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Email: info@sampanmedia.com

Editorial and Marketing Office :  
Sampan Media Pvt. Ltd. B-20, First Floor, Nangal Dewat, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, 110070  
Ph: 9560264443, ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

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Dear Friends,

The holiday season has begun and travellers will firm up their plans for summer holidays in spite of international and domestic air fares being already high for May and June. So, these two months will be busy for the travel industry as there will be a surge in bookings and enquiries.

On the other front, to understand the current scenario in the hospitality industry, the May 2023 issue of TTJ focusses on understanding and discussing the latest hospitality trends and opinions. To keep our readers engrossed and engaged, we have featured some dynamic hospitality industry leaders and few reputed General Managers to get an insight into this very versatile industry that works round the clock to give their guests memorable moments.

As we closed the issue, there was the news of Go First's plea for voluntary insolvency proceedings and it is being heard by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). We sincerely hope the airline comes out of trouble, amid an uncertain future.

In the meantime, we hope you will have a great time reading our May issue.

Happy Reading!



*Ravi Sharma*

Ravi Sharma  
ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

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## Saudi scraps visa stickers in passports, launches e-visa service in seven countries

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has launched a new initiative, cancelling the visa sticker on passport and switching to e-visa with QR code.

The new procedure is part of the digitalisation of the ministry's consular services, including work permits, residence, and visit visas.

As the first stage, the new procedure has been activated at the Kingdom's diplomatic missions in the United Arab Emirates, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Republic of India, the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of the Philippines.



## NCL to resume Asia Cruising in October 2023 after three years

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) is counting down to its much-awaited return to sailing in Asia after more than three years when the newly revitalised Norwegian Jewel makes her grand return to Tokyo on October 19, 2023.

Norwegian Jewel's extensive six-month Asia season will offer 16 immersive, port-rich itineraries visiting 11 countries and sailing from nine different departure ports, including Tokyo and Yokohama in Japan; Taipei (Keelung), Taiwan; Bangkok (Laem Chabang), Thailand; Bali (Benoa), Indonesia and Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Malaysia. With cruises ranging in length from 10-14 days, the season

features a number of brand firsts: NCL's first departures from Manila, Philippines and Seoul (Incheon), South Korea, as well as six new ports of call: Manila, Boracay, Palawan, Salomague in Philippines, Bintan Island in Indonesia and Hualien in Taiwan.

Boasting an average of less than two sea days per sailing, up to 13.5 hours in destinations like Singapore and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, as well as extended overnight stays in places that come alive at night, such as Phuket, Osaka and Bali (Benoa) – Norwegian Jewel provides the ultimate way to explore vibrant Asia.



## Fortune Hotels launches Fortune Resort Kalimpong

The scenic resort set amidst picturesque locales, tucked away from the usual hustle and bustle of city life, is a perfect blend of modern amenities and nature's tranquillity offering easy access to all popular tourist spots should the enigmatic wanderers wish to explore.

Fortune Resort Kalimpong boasts aesthetic, well-appointed rooms and suites with stunning views of Mt. Kanchendzonga. The contemporary decor of the rooms perfectly complements the beauty of nature that is embellished with a burst of flora and fauna of the region. The resort features an open-air swimming pool and a restful spa for guests to relax and rejuvenate after a long day of sightseeing.

At the Fortune Resort Kalimpong, guests will discover a world of culinary wonders at the all-day diner, Zodiac, where a multi-cuisine menu featuring Indian, Chinese, Continental, and local delights can be savoured amongst breath-taking views of the Kanchendzonga mountain range. The chic bar, Neptune, invites you to unwind and enjoy relaxed evenings in a vibrant



setting. Its impressive selection of spirits and heady beverages paired with caringly crafted finger foods is sure to keep you company.

Fortune Resort Kalimpong also makes for an ideal venue for corporate events, weddings, and social gatherings. The hotel features a modern banquet hall and a lush green lawn space that can accommodate up to 600 guests.



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## Lufthansa to expand operations in India, to launch new connections

**L**ufthansa is expanding its service to India. The new destination from Munich is Bengaluru, which, in addition to Delhi and Mumbai, will be served by an Airbus A350. LH764 departs Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 12:10 p.m. to the southern Indian metropolis.

Lufthansa guests will be able to enjoy one of the Lufthansa Group's most modern and economical long-haul aircraft, the Airbus A350-900. After a longer break, Lufthansa will

also include again Hyderabad in its flight schedule from Frankfurt. This will once again provide a direct connection from Germany to India's pharmaceutical and high-tech industries. Lufthansa will announce further details in mid-May.

Lufthansa will offer a total of five destinations to the Indian subcontinent from its two hubs in Frankfurt and Munich in the coming winter.

## Club Vistara wins big at Freddie Awards 2023

**C**lub Vistara, the frequent flyer program of Vistara, has won three awards at the prestigious annual Freddie Awards 2023. Club Vistara, was awarded 'Program of the Year' besides winning 'Best Promotion' and 'Best Redemption Ability' awards at the ceremony held at The Smithsonian, Washington DC.

In line with its customer-centric approach, Club Vistara has been consistently enhancing the offerings of its lifestyle program with the sole objective of ensuring an elevated experience to its growing member base. The program currently offers value-based earning and easy redemption of flights and upgrades as low as 2000 CV Points and 500 CV points respectively. It recently introduced online complimentary voucher extension and points extension features that offer more flexibility and ease in redeeming CV Points for Award Flights or Upgrades.

The Freddie Awards, established in 1988, are internationally



recognised as one of the most coveted accolades in the travel industry and are voted for by frequent flyers and hotel patrons.

## Air Mauritius resumes Delhi - Mauritius operations

**A**ir Mauritius, the flagship carrier of Mauritius will operate from Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi with biweekly 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 7 hours and 30 minutes. Air Mauritius also operates six weekly direct flights to CSMIA in Mumbai.

To announce and commemorate the occasion, Air Mauritius, in collaboration with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, hosted a networking gala evening at The Imperial New Delhi on April 14, 2023. The evening was graced by the presence of H.E H. Dillum, High Commissioner of the Republic of Mauritius to India, Krešimir Kučko, Chief Executive Officer, Air Mauritius, Laurent Recoura, Chief Commercial Officer, Air Mauritius, Arvind Bundhun, Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and other dignitaries and delegates.







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# Jazeera Airways

## eyes expansion in India, seeks increase in seat capacity

In 2007, India and Kuwait signed an air services agreement for 12,000 seats per week capacity for carriers of both countries. At present, this is fully utilised by both Indian carriers flying to Kuwait and Kuwaiti carriers flying into India. The signing was also at a time when there were merely 3 lakh Indians working and residing in Kuwait and currently it is more than 11 lakhs. The sector has tremendous potential for additional seats due to the movement of tourists, workers and VFR segments. Since most of the working class are in the low and middle-income bracket, they aspire for low-cost options and Jazeera Airways fits the bill. Now, the Kuwait-based airline is awaiting additional seat allocation to implement its India expansion plans. Rohit Ramachandran, Chief Executive Officer, Jazeera Airways, feels that 50,000 seats per week would be more than adequate to meet the India demand.

Prashant Nayak

**How is the year 2023 developing for Jazeera Airways? What are the prevailing load factors on the Indian sectors?**

At Jazeera, we started the year on a positive note by announcing record profits of KD20.1 million for 2022. The first quarter has also been good. We introduced a new route to Moscow in early February – the only direct flight to the city from Kuwait and recently announced our new summer destinations, including Larnaca, Belgrade and Tirana. We will also restart flights to Sarajevo and Prague this summer. We now serve 63 destinations across Europe, the Middle East, Central and South Asia and Africa.

In March, we announced our intent to establish a low-cost airline in KSA in collaboration with Saudi partners. This new airline will be based at the King Fahad International Airport in Dammam. Coordination is underway with the regulatory authorities in

the Kingdom to complete procedures to obtain the necessary licenses in accordance with the applicable laws.

India is an important market for us. In 2022, we closed with a load factor of 92 per cent which demonstrates the demand for travel from India. So far, 2023 has been good and we are hoping to close with a load factor of around 95 per cent.

**As a low-cost airline based out of Kuwait, do you see the demand for seats given that there is a large diaspora of Indians in middle and low-income jobs in Kuwait?**

Kuwait's current population is around four million, out of which about 1.1 million are Indians. So, there is a huge demand for connectivity, especially among the middle and low-income groups who seek affordable flights to visit their families back, especially to the cities that we serve.

**What is the current bilateral agreement between India and Kuwait for airline operations and seat capacity?**

Kuwait and India are committed to the Air Services Agreement that governs the civil aviation relations between both countries. The current bilateral agreement was signed in 2007 when delegations from both countries agreed to increase the capacity entitlements of each side from 8,320 to 12,000 seats per week. However, this was at a time







when the Indian population in Kuwait was only around 300,000. Today, the population is more than a million but the seat capacity has not increased at all.

**At the CAPA event in Delhi, you spoke regarding increasing seat capacity and flight operations between the two countries. Please elaborate.**

With the growth of the Indian population in Kuwait, there is an urgent need to raise the seats limit from 12,000 to what is a more appropriate figure today. This will allow Indian carriers to operate more in Kuwait and vice versa. The governments of our two countries have been in conversation about expanding the allocation of this seat capacity. If this happens, we would love to fly to several other destinations in the country, including some tier-two cities, as people living in Kuwait prefer flying directly to their hometown and not via the busy international gateways.

If a new bilateral agreement falls into place, we feel about 50,000 seats a week would be more than adequate to cater to the current requirements.

**Jazeera has been operating in India for the last 5 years and is now flying to 8 destinations in India. Do you still find the potential to expand operations to other cities in India? Can you name a few of the potential cities?**

Within India, Jazeera Airways currently flies to Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kochi,

Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, and Thiruvananthapuram. The abundance of choices is strategic, given the Indian expat population in Kuwait, and our plans to add even more destinations to our network in the future.

The size of the expatriate population of Indians in Kuwait, and their aspirations for affordable travel to their home cities, also require an increase in air service entitlements for carriers of both countries. With an increased seat capacity, we would ideally like to include flights to other cities like Goa, Amritsar, Lucknow, Jaipur, Vijayawada, Trichy and Madurai.

**What are your views of the Indian aviation market, which is growing extensively, with airports and airlines reaching every corner of the country due to the UDAN initiative?**

The UDAN initiative has been instrumental in the transformation of the Indian aviation industry. Increased air connectivity, concessions to airlines operating regional routes as well as direct or indirect contributions to economic development have all been good for the country.

We see a very vibrant Indian aviation market that includes best of breed and practices by Indian carriers. Travellers in India are also becoming more adventurous – especially with the growing middle-income population. In 2019, we served five cities in India and in 2022, increased to eight. In the last year, our passenger numbers for India

grew by 24 per cent compared to 2019.

Offbeat destinations seem to be attracting more visitors and we see a lot of traffic on our direct flights to cities like Bodrum and Trabzon in Türkiye as well as CIS countries. It is also interesting to see a mix of different types of passengers on our flights – vacationing families, solo adventure travellers, honeymooners, etc. Our load factors are also good indicators of the demand for travel from India.

**What are the new developments at Jazeera Airways in terms of global operations?**

For the coming year, we will continue to stay focused on expansion plans for our fleet and destinations network. As mentioned earlier, we have launched new summer destinations in Europe and also intend to introduce a new low-cost carrier in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Following our “Approved Training Organization” certification from Kuwait’s Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) last year, we placed an order for an Airbus simulator, which will be delivered by the end of 2023. We are very excited about this as it enables in-house pilot training and monitoring to ensure the highest levels of safety for our passengers.

We also have plans to collaborate with a European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) approved training organization to launch our own Multi-Pilot License (MPL) program.



# 'India's Hospitality Ecosystem is Swiftly Evolving'

A majority of hotel projects are back in action with over 59,000\* rooms expected to join this supply in the next five years in big-ticket markets like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Jaipur. The strong growth of domestic travel in India will help open up new destinations in India, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 markets. In an exclusive conversation, TTJ speaks with the very dynamic Zubin Saxena, Managing Director and Area Senior Vice President - South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group (RHG) to get an insight into the changing patterns of the hospitality industry.

Sonika Bohra

**T**he hospitality sector in India is well on its way to revolutionising how it runs and satisfies changing traveller demands. To meet these expectations, hotels are doing everything they can to give visitors a personalised experience, from implementing new-age technology to modernising their outreach methods. However, running a successful and profitable hotel begins with effective revenue management. It centres on determining the pricing strategies that clients from various audience segments are ready to accept, which can only be done by measuring and keeping track of the supply and demand of the hotel rooms.

The seismic shift in the hotel industry is quite evident, as with the new normal came new challenges. Addressing the same Zubin says, "Some of the challenges faced by hoteliers to maintain a consistent revenue flow would include managing a high occupancy rate. This requires careful planning, promotion, and marketing to ensure that rooms are constantly filled and revenue is maintained. The ever-evolving customer expectations and keeping up with the latest technology, which might also include a higher cost attached to it, are some of the other major challenges observed in this industry. Hoteliers must also control their costs to maintain a consistent revenue flow. This includes looking for ways to reduce operational costs, increase efficiency, and implement costs." While pricing remains an important factor behind driving guest choices, it's not the only contributor to this decision-making matrix. Consumers now make choices based on preferences and have specific demands and needs. The conversation is beyond exploring the best hotel room but also getting maximum value from their experience.

Bleisure travel has become increasingly popular in recent years as more people are seeking to blend work and personal time. It allows travellers to maximise their time in a destination, combining business meetings or conferences with leisure activities such as sightseeing, exploring local culture and cuisine, or spending time with family or friends. "India's hospitality ecosystem is rapidly evolving, and we stand ready to be at the helm of this change to offer travellers a high-quality product that is driven by distinct experiences. Trends like Staycations and Bleisure Travel have come into shape. Bleisure travel has given brands like ours, a chance to introduce relevant brands like Radisson Individuals in the country. With the recent opening of the Rakkh Resort, a member of Radisson Individual Retreats, we have entered the era of experiential hospitality in the country. Radisson Individuals Retreats rests on beautiful properties with unique identities offering tailor-made stays that are authentic, sustainable, and memorable," shared Zubin.

"Apart from the experience of the property, all Radisson hotels are equipped with services such as high-speed Wi-Fi, flexible check-in and check-out times, and even well-equipped workspaces with ergonomic furniture. Additional services like laundry, meals, and healthy dining options made of locally sourced ingredients and millet remain available for our guests," adds Zubin.

With the beginning of the Staycation culture, Radisson hotels had a chance to introduce and gel up on the working co-spaces and



▲ Zubin Saxena

social spaces. This is especially useful for those who are looking to travel for a longer period and need space to work. Additionally, they also offer packages that include accommodation and work-related services, such as access to a business lounge and meeting rooms. This is a great way for digital nomads to stay productive while traveling.

The perception of long hours and low pay has long been cited as the major deterrents for candidates to avoid careers in the hospitality sector. Secondly, the industry is not getting new talent / skilled people due to the lower admissions to hotel management institutes. In the last couple of years, the hotel industry has faced a major manpower crunch owing to these reasons, and as an industry veteran, Zubin who has seen this paradigm change in the industry adds, "I strongly feel that today's generation is fuelled by passion in whatever they do. Hospitality in itself is a passionate industry where our relentless commitment to guest satisfaction and creating value for all our stakeholders drive us. There are synergies where these two visions meet and create significant opportunities for the current generation with diverse interests to become a part of India's hospitality ecosystem. Some of our best General Managers are from banking and investment backgrounds. Moving forward also, I



believe that the best minds in hospitality will come out of non-hotel backgrounds.”

At the helm of RHG brand Zubin further highlights the brand’s core belief, “We are Many Minds with One Mindset,” and we respect and value the individual differences and life experiences that our team members bring to the table. Our unique backgrounds help us make memorable experiences for all who walk through our doors. Our people are at the core of our business’ success and future. We are committed to growing and promoting talent, and this continues to be a priority for us. At RHG, we imbibe an excellence-driven mindset and share a collective vision of success - every colleague has equal ownership of this vision. With our new manning blueprint, we are nurturing a future-ready organisation that delivers efficiencies with a structured approach, led by a quality-driven mindset. We continue to invest in our talent through multiple initiatives, including talent exchange programs, the Radisson Future Leaders program which offers cross-exposure training, corporate office exposure, participation in General Manager engagement workshops, and pre-opening operations exposure.”

The trend of pent-up demand is at peak especially post-pandemic. Last year, hotels generated a major chunk of their leisure and social business through pent-up demand. In terms of supply, while there was a setback due to the pandemic, a majority of projects are back in action with over 59,000 rooms expected to join this supply in the next five years in big-ticket markets like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur. The strong growth of domestic travel in India will help open up new destinations in India, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 markets. At Radisson, they foresee that these markets will drive India’s next supply growth phase. For instance, pilgrim locations have stepped up as important source markets. “At Radisson Hotel Group, we have developed innovative business lines by responding quickly to market demands from owners

as well as to changing consumer travel trends to ensure the Group maintains a dynamic business model and offerings. With 150 hotels in operations and pipeline across 64 locations in India, we are looking at doubling our footprint by 2025. We have a robust pipeline for the future and will continue our growth trajectory with 12-15 hotel signings and 10-12 hotel openings every year,” shares Zubin.

The hospitality industry is always evolving, introducing exciting new trends that make the experience of staying in a hotel more enjoyable, efficient, and luxurious. Apart from inclusive culture, personalisation, and localisation, the industry has observed major shifts in consumer patterns. Consumers these days have moved to longer and more memorable staycations rather than shorter holidays.

