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Dear Friends,

Positivity has finally returned to the tourism sector as travel demand finally shows signs of a significant uptick. There are still some global factors playing spoilsport for travel and hospitality players, but there are also emerging opportunities to accelerate the adoption of new technologies and meet ever-changing customer needs and demands.

Sustainability is now a trending word, redirecting the tourism industry and driving major investments. The industry is expected to develop and adopt more sustainable solutions and practices in all its activities in the coming times.

TTJ March 2023 issue reflects this positivity that things are moving as the industry appears confident about travel demand, which remains high despite inflationary pressures. We have covered elaborate topics on hospitality and the outbound sectors, which are gaining considerable traction as months are passing by.

So, as you read, we hope you will be all set to capture the upcoming summer business.

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

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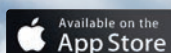


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Utah Office of Tourism launches Utah Specialist Academy to upskill trade partners

The Utah Office of Tourism has launched a new, interactive online training programme, Utah Specialist Academy, that is designed to enhance its global travel trade partners' knowledge of Utah's diverse product offerings and provide destination insights in a fun and unique way. The programme is meant to equip the partners with the relevant information and tools to promote and sell Utah more effectively.

The Utah Specialist Academy focuses on various aspects of Utah's tourism, including its attractions, experiences, landscapes and adventure. Instead of heavy texts and long form questions, the trade partners will absorb and learn Utah's offerings in a more engaging way through images and videos. They will also have access to travel recommendations of Utah locals as part of the learning program.

Partners who complete the full programme will receive a Utah Specialist certificate, along with special prizes and goodies. They will also enjoy exclusive benefits and receive insider tips and the latest information on accommodation and attractions.

To register, visit visitutahspecialistacademy.com



Jordan Tourism Board renews partnership with Think Strawberries as its India Rep

The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) has appointed Think Strawberries, its longstanding partner in the India market, as its in-market representation agency. The appointment comes at the heels of JTB's strategic market re-entry plan that reinforces its strong commitment to the India market.

As part of the agreement, Think Strawberries, India's leader in tourism representation with offices in the GCC and the United Kingdom, will provide JTB with a complete portfolio of trade, marketing and public relations services. Using their local knowledge and wide network, the tourism experts will develop market-specific strategies to promote Jordan's unique offerings to increase visitation numbers from India.

The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), in a statement, said, "The Jordanian government has made inbound tourism an important pillar of its economic growth strategy. The JTB's mission is to promote inbound tourism and to position Jordan as the world's most desirable travel destination. India continues to be a key source market for us and we are delighted to be represented by Think Strawberries in pursuit of this mission."



Manisha Saxena appointed new Director General at Ministry of Tourism

Senior bureaucrat Manisha Saxena has been appointed as Director General of tourism in the tourism Union Tourism Ministry, a personnel ministry order issued on Saturday said. Saxena is a 1996 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Arunachal Pradesh-Mizoram-Goa-Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre.

She is currently serving as the Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Mizoram. In the past, she has also served as the Secretary (Tourism) with the Government of Mizoram. She hails from Delhi and has also served as Principal Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi between November 2016 and July 2022. She is also an alumnus of Lady Shriram College of Women.



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Nexus DMC welcomes Vijay Puthran as National Sales Head for India

Vijay Puthran strengthens the Nexus DMC leadership team as the National Sales Head for the India market. He will work closely with the leadership team to positively impact the overall goals of the organisation. His focus will be to position Nexus DMC as a market leader in the B2B segment while taking into account the ever-evolving market dynamics.

Vijay Puthran comes with a rich experience spanning over 45 years, where he excelled in hospitality, business development, strategic management and knowledge of various market segments. In each of his prior responsibilities, with VFS Global, Royal Arabian, Dubai Tourism and Business Events, and Star Cruises, he has made significant contributions to these brands that have resulted in him achieving senior positions at the company, which he well deserves.

"I believe that Nexus has the ability to revolutionise the travel industry and simplify the lives of travel advisors. We aim to empower each and every travel agent and help them scale their business. For the India market, we have planned for multi-city roadshows across key cities and have various other initiatives in the pipeline this year that are aimed at educating the travel agents about Nexus and bringing together all stakeholders in the travel industry to redefine travel experiences for everyone!" says Puthran.



Australian Attractions appoints Auxilia Networks as its India Rep

Australian Attractions, one of Australia's leading specialist inbound tourism consultancy and representation companies, having an unmatched portfolio of exclusive Australian products and experiences across Australia, has announced the appointment of Auxilia Networks, headed by Indian tourism industry veteran Paramjit Bawa (PB), as their sales and marketing arm for India. Auxilia will promote marquee Australian products such as BridgeClimb & Pylon, Sydney Zoo in Sydney, Scenic World in the Blue Mountains, Oakvale Wildlife Park and Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters in Port Stephens, Hunter Valley Resort and Balloon Aloft in the Hunter Valley among other products across multiple Australian states.

Paramjit Bawa, Founder and Principal, Auxilia Networks said, "We are thrilled and privileged to add Australian Attractions to our very select list of international clients. They have what I believe, a product portfolio unmatched in its diversity and quality by any company in Australia – pick any product and it is the benchmark in its category. Auxilia will promote this exclusive portfolio to the India travel fraternity through a hybrid mix of online and offline channels and we can't wait to get started on this exciting project, as we believe the range is ideally suited to Indian outbound for leisure as well as MICE. This is the perfect time to be planning Australia itineraries that include some or all of these fantastic offerings from Australian Attractions. We look forward to the continuing support of our Indian trade network."



Singapore Airlines launches family holiday deals to Singapore this summer

With summer holidays just round the corner, Singapore Airlines, in collaboration with Singapore Tourism Board and Changi Airport Group, is offering a special family promotion on summer travel to Singapore.

Families that book their Singapore Airlines tickets between now and March 31, 2023, for travel anytime between March 15 and August 31, 2023, can enjoy a 50 per cent discount on adult airfares for children aged 12 years and below. Tickets must be booked at least 7 days prior to departure.

Upon arrival, families will be greeted by the award-winning Changi Airport and the stunning new Jewel Changi Airport, both offering an array of iconic shopping, dining, and entertainment options. With its lush greenery and tranquil atmosphere, including the HSBC Rain Vortex and the Shiseido Forest Valley, the Jewel Changi Airport is a fabulous offering for the family.

Further, families can also enjoy special deals at over 100 exciting attractions across Singapore when they book their

tickets using Pelago, a travel experience platform by Singapore Airlines. Key attractions on offer include the Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, Gardens by the Bay, Universal Studios, S.E.A. Aquarium, iFly Singapore and many more.



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Oman Air adds four destinations to its network, increases frequency to its 2023 summer schedule

Continuing its ambitious and dynamic strategy of fleet and network expansion, Oman Air has unveiled its summer schedule for 2023. The schedule specifies significant frequency increases on existing routes, and the addition of four destinations—representing a 60 per cent increase in the number of flights from its hub in Muscat compared to the previous year. This will provide the market with approximately 60,000 more seats weekly across its network and provide greater convenience and connectivity for Oman Air guests.

The four additional destinations being introduced for the summer schedule are four-weekly flights from Muscat to Chittagong (from March end); four-weekly flights from Muscat to Maldives (from June end); twelve-weekly flights from Muscat to Lucknow, and five-weekly flights between Muscat and Thiruvananthapuram (from August).

The expanded network and schedule for 2023 demonstrate Oman Air's ongoing efforts to contribute to the economy of the Sultanate of Oman while also exhibiting its drive for increased global reach through its award-winning services and products, along with its signature Omani hospitality both in the air and on the ground.



Air India relaunches non-stop flight service between Delhi and Copenhagen

Spreading wings to further expand its global reach, Air India resumed its non-stop service on the Delhi-Copenhagen-Delhi sector from March 1, 2023.

Air India Flight AI157 now operates on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays from Delhi, taking off at 1330 Hrs and arriving in Copenhagen at 1750 Hrs (local time). The CPH-DEL flight AI158 will depart at 1950 Hrs (local time) and arrive in Delhi at 0740 Hrs, next day (local time). The flight will be operated by Air India's state-of-the-art Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft, featuring a two-class cabin configuration, comprising 18 Business Class and 236 Economy Class seats. With this service, Air India's India-Europe frequency has increased to 79 non-stop flights per week.

Recommencing after a hiatus of almost three years, since global flight operations were restricted due to the outbreak of the pandemic, this service will further strengthen Air India's foothold in Europe, after the recently resumed flights to Vienna and Milan. Passengers can now conveniently fly non-stop to Copenhagen, a popular tourism and business centre and an educational hub of Europe.

This service will provide Indian travellers with convenient access to not only Copenhagen but also to several popular destinations around Copenhagen, including Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. Besides catering to the demand of the corporate travellers, the student community and the Indian diaspora in general will benefit from this service.



Malaysia Airlines appoints Acumen Overseas as its GSA

Malaysia Airlines has appointed Acumen Overseas, a part of Group Concorde, an airline management company, as its General Sales Agent (GSA) to represent its passenger business in India. This marks the airline's latest move in strengthening its customer base across its Indian network.

India remains a key market for Malaysia Airlines, having witnessed a strong surge in travel bookings, especially since the reopening of borders between the two countries. Since March 2022, Malaysia Airlines has reinstated its scheduled commercial services from India with 52 weekly flights from six major cities, namely New Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Kochi.

Acumen Overseas has vast experience in airline management, having represented major airline companies with a client portfolio of 22 international airlines through their 18 international offices

in the Asia-Pacific region. With India being their home country, they are spread across 37 branch offices in 23 Indian cities covering North, South, East and West India.



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TOURISM WESTERN AUSTRALIA WITNESSING A ROBUST AND FAST-GROWING INTEREST FROM INDIA MARKET

As a major focus market, India represents an enormous growth opportunity for Western Australia's (WA) visitor economy. In the period May to September 2022, arrivals from India to WA recovered to 87 per cent of pre-COVID levels, which far outstripped the average of 46 per cent from other countries and reflects the Indian markets' rapidly growing interest in WA as a holiday destination. TTJ interacted with Carolyn Turnbull, Managing Director, Tourism WA, who is responsible for promoting WA as an incredible tourism destination, along with delivering world-class tourism experiences and events calendar.

She shares with us more about the sun-kissed destination with jaw-dropping, dreamlike scenery and authentic cultural experiences and how they are targeting and working to get in more Indian tourists.

Prashant Nayak



▲ Carolyn Turnbull

With Australia opening for tourism and business, how was 2022 for Tourism WA from a global perspective?

Western Australia began reconnecting with the world in 2022 and for Tourism Western Australia, that involved enhancing the visitor experience we offer, delivering a blockbuster year of major events, launching our new global tourism brand, and improving flight access into our state. We implemented these initiatives with the support of the Western Australian Government's \$195 million Reconnect WA package, which

allocated funding towards Tourism WA's aviation, events, destination development and marketing activities.

Pleasingly, by the end of 2022, we began to see the signs that our hard work and investment was paying off, with new visitor statistics showing WA tourism was recovering well from the pandemic. Recent insights indicate that our capital city, Perth, is again thriving as a destination, recording its second-highest domestic spend on record – up to \$492 million in November 2022 – which is a 34 per cent lift since November 2019. Domestic visitors are also spending big in WA's regions, with regional domestic spend for November sitting at \$456 million, which represents a 35 per cent jump since pre-COVID.

Meanwhile, January 2023 figures show the number of international flights into WA sits at 76 per cent of pre-COVID levels. Interstate figures are even stronger, showing the number of flights into Perth is now 102 per cent of pre-COVID levels. All this data tells us there is strong interstate and international demand for our state, with our new global tourism brand heightening the existing interest in our destination and further driving visitation to WA.

Post-COVID, with outbound travel showing strong recovery in India, how is Tourism WA optimising its efforts to attract Indian leisure and business travellers planning to visit Australia?

India remains a priority market for WA and we continue to work to rebuild and grow our aviation capacity so that family and friends can reunite here. Singapore Airlines is our most significant international airline partner and is

already back to running multiple flights per day to and from Perth, offering one-stop connections to and from India.

We have also developed strong partnerships with several other airlines and are actively looking to further grow our engagement in India's aviation sector. Along with strengthening our aviation connections, WA's Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism, the Hon Roger Cook, led a mission to India in July last year.

As part of the eight-day mission, Tourism WA CEO Rebecca Brown and I were joined by other business leaders and famed Australian cricketer Brad Hogg as we visited four Indian cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Visakhapatnam and Chennai. Having Brad Hogg join us was essential, as we know that hosting world-class cricket events in WA offers a major drawcard for leisure visitation from the Indian market.

Overall, the India mission offered countless opportunities to strengthen existing friendships and establish new connections, which have led to greater investment and collaboration between India and WA across a range of sectors – including tourism – and the establishment of WA's newest international trade office in the South Indian port city of Chennai. I'm confident that having a physical presence in Chennai will help raise the profile of WA as the ideal place for Indian nationals to visit, as well as invest in, live, and work.

Please elaborate on the concept of Tourism WA's new global campaign, 'Walking On A Dream' and what does it address?

Walking On A Dream invites travellers to visit WA to explore the awe-inspiring attributes that make our state a wondrous, otherworldly and dreamlike place. The new brand will underpin Tourism WA's marketing activities for at least the next five years and is very much inspired by our state's ancient Aboriginal culture.

The new brand showcases our globally-recognised destinations like Ningaloo Reef on the Coral Coast, the vineyards of Margaret River in Australia's South West, the iconic Perth city skyline, and the Bungle Bungle Range of the Kimberley's Purnululu National Park, in Australia's North West.

Walking On A Dream will lift the profile of WA as a unique holiday destination within a fiercely competitive global travel marketplace. It speaks to the interests of our global target market, the High Value Travellers who have an adventurous spirit, and are seeking authentic experiences beyond the expected, fueled by a desire to get away from the well-known and well-trodden.

What are the current challenges when it comes to Indian visas, connectivity, etc.?

Any queries regarding visas are best directed to the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs. However, within Tourism WA, we understand the need for better access to and from our beautiful state.

We are committed to working with India's tourism and aviation sectors, as well as Perth Airport, to secure more aviation connections to India, with our current focus on establishing a direct flight from either Mumbai or Delhi to Perth. It

makes sense for an Indian airline to also consider this opportunity, given the connecting flight possibilities throughout all of India.

We have already developed strong partnerships with several airlines and will look to further increase our engagement in the aviation sector, to potentially secure a new direct flight route between our two destinations.

What is it about the region that makes it an exciting destination in Australia?

We offer pink lakes, horizontal waterfalls, majestic gentle whale sharks, endless wildflowers, sweeping outback plains, a staircase to the moon, miles of coastline and Australia's whitest beach, all in the one state.

Beyond breathtaking destinations, WA is also a state obsessed with sport, and we have secured several blockbuster events for the coming year. This includes the prestigious World Surf League event, the Margaret River Pro, and the world's biggest women's football tournament, FIFA Women's World Cup 2023. We're also home to the perfect venue for these global sporting events, Optus Stadium, which has been awarded 60 awards in the five years since opening.

What are your destination's new experiences for a great vacation?

WA's capital city is a great starting point for international visitors – Perth is a relaxed, naturally adventurous city which also holds the enviable title of being Australia's sunniest capital city, with more than 3,000 hours of sunshine per year.

Within 30 minutes of Perth's city centre visitors can sample fresh food and premium wine in the Swan Valley – the state's oldest wine-growing region. The bohemian city of Fremantle is also a short journey from Perth, and this port city offers heritage streetscapes, a thriving restaurant scene, and direct connections to the iconic Rottnest Island. Accessible only by boat and plane, Rottnest Island is home to 63 beaches, 20 bays and the world's happiest animal, the quokka, as well as car-free streets that are perfect for families to explore by bike or foot.

Visitors who want to travel a bit further can head south to the stunning Margaret River Region – WA's largest wine region and home to numerous world-class dining venues, breweries and wineries. On the way down to Margaret River, travellers can stop in at the seaside town of Busselton, home to the Southern Hemisphere's

longest jetty, or continue further along to Albany or even Esperance, which boasts some of the most pristine and untouched beaches in Australia.

Tourism WA has appointed a Representative in India. Together, what are your current marketing mix and strategies to promote and position your destination as one of the most preferred destinations for Indian travellers?

Tourism WA recently upscaled its investment in India with the appointment of international marketing agency T&A Consulting Private Limited, to drive our state's trade marketing and public relations operations across the country.

With Walking On A Dream elevating WA on the world stage, and many high-profile sporting contests on the horizon driving further event-led visitation, it is vital that our destination marketing and trade partnerships target the High Value Travellers in India and reflect the significant interest the market has in our state.

Tourism WA is therefore focusing on working with key influencers like Barkha Singh, to showcase the best of Western Australia. Our agency will also capitalise on other Indian celebrities visiting our state, such as the Indian Cricket Team, so we can host them at key destinations, like the beautiful Rottnest Island. Additionally, we are continuing to work with our in-market key tourism trade partners, including MakeMyTrip, Thomas Cook, Pick your Trail, Ease My Trip, Veena World, and TBO, to further promote our global tourism brand.

How important is the India market for Tourism WA?

Before pandemic, India was WA's 11th-largest international market for visitor numbers, and 10th-largest market in visitor spend. In fact, more than 30,000 travellers from India visited WA in 2019.

