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Vol. 13 | Issue 12 | October 2023 | Pages 60 | ₹150





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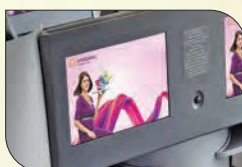
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Owned and published by: Ravi Sharma, Editor & Publisher, A-100, Upper Ground Floor, Nangal Dewat, New Delhi - 110070 and printed on his behalf at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi - 110020.



Dear Friends,

As the monsoon season gives way, October emerges as the ideal month for travel in India. It marks the onset of the pleasant winter season, and most tourist hotspots remain under a green carpet. This month also ushers in vibrant festivals like Navratri and Durga Puja, adding a special charm to family vacations.

TTJ's October 2023 issue is a general mix with exclusive content on all things reflecting travel and hospitality. We have highlighted a few domestic and international destinations along with some great interactions, providing expert opinions and taking our readers on new journeys and discoveries. Additionally, this issue features extensive coverage of EITM (East India TRAVMART), a larger and more comprehensive version of TTJ TRAVMART, which concluded successfully in Kolkata last month.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, and that the month of October inspires you to embrace and encash upon the start of the peak travel season!

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma
ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk



Connecting Travel Partners With New Opportunities



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India Assist plans expansion into 100 more cities

India Assist, a leading provider of emergency assistance services for travellers, has announced that it plans to expand into 100 more cities by next year. This expansion will bring India Assist's total presence to over 240 cities across India, making it even more accessible to travellers in need of assistance. India Assist offers a wide range of services, including medical assistance, emergency transit assistance, and emergency response to any unforeseen situation. Now, travellers can rely on India Assist's team of experienced multilingual experts for 24/7 assistance with any problems they encounter while travelling.

Harish Khatri, Founder and MD, India Assist said, "Our growth and expansion reflects our relentless pursuit of excellence and our dedication to providing top-notch assistance services. We are excited to expand to 100 more cities by next year and to partner with service and business partners across India to support our growth. Right from our partnership with IRCTC to simplify travel via railways, to us being a travel assistance partner in the prestigious Moto GP Bharat, India Assist's journey has been remarkable to say the least. As the company moves forward, it remains committed to raising the bar in the travel assistance sector."



Brij Hotels expands its portfolio, opens Brij Anayra in Dharamshala

Brij Hotels, a well-known boutique hospitality chain celebrated for delivering immersive, locally-inspired stays in stunning destinations, has recently opened its latest retreat, Brij Anayra, in Dharamshala. This luxury heritage resort marks the brand's 8th property in India and its second resort in Himachal Pradesh. This 161-year-old heritage property, overlooks expansive views of the Kangra Valley and surrounded by the mesmerising sights of the Dhauladhar Himalayan range, Brij Anayra promises an unparalleled stay experience in Dharamshala.

Spread over 10 acres of lush green landscape, the Brij Anayra estate bears witness to a journey through time. The heritage property, formerly known as 'White Haven,' resonates with echoes of illustrious figures who have left a lasting impact on its legacy. Initially inhabited by tea planters and explorers and later serving as the residence of visiting British Viceroys, Brij Anayra Dharamshala holds a rich tapestry of stories.

Surrounded by towering deodar and oak trees, lush lawns, and the verdant embrace of tea plantations, Brij Anayra offers 12 well-appointed suites and rooms. Additional facilities include a multi-cuisine restaurant with expansive alfresco seating offering breathtaking views providing guest dining rooms. Brij Anayra is located 25 minutes from the Gaggal airport.



Daniel Ricciardo to lead Western Australia's 'Drive the Dream' global campaign

The Drive the Dream campaign invites travellers to explore Western Australia as the ultimate destination for a self-drive holiday and follows Formula 1 driver Daniel Ricciardo and his best mate Blake on their road trip from Perth to Exmouth along the Coral Coast Highway.

The pair enjoy a number of iconic Western Australian tourism experiences, including swimming with whale sharks, catching and cooking fish as part of an Aboriginal cultural experience and camping out at Bullara Station.

The campaign will be rolled out over the next 12 months across Australia and the State's key international markets, including Europe, the UK, South East Asia and Japan, aiming to attract visitors to WA and inspire them to take their own road trip. Drive the Dream will also include partnerships with Qantas, Trip.com and Expedia, to encourage travel bookings to Western Australia.



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Cenizaro Hotels and Resorts unveils The Residence Douz in Tunisia

Scheduled to open this month, The Residence Douz is Cenizaro Hotels and Resorts' first desert resort and the brand's second opening in Tunisia. Serving as a gateway to the Sahara, surrounded by glistening golden sands and swaying palms, the serene retreat comprises 50 elegant villas, two gourmet restaurants, and a sprawling Spa by Clarins, all set within 14 hectares of rolling dunes.

Located in southern Tunisia, the luxury resort provides an otherworldly escape for travellers seeking an oasis of comfort and seclusion. Set within an intimate palm oasis, the encampment seamlessly combines modern luxuries with timeless elegance, inviting guests to dream peacefully under a sky full of stars and detach from the outside world.

With a number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites to explore, guests are encouraged to venture outside the resort by jeep, camel, or quadbike and fully immerse themselves in the destination. The Residence Douz follows in the footsteps of The Residence Tunis, a firm favourite amongst luxury travellers visiting the north of the country. Cenizaro Hotels and Resorts wants to continue investing in cultural destinations and is delighted to now provide travellers with its two unique offerings, allowing guests to travel from the coast to the desert with ease and uncover the many treasures of Tunisia.



New Orleans & Company appoints Sartha Global Marketing as its Representative in India

New Orleans & Company is the official destination marketing and sales organisation for the New Orleans tourism industry. Sartha Global Marketing has been tasked to implement a comprehensive travel trade and public relations program aimed at inspiring and attracting potential Indian leisure travellers, thus enhancing Indian arrivals to the destination.

Located in the state of Louisiana, New Orleans boasts a rich history and culture shaped by a captivating blend of Spanish, French, African and Caribbean influences. The city thrives on a calendar brimming with events and festivals, like the iconic Mardi Gras, Jazz Fest, Bayou Classic, etc., attracting locals and tourists alike to these celebrations.

"Leveraging the market insights and expertise of Sartha Global, we aim to enhance awareness of our destination in India. Simultaneously, we intend to collaborate closely with travel trade partners to offer new and unique tour programs to prospective visitors," said Kim Priez, Senior Vice President, Tourism, New Orleans & Company.



Thailand renews contract with VFS Global for processing visa applications across India

Continuing its trusted partnership with the Thailand government, VFS Global, once again won the contract to process visa applications for Thailand from India.

The company will cater to travellers from India across visa categories through visa application centres and drop-off centres as per the jurisdiction of the Royal Thai Embassy in Delhi and the Royal Thai Consulate General in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai.

VFS Global's relationship with the Government of Thailand dates back nearly two decades. The company has processed more than 2.2 million Thai visa applications since 2005.

As a part of the mandate, VFS Global will roll out drop box services in tier 2 cities such as Ranchi, Aurangabad, Bhopal, Indore, Nagpur, Nasik, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Vijayawada. Currently, the service is available at Agra, Amritsar, Dehradun, Jaipur, Ludhiana, Guwahati, Patna, Bihar, Bhubaneswar, Jamshedpur, Siliguri and Visakhapatnam.

The VFS Global's newest visa application centre (VAC) in

Lucknow (a drop box facility earlier) will also accept applications for Thailand visas.



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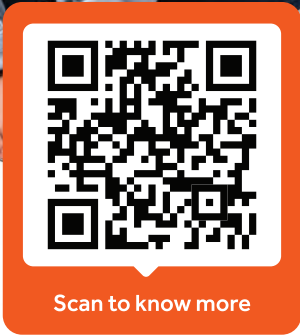
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Norwegian Cruise Line launches new Asia-Pacific itineraries

Norwegian Cruise Line recently launched a series of 14 immersive, destination-rich Asia Pacific itineraries aboard the spectacularly refurbished Norwegian Spirit. During its eight-month season in Asia from September 2024 to April 2025, Norwegian Spirit will offer a selection of four to 14-day voyages from five departure ports including Manila, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo and Seoul starting September 2024 and through April 2025.

A smaller ship at just over 2,000 guests, Norwegian Spirit is packed full of features including the adults-only Spice H2O pool retreat, enthralling entertainment, and the doubled-in-size Mandara Spa™, featuring a Thermal Suite with steam room, sauna, shower experience and heated-tile loungers.

Ben Angell, VP and Managing Director, NCL APAC, said, "We know Asia is a popular choice for local travellers – Japan is one of my personal favourites – and we are excited to expand our options in this market to excite our Indian guests."

The itineraries include the 12-day Japan round-trip from Tokyo: Osaka, Sapporo, Busan and Mt Fuji, the 10-day Asia from Seoul to Tokyo: Osaka, Kohi, Jeju and Mt Fuji and the 12-day Asia from Seoul to Tokyo: Jeju, Nagoya and Sapporo.



Saudia enters a new era, unveils new brand identity and livery

Saudia, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, revealed its new brand identity and livery during a milestone event in Jeddah, in the presence of Royal Highnesses, Excellencies and leaders from both the public and private sectors, as well as prominent media correspondents and aviation experts. This new identity is in line with a wider strategic digital transformation plan aimed at strengthening the airline's support for the Kingdom's Vision 2030 to bring the world to Saudi Arabia.

The rebrand marks the beginning of a new era for Saudia, emphasising innovative customer services with a strong digital focus and celebrating Saudi culture to enhance the guest experience. This transformation embodies Saudia's national identity, engaging all senses with an authentic Saudi journey, including unique fragrances, sounds, locally-inspired cuisine, and crafts. The new identity reflects Saudi Arabia's welcoming spirit, fostering a deeper understanding of Saudi culture for both locals and visitors. Additionally, the rebrand includes new uniforms for cabin crew and ground staff.

The new brand color identity, comprised of green, blue, and sand, represents Saudia's aim to expand its fleet and destinations, connecting the world to Saudi Arabia, emphasising the Kingdom's authenticity and deep-rooted values.



Jazeera Airways introduces sustainable food service ware on all flights

Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost carrier, recently introduced sustainable food service ware on all flights across its network of 64 destinations. By changing from plastic cutlery to 100 per cent biodegradable spoons, forks, knives and napkins, Jazeera reduces 300 kilograms of plastic on its flights each month. The cutlery manufactured by Dubai-based Palmade® is made from natural materials including leaves of date palm trees. All of these materials are certified biodegradable and compostable. Earlier in the year, Jazeera also switched from plastic stirrers to wooden ones as a part of its sustainable practices.