RHG’s diverse portfolio, present in different and unique locations in the country, has ensured a stronger presence catering to the needs of various groups in the country. From custom-crafted menus to unique activities and events, hotels are now offering guests an opportunity to truly make their stay one-of-a-kind. With tailored programs like the Rad family kids’ program, they are providing unique personalised experiences for families that love to travel. This trend will likely become even more popular soon, as hotels strive to create an experience that their guests won’t forget. RHG offers a range of services that are tailored to the individual and their specific needs.

Another notable trend observed among consumers in the recent past is a shift towards sustainable and greener stays. At Radisson Hotel Group, they have been consistently intensifying their sustainable business efforts to provide authentic and mindful experiences that also benefit the earth. To be a permanent solution to environmental problems while also balancing its economic impact, they have launched various initiatives such as

Soap for Hope, Linen for Life, and Flush Me Not Program, which are built on their long tradition of being a responsible business. Environmental stewardship is becoming a bigger priority for global hotel companies and hospitality sector leaders. Economic factors are also affecting the developing industry’s tendency towards sustainability in addition to the noble goal of decarbonisation.

Eco-friendliness has also evolved from a nice-to-have to a must-have priority for a growing number of environmentally and socially conscious travellers. By becoming environmentally friendly, a hotel can attract and retain today’s eco-aware travellers while also assisting its guests in protecting the environment without compromising the quality of their stay. Sharing further on RHGs contribution to sustainable and responsible tourism Zubin says, “When it comes to The Radisson Hotel Group, we have consistently shown a commitment to the environment and have taken the lead in halting climate change. We intend to adhere to the Glasgow Declaration and achieve net-zero status by 2050. To do this, we are focusing on increasing the energy efficiency of hotel buildings, reducing the consumption of natural resources, transitioning to renewable energy, and eliminating single-use plastics. The adoption of the cross-industry Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality and the Hotel Sustainability Fundamentals project are two crucial efforts that The Radisson Hotel Group has endorsed to promote Responsible Tourism throughout the world. The 12 progress-oriented criteria for this project are focused on people, the environment, and efficient resource usage. Additionally, we have partnered with Sunfuel Electric to offer captive EV charging stations at all of our hotels in India, creating a sustainable environment for visitors and encouraging them to choose safer, more environmentally friendly, and more easily available forms of transportation.”

*\*Hotelivate Research 2022*



*Rakkh Resort, a member of Radisson Individuals Retreats*



# ITC Hotels assures commitment to people and planet

ITC Mughal was very recently awarded the LEED Zero Water Certification by the US Green Building Council (USGBC), and it is the first hotel globally to get the certification. The recognition validates ITC's Responsible Luxury ethos that seeks to integrate planet-positive experiences in various facets of hotel operations. Anil Chadha, Divisional Chief Executive-ITC Hotels, sheds light on ITC Hotels' achievements in Sustainability and Responsible Luxury, further revealing the visionary approach in setting new standards that positively impact the planet.

Prashant Nayak

**T**he LEED Zero is the new standard for global cities, communities, and buildings as they strive to achieve a sustainable future. The LEED Zero Certification is an embodiment of an organisation's commitment to combat Climate Change and enables them to contribute meaningfully towards the transition to a net-zero economy. The framework recognises high-performance buildings and spaces operating with reduced greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable strategies.

ITC Mughal's achievement is in line with ITC's commitment to scale newer heights in creating a 'Climate Positive and Future Tech Enterprise'. In LEED Zero Water, a balance is maintained between total potable water consumption and total alternative or recycled water use.

In addition, ITC Hotels, guided by the ethos of 'Responsible Luxury' have achieved another global first. The "World's First Twelve LEED Zero Carbon Certified Hotels" are all ITC Hotel properties. LEED Zero Carbon recognises net zero carbon emissions from energy consumption through carbon emissions avoided or offset over 12 months. To obtain the certificate, a project must attain a carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) balance of zero for the past year.

"With ITC Windsor, Bengaluru being the foremost consciously designed building to help achieve the LEED Zero Carbon status for us, we swiftly moved on to ITC Grand Chola -Chennai, ITC Gardenia - Bengaluru, Welcomhotel Bengaluru, Welcomhotel Guntur, Welcomhotel Chennai, ITC Mughal - Agra, Welcomhotel Coimbatore, Sheraton New Delhi, ITC Grand Central – Mumbai, ITC Maratha – Mumbai and most recently ITC Rajputana - Jaipur," shares Chadha.

ITC Hotels is also the largest hotel chain in the world, with 22 of its hotels being awarded the LEED Platinum Certification by USGBC. Considered the international benchmark for eco-friendly buildings, the LEED platinum rating is the highest honour given based on five categories, namely sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality.

Feat after feat and in another remarkable feat and much ahead of time, ITC Hotels and Welcomhotel have achieved their 2030 carbon emission targets as per the COP21 Paris Agreement. Here, ITC Hotels' sustainability efforts have led to:

- Over 57 per cent of electricity consumption is generated through renewable sources.
- Reducing fresh water consumption over the last 5 few years: equivalent to irrigating 100 thousand trees,



▲ Anil Chadha

sequestering 95 thousand tonnes of Co<sub>2</sub>. (approx.).

- Recycling/Reusing of more than 99 per cent of solid waste.
- Eliminating 2.5 lakh kg (annual) of single-use plastic.
- Over 50 per cent of food and beverage being locally sourced.

"Sustainability is the bedrock of all operations at ITC Hotels. ITC Hotels shall continue to create world-class luxury experiences through responsible practices which are in harmony with the environment and society," reminds Chadha.

'Responsible Luxury' is another unique initiative pioneered, nurtured, and realised by ITC over the years, which they believe brought a paradigm shift in the hospitality industry towards sustainability. For the betterment of the overall industry, they have always shared their best practices with other industry colleagues and leaders. For example, their ISB case study on "Responsible Luxury" features prominently in Harvard Business Publishing and Ivey Publishing and it is taught at HBS.



Sharing more on the luxury with responsibility, Chadha mentions, “ITC Hotels blended ‘Luxury and Sustainability’ together and pioneered the concept of Responsible Luxury, integrating world-class luxury with ‘green best practices’ to enable Planet Positive luxury experiences for guests and other stakeholders. Our belief is guided by the philosophy that luxury brands must have sustainable practices embedded in them. At ITC Hotels, we call this Responsible Luxury - Luxury without compromising the earth and sustainability without compromising luxury.”

Speaking about the industry moving towards sustainable construction, Chadha says, “Sustainable construction means building with renewable and recyclable resources and materials. There are many ways in which companies can improve sustainability and reduce their carbon footprint, such as harnessing renewable energy, recycling water, using on-site water treatment plants to minimise waste and recycling and building with renewable or waste materials, treating solid waste, sourcing consumables locally, eco-sensitive architecture and design protocols that help to create a journey for a brighter tomorrow.”



ITC Mughal





# TITLIS GLACIER MOUNTAIN

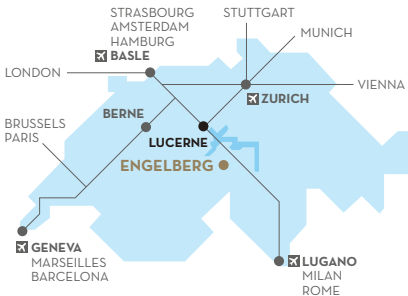
Enjoy a magical day under bright blue skies on sparkling fresh snow. Soar like an eagle over stunning glacier crevasses with the Ice-Flyer and indulge with snow toys at the Glacier Park. Let your heart pulsate on the breath-taking Cliff Walk. Mount TITLIS is a spot not to miss!



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# InterGlobe Hotels

raising the benchmark in the smart economy segment

The joint venture between InterGlobe Enterprises and Accor led to the formation of InterGlobe Hotels. Further, the combined strength led to the creation of the 'ibis' network of hotels in India. The brand is now filling a major void in the market while catering to the increased demand, a result of booming domestic and international travel. JB Singh, President and CEO, InterGlobe Hotels, translates how best they make a difference in the lives of their guests.

Prashant Nayak



▲ JB Singh

**T**he hotel industry has indeed gone through a seismic shift in the year 2022. However, the sector in the same year witnessed some of its best-performing months, with a few months surpassing the pre-COVID performance levels of 2019. This was largely due to pent-up demand from all business segments, domestic travelers, and strong MSME demand except inbound. The momentum continues backed by strong domestic demand, but the slow revival of the IT sector and inbound travel remains a challenge for the hospitality industry.

There are other challenges that hoteliers still face to maintain an even flow of revenues. Singh says, "Post COVID, shortening of booking window especially for group bookings, which

used to be 2-3 months earlier and has now come down to 2-3 weeks, is a challenge. The longer booking window used to act in the favor of the operators to effectively manage the inventory and optimise occupancy at their hotels. However, the trend is now slowly going back to normal. Furthermore, achieving the right segment mix and optimising them during the low season always remains a focus area for the hotels."

InterGlobe Hotels and ibis are now solid brands with a strong customer base. This has been achieved through their commitment to high-quality service and brand recall. Their ability to innovate and evolve has produced strong market engagement owing to new-gen and trendy design, strategic locations, innovative F&B, and smart public areas.

"Staying true to our ibis DNA of music and art, we continue to promote local artists and showcase their talent at our hotels. We are also in continuous engagement with our customers through music by organising events across our portfolio and providing specially curated playlists at each of our hotels to enhance their staying experience. Strong loyalty program with continuous offers and engagement helps us maintain a long-lasting relationship with our guests. As a brand, customer satisfaction is at our pedestal. Our employees are constantly involved with their guests to provide them with a more reassuring, holistic, and enjoyable experience that caters to all age groups and focusing not only on stay but also on F&B, facilities and experience," assures Singh.

InterGlobe's new hotel design has been conceptualised for the modern traveller with spaces that are more fluid, giving a warm look and feel. For example, they have now included specially curated libraries and art by young and upcoming artists, which appeal to millennials and Gen Z alike

and for both business and leisure travellers.

Singh shares more, "We at InterGlobe Hotels, offer a refreshing and pleasant stay for different guests' segments like corporates, families, social groups and younger millennials with great food offerings, trendy and energetic public spaces, with photo-worthy and Instagrammable spaces inside the hotel. Our new-gen hotel rooms feature state-of-the-art meeting spaces and boardrooms capable of holding social events and conferences making us an ideal location for conducting business. Our hotels also offer seamless Wi-Fi connectivity at every corner to cater to the needs of business travelers and influencers alike."

InterGlobe Hotels has partnered with the best of international interior and architectural design firms to deliver modern designs with chic and lively public areas of their hotels, combining Western aesthetics with elements of Indian art. "Curated experiences are becoming a trend in hospitality and digital transformation of hotels is the need of the hour to serve today's traveller. We at InterGlobe Hotels are fully equipped with these changing times to use technology to understand our guest's preferences and that enables us to understand their needs and expectations better, which in turn helps us to customise and curate experiences for them. Our food curators have handpicked cuisines and food that caters to the conscious traveller who eats healthy and leads an active lifestyle," asserts Singh.

Over the last year, InterGlobe Hotels have opened two new-gen ibis hotels at Bengaluru and Thane, near Mumbai, with a total inventory of 340 keys. Furthermore, they have a solid pipeline of three hotels (500 keys), including an ibis property in Mumbai, and ibis Styles in Goa, and an upscale hotel in Bengaluru.



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# WelcomHeritage Hotels

## Fostering Deeper Connection with Guests

Over the last decade, the hotel industry has been constantly evolving to meet the changing wants and needs of its guests. However, post-COVID, guest expectations have evolved faster than ever before, which is putting pressure on hotels to offer more. Abinash Manghani, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels, shares some pointers on how they are attending to the needs of the ever-changing guest expectations, digital nomads, and guest engagements.

Prashant Nayak

India's hospitality sector is currently experiencing significant growth in terms of revenue and room nights sold, led by emerging classes of travellers who seek quality, comfort, hygiene, variety, and services. However, getting guests regularly is hard when many of them make their choices based on preference or price. At WelcomHeritage, their hospitality and services consistently go beyond the ordinary satisfaction of guests, earning a strong sense of loyalty from them.

"We see our guests returning in our reviews to savour a WelcomHeritage experience again. Adding to this, encouraging guest engagement is a powerful strategy that can influence potential clients' behaviour and lead to increased hotel bookings, brand loyalty, and customer retention rates. To achieve this, it is crucial to maximise online presence through social media and a user-friendly website as well as utilise effective communication channels that facilitate interaction with potential guests throughout all stages of their journey, including the pre-trip, during their stay, and post-trip phases," says Abinash. Some strategies that WelcomHeritage Hotels follow consistently to maintain engagement with their guests are:

**Text-based communication strategies:** An effective strategy to ensure continuous engagement with guests throughout their entire buyer's journey.

**Use of social media:** Social media has emerged as one of the most effective engagement strategies in the hospitality industry. It enables hoteliers to not only build brand awareness but also connect with potential guests in a meaningful way.

**Clear brand identity and tone of voice:** This helps to build trust and recognition, making it easier for potential customers to identify and engage with our brand across different channels.

**Leveraging data:** In today's digital age, by using available data with them, they effectively create messages that resonate with guests, increasing the likelihood of engagement and ultimately conversion.

With travellers intending to combine work and travel in the future, there is a growing need for Indian hotels to adapt to the needs of digital nomads. Abinash mentions, "By catering to the needs of digital nomads, we can attract a new demographic of travellers and establish our properties as a destination of choice for remote workers who prioritise work-life balance and flexibility." WelcomHeritage hotels cater to the demands of digital nomads in a variety of ways, including:

**High-speed internet:** WelcomHeritage hotels are investing regularly in high-speed and reliable internet infrastructure to ensure that such guests can work without interruption.

**Dedicated workspaces:**

WelcomHeritage hotels have created dedicated workspaces for digital nomads, such as coworking spaces or private work areas, to provide a professional and distraction-free environment for work.

**Comfortable accommodations:**

WelcomHeritage hotels provide amenities such as ergonomic chairs, work desks, and comfortable beds to make their stay more comfortable.

**Flexible check-in/check-out:** Digital nomads may have unpredictable work schedules, so they offer flexible check-in/check-out options to accommodate their needs.

**Access to recreational activities:** Their hotels offer access to recreational activities such as fitness centers, yoga studios, and swimming pools to cater to this need.

**Technology-enabled services:** Many of WelcomHeritage hotels have adopted technology-enabled services such as mobile check-in, contactless payments, and digital concierge services to cater to the needs of digital nomads who are often tech-savvy.

To compete today, hoteliers must rely on various methods as guest expectations are rising and evolving faster than they ever have before. "Overall, meeting guests' ever-rising expectations and experiences requires a holistic approach. Our hotels continuously evaluate and



▲ Abinash Manghani

improve the guest experience to stay ahead of the competition. This may involve investing in new technologies, updating room designs, and improving service offerings," informs Abinash.

**Personalisation:** Personalisation is key for WelcomHeritage hotels. This may include customised recommendations, tailored experiences, and personalised services.

**Technology:** They use mobile check-in, digital concierge services, and virtual tours to enhance their guest experiences.

**Customer feedback:** Guest satisfaction is a priority for them. They solicit and incorporate guest feedback to identify areas for improvement and make positive changes.

**Consistency:** Guests expect a consistent experience across all properties of a hotel chain. And WelcomHeritage focuses on maintaining consistent standards in terms of amenities, services across all properties to ensure that guests know what to expect.

**Staff training:** A defining experience for guests is the staff they interact and engage with. WelcomHeritage invests regularly in staff training to ensure that staff is knowledgeable, and helpful, and provides exceptional service.





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# Exceeding expectations in the ever-changing hospitality business

Over the years, the evolving guest experience, expectations, and demands are ever increasing. With three generations travelling, there is a greater expectation that the service be tailored according to individual needs. Hotels are looking for ways to become more agile and responsive to their guests. Rishi Mattu, General Manager, ITC Grand Bharat, Gurugram, identifies a few touchpoints to adapt in these changing times that deliver a positive customer experience and exceed expectations.

Prashant Nayak

**A**tribute to the glory of India and set amidst the Aravalis, ITC Grand Bharat Gurugram features 104 suites and villas, a 27-hole golf course along with exquisite culinary and wellness experiences. To showcase its splendour, the retreat offers a strong, personalised value proposition — one that connects with the guests consistently across all marketing channels. And social media plays an important role in their marketing efforts.

At ITC Grand Bharat, their marketing strategy is based on three pillars: authenticity, engagement, and personalisation. “We showcase the true essence of our Retreat, which is an unhurried luxury getaway built on the ethos of Responsible Luxury that celebrates India’s rich culture and heritage. We use high-quality images and videos to highlight our unique features, such as our 27-hole signature golf course, our luxurious spa and our diverse culinary offerings among others for a holistic experience for our audience online. In addition to this, we interact with our followers regularly by promptly responding to their comments, questions and feedback. We also encourage them to share their experiences with us by using hashtags, tagging us or sharing reviews. We also collaborate with influencers and bloggers who align with our brand values and assist in amplifying our message,” states Rishi.

To build a lasting and meaningful connection with its audience, the Retreat works towards understanding its audience’s interests and preferences through the engagement shown towards its content online. Then they segment them into different groups based on their demographics, location, travel purpose, and booking history. They also tailor their content and offers to suit their needs and expectations. Re-marketing tools are also used to engage with guests across different platforms and channels. Adding more Rishi says, “By following these key pillars, we aim to create a strong, personalised value proposition for our Retreat that resonates with a diverse set of travellers consistently across all marketing channels. We believe that social media marketing is not just a tool, but a way of building relationships and creating memorable experiences for our guests.”

