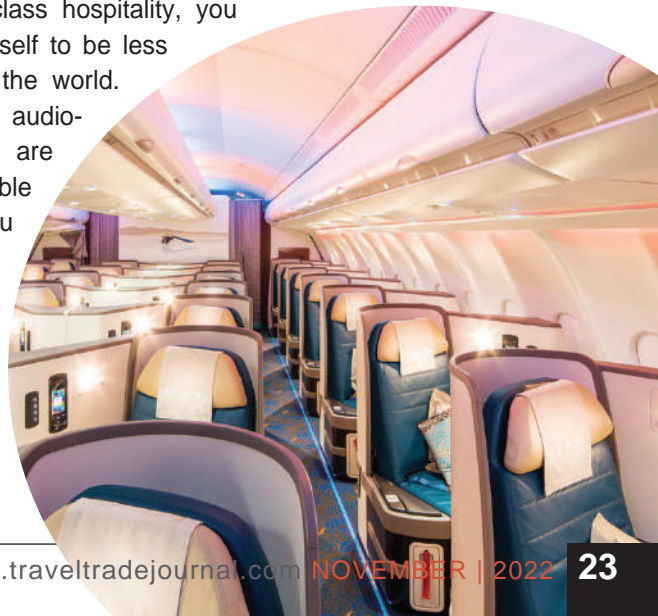
The country has a dynamic set of offerings from magnificent nature, luxury second to none, to adventure sports! The jet-ski ride at the Bentota river filled my veins with adrenaline and provided much-needed respite to the adventurer in me. My thrill-seeking nature got me a bit greedy which led me to go for a few other water sports which made for an equally enthralling experience as the jet-ski. The staff was well trained and the safety measures looked apt. There are other water sports that one could take on as well without affecting the pocket too much as these experiences are quite economical in Sri Lanka.



Going back wanting for more

We reached Colombo to understand more about Sri Lanka's efforts to revive its name in the tourism industry from the torchbearers of SriLankan Airlines themselves. The discussion led us to believe how mainstream media might just be a little too harsh on the relentless Sri Lankan tourism industry, which has seemingly bounced back with a bang! We witnessed a nightlife that was exceptional - the nightclubs and luxury hotels see a whopping turnout of party lovers and tourists. It just goes to say that Sri Lanka is still here, better than ever.

Our flight back to India was hosted by Sri Lankan Airlines, an airline that never seems to disappoint. With their luxury business class and world-class hospitality, you wouldn't feel yourself to be less than the king of the world. The seats and audio-visual systems are super comfortable and in no time you find yourself back home – back to daydreaming of another trip to this wonderful island country, Sri Lanka.



Trek to the base camp of the ANNAPURNA MOUNTAIN



Care for a holiday where you come back stronger – physically and emotionally, sharper and mostly even leaner? This is a holiday for someone who would love to experience nature in its rawest form- a trek to the Annapurna base camp. This trek to the base camp of the 10th tallest mountain in the world is filled with some of the most beautiful natural sights consisting of snow-clad peaks, green valleys, dense forests, gushing rivers, splendid waterfalls all in the midst of beautiful sunrises, amazing sunsets and starry nights.

Chintan Shah

Nepal is home to some of the most breath-taking mountains in the world. Though a huge part of the Himalayas exists in the northern part of India as well, the upper Himalayas are located in Nepal, which is home to the largest congregation of the tallest peaks of the world. The country, which is cradled in the lap of the Himalayas, ensures that right from landing at the airport of the capital city, Kathmandu to the journey across the trek, you will see some of the tallest mountain peaks of the world. The home to eight of the fourteen 8000+ peaks of the world, including the mighty Mount Everest – Nepal has two must-do treks for any trek lover – The Everest base camp trek and the Annapurna base camp trek.

My journey started much before the moment I took the flight from Mumbai to Kathmandu. It started when I enrolled for the trek. Right from training at the gym to climbing the stairs of my building to training my legs to identify the right food & trekking gear, the preparation for the trek is as exciting as the trek is. I also did a few local treks around Mumbai to get myself prepared. Also, I built my stamina by running and walking as often as I could.

Once I landed in Kathmandu, I spent an evening at Thamel, which is probably the “trekking preparation capital of Nepal.” You will find people across

the world spending time there as they prepare for the trek. Right from buying the right gear to getting familiar with the trekking terrain, you will find this place already inspiring you for the trek.

Post one day in Kathmandu, I flew into Pokhara. After a short car ride from Pokhara to Nayapul – the starting point of the trek, I was now on my own feet staring at the humongous Himalayan mountains. Over the next 5-6 days, I walked through the mountains seeing some of the most beautiful terrains that I could have imagined. The trek begins at nearly 2500 feet and I climbed to 13500 feet as I reached the Annapurna base camp.

Generally, I would walk 8-9 hours a day, climbing and descending from one mountain to another. On an average, I would climb and descend 3-4 mountains



in a day. The typical day would include waking up early around 6 AM, getting ready and having breakfast, and then starting the trek around 7-30 AM. I would generally walk 4-5 hours before the lunch break, which was mostly in a small settlement. The food along the trek was surprisingly delicious, and the complete continental food menu was available across the entire journey. After

we used to spend our nights were right beside a river or in a valley at the centre of snow-clad mountains.

After trekking for around 5-6 days across the mountains, I finally reached the destination – the Annapurna base camp. It was magical when I reached there. I was surrounded by some of the tallest peaks in the world and I was right at the centre of them. The base camp offers a 360-degree view of the Annapurna range. The Annapurna base camp allows the trekker to stay on the base camp, unlike the Everest base camp trek,



lunch, I would walk another 4-5 hours to reach my night stay destination where I relaxed, saw the sunset, and slept under the stars.

While I walked, numerous places awed and inspired me to take pictures – some of them include a beautiful sunrise, tall waterfalls, streams and merging of rivers, suspension bridges, dense forests, caves, beautiful valleys, natural vegetation and most important of all – tallest peaks of the world (quite a few completely snow-clad). If one loves walking by the rivers or bathing in the cold waterfall, this trek gives plenty of such opportunities. Some of the places where



where one cannot stay on the base camp. Being at the height of 8,091 metres (26,545 ft) above sea level, Annapurna Mountain is well known for the difficulty and danger involved in its ascent.

Also, the sunset was probably the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen. The sunrise the next day was even more mesmerising as I saw the mountains turn golden as the sun shined on the beautiful glaciers of the mountain. In the mountains, the weather is highly unpredictable, and it quickly fluctuates from a clear sky to a complete cloud cover with negligible visibility in a very short span of time.

After that beautiful sight, one may choose to either walk back down the whole route or take a scenic helicopter ride back to Pokhara.

journey to the Annapurna base camp will not just fill up your photo album but also add a lot of dramatic moments to your travel journal.



Once you are back from Pokhara to Kathmandu, I recommend spending some time on local streets collecting souvenirs and clothing. Also, do visit the Pashupatinath Temple, which is amongst the largest temple complex in the world.

I am a strong believer that the real fun of any travel is the journey and not the destination – A trek is all about the journey as one experiences the sheer beauty of nature. The



About the Author: Chintan Shah is a finance professional who loves to travel and experience nature. He is an adventure enthusiast who loves trekking and has done multiple treks, including the Everest base camp and Annapurna base camp.

Discovering Jewels of the Nile on Mayfair Cruises

Based in Egypt, Mayfair River Cruises, with its fleet of stylish and elegant cruise vessels, is an excellent option for cruising the Nile. Sailing from Aswan to Luxor is the perfect way to unwind and immerse oneself in the rich Egyptian culture to experience, explore and discover the remarkable treasures, glorious times, and mysticism of Egypt unravelling itself.

Prashant Nayak

Egypt's tourism industry is now bouncing back post the knock-out effect on the country's economic sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in the number of tourists visiting Egypt in 2021 and the first half of 2022 is a good indication of recovery post-COVID-19, which had caused a sharp decline due to the restrictive travel policies that the lockdown imposed worldwide. Having lifted its COVID restrictions earlier this summer, pyramid-hopping and the hot-air balloon ride over Luxor's ancient sites are back in business with a vengeance. According to the latest reports, around eight million tourists visited Egypt in 2021, a 117.5 per

cent increase compared to 3.7 million tourists in 2020.

Egypt alluring for ages

Egypt is one of the most remarkable tourist destinations, having iconic and splendid tourist attractions combining culture, history, prominent geographical location, a paradise for adventure, and various marine activities. Egypt is also a place to see some of the world's most famous ancient attractions. The Great Pyramids of Giza - one of the world's seven wonders, are a must-see. Abu Simbel is Egypt's most popular attraction after the Pyramids. Egypt is also one of the few countries where new archaeological discoveries are occasionally being made. With the opening of the highly anticipated GEM, Grand Egyptian Museum now set for next year (it'll house the largest archaeological collection in the world as well as all 5,000 Tutankhamun's treasures), Egypt is well primed to become a top tourist destination in the coming years.

Gift of the Nile

The Nile is one of the world's great waterways, at 6,695 kilometers, generally regarded as the longest river in the world and among the most culturally significant natural formations in human history. It is also called the Father of the African Rivers. The Nile has flooded seasonally

over millennia to provide life-giving fertile soils and irrigation and has been the lifeline for Egyptian culture since the Stone Age. As an eternal source of sustenance, the Nile played a crucial role in the founding of Egyptian civilisation. The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that "Egypt was the gift of the Nile," and in a sense that it stands correct till today. The Nile was also a convenient and efficient mode of transportation for people and goods. The 'Dahabiya,' a kind of boat, has been used for many centuries as a means of transportation on the Nile. The 'Sandal' is a smaller version of a Dahabiya and was used as a freight vessel on the Nile. There is also one more traditional Nile boat known as a Felucca.