The airline is the first low-cost carrier in the Middle East to switch from plastic to eco-friendly food service ware in-flight.

Rohit Ramachandran, Chief Executive Officer, Jazeera Airways said, "As a low-cost carrier, we have to be cost-conscious in our business, but we are also mindful of our ethical, social and environmental accountability. In the last few years, we have taken small steps towards sustainability and continue to

stay focused on reducing or offsetting our carbon emissions. Changing to biodegradable service ware is another small initiative that we are hoping will contribute to a larger impact. Our ultimate goal is to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050."



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OUTLETCITY METZINGEN

German Retail Goldmine beckons tourists

The convergence of luxury, cost-effectiveness, and an inviting shopping ambience positions Metzingen as an essential destination for fashion aficionados. Angela Rieger, Senior International Partnership Manager at Outletcity Metzingen, outlines the appeal of Outletcity Metzingen.



Prativa V Bhalla

Located within a two-hour radius of major cities such as Munich, Frankfurt, and Zurich, an hour from Baden-Baden, and a mere 30 minutes from Stuttgart, Outletcity Metzingen provides access to an impressive selection of over 170 international exclusive luxury fashion brands. Brands offer year-round discounts of up to 70 per cent, presenting an unparalleled shopping opportunity.

Outletcity Metzingen claims the title of Europe's largest outlet and proudly hosts the world's largest BOSS outlet. As the hometown of the legendary design giant Hugo Boss, this destination offers accessible designer trends with global appeal. Visitors from 185 different nations frequent this cosmopolitan hub. Its unique blend of seamless connectivity, avant-garde architecture, a compelling retail



▲ Angela Rieger

experience, and great weather serves as a magnetic attraction for tourists.

It provides attentive and tailored

services, ensuring the utmost comfort for its visitors. The offerings include diverse international cuisines at multiple restaurants, including Halal food, a dedicated Islamic prayer room, a robust safety programme, a Kid's Camp, and various other amenities.

The leading source markets include Germany, China, and the Gulf Countries, while India demonstrates great potential with steadily increasing footfall. In their endeavour to enhance the Metzingen experience, efforts are being made to create greater awareness in countries such as India, which demonstrates substantial potential. As part of IMEX 2023, a FAM trip was organised for luxury travel agents from India, which has received great feedback.

Outletcity is taking further steps to enhance its offerings by introducing a Moxy Hotel on its premises, despite the presence of a few smaller boutique hotels within Outletcity, which cater to shoppers seeking overnight accommodations during their shopping visits or layovers. The addition of a prominent hotel chain to the property is anticipated to substantially increase the visibility and appeal of Outletcity.

It also hosts a range of enchanting seasonal experiences and festivities that contribute to its charm. Events such as DJ nights, fun activities, vibrant Oktoberfest celebrations, and colourful Christmas markets are carefully curated to engage and enhance the shopping experience.

The post-pandemic slump has finally been replaced by the happy buzz of excited shoppers scoring great deals and signalling a vibrant resurgence of retail at Outlet City Metzingen.



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INDIA A THRIVING SOURCE MARKET FOR VISIT ALMATY



In an exclusive interview with TTJ, Diyar Askarov, Deputy Director of Visit Almaty, shared valuable insights into the plans, prospects, and strategies of the Almaty Tourism Bureau for the Indian market.

Prativa V Bhalla

Q. How important is the Indian market for Kazakhstan?

The Indian market holds significant importance for Kazakhstan's tourism industry. Over the past few years, there has been a noticeable evolution in the tourism landscape, with increasing numbers of Indian travellers choosing Kazakhstan and specifically Almaty as their destination. According to statistics, more than 32,000 tourists from India visited Almaty from January through July of this year. Kazakhstan and India have cemented a strategic partnership, enhancing their multifaceted collaboration for the mutual benefit of both nations.

Q. What are the key factors contributing to India's importance for Kazakhstan tourism?

This flow can be attributed to several key factors such as the easing of visa regulations and improved connectivity



▲ Diyar Askarov

between the two countries. For instance, Air Astana – the largest airline in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, offers direct flights from Almaty to Delhi. IndiGo recently commenced non-stop flights on the Delhi-Almaty route. This was created for the convenience of travellers as more tourists from India are seeking diverse and unique travel experiences. Almaty offers an enticing blend of culture, outdoor activities, bazaars, cuisines

and stunning landscapes, like the vast steppe mountains around Almaty.

Q. Could you elaborate on the strategies and initiatives that Almaty Tourism Bureau "Visit Almaty" has been employing to strengthen ties between India and Almaty in the travel and tourism sector?

The Bureau has been implementing several strategic initiatives to strengthen ties between India and Almaty in the travel and tourism sector. This includes targeted marketing campaigns that highlight Almaty's attractions and its uniqueness to the Indian audience. Collaborations with Indian travel agencies, participation in travel expos in India and South-East Asia, as well as hosting FAM trips for Indian tour operators have been part of our strategy.

Furthermore, to promote the tourism potential of Almaty in India, for the last two years our team has participated in roadshows in New Delhi and Mumbai, reaching a combined audience of over 1,500 individuals. During the roadshow, agreements were signed for collaboration between the Department of Tourism of Almaty City and the Travel Agent Association of India (TAAI) in New Delhi, as well as the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) in Mumbai.



Additionally, in 2022 we participated in SATTE in New Delhi. In November 2022, members of the Travel Agent Association of India (TAAI) were invited to explore Almaty. They also paid a visit to the 'Visit Almaty Tourist Hub'. Informational tours were conducted at the finest and most popular hotels, indicating the increasing interest of Indian travel agencies in both Almaty and Kazakhstan.

This year, we organised a roadshow in India, which has further strengthened the bonds of friendship between our nations. The event witnessed the presence of esteemed officials from the embassies of both countries, as well as representatives from the municipality of Almaty. The roadshow served as a fruitful platform to showcase the extensive tourism potential of the vibrant city of Almaty, often referred to as the southern capital.

Q. Looking ahead, what is Almaty Tourism Bureau's vision and outlook for India as a source market in the next few years? Are there any specific goals or targets that the organisation aims to achieve?

The Bureau envisions India as a thriving source market. Our goal is to establish Almaty as a preferred destination for

Q. Any signs and figures to show that Indians are looking at Almaty as a new destination?

Indeed, there are promising signs indicating growing Indian interest in Almaty. We have witnessed a steady increase in the number of Indian tourists visiting Almaty over the past few years. Additionally, online search trends and social media interactions from Indian users have shown a rising curiosity about Almaty's attractions and offerings.

Q. Which month is best to visit Almaty, and what are the nearby places of interest in Kazakhstan that can be covered in the trip?

Almaty has a unique location, rich historical heritage, a multicultural environment and all the potential for comprehensive tourism development. Our focus is centred on crafting the image of Almaty as a year-round tourist destination (all

4 seasons), emphasising numerous facets such as nature, business, event, cultural, and sports tourism. The city itself attracts tourists due to its unique location in mountainous terrain, presence of

are no more than 10 cities in the world with similar geographical features. Visitors can enjoy a wide range of experiences, from cultural and educational ones such as visiting museums, theatres, cultural events, and festivals to MICE tourism. Almaty hosts regular exhibitions, conferences, and conventions at both local and international levels.

We intend to continue to develop Almaty as an attractive and unique destination for tourists from all around the world. We collaborate with international tour operators and agencies, participate in international forums, and actively promote Almaty through digital and social media. This approach allows us to reach diverse travellers and attract more guests from different countries. We strive to quickly and effectively adapt to new global trends and tourist expectations. We study the needs of our guests and work on diversifying our tourism products and services, ensuring that everyone can find something special and interesting in Almaty.

This exciting discussion raises hopes for Almaty's emergence as a leading global tourism destination. The nation offers an enchanting culture, awe-inspiring landscapes, traveller-friendly amenities, and warm hospitality that truly charms visitors. The efficiently planned direct flights connecting Delhi and Almaty serve as a convenient entry point into the captivating Eastern European tourism circuit, illustrating Kazakhstan's substantial potential as a tourism hub.

Indian travellers seeking both leisure and business experiences. We aim to achieve sustained growth in Indian tourist arrivals through a combination of innovative marketing campaigns, enhanced travel experiences, and strengthened partnerships with Indian travel industry stakeholders. One of our targets is also to showcase Almaty as the best new exotic destination for MICE, Sports events and Indian weddings. We are planning to help organise the Bergman Triathlon Kolhapur, known as India's best Triathlon event. Bergman Triathlon in Almaty will not only boost sports tourism but also bring numerous branding benefits for both countries. It is expected that the event will be attended by more than 1,000 guests.

resorts, lakes, and picturesque valleys and canyons, as well as its authentic architecture and climatic conditions. It provides a variety of recreational spots, ranging from the Green Bazaar to Shymbulak. The main undeniable advantage of Almaty is that our mountains are within a 20-minute reach from the city centre. There



India powers growth trajectory of South African Tourism

South African Tourism recently unveiled the 2023 edition of 'Learn South Africa' in Delhi, kickstarting a six-city training programme in India aimed at equipping travel agents with the finest tools to sell the destination effectively. Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head, Middle East, India and South-East Asia, South African Tourism, provided valuable insights into their growth strategy and ventures to attract Indian travellers to explore the Rainbow Nation.

Prativa V Bhalla

India, currently ranked as South Africa's sixth-largest international source market, is assuming an increasingly pivotal role in the country's thriving tourism sector. The influx of Indian tourists to South Africa has witnessed remarkable growth, this year's target of 47,000 visitors has been met in the first half of the year itself. The projected numbers could easily surpass 80,000 arrivals from India in 2023.

Neliswa stated, "I believe that India will achieve a higher position in the rankings within the next few months, likely reaching the fourth or fifth spot, given its current trajectory. Our ongoing efforts to streamline travel to South Africa, particularly if visa procedures become more accessible, will propel India into the top five destinations, following closely behind the current top three: UK, US, and Germany."

The current surge in tourism, encompassing both corporate and leisure sectors, is attributed to the vigorous initiatives undertaken by SA Tourism to boost footfall. These include hosting engaging events such as 'Corporate Chillers' and 'Corporate Think Tanks', which serve as avenues to gain deeper insights into the market landscape.