With Generation X, Y, and Z all travelling regularly, one of the challenges that hotels face today is catering to the diverse needs and expectations of different generations of travellers. Generation X, Y, and Z have different preferences when it comes to booking, staying, and engaging with hotels. To customise their preferences individually, at ITC Grand Bharat, they adopt a multi-faceted approach. “We analyse customer feedback to understand the preferences and behaviour of each generation. For example, we have been able to identify that Generation X values convenience and loyalty programs, Generation Y values social media and personalisation, and Generation Z values sustainability and authenticity. We actively work toward creatively offering a range of curated experiences and services that appeal to each generation. This enables us to create a personalised and memorable experience for each



▲ Rishi Mattu

of our guests cutting across generations. We also place great emphasis on the training of our associates to provide friendly and attentive service that makes each guest feel valued and appreciated,” asserts Rishi.

Being an uber luxury Retreat, ITC Grand Bharat Gurugram takes pride in curating unhurried luxury experiences for its guests. They believe that by providing their associates with the right tools, training, and support, they can create memorable and personalised moments for their guests. Rishi strongly believes that their associates are their greatest asset and by empowering them to drive guest experiences, they create a culture of excellence that sets them apart. Rishi mentions, “To achieve this, we have implemented a range of initiatives that focus on employee empowerment, including ongoing training and development to enhance their skills and knowledge. This includes both technical training (e.g., customer service, communication, problem-solving) and soft skills (e.g., emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, leadership). Additionally, we believe that recognition and reward are a great morale booster for the entire team and therefore, continually acknowledge our associates for their hard work and dedication. Moreover, we maintain open lines of communication within the team and encourage team members to actively share their ideas, feedback, and concerns. This helps us in identifying areas where we can improve and ensures that every member of team ITC Grand Bharat feels heard and valued.”



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# Employee Efficiency

## Key to Guest Happiness at Hyatt

Every hotel guest remembers personalised experiences, which connect with them. That is why it is essential for hoteliers to give their best when it comes to the guest experience. Shrikant Wakharkar, Area Vice President of Hyatt Hotels, North and General Manager, Hyatt Regency Delhi reflects on topics like empowering and upskilling employees, engaging trade partners, and effective guest communication, which are some of the ways to enhance the guest experience to another level.

Prashant Nayak

According to industry players, India's G20 presidency is boosting the domestic travel and hospitality industry, with hotels seeing increased bookings and a substantial surge in hotel room pricing. Indian hospitality also stands to benefit from increased visibility and exposure on a global stage. This is the biggest boost to India's hospitality sector since it has come at a good time when all are getting out of the pandemic impact. However, at this time, when business is picking up, hotels are also dealing with staff shortages.

"This year is very crucial for the Indian hospitality industry at large. India's G20 presidency has presented us with a unique opportunity to change the narrative around inbound tourism. We must rise to the occasion and extend the highest levels of services and exceptional hospitality to all visitors so that each of them is a spokesperson for our tourism industry. To achieve this, it is imperative to address the fissures in the skill-gap requirement in the hospitality industry rather than focusing on increasing the strength of the staff. The intent is to optimise resources to increase efficiency and quality standards. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate a culture of continuous learning so that the associates are continuously skilled, re-skilled and up-skilled to carry out cross-functions and multiple tasks more deftly. We, at Hyatt Regency Delhi, lay great emphasis on training our employees regularly so that they are well-equipped to extend the best possible care to the guests," shares Shrikant.

Empowering employees to drive the guest experience has also been a very important part of Hyatt's purpose of care, and it is a key element of Hyatt's employee engagement strategy. Hyatt's culture empowers every individual to



▲ Shrikant Wakharkar

be his or her best, and such authentic connections inspire the way they care for each other and the guests. For them, the most important facet is training and upskilling their people so that they are well-equipped to deal with all kinds of hurdles, make decisions and further provide the best possible care to all guests.

Shrikant further adds, "Another way that we nurture and motivate key talent here is by giving them adequate recognition. We understand that recognition is a critical aspect for which we have a comprehensive recognition program in place called the HYstar in which associates at all levels are recognised and suitably rewarded for all their hard work and notable contributions. This has helped us control attrition to a large extent and has also given a great impetus to our employees to drive the guest experience. It goes without saying that empowering employees starts with meeting their foundational needs, hence we try our best to provide them with a conducive work environment, ample learning opportunities and knowledge tools which help them become more

adept at extending exceptional hospitality to all our guests."

Hospitality is a people-oriented business. In the last decade, Hyatt has been focusing on building and strengthening their relationships directly with customers to drive most of their revenue and customise their offerings. "We are happy to share that today, we see a lot of our business is through direct bookings via our website, and through leads secured by our sales team at corporate rates. This is due to our heavy investments in hiring the best talent to promote our offline and digital initiatives of direct bookings, which drive potential guests to reach out to us directly. Our robust loyalty program, World of Hyatt, has further boosted the rate of direct bookings received, thereby increasing revenue and enhancing the overall guest experience," shares Shrikant.

At the same time, Hyatt deeply values the business they get through OTAs and travel agents who enable them to reach out to many untapped segments and add to the overall revenue. "Through reviews and photos shared on OTA platforms, we have been able to connect and engage with customers more personally. This has helped us garner more trust among travellers from around the world. The bulk bookings received through travel agents and travel partners have also helped the hotel drive its revenue in a post-pandemic era and continue to be an important medium for driving revenue," affirms Shrikant. They are also working on garnering greater engagement across various social media platforms to gather deeper insights into the dynamic needs of their diverse customer segments. It has always been important for them to deliver meaningful and integrated experiences for moments that matter to their guests.



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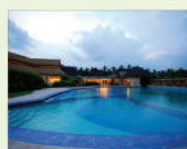
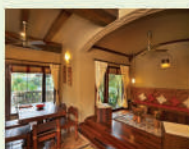
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# The St. Regis Goa Resort

## Signature experiences wrapped in luxury

Located in the serene and subtle environs of South Goa, The St. Regis Goa opened its gates in 2022. Known for its stylish abode and luxurious services, the hotel has already established its footprint within one year of its inception. TTJ spoke with Satish Kumar, General Manager, The St. Regis Goa, to get an insight into the year gone by and their plans to enhance the guest experience in 2023. Here's a look at what he has to say...

Prashant Nayak

**T**he St. Regis brand is known for its bespoke and anticipatory service, underscored by the signature Butler Service. A selection of family traditions and rituals provide a spectrum of unique experiences that their guests are privy to. Combine that with an unparalleled location, and it would well sum up a St. Regis resort experience. The unmatched address of being located near the estuary, at the confluence of the Sal River and the Arabian Sea, blends beautifully with the resort in pristine South Goa.

As a relatively new resort, there are certain challenges in streamlining its operations. Satish Kumar says, "Finding top talent and retaining them has been on the top of everyone's radar. Shortage in the workforce is an acute challenge and we are trying to tackle this by collaborating with colleges and providing excellent training for our teams. It does help that we are part of Marriott International and the sheer number of our workforce means that there's always a helping hand or support to step in when needed."

Currently, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi continue to be their top feeder markets in the country. The numbers from these cities are continuing to grow. They have seen a healthy return of their international guests as well. Guests from Russia, the United Kingdom, and the CIS countries like Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan continue to come back to Goa and this has also impacted the length of stay because they come in as pure leisure guests. Some Western European countries are also showing up as source markets, which is a good sign.



▲ Satish Kumar

At The St. Regis Goa, they are in the process of curating a purely wellness-based Ayurveda Journey Package, as there has been a marked interest in this segment.

The St. Regis Goa Resort features 206 guestrooms, including 46 suites offering private terraces overlooking the tranquil lagoons or the golf course. For the ultimate bespoke luxury, there are 20 luxuriously appointed suites and villas, 12 of which feature plunge pools, private access to the beach, and all-day indulgent dining at The Manor.

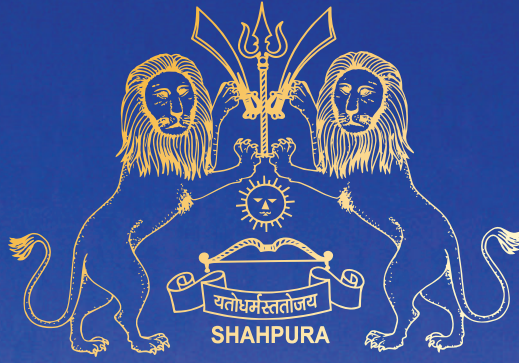
"The St. Regis Goa Resort provides exquisite resort experiences which are rare for global and national guests. Everyday rituals like our resort's Afternoon Tea, Family Traditions and Evening Champagne Sabrage by the beach are some unique experiences that guests enjoy during their stay. For groups, there is a wide selection of activities ranging from yoga and meditation, golf,

outdoor picnics, nature walks, etc., and a mobile library for junior guests. These are some of the USPs of the property. We also have the varied iterations of the classic Bloody Mary cocktail that our global guests recognise as signature offerings of the brand. Enlivening these rituals against the stellar backdrop of our South Goa resort has been nothing short of extraordinary!" assures Satish Kumar.

On the marketing front, as a Marriott brand, the focus is on driving qualified traffic to the hotel's website. The hotel also likes to keep a relationship going with their OTA partners as well as with the travel agent fraternity. "In all honesty, the cost of doing business with these third parties is high because of commissions and advertising costs. I also mean that there is a lapse in the direct relationship with our guests. On this direct connect aspect, we have to mention the power of our loyalty program, Marriott Bonvoy, which aims to be a great connector with our guests," informs Satish Kumar.

Coming to MICE and wedding business, the resort nestled in lush greenery by the banks of Mobor Beach is a tranquil paradise and getting the attention of wedding planners and potential couples looking for bringing their dream wedding to life. The property is set to change the experience of MICE travellers with the launch of Glass House - a unique, concept-driven outdoor space for meetings and events. They have not only conducted some exquisite tropical weddings but also had MICE groups from renowned companies, attended and appreciated by their global leadership teams.





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# Unlock the elements of surprises at Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort

Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, located in the Shivalik ranges, is a luxury wellness resort with state-of-the-art facilities dedicated to the enrichment of physical, and spiritual health, beauty, and well-being. Akash Garg, Chairman and Managing Director, Asia Resorts, shares his company's background and the contributing factors that make the resort stand out from others in the blissful Himalayas.

Sonika Bohra

## How has Asia Resorts evolved in the hospitality business over the years?

Our journey began on December 22, 1982, when my father, the Late R.K. Garg, one of the pioneers in the tourism industry, launched Timber Trail, the first resort on the highway to Shimla. It was a time when this entire region was a part of the industrial circuit, with Baddi and Parwanoo being the manufacturing hubs. However, our family saw an opportunity to offer a unique tourism experience to visitors in the region.

We were the first hotel in India to introduce cable car service, which we consider to be one of our proudest

achievements. Over the years, we continued to expand our offerings, launching Timber Trail Heights in April 1988, followed by Moksha in 2009, and finally Terraces in December 2014.

## Please elaborate on the wellness philosophy that Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort follows.

We believe that wellness is not just about physical health but also encompasses mental and emotional well-being. Our philosophy is based on the principles of Ayurveda, which aims to balance the body, mind, and soul to promote overall health and harmony. We have a 70,000 sq. ft. spa, making it one of the largest in India. Our spa facilities include a full-sized 'Hammam and the resort gas temperature-controlled infinity pool with a stunning view of the valley, and hot Jacuzzis.

We offer a wide range of wellness activities, including yoga, meditation, and nature walks, which are designed to help guests connect with their inner selves and find peace in the midst of a busy lifestyle. Our culinary team also creates healthy and nourishing cuisine, with a focus on locally sourced, organic ingredients that promote good health.

## Moksha is also a popular wedding destination. Could you tell us about your strengths in catering to the wedding segment?

We understand that a wedding is one of the most special events in one's life. Our experienced team works closely with the couple and their families to ensure that every detail is planned and executed flawlessly, from decor to entertainment and more. We offer several stunning locations for the wedding ceremony and reception, including the lush green lawns, the open-air amphitheater, and the poolside area with stunning views of the valley. We also

have indoor banquet halls that can accommodate a large number of guests.

At our resort, the culinary team of experienced chefs offers a range of cuisine options, including local Himachali, Indian, and international delicacies. And, with the perfect weather throughout the year, guests can enjoy the breathtaking views and beautiful surroundings during their stay.

One of the unique features of our resort is the arrival of all guests through a cable car, which adds an element of charm and exclusivity to the event. With over 140 rooms available for approximately 300 guests, we can accommodate a sizable wedding group while also ensuring comfort and privacy. Additionally, we can combine our facilities with other properties too.

## We heard about the upgradation and addition plans at the resort. How will it contribute to the overall guest experience?

At Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, we are committed to providing our guests with an exceptional experience. That's why we have some exciting expansion plans in the works. We're focusing on upgrading our rooms with luxurious amenities and offering a more comprehensive wellness experience with Ayurvedic-centric offerings. We want to ensure that our guests have a truly restful and rejuvenating stay, which is why we provide 10-inch snoozer mattresses, high-quality bed linen and towels, and 100 per cent down feather pillows.

But that's not all! We're also thrilled to announce the launch of our new restaurant, Pines and Cones. This unique mountain café-inspired eatery offers a diverse menu of family-friendly food and stunning hill views. We believe that the addition of Pines and Cones will provide a memorable dining experience for our guests and attract a wider audience to our beautiful property. We are dedicated to continuously improving the guest experience, and these expansion plans are just one way we're doing that. We want to provide our guests with the best possible stay, and we believe that these upgrades and additions will help us achieve that goal.







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# Dusit

## gears up for Rapid Expansion, to re-enter India

*Dusit Thani LakeView Cairo*

Nichlas John Maratos, Vice President - Commercial, Dusit Hotels and Resorts, shared in an interview with Travel Trade Journal, his belief that the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic presented growth opportunities for the hospitality industry. Dusit Hotels and Resorts has implemented several changes to its operations to provide better guest experiences, including embracing technology to support front desk clerks and other staff, social media and influencer marketing, and sustainability initiatives. The company has identified four pillars that they focus on, which include personalised service, locality, wellness, and sustainability. Maratos expects Dusit Hotels and Resorts to reach pre-COVID levels by the end of 2023.

**Vartik Sethi**

**D**usit Hotels and Resorts plans to double the number of hotels in the next few years and expand worldwide. The hospitality group is committed to sustainability and supporting local communities. Nichlas John Maratos joined Dusit Hotels and Resorts because he was impressed by its reputation for delivering Thai hospitality, which is renowned the world over. Maratos also recognised that the company's growth strategy would be an exciting challenge for him to be part of.

The global hospitality industry has faced many challenges, especially with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maratos, however, sees these challenges as opportunities for growth. "I see technology playing a supportive role in the hospitality industry, enabling us to provide better guest experiences by taking away menial tasks and allowing more time for interaction," said Maratos. However, he does not see technology as a replacement for human interaction but rather as a tool that can enhance



▲ Nichlas John Maratos

the guest experience. Dusit Hotels and Resorts has embraced technology in its operations, and Maratos believes that it has the potential to support front desk clerks and other staff, enabling them to spend more time interacting with guests.

Social media and influencer marketing are also an important part of Dusit Hotels and Resorts' marketing strategy. The company recognises that digital marketing is becoming increasingly important and that social media and influencer marketing are essential components of that strategy. While artificial intelligence is still in its early stages in the hospitality industry, Maratos sees the potential for it to play a role in the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the hospitality industry, but Maratos is optimistic about Dusit Hotels and Resorts' recovery. He shared the company's aim for the year 2023 by stating, "The response to COVID has been challenging, but we are seeing recovery in many markets, with our aim being to reach pre-COVID levels by 2023."

According to Maratos, Dusit Hotels and Resorts has spent a lot of time during the pandemic thinking about how they want to reposition themselves in the hospitality arena. They have



identified four different pillars that they focus on, which they call their 'Graciousness Pillars.' These pillars include personalised service, locality, wellness, and sustainability. Maratos explains that these pillars play out in different ways, with personalised service being a key pillar for them.

Being a smaller hotel company, Dusit has the opportunity to know its customers a lot better and personalise what they offer them. This allows them to provide a unique experience to their guests, based on their individual needs. The second pillar, locality, is about providing guests with an experience that is unique to the location they are visiting. Maratos explains that when people are visiting a location like the Maldives, they are looking for a Maldivian experience that may have a service offering from Thailand, but they don't want Thailand replicated. The challenge is to bring that offering and experience alive for guests.

The third pillar, wellness, has become even more critical in the post-COVID era. Maratos believes that it is not just about offering spa treatments but weaving wellness into the whole guest experience. Whether attending a conference or an overnight stay, it should be more of a wellness experience than a hotel experience with a spa. The fourth pillar, sustainability, is an area that Dusit Hotels and Resorts takes very seriously. They partner with Thai farmers to grow organic jasmine rice and buy it directly from them, educating them on how to grow rice, market it, and package it. By cutting out the middlemen and storage that happens in distribution, they support the farmers directly and pay them more, while guests benefit from great quality rice.

Dusit Hotels and Resorts also uses solar energy in many of its properties, demonstrating a commitment to sustainability. According to Maratos, customer feedback is crucial to hospitality, and Dusit Hotels and Resorts pays a lot of attention to it. He shared, "We see hospitality as someone being invited to our home and making sure they spend a good time with us." Understanding customers' needs is critical, and staying engaged with customers helps them adapt their



*Kids Club at Dusit Thani Maldives*

services accordingly.