Cruising on the Nile

The Nile has been an integral and important part of Egyptian life since ancient times. A visit to this country is only considered complete with a cruise on the river. Cruise itineraries, ranging from 3 to 7 nights, offer visitors multiple options to sail from Aswan to Luxor and see all the major Egyptian landmarks on the way. Most cruises also offer services of trained guides who make the experience a memorable one for the visitors. Meals and luxury accommodations are also included in the cruise deal.

River cruise season in Egypt runs from September to June but is operated around the year. 2022 was an exciting season for sailing as the country prepared to mark the 100th anniversary of the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb, which happened on November 4, 1922. Several new ships and itineraries have launched offerings on the Nile River and new tours that visit the area's highlights. Earlier this year, the theatrical release of 'Death on the Nile,' based on the popular Agatha Christie novel of the same name, perhaps has also ignited a resurgence of river cruise travel in the region.

Mayfair Cruises- Spectacular journeys on the Nile

As one of the fastest-growing cruise companies in Egypt, Mayfair Cruises has three 5-star Nile Cruise vessels (M.S. Mayfair, M.S. Esplanade, and M.S. Mayflower) sailing the majestic River between Luxor and Aswan. Just board one of the cruises and experience true luxury. Mayfair Cruises offers 3/4 /7-night itineraries that allow their guests to visit historical temples, tombs, and ruins on the journey guided by their onboard Egyptologists during the day. The guests will also be invited to participate in leisurely activities onboard during the evening. All Mayfair boats have swimming pools, modern luxury cabins, bars, and restaurants.

M.S. Mayfair

Cruising on The Mayfair is like travelling in true luxury and style as one explores some of the most stunning locations on the Nile River between Luxor and Aswan, where exceptional service is the standard on all of its five elegant decks. The Mayfair's Cabins are very spacious and well-appointed, with satellite TV, individually controlled air conditioning, wi-fi, hair dryers, private verandas or French windows, and an attentive and friendly staff services them. This trip on the Nile is bound to be memorable, not only for the impressive ruins and temples that one can see but also for getting the

comfort of home along the way.

M.S. Esplanade

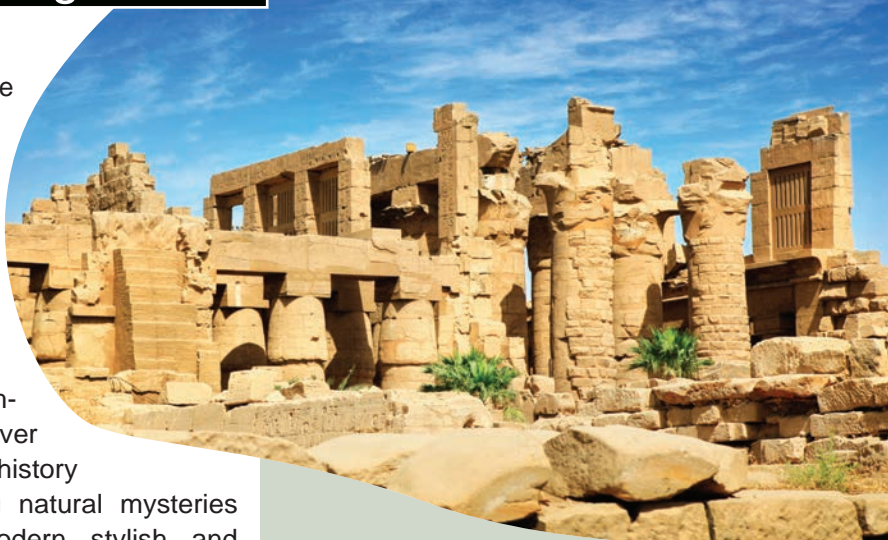
Glistening in bold sophistication from bow to stern, the luxurious M.S. Esplanade offers travellers a dream-like journey to uncover the land of ancient history and its captivating natural mysteries along the Nile. Modern, stylish, and sophisticated, the Esplanade offers exceptional luxurious surroundings and guestrooms. The attention to detail and finish are superb. Built to a very high level of modern design with large panoramic windows offering magnificent Nile views, this cruiser is a class above the normal.

M.S. Mayflower

The 5-star M.S. Mayfair is one of the newest vessels on the Nile today. With her avant-garde style and luxurious amenities, the M.S. Mayfair is an exclusive invitation to truly sophisticated regal accommodations, tranquil relaxation, and delectable dining - all complemented by an unsurpassed experience in the discovery of the rich history and timeless beauty of Egypt along the Nile. One can indulge in the sweet life aboard Mayflower and discover grandeur, elegance, succulent flavors, and a flair for exciting night-time celebrations.

The Mayfair experience

On a Mayfair cruise, one feels as if they are following the footsteps of some of the world's greatest explorers as they



sail down the mighty Nile in search of the ancient secrets and golden treasures, and answers to some of the world's greatest mysteries. With grand temples dotting their borders, every monument, tomb, or structure on the way is a sight to behold. Unlike the other temples in Ancient Thebes, the Luxor temple is not dedicated to a specific God. Instead, the Luxor temple is dedicated to



the rejuvenation of kingship. The Karnak Temple and the Avenue of Rams is a cult temple dedicated to Amun, Mut, and Khonsu and is the largest religious building ever constructed. Only a few kilometers from the river bank in the city of Edfu, the temple of Horus dates back to 237 BC. Aswan is known as the city of the oldest cataract and home of the High Dam. Taking after their Nubian ancestors, the people of Aswan will charm guests with their hospitality and crafts. The Philae Temple is dedicated to the Goddess Isis. Philae was said to be one of the burying places of Osiris. The temple was held in high regard by both the ancient Egyptians and the Nubians. Other than these experiences, many bird watchers prefer to drift slowly past mud banks observing the many species of avian in Egypt, the unique river bank flora and fauna and fishermen casting their nets.



Encounter with the tough kind at Shaba

In early October 2022, I had the opportunity to travel to Kenya for the Magical Kenya Tourism Expo (MKTE 2022) and be a part of an exclusive FAM trip hosted by Kenya Tourism Board. As a wildlife enthusiast and a travel writer, this opportunity offered me a wholesome and distinct insight into the wonders of Kenya's amazingly diverse and dramatic landscape, natural wildlife, and cultural heritage. With stunning countryside from Nairobi to Shaba National Reserve in Northern Kenya, then on to Lake Nakuru National Park in South of Nairobi, our group of six including our guide and driver thoroughly enjoyed the spectacular land cruiser rides, real deal wildlife viewing, tranquil stays and other surprising experiential at both the game reserves. This is my account of our visit to the Shaba National Reserve, an ultimate and enriching experience.

Prashant Nayak

The African continent is one of the world's most captivating destinations on earth with some of the most prolific wildlife viewing opportunities. Wherever you wander in Africa, you will leave with a new insight into the African way of life. The magic of this culturally rich, vibrant, and welcoming continent will have you wanting to return over and over. It was my first visit to Kenya and my third country in Africa. This time, I have promised to return to this magnificent country, especially for the unseen wildlife teeming in Kenya.

After a late-night arrival in Nairobi by a smooth six-hour flight by Kenya Airways from Mumbai, my trip started early the next day after a blissful but brief sleepover at the Sarova Panafric Hotel. Post breakfast, we headed north. The drive from Nairobi to Shaba National Reserve takes approximately 6 to 7 hours, using the Thika Super

highway Road. The picturesque drive through the curving roads and some breath-taking scenery dotted with mountains, streams, fields, villages, and markets give you adequate time to absorb the essence of Kenya, en route.

Shaba, Samburu, and Buffalo Springs are a trio of unfenced reserves that share common borders. We stayed at Sarova Shaba Game Lodge in Shaba Reserve, perched along the banks of the Ewaso Nyiro River. The property features indigenous trees and a pond where you can get a natural fish pedicure done. We did most of our game drives in Buffalo Springs National Park. Once on safari, nothing else makes me feel alive than being in the company of birds and animals and knowing about the many wonderful creatures of the African savannah and forests.

Much of Shaba's charm lies in the splendour of its topography, which



includes deep gorges near the Ewaso Nyiro River. I was attracted to this interesting game park because of the terrain, which gives way to rocky hills and dusty plains strewn with black lava boulders. Massive Shaba Hill towers over this appealing landscape. The region was going through a major drought when we were there, so the foliage and grasses were almost non-existent. The going was tough for the wildlife here. While many of them had migrated, it was a wonder to know that many were surviving in the rough and rugged terrain. Their only respite was



the low-flowing river nearby. However, it is a great reserve if you are keen on searching and finding wildlife, as opposed to being presented with loads of wildlife with no effort of scouting. For those who came late, Shaba National Reserve was once the home of Joy Adamson of 'Born Free' movie fame and



was famous for its large lion prides. If not for the drought, this place virtually guarantees wildlife encounters in large numbers, while elephants roam in large herds and are best seen beside the river.

However, Shaba is still home to some of Kenya's dry country specials. We did spot the Beisa Oryx, Cape Buffaloes, Dik Diks, Olive Baboons, Waterbucks, Lesser Kudu, Grevy's Zebra, and Gerenuk. The Ewaso Nyiro River is a good place to look for big Nile crocodiles. I spotted a small one in front of our lodge, basking under the sun near the river. While the Hadada Ibis and Egrets are found in the lodge premises, among the avian species in reserve, I was lucky to spot the Goliath Heron, Go away birds, Hamerkops, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Yellow Billed Hornbills, Yellow Necked francolins, Red Winged Starlings, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Buffalo Weavers and plenty of other small doves and birds.

However, one cannot find some of the animals that are found in this part of Kenya in Masai Mara or Amboseli National Park.