'Corporate Chillers' serve as relaxed conferences tailored for corporate decision-makers, with over 450 guests to engage in the SA experience. These events, guided by the South African High Commissioner, provide an opportune environment for discussing the brand South Africa while enjoying its legendary hospitality. These gatherings promote friendly and valuable exchanges, ultimately driving progress in the travel industry. Neliswa states, "Following one such session, the Indian corporate entity, Mahindra, arranged for a group of 700 guests to visit South Africa. It is indeed a humbling experience to host Indian travellers and witness the tangible results of our dedicated efforts." In November 2023, SA Tourism will host events in Delhi and Mumbai to commemorate 30 years of bilateral relations with India.



▲ Neliswa Nkani

The 'Corporate Think Tanks,' in contrast, are industry events designed to solicit input on concerns, apprehensions, and queries. Their objective is to address doubts and facilitate a more informed choice of South Africa as a travel destination. During these sessions, feedback is actively collected to tailor better travel products to meet industry needs.

SA Tourism also organises incentive drives for Indian travel partners to personally experience the country. In 2023, SA Tourism will provide FAM opportunities to 30 agents, while next year's Indaba drive will recruit 100 agents for participation. Additional initiatives involve promoting trade engagements in tier two and three cities of India to foster an increase in tourist footfall.

Leisure travel has experienced significant growth, particularly with a noticeable increase in millennials and young women embarking on girls' trips. South Africa's extensive range of adventure sports has become a significant draw for younger tourists, with Indians taking the lead as avid adventure enthusiasts. The

nation provides access to over 3,000 affordable and thrilling adventures. Exciting experiences such as shark diving and bungee jumping are available at budget-friendly prices.

Other factors that make it an attractive tourist destination include its affordability, the favourable exchange rate between the Indian Rupee and the African Rand, and the intercontinental tourism circuit, allowing an experience of the rich diversity of Africa.

Adding to the attraction is the newly launched fare, in collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines, which offers travellers access to South Africa for about Rs. 40,000. Ethiopian Airlines' extensive flight network and capacity provide a solid foundation for fostering growth and synergy between the two African nations.

Commenting on feedback gathered from Indian tourists, Neliswa emphasised, "Indian travellers initially worry about costs, visa processing, and travel duration when considering South Africa. However, upon arrival, they are pleasantly surprised by the country's exceptional offerings, leading to overwhelmingly positive feedback." She continued, "While there may be occasional travel challenges that our tourism ministry is actively addressing, the South Africa experience is undeniably a worthwhile adventure."

“The target for individual visitors in 2023 has already been surpassed. The focus now is on maintaining a steady growth trajectory.”

South African Tourism is deeply invested in India as a key part of its global strategy. Neliswa concludes, "We deeply appreciate the support and affection from the Indian community, which greatly influences our identity. We are wholeheartedly dedicated to reciprocating this support."



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Elevating Nepal's Hospitality Landscape

Nestled amidst the backdrop of the majestic Himalayan Mountains, Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort Dhulikhel is a lighthouse of luxury and calmness in the heart of Nepal. This resort is a testament to the fusion of international excellence and local charm. In a recent interview with Kris Panya, the General Manager of the resort, we delved deep into the resort's vision, initiatives, and its promise to redefine the travel experience for both leisure and corporate travellers.

Vartik Sethi

A Resort that Transcends Boundaries

Nepal, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, rich culture, and spiritual aura, has long attracted travellers seeking solace and adventure. However, the hospitality scene in this beautiful country has largely remained untapped by international brands. Panya highlighted this gap by stating, "We are the first international brand to enter Dhulikhel. While it is not new in the local market, it is a novel experience for international travellers. Currently, there are no international brands here, and our aim is to support the local community with our core values, particularly corporate social responsibility (CSR)."

Initially offering 28 elegantly designed rooms, including junior suites and residences, the second phase of development will add numerous keys, totalling 72 by 2024. The resort places a strong emphasis on wellness, featuring Devarana Wellness with tailored activities, an infinity pool, and a view of the Himalayas. Panya expressed excitement about the resort's opening, highlighting their core values of care and commitment.

Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort Dhulikhel, Nepal has not only entered the Nepali market but has also become deeply ingrained in the local community. Panya proudly shared, "At present, more than 35 per cent of our staff



▲ Kris Panya

are locals, with 70 per cent of them having no prior experience in the hospitality industry. We train them from the ground up, nurturing their potential. This has a profound impact on the local economy, fostering a promising future."

Discovering Dhulikhel

Panya elucidated, "Dhulikhel offers not only a scenic backdrop of the Himalayas but also a rich cultural heritage. With attractions like Namo

Budha and nearby rafting opportunities, we provide our guests with an array of experiences. Our aim is not just to offer accommodation but to showcase the city's potential as a destination."

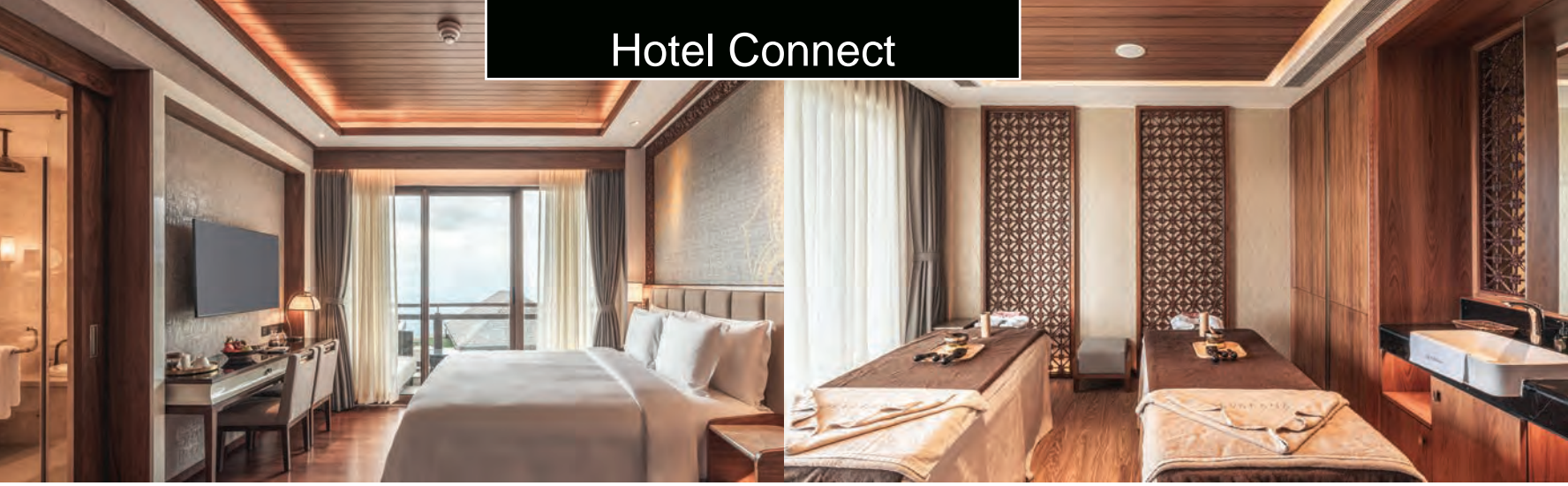
Indeed, the resort's commitment to experiential travel is evident. Panya elaborated, "We don't just want our guests to stay; we want them to immerse themselves in the local culture. We organise visits to small villages and offer experiences like afternoon tea with locals. We aim to create authentic interactions between our guests and the community."

Activities Beyond Compare

In response to a question about the resort's plans for guests staying longer durations, Panya shared an enticing array of activities. He said, "Apart from visits to monasteries and the exciting 45-minute drive to the rafting river, we have an extensive wellness program. Guests can indulge in meditation, detoxification, and trekking experiences, including the Namo Buddha Trek. For those interested in the local way of life, we offer opportunities to explore nearby towns, experience local living, and even participate in cooking classes."

A Unique Culinary Journey

The culinary aspect of Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort is an experience in itself. Panya emphasised their commitment to offering an



unparalleled culinary journey, saying, “We believe in creating personalised luxury. Our resort boasts its own unique cheese, produced locally with a twist. We collaborate with local cheese factories, infusing specific herbs to create our exclusive cheese collection. This unique offering sets us apart, as we aim to introduce guests to flavors they won’t find elsewhere.”

Panya further expanded on their culinary initiatives, adding, “We are also venturing into coffee. Soon, we will be serving a special blend of local coffee, further supporting the local community. Our focus is on maintaining a farm-to-table approach, showcasing the finest local ingredients while adding international flair to our menu. Guests can look forward to a fusion of authentic Nepali, Thai, and other international cuisines.”

The Thai Street Food Experience

A standout feature of the resort’s culinary offerings is their Thai street food experience. Panya explained, “We have a Thai chef who specialises in street food. She has never worked in a hotel before, which is a unique approach in the hotel industry. We believe that true culinary authenticity lies in the streets, and we aim to bring that experience to our guests, even in a luxury setting.”

Panya went on to express his passion for authentic culinary experiences, saying, “We believe that a chef doesn’t need a hotel background to be exceptional. Good chefs can be found anywhere, from small street-side stalls to renowned restaurants. It’s about the passion for food and the ability to create an unforgettable dining experience.”

Cross Promotional Initiatives

One of the resort’s innovative ideas is cross-promotion with their Middle Eastern and South Asian counterparts. Panya elaborated on this concept, saying, “We want to create a unique journey for our guests. Imagine starting in the deserts of the Middle East and journeying to the serene heights of the Himalayas. It’s an imaginative concept, but it exemplifies our commitment to offering distinctive experiences. We believe in providing guests with a seamless and unforgettable journey across our properties.”

Positioning for the Indian Market

Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort recognises the significance of the Indian market and is actively strategising to attract Indian travellers. Panya expressed, “India is a market of great potential for us. It’s not just about attracting tourists; it’s about providing an experience that resonates with them. Our proximity to India, just a short flight away, makes us an accessible destination for Indian travellers. We want them to explore Nepal and its unique offerings.”

For Indian travellers, it aims to create tailored experiences. Panya shared, “Indian travellers have diverse interests, and we aim to cater to all of them. Whether it’s solo adventurers, couples, honeymooners, families, or corporate groups, we have something to offer everyone. Our diverse range of activities and experiences ensures that each guest can create their own memorable journey.”

The MICE Advantage

The resort’s strategic location and versatile event spaces, including a grand ballroom and

expansive lawns, make it an ideal destination for hosting a variety of events. Panya acknowledged this advantage, saying, “We have the capacity and facilities to host destination weddings, corporate meetings, and other special occasions. Our pristine air quality, amid the natural beauty of the Himalayas, makes us an attractive proposition for hosting international meetings and events.”