Maratos sees technology as a significant and exciting development in the hospitality sector. He cites facial recognition technology as an example of how technology is taking the administration out of transactions to give staff more time to interact with customers and give them a great experience. The growth of the middle class in countries like China and India also presents significant opportunities. He added, "I think Asia's a growing market that offers great opportunities." Dusit Hotels and Resorts plans to double the number of hotels in the next few years and may grow further, with many deals under discussion.

In terms of future goals, Maratos says that Dusit Hotels and Resorts aims to get back to 2019 numbers, which they expect to achieve soon. They plan to open more hotels this year than ever before, with two in Nepal, one in Shimla, one in Kolkata, and more deals under discussion. They have also opened their first hotel in Europe in Greece and re-entered Nairobi. Two new hotels are coming up in Bangkok, and they continue to sign new deals all the time.

Dusit Hotels and Resorts expresses its deep appreciation and utmost regard for Indian travellers, whose patronage and support have been instrumental in propelling the brand forward. In turn,

Maratos stated that Dusit is honored to have earned the admiration and trust of Indian travellers, who have come to appreciate the warm and gracious hospitality that is emblematic of the Dusit experience, be it through a luxurious stay or a culinary escape.

The shared affinity between Dusit and Indian travellers is anchored on a profound connection that transcends geographic borders. With discerning tastes and an appreciation for excellence, Indian travellers have consistently demonstrated a keen understanding of the brand and its unique proposition, whether in Thailand or elsewhere.

As such, the relationship between Dusit Hotels and Resorts and Indian travellers is symbiotic in nature, one that is characterised by a mutual understanding and respect for each other's values and preferences. Maratos said, "Dusit appreciates and values Indian travellers, and equally, Indian travellers appreciate Dusit and what it offers. They truly appreciate Thai hospitality, whether that's a stay or a food experience that creates a strong connection with Indian travellers. Whether it's in Thailand or elsewhere, many Indian travellers understand what the Dusit brand represents and what it offers. As a result, we have a great symbiotic relationship between Indian travellers and Dusit."



*Dusit Thani Hua Hin*



# Brij Hotels

## A Collection of Distinctive Properties with Immersive Experiences

Launched in 2021, Brij Hotels has moved from strength to strength, with seven hotels in North India. The brand comprises bespoke boutique properties offering exclusive experiences amalgamated with modern aesthetics and heart-warming hospitality. The hotels are all eclectically designed with modern luxury while showcasing local arts, crafts and culture. Spearheaded by Udit Kumar and Anant Kumar, who have a penchant for personalised, boutique properties inspired by their global travel and that draws on the culture of the local area. Udit Kumar, Co-Founder, Brij Hotels, gives an insight into the Brij brand, its portfolio and its uniqueness that has created a niche in the hospitality industry.

Prashant Nayak



### What was the motivation and inspiration behind establishing Brij Hotels?

Brij is inspired by the life and work of my great-grandfather, Babu Brijpal Das ji, who was the Founder of Clarks Group of Hotels. With Brij, we wanted to create a hospitality brand that is synonymous with authentic travel experiences across unique destinations in India. Sustainability, working with local communities and curating hyperlocal

experiences is at the core of our brand philosophy.

### What is the motto and belief of the Brij brand?

Our motto at Brij is to curate bespoke hotels that offer immersive experiences, connecting guests with the unique flavours and traditions of local communities. We are dedicated to showcasing India's diverse cultural heritage, celebrating the beauty of each

region, and providing personalised hospitality that meets our guests' individual needs. Whether they seek a luxurious retreat or an adventurous getaway, we invite our guests to discover the authentic charm of India through our take on bespoke hospitality.

We firmly believe that sustainable tourism and hospitality practices are the only way forward. As a brand, we are committed to responsible and sustainable tourism practices that protect the environment, support local communities, and preserve traditional crafts and techniques. We work closely with local artisans, craftsmen, and suppliers to source materials and services, ensuring that our operations are socially responsible and economically sustainable. We also strive to reduce our environmental footprint through eco-friendly practices and technologies, ensuring that our guests can enjoy a comfortable and memorable stay while minimising their impact on the environment.

### Brief us about the hotel properties that you operate.

Brij currently operates seven properties, with two new hotels – Brij Anarya Dharamshala and Brij Atmanya Bhowali - Nainital, scheduled for launch in May 2023.

**Brij Bageecha, Kukas – Jaipur (Rajasthan)** - Our newest launch, this is an all-villa property. Brij Bageecha is nestled amidst 11 acres of lush greenery and surrounded with water bodies, fruit orchards, organic vegetable farms and manicured gardens. The resort is pet-friendly and each 1250 sq. ft. Villa overlooks the lake and offers a private sit-in pool.



**BrijRama Palace Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh):** This is our flagship property, a 210-year-old palace which stands mightily on the banks of the famous Darbhanga Ghat in Varanasi.

**Brij Pola Jawai (Rajasthan):** This luxurious tented accommodation property is nestled in the heart of the wilds of Jawai in Rajasthan. The property boasts four expansive tents, each covering an area of 2500 sq ft and situated in the distinctive wilderness of Jawai Bandh. Guests can avail the services of a dedicated naturalist and personal butler, adding to the overall experience.

**Brij Lakshman Sagar, Pali (Rajasthan):** Located in a serene rural setting spanning 32 acres, this property is an oasis that features 12 independent cottages, each with a private pool. The property also includes a historic man-made water catchment and a hand-carved swimming pool situated on top of a rock hill, all contributing to the tranquil atmosphere.

**Brij Nest Suites, Jaipur (Rajasthan):** A charming boutique hotel, located centrally in Jaipur, that offers some of the finest suites in the city. Each of the 12 suites is equipped with modern amenities and features stunning decor, reflecting the rich culture and heritage of Jaipur. Facilities include a rooftop swimming pool, restaurant, and fitness centre.

**Brij Gaj Kesri, Bikaner (Rajasthan):** Featuring 40 rooms, Brij Gaj Kesri in Bikaner is a modern-day manor house that spans 16 acres and is a testament to the Marwari patronage of art and architecture. The property is built on five levels, which include sprawling gardens, three beautiful drawing rooms, a courtyard, a vegetarian restaurant, cafe, 8 event venues and a luxurious rooftop pool. USP: Palace property

**Brij Villa, Dalhousie (Himachal Pradesh):** Brij Villa is a 150-year-old colonial-era heritage bungalow, which was owned and built by the Lieutenant General of the British Army during India's colonisation. The property offers six well-appointed rooms, each with panoramic views of the landscape, valley or courtyard. Guests can enjoy on-site multi-cuisine dining and a plethora of indoor and outdoor activities and experiences.

**Have you been seeing recovery in your hotel occupancies? Which are the segments that Brij Hotels was able to capitalise on in 2022? Moving forward, tell us about your preparedness and expectations in 2023.**

Yes, occupancy has dramatically increased, on all fronts. We have

witnessed a huge flow of domestic tourism with an upswing in Leisure and Bleisure travel. There has been a significant increase in the small-scale boutique weddings segment too.

We are anticipating a better year ahead. While we have already experienced a surge in domestic tourism, we are still awaiting the full impact of inbound travel, which we expect to pick up in the coming months. To cater to the evolving preferences of travellers, we are pushing for experience-based travel, as more and more travellers are actively seeking out such experiences. Furthermore, we believe that the implementation of the TCS law, which will become applicable from 1st July, will bolster domestic travel. While this law is income tax adjustable, we anticipate that it will impact cashflow and that regular domestic travellers will factor this into their decision-making process.

**Having a big base of hotels in Rajasthan, how are your hotels faring in the Wedding and MICE business?**

Brij properties are more experiential in nature and works well for the FIT, inbound and domestic HNI traveller segment. However, for Brij Gaj Kesri in Bikaner, Weddings and MICE is a focus segment. The wedding business has been quite upbeat in Bikaner, however, MICE is yet to pick pace.

**Tell us how your hotel group is working on improving the need for the guests' ever-rising expectations and experiences. How do you empower employees to drive the guest experience?**

At Brij, we are committed to delivering unforgettable experiences that exceed our guests' expectations. To achieve this, we have implemented a comprehensive approach that revolves around our people, services, and guest feedback.

We believe that our people are the foundation of our success, which is why we invest in their growth and development. Our employees are empowered to take ownership of their roles and use their skills to create personalised and memorable guest experiences. We encourage them to think outside the box and take initiative to make each guest feel valued and appreciated.

Overall, our focus on people, services, and guest feedback enables us to create exceptional experiences that keep our guests coming back. We are always looking for ways to innovate and enhance our operations, and we remain committed to delivering personalised

and unforgettable experiences that exceed our guests' expectations.

**Which are the feeder markets for your hotel properties, and which are the ones you are looking at developing in the upcoming years?**

Our main feeder market is the domestic traveller. We are looking to develop travel from tier 2 towns as we believe that the potential here is strong.

We are also focusing on travellers from England, Europe and America. This has always been a strong segment for us and the depreciating Rupee has only helped us in trying to capture this more.

**On which merits do you select new properties? Please throw light on Brij Hotels' growth and expansion plans.**

We consider multiple factors while selecting new properties.

- Experience the property/location can provide. This is most important.
- Feasibility of attracting the required customers for a boutique experiential hotel.
- Potential to convert and/or run the unit as a luxury property.

We are currently inundated with prospects as we are seeing an exponential rise in experiential travel. We are building assets in Pokhara - Nepal, Mulshi - Maharashtra, Raipur Fort - Pali and Lucknow - Uttar Pradesh. In addition to this within the next 90 days, we are launching properties in Bhowali- Nainital, Dharamshala and Bandhavgarh. We are also exploring locations such as Ooty, Goa, Coorg, and Mashobra with various individuals.

**The number of people who choose to bring their pets on holiday is increasing every year and traveling with pets is one of the fastest-growing trends in the travel industry. What are your thoughts on pet-friendly hotels?**

At Brij Hotels, we recently launched a pet-friendly hotel, Brij Bageecha Kukas – Jaipur, to cater to the growing demand of pet-friendly travel. We believe that traveling with pets is one of the fastest-growing trends in the travel industry, and it's important to provide pet owners with options that allow them to enjoy their holidays with their furry friends. Our pet-friendly resort is designed to offer a comfortable and welcoming stay for both pets and their owners. We are committed to providing personalised services and amenities to ensure that our guests and their pets have a memorable stay with us.



# Shahpura Hotels and Resorts

A Tale of Royalty, Sustainability, and Community Involvement

Shahpura Hotels and Resorts is a luxury hotel chain that specialises in heritage properties, with a growing portfolio of 15 hotels in India and plans to cover the entire country by 2024. In an interview with Travel Trade Journal, Digraj Singh Shahpura, Director, Shahpura Hotels and Resorts, spoke about the company's focus on creating products that meet the market's demand for culture and heritage.

Vartik Sethi



▲ Digraj Singh Shahpura

## Journey from Heritage to Luxury Properties

Offering a wide range of properties, Shahpura Hotels has an inventory of palaces, city hotels, resorts, and luxury boutiques. The company's heritage properties, including forts and palaces in Rajasthan, are the core of the business, and the company has renovated and maintained them to meet the market's luxury standards. The group is focused on creating a product that meets the demand of the market and is consistently renovating its heritage properties.

Shahpura Hotels' flagship hotel, Shahpura House, was opened in 1990, and the company has since expanded to include more properties. Their commitment to providing luxurious and sustainable tourism experiences while also being actively involved in community development sets them apart in the industry.

## Expansion and Renovation Strategies for Royal Heritage Tourism

The company has also expanded its business by entering into management contracts. The company has a team that analyses tier 1 and tier 2 cities to determine where to focus its expansion. The company has plans to open hotels in Mumbai, Pune, Goa, Himachal, and Kerala, with a 28-room resort in Munnar and a property in Goa set to open soon. In an attempt to stand out from other heritage properties, Shahpura Hotels consistently renovates its heritage properties and is able to maintain

them to luxury standards. "Our focus has been renovating all the heritage to heritage products in our portfolio and making them up to the standards of," said Digraj Singh Shahpura. The company's passion for changing things and improving heritage properties has helped it grow from a single hotel to a portfolio of 15 properties in India.

## Efforts Towards Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

Apart from providing luxurious tourism experiences, Shahpura Hotels is also dedicated to sustainability and responsible tourism. Since their inception, they have been using solar plants for electricity and engaging in water harvesting. They also work towards eco-tourism and have built eco-friendly resorts that offer a unique experience of living in nature. To further their sustainability efforts, Shahpura Hotels has been planting trees and building solar plants in areas surrounding their hotels.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Shahpura Hotels also demonstrated their commitment to community involvement by offering free accommodation to doctors and airport authorities at their Shahpura Residency hotel. This effort was recognised by the government, and Shahpura Hotels received a certificate of appreciation for their contribution. In addition to their sustainable practices, Shahpura Hotels is also actively involved in community development. The company has an NGO that focuses on women's empowerment, children's education, skilled labor, and heritage

restoration. "The group also has been associated with an NGO since 2015. The focus is on women empowerment, children's education, skilled labor, and heritage restoration," added Digraj Singh Shahpura. They use their private funding to support these initiatives and have been actively involved in community development since 2015.

## Sub-brands for Tailored Hospitality Experiences

Shahpura Hotels and Resorts has introduced seven sub-brands that are designed to cater to specific travel requirements and experiences, making it easier for customers to choose their preferred property.

Each sub-brand caters to a specific segment. For instance, Shahpura Residency offers business hotels, Shahpura Wilderness features properties situated in wildlife areas, Shahpura Wellness offers spa properties, and Shahpura Heritage provides heritage properties. Shahpura Nomadic will cater to offbeat destinations, while Shahpura D-Divine will focus on religious tourism with properties located in Varanasi, Shirdi, Katra, and Ayodhya. The company is also in the process of developing Shahpura Boutique, which will showcase several boutique properties for regional tourism.



Shahpura Hotels is launching their own loyalty program. The first 500 members will receive exclusive offers and vouchers, and the launch event will be attended by trade partners and those who have been associated with the company.





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Pending Ticket Issuance

Unconfirmed

Pending Refunds

Pending Payment

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

Create New Booking

View All

Activities

New Activity

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March 2022

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

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# Cygnett Augments Customer Journey Despite Challenges

The hotel industry continues to bounce back and perform well. However, each hotel has its share of issues that must be resolved for smoother operations. Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder and MD, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts, discloses some operational challenges in the hotel business and how their hotels are adapting and finding solutions to them.

Prashant Nayak

**T**he hotel industry has faced significant challenges in the past few years and one of the major challenges that hoteliers still face is maintaining a consistent flow of revenue throughout the year. A large number of guests are also now viewing hotels as commodities where they are not ready to pay for generic services. Also, the guests belong to diverse groups, so meeting their needs and expectations is another challenge. The inbound tourism and business travel market has taken a big hit due to the pandemic, which has impacted the demand, further adding to the challenge of maintaining revenue flow.

“The hospitality industry also depends on several external factors, like economic and geopolitical stability, which can affect the business. In times of crisis like the pandemic, hotels are usually the first ones to bear the brunt. However, the Indian economy and a stable government have insulated us from these challenges for now,” says Sarbendra.

Nowadays, getting guests regularly is hard when many of them make their choices based on preference or price. However, Sarbendra says, “Brand recall and loyalty are key factors in attracting repeat clientele. A guest’s loyalty towards a hospitality brand can be influenced by various factors, such as their experience during the stay, the value they receive, and the benefits they enjoy. In today’s competitive hospitality landscape, it is important to differentiate your brand to retain guests.”

“Loyal customers are more likely to choose your brand, even if the tariff is higher, because of the quality you offer and their trust in your ability to meet their expectations. We encourage our customers to post reviews about our hotels on both online and offline platforms to help with brand awareness and reputation. Additionally, we use CRM reports to identify loyalty leads and focus on engaging with these guests



▲ Sarbendra Sarkar

to maintain a strong relationship with them,” adds Sarbendra.

From searching for a hotel to booking and then staying in a property, technology now plays an important role in delivering a top-notch experience to guests. “Hotels like ours are adapting to the needs of guests by offering the products and services that they require. For example, the digital nomads will need basic amenities like a reliable internet connection and a suitable work table, as well as quality F&B options and recreational activities within the hotel which we provide. Additionally, providing good meeting spaces is crucial to attracting this type of clientele,” shares Sarbendra.