To me, the Buffalo Springs Game Reserve happened to be a perfect Kenya birding safari destination. This reserve is a habitat for a huge number of birds, where I captured a Martial Eagle, Vulturine Guinea Fowls, Dwarf Bittern, Lappet Faced Vulture, White Headed Buffalo Weavers, Superb Starlings, African Hoopoe, and many more. Buffalo Springs is known for its biodiversities of animals such as the Rothschild's Giraffe, Reticulated Giraffe, Burchell's Zebra, African Bush Elephants, Warthogs, Lions, and Leopards. Surprisingly, there are few safari visitors to the park, thus making it a pleasant destination to go on game drives without disturbing the wildlife and be the first to sight the animals and birds. Its picturesque landscape is defined by rolling savannah punctuated by termite mounds, scattered shrubs and acacia, clumps of toothbrush trees, and iconic umbrella trees, making for great photo opportunities along with the wildlife.

We also visited the Samburu National Park on a cultural tour of a Samburu settlement. This one-hour visit to a Samburu village is a chance to interact with Samburu people and get a glimpse into their culture, unique way of life and see first-hand some of their customs and practices. They took us inside their traditional huts, which are built by women using interwoven sticks, mud, and cow dung. They also showcased some ethnic dances and sang songs, demonstrated the age-old method of lighting the fire, and displayed trinkets to take home as souvenirs. Kenya boasts 42 ethnic tribes, and they are always ready to share their culture with local and international tourists. It is great to know about their nomadic lifestyle, clothing, economic activities, and beliefs.

The Sarova Shaba Game lodge is set on a natural oasis, channelling the water into cascades and fishponds on the entire premises. The abundance of trees on the property gives ample cover and offers refreshing breaks after the long game drives. They also have a spectacular swimming pool with a lovely outdoor restaurant for dining and an



open bar space. The lodge rooms are cosy and comfortable, with excellent river views. The service from all the staff was top-notch, and we were particularly impressed with how they went out of their way to arrange our exclusive and special riverside champagne breakfast and night BBQ with a bonfire. The



Vervet Monkeys also enthrall the guests with their antics, and they had to be shoed away constantly by the specially appointed guards. Sarova Shaba is a gated property with electric fences to deter wildlife from entering the premises, but monkeys usually have their way around.

The Danish author Karen Blixen, widely known for her book "Out of Africa," which details her time spent living in Kenya, said, "If there were one more thing I could do, it would be to go on safari once more." I experienced similar emotions as we departed for Nakuru, our next destination. I really needed that one more game drive in Shaba! My experience at Shaba will always remind me of all the good people, the comfortable stay, the rich wildlife, and the exquisite culture. I am sure to visit this beautiful destination again whenever I get the opportunity to be back in Kenya.



New experiences and entertainment await in Qatar during the **FIFA World Cup**

With a few days to go until the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, Qatar Tourism has revealed new tourist attractions, hotels, and resorts that will be open for fans to enjoy during the tournament. This unprecedented year of development represents a major milestone in Qatar's emergence as a tourist destination, with the country seeking to welcome six million visitors annually by 2030. TTJ highlights a few of these attractions, hotels, and resorts in Qatar just in time for the most anticipated sporting event in the world.



Team TTJ



residential area is set to become the Champs-Élysées of the Middle East, with the open-air, climate-controlled boulevard offering a vast range of experiences. Lusail Boulevard is set to open in time before the

Hyde Park location, visitors to Lusail Winter Wonderland will be able to relax on the beach in the sun while enjoying festive games, rides, live entertainment, and delicious food and drink. Lusail Winter Wonderland will launch at the beginning of November 2022, bringing winter magic to the Middle East.

Qetaifan Island North

Conceived as an entertainment hub, Qetaifan Island North will feature luxurious hotels, beach clubs, gardens, pedestrian-friendly streets, distinct neighbourhoods, and a waterpark. Qetaifan Island North will launch before the end of the year.

Al Maha Island

Set to launch this month, Al Maha Island will feature high-end restaurants, including Zuma, LPM, Billionaire, and Carbone, as well as other eateries and attractions such as Nammos Qatar beach club and Lusail Winter Wonderland. The island also features Al Maha Drive, a unique driveway experience reserved only for supercars and classic cars.

Lusail Boulevard

Located in the heart of Lusail, this dynamic and diverse shopping, commercial and

FIFA World Cup. Some five kilometres away is the Lusail Winter Wonderland. In contrast to the icy cold temperatures that greet visitors at the famous London



West Bay North Beach Project

Early November will see the highly anticipated launch of Qatar Tourism's West Bay North Beach Project, with the initial launch comprising three new beaches in the heart of Doha:

West Bay Beach- This is an affordable public beach with diverse amenities, including a food court, fan zone, and beach volleyball court.

B12 Beach Club Doha- A family-friendly beach club with many amenities including 600 sun loungers, a restaurant, retail shops, and a children's playground.

DohaSands Beach Club- The stylish club will feature a buzzing concert stage, quick-service food and beverage outlets, retail offerings, and 1,000 sun loungers for visitors keen to enjoy the sunshine.



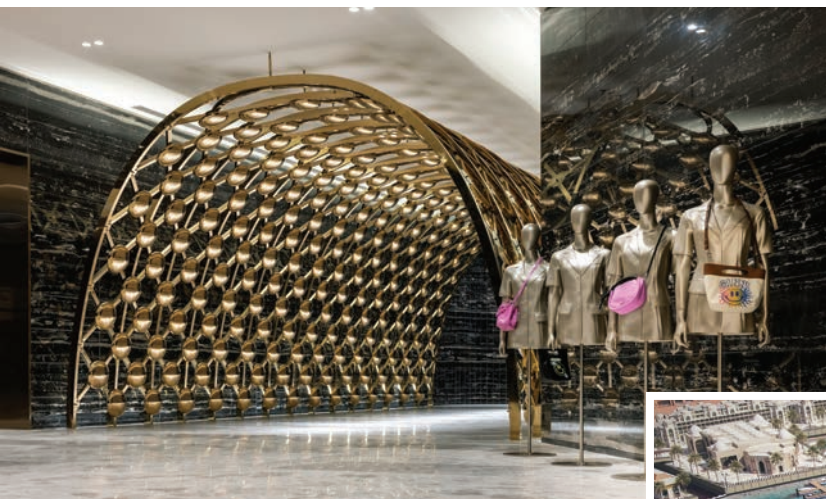


Museum of Islamic Art (re-opened)

Qatar's iconic Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) re-opened to the public on October 5, 2022, following a year-long facilities enhancement project. Reimagining its permanent collection of over 1,000 objects will create a new visitor-focused layout and storyline, allowing the museum to showcase its world-renowned exhibits as never before. Aimed at families with children, the new galleries at MIA include hands-on experiences and activities.

Printemps Doha

Launching for the first time outside of France, the prestigious Parisian department



store, Printemps will combine new technologies and an immersive physical experience to offer over 600 brands – 200 exclusives in Qatar. Printemps will be the only department store in Qatar to house all the iconic Maisons under one roof: Louis Vuitton, Dior, Valentino, Balmain, Pinel et Pinel, and more. Set to be the largest luxury department store in the region, Printemps will open its doors in Doha Oasis over the coming weeks.

The Outpost Al Barari

The first-of-its-kind accommodation in Qatar, The Outpost Al Barari is situated in the stunning Inland Sea nature reserve and is surrounded by soaring dunes and desert



wilderness. The resort offers 21 luxury lodges with private pools that integrate close-to-nature experiences, sustainability, and luxury hospitality. This unique desert experience will be open from November 1, 2022.

Katara Hills LXR Hotels

Inspired by Scandinavian architectural style and created with environment-friendly materials, 15 luxury villas will offer a private and peaceful escape from the city in the green paradise of Katara Hills. Set to open this month.

The St. Regis Marsa Arabia Island

This exclusive island getaway in the heart of Porto Arabia opened in October. The hotel offers bespoke services and exquisite culinary offerings on a Mediterranean-styled island.

Raffles Doha and Fairmont Doha

Each luxury hotel will face another in two grand towers, which combine to represent the two scimitar swords on Qatar's national seal. Fairmont



Doha will be inspired by mega-yacht design, and a soaring lobby will house the world's tallest chandelier. In contrast, Raffles Doha will be a suite-only property with a legendary butler service. Select dining and event spaces will be accessible during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.



Homestays now a part of mainstream travel ecosystem

With homestays propping up all over India, it is a new concept for many travellers. However, homestays are increasingly taking place on the Indian traveller's itinerary. This concept was already popular globally, but it is fast catching on in India as well.

Sanjay Wadhawan

Over the past few years, the hospitality segment has experienced several changes. The sector that went down in the pandemic era is now making a stellar comeback at the pan-India level. According to a study report by JLL, the RevPAR (revenue per available room) experienced an exponential growth of 339.3 per cent YoY in Q1 2022 compared to the previous year. This growth is driven by several factors, including the shift in customer preferences.

As more services related to shared facilities increase, the travel industry in India is witnessing the concept of sharing homes with the luxury facilities of a hotel, also known as homestays. Homestay accommodations are becoming more popular because of their unique operating model and the more personalised stay experience that they provide. In addition, more and more travellers are looking for luxurious and spacious homes for a comfortable stay, and homestay accommodations are catering to their needs in an incredible manner.

Homestays stepping into the Mainstream Travel Ecosystem

Homestays in India are still in the nascent stage. However, it has rapidly become part of the core of tourism with its multi-faceted offerings. It offers a wide range of facilities that tourists prefer, such as natural resources, man-made heritages, social bonding, community experiences, luxury stays, pleasant hospitality, and many more. It also provides undiscovered treasures that amaze today's modern travel fraternity.

Homestays have emerged as such a demand-driven concept that they have become need-based and have the full potential to grow multi-folds. Furthermore, the government's hospitality ecosystem policies in the domains of community-based tourism, rural tourism, nature tourism, and several unique prepositions are fuelling the growth of the homestay industry.