Since WA re-opened to the world, we've seen a growing number of Indian visitors travelling to our shores. Specifically, since May 2022, Indian visitors to WA have been tracking at over 90 per cent of pre-COVID levels – an amazing achievement, which proves that the relationship between these two great destinations has the strength to grow even further.

We know that there is great potential to develop this market in the future and Tourism WA is committed to securing a direct flight between Perth and India so our travel, trade and education ties with India can be made even stronger in 2023 and beyond.



DUBAI DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMY AND TOURISM'S KEY FOCUS FOR 2023

The Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism is focusing on enhancing the customer experience and leveraging word-of-mouth to attract visitors to the region. In an interview with TTJ, Bader Ali Habib, Head, Region-South Asia, Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, shared insights on Dubai's strategy for the India market, including organising regular partner meetings and a series of workshops to increase awareness around tourism in Dubai. The department is also exploring opportunities to attract visitors through stopovers and layovers, and is committed to providing a memorable travel experience for post-pandemic travellers.

Vartik Sethi

The Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism is capitalising on the region's world-class facilities and tourist attractions to fuel its strategies and attract visitors from all over the world. With a renewed focus on enhancing the customer experience and leveraging the power of word-of-mouth, the department is well-prepared to achieve its goals.

In an interview with Travel Trade Journal, Bader Ali Habib, Head, Region- South Asia, Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, shared insights on Dubai's key focus for 2023 in relation to the India market. Habib emphasised the importance of organising regular partner meetings to enhance communication and refine the department's strategy with the Indian trade. To this end, the department is planning a series of one-of-a-kind workshops aimed at increasing awareness about tourism in Dubai. These tactical workshops will primarily focus on various aspects of Dubai's attractions and increasing visitor numbers in the region.

One of the key strategies of the department includes leveraging the power of stopovers and layovers in Dubai as they open a wide market to attract visitors. "Attracting these visitors by providing them with added value is a promising area. We are very sure that these visitors will definitely step into the city, and spend a night or two in Dubai," says Habib. The department is also keen on exploring India's tier 2 and tier 3 markets, and realises the immensely high potential in these cities.

According to customer data, post-pandemic travellers are showing a heightened awareness



▲ Bader Ali Habib

of their destinations. To meet the demands of this discerning audience, the department is fully committed to providing a memorable travel experience to travellers of all types, with varying travel aspirations and goals. With the increasing popularity of Dubai as both a travel and work destination, the tourism segment is ripe with opportunities.

The merger with the Department of Economy is focused on creating a welcoming environment for visitors and foreign residents, ensuring their satisfaction and contentment and leveraging the power of positive word-of-mouth. In addition,

the Dubai Department of Economy is eager to continue some of their successful initiatives from previous years, such as the Dubai Expo, which has garnered global acclaim and cemented Dubai's status as a premier destination.

Dubai's initiatives towards sustainability have been stellar. The city of Dubai is built on a sustainable, self-sufficient model, and the same continues to be a showcase point in all the expos. The offices in the city use a fully recyclable model, setting an example. In fact, the Dubai government has gone paperless in the last two years! Showcasing this sense of responsibility is sure to go a long way in promoting Dubai as a favourable tourist destination.

The city of Dubai has made impressive strides in its recovery from the pandemic, having already achieved 97 per cent of its pre-pandemic levels (2019-2020) and showing remarkable growth every day. India remains the top market for the city, with safety, world-class infrastructure, and internal tourism contributing to its enduring appeal.

Dubai continues to attract outbound travellers from various countries, particularly India, who are drawn to the city's many attractions and offerings. The city's exceptional leaders have significantly contributed to the region's stronghold on the world. Habib also shared, "The department is also looking at creating Dubai as a wedding destination, and to put together necessary logistics to host destination weddings in Dubai. Local planners, exceptional food menus, and scenic beauty would be the stepping stones towards building the wedding segment in the country."



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MALDIVES NAVIGATES PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

Evolves into a Destination for All



The Maldives is a nation of over 1,000 islands located in the Indian Ocean. Known for its crystal-clear waters, vibrant marine life, and luxurious resorts, the Maldives has become a popular tourist destination in recent years. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing travel restrictions and shutdowns worldwide, the Maldives, like many other tourist-dependent economies, has faced challenges in keeping its tourism industry afloat. In this article, we'll explore how the Maldives has navigated the pandemic and hear from Fathimath Afra, Chief Marketing Officer, Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, about the strategies that have been implemented to keep the tourism industry going during these difficult times.

Vartik Sethi

The Maldives is a well-known and popular destination for honeymooners and couples, but in recent years it has transformed itself into a destination that has something for everyone. Fathimath Afra, Chief Marketing Officer of Maldives Marketing and Public Relations, during SATTE 2023, shared some insights into how the Maldives is evolving as a travel destination.

One of the things that sets the Maldives apart from other destinations is that it is always working to stay ahead of the game. Speaking to Travel Trade Journal, Afra shared, "The secret behind this is that we never stop working even during the pandemic we made sure that Maldives is safe and visible to the world." The country has a lot to do to keep the



▲ Fathimath Afra

momentum going, especially since India is their biggest market.

THE MALDIVES' CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION

The Chief Marketing Officer also spoke about the Maldives' efforts to spread awareness and cater to tier 1 and tier 2 cities. The country is no longer just an exclusive and high-end destination; it is now promoted as a luxurious destination with many options and experiences. The Maldives has a range of accommodation options, including the one-island, one-resort concept, local islands, and hotels, each offering a different experience.

The Maldives has won several travel awards and accolades, which have added more brand value to Visit Maldives. These titles have been prestigious for the destination and have shown the



love that people have for the Maldives. People who visit the Maldives also vote for these awards, and they promote the destination through these accolades.

CATERING TO A RANGE OF TRAVELLERS

Afra spoke about the upcoming Visit Maldives Storyteller Conference, which is going to be one of the biggest events they are hosting. "It is open to everyone who can tell a story about the Maldives, be it a blogger, a writer, a videographer, or anyone else," she added. The conference will be a five-day event, with the first day being a conference, and the rest of the days filled with fun and interesting activities. The idea is to redefine minds, and the organisers are working hard to develop it.

REACT, RETHINK, AND RECOVER

The first destinations to open during the pandemic, the country's strategy was to React, Rethink, and Recover. When everyone was shocked and trying to understand what was happening, the Maldives was in reactive mode, trying to understand what was happening in the market. They maintained engagement and asked how they could be of any help.

They were rethinking how they could help and were in contact with everyone. They never stopped working. In the next phase, they gave people a lot of content to dream about visiting the Maldives again. The fact that the Maldives was one of the first destinations to open, coupled with the presidential decision, helped them a lot. They worked closely with agents and the trade, and in terms of marketing, they communicated that the Maldives was one of the first destinations to open due to its geographical distance and stringent rules and regulations about safety measures.

Expressing her gratefulness to the India market Afra said, "India really started the boom and helped us in the recovering process because we had double and triple digit growth as soon as we opened up." The destination is eyeing future collaborations with stakeholders, taking a 360-degree approach to be present on all platforms. The Maldives has a range of popular tourist attractions and activities, and each segment allows for a different experience. Local island tourism is another thing they really want to push, along with the budget-friendly luxury segment. They are also promoting the cultural segments of the country.

In conclusion, the Maldives is a destination that has something for everyone. It is no longer just a honeymoon or wedding destination but is now offering luxury, corporate, and a range of other experiences. The Maldives has a lot to offer, and it is continuously evolving and staying ahead of the game. With its stunning beaches, clear waters, and luxurious accommodations, the Maldives is a must.



Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board

Celebrating Multiple Milestones in 2023 and Beyond

Key anniversaries, milestones, new openings, and developments make Los Angeles a “must-see” destination for Indian Travellers. A high-powered delegation from Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board, led by Adam Burke, President and CEO, accompanied by Don Skeoch, Chief Marketing Officer; Kathryn Smits, Senior VP, Global Tourism Development and Chris Heywood, Senior VP, Global Communications was in India recently to meet with key travel trade stakeholders, industry partners, and media. TTJ met up with Kathryn Smits in New Delhi to know more.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board established its India presence with the opening of its India office in 2019 to educate and enhance tourism inflows from India. Unfortunately, soon after the whole world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. 2023 marks the first time LA Tourism’s President and CEO is visiting India with the LA Tourism delegation to update stakeholders about new offerings in and around LA and gather insights about the changing trends amongst Indian travellers post-pandemic. The LA Tourism delegation travelled to Mumbai and Delhi.

“As one of the world’s fastest-growing markets for tourism, we’re proud that Los Angeles Tourism was the first U.S. Destination Marketing Organization to open our own full-time office in India in 2019. We see tremendous opportunities to support the growth of the travel industry in India – particularly given how much our communities have in common,” said Adam Burke, CEO, of Los Angeles Tourism.

Adding to the sentiment, Kathryn Smits, Senior VP, Global Tourism Development, mentioned, “It is so exciting to be back, we were here several times in 2019 so it is really wonderful to be back in India talking about the future of travel. This year, LA invites travellers to celebrate a milestone year for the city with the 100th anniversaries of the Hollywood Sign, Warner Bros. Studios, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, the iconic Millennium Biltmore Hotel, and the 15th anniversary of LA Tourism’s signature dining program, Dine LA.”

She further added, “Pre-COVID, India was our number one opportunity market in terms of growth. We are excited that the market is starting to come back but we understand the huge challenge that the visa issue presents. The good news is that there is a strong focus on getting things back on track and shortening

processing times on priority.”

Talking about the tourism business mix Los Angeles receives, Kathryn shares, “We are really fortunate, we cater to leisure travellers, group travellers, independent business traveller we see a real variety and that is reflective of India as well, coming out of COVID, we are seeing a lot of student related travel, travel related to visiting family and relatives and taking a holiday on top of that we are very positive of the future of the leisure travel and we are also receiving inquiries for group travel and MICE.”

Los Angeles is an ever-evolving destination full of new experiences for first-time Indian visitors or returning travellers to discover, and 2023 is no exception. New places to stay, award-winning dining experiences, vibrant attractions, advanced infrastructure projects, and more across the city make up “LA 2.0,” offering countless exciting new places to explore.

With so much to discover in LA 2.0, Los Angeles is ready to roll out the red carpet for Indian travellers in 2023. 130,000 Indians visited LA in 2019, injecting \$305 million in visitor spending into the local economy. It’s estimated that 110,000 Indian travellers will visit Los Angeles County in 2023, with full recovery to pre-pandemic levels anticipated in 2024. The target is to achieve “One Million” Indian visitors by 2030.

Visitors can now enjoy all-new attractions, including the recently opened SUPER NINTENDO WORLD at Universal Studios Hollywood. Emerging neighborhoods are also a draw for



Kathryn Smits, Senior VP, Global Tourism Development; Chris Heywood, Senior VP, Global Communications; and Seema Kadam, Regional Director of India

visitors, including the Arts District on the eastern edge of Downtown LA, a creative neighborhood growing into a must-visit dining capital with Michelin-starred restaurants. Culver City is becoming an entertainment hot spot.

Beyond entertainment, dining, shopping, and arts and culture, Los Angeles is also a top selection for international students looking to pursue higher education in the U.S. With several esteemed institutions. Los Angeles welcomes students from around the world to study in the City of Angels.

“The Los Angeles World Airport is also in the midst of a \$14 billion capital improvement project at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The modernisation program is the largest public works program in the history of the City of Los Angeles. Under construction now is a new 2.25-mile Automated People Mover,” shares Kathryn.

As tourism from India to LA grows, the tourism board also plans to expand its India regional office this year with the addition of new staff.

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Adventure Tourism takes Centre Stage in South Africa for Indian Travellers

South African Tourism is all set to make a mark in the Indian travel market with a focus on adventure tourism. In a recent interview with Travel Trade Journal, Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head, MEISEA, South African Tourism, revealed their plans to offer a variety of adventure activities, ranging from wildlife safaris to stargazing in the Northern Cape, to attract Indian travellers. With exceptional consumer engagement and support for the MICE segment, South African Tourism aims to sustain and build on the current peak in 2022, projecting a promising year for both India and South Africa in 2023.

Vartik Sethi

Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head, MEISEA, South African Tourism, shares her insights on the emerging trend of adventure tourism in the Indian market. In an interview, she emphasised that adventure tourism is not just about extreme activities, but also about experiencing South Africa's nature, culture, and heritage in a unique and thrilling way. From up-close encounters with lions to stargazing in the Northern Cape, South Africa offers a variety of adventure options that cater to every Indian traveller's adrenaline rush.

Looking into the future, Nkani shared that South African Tourism's focus is on exceptional consumer engagement, especially in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. On being asked about South Africa Tourism's strategy for 2023, Nkani shared, "Exceptional consumer engagement. Talking and making sure that we are front facing the consumer and making sure that we are supporting our trade and trade capacitation is going into tier 2 and tier 3 cities is very important for us." The goal is to understand the needs and wants of Indian travellers, support trade capacity building, and launch E-visas as soon as possible. Additionally, South African Tourism aims to cater to the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions (MICE) market, offering unique experiences and support to make them feel comfortable and attended to.

When asked about the comparison between



▲ Neliswa Nkani

2019 levels and 2022, Nkani acknowledged that the travel industry has changed and evolved. While we are peaking and sustaining in 2022, the focus should be on building on what the new customer is looking for, making sure South Africa is ready and available to them.

As for projections for 2023, Nkani sees a

promising year for both countries. With South Africa hosting a mega-event and India cheering the G20, there will be a good incentive increase for both countries. South Africa expects an increase in Indian arrivals because Indian travellers just can't get enough of South Africa's natural beauty and diverse culture.

"It is going to be a very good year in all that we do. And not just for South Africa, I think for both countries, India is going to experience a bloody good year. They are chairing the G20, so there is going to be a good incentive increase from that perspective," Nkani added.

In conclusion, Nkani emphasised that South Africa values the Indian traveller and loves the country, its people, and culture. South Africa accepts India in all that it is because it has accepted them. South African Tourism welcomes Indian travellers to come and explore the adventure and beauty that South Africa has to offer. In today's competitive travel industry, South Africa's focus on adventure tourism and exceptional consumer engagement makes it an attractive destination for Indian travellers seeking unique and thrilling experiences. The country's diverse range of adventure options, from wildlife safaris to stargazing, promises to provide an adrenaline rush for every type of traveller. With the assurance that South Africa values and welcomes Indian travellers, the country is sure to see a surge in Indian arrivals in the coming years.



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Hong Kong to give out 5,00,000 Air Tickets and HK\$100 million worth Goodies to Visitors

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) recently reached out to the Indian travel industry partners through a two-city MICE roadshow in Mumbai and Delhi and their presence at SATTE, to introduce their “Hello Hong Kong” campaign, providing the latest updates on Hong Kong and sharing new developments, new experiences, new tourism opportunities and special offers. These platforms served as perfect launch pads to reactivate Hong Kong - India travel relations post-COVID-19 shutdowns and explore new business opportunities over networking sessions. TTJ interacted with Puneet Kumar, Director Middle East and South Asia – Hong Kong Tourism Board to know more.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Hong Kong is now ready to welcome travellers from all around the world, be it on vacation or business, without any restrictions. Puneet Kumar informs, “In Hong Kong, there are no restrictions, no isolation and no quarantine. The travel is now seamless. All they need to do is take a rapid antigen test (RAT, which can be self-administered) within 24 hours, or undergo a PCR-based nucleic acid test within 48 hours, before the scheduled time of flight departure.” All visitors travelling to Hong Kong are no longer required to wear masks indoors and outdoors and can enjoy Hong Kong's iconic and new experiences to the fullest.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative to woo back international visitors, Kumar shared, “Hong Kong is giving away 5,00,000 free air tickets and a welcome bonanza totalling 100 million Hong Kong Dollars. Goodies, benefits and offers worth HK\$100 each will be given to one million visitors as welcome gifts to entice global travellers to visit and experience the world of new discoveries in Hong Kong.” Hong Kong Airport Authority will be giving away the 5,00,000 tickets through three airlines, namely Cathay Pacific, Hong Kong Airlines and Hong Kong Express. The rollout of this programme will be in a progressive manner, starting first with the short-haul markets and followed by the long-haul markets. India is definitely on this allocation and will start receiving the benefit from this offer within the first half of 2023.



▲ Puneet Kumar

Over the last three years, Hong Kong has unveiled new mega infrastructure, added new attractions and upgraded and revamped existing ones. The new Hong Kong-Macao-Zhuhai bridge and High-speed railways now offer excellent connectivity and reduced travel time from Hong Kong to Greater Bay Area full of spectacular tourist attractions, newest tourism developments such as 11 Skies the biggest retail, dining and entertainment Hub, Kai Tak Sports Park a multi-purpose

global sporting and wellness hub.

The West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the world's largest cultural projects spread over 40 hectares of reclaimed land with 2 km of waterfront promenade dotted with the newest Art and Culture attractions, museums, unique event venues such as Hong Kong Palace Museum, M+ Museum, Xiqu Centre, Art Park and Free Space that would delight visitors with a high dose of world-class immersive experience.

Kumar further added, “The city is ready to cheer our Indian visitors with new attractions such as the Magical night-time show ‘Momentous’ at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, all-weather Water World Ocean Park, a brand new 6th Generation Peak Tram and exciting line-up of mega events and festivals starting from March 2023 such as Hong Kong Rugby Sevens, Art Basel, Clockenflap Musical Festival and many more throughout the year, there is never a dull moment in Hong Kong.”