The perception of long hours and low pay has long been cited as the

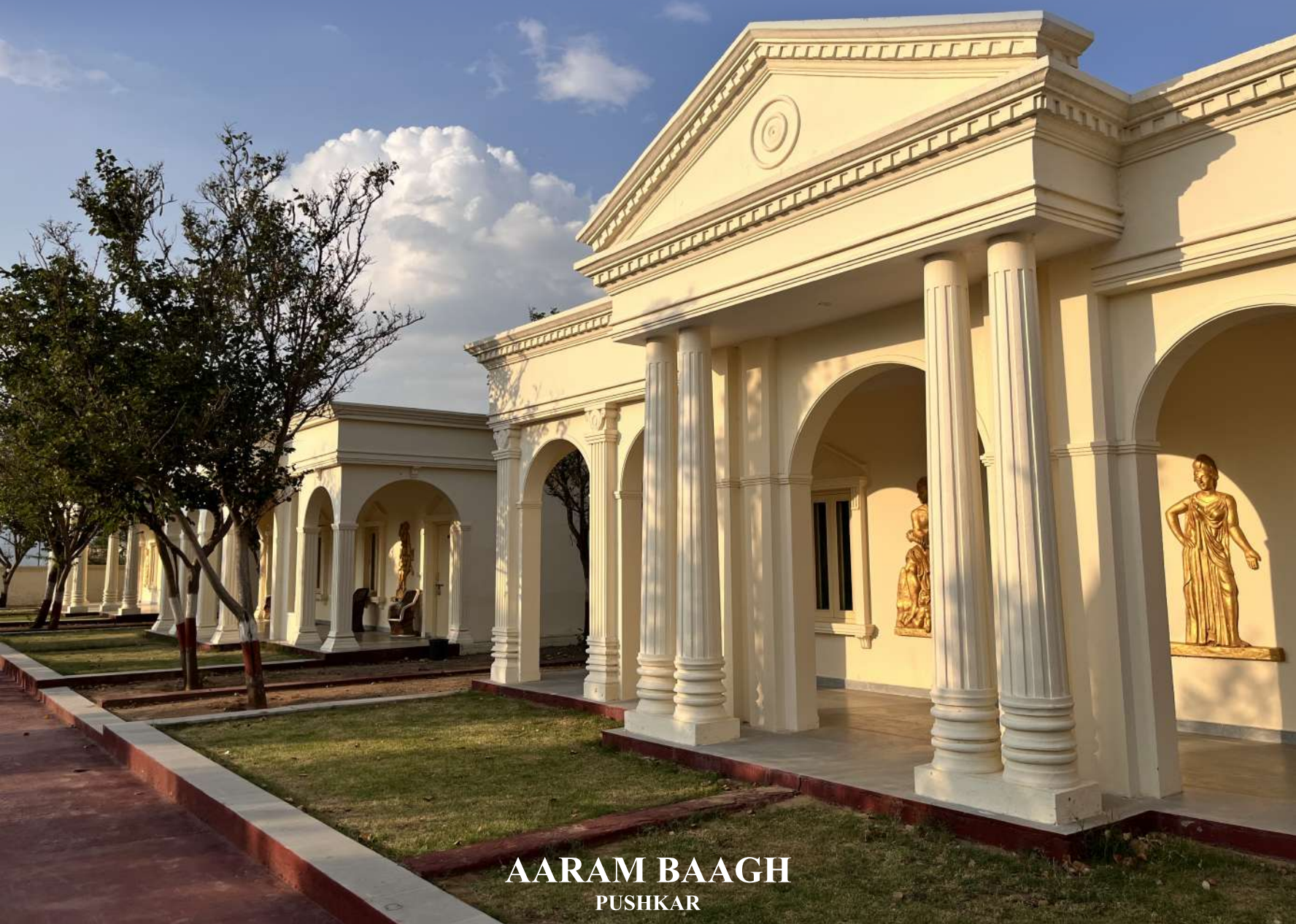
major deterrents for candidates to avoid careers in the hospitality sector. Secondly, the industry is not getting new talent or skilled people due to the lower admissions to hotel management institutes. On this, Sarbendra says, “This aspect has indeed been a long-standing challenge for the hospitality industry. As a hospitality chain, we prioritise the well-being of our employees and ensure that no employee is forced to work continuous long shifts. We also recognise that salaries in the hospitality sector must be competitive with other industries to attract the right talent. We have implemented a human resource policy that offers growth opportunities and financial incentives for deserving candidates. These efforts will help us to address the industry-wide challenge of attracting and retaining skilled talent.”

For many hotels, sustainability has now become one of the drivers of their strategic plan. However, Cygnett believes in responsible and sustainable tourism that prioritises environmental protection. Even travellers understand the need to choose hotels that help them to reduce their carbon footprints. That’s why they focus on utilising renewable energy to reduce their emissions and decrease costs. They also strive to localise their supply chain by sourcing raw materials from local farmers and promoting local menus to reduce transportation, time, and energy usage.

“Our commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism remains an integral part of our brand philosophy. Guests today are not just using hotels as an accommodation option but also connecting to the local communities and soaking in an experience that brings them closer to a destination. Experiential travel, which nowadays everyone is talking about, has the idea of sustainability at its core. So, we want guests staying with us to go on a self-realisation journey where they connect with the locals and experiences that are regional in nature,” explains Sarbendra.



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## PACHAR GROUP OF HOTELS

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# Discovering the Best of Leh

## A Stay at The Indus Valley

The Indus Valley, a luxury boutique property in Leh, Ladakh, has seen an increase in tourism despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. The hotel is the only walkable luxury property in the area and is known for its unique design, eco-friendly practices, and exceptional staff. In an interview with Sonam Parvez, Managing Director, The Indus Valley, we learned more about what makes it one of the top hotels in the region. From its breathtaking location to its exceptional amenities, The Indus Valley offers guests a luxurious and comfortable stay in Leh.

Vartik Sethi

**A**s the world navigates through uncertain times, the tourism industry has faced unprecedented challenges. Ladakh, known for its stunning landscapes and rich cultural heritage, has seen its fair share of the impact of the pandemic. However, despite the challenges, The Indus Valley, a luxury boutique property in Leh, has seen a good increase in tourism over the past couple of years.

Leh, Ladakh, is one of the most breathtakingly beautiful places in India, with its stark mountain landscapes, high-altitude passes, and clear blue skies. It's a destination that's been attracting travelers from all over the world for years, and it's no wonder why. Amidst all the natural beauty, The Indus Valley Hotel stands out as a luxurious oasis in the heart of this stunning region. According to Parvez, "The Indus Valley is built and run as a fun downtown boutique property. From its art scene to its unique design, the property is truly one of a kind. What's more, it is the only walkable luxury property in the area, allowing guests to visit most of the Leh



▲ Sonam Parvez

city sites by foot."

The hotel, located in the charming town of Leh, offers the perfect mix of modern amenities and traditional Ladakhi hospitality. With a variety of rooms and suites to choose from, guests can tailor their stay to fit their needs and preferences. Each room is tastefully decorated with a blend of contemporary and traditional elements and features

stunning views of the surrounding mountains.

The Indus Valley's facilities are designed to make guests' stays as comfortable and convenient as possible. One of the most notable features of The Indus Valley is its emphasis on the environment. The property is designed to minimise its impact on the environment while still providing a luxurious experience for guests. The hotel has also implemented sustainable practices such as waste management and energy conservation to ensure that it is doing its part in preserving the natural beauty of Ladakh. "It values the environment and is the only walkable luxury property where clients can visit most of the Leh city sites by foot," added Parvez.

Parvez also highlighted the hotel's exceptional staff. The Indus Valley has a good mix of local staff and professionals from other parts of the country. The employees are treated like family, which creates a sense of ownership and pride in the property. As the hotel continues to grow, so does this family. The Indus Valley offers a range of activities and experiences for guests. From trekking and mountain biking to cultural tours and meditation sessions, there's something for everyone. The hotel also has a wellness center where guests can enjoy massages and other treatments to relax and rejuvenate.

The Indus Valley is an excellent base for exploring the stunning landscapes of Ladakh. The hotel can arrange various tours, including visits to the famous Pangong Lake and Nubra Valley, where guests can witness the unique culture and lifestyle of the region's people.

Overall, The Indus Valley is the perfect choice for travellers seeking a luxurious and comfortable stay in Leh, Ladakh. With its exceptional amenities, stunning location, and excellent service, it's no wonder that it's one of the top hotels in the region.





# Marriott Mauritius

eyes exciting growth opportunities from India market

Marriott International has three stunning properties in Mauritius, which are all unique and set in the most breath-taking locations. With the luxury travel market particularly buoyant with consumers keen to book their international holidays, Sydney Pierre, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Marriott Mauritius (JW Marriott, Westin Turtle Bay, and Le Meridien Ile Maurice), understands that there is huge potential to grow bookings from key markets like India.

Prashant Nayak

**M**arriott International is represented by three resorts in Mauritius with different concepts which cater to different clientele. JW Marriott Mauritius Resort is a luxury retreat with 172 lavishly appointed guest suites. The resort is set against a backdrop of the majestic Le Morne Brabant, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is surrounded by majestically protected coral reefs and lush vegetation. Recently refurbished, Le Meridien Ile Maurice is a place for discoveries with an exclusive adult-only Nirvana wing and royal beachfront suites. The Westin Turtle Bay Resort and Spa Mauritius is nestled in a tranquil spot and faces the idyllic Turtle Bay, a protected marine park on the northwest coast of Mauritius.

Speaking about the USP of each hotel, Sydney reveals, "At JW Marriott Mauritius Resort, with our exclusive butler service, we endeavour to provide our guests with a personalised and memorable stay at the Grand Beachfront Villas and Manor House Spa Suites. The La Palme d'Or Private Cinema is an exclusive gateway into a theatre with 32 luxurious seats and movie condiments. Guests can have remarkable epicurean culinary experiences at our five distinct fine-dining restaurants. The Pure Spa is a haven of relaxation, a revalidating sanctuary offering signature treatments, leaving you feeling rejuvenated and stress-free. One can also indulge in adventurous and thrilling water sport activities ranging from swimming with dolphins to diving, surfing and snorkelling at pristine locations close to our resort."

Continuing with the second property, Sydney says, "At Le Meridien Ile Maurice, all our 261 contemporary suites are artfully positioned for a retreat in style, offering exclusive and private terraces with magnificent Indian



▲ Sydney Pierre

ocean views and direct access to our natural sandy beach. Our Royal suites offer opulence and luxury with personal touches. Eden-like gardens and spaces create the perfect atmosphere for events, from the social to the soulful. Guests can live life to the fullest and have fun at the beach. We offer water-skiing, sailing, windsurfing, kayaking, pedal boating and much more."

The Westin brand is known to empower guests, associates, and local communities to embrace well-being and be their best selves. At The Westin Turtle Bay Resort and Spa, nourishing the mind, body, and soul is their motive and these aspects can be found with Westin Wellbeing Movement and their Signature and Health-Conscious Culinary Journeys.

During COVID, while the Maldives gained strong momentum out of the Indian market, Mauritius got overshadowed in that process. Sydney says the reason for the Maldives to gain popularity was good flight connectivity pan India. However, with Air Mauritius flying only out of Mumbai, they all had limited means to capture the full potential of the India market. "Now with

an increase in flights capacity with the relaunch of Air Mauritius to Delhi twice a week coupled with the introduction of Air Vistara out of Mumbai five times per week, the propensity to capture the pan-India market is even stronger," says Sydney.

Mauritius remains relatively traditional in the booking pattern of the customers when it comes to holidays. Here, travel agencies still hold strong importance and influence. Nevertheless, the gradual shift to OTA bookings has not been ignored as it is a growing segment and warrants the necessary attention. MICE agencies prefer the use of intermediaries as a one-stop shop for their events procurement. Sydney shares, "With business travel increasing year on year, we are seeing an uptick in both the number of RFPs (Request for Proposal) and conversions when it comes to Corporate Group movement to the destination. Marriott Mauritius positions itself as a strong value proposition for MICE offerings with state-of-the-art accommodation, meeting facilities, events spaces, and logistics."

Marriott Mauritius has appointed Nijhawan Group as the India Sales, Marketing, and PR representative for all three resorts. The objective is to tactical sales, marketing, and PR initiatives in the India market with the expansion of the group's affinity to the key luxury Indian trade and media partners. "For Marriott Mauritius, proximity to our key stakeholders, which includes travel trade, airline, and media, remains paramount," states Sydney.

Following the recent renovation of the Le Meridien Ile Maurice, Marriott Mauritius' focus is to consolidate business for its three properties in the island nation and increase guest satisfaction and experience.



# Curated tours for new-age travellers at Vedic Village

Social media marketing has emerged as the buzzword in today's business scenario and hospitality groups need to provide a robust value proposition that will make them connect with travellers from anywhere in the world. Rajib Roy Choudhury, Senior General Manager, Vedic Village Spa Resort discusses the current developmental trends and challenges in the hospitality industry and also touches upon the preferences of each generation of today's travellers that need to be taken care of.

**Swaati Chaudhury**

**A**fter a two-year slump, the hospitality industry in India is back in the reckoning and is making the most of the post-pandemic opportunity. Luxury hospitality groups have been trying to woo travellers ever since inception.

According to Rajib Roy Choudhury, "It is assumed that nearly 4.62 billion populace across the world makes use of social media channels. Engaging with the right audience, posting content during peak hours, leveraging influencer marketing, investing in paid advertorials, storytelling in our content and adopting social listening can help us to capture the social media-savvy audience. Video marketing is the most convenient way to promote the property, amenities and services on offer, without the need to travel to the property. Creating video tours of the hotel rooms, highlighting the brand history, showcasing food and beverage options, providing info on local attractions and sharing behind-the-scenes footage are some of the surefire ways to target desired travellers. Our luxury resort has taken the cue to share videos on popular social media handles like Instagram Reels and YouTube shorts. To receive more number of views, we add snippets of the videos, textual content and use the right hashtag." The hospitality group has also added Google Trends as part of Social Media Marketing in order to analyse data that enables the group to compare the frequency of search terms compared to other similar keywords.

Roy Choudhury stated, "Artificial Intelligence is an effective technology that can boost the digital transformation of hospitality businesses with the promise of a smart future. It is Artificial Intelligence that is bringing a turnaround in customer experience and streamlining operations. Our property provides a Chat Bot facility through its website that offers instant and seamless solutions to the queries of travellers."

The preferences of each generation of travellers vary with age and hospitality players are bent upon customising their services to cater to their preferences. Roy Choudhury said, "Around 60 per cent of Indian tourists have not taken up leisure travel longer than four nights and nearly 72 per cent of Gen Y have opted for one micro-cation in the past couple of years. At the same time, about 69 per cent of Gen X and 60 per cent of baby boomers have gone for micro-cations. With a view to recharge the batteries of travellers within a short period without burning a hole in their pockets, we have rolled out short-term deals in the form of micro-cations including Summer Escapade, Experience by Vedic and Uttara Darshan. Buddymoon has become prevalent with high-end destination weddings that are giving way to friends who join couples on their honeymoon. We have workation packages for business travellers called Bleisure Travel that blends business along with leisure travel. We offer holiday deals closer to home for those expecting their little ones. The concept of social travel



▲ Rajib Roy Choudhury

has caught up with Gen Y and Gen Z and cashing in on the trend, our property has yoga retreats where travellers can plan an excursion with their friends."

Besides, trip stacking is another travel trend that has caught up with Gen Z and millennials that enables them to book a number of trips with free refunding and prevents travellers from the risk of cancellation. Roy Choudhury further said, "Apart from Vedic Wellness Ayurveda and Naturopathy, we have devised spiritual travel that blends pilgrimage with a holiday."

With an aim to maintain optimum room is to staff ratio and to ensure service efficiency, an organisation needs to perform horizontally as well as vertically with an experienced, trained and sound quality workforce. Roy Choudhury added, "We emphasise on certain criteria including customer satisfaction, bundled and unbundled services, zero guest complaints and high customer retention that place the organisation on a better performance curve. There are training programmes to empower employees in order to drive the guest experience. Creating a positive work culture that values and rewards employees for their efforts is essential since it contributes to motivating them to deliver high-quality service. Online travel agents have an annual share of 27 per cent. However, direct booking channels are most profitable."



## AI

# The Rise of AI and Chatbots in the Hospitality Industry: Opportunities and Challenges

The hospitality industry is highly competitive, so it's important that it moves with the times. In the recent years, there has been an uptick in hotels using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Chatbots, taking personalised customer experience to new levels.

Tanu Singh

The hospitality industry is embracing cutting-edge technologies, including Machine Learning, Chatbots, and Artificial Intelligence. AI and chatbots offer the ideal opportunity for travel firms to improve marketing, customer support, customer experience, and retention. The increasing number of travellers and deep technological advances in the hotel industry force service providers to differentiate themselves from the competition. As a result, best practices and existing business processes must be redefined at all levels of the organisation to suit guest preferences, offer unique travel experiences, and improve customer loyalty.

To personalise interaction with guests, hotels have begun to use AI technology in their customer service portfolio and operations. AI employs cognitive learning to do typical human jobs at far lower costs, with enhanced efficiency, and with few errors. According to Worldwide Hospitality, Travel 2021 forecasts, AI will be used by 85 per cent of online travel agencies and 70 per cent of hotels globally by 2024. This will result in a 40 per cent increase in clients.

Even though visitors leave their digital imprint at a variety of touchpoints such as restaurants, recreation facilities, airlines, stores, events, social media, and elsewhere, the use of this valuable data to discover guest preferences and new income sources is rather low. Data analytics provide the majority of the insights. With advances in technology and tools, using AI principles on top of data may now improve the accuracy of forecasting visitor choice. The travel and hospitality industry has already started applying AI by deploying robots and humanoids as receptionists and guides at hotels and airports.

## Context Sensitive Personalised Services

To gather personalised data, information about client preferences, purchasing behaviour, satisfaction levels, and likes/dislikes is decoded from personal/

professional networks and other sources. The largest problem here is gathering relevant data from a variety of diverse systems and drawing useful conclusions from it.

- AI may assist in the creation and refinement of hyper-personalised marketing in order to enhance revenue and client retention.
- ML may assist businesses in gathering predictive data, identifying trends within massive collections of data, and understanding customer behaviour to promote frequent flier points (FFP) redemption.

## An Intelligent virtual assistant: Chatbots

According to research, 68 per cent of airlines and 46 per cent of airports aim to expand to put in place sophisticated Chatbot services based on AI. These chatbots will scan terms and react with keywords from the learning database that match. The system, which is supported by a digitally linked expert, will record, process, monitor, and learn about every event that occurs around the visitor, including environmental elements.