The Dusit Thani Experience

For an immersive experience at Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort, Panya recommended a minimum stay of three to four nights. He emphasised, “This duration allows guests to fully appreciate our unparalleled luxury, rich cultural experiences, and breathtaking surroundings. It provides ample time to explore not just the resort but also the city of Panauti and its neighboring attractions.”

In a heartfelt closing statement, Kris Panya extended a warm invitation to Indian travellers. He said, “I invite Indian travellers to experience Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort Dhulikhel, Nepal. Come, immerse yourself in our unique blend of luxury and local culture. Discover the unexplored beauty of Nepal and create memories that will stay with you forever. We are here to ensure that your journey with us is nothing short of extraordinary.”

Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts sets its eyes on Indian Wedding Market

In the dynamic world of travel and tourism, Sri Lanka has become an increasingly sought-after destination, with its stunning landscapes, rich culture, and warm hospitality drawing visitors from around the globe. Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts, a prominent player in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry, has played a pivotal role in showcasing the country's beauty and charm to the world. Radhey Tawar, Chief Commercial Officer, Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts, shared insights into their strategies, future plans, and the unique experiences they offer to travellers.

Vartik Sethi

A Multifaceted Destination

Radhey Tawar, Chief Commercial Officer, Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts, began by emphasising the significance of the Indian market for Sri Lanka and Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts. He explained that India wasn't just a vital market for Sri Lanka in general but also held a special significance for their brand. When breaking down the Indian market into segments, he pointed out that there was a diverse set of travellers.

In 2023, Indian travellers remain pivotal to Sri Lanka's tourism, averaging an 18 per cent contribution since 2018. From January to July, India consistently ranks among the top two markets, with April to July being the peak season. Travel preferences include 50-60 per cent for FIT, 15-20 per cent for MICE and business, and the rest for visiting friends and family.

Tawar shared, "The Indian market is central to our success, and we've strategically positioned ourselves to cater to a diverse array of travellers."

Catering to a diverse audience, Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts strategically operates 11 hotels across Sri Lanka, with 3 in Colombo and 8 spread throughout the country.

Each property offers unique experiences tailored to different types of travellers. For instance, their flagship property, Cinnamon Bey Beruwala, is a favourite for destination weddings. This stunning resort is situated on the scenic Bentota Beach, which was also recognised as one of Sri Lanka's top 10 beaches by Lonely Planet. "We are targeting about 12 destination weddings annually, with an increasing number of bookings already confirmed," Tawar added.

Additionally, they provide a wildlife experience at Cinnamon Wild Yala, located at the entrance of the



▲ Radhey Tawar

Yala National Park, famous for its leopard sightings.

Targeting the Indian Market

Besides the destination wedding segment, honeymoon travel is another lucrative market, with travellers showing interest in combining trips to Sri Lanka and the Maldives for a diverse and unique experience. The proximity of both destinations and the ease of travel between them makes this combination highly attractive to Indian tourists.

To tap into these markets effectively, Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts has established a global sales office in India, with a presence in Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore.

Reviving Tourism Post-Pandemic

Tawar shared encouraging news, stating that by the end of the fiscal year, they expected tourist arrival numbers to approach the levels of 2018-19, which was the country's best year for tourism. He noted that monthly tourist arrivals

were expected to surpass those figures as early as January. This resurgence is seen as a positive sign for the Sri Lanka's Tourism as well as Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts as a brand.

Creating Holistic Experiences

Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts has gone beyond traditional hospitality by creating a comprehensive ecosystem around its properties. Two key components of this ecosystem are Cinnamon Nature Trails and Cinnamon Air.

Cinnamon Nature Trails: This initiative enhances the adventure aspect of travel by offering nature experiences to guests. The Nature Trails team organises safaris, nature walks, and other activities that highlight the natural beauty and wildlife in the vicinity of their properties. Whether it's leopard safaris near Cinnamon Wild or marine adventures near Trinco Blu by Cinnamon, Nature Trails ensures that guests have a deeper connection with the environment.

Cinnamon Air: This domestic air taxi service provides convenient travel within Sri Lanka. Travellers can choose from scheduled flights or even charter flights for special occasions or group travel. Cinnamon Air facilitates hassle-free travel, reducing the time spent on road journeys.

Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives

Sustainability is a core focus for Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts. Tawar shared, "We are committed to reducing single-use plastic waste by 50 per cent by 2025, with impressive achievements already made in the Maldives." Cinnamon is also actively involved in biodiversity conservation projects, such as the Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project to reforest and rehabilitate rainforest areas.

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Crystal Cruises Bats for Indian Luxury MICE Market

For over three decades, Crystal Cruises has been synonymous with award-winning, white-gloved service and luxury cruises. Last year, A&K Travel Group acquired the Crystal brand and its two luxury vessels, Crystal Serenity and Crystal Symphony, ushering in a new chapter at Crystal Cruises. Matthew Boutwell, Senior Director, Charter and Incentives, Crystal Cruises, and Ajay Vinayak, CEO, Palomino Hospitality, PSA for Crystal Cruises in India, shared with TTJ their thoughts and vision for the luxury cruise MICE opportunity that the India market offers.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Elucidate upon the USPs of Crystal Cruises appealing to Indian travellers.

Matthew: Crystal is positioned perfectly in the Indian market due to our onboard offerings and unique port of calls that make us unique. We do not have set dining times in our main dining room, allowing guests to craft their holiday in a manner that best suits them. We also stand by our delivery of exceptional service, which our Indian guests expect when looking for a luxury outbound MICE cruise operator. Our onboard product is all-inclusive in nature so that our guests and MICE attendees can come on board and enjoy all of our food and drink offerings without worrying about any extra costs, along with free unlimited Wi-Fi.

Could you highlight some key trends and developments in the cruise industry?

Matthew: Guests globally are looking to experience a destination without the throng of people both on board and in the ports of call. Crystal decisively calls into smaller ports to give our guests the freedom to explore, we have also chosen to operate our embark and debark ports in smaller cities so as to give our guests more freedom of choice.

Elaborate on the onboard experience and amenities on your ships to cater to the needs and preferences of MICE attendees.

Matthew: Our ships are perfectly designed to offer our MICE clients both amenities and the facilities needed to host a conference, meeting, or incentive at sea. Both our ships feature dining rooms and theatres that can accommodate up to 70 per cent of the total capacity of the vessels. We also have dedicated conference and theatre facilities in various sizes to host both breakout sessions and board meetings onboard. When the guests are finished



▲ Matthew Boutwell

with their meetings, we have a fully refurbished spa, pool deck, and various bars and lounges for our guests.

What do you think is the potential of the Indian market for your cruise segment?

Matthew: I anticipate that India will represent up to 15 per cent of the Crystal MICE business globally. There is endless opportunity for growth in India, given the population growth of the upper middle class and their desire to travel to beautiful ports of call in the most exceptional way possible onboard Crystal. The Indian market is incredibly important to our long-term MICE plans. Crystal understands this and has placed local representation to ensure our MICE clients know of the offerings and destinations that Crystal offers.

Describe your partnership with Palomino Hospitality as a PSA for Crystal Cruises in India.

Matthew: Palomino is our eyes and ears locally for the MICE market. The only way to be successful in a new region is



▲ Ajay Vinayak

to partner with an expert in MICE and a company with a long-standing history of outbound MICE programmes. Hence, the match between our organisations is perfect.

Ajay: The partnership is poised to create a synergy that will effectively showcase Crystal Cruises' luxury cruise experiences to the Indian market.

What are your plans for promoting Crystal Cruises in the India market?

Ajay: Palomino Hospitality will be promoting the Crystal Cruises brand in India by engaging with consumer and travel trade media, executing effective B2B and B2C marketing strategies, fostering connections to drive awareness and preference for Crystal Cruises among Indian travellers, and providing comprehensive assistance with chartering the cruise by offering a tailored itinerary for an incentive programme, organising senior management conferences, planning celebratory events, or in need of a distinctive venue for weddings.



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Red Sea Global

Paving Way for Responsible Tourism

The global tourism industry stands at a crossroads, facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. On the international observance day for tourism, Tracy Lanza, Group Head, Global Branding, Red Sea Global (RSG), shares how the company is taking bold strides towards a more sustainable and responsible approach to tourism.

Vartik Sethi

Investing in People, Planet, and Prosperity

From its inception, RSG has set out to redefine the future of travel by prioritising environmental responsibility, community engagement, and economic growth. Tracy Lanza, Group Head, Global Branding, Red Sea Global (RSG) emphasises that responsible governance is at the heart of everything they do.

In their commitment to fostering long-term prosperity, RSG has implemented a range of educational and employment initiatives. These include free online English language courses, scholarships with international universities, and vocational training programs that specialise in tourism-related skills.

The Elite Graduate Program, in partnership with the University of Tabuk College of Hospitality & Tourism, focuses on training and employing local talent, with a goal of supporting 10,000 graduates through these educational programs, with at least 50 per cent hailing from the surrounding areas of their developments.

Lanza also highlights RSG's support for local businesses impacted by their developments. They have established the first farmers' cooperative, uniting



▲ Tracy Lanza

200 farmers working in family-run or independent businesses. Through this cooperative, RSG assists them in entering new markets, sharing best practices, and ensuring fair and equitable prices for their agricultural produce.

"By investing in tourism-related infrastructure and supporting local businesses, we aim to stimulate economic growth and anticipate that our developments

will create 120,000 jobs," she added.

On the environmental front, RSG has adopted sustainable building practices, energy-efficient technologies, and conservation programs to protect fragile coastal ecosystems.

The Masterplan

RSG's masterplan, developed in partnership with the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, dedicates less than one per cent of the total site area for development, with 75 per cent of the destination's islands preserved for conservation. It aims to achieve a 30 per cent net positive conservation benefit by 2040 by enhancing key habitats to help biodiversity flourish. "From its inception, Red Sea Global (RSG) has designed its masterplan of The Red Sea and other destination projects with a responsible approach that prioritises the environment," Lanza added.

Furthermore, RSG is committed to inclusivity, Lanza shared, "Complementing this, we have pledged that each of Red Sea Global's destinations and experiences be fully inclusive for guests with disabilities, specific needs, and access requirements, by implementing an accessibility initiative named Project Aurelia."



Innovation for a Sustainable Future

RSG firmly believes that sustainability alone is no longer sufficient. Lanza explained, "To move beyond preserving the status quo, we continue to embrace innovation and experimentation with cutting-edge ideas for the betterment of our planet." Partnering with ZeroAvia, they are leading the development of seaplanes powered by hydrogen fuel cells. They are also experimenting with cutting-edge carbon-negative concrete pavers to mitigate carbon emissions.