HKTB led a delegation of 18 Hong Kong trade partners that included Cathay Pacific Airways, iconic attractions such as Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, Ocean Park Hong Kong, Ngong Ping 360, key hotels and leading destination management companies on a two-city MICE roadshow that saw enthusiastic participation from over 140 key India MICE travel trade partners who reconnected with the Hong Kong stakeholders and deepened their destination knowledge with Hong Kong's diverse new tourism products and experiences unique to Hong Kong.

Indonesia capitalises on sports events to entice travellers

The Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia is into hosting a string of international sports events to rev up its tourism sector in the post-COVID world. Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister for Marketing, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia offers valuable insights into the latest strategies taken up by the Ministry of Tourism to bring a surge in tourist arrivals.

Swaati Chaudhury

In an attempt to reconnect with the travel trade in the Eastern region of India, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia hosted Indonesia Sales Mission in Kolkata sometime on February 7, 2023.

With the pandemic winding up, the world has opened up and COVID-19 protocols have been relaxed. Ni Made Ayu Marthini, explained, "We have drawn up a slew of strategies to lure Indian travellers. It's not enough to go for a one-time promotion of our destinations that have all opened up again. There is a plethora of novel destinations in and around Indonesia, including Lombok and Sumatra. New-age travellers have a penchant to visit volcanic destinations like Sumatra and Bali. There is F1 Powerboat Championship at Lake Toba in North Sumatra from February 24 to 26 in the current year. Sports events are quite powerful

for boosting travel destinations. MotoGP will be held in Lombok in October, this year."

The Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia is into providing options not only for leisure travellers but for all segments of tourists. Marthini said, "We have music, sports, dance festivals and cultural events lined up in the upcoming period. We are also eyeing MICE groups from India. Introducing the visa-on-arrival facility for Indian travellers has been our significant strategy since we want to make travel hassle-free. India features among our top five source markets. We have categorised 87 countries for providing a visa-on-arrival facility."

Bali is not only a great destination for Indian travellers but has also emerged as a wedding destination. Marthini further said, "We are stressing on Borobudur in Central Java which has the largest Buddhist Stupa in the world. We are working on resuming direct flights from India to Indonesia.



▲ Ni Made Ayu Marthini

Nearly 2,63,000 Indian travellers visited the country last year. We are hoping to have around 7.5 million global visitors and 5 lakh Indian tourists in the current period. Australia contributes the most number of global visitors to the country."



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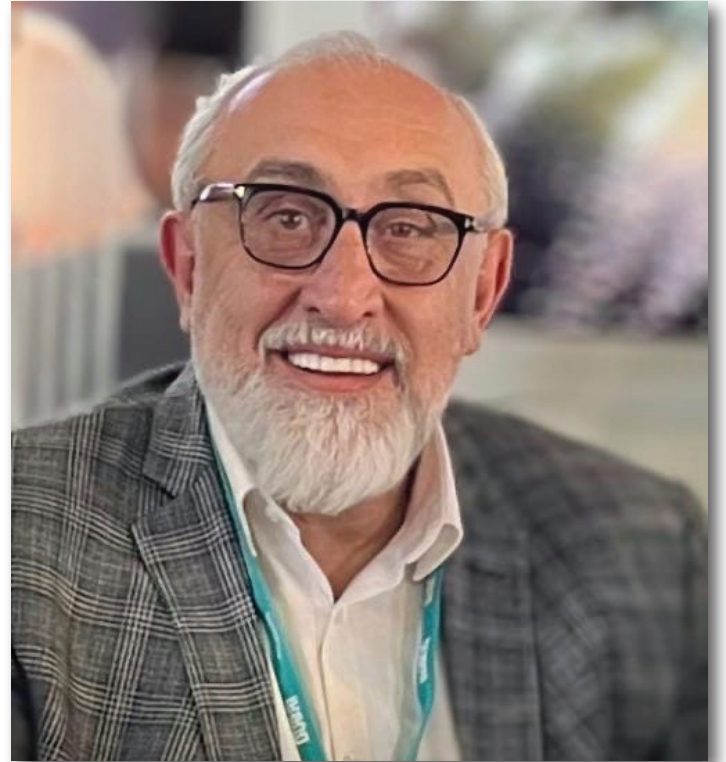
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Dubai Holding Entertainment's Hala Dubai to shake up India market

Despite the pandemic's blow, Dubai has seen a speedy recovery and is on the path to reaching pre-pandemic growth levels. With the commitment to its visitors and inclusivity, Dubai Holding Entertainment projects soaring numbers in the future. In an exclusive interview with Travel Trade Journal, Rami Mashini, Executive Director, Sales, Dubai Holding Entertainment, also revealed the group's efforts to attract visitors from the India market, which has become the group's biggest source market in 2022. Dubai Holding Entertainment's upcoming project, Hala Dubai, in collaboration with Real Madrid, is going to be bigger than ever. Mashini hinted that the launch would take place within Dubai Parks and Resorts™, and more details would be revealed closer to the date.

Vartik Sethi

In our conversation with Rami Mashini, Executive Director, Sales, Dubai Holding Entertainment, took us on a thrilling tour of some of Dubai's most exciting destinations. Ain Dubai, which boasts the title of the world's tallest observation wheel, is a must-visit attraction. Dubai Parks and Resorts™, (DPR) comprises four parks - MOTIONGATE™ Dubai, BOLLYWOOD PARKS™ Dubai; LEGOLAND® Dubai; and LEGOLAND® Water Park - and offers an array of fun-filled activities for both children and adults. The parks are also home to three hotels, with 1,500

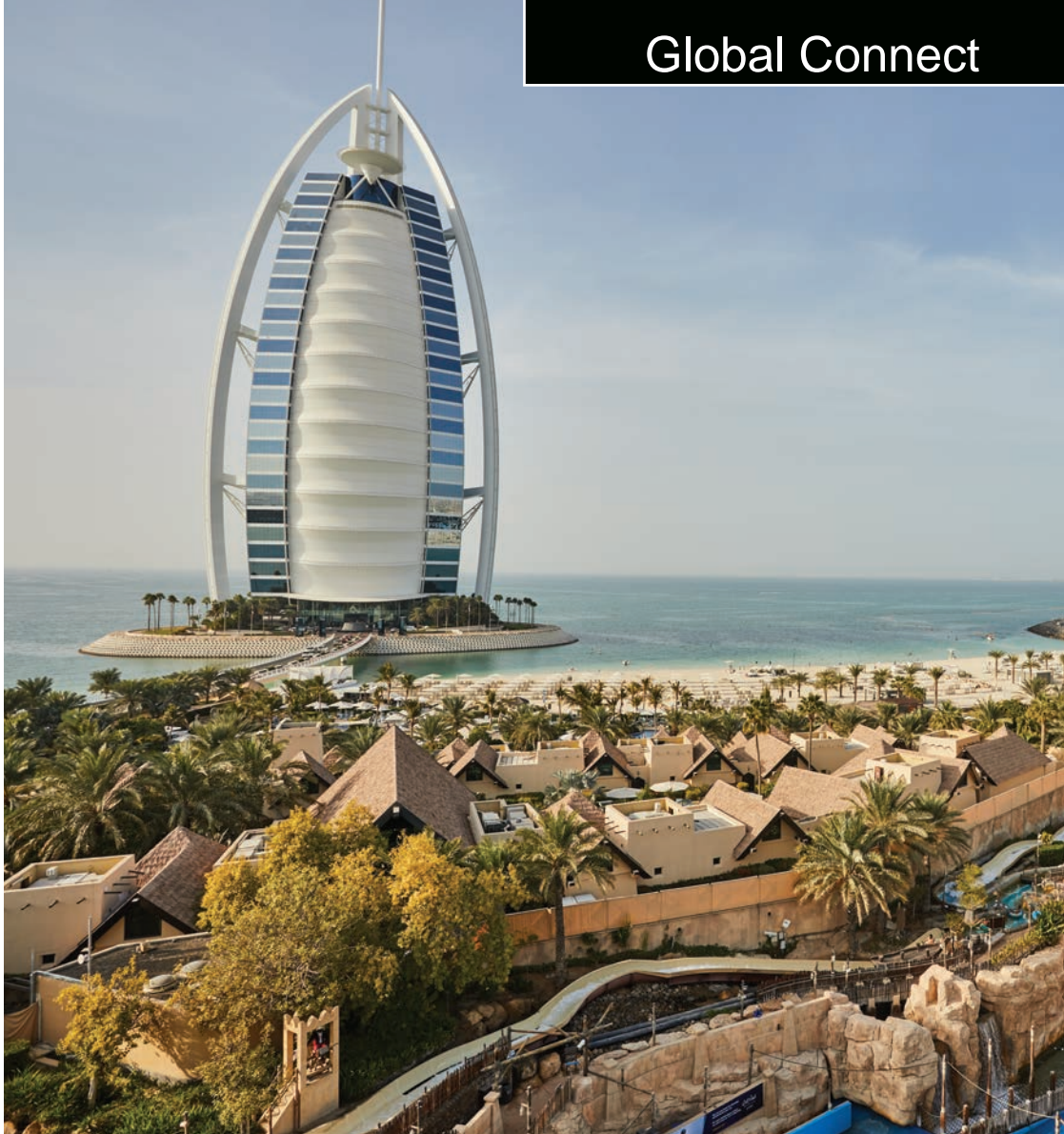


▲ Rami Mashini

rooms in total, including the LEGOLAND® Hotel managed by Marriott, the LEGOLAND® Hotel, and Rove At The Park. Moving towards the city, one can marvel at the magnificence of various destinations under the portfolio, such as Global Village, one of Dubai's most established tourist attractions, the Coca-Cola Arena, the region's largest multipurpose indoor arena, the Arabian Radio Network (ARN), the largest radio network in the region, MPN a multimedia sales house, Roxy Cinemas, The Green Planet animal attraction, and Laguna Water Park.

Speaking with Travel Trade Journal, Mashini shed light on Dubai Holding Entertainment's efforts to garner attraction from the India market. "We've been organising back-to-back activities for the India market. In fact, our biggest source market in 2022 was India". Dubai Holding Entertainment has a strong network of partners in metro as well as tier 2 and tier 3 cities of India, catering to various travel groups, including FITs, events, and MICE. In addition, conference halls with world-class facilities have been designated for hosting up to 2000 people, spread out between MOTIONGATE™ Dubai and BOLLYWOOD PARKS™ Dubai in Dubai Parks and Resorts.





Mashini also shared how the entertainment group has innovated the tourism market in the region, and has triumphed in its initiatives. For instance, visitors can organise conferences in Roxy Cinemas, a massive cinema owned by the group. Backed by the latest technology and infrastructure, the place offers a world class experience to visitors. Similarly, the group has attractions suitable to host destination weddings with pomp and grandeur. The year 2022 witnessed 70-80 destination weddings at its properties - BOLLYWOOD PARKS™ Dubai, MOTIONGATE™ Dubai and Lapita Hotel. The properties promise a grand experience, with exquisite food menus, stunning nightlife, and merry music. The proximity of the hotels to the airports ensure the traveller's ease of moving around in the region.

Signing a contract with Real Madrid, the entertainment group has named the launch as Hala Dubai. Real Madrid's concept is going to be a stepping stone for a lot of upcoming projects and announcements. Without revealing much about the campaign, Mashini shared, "It is within Dubai Parks and Resorts. What I can tell you is that it is coming, and closer to the date I will be able to tell you more about the attractions!"

Mashini added that Dubai has witnessed speedy recovery from the blow of the pandemic, and is on the path of touching pre-pandemic growth levels. India continues to top the charts for number one source market for Dubai Holding Entertainment. The group's projections promise soaring numbers, owing to its commitment to its visitors, and the spirit of inclusivity.





Uttar Pradesh Tourism

Pressing all the right buttons

Speaking to Travel Trade Journal recently, Mukesh Meshram, Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, Government of Uttar Pradesh, shared some latest insights into the strides that Uttar Pradesh was lately making in developing a multifaceted, safe and tourist-friendly tourism product. The endeavour is to fill in all the missing links, and gaps and echo the sentiment of 'Athiti Devo Bhava'.

Sonika Bohra

Do reputed platforms like ITB and ATM have the potential to give more impetus for inbound travel to India and Uttar Pradesh?

Most definitely, as Uttar Pradesh is a big centre of spiritual and religious tourism. We have Varanasi, Prayagraj, Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Mathura, Vrindavan and six major Buddhist destinations like Sarnath from where Buddhism actually started after Lord Buddha attained enlightenment and delivered his first sermon. We have Kushinagar where he attained Mahaparinirvana. These two sites are very important for Buddhists worldwide. Then there are Kapilvastu and Siddharthnagar where he actually spent his childhood and youth, Shravasti where Lord Buddha spent 18 rainy seasons meditating and also Kaushambi. 18 Jain Tirthankaras were also from areas which are integral to Uttar Pradesh.

We believe that there are about 500 million Buddhists all over the world and if we target just a certain percentage of that population, our Buddhist destinations hold great potential to offer solace, peace and spirituality to these religious tourists, seeking to retrace the footsteps of Lord Buddha.

Uttar Pradesh also has the largest number of ghats, and riverbanks, where religious buildings are located because a very large stretch of the river Ganges, flows through 27 districts of the state, starting from Bijnor to Balia. We have eco-tourism sites, there are 24 bird sanctuaries. We have many other sanctuaries and wildlife reserves like Dudhwa, Katarniaghat, Sohela, Sohagi

Barwa and the dense forest in the foothill Himalayas.

Bundelkhand region showcases 31 palaces and forts which we recently identified and hold great potential to become very good tourist destinations because each palace or fort has its legacy and old history associated with the martyrs, deities, valour of its kings. We also have remnants of the Palaeolithic age in the form



▲ Mukesh Meshram



of rock paintings and cave paintings. There is a fossil part dating back to 140 billion years old at Salkhan. So actually we bring a lot to the table.



Have you identified new sites for UNESCO accreditation in the state of Uttar Pradesh?

UNESCO is the singular nodal body for declaring world heritage sites. To be accredited as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a very detailed and cumbersome process has to be followed. The entire process takes much more than a couple of years! First, we have to prepare a dossier, then it is submitted to the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and then it goes to concerned offices where it is reviewed and visited by experts. They discuss it with different stakeholders and they finally decide. There is a big competition for sites to be declared as world heritage sites. We submitted a detailed dossier on Sarnath, a few months back and the process is already underway. It will be a few years before the final outcome emerges.

Is the Buddhist circuit a prime focus area for you?

We are not only focusing on the Buddhist circuit; we have eco-tourism sites for which we have recently set up a state eco-tourism board under the chairmanship of Hon. Chief Minister and that board will decide how to develop all these eco-tourism sites.



We have monument tourism. A lot of monuments are there in the state and all the old heritage buildings, palaces, forts and Havelis. We have now started offering subsidies and incentives to the owners of these buildings so that they can convert these buildings into heritage hotels so that tourists will have a different experience as now everybody wants experiential tourism and they want to visit such places or sites and be a part of that destination. We have offered a lot of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

Then we have Buddhist Tourism, Religious Tourism and Spiritual Tourism. We also have river tourism. We have eco-tourism apart from Agro-rural tourism because the Gangetic plain which falls in between river Ganga and river Yamuna is very fertile as far as agriculture is concerned.

Further, in these settlements or villages, there are craftsmen, silk weaving is there, also people who are experts in textile making like handloom, people expert in culinary, traditional kind of foods



they prepare made of millet which is now considered a superfood and 2023 is the International Year of Millet. We are promoting millet as an ingredient of our food plate so that it will keep people healthy and farmers will also benefit from this.

What are your plans for rural tourism?

We want to promote rural tourism and this sector is being developed. We have identified some centres we have engaged some rural tourism consultants to guide us. The stakeholders will start homestays in rural areas. Also all these activities are happening simultaneously.