## The virtual assistant applications will include:

- An 'intelligent virtual assistant' that communicates with guests and recommends services, special discounts, vacation ideas, recommendations, and alternate arrangements.
- The chatbot will minimise the use of call centres by providing hyper-personalised self-service.
- Without logging into separate systems, the chatbot will have access to information about the passenger, timetables, service status, loyalty, seat/room availability, cheque, and so on.

## Post Trip – Loyalty and Sentiment Analysis

Customers now choose to express themselves on the internet, thanks to the rise of social media. Using AI and ML, hospitality businesses can determine

which aspects of their loyalty programme are appealing to clients and which are off-putting.

Sentimental analysis (using Natural Language Processing) may assist organisations in understanding good, negative, and neutral viewpoints by analysing emotional behaviour.

- Based on recommendations, hotels and service providers can build personalised smart movies and deliver them to clients. These might be about new deals, recommendations, advice, or anything else.

As per the International Air Transport Association (IATA), 7.2 billion people will be in transit by 2035. With such a large number of travellers, maintaining smooth operations would be difficult. Flight turnaround actions would necessitate the use of clever and intelligent technology to monitor and analyse potential departure delays.

- Passenger flow may be forecasted using predictive analytics and machine learning to avoid airport overcrowding.
- Machine learning may be used to estimate the risk of delayed departures based on the present operating state as well as historical data and patterns.
- Machine learning skills may be utilised to create a virtual assistant that can proactively track baggage by understanding common baggage mistreatment and breaking points, as well as conditions and settings.

AI has enormous potential. Enterprises are shifting away from rules-based automated solutions like Chatbots and towards intelligent cognitive agents that handle unstructured data, engage in more human-like interactions, and continually learn. By merging AI with sophisticated analytics concepts, the travel and hospitality sector can offer personalised service, resulting in a better value and memorable experience for its visitors. Guests may read the news, check the weather, use maps and more in the mirror.

**About the Author:** Tanu Singh is the Associate Director Marketing Communications and PR at Signum Hotels and Resorts.





# Nok Air looking at gaining foothold in India's buoyant aviation market

Nok Air is rapidly expanding its international network and has chosen Hyderabad as its hub for re-entry into India, giving Indians who wish to visit Thailand more options. In this interaction with TTJ, Wutthiphum Jurangkool, CEO, Nok Air, touched upon a few aspects of the new route launch and the India market, as they look forward to increasing connectivity to more cities in India this year.

Prashant Nayak

**N**ok Air, a low-cost airline from Thailand, serves the largest number of domestic routes and has a presence in international sectors as well. Nok Air strives to be the number one choice, providing customers with true satisfaction through affordability, reliability, convenience, innovation, and care.

"Nok Air is a passenger-friendly airline. We realise that travel is evolving, and the requirements of passengers are changing rapidly. To keep abreast and serve the passengers better, we make sure that we understand the requirements and include them in our service offerings. We offer flexibility keeping in mind budget and premium travel segments," says Wutthiphum.

In times when aviation fuel prices are higher than ever, Nok Air strategises the pricing in such a way that they can offer competitive prices as per the demand in the market. They position themselves as an LCC, however, they operate as a "hybrid premium airline", showcasing passengers the best of Nok offerings for a seamless travel experience.

Nok Air, before COVID, served two destinations in India, Visakhapatnam, and Guwahati from Bangkok but it was terminated later. Nok Air re-entered India in February 2023 and currently connects Hyderabad to Bangkok (Don Mueang International Airport) and onward to their wide domestic network within Thailand as well as the neighbouring countries. The move by Nok Air is expected to further strengthen the cultural and economic ties



▲ Wutthiphum Jurangkool

between India and Thailand, while also providing a convenient and comfortable travel option for passengers.

"The Bangkok- Hyderabad route has been doing seemingly well. Based on the success of the current route, we do wish to expand our roots into the country at the right time. Our expansion plan is underway and we are considering additional routes to India," adds Wutthiphum.

Sharing more, Wutthiphum said, "From India, with connectivity to Bangkok, Nok Air offers the densest domestic connections within Thailand. Onward from Thailand, we offer multiple international connections to China, Myanmar and Vietnam."

Thailand over the years has emerged as one of the most popular tourist destinations among Indians. The introduction of this direct flight to Bangkok will not only attract more travellers to Bangkok but will also allow

them to explore exotic destinations like Chiang Mai, Betong, Krabi, Phuket, and many more. Nok Air currently operates 3 weekly non-stop flights from their hub DMK in Bangkok to Hyderabad in the Summer 2023 schedule. The new route is operated by state-of-the-art Boeing 737-800 with 189 Economy Class seats.

India has become an important market for Nok Air and the airline is keen to connect with Indian trade partners. "India is a primary market for Nok Air as it opens the airline to a high-potential and wider network. The multicultural charm of India is very similar to that of Thailand. We feel Nok Air helps in bridging the physical distance and gets the people of the two nations closer. We are focusing on creating brand awareness amongst the travel trade in India with our B2B collaborations," informs Wutthiphum.

In India, Nok Air has appointed DEX Group as the GSA and the airline is confident that DEX Group will support the carrier to establish an excellent sales and marketing network across the country to achieve its commercial goals in the India market.

Nok Air has a young fleet, and they plan to add four new aircraft in 2023 and subsequently add two aircraft each year. This will support their strategy of the densest domestic coverage network and expansion with the best services across Asia. "We take pride in our fleet, which primarily consists of the Boeing 737-800, which is configured with 189 seats. Each of our aircraft has a unique, vibrant design that reflects our service personality," concludes Wutthiphum.





# The Perfect Family Holiday Destination PHUKET

Team TTJ

Phuket is the largest island in Thailand and is the perfect place to start a Thailand family holiday. With fine white sands, palm trees, glittering sea, and lively towns, Phuket is among the world's finest beach destinations, like Patong Beach, Kata Beach, and Karon Beach, that is visited by tourists from across the globe.

Located amidst warm tropical waters, Phuket is also aptly called a paradise for water sports. Phuket was already very popular among scuba enthusiasts and it has now emerged as an ideal destination to offer water sports activities like snorkelling, diving, kayaking, wakeboarding, jet skiing, and many more.

Phuket is also full of stunning resorts, which are family-friendly. These hotels and resorts are known for warm hospitality and amazing kids' clubs. Overall, there are many fun family things to do in Phuket that will bring out everyone's inner child. The below experiences are the most recommended on a family visit to Phuket.



Travelling to Phuket with family is a great and rewarding experience. Thousands of families head to Phuket in Thailand every year, attracted by its beautiful beaches, splendid attractions, amazing resorts, and fabulous food, making it one of the most popular family holiday destinations in Asia. We have a not to miss list on your next or first visit to Phuket.

## Blue Tree Water Park

Blue Tree Phuket is a must-go destination in Phuket as it is a complete entertainment and activity centre for all ages to thrill and chill, day and night. Hosting Thailand's largest Crystal Lagoon, which includes Thailand's longest Superfly, a water jump, a covered open-air amphitheater arena, a lifestyle shopping village, and a huge natural Forest Park with an array of fitness and sporting activities.

## Carnival Magic

Carnival Magic is a night-time theme park unlike no other. Spanning over 40 acres and awash with dazzling colours and sparkling imagery, Carnival Magic celebrates the vibrancy and rich cultural heritage found in the many traditional festivals, carnivals, and market fairs that abound throughout the Kingdom. Carnival Magic presents a breath-taking evening of joyous celebration, regal pageantry, and cultural fun unmatched by any other show on earth.

## Siam Niramit Phuket

Siam Niramit opened in Phuket in 2010 and is regarded as the must-see show in Thailand. Siam Niramit Phuket is the World Class Thai Cultural entertainment attraction giving visitors an insight into Thailand's 700 years of vibrant history and culture. With over 150 performers and 500 costumes on display, marvel at the spectacular performances, amazing special effects, sets, and stunning costumes. Visitors can also enjoy the wide selection of delicious dishes and Thai street food.

## Andamanda Phuket

This is the largest leisure and entertainment destination in downtown Phuket opened in May 2022. Sitting on over 9 hectares, the park's overall theme is based on a local legend and folklore celebrating friendship, hardship, and ultimate victory in the Lost Kingdom of Nagaon. Enjoy a splashing time and immerse in Thai mythology in this Thai heritage-themed water park. Andamanda is a fantastic place where everyone can eat, rest and play.

## Hanuman World Phuket

This park is dedicated to the monkey God Hanuman, who showed that he had no limits, feared nothing, and would do everything to reach his goal. So, feel the rush as you fly like Hanuman through the jungle on the longest and fastest ziplines in Thailand, including the roller zipline, a high-speed twisted zipline through the trees! Discover the natural beauty of the rainforest 40 m above the ground on the Skywalk and snack on tropical fruits high up on a treetop platform.

## Old Phuket Town

The historical part of Phuket is not huge but is rich and exciting enough to explore in half a day. Expect to see a lot of Sino-Portuguese-style colourful shop-houses on each side of the streets, some excellent local Thai restaurants, and lately, many new coffee shops. Walking around town will also be a chance to visit Thai temples, colourful Chinese shrines, a couple of museums, and some beautiful old mansions. This place is recommended for a slow walk to discover hidden gems.





# SeaWorld Abu Dhabi

## A Ground-Breaking Marine Life Theme Park and a Milestone for Yas Island

SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, the world's first fully indoor SeaWorld park, will open on May 23, 2023, and feature record-breaking experiences and educational features.

Vartik Sethi



▲ Liam Findlay

**M**iral Destinations, the expert destination partner and promotional arm for Saadiyat and Yas Island, has been witnessing tremendous growth in the India market in recent years. India has emerged as one of the top two source markets for Yas Island and holds immense potential for exponential growth in the future. According to a report by Nangia Andersen LLP in association with FICCI, outbound trips from India will surpass USD 42 billion by 2024, making it a prominent future market for Miral Destinations.

Liam Findlay, CEO, Miral Destinations, said that they aim to further enhance Yas Island's appeal as a holistic family entertainment destination and Saadiyat Island's as a leading beach and luxury destination. The company is also looking to sharpen its focus on tier-II and tier-III cities in India and work alongside trade partners to promote the brand across leisure and MICE audiences.

Yas Island has become one of the most popular, year-round short-haul

destinations for quick breaks for Indian travellers. Findlay mentioned that the interest and intent for travel to Yas Island have always been strong, and the company witnessed a spike in queries from Indian travellers following their collaboration with Bollywood superstar Ranveer Singh. As the first-ever Indian brand ambassador for Miral Destinations, Ranveer proved to be an ideal brand fit with tremendous popularity for the company to leverage across potential traveller segments.

Miral Destinations is committed to strengthening its efforts in the India market as part of its long-term strategy. The company's near-term goal for 2023-24 is to build brand affinity and love for Yas Island. To increase the length of stay for visitors on Yas Island, the company is expecting to see continued growth momentum for its stay and play packages. The company has included SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, the upcoming addition to Yas Island, in its "stay and play" package, which encourages visitors to extend their stay and fully immerse themselves in all the Island has to offer. This move is expected to further enhance Yas Island's reputation as a complete and well-rounded holiday destination for families.

Findlay provided insights into the company's plans to penetrate tier-II and tier-III cities in India and the significance of the Yas SeaWorld Research and Rescue Center. He shared that Miral caters to a range of visitors across various genres at Yas Island, including multi-generational or nuclear families, friends, couples, thrill-seekers, sports enthusiasts, concertgoers, MICE travellers, and those interested in filming productions or destination weddings. He added that they have partnered with regional and community-based partners for tactical promotions in tier-II and tier-III regions across India and will deploy customised, locally relevant strategies

to tap into travel potential emerging from them.

Findlay discussed the significance of Yas SeaWorld Research and Rescue Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, stating, "Yas SeaWorld Research and Rescue will continue the legacy of SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment, leveraging their nearly 60 years of animal rescue experience and knowledge."

Offering valuable insights into the highly anticipated SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, CEO Liam Findlay revealed that it will be the first SeaWorld park to be established outside of the United States, and furthermore, will also be the first fully indoor SeaWorld park. Findlay mentioned that the park would span 183,000 sqm across five indoor levels and be home to the world's largest and most expansive multi-species aquarium, containing 25 million litres of water and more than 68,000 marine animals, including sharks and rays. The park would feature over 100,000 animals, over 10 up-close animal encounters, over 100 animal experiences and presentations, 15 interactive experiences and rides, over 20 live characters and performances, 17 dining options, and 13 shopping choices.

Set to open on May 23, 2023, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi promises to be a unique and ground-breaking marine life theme park. The park will feature record-breaking experiences, including the world's largest and most expansive multi-species aquarium and a host of thrilling rides and attractions. What sets SeaWorld Abu Dhabi apart, however, is the inclusion of educational features such as the park-wide interactive S•E•A Guardian games, which encourage guests to learn about ocean conservation while enjoying various challenges.

In addition to being a must-visit attraction, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi will complement Yas Island's already



impressive collection of theme parks and attractions. The park's focus on marine life conservation and education provides visitors with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the ocean and its inhabitants. "By expanding the variety of attractions and experiences offered on Yas Island, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi will contribute to the island's standing as a premier entertainment destination in the region," said Findlay.

Miral Destinations is committed to sustainability and conservation, and SeaWorld Abu Dhabi is no exception. The park was developed with sustainability in mind, and as part of the UAE's Year

of Sustainability in 2023, the park is committed to promoting environmental awareness and protecting marine life in Abu Dhabi, the UAE, and the wider region. The park's collaboration with Miral, Masdar, and EDF through their joint venture, Emerge, has seen the installation of a rooftop solar power project with a total capacity of 8.2 megawatts, making the park more energy-efficient and reducing its carbon footprint.

SeaWorld Abu Dhabi's cutting-edge technology ensures the highest standards of animal care for each inhabitant to thrive. The park's Animal Care Centre offers guests an in-depth look into the

world-class practices adopted by the animal care team. Guests will be able to watch animal care experts carry out routine health checks and provide medical treatments when necessary – an in-house clinic, if you will!

In conclusion, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi marks an exciting new chapter in Yas Island and Abu Dhabi's ongoing efforts to promote tourism, showcase the Emirate's unique offerings, and establish it as a top global destination. With its innovative programs, state-of-the-art facilities, and commitment to sustainability, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi is sure to be a highlight of any visitor's experience on Yas Island.



## An Intriguing Family-friendly **Swiss Adventure**

The Swiss Museum of Transport, an interactive destination, showcases the past, present and future development of transport and mobility on road, rail, water, air and space. Over 3,000 objects, superb simulators, multimedia shows and interactive platforms await visitors in a 20,000 m² exhibition area. Visitors can experience unique attractions such as the Film theatre (a 3D cinema), the Planetarium, the Swiss Chocolate Adventure, and the Swiss Arena (a walk-on 200 m² high-resolution aerial photo of Switzerland).

**T**he Swiss Museum of Transport is a place of discovery and activity. The large outdoor area, complete with lake and playing facilities makes it an experience whatever the weather. Switzerland's biggest and aa 360-degree flight to the stars, while cutting-edge communication trends await in Media Word, such as virtual reality. A multimedia journey through the Swiss Chocolate Adventure shows how the cocoa bean is made into the famous Swiss chocolate. The Swiss Chocolate Adventure is a themed world that allows the visitor to experience a

fascinating journey and learn about the discovery, origin, production and transport of chocolate.

2023 has been an exciting year for the Swiss Museum of Transport as they opened the brand-new exhibition 'Experience Energy' in early April. The exhibition aims to promote cross-generational dialogue on the Energy Strategy 2050. This topic has never been more important than now and the visitors will experience all about it. Another highlight will be the farming exhibition, which will focus on sustainable and innovative farming.

Open 365 days a year!





# Overseas Marketing and Generating Interest Crucial for Inbound Travel

Since 2022, the outbound market in India is growing stronger compared to the inbound market. The three major factors that are restricting the growth of inbound travel are the lack of overseas promotions by the Ministry of Tourism, increased airfares of incoming flights to India, and the nation being an overpriced tourism market compared to the neighbouring countries. TTJ interacts with some of the stalwarts in the travel business as they express their opinion on inbound travel in the country.

Prashant Nayak



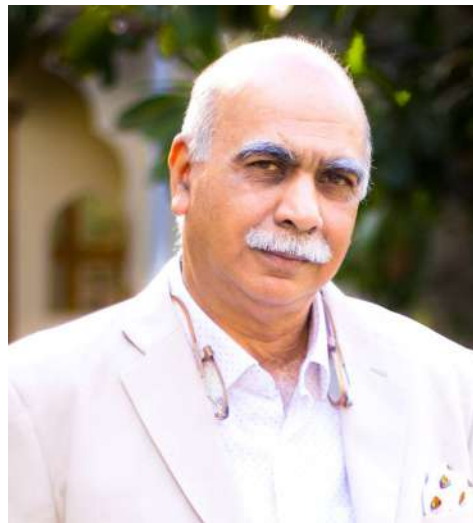
▲ Dipak Deva

**T**he Union Culture and Tourism Minister, G. Kishan Reddy, in February, said that nearly 69 lakh foreign tourists visited India in 2022, indicating a four-fold increase in the number of arrivals after two years of negative growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Inbound Tourism is surely making a comeback, but it is slow, steady, and not to the expectations. A lot of work still requires to be done to attract more and more inbound tourists.

Dipak Deva, Managing Director, Travel Corporation India, says, "The recovery is slow. We have to be honest, there is no overseas promotion by the government, and there is no real focus on inbound travel as domestic seems to be the flavour of the year. So inbound is bound to return, but it will take time."