▲ Sanjay Wadhawan

Homestays now the first preference of tourists

The hospitality industry is based on four pillars: location, service, facilities, and attraction. Through the concept of homestays, this industry caters to the needs of tourists with homegrown resources and a natural setting along with curated experiences. Moreover, the homestay community has become so strong that it is now an active participant in promoting tourism in India. Furthermore, the properties are handled more sustainably, making them environmentally friendly and the first choice of tourists.

Apart from the accommodation factor, the homestays provide several outdoor activities and cultural nuances for the guests to experience. These activities can differ regarding the position of the geographical area or property. All these factors make homestays the first preference for tourists while visiting prime or offbeat locations.

A delicate mix of experiences

Homestays are rapidly becoming part of the mainstream travel ecosystem

because of the rich experience they provide tourists. The guests staying in the homestay are more likely to experience the rich local culture, traditional food, and hidden spots while staying close to nature. Moreover, the upside of this accommodation is that you get accustomed to new traditions, local meals, cultural festivals, and a new perspective on living a life away from the city's hustle.

Usually, homestays are situated at a distance from mainstream cities, and hence, they attract more tourists. The need for calm environments, scenic beauty, and serene surroundings brings tourists to these places. Homestays are an ideal lodging option for anyone looking for a peaceful environment surrounded by nature while on vacation. As the house owner lives on the property, all necessary care is taken to make the stay as comfortable as possible. Because it is away from mainstream roadside traffic, guests can easily have their getaways and immerse themselves in the serenity of the location.

All things considered

India is well known for its warm hospitality and cultural diversity. It has historical and natural aspects that contribute to its popularity among tourists. Their tourism aspirations are fulfilled with the comfort and luxury stays at these properties situated in the depths of nature. In addition to that, homestays have become a popular trend that tourists enjoy, which has enormous potential for the tourism industry.

The homestay concept assists hospitality brands in diversifying and expanding their portfolios while also assisting locals in monetising their unattended properties. Furthermore, it bridges the gap between asset demand and supply while assisting hospitality enterprises in reaching out to remote areas for further property development. Moreover, homestays have also emerged as a sustainable development method that provides a source of income for many people in these areas. Overall, it has become the first preference of tourists, making it a part of the mainstream tourism ecosystem.

About the Author: Sanjay Wadhawan is the Co-founder and CEO of Earthaa Escapes, a leading chain of boutique stays. He is also the Co-founder of the brand: Mapple Hotels.



The Park Navi Mumbai jumps onto the sustainability bandwagon

The travel, tourism and hospitality industry contributes 8 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and a chunk of it is at the helm of the luxury segment. The need of the hour, especially for the luxury segment, is to take active measures to both address and reduce its carbon footprint. In a welcoming move by The Park Navi Mumbai, the luxury hotel is taking active measures to reduce its carbon footprint as well as educating its industry counterparts and hotel guests about sustainability. Read on to know more.

Vartik Sethi

In a conversation with Travel Trade Journal, Rahul Makhija, General Manager, The Park Navi Mumbai, shared some very important focus points and insights around the luxury brand's sustainability plans. While COVID's impact on the hospitality industry was massive, The Park Navi Mumbai's post-pandemic recovery has been steady and shows a positive graph. The influx in demand and occupancy levels has been a massive driver for the boom post-COVID. The ARR (average rate of return) and RevPar (revenue per available room) for quarter one were much higher as compared to the pre-COVID scenario. Makhija shared that the monsoon season did play a spoilsport to bring the ARR down. However, he is optimistic that the hotel will outstrip in H2.

Sustainability is no longer a buzzword for brands but an active choice that will soon become a mandate for everyone, especially in the hospitality sector. Travellers, especially millennials and the younger generation, are taking conscious efforts to reduce their carbon footprint. It is often perceived that incorporating sustainability is both important and difficult for luxury hotels.

Responding to this, Makhija said, "Well! At this point in time, the more sustainable a brand is, the more appealing it is to consumers. We are encouraging our guests to follow sustainability. Not many are aware of the benefits, however, we are optimistic that eventually, a larger mass will start accepting it." They actively encourage their guests to follow basic dos and don'ts to promote sustainability. Highlighting the steps taken by The Park Navi Mumbai, Makhija shared that they have an electric vehicle for daily operations to reduce carbon emissions. The hotel is also looking at exploring the in-house bottling plant to reduce the use of plastic bottles.

"We are also in talks with our vendors to procure biodegradable and recyclable items. Additionally, we have a compost machine in the hotel where the end product



▲ Rahul Makhija

is rich fertiliser, which is then used in the gardens within the property," added Makhija. Furthermore, they have invested in heat pumps to reduce carbon emissions and to ensure the supply of hot water in the rooms while reducing their electrical consumption.

When asked about the response of their guests, Makhija answered that guests are highly supportive of the initiative. The luxury hotel is implementing the 'Three R rule' – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle for its operations. For their continuous efforts, they have been recognised and awarded by the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

A study by Luxe Digital highlights that 85 per cent of millennials (young populace) globally prefer environmentally conscious luxury brands. I asked Makhija if the trends translated to the hospitality industry as

well. He responded that the markets are slowly and gradually moving forward with the same thought process. "However, it will be a longer process than we think. There is a significant number of people who are yet to process the acceptance and awareness of sustainability. We are constantly educating our internal team as well," Makhija concluded.

The Park Navi Mumbai, when asked to share updates on any new or emerging sustainability trends that are in the pipeline for the property, responded that they have taken significant measures to reduce their carbon footprint. Their approach is holistic, where these measures are active across various segments of hotel operations. For instance, they have switched from charcoal to gas-operated tandoors in their kitchen premises. Similarly, to encourage sustainability, they have adopted a digital methodology for customer check-ins, invoices and pre-check-ins. They are also in the process of utilising farm-fresh vegetables in order to upgrade to healthier, organic services for their guests. To add to this, The Park Navi Mumbai will be one of the first in the vicinity to use recyclable and biodegradable paints on the premises with reduced Led content.

It is indeed heartening to see luxury hotel brands take the first and the most important step in encouraging and ensuring that the sustainable goals of the sector are met.



Millennials getting inclined toward SATTVIC LIVING



▲ Anuradha Sharma



The COVID-19 pandemic has made people more aware and vigilant about their health. According to Ayurvedic practitioners, following a Sattvic lifestyle can enable you to live in harmony with your mind and body. Now millennials who were so busy in their daily work routine have started taking their time out to look for inner peace. Many are opting for a Sattvic lifestyle that advocates goodness in all spheres of life, be it food, health, thoughts, feelings, or action.

Anuradha Sharma

The COVID-19 pandemic brought everyone to their knees, and we are still taking our time to come out of its web. However, most of us know that increasing immunity is easy and natural. As a result, millennials are moving back to the roots of Sattvic living. The reason is very straightforward, Sattvic food is a natural source of supplements that boost immunity, and as per our Ayurveda, consuming Indian herbs, like turmeric, saffron, walnuts, and seeds, can not only improve our immunity but also enhances the taste of our food, something which millennials these days craves the most! Moreover, leading a Sattvic way of life has become more beneficial.

Sattvic living is conscious living. A Sattvic life is one of freedom, joy, love, abundance, expansion, and a deep connection to the core of your being, your true self. The demands of modern living can often mean you lose sight of and connection to the part of you that wants to live a life of purpose and play, happiness and ease, meaning and authenticity.

In the hospitality sector, we also see a decent rise among the millennials who seek peace and tranquillity rather than buzz and noise. There were days back when the booking enquiries for wellness retreats were mostly driven by the age group above 30, but with now more youngsters aware of their holistic well-being, enquiries are pouring in from the age group of the 20s.

The fundamental principles of Shatam Jeeva are made out of a holistic way of living based on Ayurveda and Yoga, considered the oldest systems of medicine to live and heal the body through nature. Hence, by default, offerings of Shatam Jeeva accentuate the Sattvic way of living. The food, activities, therapies, and ambience offered at Shatam Jeeva are mere evidence of Sattvic living. All our guests see, observe, and sense the same repercussion.

The enquiries we are receiving are about how authentic and efficient the food, therapies, and daily routines are- without compromising with comforts in the basic

living hood. People prefer the simple form of living over extravagant offerings as they are either overwhelmed or affected by the adverse effects of the same.

Even looking at the kind of experiences they seek, it is more likely towards activities like yoga, meditation, nature walks, etc. This has encouraged many retreats to customise their packages in terms of offerings, keeping the young crowd in consideration.

According to Ayurveda, Sattva is the quality of nature that brings about balance, peace, purity, and clarity. It is one of the three subtle qualities or 'gunas' that exist in all of nature. The other two qualities are rajas and tamas, of which rajas are the quality of energy, movement, and transformation that creates an imbalance in life. In contrast, tamas is the quality of solidity, heaviness, and stagnancy that creates inertia. If we want to become healthy or to maintain good health using an Ayurvedic approach, then, without a doubt, moving towards a Sattvic life is a key element in this process.

About the Author: Anuradha Sharma is the Managing Director of Shatam Jeeva Ayurveda Wellness Retreat, a 100-acre man-made forest in Jhansi, managed by Spectra Hospitality.



PEEK INTO THE HISTORY OF MADHYA PRADESH THROUGH MUSEUMS

Madhya Pradesh is often called the 'heart of India', not only because it is geographically located at the centre of the country but also because it epitomises the history, culture and natural variety as well as the sheer antiquity of this land. Some of the oldest human and animal fossils in the world have been excavated in the Narmada valley, and the state's many rock art shelters are rich preserves of our ancestor's imaginations. In historical times, Madhya Pradesh has been ruled by many dynasties, who built temples, forts and palaces across their empires in the state. Dozens of museums across the state are aiding the efforts to document and preserve the history of Madhya Pradesh as it has come down to us in art and sculptures, pottery and fossil, jewellery and weapons. Let's have a look at a few museums in Madhya Pradesh.