The Apurva Kempinski, Bali

a luxurious gateway to the Bali life



The Apurva Kempinski is a blend of traditional Balinese architecture and tropical island at Nusa Dua, Bali
 “Bali is more than a place. It’s a mood, it’s magical. It’s a tropical state of mind.” - Unknown

Shivil Bhasin

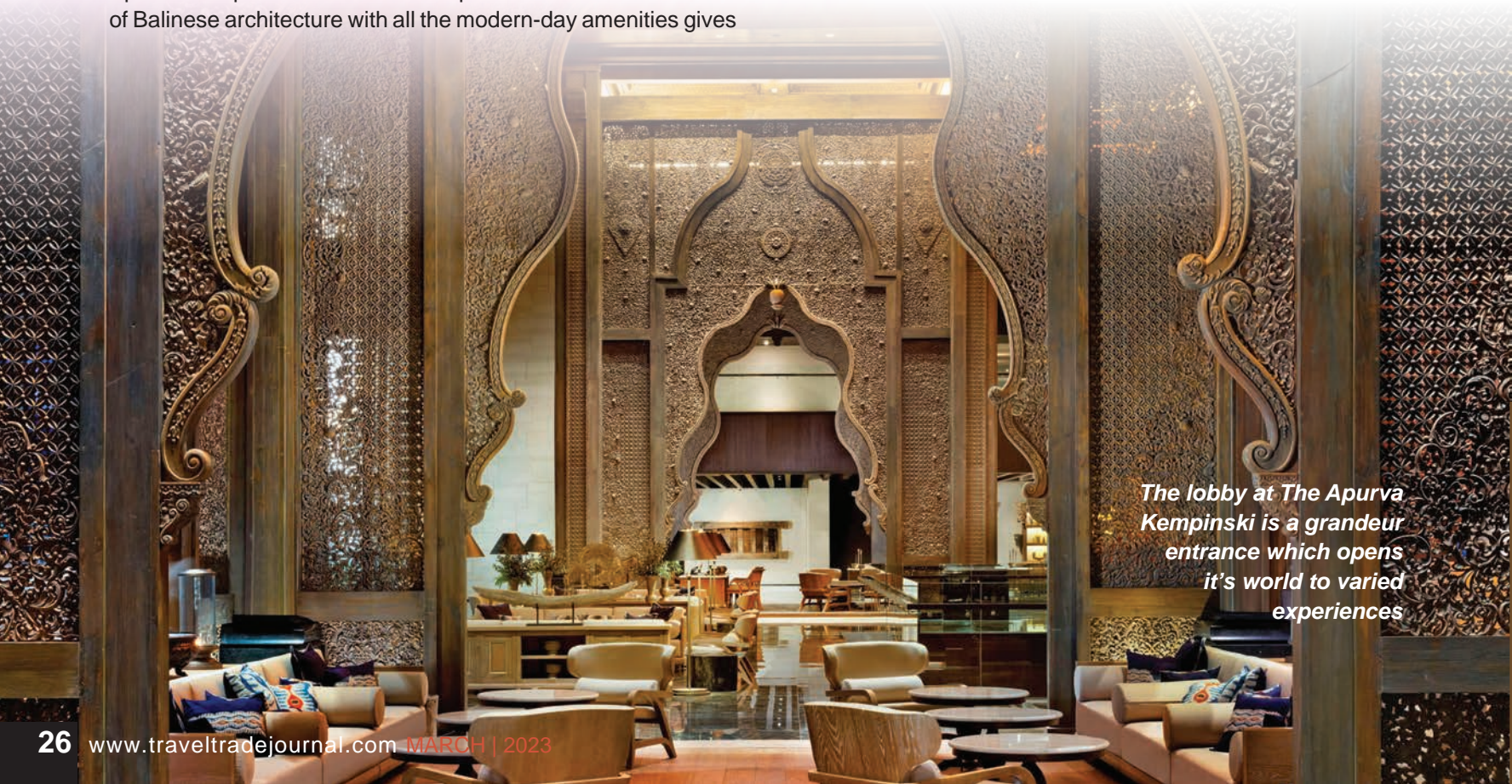
It was back in the year 2019, when my partner and I, both of us ardent travel enthusiasts, were sitting and thinking of our foreign travel destinations over a cup of tea. We decided to get married in the year 2022 and we were provided

with the golden opportunity to plan for a trip together, aka our honeymoon. Soon we started going through our to-do list of destinations and we knew that we would want to be nowhere else but Bali.

The Grandeur

Just as we were on our way to The Apurva Kempinski at Nusa Dua, we were crossing a lot of hotels, but the architecture of The Apurva Kempinski makes it stand apart hands down. The blend of Balinese architecture with all the modern-day amenities gives

a wholesome experience just from the looks of it. It was easy to figure out that this hotel is going to be luxurious and help us immerse ourselves in the Indonesian culture.



The lobby at The Apurva Kempinski is a grandeur entrance which opens it's world to varied experiences



Uber Luxurious Rooms

After a long journey, all that one probably craves for is the comfort of a bed with some warm food and relaxing views, and we were wanting just the same as we were looking forward to our stay. But being at the property, completely re-energised us and made us feel so fresh despite being jet lagged. As soon as we entered our room, which I would say, out of the 475 rooms at the hotel, was probably one of the best. We had the pleasure of staying in the Cliff Private Pool Ocean Junior Suite, and I can confidently say that it's one of the most beautiful hotel rooms I've ever had the pleasure of staying in. The suite is located on the top floor of the hotel's cliff-side wing, offering unparalleled views of the ocean and the surrounding cliffs. The first thing that caught our eye upon entering the room was the floor-to-ceiling windows that showcase the breathtaking view. The suite is decorated in a contemporary Balinese style, with dark wood accents, neutral tones, and plenty of natural light.

The rooms at The Apurva Kempinski are spacious, elegant, and are furnished with the finest materials, including Balinese textiles and hand-carved wooden furniture. The rooms are equipped with all the modern amenities, including a flat-screen TV, high-speed internet, and a luxurious bathroom with a rain shower and deep soaking tub.

The bathroom in the suite was equally impressive, featuring a large bathtub and a rain shower that offers a luxurious spa-like experience. The bathroom amenities are top-notch, with fragrant Balinese essential oils and high-quality bathrobes and slippers.

The highlight of the room, however, was the outdoor terrace that features a private infinity pool overlooking the ocean. The pool is the perfect place to unwind and take in

the view, and the surrounding deck chairs provide a comfortable spot to relax with a good book or a cocktail.

Tantalising Taste Buds

If you're looking for a culinary adventure, The Apurva Kempinski has six restaurants and bars that offer a wide range of cuisines. Koral Restaurant is the hotel's signature seafood restaurant, where you can enjoy fresh seafood and ocean views. Pala Restaurant offers authentic Indonesian cuisine, while Selasar Deli serves up delicious pastries and coffee.

I was quite surprised because when we entered one of their top-of-the-class restaurants, Izakaya by Oku, specialising in Japanese cuisine, I was absolutely enthusiastic and did not want to leave any bit of the food served on my plate, which yet so far had been foreign to my taste buds.

The beauty of the brilliant food was enhanced by the way the staff at each of the restaurants talked us through the food we were being served. It's hard to miss the cocktails too, because they were created all live and looked nothing less than a piece of art for us.

The Koral Restaurant

Out of all the restaurants, I am choosing to mention "The Koral Restaurant" exclusively because what we experienced at this place is unmatched and is unbelievably unique. This sea food restaurant offers a set menu with a wine paired with each course of the meal, yes that also includes a wine pairing with the dessert. It was one of the best dinners I have ever had because with good food and drinks who doesn't like to be surrounded by a view of the water and the fishes, and especially

have a diver dance around with the sharks. It felt completely out of the world, as we sat and kept gobbling at the food coming our way and experienced such stunning glimpses of the underwater life.

The Fabulous Property

The Apurva Kempinski Bali is more than just a luxurious five-star resort. It is a haven for travellers seeking a magical escape to a fantasy world. As you step foot into this paradise, you will be transported to a world filled with wonder, magic, and adventure.

The resort is full of amenities and activities that will keep you entertained throughout your stay. Diving into the crystal-clear waters of the 60-meter-long infinity pool at this breathtaking Bali resort was an experience like no other. With its prime location in the heart of the property, the pool boasts unparalleled views of the Indian Ocean, making it the perfect spot to soak up the island's natural beauty. Complete with a swim-up bar, Kubu, we sipped on delicious cocktails while lounging on plush sunbeds, completely immersing ourselves in the ultimate paradise experience. We felt transported to a world of pure tranquility and relaxation, a true Balinese escape.

For the ultimate relaxation, we headed to the hotel's luxury spa, which offers a range of Balinese-inspired treatments. Indulging in a luxurious Balinese-style massage was an unforgettable experience that left us feeling completely rejuvenated. The skilled masseuses transported us to a world of relaxation as they worked their magic on our tired muscles. The traditional techniques and soothing aromas of the natural oils used in the massage were simply divine. It was the perfect way to unwind after a long day of exploring the property.



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upscaling hotel portfolio to weave in experiential and unique destinations



WelcomHeritage represents the finest traditions of heritage hospitality and tourism in India.

Today, WelcomHeritage with their intent to preserve India's cultural and natural heritage, offers unique properties, ranging from grand palaces to traditional havelis to magnificent forts, quiet nature resorts and mesmerising wildlife resorts, spread across exclusive destinations across India. Abinash Manghani, Chief Executive Officer, WelcomHeritage Hotels who has traversed his professional journey wearing several hats primarily in tourism, hospitality and real estate advisory services, shares more on the brand's expansion plans, luxury aspects, and about their constant endeavour to practise sustainability and responsible tourism.

Sonika Bohra

How popular is India as a luxury destination at the world level? The luxury tourism market is expected to grow to a staggering value of \$82 billion in the next eight years according to a study released by Global Market Insight earlier this year. And interestingly, the Asia-Pacific luxury tourism market accounted for 28 per cent of this travel in 2021 as per the report. Once a backpacker's paradise with only sightseeing options, India is fast orienting itself to the changing profile of luxury tourists who are willing to overlook price points in favour of exclusivity, novelty, an insider immersive and hands-on experience. Moreover, the biggest advantage India has in its favour is that the country, with its sheer diversity and range of locations, weather, food and cultures, has a bit of something for all age groups and interests. Sun, sand, mountains, deserts, forests and rivers vie for attention as new properties come up alongside older traditional favourites. Having said this, India as a luxury travel destination, whilst fast growing among domestic and inbound travellers, will continue to be a niche.

What is the current state of inbound luxury tourism in India? What are the source



▲ Abinash Manghani

markets?

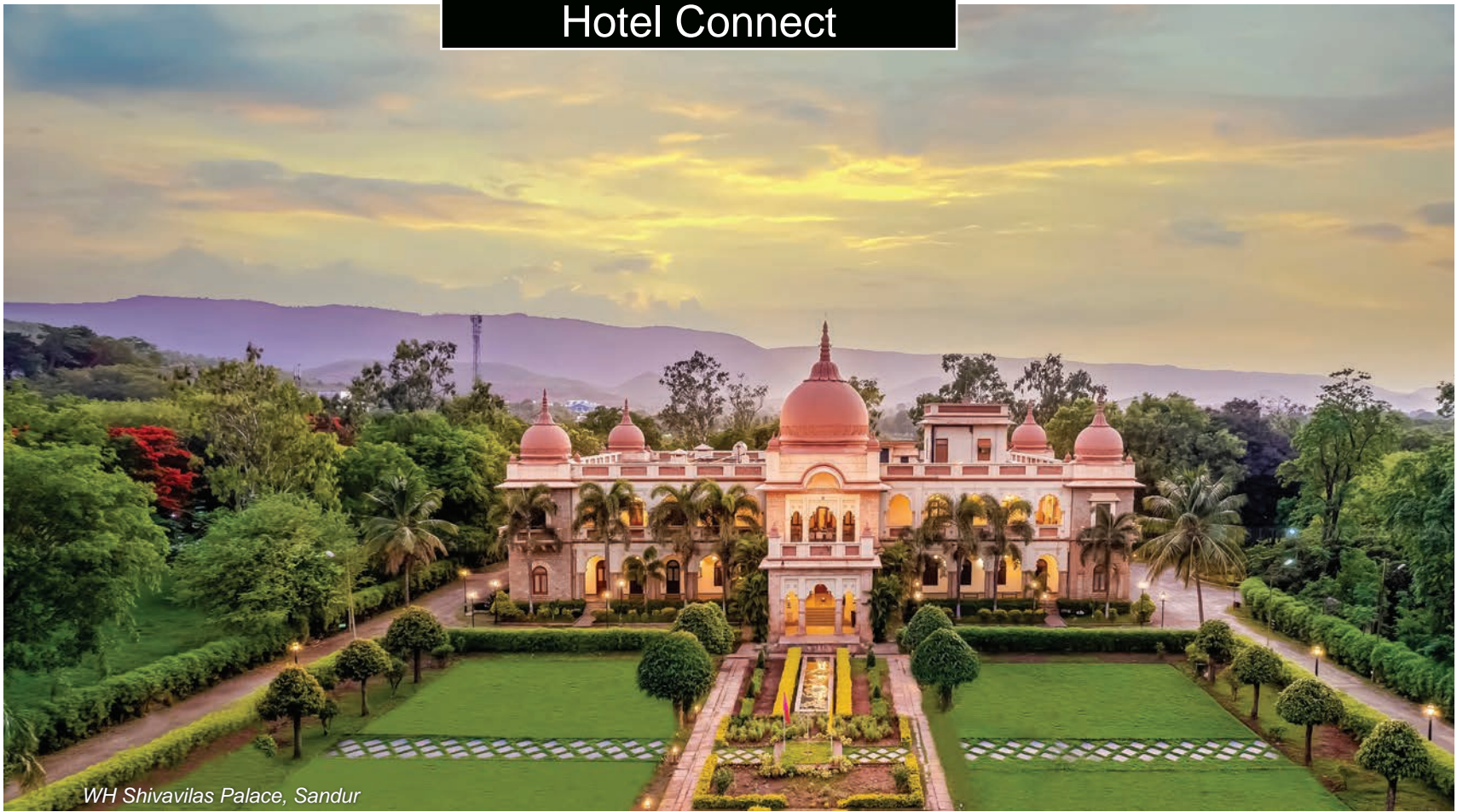
We are witnessing some inbound tourists from the US, Germany, Spain, and Australia. However, this segment will probably see a return to its pre-pandemic level of inbound travel only towards the last few months of 2023. Given that Inbound Tourism has already begun with a moderate flow, the influx is, however, also subject to airline capacity, soaring airfares and speed of Visas too. So, in the medium-term, domestic tourism will remain key. Going ahead, Indian tourism needs both International and domestic tourism as against a skew towards Inbound in key

markets earlier. With the beginning of inbound tourism, Heritage Tourism is bound to get a fillip.

What is your expansion plan for the coming year? Which regions and cities are you exploring?

We find that the domestic traveller has come of age and appreciates quality with a capacity to pay which we feel will transform the tourism and hospitality sector. We also must cater to the increasing influx of Inbound tourists as well as meet the expectations of Indian international traveller too.

Thus, our focus has been to identify new products, experiences and ideas, with an emphasis on quality, that continues to hold the guests' interests and speak to these different segments of travellers. To this effect, WelcomHeritage has five planned openings scheduled in 2023, each offering unique stories and experiences that enhance the destination offerings: WelcomHeritage Parv Vilas Resort and Spa in Kasauli, WelcomHeritage Azora by Ayatana in Fort Kochi, WelcomHeritage Ayatana in Ooty, WelcomHeritage Santa Roza, Kasauli and WelcomHeritage Akashganga Heritage Hills Resort and Spa, Dungarpur. With these additions, the WelcomHeritage collection will



WH Shivavilas Palace, Sandur

comprise 46 boutique hotels with 1300+ keys across 40 impressive Indian destinations. We are in active discussions for a strong presence in Goa, the Gir and Kabini forests and we aim to expand our horizon in the North-eastern region as well.

What is the next benchmark you're looking at?

As an experiential heritage brand, WelcomHeritage clearly recognises the importance of preserving India's cultural and natural heritage for future generations. We understand that the hospitality industry has a significant impact on the surrounding environment and local communities.

We have taken significant strides towards aligning with sustainable practices to reduce their carbon footprint and promote responsible tourism. We're in the process of installing our first EV (Electric vehicle) charging station at one of our resorts in North India, followed by more charging stations in other resorts to create an EV-drivable itinerary for our carbon-conscious guests. This is a path-breaking initiative for us, as a brand where our efforts to reduce our collective carbon reach beyond our properties.

From a brand perspective, all the properties in our portfolio must adhere to some stringent best practices that we have outlined in daily operations and maintenance. Many WelcomHeritage hotels have installed solar panels to generate electricity to reduce their dependence on non-renewable sources of energy. They have also implemented rainwater harvesting and waste management systems to conserve resources and minimise waste. There is focus on using energy-efficient lighting and promoting the use of organic and locally sourced produce in their restaurants. We have also initiated programs to educate guests about sustainable tourism practices and encourage them to participate in conservation

efforts.

In individual capacities, our properties continue to introduce mindful and highly impactful responsible initiatives. For example, one of our recent additions to the portfolio, WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort and Spa in Jawai has been built on the very ethos of sustainability. Offering guests unique experiences of the destination with local flavor, and with all indulgences and luxuries, but done consciously and in an ecologically sensitive manner, is their aim. From using local ingredients in its construction to having an organic farm, and sourcing all ingredients from within 60 km of the property, the resort has been designed to conserve and preserve the environment. Besides rainwater harvesting, there are STPs and water treatment plants installed, and reforestation in an ongoing project. The resort also hires locally, providing them with necessary skill training, as well as supporting the development of local businesses to encourage economic growth and involvement of the surrounding communities.

How are your guests reacting to your sustainable efforts?

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness among travellers about the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities. Many guests are now actively seeking out hotels that have sustainable practices and are environmentally responsible. In fact, according to a recent study, 88 percent of Indian travellers say they would be more likely to choose a sustainable

accommodation - whether they were looking specifically for one or not.

We personally see quite a progressive shift in the attitude of our guests with respect to how we, as hotels, respond and interact with the surrounding environment. Our initiatives are not just well received and respected by them, but it is proving instrumental to building and deepening a longer-term relationship.

In addition, WelcomHeritage Jungle Home in Pench, Madhya Pradesh has recently received the prestigious TOFT rating of 'Good practices' and WelcomHeritage Tadoba Vanya Vilas Resort and Spa received a TOFT rating of Quality practices.