Adding more, Deva apprises, "The destination needs to be marketed well to the world, especially in source markets, which can be done through PR agencies who can build a narrative for the destination. Roadshows are important to promote the destination. It is time for the ministry to involve the Embassies around the world to engage with the trade and the media in a more aggressive way to build a positive narrative for India. Incredible India can only be effective if the government increases its budget for overseas promotion."

Sharing his thoughts, Randhir Vikram



▲ Randhir Vikram Singh

Singh, President, Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) said, "India has always been a preferred destination for the world traveller and with the global travel climate gradually returning to normalcy, the inbound market will once again continue to steadily grow."

Singh also went on to say, "One major recommendation for the State tourism authorities and the Ministry of Tourism is to follow the Rajasthan model. The State has granted industry status to the travel and tourism sector as well as its affiliate services. It has made sure that every major policy includes benefits for the stakeholders in tourism. It has enabled 'Ease of doing Business' through quick and efficient processing and implementation of subsidies, benefits, rebates, registrations, certifications, etc. The Rajasthan State Government has done path-breaking work in promoting Tourism and Travel. This is something that others must replicate in their regions."

On the other hand, Prateek Hira, Chairman, FICCI UP Tourism Committee and President and CEO, Tornos, opined, "The growth of domestic and outbound travel showcases the potential and readiness of the destination. While the flights are going out, they are coming in too. All this movement is making inbound tourism ready. I am hopeful that India will touch the pre-pandemic levels by 2024 and then on, inbound tourism will



▲ Prateek Hira

only be experiencing an upward trend, surpassing the growth percentages registered in the past. The Central and state governments are doing their best to make India an attractive inbound tourism destination and living up to the 'post-COVID-tourists' demands that have changed quite a bit in the past two years."

Adding more Pratik states, "It is true that India has traditionally lacked in its marketing efforts for tourism, which needs to be corrected now. It is even more important now as destinations worldwide are competing with each other stiffly to make themselves more attractive and to get a bigger pie of the leisure travellers from world over. Barring a few states of India, most states in India do not accord a high priority to tourism or see tourism as one of the drivers of their economy. This unfortunate stance has to change and change fast before India loses out on the inbound travellers' market, which is now spoilt for choices and has more on its plate than it can eat."

According to Pratik, perception is what drives tourism and India should work hard to correct and change all the negative perceptions that are doing the rounds internationally. Now that India's tourism is poised for growth, large businesses need to shun the self-centred policy of 'only me' and come forward to support small businesses and help new-age tourism entrepreneurs grow and prosper in the tourism ecosystem.



# Madhya Pradesh

## A DESTINATION OF SAFE TOURISM EXPERIENCES



## THE HEART OF INCREDIBLE INDIA, ONE OF THE SAFEST TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN INDIA

**T**he eclectic state of Madhya Pradesh, the heart of India, has swiftly surfaced as one of the most sought-after destinations in India. MP offers a varied range of verticals that can quench the thirst of any traveller from wildlife to culture to heritage or be it pilgrimage. What makes Madhya Pradesh so unique is the fact that it is one of the biggest states in the country and still a major part of it is left undiscovered. The very fact that the majority of the state is covered in forests provides a 'closer to nature experience' for visitors and at the same time it opens the door for a question like, is it safe to travel in Madhya Pradesh?

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, under the Responsible Tourism Mission (RTM), has been aggressively working on the safety of tourists and especially solo women travellers. MP is a state that is dedicated to the involvement of women in the tourism industry be it from gypsy drivers and forest guides from Shivpuri,

Pachmarhi and Tamia, boatmen and storytellers from Jabalpur and Gwalior, women safety guards from pilgrimage places like Ujjain, Chitrakoot or Maihar and Segway Drivers to Hospitality professionals in Khajuraho. The government of Madhya Pradesh works closely with several other departments like the Police, Women and Child Development, Urban Administration Department, Transport, Education and Skill Development to create a more accommodating atmosphere for the people of the state and the tourists visiting the state. MP Tourism conducts safety audits and infra gap assessments at every tourist destination with the coordination of local bodies and district authorities, which ensures the safety of women service providers and tourists.

The idea is to make safer tourist destinations for women where even a solo female traveller can feel at home. Tourism is one of the key drivers of socio-economic development and its integral for tourists to have a safe and secure environment. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has nominated several bodies to support the conduction of baseline surveys and situation analysis under the "Safe Tourism Destinations for Women" project which is a part of the Responsible Tourism Mission of Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board. It includes the following activities –

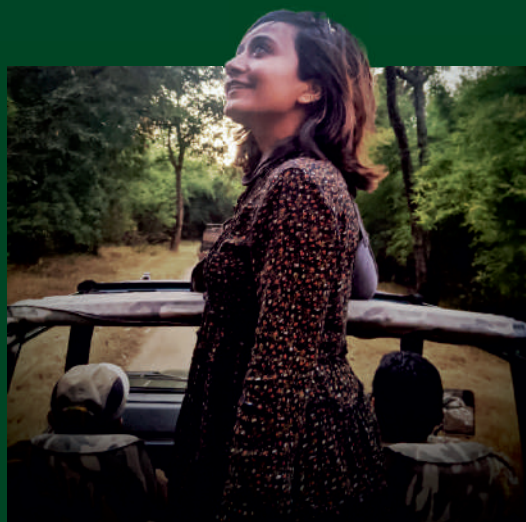
- Capacity building, orientation and training and sensitisation
- Strengthening of safety mechanism
- Skill and Employment generation
- Safety audits and fulfilment of infrastructural gaps at tourism

destinations about women's safety

- Self-defence training
- Community participation and awareness
- Formation of legal bodies and federations
- Monitoring and evaluation

MP Tourism Board works in convergence with other departments, including NGOs and CSRs to ensure women's safety and in fact, Madhya Pradesh is the pioneer state in India to take efforts for women's safety and upliftment in the tourism industry. It also inspires local youth of the villages and suburbs to make a career in the hospitality industry and contribute to the development of their local region.

Enjoy your visit to Madhya Pradesh with a sense of freedom and security and embrace the state's unique wildlife, heritage, pilgrimage and culture. Blend in with local cultures and rejoice in the uniqueness of the Heart of Incredible India.





# World-class dining & culinary experiences in the heart of Qatar

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Now emerging as a great upmarket leisure destination, Qatar has something for everyone, whether it's art, culture, history, shopping, or adventure. For the global traveller, on business or leisure, there surely is a need to unwind and relax with a glass of your favourite tittle and in the company of good food. Doha offers a fine line-up of world-class establishments to kindle your soul and tickle your taste buds. We explored a few and indulged in all the flavours Doha has to offer.

## Italian Wonders at 'ADRIFT Anda by David Myers' at the Le Royal Meridien Doha

If it is Italian soul food you want, you just cannot go wrong if you plan a visit to this restaurant with understated rustic elegance. It is said that Chef David Myers designed its core menu on a napkin onboard a train between Rome and Florence! Fusing the best from a Roman trattoria, Neapolitan pizzeria, and Florentine steakhouse. The restaurant serves artisanal pizza, pasta, and the juiciest Bistecca Fiorentina cooked over a charcoal grill not to miss out on an impressive wine list and a well-stocked Bar.





**Thai Delights at Benjarong - Dusit Doha Hotel**

Located at the lobby level of the Dusit Doha Hotel, the restaurant exudes its Thai aura right from the word enter. Featuring a modernistic low-lit décor with comfortable seating, the very polite, attentive, and knowledgeable staff ensure that your taste buds and senses are fully satiated by the Thai aromas and textures of the well-cooked and presented delicacies.

**Parisa - Souk Wakif for Persian feel and grills**

In one of the most happening alleys of Souk Wakif is located this Gem of a Place, a tribute to Persian cuisine and ambiance. A must-visit to enjoy the authentic Persian experience outside Iran. The opulent interior is complete with its painted murals, patterned Colour glass walls, and high ceilings with large hanging chandeliers and a central fountain. Enjoy the Shish-Kabob and Persian Pilaf with mint and saffron topped with Zerehs, sheer bliss.



**Indian Cuisine? Feel the difference at Qalamkarri Banyan Tree Doha**

Looking for sweeping panoramic views of Doha in a classy royal setting that spells India and serves Indian cuisine with a twist then head out to the Banyan Tree Doha and press the elevator for the 25th floor to be swept away by the sheer décor and size of this Indian restaurant.

**Savour Levantine food like no place else at Bayt El Talleh-Katara Cultural Village**

This restaurant with a very Mediterranean feel has a very warm and welcoming feel to it with its large floor-to-ceiling windows that open up into a large terrace that offers, magnificent views of the sea and city skyline. It serves authentic, home-style cooked Lebanese and Middle-Eastern dishes and desserts. Great for a family day out or a romantic brunch or dinner.



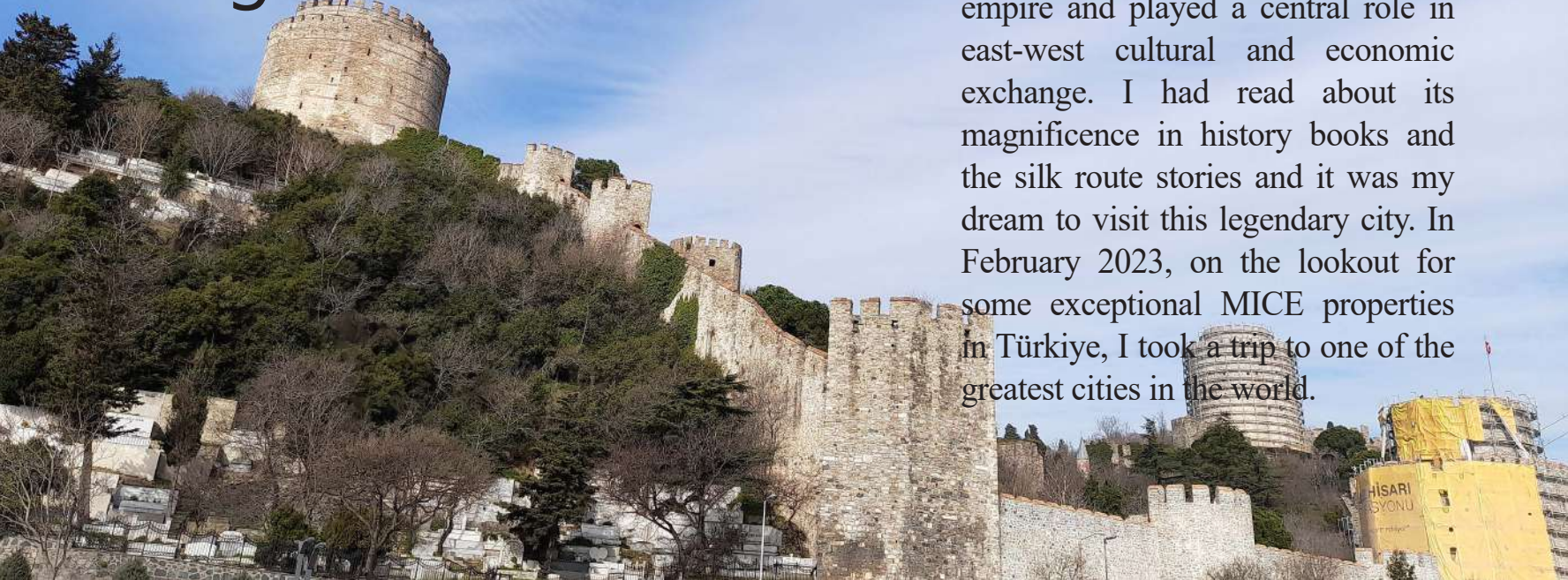
**Asian Fusion comforts at B-Lounge, Ritz Carlton Doha**

With marina-side views that offer a sensory backdrop during the changing shades of the day, B-Lounge is where the city's Chic and glamorous converge, to enjoy an unforgettable dining experience with Asian fusion flavours. Enjoy sushi, and sashimi alongside fresh seafood and meats cooked on a robata charcoal grill. Its well-stocked bar with a great choice of cocktails and complimenting drinks is sure to set the party going.



# Istanbul

## Magnet for M.I.C.E



Prashant Nayak

Istanbul, earlier known as Constantinople, was an ancient city in modern-day Türkiye. Renamed Istanbul under the Turks, the city again became the capital of a glorious empire and played a central role in east-west cultural and economic exchange. I had read about its magnificence in history books and the silk route stories and it was my dream to visit this legendary city. In February 2023, on the lookout for some exceptional MICE properties in Türkiye, I took a trip to one of the greatest cities in the world.



four divisible ones, hosts meetings and events in different capacities. It also puts you close to attractions and interesting dining options within their premises.

Crossing the Bosphorus on a ferry is a great way to enjoy the views while travelling from the European side to the Asian side and vice versa. However, I recommended sailing the Bosphorus in style on a luxury yacht cruise and exploring Istanbul's famous waterway, which I did for 2.5 hours. The views of the waterfront palaces, mansions, hotels, and mosques, other than Istanbul's stunning skyline, will blow you out. Another amazing sight is there are scores of people fishing around the strait and its bridges and that is an experience I missed out on.

The Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus also offers stunning views over the Bosphorus Strait and it is just a 10-minute walk from Taksim Square. Featuring both an outdoor and an indoor pool, beautiful green gardens, a traditional Turkish bath, and 6 restaurant and bar options, this iconic hotel provides resort-style accommodations. The Ambassador and Connie Ballrooms, renovated by taking inspiration from the unique

Strategically located between the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara at the point where Europe meets Asia, on the Bosphorus Strait, Constantinople was extremely important as the successor to ancient Rome and the largest and wealthiest city in Europe throughout the Middle Ages. The city founded by the Roman emperor Constantine served as the capital of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In olden times, the wealth of Constantinople was immense, and its location ensured it a very important role in the trade with the East and was referred to as 'Eastern Rome'.

Today, Istanbul is famous for being a dual continent city with rich historical value, architectural marvels, beautiful mosques, museums, and monuments and packed with excellent dining opportunities, shopping, nightlife, etc. This city has always been a melting pot of rich culture and history.

From CVK Park Bosphorus, where I stayed, one gets amazing panoramic views of the Bosphorus, Golden Horn, Topkapi Palace, Maiden Tower, Prince's Islands, and Asian side views. I made sure to spend at least an hour overlooking the strait while having my morning cuppa and wondering over the strategic importance of this waterway for ages, which separates Istanbul into two continents of Asia and Europe.

Conveniently situated in the heart of Istanbul, CVK Park Bosphorus, inspired by the texture and history of Istanbul, brings aesthetics and comfort together in an elite district and distinguishes itself with its superior service concept. The hotel with 12 meeting rooms including





splendor of sunrise and the Bosphorus, are sure to fascinate guests.

The Peninsula Istanbul is the newest addition to The Peninsula Hotels' portfolio of peerlessly elegant and luxurious worldwide properties. The waterfront property along the Bosphorus Strait with 177 gorgeously appointed rooms encompasses four exquisite buildings, three of which are protected historical landmarks dating to the early 1900s, each carefully renovated, set amid a quarter-kilometer expanse of newly built gardens. The hotel's collection of special-event venues is similarly splendid. Lavish options include a grand ballroom that, when combined with its Terrace, can accommodate 820 guests for a seated banquet and 1,300 for standing cocktails. In addition, the hotel offers two intimate conference rooms, VIP private dining and wine-tasting areas, and numerous alfresco spaces.

The Bosphorus area is teeming with unique hotel concepts. Dating back to the 17th century, Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul is the one and only Ottoman Imperial Palace and hotel situated right on the Bosphorus. This legendary property with 310 rooms has 11 suites including the Sultan Suite in the historical palace that offers a royal experience in line with local tradition, with large sash windows, high ceilings, and captivating views of the Bosphorus, the historical peninsula, the palace courtyard, or the park. This is a dream destination for fairy-tale palace weddings and they have over 25 venues for business meetings and special events.



The Galata Tower is a huge landmark in Istanbul and can be seen from many parts of the city. Among the many towers in the city, the Galata is undoubtedly the oldest and most iconic one. There are many interesting stories surrounding this one. Head up to the observation deck of this historic watchtower, where visitors will be treated to sweeping views of the city and the Bosphorus Strait.

The Sultanahmet district houses the famous historical buildings of Istanbul. Once the biggest cathedral in the world, the Hagia Sophia is considered



the magnum opus of Byzantine architecture. It is a must-see when in Istanbul and I was inspired by its stunning architecture, glorious interior, and historical significance. Hagia Sophia is now a working mosque and visitors need to remove their shoes before stepping onto the building's carpet and dress appropriately while covering their heads, once inside. As tourists flock to visit the mosque, don't be surprised to see long queues. The Blue Mosque is adjacent to the Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace, which are also among the most important structures in Istanbul's history and welcome millions of visitors every year. Unfortunately, during my visit, it was closed for some renovation purposes and I missed seeing the beautiful and classical works and architecture of the Ottoman Empire from inside.



Nearby nestled among the city's most defining landmarks is the Four-Season Istanbul Sultanahmet. This 65-key boutique and opulent hotel

is an architectural ode to Istanbul's fascinating heritage. This newly restored neoclassical home is a multi-layered architectural gem – a calming sanctuary where heritage and modernity converge to immerse guests in the charm and intrigue of Istanbul. From their Sureya rooftop bar, guests can gaze out over the dramatic cityscape, with the Hagia



Sophia Mosque and the Blue Mosque almost close enough to touch.