MP Tribal Museum

Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, also known as the 'City of Lakes', has several museums which have a lot of unheard truths of the bygone era in their folds. One of the biggest attractions here is the Tribal museum. The colorful museum is divided into six different galleries, showcasing various tribes of Madhya Pradesh. The folklores, lifestyle, rituals and social customs of all seven indigenous tribes of MP- the Gonds, Bhils, Bharias, Sahariya, Korku, Kol, and Baiga are showcased in the museum through a repository of traditional art. The lives of the region's seven tribes are being celebrated here via their craft. The moment you step into the galleries inside the museum, you get a strong feel about not just witnessing the galleries but a strong feeling of entering straight into the lifestyles of the tribes of Madhya Pradesh.



the tribes themselves using the indigenous raw material that depict the lifestyle of tribal in the villages. The open-air exhibitions include Himalayan Village, Medicinal Trail, Mythological Trails, Desert Village and Rock-Art Heritage which displays 36 rock shelters with stunning prehistoric paintings. The museum also exhibits a collection of traditional outfits, agricultural & household objects and other crafts showcasing the regime of the tribes!

Adivart Tribal and Folk Art Museum, Khajuraho

Situated within the Chandela Cultural Complex in Khajuraho, this museum is an ideal place for history lovers, as it possesses a rich collection of tribal and folk art and artifacts. The museum offers visitors a peek into the history of customs and rituals of different tribes in Madhya Pradesh. It houses over 500 tribal antiques, folk paintings, jewellery, masks, terracotta objects, metal craft and bamboo items. One can also buy some original paintings and prints here. This museum also exhibits the evolution of centuries.

Gujari Mahal Archeological Museum, Gwalior

Gujari Mahal is one of the most visited places in Gwalior. The palace was built by king Man Singh for his beloved queen Mrignayani who was born into a Gurjar family. It is now known as the Archeological Survey of India's museum in Gwalior. The archaeological heritage displayed in the museum is comprised of stone sculptures, terracotta figures, stone inscriptions, copper plate inscriptions, coins, bronze sculptures, paintings, excavated material, arms and weapons.



Maharaja Chhatrasal Museum, Dhubela

Situated at a distance of 62km from Khajuraho, Maharaja Chhatrasal Museum is located in Dhubela on the Chhatarpur-Nowgaon highway in the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh. Popularly known as Dhubela Museum, the palace was built by Maharaja Chhatrasal on the banks of Dhubela Lake. Established in 1955, the museum

helps tourists to know the history of the famous Bundela dynasty of Khajuraho. This museum has eight galleries, of which two galleries display inscriptions, copper plates, Sati pillars, lingas and inscribed images of the Gupta and Kalachuri period. The museum houses a wide range of sculptures of the Shakti cult. It has also a significant collection of Jaina images.



Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS)

Any exploration of a museum is incomplete without a visit to the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), in Bhopal. On a sprawling land of over 200 acres, one can see the open-air exhibition of tribal habitats from all corners of India. These dwells are made by

Udaipur from a Hilltop

One would gladly say ‘Yes’ to a trip to Udaipur any day but to be able to bask in the glory of fine royalty and comfort on a hilltop, enjoying the breathtaking views of the Monsoon Palace, Lake Pichola and Aravalli ranges as you wake up every morning in Udaipur is icing on the cake. This well summarises my recent experience in the city as I nestled myself in the beauty of Ramada by Wyndham Udaipur Resort and Spa - a luxury property just 3.5 km from the famous City Palace of Udaipur. Let me walk you through it all.

Parth Sharma

My quick dash into the city of Udaipur was nothing but the byproduct of Wyndham Group's annual FAM. It took place in September and that is when I embarked on a trip to what we often call the ‘Kashmir of Rajasthan,’ - Udaipur!

On entering Ramada by Wyndham Udaipur Resort and Spa, the feeling was exuberating - the resort, though built far away from the hustle and bustle of the main city, truly reflects the Mewar region enough to give you a feel of being under the tutelage of a pristine Rajasthani resort. Much appreciation goes to the architecture constructed through the use of Tekri work. This task combines traditional gems, craftsmanship, and locally available materials, paying tribute to the native heritage and parallelly serving as an employment enabler for the local craftsman, thus contributing to the local economy.

The deeply ingrained culture wasn't hard to notice, starting with the warm welcome we received using the tika and aarti, the ceremonial gesture of welcoming guests at Ramada. Later in the evening, after much chatting as we bonded with our fellow mates over hi-tea, it was just in time for the property tour. As we embarked on the tour, suddenly, there was an understandable silence in our group as we all got keenly engrossed in Ramada's delights.

The resort has a central courtyard, around which all four types of guest rooms are located, along with three lawns at different levels, creating spectacular views. To leverage the property's splendour, it has a spectacular view of the city with the very famous Lake Pichola and Sajjan-Garh Fort, popularly known as the Monsoon Palace. Keen emphasis on the greenery in and around the resort contributes to a soothing, windy vibe and makes the resort well-suited for short ‘bleisure’ stays or an intimate family destination wedding.

Every room is blessed with an overview of the Aravalli Hills, Lake Pichola, Lake Fateh Sagar, Monsoon Palace, and the entire Udaipur City. As for the structure of the rooms, the deluxe and super deluxe categories are located in one wing and are open to natural



▲ Jitesh Patta

ventilation. The premium rooms and suites are located on the opposite side in clusters, resembling independent villas.

Other marvels of the resort include an all-day dining restaurant, pool-side dining, a well-stocked bar, two banquet halls for grand parties and exclusive dining venues. The kind hospitality and the sumptuous cuisine deserve applause, which makes me recall the great taste of the steaming hot dal bati churma, hara bhara kabab, choley bhature, and virgin pina colada, which we

relished at the beautiful Myra Multi-Cuisine restaurant and the Bar Lounge which was vibrant and energetic.

Ramada by Wyndham Udaipur Resort and Spa proudly boasts of Sohum Spa, a premium spa brand of India, with breathtaking views of the city, a heated swimming pool, a Sajjan-Garh facing fitness centre, and facilities for indoor and outdoor activities. The much-needed spa session with my friend Amit was indeed rejuvenating!

“Apart from being the go-to place in Udaipur for residential conferences and high-end weddings, the food and beverage offerings along with the highly personalised hospitality is a silver lining which always gives a WOW feeling to the guests,” shared Jitesh Patta, General Manager, Ramada by Wyndham Udaipur Resort and Spa.

To cater to the growing MICE segment in Udaipur, Ramada by Wyndham Udaipur Resort and Spa is coming up with a pillar-less banquet hall of 6500 sq./feet, a clear height of 22 feet with state-of-the-art interior and architecture. In the days to come, it aims to be positioned as the landmark MICE destination of Udaipur.

In a nutshell, Ramada by Wyndham Udaipur Resort and Spa isn't just about comfy rooms and relaxing pools but also about unmatched royal hospitality experiences ample to be cherished for a long. We all need such icing on the cake every once in a while!





Discovering Portugal through its Wine

The ProWine Mumbai event on October 17, 2022, included a fantastic presentation on 14 Portuguese wine regions and the uniqueness of Portugal as a wine tourism destination by the Sommelier Ricardo Dias, Director of Turismo de Portugal School of Hospitality and Tourism of Portalegre. (Turismo de Portugal Network of Tourism Schools). The audience was offered a special wine-tasting experience during the Masterclass with the distinctive Ameal Loureiro-Quinta do Ameal from Herdade do Esporão. This special Masterclass brought together the best knowledge of Portugal's famed wines, regions, wine pairings notes and tourism routes.

Portugal was the only destination associating wine and wine tourism at the pavilion, which featured some of the country's incredible wines. The event was graced by H.E. Carlos Pereira Marques, Portuguese Ambassador to India. Also, B2B meetings were conducted between Claudia Matias, Director, Visit Portugal, India, and the travel trade partners, to increase awareness about Portugal as a wine and leisure destination.

Twelve of the best wineries from Portugal took part in the event, representing Wines of Portugal and CAP (The Confederation of Portuguese Farmers), which included Adega Cooperativa e Regional de Monção, Adega Cooperativa da Vermelha, Casa Relvas, Casa Santos Lima - Companhia Das Vinhas, S.A. Caves Campelo, Falua - Wines from Portugal, João Portugal Ramos, Manuel Costa e Filhos, LDA, Quinta

das Arcas, Quinta da Raza, Santos, and Seixo Wine Export and Viniverde - Promoção e Comércio de Vinhos Verdes.

Speaking of wines, the first reference that comes to mind is the Port wine. This fortified wine from the Douro region has been a great ambassador of wines from Portugal, but it's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to wine-making in the country. Portugal has a strong wine-making tradition, and its wines' excellent quality is recognised worldwide, with numerous prizes and distinctions awarded in international competitions. The vast quantity of native grape varieties (more than 250) allows the production of a great diversity of wines with distinct personalities. From north to south, including the Atlantic archipelagos of Azores and Madeira, Portugal counts 14 wine regions. If Portuguese wines are

Visit Portugal recently participated at the ProWine Exhibition in Mumbai and was seen promoting 'Portuguese Wine Tourism' and showcasing the country's confidence as a wine-making nation of repute. Visit Portugal also invited a select number of high-end, niche, and important trade partners to the Portugal pavilion to introduce them to the unique Portuguese wine varieties and offer them the opportunity to interact directly with wineries from Portugal.

Prashant Nayak

so versatile, it is because of a combination of differentiating terrains and geographical conditions across the map, combined with this incredible choice of grape varieties.

You will find the largest places dedicated to wine tourism in the Douro and Alentejo regions. Still, wine production units and regions receive visitors all over the country, including the Algarve. Getting to know Portugal through its wines is an authentic and original way to embrace the country's culture.