Can you please shed some light on the growth and marketing strategy for this year?

Some of the strategies in focus this year are, developing experiential packages and itineraries, showcasing our properties in various domestic and international travel fairs and marts, associating with international online aggregators for greater reach, keeping a focus on sustainable tourism (considering the rise in awareness and preference by global and domestic travellers) and influencer marketing, in which we have seen a rise in requests from international influencers for WelcomHeritage properties.



WH Azora by Ayatana, Fort Kochi

Lily Hotels committed to offer world-class services in Maldives



Lily Hotels added nine exclusive villas, called the ‘Signature Collections’, to its offerings, promising exclusivity and premium services. The group is committed to continuously upgrading and enhancing its services to provide excellent experiences to its visitors. With the inauguration of the new airport and a positive growth projection, Maldives is optimistic about sustained growth in the travel market. In our conversation with Desislav Gospodinov, Group Director, Sales and Marketing, Lily Hotels, we learn more about the group’s plan going forward in 2023.

Vartik Sethi

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Maldives has emerged as a top destination for travellers from all over the world. However, it’s the India market that has played a significant role in boosting the travel industry in the country. Lily Hotels, a premier group of resorts, has been instrumental in creating a strong base for the India market in Maldives.

Lily Hotels has carefully curated its resorts to offer an experience that resonates with the rich Indian culture. The group has integrated Indian cuisine into its menus, ensuring that the dietary requirements and food preferences of Indian visitors are respectfully accommodated. Jain food and vegetarian food options have also been included, maintaining the authenticity of Indian cuisine. Speaking to Travel Trade Journal, Desislav Gospodinov, Group Director, Sales and Marketing, Lily Hotels, took pride in sharing some of the milestones of the group. “We were the first pioneers to introduce integrated meal plans. We initiative received accreditation from its visitors,” said Gospodinov.

Owing to its steadfast vision and commitment, Lily Hotels has attained great success in providing world-class services to its visitors. Nestled in the lap of nature, both resorts offer awe-inspiring views, serene aquatic life, and breathtaking beauty that guarantee an unforgettable experience for guests. The group takes pride in being among the first movers to



▲ Desislav Gospodinov

introduce integrated meal plans, which have earned the approval of its visitors.

To ensure that visitors make the most of their trip, the resorts offer a wide range of activities, including snorkeling with whales in crystal-clear beach waters. The group’s honeymoon packages, designed especially for newlyweds, provide a romantic getaway. The group continuously upgrades its services, striving to enhance visitors’ experience.

The group recently introduced “Signature Collections,” an exciting new product that features nine exclusive villas ranging from one to four bedrooms. These villas promise exclusivity and premium services, which only further cement the group’s commitment to providing unparalleled experiences and services to its guests.

Shedding light on the growing performance of the hotel group, Gospodinov shared some of the projections for the year ahead, “Market studies promised a pre-pandemic level growth, with markets like Asia showing a spike in the number of visitors that come from this continent.” With the inauguration of the new airport, Maldives is optimistic of sustained growth, and committed to providing excellent services to its visitors. With the inauguration of the new airport, Maldives is optimistic about sustained growth, and Lily Hotels is committed to providing excellent services to its visitors. The group’s strategy includes promotions through events, strong digital marketing, and on-ground service providers.

A strong base for the India market in Maldives, offering an experience that resonates with Indian culture while maintaining the authenticity of Maldives, has placed Lily Hotels for an impressive 2023. The group’s focus on providing world-class services and continuously upgrading its offerings has contributed to its success, and it is optimistic about the future of the Maldives’ travel market.

Spanish hotel chain

Palladium Hotel Group

to target FITs and Groups movement from India



The luxury hotel chain is further adding another 174 rooms to its all-adult property, the Hard Rock Hotel Marbella, in March 2023. The group further aims to reach smaller markets such as Pune, Ahmedabad and Kolkata, among others.

Imran Khan

Palladium Hotel Group, the Spanish hotel chain, continues to attract Indian travellers with its unique hotels and luxury beach resorts. The hotel company which is actively promoting its various high-end brands in the India market since 2014-15, forecasts that 2023 will be better than the previous year for Indian travellers visiting Spain as there are no visa issues or any COVID-19 related restrictions as imposed earlier.

Headquartered in Ibiza, the hotel chain has exceeded its pre-pandemic turnover by 26 per cent. "Palladium Hotel Group (PHG) has been active in the India market for quite a while now. As compared to the pre-pandemic level, it has actually increased, with the year 2022 definitively being over 2019," revealed Sandra Polo Canudas, Asia and Middle East Commercial Director, Palladium Hotel Group.

According to Canudas, Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel is the top preference for Indian travellers, followed by Hard Rock Hotel in Ibiza, the Grand Palladium Palace Ibiza and Grand Palladium White Island, and Hard Rock Hotel in Tenerife. The hotel chain is further adding another 174 rooms to their property, Hard Rock Hotel Marbella. The all-adults hotel property located in Puerto Banus will be put open to guests in March 2023. Also, the hotel chain has recently announced the launch of TRS Ibiza Hotel, the adults-only

luxury hotel in San Antonio. The beach-front property is known for its premium services, exquisite gastronomy, a butler service and an All-Inclusive experience.

Palladium Hotel Group has announced to add more properties in the years to come. For instance, in 2024, PHG will launch a refurbished urban hotel in Seville, besides opening the first urban hotel Only You in Venice, Italy in 2025. Grand Palladium Palace Ibiza, an over 400-room hotel, is under refurbishment to further soothe the guests' experience and will be put open to guests' in June 2023. After the extensive refurbishment carried out in 2022 at Grand Palladium Jamaica Resort and Spa, renovations will also be undertaken in 2023 at Grand Palladium Kantenah Resort and Spa in Riviera Maya, as well as additional renovation projects in Mexico and Punta Cana during 2024.

The hotel group has an extensive marketing plan in place for 2023 to create a lasting relationship with Indian travellers viz-a-viz with Indian travel agents as well. The group is represented by Global Destinations, a tourism representation company based in Mumbai.

"The first country that we started working in the Asian market was India, followed by the Middle East. With all strategies in place for India, we are targeting, obviously, the FIT, as this is the main segment for us. We are certain to target the MICE market and also the Wedding segment, mostly for Mexico. MICE, we are focused in premium groups



▲ Sandra Polo Canudas

of 50 - 70 going to the destinations such as Ibiza, Tenerife and Marbella," adds Sandra Polo Canudas.

"India is an ever-evolving market. We started some years ago, with a focus to widen our reach in major cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. Now we are trying to obviously expand our visibility and reach in potential tier-II cities and would like to meet travel agents in these cities that sell Spain and other destinations where we are, such as Mexico, for example, which is picking up lately. We would like to explore Kolkata, Pune, Ahmedabad and other cities for the Palladium Group Hotel," Canudas added.

Palladium Hotel Group currently operates nine different hotel brands and has 40 hotels located in Spain, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Italy, and Brazil.

Pride Hotels

to double its portfolio to 100 hotels by 2030

Pride Amber Vilas Resort and Convention Centre, Jaipur

S.P. Jain, Founder and CMD of Pride Hotels, is a Chartered Accountant with over thirty years of expertise in hotels, construction, and finance. He made his initial foray into the hospitality industry when his first hotel was commissioned in 1988 in Pune, under Pride Hotels. Over the years, SP Jain has contributed to the industry with his knowledge and expertise. In this exclusive interaction with TTJ, he talks about the group's performance, success, challenges and ambitious expansion plans.

Prashant Nayak

How has 2022 been for you, and what are your learnings from this dynamically evolved post-COVID period?

The year 2022 has been very interesting for all our hotels as we have very high occupancy in the third and fourth quarters. Our RevPAR has also increased much higher than in 2019. Similarly, we have done extremely well in wedding and social functions at our hotels at Aerocity – New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Kolkata, Jaipur and Indore in the post-COVID period. We had to make changes to the way we do things, such as implementing contactless check-in and check-out and putting in place protocols to ensure the safety of our guests. We have also had to focus on our online presence and digital marketing strategies, which have allowed us to remain competitive despite the circumstances.

Overall, we have learned the importance of innovation and adapting to the changing environment. We have also learned the importance of focusing on customer service, as this has been a major factor in helping us retain loyal customers and encourage new ones. We have also learned the importance of creating an enjoyable and safe environment for our guests. Finally, we



▲ S.P. Jain

have learned the importance of digital marketing and using technology to stay ahead of the competition in this ever-evolving landscape.

We saw a lot of hotels spring up in India even during the pandemic. According to you, what is the scope of budget and 3–4-star hotels in the country?

The scope of budget and 3–4-star hotels in India is very encouraging,

particularly in tier II and tier III cities. This is due to the fact that, with the increasing constraints on travel during the pandemic, people were opting for domestic holidays and exploring their own country. We launched our “India Dekho with Pride” campaign in 2019. We forecasted the domestic travel market even then. Local and domestic tourism has led to an increased demand for budget and mid-range hotels across India. Moreover, the government initiatives such as ‘Make in India’, ‘Digital India’ and ‘India Dekho’ are also encouraging more investment in the hospitality sector. As a result, the number of hotels in this segment is increasing rapidly. With the market gaining rapid momentum, we are also in expansion mode.

Which new hotels have come into the Pride Hotels Group fold in the past three years?

We are thankful to the domestic market that they trusted us even during the pandemic times. Our group has witnessed great penetration within the country further with hotels launched in locations like Anand, Jabalpur, Bharatpur, Udaipur, Mussoorie, Vadodara (Manjusar, Alkapuri), Somnath, Bhopal, Sasan Gir and Rudraprayag. Hotels to be launched in 2023 include Surendranagar, Bharuch, Daman, Haldwani, Nainital and Jim

Corbett. Our Brownfield project locations are in Agra, Aurangabad, Ranakpur, Rishikesh, Rajasthan, Bhavnagar, Dwaraka, Halol, Rajkot, Neemrana, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Mysore, Gurugram, Bangalore, Yawatmal, Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur, Ramnagar, Greater Noida and Digha. Today, Pride Hotels has a presence in around 51 great locations with 5,075 rooms, 102 restaurants, 134 banquets, lawns, and conference halls.

Regarding our brands, currently, Pride Hotels operates and manages a chain of hotels under the brand name "Pride Plaza Hotels," which is an Indian Luxury Collection. The hotels under the "Pride Hotels" brand are conveniently centrally city-located business hotels and "Pride Resorts" are found at mesmerising destinations. The mid-market segment hotels for every business are the "Pride Biznotels" and then we have a fresh concept of luxury serviced apartment stays called "Pride Suites."

What strategies is your hotel group employing now to capture the domestic business?

The Pride Hotels Group seeks to increase its domestic presence by developing new properties in strategic areas. Using digital marketing technologies to connect with clients and advertise their services. This involves making use of email campaigns, social media, and other internet advertising. To give our visitors a remarkable experience, we will also make investments in customer service. Our communication for the campaign is "India Dekho with Pride." Pride hotels resonate with true Indian Hospitality. Being a truly Indian brand, people have taken pride in associating with us.



Pride Ashiyana Resort, Mussoorie

Which segments in travel were you able to capitalise on in 2022? How are your hotels faring in the MICE business?

Pride Hotels Groups Group is actively engaged in a number of different travel segments, including Leisure, MICE, and Weddings. Our Pride Plaza Hotel brands in Aerocity- New Delhi, Ahmedabad and Kolkata have done extremely well in the wedding business and our Pride Hotels at Nagpur, Pune, Jaipur, Indore and others cater to specialised weddings and other social functions. We provide a specially planned wedding package to our guests as per their requirements.

In terms of MICE business, our hotels are doing quite well. We have seen a surge in demand for our meeting and conference facilities, which has allowed us to capitalise on this segment. We have also seen a notable increase in corporate bookings, which is a testament to our

ability to provide a world-class experience for our business guests. Additionally, we are seeing increased demand for our wedding packages, as couples look for ways to make their special day even more memorable. In fact, this is one segment which has been active throughout the years.

Tell us about your preparedness for 2023 and your expectations for the new year.

To capitalise on trends, the hotel sector is always changing and adapting to new circumstances. While domestic travel has been strong, ADR growth is still significant. The hospitality sector will need to satisfy the demand regarding facilities expected by the guests and surpass the expectations to maintain the demand growth. We have understood this aspect and thus have started upgrading the facilities for the guest at our hotels in Aerocity – New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Jaipur. We will provide them luxury facilities and at our other hotels like in Pune, Nagpur, Ahmedabad and Bengaluru, we are upgrading to provide facilities to match the upper upscale brand. Please throw light on the Pride Hotels Group's expansion plans.

We intend to increase our footprint to 100 properties with more than 10,000 keys distributed across diverse geographic areas, primarily in tier I and tier II markets by 2030. With a significant portion of the portfolio being directly managed by the company, an asset-light expansion approach is the main focus. The majority of the new properties will be situated in popular tourist hotspots for leisure. Currently, we would be concentrating on the domestic market. Even though we will have above 51+ properties by the end of the year, we want to double that number to 100 hotels by 2030, to increase our footprint across the country.



Pride Divine Resort, Somnath

Ark Travel Group

Capitalising on the Island Destination Market

Ark Travel Group is targeting the booming market for island destinations with the launch of its new vertical - Ark Islands. The company plans to focus on Mauritius, Maldives, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka, leveraging its existing network of satellite offices and travel agents to expand its presence in these markets. The team aims to offer a unique and valuable experience to their partners and customers through ethical and value-added services, with a focus on eliminating the need for lengthy visa application processes. With their extensive experience in island contracting, the company is well-positioned for future growth and success in the B2B travel industry.



Vartik Sethi

Ark Travel Group has recently established a new vertical – Ark Islands – to cater to the growing demand for island destinations in the region. In an exclusive interview with Travel Trade Journal, Kishan Biyani, Managing Director, Ark Travel Group, and Saroj K Jena, Director, Ark Islands, shared their insights on the new venture and the company's strategy to capitalise on the island destination market. "We have been getting into different segments, and one segment which was empty was the Islands segment. It was always in our head, and we were just wanting the right person to come and take things forward. Coincidentally, we found Saroj, and our synergies met, and we are taking this forward as Ark Islands, bringing in Mauritius, Maldives, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka into this vertical," said Biyani.

While the company plans to expand to other island destinations like Zanzibar and Fiji in the future, its focus, for now, is on these four destinations - Mauritius, Maldives, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka. To capitalise on these markets, the company plans to leverage its existing network of satellite offices and travel agents. "We already have Pan India 14 satellite offices, and there are a lot of agents who have been very loyal to us and looking



▲ Saroj Jena

forward to taking the new segments, the new properties, and a couple of new hotels coming up. We are trying to partner and pre-purchase a couple of these properties so that it becomes a little more competitive with more value adds rather than just discounting. That's the forte we are looking at so that the end consumer is really satisfied with what he wants. If the consumer is satisfied, the travel agent is satisfied, which brings in more business," explained Biyani.

When asked about their USP or



▲ Kishan Biyani

differentiation from competitors, Biyani emphasised their focus on value adds. "We always talk about the value adds, and that will be the USP of our company," he said. Looking ahead to 2023, Biyani is optimistic about the company's prospects. "2023 looks as of today quite promising, all curves of COVID and everything has been taken off. The people want to travel, numbers are growing year by year, and yes, just waiting for more flights to come up for all the destinations so that they come down to realistic pricing, which

is right now exorbitant,” he added.

Jena, who has been in the travel industry for a long time and is known as the “Island King,” shared his vision for Ark Islands. “We wanted to do all islands! All the islands where visa is free, where visa is on arrival, and somebody who can decide maybe two days prior or one day prior to travel,” he explained. This allows customers to make last-minute decisions about their travel plans without the hassle of visa applications and the uncertainty of visa approvals. As Jena points out, this eliminates the need for lengthy and complicated visa application processes, which can often lead to cancellations or rescheduling.

Jena believes that the island destination market has a lot of growth potential. “Islands, there are only a couple of people who are focused on selling islands.” The

focus on islands is also a natural choice for the company, given Jena’s extensive experience in island contracting. This has allowed the company to develop relationships with island resorts and hotels, which in turn benefit their B2B partners and customers. However, the company is not looking to simply offer discounts on these hotels and resorts, as is common in the industry. Instead, the team is focused on adding value to the customer experience, as well as ensuring that their partners are happy and successful.

The team also plans to work closely with their B2B partners to understand their needs and offer customised solutions that help them succeed in their respective markets. “We just want to focus on business where we make money and both our travel agent partners and hotel partners are happy,” Jena added.

The company’s approach has already generated excitement among industry insiders, with many noting the potential for the Ark Islands to disrupt the traditional B2B travel model. Biyani notes, “Our goal is to not just be another travel company, but to be a company that provides a unique and valuable experience to our partners and customers.”

While the island vertical is still in its early stages, the team is confident in its ability to succeed in the competitive world of B2B travel with the “Island King” on their side. Their focus on ethical and value-added services, along with their extensive experience in island contracting, positions them well for future growth and success. Jena concluded, “We want to create a legacy in the travel industry and make a positive impact on the lives of our customers, partners, and employees.”