For Indians who love shopping, the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul is not the place to miss. The Grand Bazaar is one of the world's most famous shopping destinations and, the world's biggest enclosed bazaar still retaining its ancient charm and mysterious vibes. It is also the world's oldest, the biggest bazaar where the most variable products are exhibited. Once inside, the Bazaar's 64 streets and smaller alleyways house roughly 4,000 stores and the mosque,



post office, cafes, banks, and police station, making it a little city in a big city.

Earlier a sports and Exhibition Center, the mighty Istanbul Lutfi Kirdar International Convention and Exhibition Centre (ICEC) can host large-scale events such as international congresses and meetings, fairs, exhibitions, cocktails to gala dinners, film premieres cultural and artistic events. With 23 function and event rooms, the Halic Congress Center fulfills a crucial mission for Istanbul's business market by hosting a wide range of MICE events.

I found Istanbul to be one of the coolest cities I have ever visited and is a perfect city for MICE. Combined with Antalya, MICE groups will have a great time as both the city caters to several different tastes. Istanbul is one of my top recommendations as the city is a mix of history, emotions, excitement, and vibrancy with great tourism opportunities.



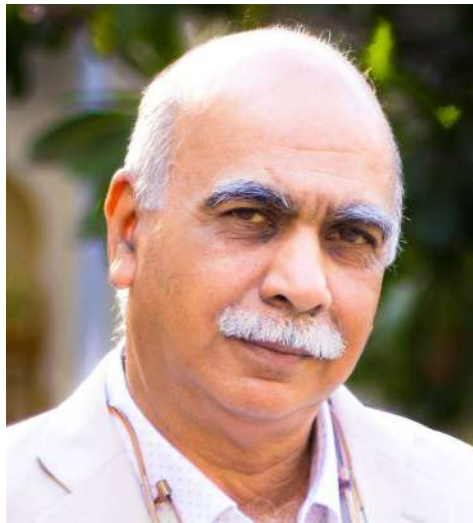
# RDTM-2023 to focus on Sustainability as its theme

The third edition of Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) will be held from July 14 -16, 2023, at the Birla Auditorium, Jaipur. The announcement to the effect was recently made by the Tourism Minister of Rajasthan, Vishvendra Singh, at a meeting with a delegation of the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism (FHTR).

Gurjit Singh Ahuja



▲ Mohan Singh



▲ Randhir Vikram Singh



▲ Khalid Khan



▲ Mahendra Singh

## Mohan Singh, Secretary General, FHTR

The third edition of RDTM will be on domestic tour operators who have supported us during difficult times of COVID and also on Sustainable Tourism for the future with the collaboration of the Government of India and the Government of Rajasthan. RDTM will also serve as a launch platform for new Startups. We are looking at 250-270 fully hosted domestic buyers to attend and transact future business with exhibitors during this RDTM.

## Randhir Vikaram Singh, President, Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA)

As IHHA, we are a part and parcel of the core team of RDTM. Domestic Travel came as a saviour during the COVID times and has now established itself as a key component of the business mix that includes inbound, weddings, conferences, and events. The focus at RDTM 2023 is solely on this segment that has been promoting or can promote domestic tourism business flow to Rajasthan.

## Khalid Khan, Vice President, FHTR

The 2023 edition of RDTM will have approximately 200 exhibitors from

across Rajasthan. We are expecting about 12,000 business meetings to be conducted between the buyers and sellers over 2 days of the mart. Fully hosted buyers will have the opportunity to experience the best of hotels and hospitality that Rajasthan offers.

## Mahendra Singh, President, Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO)

Promoting Rajasthan as a destination to more domestic tour operators is our major agenda this year so that more and more domestic tourists visit and explore the historical, cultural, and natural wonders of Rajasthan. New Wildlife conservation reserves have been announced in Rajasthan, Jhalana near Jaipur is another great opportunity to view the Leopard in the wilderness, and RDTM is a great opportunity to promote them to our Domestic Travel market.

## Tarun Bansal, Treasurer, FHTR

There will be a cross-spectrum of exhibitors at RDTM 2023, including 7-star hotels, heritage hotels, boutique hotels, smaller properties, tour operators, attractions, and experiences. The entire focus is to highlight unique travel products of Rajasthan to tour operators who will be fully hosted and invited from all over India.

The last edition of RDTM, held in 2022 in Jaipur, was the first major event post-COVID and was a tremendous success. The 2023 edition is projected to be even bigger. The delegation was led by FHTR Apurv Kumar, President and also present were Bhim Singh, Chief Patron-Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO), Randhir Vikram Singh, President, Indian Heritage Hotels Association, Mohan Singh Merta, Secretary General, FHTR, Khalid Khan, Vice President, FHTR, Mahendra Singh Rathore, President, RATO and Kuldeep Singh Chandela, President, Restaurant Association of Rajasthan.





# TRAVMART

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**21**

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**OCT**  
**14**

INDORE

**NOV**  
**03**

AHMEDABAD

**DEC**  
**15/16**

NAGPUR

**JAN**  
**15**

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# TTJ TRAVMART – Lucknow once again a resounding success

The sixth TRAVMART for the year was held on April 29, 2023, at Fortune Park BBD, Lucknow. Earlier this year in January, TTJ organised its Tri-City TRAVMART in Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai, followed by Surat and Pune in March 2023.

**Gurjit Singh Ahuja**

**T**he TRAVMART in Lucknow showcased products and offerings from 32 sellers, including Ethiopian Airlines, Air Asia, Garuda Indonesia, Nepal Airlines, Cruise Lines, Hotels, Tourism Boards such as Uttar Pradesh Tourism, Experience Kissimmee and AIUla, car rental platforms, and hotel consolidators.

More than 200 travel agents and tour operators from Lucknow, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Gorakhpur, Kanpur, and Agra attended the

event. The event was well supported by TAAI, IATO, TAFCA, TTAUP, SKAL, and TTW. The office bearers of the Associations were honoured with mementos for their support.

Lucky draws were also conducted and prizes were offered by Oman Air, Summit Hotels, Udaan Hotels, Experience Kissimmee, and the organiser - TTJ. The event was a resounding success and gave a great opportunity for the stakeholders to be fully prepared for the coming summer holiday season.

## TTJ TRAVMART

Travel Trade Journal

### Glimpses of TRAVMART Lucknow



“

**Nishant Gupta**

**Managing Director, Rezbook Global DMC**

TTJ TRAVMART in Lucknow was an extremely well-organised event for suppliers and buyers. This was our first TRAVMART, and we found out that Lucknow and Kanpur were very fresh, productive, and interesting markets. Being a DMC for Andaman, Bhutan, Northeast, and CIS countries, we strongly look forward to business associations and support from Uttar Pradesh trade partners. Thank you to the TTJ TRAVMART team for making us aware of these markets and striking new collaborations.



**Zara Ali Khan**

**Associate VP - Aviation and Alliances, India Assist**

TTJ TRAVMART in Lucknow was a great help in terms of connecting with the right audience and target market, especially post-COVID in this region of Uttar Pradesh. This was our first time participating in TRAVMART, and the event in Lucknow turned out to be a promising show. The event was indeed managed well and professionally organised.

”







**Mohd Shoeb**  
**President, TAFA**

TTJ TRAVMART organised in Lucknow, was a great initiative by the TTJ Team. It was wonderful to see so many suppliers offering their products and services and updating the travel agents and tour operators from Lucknow and other cities of Uttar Pradesh, with the latest developments. This came at the right time, just before the holiday season sets in.



**Vivek Pandey**  
**President, TTAUP**

The TTJ TRAVMART in Lucknow was a wonderful event, extremely well organised, easy to navigate with informative and comprehensive presentations. There were many new DMCs and a good mix of sellers whom we interacted with. We congratulate TTJ for their efforts and wish them all the very best for organising TTJ TRAVMART in Lucknow in 2024.





## Events



“

**Prateek Hira**

**Chairman, IATO, Uttar Pradesh Chapter**

The TTJ TRAVMART, held in Lucknow this year, was much beyond expectations. The sellers and buyers were handpicked to meet the agenda of striking deals and leveraging business. TTJ is constantly raising its bar year after year and challenging itself to do better each year.





# Qrius Connect organises four-city roadshow Travel Connect (India - Vietnam)



Vietnam in the past year has turned out to be a popular and promising new destination for Indians. To further promote Vietnam and showcase key tourism products from the destination, Qrius Connect recently conducted a four-city roadshow through their flagship event, Travel Connect in New Delhi, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai.

'Travel Connect' brought some of the most selective and top-notch tourism and hospitality brands and stakeholders from Vietnam as their key participants at the show. There were product presentations, B2B meetings, and networking sessions with buyers from the India market.

The event was inaugurated in New Delhi by the Ambassador of Vietnam to

India, HE Nguyen Thanh Hai, along with welcome remarks from Nishant Gulliya, Founder and CEO, Qrius Connect. Also present at the event was Hoang Dai Ngai, Deputy Director from Vietravel, along with other delegates. In the other cities, the show was graced by Hoang Tung, General Consul of Vietnam in Mumbai, NS Srinivasa Murthy, Hon. Consul in Bengaluru, and Saurin Shah, Hon. Consul in Ahmedabad.

Speaking during the inauguration in Delhi, H.E Nguyen Thanh Hai said, "I appreciate Qrius Connect's initiative and pro-activeness in connecting buyers and sellers from two countries. The number of direct flights between India and Vietnam has increased significantly, bringing the two countries physically closer. I believe there will be a sharp increase in the number of tourists

visiting each other in 2023."

The Travel Connect (India - Vietnam) initiative was sparked by the sharp increase in demand for Vietnam from India and the expansion of flight options, and Nishant Gulliya felt that now is the ideal time to market the country, disseminate information among the travel industry, and establish effective partnerships in order to increase tourism to Vietnam. Nishant expressed, "We are thrilled to host our exclusive roadshow for the splendid country of Vietnam. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ambassador Nguyen Thanh Hai for appreciating the initiative and highlighting the strong potential for bilateral tourism relations between our two countries. I also want to thank all the important people that came together to make this event successful."



## Schilthorn Cableway appoints Kunal Kothari as its India representative

The Schilthorn Cableway has been active in India market for years, until 2016 this was always with the support of a representative directly on site. Now it is time to rely more intensively on additional support again.

Since the beginning of April, Kunal Kothari is the new right-hand man of Alan Ramsay, Head of Markets at Schilthornbahn, on a 40 per cent basis in all matters relating to the India market.

Kunal Kothari, the 46-year-old from Mumbai completed a university degree in Travel and Tourism Industry Management at the end of the 1990s, worked for several years for the major tour operator Thomas Cook in Dubai before returning to Mumbai to work for over seven years as Regional Manager Sales and Marketing for Rail Europe India, the largest B2B distributor of train travel in Europe. In 2018, he founded his own company, KKR World, which specialises in consulting and representing select Swiss rail companies in India. Kothari's goal with Schilthorn Cableway is to connect the mountain cableway company with the right travel agents and tour operators in India, find new marketing strategies together and then represent them in the market.



## Holiday Moods Adventures launches new B2B portal for Polar countries



L-R: Tejbir Singh Anand, Managing Director, Arshdeep Anand, Director, Holiday Moods Adventures.

Holiday Moods Adventures (HMA), a Delhi-based, 26 years old experiential and adventure tour operating company launched its B2B portal on April 28, 2023. All travel agents can

register for free on the specially curated portal, which will give access to their exclusive detailed itineraries, free download of unbranded flyers and brochures. Agents will have the ability to White Label with their branding and contact details which means that they can directly send the quotation to their clients. In addition, all products are commissionable to travel agents in the range of 8 -15 per cent.

Holiday Moods Adventures (HMA) had earlier been appointed distributor in India by the Havila Kystruten Operations AS (Norway) for its Havila Cruise bookings. Going ahead, the company has further strengthened its product profile as distributors in India for Norwegian Travel Company and Antarctica 21 also, thus making it a leading DMC for the polar countries of Norway, Iceland, Greenland and Arctic Canada in the Arctic region and New Zealand and Antarctica in the South pole region.

The portal [b2bdmc.holidaymoods.in](https://b2bdmc.holidaymoods.in) is very user friendly and all an agent needs to do is register with their GST and PAN number details which after due approval from HMA backend, will get access to the entire inventory.

## QuadLabs introduces QuadGPT – an AI-powered Itinerary Builder

Quadlabs Technologies has introduced QuadGPT – the revolutionary AI-powered itinerary builder experience that will change the way your customer can book travel. With QuadGPT, the user can create a customised travel itinerary that perfectly matches their interests, preferences, and budget – all in just a few clicks. Now you can have your own online website built using the power of QuadGPT.

QuadGPT is designed to make travel planning easy, convenient, and stress-free with features like Personalised Recommendations and Easy Booking

"I am thrilled to announce the launch of QuadGPT, our cutting-edge travel product that offers a personalised and real-time travel experience like no other. At QuadGPT, we are committed to making travel planning and booking easy, convenient, and enjoyable for everyone. We believe that travel should be about experiencing new places and cultures, not about the stress of planning. QuadGPT is powered by ChatGPT and designed to help the customers plan and book their travel effortlessly, allowing them to focus on creating unforgettable memories," said Gaurav Chiripal, CEO of QuadLabs Technologies.





## Go First files for voluntary insolvency, DGCA orders timely refunds for passengers



**G**o First has filed for bankruptcy, which could send ripples across the domestic aviation sector, right from raising passenger fares and triggering a rush among competitors to grab Go First's market share.

The Wadia Group-owned airline, Go First has blamed the engine manufacturer Pratt and Whitney stating that it has been forced to do so due to the ever-increasing number of failing engines supplied by Pratt & Whitney, resulting in the grounding of 25 aircraft equivalent to 50 per cent of its Airbus A320neo aircraft fleet.

While the matter has been brought to the notice of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Delhi for resolution under section 10 of the Insolvency Bankruptcy Code (IBC), The appeal is aimed at restructuring the airline's debt and liabilities, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The airline also had initially cancelled its flights on May 3 and

4, 2023, but the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), issued a show cause notice to Go First for cancelling all flights without giving any prior intimation. Yet the airline cancelled flights till May 09, 2023, and in the latest development the crisis-hit airline has extended the cancellation of all its flights until May 12, citing 'operational reasons' and is uncertain about its future.

DGCA has asked Go First to refund passengers and the airline may have to pay Rs 350 crore for flights cancelled till May 9. However, the airline said in a recent tweet said that it would issue a full refund to the original mode of payment for the cancelled flights.

On the other front, the NCLT has reserved orders on the airline's plea seeking protection under moratorium. The airline has made a plea seeking a moratorium to prevent lessors from taking possession of planes. Aircraft lessors told the tribunal that they represent 25 aircraft of the Go First fleet.

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## Uttarakhand Tourism announces 'Jadung' as new tourism destination

The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) has announced "JADUNG", the first Village from the Tibet Border, an old border village in Uttarkashi, as the next tourism destination in the state of Uttarakhand. Jadung also becomes the first of the five villages that will not just be rehabilitated (the locals were displaced during the Indo-China War) but will also help create this area into a sustainable Tourism destination for Astro Tourism, Trekking, Hiking, Nature Camps and Tribal Culture among others.

A village frozen in time and nestled amidst the breathtaking Himalayas, Jadung is the first village at the Indo-Tibet border and boasts of unmatched scenic beauty with its snow-capped mountains to lush green valleys. Located at an altitude of approximately 3800 meters and around 45-50 km from Harsil, Jadung offers a picture-perfect landscape. The village is a testament to the state's efforts to develop border villages through sustainable and responsible tourism, which aligns with the Central Government's vision of creating vibrant border villages.

For adventure lovers, Jadung and its surroundings offer an array of activities such as trekking, hiking, bird watching as



well as nature camps. Visitors can also immerse themselves in the local culture by experiencing tribal culture and traditional architecture.

## The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata unveils Kids' Corner

The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata, Asia's oldest luxury, heritage property has designed a multi-purpose playground for kids where they can hone their reading, writing, and storytelling skills and relish healthy recipes.

There are interesting games for kids like cartoon wall, sea saw and slides, LEGO games, puzzle games, and board games. According to Kamal Raza, General Manager, The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata, "We consider this as an opportunity to come up with Kids' Corner that is not only confined to activities for children but has options for audio-visual storytelling. Apart from resorts, kids do not have any playgrounds in the city. At Kids' Corner, children get to develop reading and writing skills. We are not targeting children for commercial purposes. Some games encourage the children to be active and they get to savour healthy delights designed by our chef. The Kids' Corner is sanitized at an interval of every three hours and would remain open from morning to evening for kids."

The high point of the kids' zone is the foldable magical



sound mat. The hospitality player has joined hands with a city-based non-governmental outfit to procure the stationeries for children.

## TAFI North India Chapter meeting held in Delhi

The TAFI North India Chapter Members organised a meeting on April 21, 2023, at The Park, Parliament Street for updates and a networking session. In the meeting, the TCS implementation issue was discussed and the revamped TAFI



website was also brought to the notice of members. There were 86 members present at the meeting.

TAFI has been representing the abolition, or at least a substantial reduction in the prevailing rate of TCS on outbound tours but instead this year the industry has got a big hit with a huge increase of 20 per cent + GST. Both the taxes are not enforceable on overseas entities, and the Indian travel agent/tour operator has been knocked out on pricing vis-à-vis any travel services provider who is not registered in India.

The TAFI website has been revamped and they have added several free skilling courses. Members were encouraged to visit the TAFI website at TafiOnline.com and make use of the resources available for their office.

Besides the above topics, a presentation was given by Sanjay Bhatnagar from Flybig. Ajay Kumar Wadhawan of AirIQ and Neeraj Kumar of UDAAN Hotels and Resorts spoke about their current and future plans. Asego Insurance also gave a product presentation at the event.





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