One of their most ambitious endeavors is harnessing the power of sunlight to meet the energy needs of The Red Sea and Amaala destinations 24/7. Currently building the world's largest battery storage facility, RSG is committed to making their mobility network 100 per cent electric or powered by hydrogen. This groundbreaking effort positions them at the forefront of sustainable energy solutions in the travel industry.

Planting the Seeds of Conservation

In alignment with the Saudi Green Initiative, RSG has embarked on an audacious project to plant 50 million mangrove trees. These trees are not only effective at carbon capture but also support biodiversity. This initiative aligns perfectly with their overarching goal of achieving a 30 per cent net conservation benefit across all their destinations by 2040. Lanza shared, "The initiative is in strong accordance with the Saudi Green Initiative's national goals and mirrors RSG's dedication to preserving and rejuvenating the Red Sea coast in Saudi Arabia."

Luxury Regenerative Tourism: The Red Seas Promise

The Red Sea is on a mission to redefine luxury through sustainability. With plans to have 50 hotels and up to 1,000 residential properties by 2030, visitors can anticipate a fusion of opulence and eco-consciousness.

Among the hotels set to open, Six Senses Southern Dunes at The Red Sea is a standout. Located inland, this resort offers guests a deep connection with nature, with opportunities to explore rolling sand dunes by day and gaze at the pristine night sky, free from light pollution, by night.

Lanza detailed, "Our collaborations with renowned names in the hospitality sector guarantee guests an extraordinary blend of luxury and sustainability." Partners such as Four Seasons Resort at The Red Sea, Grand Hyatt, Jumeirah Hotel Group, Miraval, Intercontinental Resort Red Sea, Fairmont The Red Sea, and Raffles Red Sea are poised to deliver exceptional experiences.

Once-in-a-Lifetime Experiences at The Red Sea

Three distinct experience brands, WAMA, Galaxea, and Akun, are designed to offer a diverse range of activities, including water sports, diving, terrestrial adventures, and aerial escapades. Whether your interests lie in mountain climbing, dune hiking, surface water activities, or underwater exploration, The Red Sea promises tailored experiences for every individual.

Amaala: A Wellness Oasis

Amaala is not just a destination; it's an immersive experience designed to enhance the well-being of its visitors. Nestled approximately 200 kilometers north of The Red Sea, Amaala aspires to become the global leader in integrated wellness destinations.

Spanning an impressive 4,155 square kilometers, Amaala is a sanctuary boasting diverse natural ecosystems and a unique coastal landscape. It's here that discerning guests will embark on profound and transformative personal journeys.

Lanza added, "Partnerships with

renowned names like Clinique La Prairie, Jayasom, Equinox Hotels, Six Senses, and Rosewood Hotels and Resorts ensure that Amaala offers distinctive wellness experiences aimed at enhancing visitors' well-being."

Marine Life Institute and Triple Bay Yacht Club

Designed by the renowned architectural firm Foster + Partners, the marine life institute at Amaala serves as both a scientific research hub and a captivating tourist attraction. Situated within the Triple Bay marina, the institute is central to Amaala's mission to safeguard and enhance the vibrant Red Sea coastline of Saudi Arabia. Visitors can partake in activities such as underwater walks, snorkelling alongside rare species, guided laboratory tours, and deep-sea exploration via a submarine.

Another integral development is the iconic 7,900-square-meter Triple Bay Yacht Club, designed by the leading architecture firm HKS. This club is set to become a global destination for luxury yacht owners and enthusiasts, featuring state-of-the-art marina facilities, dining options, shops, and leisure amenities.

Leading the Way in Sustainable Tourism

Tracy Lanza pointed out the significance of Red Sea Global partnering with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) for the development of The Red Sea and Amaala destinations. She stated, "Our partnership with WTTC acknowledges RSG's prominent role in spearheading a transformative shift within the tourism industry, transitioning from sustainable to regenerative tourism development."

This collaboration aims to highlight the potential of responsible and regenerative travel, showcasing best practices and experiences for a more sustainable future in tourism.



RwandAir emphasises amplifying customer experience

RwandAir has been building a strong reputation for its service quality, reliability, and efficiency. Vennah Mukumburwa, Country Manager, RwandAir, India, provides insights into the airline's impressive growth, solidifying its position as one of Africa's, fastest-growing airlines.

Prashant Nayak

RwandAir, the national flag carrier of Rwanda, has a mix of regional and long-haul routes, with a focus on connecting underserved markets and driving economic growth in the region. RwandAir's Kigali hub also provides quick connections to its extensive network of flights reaching across Africa to countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Vennah Mukumburwa recently took the role of Country Manager, and she aims to ensure excellence and foster professional development. A devoted aviation professional with 15 years of experience, she is demonstrating progression within RwandAir while being an expert in customer service, management, operations, and sales. Before her deputation in India, she served as Sales Manager for RwandAir, Tanzania-Dar es Salaam, from 2019 to 2023.

RwandAir's primary focus at the moment is amplifying the customer experience. Vennah emphasises, "This encompasses a multitude of facets, including, but not limited to, optimising on-time performance and expanding our network. We recognise that each of these elements plays a vital role in crafting a superior and memorable journey for our passengers." Currently, RwandAir operates flights to and from Mumbai. Passengers can seamlessly connect to over 25 destinations across its network via its Kigali hub, all while enjoying exceptional on-time performance.

Living up to customer expectations has always been important for the airline. "Our customers are our utmost priority. Every action we undertake is aimed at delivering the best possible customer experience. This encompasses understanding their needs and continually exploring innovative ways to enhance our services," points out Vennah.

Considering the huge competition in air travel, it is also important to retain frequent flyers. "To attract a higher number of our frequent flyers, we focus



▲ Vennah Mukumburwa

on understanding the unique needs and preferences of our passengers and continuously strive to offer personalised services and benefits. Through our loyalty programme, we aim to provide exclusive rewards, benefits, and conveniences that distinguish us from the competition," says Vennah.

RwandAir operates flights to and from Mumbai. Passengers can seamlessly connect to over 25 destinations across its network via its Kigali hub

The airline is also quick to react to the grievances of customers and travel partners and resolve them immediately. Vennah mentions, "We take proactive approaches like conducting regular service level audits to continually improve the customer experience and address any potential dissatisfaction promptly."

After the pandemic, there are still many challenges faced by airlines across the globe, among which the price of aviation fuel is a primary concern. "Airlines fall into a sector typically vulnerable to global fluctuations such

as fuel price shifts and various political and economic situations that influence operational costs. However, RwandAir is privileged to benefit from visionary leadership and management that proactively anticipates or plans for such adverse scenarios," asserts Vennah.

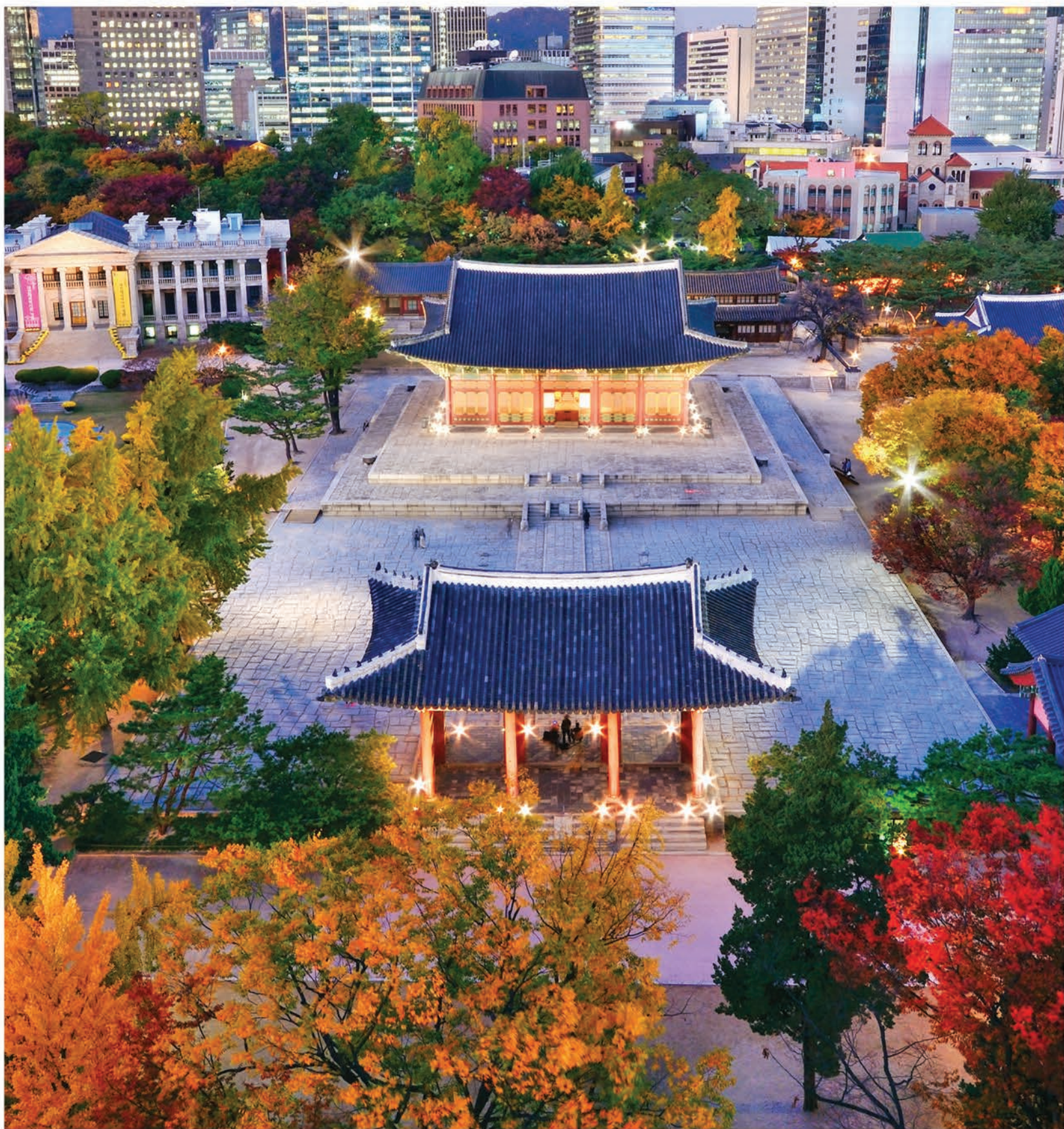
The airline has been rapidly growing its fleet size and route network over the past few years, with a focus on connecting Rwanda to the rest of Africa and beyond. "We have recently initiated three-weekly flights to Paris from our hub in Kigali, with more destinations on the horizon. So, stay tuned for more! Our current operations employ a state-of-the-art fleet featuring aircraft from leading manufacturers like Airbus and Boeing, among others," reveals Vennah. In March 2023, the airline received its third long-haul aircraft, an Airbus A330-200, allowing the airline to further expand its long-haul operation between Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

Sustainability is a paramount consideration for airlines in today's world, and RwandAir is fully committed to it. Vennah emphasises, "We view ourselves as members of the global community and actively promote sustainability. This includes operating an eco-friendly young fleet. Additionally, in alignment with Rwanda's stance, we've embraced the ban on polythene bags."