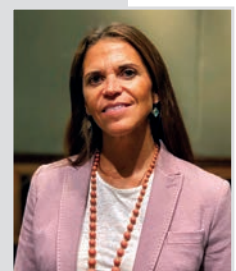
Apart from wine tourism, Portugal has a lot to offer. It is also a haven for other types of travel, making it the perfect destination for tourists of all ages and interests. In 2021, Portugal also ranked second after Italy in international tourism.

“India is a significant and valuable source market for us. It's a growing market, and it's great to see India's diversity of travellers. We intend to do more initiatives in India in the upcoming year to promote the country's beauty among our trade partners. We anticipate seeing significant numbers of Indian tourists in the coming future.



H.E. Carlos Pereira Marques
Portuguese Ambassador to India

“It's wonderful to testify that our approach to promoting wine tourism from India to Portugal is accurate. The interest the trade partners demonstrated, given that wine tourism in India is still a niche and premium sector, the industry's response has been excellent, and we are extremely grateful for that. It shows that the Indian traveller profile is changing and diversified. Portugal was the second wine tourism destination worldwide after Italy. In the upcoming year, we intend to promote more wine tourism initiatives in India supported by our wine tourism online platform.



Claudia Matias
Director, Visit Portugal, India





The Palace on Wheels: a regal train journey through Rajasthan

The Palace on Wheels is back on track, ready to give you Rajasthan's rich and royal guest experience. I was fortunate to be a part of the FAM trip, as the train resumed services after a two-year due to COVID-19. Sharing my trip report is as special as my exquisite journey on the train.

Bharti Kalia

The Palace on Wheels has been enthralling tourists for 40 years. The train is a mark of the highest grand and aesthetic standards and ensures an exotic, memorable, and exhilarating journey for the passengers. The journey on this magnificent train starts every Wednesday from New Delhi, covering a distance of over 3000 km in seven nights and eight days, with halts in Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur, and Agra before returning to the capital again.

The train was launched in 1982 with the concept of the first luxury heritage train in the country. During my memorable journey, I was marvelled by the train's interiors, which reflected Rajasthan's cultural and heritage ethos. Presently, there are two super deluxe cabins and 39 deluxe cabins, and each coach has a mini pantry area and personal attendants

who are extremely helpful and courteous. There are two dining cars, Maharani and Maharaja, a salon, and a gym on the train. While making stops at the tourist hotspots during the day, the train travels the distance at night.

The journey began in Delhi, reaching Jaipur the next morning as its first stop. In Jaipur, the pre-paid itinerary covers City Palace, Jantar Mantar (the Observatory), Hawa Mahal, Museum, and Amber Fort. The next morning, we were at Sawai Madhopur and

visited the Ranthambore National Park. If you are a wildlife enthusiast, this is the place for you, but you will also find history here. In Rajasthan, every stone has a story to tell. So, you can imagine the story of Ranthambore Fort, a 10th-century fort. The castle Jhoomer Bawar,





which used to be a summer rest house for the rulers, is now converted into a heritage hotel.

As one of the oldest forts and UNESCO World Heritage sites, Chittorgarh Fort premises is still home to around 5000 people living inside the walls from generation to generation. The fort tells tales of royal warriors and their victories, but Vijay Stambh is the most famous attraction. The next morning from the hills, the train took us to the city of lakes, Udaipur. The city has had a unique interconnected water system since 1559, with beautiful forts and palaces on the banks of these lakes. Many of them are now converted into heritage hotels, so you can enjoy some regal life.

With Palace on Wheels, you are covering all colours of Rajasthan, from plains to forests to lakes, and now it's time for the desert. The next morning, we were welcomed by the beautiful Thar, the great Indian desert. In Jaisalmer, the

'Golden city' tour covers Jaisalmer Fort along with Patwon ki Haveli and Jain Temples. Later, at sunset, we visited the dunes on a camel and then enjoyed some cultural programmes. Further on, apart from Marwari businessman, the city of Jodhpur is famous for the Mehrangarh Fort, Umaid Bhavan Palace, and Jaswant Thada Museum. Also, if you are a foodie, remember to try Jodhpur's famous Mirchi Bada and Mawa Kachori.

The next morning, we woke up a little early to see the famous Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur, again a UNESCO World site. It was a former duck-hunting reserve for the Royalty. This bird sanctuary is famous for sighting endangered Siberian cranes and other migratory birds in winter, along with the local and endemic species. After Bharatpur, we stopped at Agra, where we saw the world-famous symbol of love and romance, the Taj Mahal, and also the Agra Fort.

As the journey came to an end, I realised I had made some amazing friends and felt quite connected



with the train staff who pampered me in the past seven days and eight nights. I recommend that you speak to the staff, as they are eager to tell many stories about this splendid train and its royal adventures. Also, from narrow gauge to meter gauge, from the steam engine to the electric engine, they share gripping stories to take back home apart from your personal and memorable experiences.



NCL motivates travel advisors by paying commission on NCFs

In a boost to travel advisors, Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) has announced that it would pay travel advisors commission on non-commissionable fares (NCFs). NCL hopes this will further strengthen the relationships between advisors and clients, as well as bolster loyalty for the brand, altogether generating repeat business and potentially higher earnings for partners.

Team TTJ

NCL recently announced that it will pay travel advisors commission on NCFs, showcasing its industry-leading commitment to the travel agent community worldwide.

The payment of NCFs will go into effect on January 1, 2023, for new reservations made 120 days prior to sailing for cruises departing May 1, 2023, and forward. To qualify for the NCF commission, travel advisors will need to submit a marketing plan to their NCL Sales Support Team by December 31, 2022.

NCL is claiming to be the first major contemporary cruise line to compensate travel advisors on NCFs for reservations booked outside of the 120-day window. Since the establishment of the brand's partners first philosophy, Norwegian Cruise Line has been committed to being the easiest cruise line to do business with by providing agents with educational

tools, promotions and marketing assets to help them grow their businesses.

"Our 'Partners First' philosophy remains top of mind, and our decision to pay commission on NCFs is further proof of our commitment to this community. We want our partners to thrive; we want to see their businesses grow all around the world," said Harry Sommer, President and CEO, Norwegian Cruise Line.

The cruise line has been dedicated to equipping the travel agent community with the tools and information to provide their clients with exemplary service. This revolutionary choice will further help travel partners establish a stronger relationship with their clients and increase brand loyalty, resulting in repeat business and higher earning potential.

Braydon Holland, Senior Sales Director, Norwegian Cruise Line, said,

"Our travel partners are incredibly important to us and our business; it is a true partnership. Advisors know why NCL offers the best cruise experience at sea and when they can speak to our unique, bucket-list itineraries, one-of-a-kind Free at Sea promotion and incredible 18-ship fleet with unparalleled onboard offerings, they are providing immense value to the business. We see this value and we wanted to reward our travel advisors like never before."



MKTE 2022: rebuilding tourism, forging new partnerships

Magical Kenya Tourism Expo (MKTE) is the largest travel and tourism expo in East Africa, which Kenya leverages to woo the world with its nature-based tourism attractions. This year MKTE 2022 attracted participants from 35 countries across the globe, which is a testament to the growing recognition of MKTE as Africa's show of choice and demonstrates Kenya's global attractiveness for investment in tourism development. Additionally, while the tourism industry has been recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Expo has undoubtedly played a vital part in enhancing the diversified tourism possibilities for the nation this year.

Prashant Nayak

One could sense a lot of excitement across Kenya's tourism fraternity and the global industry stakeholders as the Magical Kenya Travel Expo (MKTE) 2022 returned as a physical event this year from October 5-7, 2022. With the theme 'Rediscover The Magic,' the event held plenty of business networking sessions, exciting panels, discussions, meetings, and merriment for three days.

After a two-year hiatus, this year's Expo attracted participants from around 35 countries across the globe. The three-

day Expo brought together 225 exhibitors, 160 hosted buyers, and over 20 hosted media, among other industry partners from some of Kenya's key source markets

in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Around 20 delegates from India, which included buyers and media, participated in the event. The event was important to the Kenya Tourism industry as it brought domestic, regional, and international tour operators, travel agents, destination agencies, and other tourism trade players to network and



Najib Balala

facilitate the tourism business. The Expo, the largest in the East and Central African region, came at an important time when Kenya Tourism Board is also building on its efforts to restore the tourism industry, which has suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On October 4, the Expo was inaugurated with a grand opening night at the Bomas of Kenya, which included

cocktails and networking, followed by a high tempo of authentic and traditional Kenyan songs and dances and inspiring fashion shows.

Betty Radier, CEO, Kenya Tourism Board, impressed the

crowd with her speech during the opening night. She also mentioned quotes like, "travelling leaves you speechless and turns you into a storyteller," and "the world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page." Speaking about the Expo, she said, "The Expo is in line with the board's efforts to revitalise tourism in Kenya as it focuses on Africa and other emerging markets. The learnings we shall pick from this Expo will be invaluable as we work towards building the sector now and in the future."

Betty also stated, "To keep pace with the fast-changing needs of visitors and challenges faced by the tourism sector, the industry has to act swiftly and adjust



Betty Radier



its strategies for tourism development from time to time.” She added, “We are determined to support the tourism sector by providing an environment that will attract visitors and enable them to connect with the best in local hospitality, culture, and heritage.”

The Expo, hosted at the Bomas of Kenya on the outskirts of Nairobi, added more color to the event and highlighted the diversity and richness of Kenya’s tourism industry. The Bomas had great facilities and a tranquil environment, ideally suited for events such as MKTE 2022. There was also the Maasai Market,

better projects since things have begun looking up,” said Balala. Considering that normalcy has returned to the industry, people are now traveling, and businesses are back, Balala assured that the target is achievable. He further said that the Ministry has already put in place measures to ensure that tourism experiences

are safe and enjoyable for visitors and sustainable and profitable for stakeholders in the industry.