The Residence Maldives: An ideal place to experience two resort islands in one stay

The Residence Maldives has the unique advantage of having two properties – Falhumaafushi and Dhigurah – nestled on twin islands in Gaafu Alifu atoll, one of the largest in the world. This gives guests the privilege of island hopping, cycling, or strolling on a kilometre-long bridge connecting the properties, and experiencing two different vibes in one vacation. Meenakshi Sundaram, GM, The Residence Maldives is delighted to share more about the resort that stands out among the competition.

Prashant Nayak

The Residence Maldives witnessed a steady rise in bookings as tourist arrivals remained on the higher side in 2022, bolstering a buoyant travel sentiment from across the world. They have been actively positioning the property as an all-inclusive vacation hub for multi-generational families, couples with young kids, as well as honeymooners.

There is a steady influx of guests from India, and they have been deploying strategies to suit the varied mix. “Food is a big part of Indian travellers. A specially curated Indian buffet in The Dining Room at Dhigurah made by chefs from India has enhanced guests’ experience. The resort’s main restaurant serves world, Asian, and Indian Ocean cuisines

along with a children’s menu,” says Sundaram.

For couples travelling with kids, they have specially designed Kids Club activities and a team of trained professionals to engage the children. The Turtle Kids Club offers a wide array of activities, such as treasure hunting, arts and crafts sessions, Dhivehi language practice, and cooking classes, indoor and beach games, along with babysitting services on request. So, while the kids are engaged, parents can enjoy their time at the Spa by Clarins, go for a romantic date or enjoy innovative cocktails at the bars and poolside lounge.

Maldives is synonymous with romance, and the location makes

it perfect for couples looking for privacy and luxury. They have also lined up many romantic experiences for couples to make their vacation memorable. Also, they recently launched Renewal Retreats, which is designed to rejuvenate, reset, and restore the body and mind. They also aim to immerse guests in meditative practices, and therapies at the Spa by Clarins, and offer yoga classes.

“We have also been in tune with the rise of ecotourism as more travellers are getting conscious of the environment. We have on-site kitchen gardens to grow pesticide-free produce and offer guests an insight into sustainable living through our Earth Basket sessions,” concludes Sundaram.



▲ Meenakshi Sundaram

CELESTIAL DISCOVERIES IN NEW ZEALAND

Stargazing in New Zealand is an incredibly wonderful experience thanks to the country's pitch-black skies, distinctive celestial formations, and exotic landscapes. Be it shooting stars and constellations in the clear sky or starry night; New Zealand has some of the best public observatories in the world. Wish to fall deeper in love with the dark skies? Find out where to get a billion-star view of some of the clearest skies from earth.

Team TTJ

The Districts of South Wairarapa and Carterton of New Zealand's North Island named Wairarapa Dark Sky Reserve has become the newest International Dark Sky Reserve certified by the IDA. Wairarapa Dark Sky Reserve now joins more than 200 Places in the International Dark Sky Places Program worldwide that have demonstrated robust community support for dark sky. To celebrate the latest additions to New Zealand's Dark Sky Reserves, Tourism New Zealand has curated a special list of Dark Sky Reserves and sanctuaries for a magical stargazing night.

WAIRARAPA DARK SKY RESERVE

An hour's drive north of Wellington, Wairarapa is known for its stunning coastlines, spectacular landscapes and award-winning wine. It is now in company of the finest Dark Sky reserves/

sanctuaries in New Zealand. The new reserve is surrounded by enduring protection from significant light encroachment, with the Pacific Ocean to the east and south, and the Remutaka and Tararua forest ranges to the west.

AORAKI/MOUNT COOK

The South Island of New Zealand received recognition as one of the world's largest International Dark Sky Reserve, covering 4,300 square kilometres. This is the home to the darkest skies in the world. The Dark Sky Reserve, which spans a large portion of the Aoraki/Mount Cook Mackenzie region, has been hailed as one of the finest locations for stargazing. For stargazing at Mount Cook, visit Big Sky Stargazing at the base of the mountain or take one of the Dark Sky Project trips at Tekapo's Mount John Observatory (previously Earth & Sky). Here, you may experience a spectacular night of stargazing with the help of expert telescopes and skilled, passionate guides.

GREAT BARRIER ISLAND

In June 2017, New Zealand's very own Great Barrier Island was

named the first Island Sanctuary of the world. A picturesque flight to Aotēā/Great Barrier Island takes about 30 minutes from Auckland. The pristine, uninhabited island's dunes make for a particularly beautiful setting for stargazing in New Zealand. Enjoy Good Heavens Dark Sky Experiences with stargazing packages for individuals or groups including "Dining with the Stars". Here, the local guides from Good Heavens amuse you with fascinating facts and the amazing tales from their ancestors, to help you understand this enchanted night time realm.

STEWART ISLAND/RAKIURA

Regarded as the second Island Sanctuary in the world, Stewart Island/Rakiura is one of the darkest places to observe the night sky and the world's southernmost Dark Sky Sanctuary. The Māori name for Stewart Island, "Rakiura," which is typically translated as "glowing skies," describes the place's unique connection to the night sky. When British explorer James Cook first saw the island in 1770 while sailing the HMS Endeavor, the island was already inhabited by Māori.

© Miles Holden



Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, Canterbury

Pete Monk Photography



Cape Palliser Lighthouse, Wairarapa



Star Gazing from Pukaki hot pool (Tekapo Springs)

TEKAPO SPRINGS STAR GAZING, TAKAPŌ (TEKAPO)

The only guided hot pool and stargazing experience in New Zealand, Tekapo Stargazing is the pinnacle of celestial relaxation. Get a chance to exclusively use the 38-degree hot tub. Simply recline on a floating hammock and unwind while gazing at the skies. Your tour guide will be by the pool to tell you about local myths and legends from New Zealand as well as the science behind the constellations, planets, and galaxies. Bliss!

ADRIFT TONGARIRO, TONGARIRO ALPINE CROSSING

Have you ever imagined that could go for stargazing early in the morning? Stargazing is not just for the late-night hours. Experience a guided Sunrise Tongariro Alpine Crossing hike with Adrift Tongariro. The tour starts between 1am and 3am (weather and sunrise dependent), and your expert guide leads you to a special part of the breath-taking

Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Enjoy the starry nights without the crowds while hiking beneath the Milky Way and the Southern Cross. You might even see a handful of

shooting stars if you're lucky.

So, while in New Zealand, have a once-in-a-lifetime experience by visiting these splendid star gazing locations.



© Mark Russel

Great Barrier Dark Sky

Must have experiences at THE KUMAON

for a refreshing 2023!



Pay heed to the calling of the mountains and begin 2023 with an unforgettable retreat in the heart of the Himalayas. The Kumaon sitting atop a ridge, surrounded by the sanctity of the Nanda Devi Range, boasts of diverse experiences where one can disconnect with the tangible workings of the world and reconnect with one's truest self.

An ideal destination getaway for a diverse range of travellers from nature lovers, adventure seekers to culinary aficionados and wellness enthusiasts - this stunning property recently got featured in the highly coveted Michelin Guide. Now accessible by a swift and scenic helicopter ride from Dehradun or Haldwani to Almora and then a short 30 mins road journey to the property, truly inside the walls of The Kumaon lies a safe space for introspection and quietude.

Here are top handpicked experiences one can indulge in at The Kumaon for a refreshing and rejuvenating staycation in the hills –

RENDEZVOUS WITH THE STARS

The secluded setting of The Kumaon provides a perfect ambience for one to fully immerse in the beauty of the mysterious night sky. Stargazing at The Kumaon is a newly introduced, 2-hour session under the guidance of experts that can be booked on request at the property. Truly a magical experience with clear, dark skies away from the city lights offering breathtaking views of the cosmos that one can witness closely with the help of a telescope.

An interactive session with astronomy experts will help one delve deeper into understanding the night sky, Indian folklore and mythology surrounding the various constellations. Let broad horizons and the universe leave you transfixed while you observe and navigate

various celestial bodies, nebulae and galaxies across the sky from the Moon, Saturn and Jupiter, to the Milky Way Galaxy.

AN ODE TO CULTURE AND HERITAGE OF THE KUMAONI REGION

The region surrounding The Kumaon is rich in culture and heritage that one can explore further to delve into its traditions. From The Nanda Devi temple that sits on the top of Crank's

ridge, to the Chitai Golu Devta bell temple, one can visit these sacred sites frequented by the local worshippers. Then there is the nearby town of Almora with an old-world charm and secrets from history.

Notice the houses with unique hand-carved, colourful windows and balconies while you walk around the town! Over hundreds of years, some of the world's greatest personalities like - Swami Vivekananda, DH Lawrence, Timothy Leary



and Bob Dylan, to name a few have visited the region and taken inspiration from its eclectic charisma.

A unique experience is a curated evening walk in the nearby Gadholi village surrounding the property that ends with a high-tea setup and gorgeous undulating views of the mountains. Catch the sunset with Juno and Elsa, the most charming pair of resident dogs at The Kumaon. Amidst the quaint village, one can discover local homes painted in vibrant hues and engravements of Aipan - the Kumaoni folk art.

A WALK WITH NATURE

The experiential journey at The Kumaon is anchored around the rich biodiversity and uncharted landscapes with a retreat as a base camp. Deeply rooted in the distinctly diverse flora and fauna, the landscape changes colours with seasons and during different times of the day, think a multi-hued sunset in summer and easy glimpses of Blue Magpie, Himalayan Cedar (Deodar) and Rhododendron. These are just a few of the many species that adorn this Himalayan hillside!

A varied selection of tailor-made nature walks and trails allow one to connect with the cultural history and natural heritage of this unscathed and untouched beauty of the Kumaoni region. From surreal village walks through the lush forests to short hikes to temples, a nearby waterfall or the Binsar wildlife sanctuary. Each excursion unfolds a new dimension of the place for the seeker.

INDULGE IN LOCAL CULINARY JOURNEY

Locally sourced, farm-fresh produce makes for a splendid culinary experience at The Kumaon. While one can go foraging for various ingredients in the forests with the team, insights into sustainable local cuisine can be found in complex fibre and biodynamic superfoods that are native to the region. One can try a variety of seasonal produce like black soybean daal, bhaang chutney made with ground cannabis seeds, and millet flatbreads.

A combination of indoor or al fresco dining can be enjoyed at the gourmet restaurant that sits in a cantilevered structure of floor-to-ceiling glass with an adjoining main terrace area. Elevated above the valley floor, the area offers panoramic views of the Himalayas with scrumptious yet healthy dining that includes a mix of Kumaoni delicacies served in a traditional Kansa thali and world cuisine for a delightful indulgence.

TAKE A MOMENT TO WITNESS THE KUMAON'S UNIQUE ARCHITECTURE

A formidable juxtaposition of minimalism and modernism, The Kumaon is uniquely crafted as a secluded private sanctuary. Award-winning Zowa Architects from Sri Lanka - Pradeep Kodikara and Jineshi Samaraweera, have taken their love for nature, natural materials and minimalism to weave these together into



contemporary design aspects that reflect at The Kumaon.

Having recently won the Arcasia Award for its architecture, the property is spread across 2 acres of verdant greens with 10 magnificent chalets nestled in pairs and named after different villages of the Kumaoni region. Across all chalets are unique perceptive design touches and amenities like floor-to-ceiling windows with splendid outward views of the valley and the mountains, large terraces and ample lounging

spaces!

How to get here:

The Kumaon is located in the quaint Gadholi Village in Kasar Devi. Nearest train station: 4-hour drive from Kathgodam Railway Station (90 km) | Nearest airports: 5-hour drive from Pantnagar Airport (125 km), or 6-hour drive from Bareilly Airport (195 km) | Nearest Helicopter Pad: Haldwani to Almora – 1hr 15mins (every Friday) or Dehradun to Almora – 2hrs 35mins (every Friday).



IGLTA

Ensuring an Equal and Inclusive World for All Travellers

Founded in 1983, the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) is one of the very few organisations in the world dedicated solely to promoting and supporting LGBTQ+ tourism businesses. In an exclusive interview with Travel Trade Journal, John Tanzella, President and CEO, International LGBTQ+ Travel Association shared with us the organisation's mission and vision, as well as the hurdles and the challenges faced by them. Tanzella also shed light on the IGLTA's expansion plans and their noble act of spreading awareness, to make this world LGBTQ+ friendly. Read on to know more.

Vartik Seth

Since its inception, about forty years ago, the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) has put its heart and soul into creating a world where equity and inclusivity are synonymous with LGBTQ+ travel. Founded as an underground organisation in the US, the organisation has grown by leaps and bounds in the past decades. The primary goal and mission of the organisation continues to circumvent the discrimination and stigma faced by the LGBTQ+ community in the travel sector. At its core, IGLTA as an organisation seeks to support buyers and suppliers, thereby facilitating business opportunities within the LGBTQ+ community. The organisation extensively conducts tours with travel professionals, along with hosting educational conferences for emerging talent, and funding scholarship programmes for the community.

Speaking with Travel Trade Journal, John Tanzella, President and CEO of the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association, heartily said that the goal of IGLTA is to make this world of ours more liveable. Shedding light on the harsh social discrimination and stigma faced by the LGBTQ+ community, Tanzella said, "It's important for any community to feel safe, and feel welcomed as visitors." The organisation extensively works with its travel partners and has built a network of LGBTQ+ supporters across 80 countries in the world.

Tracing the organisation's journey, Tanzella strategically talked about the expansion plans in the pipeline. Having a full-time staff in various countries across the globe not only helps strengthen the network but also maintains the all-inclusive mission of the organisation. With local staff in place, the various workshops and educational conferences are conducted with ease and local participation, thereby providing awareness to the maximum number of people. "Our aim is to have a local footprint in all the countries across the globe, so we better support our community, wherever they go", said Tanzella. For digital expansion, IGLTA hosts online marketplaces where buyers and suppliers meet virtually to facilitate business in the community. This idea was birthed during COVID and continues to benefit the community.

To combat the stigma and discrimination faced by the community and address it head-on, the organisation conducts monthly online conversations with its members. They also host open forums to discuss pressing issues prevailing within the community. The organisation consistently hosts educational workshops to address social issues prevailing against the LGBTQ+ community. The conferences include panel discussions, leadership tips and creating a space wherein the community's business thrives and prospers. IGLTA has garnered attention from prominent universities and major tourism fairs across the globe. The global membership enables the organisation to take pride in onboarding an

eminent board of directors and partners to work with. "We leverage our partnership from around the world to facilitate business within the LGBTQ+ community," said Tanzella.

Speaking of the prevalent social stigma and perception of the community, Tanzella expressed optimism in the awareness levels of individuals and the positive reactions received by the community, owing to the increased consumption of articles on related topics during the pandemic. The visibility garnered during the pandemic has paid off well, in terms of building a trustworthy network in the organisation. "We've been invited to various panel discussions during the pandemic. We've even authored three reports for the United Nations, and continue to support various other projects in universities", said Tanzella. The organisation realises its duty and responsibility towards the community and leaves no stone unturned to support them. In fact, in countries where LGBTQ+ folks aren't welcomed warmly, IGLTA takes the route of secretly and quietly supporting them by employing a network of trusted travel partners in these locations. The challenge of navigating these countries is indeed thrilling!

Sharing some of the strategies in the pipeline, Tanzella hopes to be visible at all the major conferences and travel fairs. The organisation has well-thought plans to expand in India and strives to achieve the same by expanding the membership in India and onboarding locals to fast-track the organisation's mission.

Indian hoteliers expect a rise in demand for corporate meetings in 2023

After the revival of the domestic leisure segment last year, Indian hoteliers are expecting strong demand from the domestic corporate meetings segment in 2023. India's hospitality stakeholders expect that with the country assuming the important G20 Presidency recently followed by multiple meetings lined up throughout the year, the market for corporate meetings is expected to grow further this year.

Team TTJ

Rahul Joshi, General Manager, Taj Hotel and Convention

Centre, Agra said, "As a MICE hotel with one of the biggest convention centres in Agra, we are expecting a strong demand for corporate meetings and events in 2023, driven by various global MICE events, including the G20 summit, and the robust growth of the Indian economy. In the last quarter, we have already seen a substantial increase in corporate travel, and we anticipate this trend to continue in the coming year."

"With the pandemic behind us, off-sites, business meetings, and conferences are back, and we are registering robust occupancies and room rates. Therefore, we are optimistic about the outlook for corporate travel and meetings in 2023, and we are well positioned to serve the needs of our clients with our state-of-the-art facilities and exceptional services," Joshi added.

Vishal Lonkar, General Manager, Business Development, Renest Hotels and Resorts said, "Despite technological advancements revolutionising business operations, corporate travel remains a crucial aspect of conducting business, as face-to-face interactions remain irreplaceable according to business travel trends. As a result, corporate or business travellers continue to significantly contribute to hotel demand. In 2023, the demand for hotels is expected to grow, mainly due to political events such as the G20 summit and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, further driving corporate travel demand."

The Indian economy has remained resilient amidst the global slowdown being noticed in markets like Europe and the US. Even though as per the January



▲ Rahul Joshi



▲ Vishal Lonkar



▲ Kush Kapoor

update of its World Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected growth in India is set to decline from 6.8 per cent in 2022 to 6.1 per cent in 2023, the Asian giant is in a better space considering the global growth is projected to fall from an estimated 3.4 per cent in 2022 to 2.9 per cent in 2023. Business hotels like Roseate House New Delhi at Aerocity are recording RevPAR higher than in 2019 and expect the positive run to continue in 2023 too.

Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels and Resorts said, "We are witnessing strong demand from business and MICE travellers. This can be attributed to various reasons including an uptick in business travel post-pandemic, line up of major global MICE events and G20 meetings. India is the bright spot with a lot of investment interest in the country. The government has been promoting India as a business destination and also investing in infrastructure to promote the country as a preferred investment hub."

"India's growing economy is expected to positively impact the corporate travel market. With more companies expanding their operations in the country, this is going to result in increasing the demand for corporate meetings and events in India. Additionally, the Indian government's promotion of tourism and the MICE sector

through various initiatives is expected to accelerate the demand for corporate meetings in 2023," added Lonkar.

India sharpened its focus on G20 much before the presidency was handed over by Indonesia. During a national conference of state tourism ministers in Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala that took place last year, Arvind Singh, Union Tourism Secretary had said India planned to position itself as a "major tourism destination" during its G20 presidency. Tourism-related aspects of the G20 leaders' summit were also discussed during the conference organised by the ministry in the hill town.

The Group of Twenty (G20) is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries - Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, the US. and the European Union.

The G20 members represent around 85 per cent of the global GDP, over 75 per cent of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population. G-20's invited international organisations are the UN, IMF, World Bank, WHO, WTO, ILO, FSB, OECD, AU Chair, NEPAD Chair, ASEAN Chair, ADB, ISA and CDRI.

The Lalit Great Eastern strides ahead with grandeur

One of the most distinguished faces of the Indian hospitality, The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata signifies an epitome of heritage and luxury tracing back its roots to the British era. Kamal Raza, General Manager, The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata, throws light on the challenges encountered during the pandemic and the latest, significant expansion plans of the property.

Swaati Chaudhury

Spurred on by a strong belief in diversity, equity and inclusion, The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata had once defined the concept of luxury hospitality not only in India but across Asia during Colonial times. Since then it has been a long journey for the five-star heritage property and in recent times, after battling lockdown challenges, it is doing everything it can to widen its appeal among premium travellers.

According to Kamal Raza, "We are one of the few luxury heritage hospitality set-ups in the country and we are carrying on with our unique tradition of hospitality. We have bounced back to sound business numbers and barring the first quarter of last year, the remaining three quarters were satisfactory for our hospitality set-up. As a hospitality player, we largely depend on travel. The pandemic had taken a toll on the tourism sector and travel had come to a standstill. People were not willing to travel. This opened up opportunities in the hospitality sector for those who sustained the impact and provided great options for newcomers."

The pandemic was a great learning phase for the travel and hospitality industry. Raza said, "COVID-19 outbreak taught us ways to deal with a complete shutdown when the global tourism industry had virtually stopped. It also made us learn ways to recover from a complete shutdown when the tourism industry began opening up. We had to deal with both kinds of situation during the worst calamity of the century from a moving business to a life on hold. At the same time, we had to cope with human and emotional challenges as an organisation."



▲ Kamal Raza

The luxury heritage property has unveiled novel strategies to sustain itself in the long run and to capture the domestic inbound and outbound tourist market as well. Raza further said, "In current times, Kolkata is thriving with domestic travellers. We have witnessed a substantial rise in domestic travel in both MICE and corporate segments. Inbound leisure travel is gaining momentum. We are boosting destination weddings among domestic and NRI travellers. Luxury travellers love to come down to our hotel owing to its great heritage value and experience unlimited hospitality. In a bid to capture a larger pie of the MICE market, we are closely working with well-known event management groups, destination management companies (DMC) and wedding planners. We have employees from diverse backgrounds including differently-abled and those from the LGBT community. The Lalit group of hotels is widely reputed for

serving Indian and global cuisine and we have a national award-recipient, in-house chef in our food and beverage segment."

The luxury set-up has drawn up massive expansion plans up its sleeve. Raza added, "We are looking forward to opening the doors of two novel food outlets including Baluchi and a 24x7 multi-cuisine food outlet sometime in October, this year. Plans are on to unveil the Maxim night club in the upcoming period. Also on the cards are four banquet halls with a few additional rooms. Very soon, the menu in our heritage bakery will be revamped with exciting dining options. Wilson's Club will be revived with a sound dose of entertainment for music lovers this month. Our hotel is rolling out a Kids' zone in the ongoing month and this facility will be for leisure travellers visiting our hotel with kids." The Lalit Terrace sprawling over 15,000 sq. ft area has been opened for MICE and wedding events.

The West Bengal government has a stake in the hospitality property. Raza further said, "We enjoy the status of the preferred hotel among government entities. We expect larger events to occur in Kolkata that would support MICE business and we would be one of the direct beneficiaries of such events. As a major hospitality player, we have a bigger vision to expand in tier-II and tier-III cities of India since we do not believe in launching hotels but also developing tourist destinations."

In the context of the current luxury hospitality scene in the city, Raza signed off, "More number of luxury hospitality groups will be foraying into the city that will create a healthy competition among players and prompt tourists to visit the city."

Visit Gandhi Sagar

*The pinnacle of offbeat destinations in
'Heart of Incredible India'*

Nature and Adventure lovers can now summon themselves in the Mandsaur District to embrace Asia's first floating festival and explore the unique Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.



Madhya Pradesh, the 'Heart of Incredible India', is a state of immense untapped tourism potential. The Gandhisagar Dam is one of the four major dams which are built around the famous Chambal River, which houses one of the most undiscovered Wild Life Sanctuaries of Central India, the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.



In addition to that, the Gandhisagar dam also hosts the

through the sanctuary, dividing it into two parts; The western part, which is in the Neemuch district and the eastern part is in the Mandsaur district.

The Sanctuary is open to visitors throughout the year except during the monsoons and offers a varied terrain of wooded hills – the forest being dry, mixed and deciduous- and flat grasslands around Gandhisagar dam submergence, it offers abundant opportunities for sighting a variety of wildlife. The ranges of tree species found in the Sanctuary are Salai, Kardhai, Dhawda, Tendu, Khair, Palash, etc.

symbol Paramara period, and it was established in the 18th century AD.

- Taxakeshwar Temple or Takhaji is a place of significant religious and historical importance in Mandsaur
- Bhanpura Museum is located in Bhanpura, about 30.0 km from Gandhi Sagar dam and around 120 km from Mandsaur in north-east direction. The museum depicts the popular art forms of Mandsaur
- Dharmrajeshwar is an ancient Buddhist and Hindu cave temple site of Mandsaur which was established in the 4th-5th Century. Dharmrajeshwar Temple signifies brilliant example of Indian rock-cut architecture.

newly emerged, and Asia's first floating festival, the Gandhi Sagar floating festival.

Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival

For adventure lovers, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has introduced Asia's first-ever floating festival in Mandsaur. A unique and first-of-its-kind floating festival that will have land, air and water-based adventure activities.

The Floating Festival is a great opportunity for nature lovers and adventurers, allowing them to get away from all the noise of cities. The festival includes a floating stage, floating market, boat spa, boat safari and live music. Apart from these, many exciting adventure activities will be organised alongside the Gandhi Sagar reservoir.



- The festival was organised for 5 days from 1st till 5th February 2023
- The tent city for tourists will continue till 30th April 2023
- Adventure activities will continue till 30th July 2023

Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

Gandhi Sagar has a wildlife sanctuary situated on the northern boundary of Mandsaur and Neemuch in Madhya Pradesh. The wildlife sanctuary is spread over an area of more than 300 square kilometres adjoining Rajasthan. The Chambal River passes

The predominant species of animals which inhabit the sanctuary are the deer, of which the most easily sighted are the chinkara or Indian Gazelle, Nilgai and Sambar. In addition, the Indian leopard, Langur, Indian wild dog, Peacock, Otter, and Mugger crocodile are omnipresent in the forests of central India.

Places of Interest



Gandhi Sagar has many places of historical, archaeological and religious importance, including Chaurasigarh, Chaturbhujnath Temple, Bhadrakaji rock paintings, Narsinghjar, Hinglajgarh Fort, Taxakeshwar Temple, etc.

- Chaturbhujnath temple, which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, is situated around 8 km from Gandhisagar dam site.
- Hinglajgarh or Hinglaj Fort is an ancient fort situated near Navali village of Bhanpura tehsil in the Mandsaur district in Madhya Pradesh. It is a

Connectivity

Roadways- Regular buses run to Mandsaur from all the major cities, including Neemuch, Ratlam, Ujjain, Indore and Bhopal.

Railways- One can reach Mandsaur very easily as the town has a railway station (Ajmer- Ratlam line and Bhawani Mandi) States like Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Gujrat are also very well connected by train.

Airways- The nearest airports to Mandsaur are in Indore and Udaipur.

For more details, visit: gandhisagarfest.com

TravClan to shape up travel supply chain through technology

The B2B travel technology provider is all set to make the work of travel partners more efficient and easier by introducing an array of marketing tools and providing customised websites. Travel partners can get all their deals done with confidence at the click of the mouse or on a mobile app. Chirag Agrawal, Co-Founder, TravClan provides vivid info about the company.

Swaati Chaudhury

For those travel partners on the lookout to procure instant flight tickets, hotel bookings, customised tour packages, free-of-cost websites, Customer Relationship Management and marketing tools, look no further beyond. New Delhi-based TravClan is making a sincere effort to provide complete business solutions to travel partners and suppliers across the country. The entire process is hassle-free and there is a round-the-clock support team to look into the queries of travel partners.

The B2B travel technology group began its journey in October 2018 and the novel initiative has been the brainchild of three professionals-Chirag Agrawal, Ashish Thapliyal and Arun Bagaria. Chirag Agrawal explained, "We began with developing technology-based solutions for travel agents and received an overwhelming response from the travel trade fraternity across the country. We are offering a one-stop platform for travel agents; starting with a website, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools and marketing tools for which they do not have to shell out any price. At the moment, we have over 15,000 travel partners in the country availing of our facility. A travel agent must pass on the relevant travel-related info to his customers. We place all the significant info on our website. We ensure that travel partners can grow their businesses with their online presence. The marketing tools used by our travel partners generate demand in social media and we make profits by booking hotels, flights and holidays for our travel agents."

The B2B travel technology platform boasts of manpower strength of over 250 and has spread its wings in major cities of India, including Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad,



▲ Chirag Agrawal

Kolkata, Pune and Ahmedabad. Chirag Agrawal said, "We have our overseas offices in Dubai and Singapore. It is our in-house, easy-to-use technology that sets us apart from other destination management companies. We aspire to provide sound service for our travel partners and they in turn can refer more number of travel agents to approach us."

The pandemic had a great impact on the travel technology player. Chirag Agrawal further said, "The pandemic had taken the tourism industry by storm and our sales had plummeted to zero. We began providing free websites for our travel agents ever since the pandemic hit. We also built a plethora of new tools for agents to ease their business, including our instant quotation system. TravClan has set up destination management

companies in more than 10 offshore destinations and seven states in India. Travel partners can enjoy instant quotations and excellent on-site services for each of them."

There are hosts of domestic tourist destinations that are popular among travellers but the destinations that are in demand include Kashmir, Ladakh, Goa, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Andamans and North-East India. There are special honeymoon tours and travel partners can avail of the best deals for cruises. The cruise options are Royal Caribbean, Resorts World Cruises, Cordelia, Costa and Norwegian Cruise Line. Chirag Agrawal added, "Dubai and Maldives constitute our two significant markets. We are growing at a fast pace in Singapore, Thailand, Bali

and Mauritius. Apart from this, we are also popularising Saudi Arabia as a leisure travel destination. Europe and Sri Lanka are new additions to our portfolio."

The travel tech group is also into hosting familiarisation trips for travel partners. Chirag Agrawal further added, "This year, we have familiarisation tours to Maldives, Dubai, Singapore and Bali for over 100 travel agents all across India and the tours will be held from April to September. We make our presence at Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) and SATTE every year."

The group is quite confident to notch up rapid growth in the upcoming period. "We intend to grow five times more in the next 12 months," signed off Agrawal.



Confluence of Relaxation & Sensorial Wellness

Vedic Village Spa Resort is a hidden gem, nestled in the lap of nature just 20 minutes away from the international airport in Kolkata, India. A boutique getaway sprawling over 150 acres of fertile farmland greenery, sparkling lakes, coconut groves and a wealth of flora; it is a haven for migratory birds, butterflies, squirrels and exotic species of plants. At Vedic Wellness our endeavour has always been in reimagining core elements of wellness lifestyle and exploring brave new directions. It comes with the immense wealth of indigenous, traditional, natural asset-based wellness and healing traditions.



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NIMA MICE FORUM-2023

Where relationships were built and business was conducted

The NIMA MICE FORUM-2023, organised by the Network of Indian Mice Agents, was inaugurated on March 02, 2023, at the Radisson Blu-Amritsar by Gurjeet Singh Aujla, the Honourable member of Parliament for Amritsar. The forum scheduled from March 02-04 was well attended by 102 delegates, 32 exhibitors, and members of the media.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

The Radisson Blu Amritsar played host to the NIMA MICE FORUM-2023 from March 02-04, 2023, where the delegates were welcomed at the hotel in the authentic Punjabi style to the beating of the Dhol.

Day-1, post lunch, the activities started with multiple, interactive and participative team-building exercises, in a session coordinated by Punkesh Chawla. This fun session helped in breaking the ice between the delegates and build bonhomie.

The event was officially inaugurated by the Honourable Member Parliament from Amritsar, G.S Aujla in presence of industry luminaries and NIMA office bearers that included Jagdeep Bhagat, National Coordinator, NIMA, Tushar Jain, Organising Chairman, NIMA MICE FORUM-2023, Anil Sahu, Managing Director, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, Maya Anurova, Moscow Tourism Board, Vikas Khanduri, Advisor NIMA, Raymond Lim, Area Director, Singapore Tourism Board, Navin Kundu, MD, Ebixcash India, Middle East and South East Asia and Ashwani Gupta.

The inaugural session was followed by a presentation from the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board. Welcome cocktails and dinner were organised at The Earth-Amritsar, a trademark collection by

Wyndham Hotel. All delegates were taken for a show around of this recently renovated and restored elegant heritage property and a recent addition to Amritsar's hotel portfolio.

Day-2 kicked off early with the sharing of the NIMA vision by Vikas Khanduri, Advisor NIMA. It was followed by a panel discussion with Tourism Boards on "Challenges, Transformations, and Opportunities in the post-COVID MICE world." Product presentations were made by Moscow Tourism, Singapore Tourism Board, and GRN Connect. Swaytank Maheshwari talked about sustainable and responsible tourism.

The keynote address was delivered by Navin Kundu, MD, Ebixcash India, Middle East, and South East Asia who talked about "Resurgence Rising India, Advantage India". Harmandeep Singh Anand talked about GST and compliances for MICE Event.





Gajesh Girdhar, Chairman Emeritus, and Founder Member-NIMA congratulated the members on the grand success of the MICE Forum-2023 and announced that the second NIMA Convention will be held onboard Resort World Cruises from Aug 06-09, 2023.

There were tabletop meeting sessions organised among the 32 exhibitors and NIMA member delegates attending the Forum. The gala dinner and cocktails were organised at the historic Gobind Garh Fort where the delegates enjoyed

an engrossing historical sound and light show followed by a show round of the various options available for MICE events at the venue, the delegates also enjoyed a multi-dimensional immersive ride experience.

On Day -3, delegates visited the Golden Temple and were then taken to experience "Sadda Pind" - a cultural theme park steeped in Punjabi culture and folklore where delegates tasted freshly made Sarson -Ka-Saag, Makki-Di-Roti, Butter with fresh Lassi and Chaas. The Bajre -Ki Khichdi was divine. Delegates experienced live demonstrations of the Sikh martial art of Gatka and engaged in Turban tying. The Forum was a rewarding experience for the delegates.



Raymond Lim
Area Director-
New Delhi
Office,
Singapore
Tourism Board

Thank you NIMA for having STB here at this prestigious event. We are happy to be collaborating with NIMA again and this is a relationship we wish to carry forward in the coming years. It is a very good platform for us to ensure that Singapore remains a top MICE destination among MICE planners and intermediaries. We look forward to welcoming more MICE groups from India to Singapore. We are delighted that the NIMA conference will be held onboard Resort World Cruises in August 2023. STB looks forward to welcoming NIMA members to Singapore and showcasing to them an experiential combination of the cruise with a stayover program in Singapore for Meeting and Incentive travel.



Gajesh Girdhar
Chairman
Emeritus and
Founder, NIMA

The MICE Forum-2023 has been a grand success. Last time we had just about 20 exhibitors and this time we have 32 exhibitors and a combined total of 150 delegates and exhibitors. In 2017, we had our first NIMA Convention in Catalonia and we have now announced our second convention onboard Resort World Cruises sailing on a 3-night cruise from Singapore on Aug 06-09, 2023 with a 2-night pre or post-land component at Singapore.



Tushar Jain
Organising
Chairman,
NIMA MICE
Forum-2023

The Amritsar Forum is our third event in the series. We held our first event at Raipur and Jaipur was our second. I am happy to share that we were able to do whatever we had planned, as 102 delegates and 32 exhibitors were at this forum. All exhibitors were satisfied with the quality of the response that they received and that they could interact with all delegates.