India's aviation industry is witnessing an exciting phase post-pandemic. When asked about the potential for multiple airlines to thrive in the Indian market, Vennah says, "The Indian aviation market is vast and continues to grow. With its expanding economy and increasing demand for air travel, there's certainly room for multiple airlines to succeed. Also, the recovery in the aviation industry has truly been a breath of fresh air! We're witnessing a rebound that's surpassing the earlier projections by IATA. It's a promising time, and there's a palpable sense of optimism breezing through the airline corridors. We're all quite buoyed by the positive turn of events."



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Indonesia beckons tourists with riveting new destinations beyond Bali

At the recent 'Indonesia Sales Mission' roadshow in Mumbai, TTJ closely interacted with Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister for Tourism Marketing, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. In the session, Marthini was intent on establishing the importance of Indonesia beyond Bali.

Prashant Nayak

Situated on the Pacific Ocean's Ring of Fire, Indonesia is renowned for the diversity of its landscapes, including the rice terraces of Bali and the skyscrapers of Jakarta. From the lush rainforest of Borneo to the sun-soaked beaches of Sumatra, Indonesia is a great destination for beach, culture, and nature lovers.

There are about 17,000 islands in Indonesia, and amazingly, Bali soaks up about 40 per cent of the country's annual visitors. Bali is now one of the top tourist destinations in Asia and among the best places to visit in Indonesia. When it comes to Indonesia, Indians, too, are choosing Bali as their first vacation spot, as it offers something for every visitor, from temples and beaches to mesmerising views and marine activities. Unlike pre-pandemic, currently, in Bali, Indian tourists rank second after Australia.

In recent years, the Indonesian government has been on the lookout to diversify beyond Bali. Marthini says, "Yes, we are diversifying our offerings. We can't rely solely on well-known destinations like Bali. In the past several years, the Indonesian government has focused on developing new destinations to enrich the tourism landscape. The government has decided on ten new destinations with a major focus on the development of airports and ports and the activities related to them. These destinations are quite popular domestically, but we want to make their presence felt globally, for which more connectivity and promotion are needed."

In fact, the country's government has zeroed in on five locations, and they have been chosen as 'super priority' destinations in a bid to increase revenue and reduce dependence on Bali as a tourist hotspot. These locations are Mandalika-Nusa Tenggara Barat, Lake Toba-North Sumatra, Likupang-North Sulawesi, Labuan Bajo-Nusa Tenggara Timur, and Yogyakarta-Central Java.

The city of Yogyakarta, besides its



▲ Ni Made Ayu Marthini

splendid temples, has Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple. Labuan Bajo, also known as the city of sunsets, is the gateway for trips to Komodo Island, home to the famous Komodo dragons. Toba is the largest volcanic crater lake in the world, while Mandalika and Likupang are well-known for their scenic beaches. There is a motorcycle racing track located in the Mandalika resort area on Lombok Island, where MotoGP action takes place. While Lombok offers plenty of isolated dream beaches, friendly and interesting people, tasty food, and fantastic nature, the Gili Islands nearby, a party place, are the personal favourites of many Australians.

In addition to the current five super-priority destinations, Indonesia is also working on five more: Belitung, Tanjung Lesung, Morotai, Wakatobi, and Raja Ampat. The country also has a set of other amazing destinations to be developed, like Kalimantan, the Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo. This place spells great adventures in its vast and legendary jungles with an abundance of fascinating wildlife and pristine natural landscapes. This island beholds the mysterious Dayak villages and their tribals, the admirable orangutans, the Proboscis monkeys,

endemic hornbills, and Irrawaddy dolphins.

Marthini wants Indonesia to be among the top ten destinations visited by Indian tourists. Since only two per cent of Indian travellers actually visit Indonesia, their aim is to double the number. She mentions, "In 2020, Indonesia welcomed around 270,000 Indian tourists. However, this year, from January to July alone, we already have had 345,000 visitors from India, which has been a significant growth. We see a lot of potential in India, and we believe that Indonesia can become a favourite and frequent destination for Indians. Thus, Indian tourists are increasingly important for us."

The government has identified Mandalika-Nusa Tenggara Barat, Lake Toba-North Sumatra, Likupang-North Sulawesi, Labuan Bajo-Nusa Tenggara Timur, and Yogyakarta-Central Java as 'super priority' destinations to boost revenue and reduce Bali's tourism dominance

Over the years of understanding the Indian market, Marthini says that Indians enjoy various segments, including leisure, beaches, adventure, and wildlife. "Families, couples, and millennials all find something appealing in Indonesia. It's a multi-age destination, and nowadays, weddings in Indonesia are gaining significant traction. We have noticed a lot of searching for Indonesia as a travel destination by Indians, but in most cases, travel doesn't materialise. We wish to bridge the gap between searching and the travel date that they wish to undertake to visit Indonesia. For this, we believe connectivity is very important. Things are brightening up as we have new airlines like IndiGo and Batik connecting Indonesia from India, and with Vistara starting soon. Shortly, we should be connecting to more cities in India."

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Thailand to promote and develop high-value and sustainable tourism in 2024

Thailand's 2024 strategic direction is aimed at promoting and developing high-value and sustainable tourism. This shift towards high-value and sustainability aligns with evolving travel preferences across the world. Isada Saovaros, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Mumbai, says by emphasising quality experiences, cultural immersion, and sustainable practices, Thailand aims to attract discerning travellers who contribute positively to the destinations they visit.

Prashant Nayak

The Indian market has fared well for Thailand as it has shown resilience, with steady growth in tourist arrivals to the Land of Smiles. Indians have already crossed the million mark, and now Thailand is working towards welcoming two million tourists from India this year by promoting unique attractions, hidden charms, offbeat destinations, and local experiences scattered across the country. Thailand also continues to promote the 5Fs, their soft-power foundations: food, film, festival, fight, and fashion.

There are multiple reasons why Indian travellers are drawn to Thailand. It is one of the most easily accessible and affordable destinations from India, just a 4-hour flight away. The e-Visa-on-Arrival makes the visa acquisition process hassle-free for travellers. The country also has a range of affordable accommodations, transportation, and food options, making it a budget-friendly destination. Being a tourism-driven country, most Thai people can communicate in English, thus making it much easier for Indian tourists to navigate. Isada adds, "Thailand's vibrant culture, diverse landscapes with beautiful beaches and islands all with different offerings, affordable luxury, the warmth of Thai hospitality, the availability of vegetarian cuisine, and the richness of shopping experiences further contribute to Thailand's appeal to Indian tourists."

To attract more Indian travellers, Isada says, "Our new initiatives include targeted marketing campaigns, partnerships with travel influencers, and showcasing unique experiences. The Amazing Thailand brand will be implemented next year for all markets. 'Meaningful Relationship' is being communicated to Indian travellers to encourage them to engage in meaningful connections with the local people and community. We are also doubling down on our collaborative efforts with travel agencies and participation in travel expos with regular workshops and roadshows to attract more Indian travellers. To cater to repeat visitors, we're promoting emerging destinations like Chiang Mai and Hua Hin. Both of these destinations offer immersive cultural activities, luxury wellness



▲ Isada Saovaros

retreats, and adventure activities, which provide fresh perspectives for returning Indian travellers. In India, apart from the metros and tier I, we are increasingly focusing on tier 2 cash-rich cities like Surat, Indore, Bhopal, Nagpur, Kochi, and Coimbatore."

“Meaningful Relationship’ is being communicated to the Indian travellers to encourage them to engage in meaningful connections with the local people and community

In 2024, Thailand's overseas strategies will involve a continued focus on high-value tourism, emphasising quality over quantity. Goals include achieving revenue targets, enhancing tourism security, leveraging digital innovation, and creating meaningful experiences. Collaborative efforts with the private sector and a sustained commitment to sustainability are integral to their plans. Isada was also keen to highlight the five directions that have been devised to boost the overseas market, which are:

Enhance the sustainability image of Thailand and utilise it as the country's unique selling point, which aims to strengthen the awareness of the Kinnaree Brand (Thailand Tourism Awards) among international travellers.

Penetrate emerging quality markets to focus on new markets in Europe and the Middle East region and other potential segments, such as Oya Rich, business travellers, and weddings and honeymoons.

Seek new partners and expand collaboration with global partners, such as Tourism Cares, Alipay, and WeChat.

Promote overland travel via the high-speed train between the People's Republic of China, Laos PDR and Thailand.

Empower marketing with digital content, such as utilising virtual influencers to promote Thailand to Generation Z and Y to Thailand.

Sustainable and Responsible Tourism has now become a mainstay of the global travel industry. TAT, in collaboration with regional departments, has taken many strategic decisions and set key initiatives in place to encourage eco-friendly and responsible tourism, including community-based projects like The Trash Hero, Spotlight Koh Tao, and New Heaven Reef Conservation projects.

On sustainable and responsible tourism, Isada further elaborates, "The Thai government has provided extensive guidelines and instructions to local businesses, tour operators, as well as the hotel and hospitality sector, aiming to promote responsible tourism practices. Additionally, there's a focus on the responsible use of water, especially in regions facing water scarcity. Visitors are educated about the significance of preserving natural habitats and respecting local cultures and traditions. Tour operators are urged to adhere to ethical wildlife viewing practices, ensuring the well-being of animals, and avoiding activities that exploit or harm wildlife. Moreover, sustainable food practices are promoted, such as sourcing locally produced food, reducing food waste, and providing vegetarian or vegan options."