Besides the B2B meetings and interactions, the event also had

Park, and many other places to showcase the experiential and readiness of the destinations. Kenya has an irresistible cocktail of epic savannah landscapes, immense herds of wildlife, palm-fringed beaches, and top safari destinations.

Kenya has been considered an attractive tourist destination for decades. With over two million tourists annually, the country has long since adapted to foreign guests and can offer breathtaking nature and other amenities, including great food. Kenya’s national parks and nature reserves are so large that numerous animal species have their natural habitat here in various landscapes. Besides the parks, there are coastal regions, large deserts, steppes, and mountains up to 5000 meters high.

where participants shopped for trinkets, bags, paintings, drawings, clothes, and carvings, which make for priceless gifts and souvenirs.

On October 5, Najib Balala, the outgoing Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, launched the Magical Kenya Travel Expo. During the press meet, Balala said that Kenya is now looking beyond the traditional offerings of game drives and beach experiences that country is famed for and wanted to give tourists more options in visiting Kenya with like adventures like mountaineering, hiking, rafting, cycling, etc. He stressed the need for an open sky policy for tourism to grow in Africa as airlines contribute to more than 50 per cent of arrivals. To boost tourism, Balala spoke that all of Africa should come together and work towards improving its security and infrastructures, avoid negative publicity and promote the continent positively. He also spoke of the requirement of digitalisation, sustainability, and investment to make the destination move forward in tourism.

Kenya is projecting to receive close to 1.46 million tourists before the end of 2022, as more borders reopen. Balala noted that the estimated arrivals would translate to Sh 265 billion. “Last year, we recorded 870,000 visitors into the country with revenue receipt of Sh 146 billion, and by the end of this year, we have

interesting seminars based on compelling themes on the current trends in the travel industry like ‘Airline and Access,’ ‘Sustainability and Inclusive Tourism,’ ‘E-travel,’ and ‘The Future of Tourism and Resilience.’

Before the event, KTB also hosted FAM trips for the hosted buyers and the media to destinations like Masaai Mara, Shaba Game Reserve, Nakuru Lake, Aberdare National Park, Diani Beach, The Nairobi National

project in the Tsavo Ecosystem, a pioneer in wildlife conservation, specifically protecting large herds of elephants and their habitats. The Kenya Tourism Board has assured that the 2023 show is bound to be bigger in all respects.



TTJ TRAVMART HOSTS ITS MILESTONE NETWORKING EVENT AT Raipur

On October 28, 2022, Raipur was witness to the 40th TTJ TRAVMART at Hotel Babylon Capital. Launched in 2017, TTJ TRAVMART has established its presence in the B2B travel networking space by connecting sellers with travel agents and tour operators in tier 2 and tier 3 cities of India.

It was a momentous occasion, as it was in the year 2017 at Raipur, that the TTJ TRAVMART was first launched. Coming back to Raipur for the 40th TRAVMART was indeed a milestone and a return to roots.

In 2022, TTJ TRAVMART bounced back with vigour and resilience, post the COVID-19 pandemic meltdown by hosting very successful Marts at Guwahati, Kolkata, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad and Jaipur earlier this year.

The seventh TTJ TRAVMART for the year 2022, the Raipur mart was well attended by the travel fraternity. More than 100 buyers from Raipur and adjoining cities of Bhilai, Durg, Bilaspur, Korba, Nagpur, Jagdalpur, Dhamtari and Rajnandgaon pre-registered for the event.

18 exhibitors, including airlines, cruise lines, destination management companies, hotels and travel automation companies, showcased their products and services to the

buyers and updated them on their services and offerings for the upcoming festive season.

The event was supported by TAAI. TBO.com and Expedia TAAP were the Gold Sponsors and Hotel Babylon Capital was the Hotel Partner. Irshad Mehdi, Chapter Chairman of TAAI Nagpur Chapter, Raman Jadwani, Founder and CEO of Ajay Travels, Jaspreet Singh Bhatia, Founder of Ice Cube Holidays, and Sandeep Sharma, AVP of Hotel Babylon Capital, were the guests of honour for the evening.

A special cake-cutting ceremony was organised at the mart for Mahesh Bansal of Uniglobe - Star India Travel, whose birthday was celebrated at the event.

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



Events





“TTJ Travmart is a good opportunity to meet buyers and increase business in the market. The event helps in building a good relationship with the clients. It was a great pleasure to exhibit at the TTJ Raipur and I would like to thank Ravi Sharma, Gurjit Singh and the team for organising such a perfect event at Raipur.”



Sandeep Khetarpal
Founder and CEO
The Global Rep



“It was a wonderful experience. Raipur was on my priority list and what better platform than TTJ Travmart? It was a very well-organised event. We met a lot of potential agents during the event and now we are looking forward to working with them. Thanks to Team TTJ for making it possible. Looking forward to attending more events in the future.”



Veena Robinson
Vice President India - Sales
Discover Destinations





“

We have been regular at TTJ TRAVMARTs and the Raipur mart was very fruitful for us. We met new agents and forged new relationships. The event was very well organised and coordinated by Team TTJ, and received a great response from agents in and around Raipur, making it a rewarding experience.



Nirmalaya Chaudhuri
Director
Chocolate Hotels



“

TTJ Travmart Raipur 2022 was an extremely well-coordinated event, arranged by Team TTJ. Globus Holidays, being a Europe, UK and Scandinavia DMC, Raipur was a very fresh and interesting market. We met new agents from Central and Western India, to whom we showcased our product offerings and services and USPs of our pre and post-sales team initiatives. We look forward to working with our new agent partners from this market for all their travel requirements. Big thanks to the TTJ Travmart Team.



Sanyukta Roy
Business Development Manager
Globus Holidays



Raipur comes alive to the beats of the National Tribal Dance Festival 2022

The third edition of the National Tribal Dance Festival (NTDF) was held at Raipur, Chhattisgarh on November 1–3, 2022. Initiated first in 2019 by the Chhattisgarh government, NTDF is a grand platform to showcase the diverse and rich tribal culture of Chhattisgarh and other states of India. The festival was inaugurated by Bhupesh Bhagel, the Honorable Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

The event brought together performers from 10 countries and 28 Indian states with over 2000 dancers, musicians and delegates. NTDF celebrated the tribal heritage and culture as conversations, collaborations and all things tribal converged and happened on one common platform.

Speaking at the festival, the Honorable Chief Minister said, "Tribal culture is deeply rooted in Chhattisgarh. Our government has taken several initiatives and started many schemes for ensuring the overall development of the tribals in the last three years. National Tribal Dance Festival is an effort to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the tribals. Today, the tribes are getting good prices for their forest produce. We have created a better market for them by doing value addition in forest produce. Tribals have been given forest rights to help them move forward fearlessly and live a dignified life."

As home to the oldest tribes of India, the Gonds, Baiga, Korba, Abhuj Maria, Bison

Horn Maria, Muria, Halbaa, Bhatra and Dhurva, Chhattisgarh is the ideal place to organise an event of this nature. Ethnic tribes account for a third of the state's population. These tribes still live in harmony with nature and have distinct traditions, beliefs, culinary heritage, crafts, music and dance.

The NTDF showcased this unbroken tribal culture of Chhattisgarh. While a Shilp Bazaar organised on the sidelines displayed tribal products and provided artisans an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in metal work, wood work, bamboo, pottery and weaving and offer their products, artefacts and handicrafts for sale to visitors.

Silkworm rearing was also explained at the Crafts Bazaar and the different types of silk produced in Chhattisgarh were displayed along with skilled weavers who were weaving silk sarees from the local Khosa silk on their looms.

Tourists got a chance to participate in tribal sports and dances with groups experiencing tribal traditions from different parts of the world.

Chhattisgarh is the youngest state of India but has a history and heritage that goes back several millennia! While the region is blessed with natural beauty, the uniqueness of the place is its people – indigenous tribes that were the earliest inhabitants of India.

Recognising that people are its biggest asset, the government of Chhattisgarh is working towards the welfare of its tribal communities and trying to create opportunities for development that involve them.

The endeavour is on creating platforms to promote tribal crafts, culture and heritage, and to help tribal communities become part of the mainstream while preserving their distinct way of life.

Today there is a growing demand for community-based experiences, often called cultural or heritage tourism. If done sensitively this can provide employment

for artisans, performers and other people in the community and NTDF 2022 was another bold step forward in that direction.





Ethiopian Airlines

Bilen Arefaine has taken over as Ethiopian Airlines' Regional Director India Sub Continent from November 01, 2022, and will be stationed in Mumbai. Bilen joined Ethiopian on December 18, 2000, and served the Airline in various positions in Human Resource Management, Marketing & Sales, and Area Manager Israel, the position she was currently holding. Her rich, varied, and long-standing experience will be an opportunity to elevate Ethiopian's operation in the Indian Sub-Continent.



The St. Regis Mumbai

The St. Regis Mumbai has appointed **Varun Chhibber** as General Manager. Varun will lead the dynamic luxury team to sustain the hotel's positioning as one of the most awarded hotels and as the preferred destination for the social elite. He will focus on steering the team to drive revenue and maintain the property's reputation of having the highest turnover in South Asia while ensuring guest voice scores remain a priority for The St. Regis Mumbai.



The St. Regis Goa Resort

The St. Regis Goa Resort, the first resort and the second St. Regis branded property in India, has appointed **Satish Kumar** as the General Manager. A well-recognised leader with over two decades of outstanding experience in luxury hospitality, Satish will be responsible for overseeing hotel operations and ensuring the highest standards of guest services synonymous with the St. Regis brand, are met. Prior to this, Satish served as General Manager at The Leela Goa and Conrad Pune.