Jaspreet Singh Bhatia
NIMA member

The idea behind MICE Forum 2023 was to create value for members and I feel NIMA delivered on that count perfectly. This was a bigger and better event than the previous one, there was a larger number of exhibitors and even the attendance of NIMA members was very good. It was a good networking and knowledge-sharing platform, and even the theme 'Resurgence India' was very positive, with good presentations, and good speakers.



Dinesh Kumar
NIMA member

It was wonderful to be at the NIMA MICE Forum-2023 at Amritsar. It was a perfectly organised, well-planned, and well-coordinated event with meaningful knowledge sessions and presentations. I value my relationship with NIMA and look forward to many fruitful engagements in the future too.



Mamta Pal
Footprints
Worldwide

I attended the NIMA Forum at Amritsar as an exhibitor. It was a great experience networking with some old contacts and making some new ones. The opportunities were great.

2nd Chapter of Eastbound Connect series concludes, 250 hi-profile travel and hospitality stalwarts witness a glittering show

Eastbound Group, one of India's leading conglomerates offering a diversified portfolio of travel and tourism, travel- tech and event services, successfully concluded the second edition of its experiential industry engagement event series 'Eastbound Connect' on February 24, 2023, in New Delhi.

Team TTJ

Marking the 18th year of Eastbound Group, the event themed 'Realign and Reaccelerate' saw an enthusiastic turnout of over 250 of the most powerful names in the travel and hospitality industry, cementing its reputation as a place where icons and disruptors convene.

With the objective of knowledge-sharing and networking as its central premise, the event was executed as a two-part experience. While the first half of the day was focused at enriching knowledge-based sessions organised at Hotel Le Meridien Gurgaon, the latter unfolded as a glittering black-tie event at a premium experiential venue in New Delhi where some of the biggest stalwarts of the hospitality, travel and tourism fraternity contributed to an unmatched crackling energy. The crowd was entranced by an exquisite five-piece jazz troupe, which was followed by a mesmerising performance by a Coke Studio India artist.

In response to the positive reception at Eastbound Connect, Prithviraj Singh, Co-Founder, Eastbound and Managing

Director, 2HUB, commented, "EBC has proven to be a key meeting point for the travel and hospitality community. It was a thrill for us to have such an enthusiastic response from industry partners. Incredible conversations contributed to an eclectic atmosphere underscoring our efforts to bring the industry together. We hope to further this cause through the future chapters of the event series."

Amit Kishore, Group Founder, stated, "We have weathered a debilitating storm and yet emerged stronger. Truth be told, this would not have been nearly possible if it wasn't for the people who stood by us and supported us. Last year has been phenomenal for us and 2023 looks equally promising, with group revenue set to cross 1000 Cr in the next 15

months. We also recently launched a highly advanced tech platform which is being adopted by all group businesses. We are completely geared towards establishing ourselves as a tech-first company."

Amit further said, "Eastbound Connect Series is our way of celebrating and nurturing the fraternal spirit of the industry. It allows us to act as an enabler towards creating a lasting environment of cooperation and collaborations and, as a result, contribute to the industry in a way that's not only impactful but also meaningful."



Thailand's Nok Air commences flights to Hyderabad

Nok Air, one of Thailand's most popular airlines, commenced its operations from Bangkok to Hyderabad on February 21, 2023, while the first flight from Hyderabad to Bangkok departed on February 22, 2023. Nok Air celebrated this momentous touchdown by hosting a grand party in the city of Hyderabad the same evening with prominent travel trade partners.

The Airline will operate 3 weekly non-stop flights from its hub Don Mueang International Airport (DMK) in Bangkok to Hyderabad in Winter 2023 schedule, and increase frequency to 4 Weekly non-stop flights in Summer 2023 schedule. The new route will be operated by state-of-the-art Boeing 737-800 with 189 Economy Class seats.

Currently, Hyderabad is the sole location Nok Air serves in India. The new route easily links Bangkok

with over 20 locations in Thailand, including Phuket, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai, as well as with international locations like Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam) and Yangon (Myanmar).



The Set Collection appoints THRS as its Representation Partner in the Indian Subcontinent

THRS (Travel and Hospitality Representation Services) has been appointed as the PR and sales representative for The Set Collection to promote its collection of iconic independent luxury hotels in Europe to the India market.

The Set Collection is a carefully curated luxury hotel group, comprising some of the world's most immersive independent hotels located in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Jerusalem, Beijing, Hong Kong, Chengdu, and Shanghai. In a league of its own, The Set Collection is bringing together unique luxury hotels at the most outstanding addresses, in the world's most vibrant destinations. These hotels have been celebrated as architectural masterpieces and historic hotspots for decades, unifying yesteryear's craftsmanship and present-day splendour.

As part of its strategic plan to build awareness in the emerging Indian luxury travel market, it has joined hands with India's leading representation company for luxury hospitality and tourism brands, THRS. The cooperation is chiefly concerned with the Group's European hotels, Hotel Café Royal in London, Conservatorium in Amsterdam, Lutetia in Paris, and Mamilla in Jerusalem.



Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC, and Thema Collection join hands with Ark Travel Group to strengthen their presence in India

Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC and Thema Collection, two highly respected destination management companies in the travel industry and a leading hospitality brand in Sri Lanka, announced their collaboration with Ark Travel Group and the appointment of Anjum Lokhandwala as their representative in India.

The signing of the agreement took place at the recently concluded SATTE event in Delhi, India. This strategic partnership aims to increase the visibility and appeal of Sri Lanka as a preferred tourist destination in India.

Anjum Lokhandwala, Director of Ark Travel Group, has been tasked with marketing the products and services of Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC and Thema Collection in India. She brings with her a wealth of experience and expertise in the travel and tourism industry and is excited about the new partnership.

"We are confident that this collaboration will help us to promote and better serve the booming Indian market and further strengthen our position as leading destination management companies/hospitality brand in Sri Lanka," said Wickramasinghe, Chairman of Connaissance De Ceylan, Travel Design by CDC and Thema Collection.



Carnival Cruise Line comes calling!

Iain Baillie, Vice President- International Sales and Luke Smith, Director, UK and International Sales, Carnival Cruise Line, were in India recently to meet the Indian travel fraternity and share the latest developments and plans of the cruise line for the India market.

Represented in India by Discover the World - India, the team, along with Dipti Adhia, Director, and Nitin Sharma, Senior Sales Manager, Discover the World- India, met with multiple partners to thank them for their support and discuss the way forward.

A fun evening with cocktails and dinner was hosted for the trade partners on February 17, 2023, at Someplace Else, Jio World Drive - BKC.



Creative Travel wins its 8th SITE Crystal Award

Creative Travel has won its 8th SITE Crystal Award for Incentive Travel Excellence. The company proved its deep expertise and the power of strong working relationships while managing a program for 175 guests in Maldives.

Considered the highest honour in the travel industry, the SITE Crystal Awards recognise creative, practical and truly memorable incentive programs that not only keep employees engaged but also drive business results and improve the bottom line. The awards are aimed at incentive travel professionals all over the world. Winners represent excellence in their profession and offer inspirational examples of how incentive travel experiences benefit qualifiers, their companies, and the destinations where they are hosted.

“Good things happen with great support and partnerships. The group was from South Africa and one of the first incentives to operate during the pandemic. The destination

was the Maldives, where Creative Travel has extensive experience in operating incentive groups. This was one of the most challenging groups we have operated,” said Rajeev Kohli, JMD, Creative Travel India.

He further added, “Thank you to our partners in South Africa and our lovely client. It was a team effort! A special thank you to our team at Creative, who work tirelessly to make us the best of the best. This is yours.”



Tourism Authority of Thailand gears up for 'Amazing Thailand Festival 2023' in Mumbai

Scheduled from March 24-26, 2023 at Jio World Drive – BKC, Mumbai, the Amazing Thailand Festival 2023 organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Mumbai Office is strongly aimed towards increasing the brand awareness of Thailand in India and upscaling its tourist arrivals.

The three-day mega event will largely promote the 5 F's of Thailand, that is Food, Film, Fashion, Fight, and Festival. It will invite discerning tourists and potential trade partners from the length and breadth of Mumbai to get closely acquainted with its wide

cultural variety, including its unique fashion, cuisine, artistry, and a lot more.

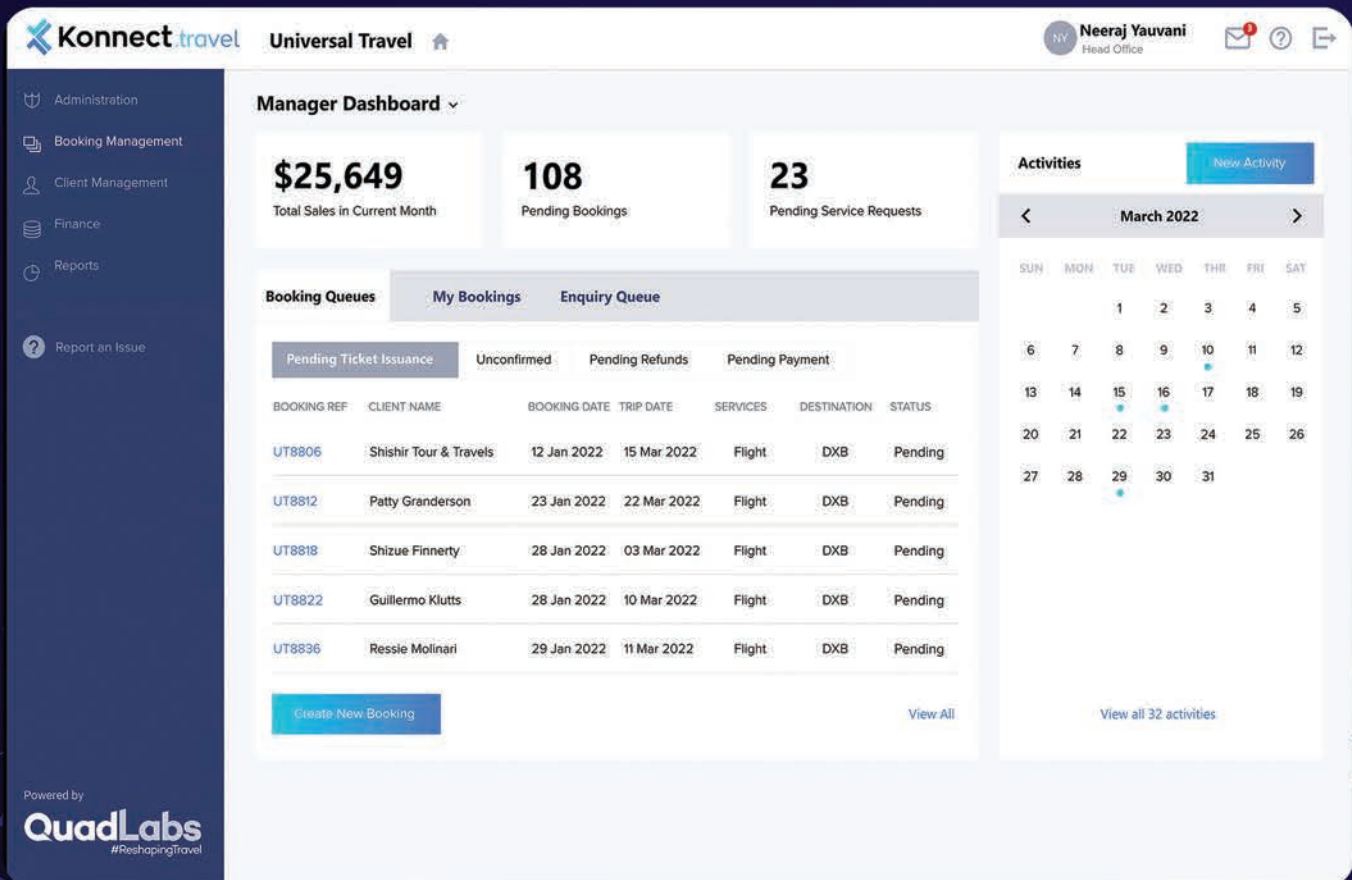
To strategically promote the festival and garner the attention of its target audience, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Mumbai Office recently partnered with Uber India to tour its advertisement-bearing cabs across Mumbai.

With India being one of the top source markets for Thailand, 'Amazing Thailand Festival 2023' is poised to spotlight Thailand as the FIRST-CHOICE destination for Mumbaikars and significantly boost its brand awareness.



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Vietjet offers attractive promotional tickets to Australia for Indians

Vietjet, Vietnam's leading low-cost carrier has announced an attractive promotional offer for Indian travellers to Melbourne and Sydney in Australia with tickets priced from only USD0 (excluding taxes and fees), which will go on sale every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday through its connecting services. SkyBoss and SkyBoss Business tickets are also currently being offered at a 50 per cent discount during these sales days. The offer is valid from now until October 25, 2023.

Passengers can avail this offer at www.vietjetair.com and Vietjet Air mobile apps, applying to all routes connecting Vietnam and Australia (Sydney, Melbourne). The offer is available for flights from April 8 to October 28, 2023.

The airline is particularly offering 50 per cent off to SkyBoss/SkyBoss Business tickets from now until June 8, 2023, for the routes to Australia. Passengers can enjoy additional priorities for flights between April 8 to June 8 of 2023, including access to a luxury lounge, private cabins, a cocktail bar, flatbed seats, free up to 20 kg of carry-on baggage and 60 kg of checked baggage, a golf club set, and delectable organic cuisine.



Air Mauritius to resume its direct operations to New Delhi from May 3

Air Mauritius will resume its direct operations to and from Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi from May 3, 2023, with two weekly flights using the Airbus A330 aircraft in a Business and Economy class configuration with a capacity of 254 seats. The duration of the flight is 07 hours and 30 minutes.

Krešimir Kučko, CEO of Air Mauritius, stated, "We are excited to resume our operations to New Delhi after three years of absence. India and Mauritius share a special relationship that is built on the foundation of people-to-people ties. Both India and Mauritius are united by culture, ancestry, language and geography. In April this year, Air Mauritius will be proudly commemorating its 50 years of presence in Mumbai. New avenues are being explored with Air India in order to offer seamless connectivity via both Mumbai and New Delhi to/from a number of destinations in India."



Hilton expands its footprint in India with new DoubleTree by Hilton Nagpur

Hilton recently announced it will bring its fast-growing upscale hotel brand to the Orange City for the first time with DoubleTree by Hilton Nagpur. Signing with Abhijit Realtors and Infrastructure Private Limited, the announcement marks the entry of DoubleTree in Maharashtra's third-largest city. Scheduled to open in early 2026, the upscale hotel will provide contemporary accommodations and amenities, as well as unique food and beverage experiences to leisure and business travellers in the populous central India city.

The new 135-room hotel will feature the brand's modern architecture and designs, large wedding and social event spaces featuring state-of-the-art technology and a wide array of food and beverage, and special event offerings. Guests will enjoy exceptional dining through a diverse culinary experience, from grab-and-go options to seasonal light bites and all-day room service to farm-to-table meals, as well as a signature rooftop

specialty restaurant and bar, a first for the city that is a growing hub for the IT industry.

DoubleTree by Hilton Nagpur will be situated at the junction of Airport and Wardha Roads, the city's main arterial road. Surrounded by major demand zones with the airport and metro stations conveniently located within less than 5 kilometers, the hotel will provide seamless connectivity to prime regions in the city.



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Germany relaunches Embrace German Nature Campaign

German National Tourist Board (GNTB) continues to bolster its sustainable tourism offerings with the imminent relaunch of one of its most popular campaigns, Embrace German Nature.

Germany is a country brimming with beautiful natural viewpoints, many of which can be accessed on foot or by cable car before the dawn breaks, meaning that the sights out over mountain peaks and peaceful meadows can be appreciated at their most beautiful.

With Germany home to 51 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and more than 33 per cent of the country under special environmental protection, the campaign also highlights the stunning natural landscapes.

Ecotourism is expected to see a market growth of 15 per cent between 2021 and 2031, according to analysis by the Future Market Insights Institute. Embrace German Nature is designed then to consider the heightened demand, align with market desires, and help Germany achieve its Sustainable Development Goals.

Indian Travellers who are looking to stay fit while taking in



the sights can enjoy a vast range of world-renowned hiking trails and 76,000 km of cycle paths. Various short cycle routes were certified for the first time in 2023, opening an even wider range of outdoor activities for all abilities. These include Buchen Hercules Trail in Baden-Württemberg; Margrave Round in Bavaria; and the Ruhland Trail in Hesse.

Maitri Visa and Travel Services hosts networking night for trade partners

Maitri Visa and Travel Services (MVTs) hosted a memorable gala dinner and cocktail on February 10, 2023, at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Greater Noida. The purpose of the event was to bring together leading Indian travel agents and showcase its products to the travel community, especially the supporting agents.

The highlight of the event was live performances by singer and performer Sapna Chaudhary and some leading Haryanvi singers. The event was witnessed by over 200 delegates, including agents, media, and celebrities.

Parvesh Dhull, Managing Director, Maitri Visa and Travel Service and Holidays by Maitri, established the visa operation business in 2016 with a focus on Dubai. Holidays by Maitri, a relatively new company, founded in 2022, specialises in MICE and other travel services.

Now an established name in the market, Maitri Visa and Travel Services is one of India's leading travel solution companies, offering an array of services to its clients. The company saw significant growth in 2022, increasing by approximately 60 per cent, and it is expected to continue its upward trend in 2023.





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