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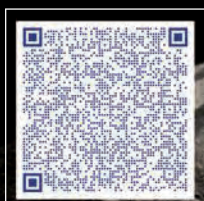
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Agaya Gangai Waterfalls

Waterfalls are nature's cascading beautiful music of the world and bear a profound connection to Mother Earth's primal power. A visit to Tamil Nadu's mesmerising falls is a flash of beauty flowing freely, mimicking life with a breathtaking splash.

The land of tales with the influence of great kingdoms, vibrant culture, and a nature's paradise, Tamil Nadu is a tourist's dream to energise the languished mind and yearning soul. Each mile traversed holds a platter of universal value. The colourful palette of culture and beauty is scintillated with the glory of misty waterfalls, a paradise to behold by every traveller visiting Tamil Nadu. Explore some of the finest waterfalls for a soul-enriching journey.

Hogenakkal Falls

The Kaveri River descends through steep terrain and plunges from a height to form the magnificent Hogenakkal Falls. 'Hogenakkal' translates to 'smoky rocks', a name attained because of the power of the river crashing against the rugged terrain below, creating the appearance of smoke emanating from the rocks.

A stunning cascade of water breaking against the rocky terrain, shrouded in mist, and surrounded by lush greenery, offers travellers a tranquil and enchanting experience in the beauty of nature. The view from the hanging bridge atop the falls is a sight to behold.

While there are several vantage points offering stunning views of the different parts of the waterfall, the most immersive way to experience it is by taking a ride in the traditional round boats called coracles, known as "parisal" locally. These indigenous boats transport tourists through a complex network of rivers and streams that lead to the edge of numerous minor falls, unravelling fantastic views. All services, however, remain suspended during the monsoon.

The surrounding forests are home to diverse flora and fauna, providing an ideal setting for bird enthusiasts and nature enthusiasts to enjoy bird-watching and leisurely strolls. The adjacent Hogenakkal Forest Reserve is home to leopards, spotted deer, and hyenas. Mettur Dam, the nearest attraction, is around a 65 km drive.

Banatheertham Falls

Located at a distance of 15 km from the Papanasam city in Tirunelveli, Banatheertham Falls, also known as Vanatheertham Falls, is a nature lover's photography and trekking paradise. The pounding fall is located inside the Karaiyar Dam and is a part of the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve.

Banatheertham is known for its pure water and medicinal properties. The water from this source is believed to possess healing properties and is ideal for an herbal bath. Legend has it that Sage Agasthiyar dwelled here and collected herbs from this part of the forest to make many incredible medicines.

In addition to its natural beauty and cultural significance, Banatheertham Falls also holds a connection to the world of cinema. The hit film “Roja,” released in 1992, was shot at this picturesque location, adding to its popularity among filmmakers and tourists alike.

This waterfall has now reopened after nine years, offering tourists a chance to experience its splendour and providing a beautiful viewpoint for nature enthusiasts and photographers.

Pykara Falls

Nestled in the picturesque landscapes of Ooty, the resplendent Pykara Falls is one of the most beautiful and majestic sights in Ooty. Situated along the main route connecting Ooty and Mysore, this waterfall stands as a captivating spectacle for travellers. To enhance the visitor experience, a boat house and restaurant have been added to the nearby lake, turning it into a delightful picnic spot.

With a 55-metre plunge, the waterfall gracefully divides into two cascades, separated by a rugged cliff, creating a captivating and enchanting scene in the midst of a lush forest, attracting nature enthusiasts. During monsoon, Pykara Falls exhibits its stunning and lively form. Indulge in adventure at Pykara Lake, with several boats available for rent at TTDC Pykara Boat House; choose a motorboat or speed boat to give you a perfect boating experience.



Pykara Falls

Agaya Gangai Waterfalls

Agaya Gangai Waterfall is a majestic 300-foot waterfall formed on River Aiyaru. The waterfall is enclosed with dense forest, which enhances its charm and grandeur, is situated in a beautiful valley surrounded by mountains on all sides. The scenic beauty created by the waterfall makes it a perfect haven for those who cherish the wonders of nature.

The location is ideal for trekking. The water of the falls is believed to possess medicinal qualities owing to the abundance of medicinal herbs in the surrounding forest, creating a natural spa-like experience. The waterfall is considered sacred, not only for its natural exuberance but also because it falls near the Arappaleeswarar Temple.

Five Falls (Aintharuvi), Courtallam

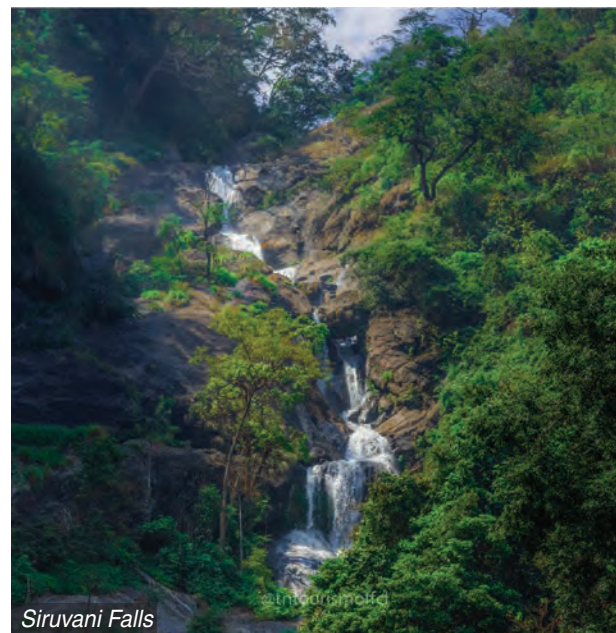
A sight of pure brilliance, Aintharuvi is one of the most preferred and visited waterfalls by tourists, situated around four km from the main town. These falls divide into five distinct sections before cascading vertically at Aravankadu Pass. There is an Aiyappan, Ayyanar, Vinayaka temple, and Lord Murugan temple in front of these falls. The water emerges as five branches and flows as a single stream, which gives the look of Adishesha (five-headed serpent). Out of the five falls, three are accessible to men, while two are designated for women.

Siruvani Falls

At a distance of 36 km from Coimbatore and 50 km from Palakkad, Siruvani Waterfall, also called Kovai Kutralam Falls, is a scenic beauty situated in the Siruvani Hills of



Hogenakkal Falls



Siruvani Falls



Five Falls (Aintharuvi), Courtallam

Tamil Nadu. It is one of the most popular waterfalls in Tamil Nadu and an essential stop on a tour to Coimbatore.

The water of this dam is renowned for its sweetness and is recognised as the second sweetest lake water globally. With an outstanding panoramic view, the Siruvani Dam is truly beautiful and breathtaking.

Private vehicles are allowed till the Sadvayal checkpoint. To proceed beyond this point, the forest department provides vehicles for conveyance to the starting point of the trek. The waterfall is at its most magnificent during the monsoon season, from June to October.

Bountiful nature has showered Tamil Nadu with unlimited grace and abundance, and the state is an abode to numerous more breathtakingly magnificent waterfalls. Some which deserve special mention here are Bear Shola Falls, Thalaiyar Falls and Silver Cascade Falls near Kodaikanal, Monkey Falls, Kolakambari Falls and Elk Falls near Ooty, Ulakkai Aruvi Waterfalls and Thiruparappu Water Falls near Kanniyakumari and many more. Beneath the beauty and exquisite glamour that brings fulfilment to the heart, there is a powerful flowing force that compels one to fall for the falls.



Cosmos unveils 'So Low' pricing for solo travellers for 2024

Cosmos invites solo travellers to enjoy SO LOW pricing by waiving the single supplement on these select North America and Europe tours.

Team TTJ

In recent years, an increasing number of individuals have opted for solo travel. While the motivations behind this choice differ from person to person, the overarching trend is clear: solo travel is gaining popularity. What's certain is that solo travel gives travellers the freedom to go when they want, where they want, and indulge in their personal interests along the way. And it's this freedom to experience

the world on their own terms that makes solo travel one of the fastest-growing travel styles today.

"Travelling solo doesn't mean you're on your own," says Varesch Chopra, Managing Director, South Asia and Middle East, Cosmos. He elaborates, "Providing the perfect balance of SOLO and 'YOLO,' Cosmos takes care of the planning, logistics, and details on vacations—plus on-site expert guides, backed by nearly 100 years of travel expertise—to ensure the perfect, life-changing vacation. No headaches. No hassles. Just hand-picked hotels, must-see sites, and much-needed free time to pack your passions while uncovering new discoveries and finding yourself along the way."

In 2024, Cosmos is inviting SOLO travellers to enjoy SO LOW pricing by waiving the single supplement on these select North America and Europe tours.

The single supplement is a premium surcharge applied to a traveller who travels alone but will use a room that caters to two.

The select tours to Europe include: Paris, Normandy, and the Loire; Prague, Vienna, and Budapest; Rome, Florence, and Venice; Lisbon, Seville, and Madrid; The Best of Greece; Irish Discovery; and 7 countries, Venice and Paris.

The North America select tours are New York, Niagara Falls, and Washington, DC; Ontario and French Canada; The Canadian Rockies; Grand Alaskan Adventure; Golden West Adventure; The Lone Star State to the French Quarter; and Highlights of the Canyonlands.

Solo travellers interested in taking advantage of this special, limited-time offer should book early. Five (4) "no single supplement" spaces have been set aside for each departure.



Kenya Calling! OTOAI Announces its 5th Annual Convention in Nairobi, Kenya

OTOAI announces Sarova Stanley Nairobi, Kenya, as the host hotel for OTOAI Convention 2023 during a press event on September 22, 2023, at The Hyatt Regency New Delhi.

Team TTJ

After a four-year hiatus, the convention is scheduled to take place from November 24 to 27, 2023, in the captivating city of Nairobi, Kenya. This event is noteworthy as it marks the first-ever tourism gathering of its kind in Kenya.

Mita Vohra, Director of Sarova Hotels and Resorts Kenya, their official hotel partner, was warmly welcomed by OTOAI members. She expressed her enthusiasm for hosting a large delegation of Indian tour operators. One Above, with its multiple offices both in India and overseas, was introduced as the ground handler for the convention.

Riaz Munshi, President of OTOAI, stated, "This eagerly awaited convention is happening after a four-year gap and in a destination like Kenya, which is still relatively undiscovered by many in India. I am confident that this will be an exceptional convention, and I invite all of you to join us."

Shravan Bhalla, who serves as the Vice President of OTOAI and holds the

role of Convention Chairman, informed that Air India and Kenya Airways are the supporting airline partners for this event. The registration process will commence on September 27, and we are anticipating the participation of approximately 200 delegates."