The St. Regis Goa Resort

R. Srijith has been appointed as Director of Sales and Marketing at The St. Regis Goa Resort. Srijith brings with him over a decade of experience and will be responsible for driving revenue through targeted strategies and overseeing all aspects of the sales and marketing department at The St. Regis Goa Resort. Prior to this, Srijith worked with many established hotels in India, including The Leela Group, IHHR Hospitality, Ginger Hotels.



Tourism Malaysia Mumbai

Ediwanto Eddie has joined Tourism Malaysia Mumbai as Deputy Director. Previously, he had worked for eight years at the Tourism Malaysia headquarters in Putrajaya, Malaysia. His key role now in Tourism Malaysia Mumbai will be to encourage marketing Malaysia as an attractive destination, organise trade and media FAMS, collaborate joint promos with trade and media partners, participate in various trade fairs and organise Tourism Malaysia roadshow.



Cross Hotel and Resorts

Christopher Cribbs has been appointed the new Cluster General Manager of Itz Time Hua Hin Pool Villas by Cross Collection, an all-pool villa resort in a tranquil setting in Hua Hin, and Haven't Met Bangkok Silom by Cross Collection, a contemporary city hotel located in central Bangkok. Cribbs has 25 years of experience managing hospitality operations, including cruise ships, 5-star luxury resorts, and boutique hotels. He has played a key role in pre-opening operations for a variety of different properties.



JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort and Spa

Bhavana Shah has been appointed as Director of Marketing and Corporate Communications at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort and Spa. In her new role, Bhavana will direct promotional campaigns, identify market trends, supervise and coordinate creative staff & agencies, create budgets, analyse and interpret sales and campaign ROIs data, ensuring that marketing and communications align with the hotel's overall objectives. Prior to this, Bhavana was associated with brands such as Elior India, The Ritz-Carlton, The Leela Palace Bengaluru, and more.



2HUB

2HUB has appointed **Anand Srinivasan** as its Chief Commercial Officer. In his new role, Anand will be responsible for the overall commercial strategy and operations of 2HUB's B2B segment and will report directly to the board of directors to implement the strategic vision and values of the firm. Apart from driving strategy, product, technology and innovation for 2HUB, he will also be responsible for scripting a digital transformation for the group enterprise. Anand was formerly the Chief Commercial Officer of Rezlive.com.

Jazeera Airways marks one year of operations to Chennai, commences flights to Bengaluru

Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, recently conducted events to celebrate the launch of direct flights to Bengaluru and mark one year of successful operations to Chennai in the respective cities.

The airline started its service to Bengaluru in India on November 3, 2022, flying to the Garden City of India two times a week on Thursdays and Saturdays. This launch comes as part of their expansion in India, with Jazeera Airways now flying to all destinations available under the bilateral arrangement between the two countries.

The management at Jazeera Airways took the opportunity of successfully marking one year of operations to Chennai by thanking its trade partners for extending their support. Top 10 travel agents were also recognised and awarded at an award show in the city on November 2, 2022.

Having started its India operations with Hyderabad in October 2017, Jazeera Airways has quickly grown in the last five years, serving from five to eight destinations in India and currently has 30 direct services to Kuwait and beyond from India.



VFS Global opens new Indian visa centre in London to boost capacity for processing applications

VFS Global opened an India Visa Application Centre (IVAC) for the Indian High Commission in central London to help deal with the surge in demand for visa applications since the opening of international borders and relaxation of COVID guidelines.



The new Centre is conveniently located in central London – Boston Place, Marylebone and was inaugurated on Tuesday, November 1, by the Indian High Commissioner to the UK, His Excellency Vikram Doraiswami. The new Centre will be the third IVAC in London. VFS Global operates a network of ten

IVACs across the United Kingdom in Belfast, Birmingham, Bradford, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, central London, Hounslow, Leicester, and Manchester.

VFS Global has also introduced more appointments, existing IVACs in London and Birmingham have started receiving applications on Saturdays and weekday afternoons. Since March, VFS Global has partnered with the High Commissioner of India in London and its Consulates to set up weekend consular camps across the UK. Together, these measures will double the current capacity so that VFS Global can support the Indian High Commission to release more appointments.

The Indian High Commissioner, His Excellency Vikram Doraiswami said in a video message on Friday, "The number of appointments we have been able to do has increased to about 40,000 per month thanks to our partners at VFS Global."

Further, he also announced that a new process is being introduced for group tourism – for those travelling as a group, typically, via a travel agency to the same destination using the same flights. Tourists from the UK will now also have the option of a visa at your doorstep service (VAYD) at a cost.

Turkiye expected to host 2,40,000 Indian travellers by the end of 2022

After welcoming more than 40 million international visitors between January to September 2022, Türkiye has exceeded all previous records and become one of the most



popular MICE and FIT tourism destinations, globally. Travel from India to Türkiye increased significantly after direct flights resumed at the end of March this year, with the country receiving over 1,55,000 Indian visitors from January to September 2022.

Türkiye is prepared to top the previous records, as it anticipates hosting over 5 crore foreign tourists and 2,40,000 Indian tourists by the end of this year. This will help the country further generate 44 billion USD in tourism revenue.

Türkiye expects a high number of Indian visitors as India's wedding season is in full swing, and many couples are travelling to Türkiye to host their destination weddings, in the country. The upcoming festive and holiday seasons combined will also add to the number of Indian travellers visiting Türkiye as most of them prefer taking leisure vacations, this time of the year. Additionally, with carriers like Turkish Airlines and Indigo that offer daily direct flights to Türkiye, it is even more convenient for Indians to visit the country. Thus, Türkiye is expecting to reach the pre-pandemic numbers of 2019, which was the record highest, by the end of 2022.

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Amaresh Tiwari re-elected as Vice Chairman of ICPB, current team to continue for another term

India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) is a management-oriented organisation promoting and establishing India as a preferred MICE destination. Its 32nd Annual General Meeting was held on October 28, 2022, in New Delhi, followed by the elections for esteemed positions of the ICPB governing board.

India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) announced the re-elected governing body for the next two years (2022–24). The governing board elections were held at Kautilya Hall, Hotel Samrat in New Delhi, on Friday, October 28, 2022.

Amaresh Tiwari, AT Seasons and Vacations, has been re-elected as the Board's Vice-Chairman. Girish Kwatra, Meetings and More has been named Honorary Secretary, and Madan Kak, Elbon Conferences & Events and Minar Travels India, is the new Honourable Treasurer, ICPB.

"I feel humbled to be honest because this is the second time in a row which is my unopposed turn," said Amaresh Tiwari, Vice Chairman, ICPB.

"ICPB is united and one close family where the personal ego and personal things are set apart. They are walking together to bring the MICE industry on the global map so that's the best feature and as I said, there are a lot of future plans that are coming for the MICE industry," added the re-elected Vice Chairman of ICPB.

Returning to the position is, of course, very exciting. We have been doing a lot of things but COVID-19 was an obstacle and all of us witnessed that for two and a half years," said Girish Kwatra, Honourable Secretary. Shedding light on the positive recovery of the industry post the COVID-19 setback, Kwatra shared, "But now that we've bounced back, there are a lot of plans in the book. G20 is a major turnaround for the Indian MICE industry. Fifty meetings happening in India, that is a major boom."

"ICPB has a big role to play in tourism of India," says Madan Kak, unopposed Honourable Treasurer, ICPB. Highlighting the unrealised potential of the Indian MICE industry, he added, "MICE is just emerging in India. It is a very big industry worldwide."

Members of the new governing body also include Saurabh Bhargava of Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces and Mohd. Ali of AAPC India Hotel Mgt. and Accor Hotels (Hotel), Ajay Vinayak of Palomino Hospitality, and Riyaz UC from Spiceland Holidays and Entertainments (Tour Operator/DMC), Sudeep Sarcar from India Expo Mart, and Ubaid Ahmad from Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (Congress/Conventional Centres), Chander Mansharamani from Alpcord Network Travels and Conferences Management Company, and Lalitha Kantham Rai from Marundeshwara Enterprises (Professional Congress/Convention Organisers) and Raghav Khosla from Exhibition Showcase Media.

Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH as Returning Officer, conducted the elections and announced the results. ICPB Governing Board congratulated the elected office bearers on a successful tenure from 2022 to 2024.



Ravi Gosain appointed Convention Chairman of 37th IATO Annual Convention in Lucknow

At the recently held 40th Annual General Meeting of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Rajiv Mehra, President of the association, announced the appointment of Ravi Gosain-Vice President of IATO as the Chairman of the 37th IATO Annual Convention along with Sunil Mishra-Hony. Treasurer and Prateek Hira-Chairman, IATO Uttar Pradesh Chapter as the Co-Chairmen. The theme of the convention is Inbound Tourism- What Lies Ahead!

The inaugural function will be held at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath has given his kind consent to grace

the occasion with his presence and inaugurate the convention. The Centrum Lucknow will be the venue hotel and all other activities including registration for the convention, business sessions and evening programmes will be held at The Centrum, Lucknow.

900-1000 delegates from all over the country are expected to participate which will include senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and States, industry leaders, tourism and hospitality professionals, travel trade media. An added attraction for this year's convention would be Post Convention Tours to Ayodhya and Varanasi.





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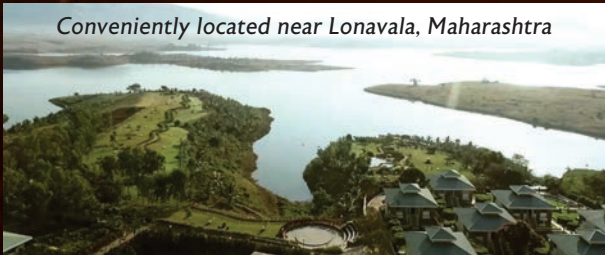
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