The Association has worked out an attractive package for OTOAI delegates attending the Convention. The cost for Active Members Ex Mumbai starts from INR 79,999 +GST; the cost for Active Members Ex Delhi starts from INR 82,999 +GST. There are also attractive pre and post-FAM trips covering regions of Nakuru, Mara and Shaba in addition to the experience in Nairobi on a first come first basis. A non-refundable Registration Fee of INR 4999/- +GST will also be charged.





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Brussels

revamps its tourism potential in the global landscape

Visit Brussels recently concluded successful roadshows in Delhi and Mumbai with the participation of 150 key partners and luxury agents. The Delhi chapter was hosted at the residence of H.E. Didier Vanderhasselt, the Belgium Ambassador to India, providing TTJ with a valuable opportunity for dialogue.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

International Hub of Trade and Diversity

Brussels thrives as a vibrant, cosmopolitan, and multicultural hub, largely due to the presence of the European Union and other international institutions. The city's global atmosphere is enriched by a diverse population of over 100,000 expatriates, including civil servants from institutions like the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Council. As a pivotal connecting city, it enjoys a unique advantage as a bustling trade centre. It plays a crucial role in import, export, and the diamond trade, further facilitated by its exceptional connectivity through the Brussels Airport and its status as home to the largest port in the European Union.

Tourism Revamped

In the post-pandemic scenario, Visit Brussels is revamping its tourism objectives, aiming to provide innovative offerings to the global market with a special emphasis on the Indian market due to its potential. The roadshows held in India provide valuable opportunities for Belgian Tourism to engage with the travel trade community, reaffirming their commitment to this promising market.

As a destination, Brussels has witnessed



▲ H.E. Didier Vanderhasselt

35,000 overnight stays in 2022 from India, out of which 56 per cent of the travellers were leisure travellers and 44 per cent were business travellers. 50 per cent of the departures were from Mumbai, while about 20 per cent from New Delhi. With an eye on increasing these numbers, the city is restoring and rebuilding to increase tourist footfall.

The Ambassador stated, "Though

Brussels has not yet returned to pre-COVID levels, it is making consistent strides towards that goal. Now the city is being showcased for its tourist potential, which travellers choose to stay in rather than simply fly through." He continued, "The trajectory for 2023 is pointing in a positive direction, hinting at a promising year for tourism from India to Brussels. The introduction of fresh attractions and upcoming experiences highlights Brussels' allure for travellers from the Indian subcontinent."

Significant efforts are underway to transform Brussels into an enticing destination for tourists, encouraging them not just to pass through but to stay and savour the city's offerings. This forms a pivotal element of the city's marketing strategy aimed at prolonging visitors' stays beyond mere stopovers. Brussels is actively spearheading a variety of initiatives to enhance its appeal and allure to tourists.

Kaleidoscope of Tourist Delights and Immersive Experiences

In 2023, Brussels joyfully marks the 130th anniversary of the Art Nouveau movement, a tribute to the exceptional architectural genius of Victor Horta, a trailblazer in Art Nouveau design and the visionary behind Brussels'



Atomium



Eat Festival



BD Comic Strip



Bright Festival

captivating structures. Horta's enduring legacy echoes through iconic landmarks like the Hotel Tassel, Solvay House, Brussels Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels Central Station, the Horta Museum, and the Belgian Comic Strip Museum. A diverse array of events are organised across the region, granting access to architectural treasures and offering an enriching program of workshops, lectures, and guided tours, especially attractive to art aficionados.

The Belgian Beer World opened its doors on September 9, 2023, to welcome beer enthusiasts from the world over. Housed within the old Brussels Stock Exchange building, this sprawling 12,000-square-metre facility promises an immersive, interactive experience devoted to the discovery, history, and appreciation of Belgium's beloved brews that showcase proud Belgian history.

The Gare Maritime in Brussels, once Europe's largest freight station, has been transformed into a bustling covered city. It now houses a mix of offices, shops, public spaces, and event venues. Visitors can explore retail outlets, food markets, parks, urban gardens, guided tours, ongoing exhibitions, and more.

In recent years, chic luxury boutique hotels like Juliana Hotel, The Hoxton, and Mix Brussels have made their grand entrances, addressing the demand for niche boutique accommodations in Brussels. By 2024, the city will welcome prestigious five-star luxury establishments like Astoria and Cardo Brussels. Despite the COVID-19 challenges, these projects persevered and are now opening their doors to meet the growing tourist demand. In 2025, more exciting

additions like the Standard Hotel are on the horizon.

The Atomium, initially constructed for Expo 1958, is now Brussels' top tourist attraction, with over 600,000 visitors yearly. It serves as an art centre and an international symbol of the city and Belgium. The spectacular light shows and the escalators joining the different spheres make it a tourist hotspot.

Adding to the list of popular experiences are the Brussels Art Fair, cutting-edge art exhibitions at Wiels Museum, and music festivals like Tomorrowland and the Bright Festival, which light up the city's buildings. The biennial flower festival, which covers the historic city square ground into a stunning flower carpet, is a favourite among Indian tourists. The Eat Festival celebrates Brussels' diverse cuisine, and there are, of course, numerous beer festivals to add to the mix.

Fostering Trade Partnerships and Quality Tourism

Brussels is a leading MICE destination, offering innovative support programs, top-tier hotels, and a multitude of outstanding convention venues. The city regularly hosts major conferences and seminars, making it a hub for international events and collaborations.

Visit Brussels' marketing strategy places a strong emphasis on fostering friendships and catering to the needs of their clients. Aviareps serves as their travel representative in India, and they maintain ongoing collaborations with select agencies to ensure that Belgium remains a prominent destination.

Didier further added, "We wish to attract

quality tourism, a segment of tourists who wish to spend time and engage in the activities Brussels has to offer. The missions and roadshows are really effective, and it is a pleasure to host our delegates in India as they are actually ambassadors of our city and are very passionate about their travel products."

Brussels is a city brimming with character and a vibrant multicultural atmosphere, offering delightful surprises at every turn. Its diverse population brings together a rich tapestry of nationalities, cuisines, and captivating experiences. The city seamlessly blends its historical heritage with modern elements, making it an alluring destination for tourists. Notably, Brussels stands out as one of the greenest capitals in the European Union, with the Sonian Forest located close to the city centre with easy accessibility.

A Holistic Approach to Tourism

Didier further emphasised, "Brussels prioritises sustainability and responsible tourism, boasting robust cycling and walking infrastructure and an efficient public transport system. The city's businesses, museums, and hotels are dedicated to sustainability, making investments in green and solar energy, among other eco-friendly practices."

While fixed departure groups and business travel remain prominent in India's tourism sector, Visit Brussels is promoting slow tourism as a long-term goal. This approach encourages visitors to stay and fully engage with the city's distinctive experiences, aligning with a more sustainable and immersive travel ethos.

India's Rising Significance in Melia's Global Expansion Strategy

Melia Hotels International proactively enlarges its property portfolio with the introduction of new establishments, aligning with its strategic growth blueprint. Mahmoud Abdelnaby, the Director of Business Development for Melia Hotels International in the Asia Pacific (APAC), Middle East, and Africa (MEA) region, offers perspective.

Prativa V Bhalla

Originating as a family business almost 60 years ago in a small Mediterranean island has now grown into a global presence in 40+ countries across 4 continents. With 347 hotels worldwide, Melia continues to thrive.

Mahmoud emphasised Melia's unwavering commitment to preserving Spanish service traditions across all their brands. "Our commitment is evident in every Melia hotel, with guests experiencing the Spanish touch and a warm atmosphere and this presence of our unique Spanish service defines Melia Hotels' approach" stated Mahmoud.

India holds a crucial position in their global strategy, and Melia continuously strives to understand its market dynamics and trends with thoughtfully executed Roadshows to achieve these goals. Their first post-pandemic sales mission was in November 2022 and during their recent 2023 Multi-City Tour, Mahmoud clearly defined their objectives. "Firstly, we aim to express sincere gratitude to our partners for their invaluable support. Secondly, we were committed to actively promoting our hotels and providing thorough updates to our travel partners regarding property developments. This encompasses the introduction of new hotel offerings and a focus on gaining market insights into property performance."

The Indian market has seen a significant 60 per cent increase in the EDR (Effective Daily Rate) and a rise in room rates, particularly for business and luxury rooms. Suites are the first to get booked, and longer stays have become a continuous trend. These trends have persisted since the Indian market reopened in early 2022. Tier 1 cities in India, like Delhi, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad, outperform others, while tier 2 cities are closing the performance gap.

India's visitor segment includes MICE, family celebrations, and FIT elite luxury travellers. The MICE segment is a top priority, covering corporate business



▲ Mahmoud Abdelnaby

travellers, corporate groups, and incentive groups. MICE events often host 300 to 400 attendees while family celebrations often mirror this group size. Additionally, they cater to FIT elite luxury travellers. All three segments are equally vital and require focused attention.

“The MICE segment is a top priority, covering corporate business travellers, corporate groups, and incentive groups. MICE events often host 300 to 400 attendees while family celebrations often mirror this group size.”

Melia offers various hotel categories. Luxury, comprising Gran Melia, Melia Collection, Me by Melia, and Paradisus, accounts for 12 per cent per cent of the total 347 hotels. The premium segment, encompassing Melia Hotels and Resorts and the new Zel brand founded by tennis player Rafa Nadal, makes up 48 per cent per cent. Falcon is the theme park hotel brand with its first location in the Dominican Republic. Inside represents corporate 4 to 5-star hotels in city centres,

while Essentials is affiliated, and Sol is dedicated to beachfront locations. Melia is expanding its presence in Vietnam with the Grand Melia in Nha Trang, offering oceanfront villas and ranking among the finest Gran Melia properties in Asia. Currently, they have 13 hotels in Vietnam, with more in the pipeline, making them the largest hotel chain in the country, totalling around 22 hotels. New properties are opening in Malta, Dubai, Milan, and ongoing talks for Saudi Arabia.

With 50 to 55 hotels slated for opening by the next year the Melia advantage lies in its diverse portfolio of products, effectively competing with a wide range of luxury and essential brands. Many of their hotels are strategically positioned within UNESCO-designated sites or affiliated with prestigious organisations like Leading Hotels of the World and luxury consortia. This approach enables Melia to offer a broad spectrum of luxury and essential accommodations under the Melia brand, meeting diverse market preferences.

Promotion of their properties in India is mainly through the B2B MeliaPro portal, encouraging partner sign-ups for instant access, including direct confirmation and availability, with higher commissions for resort or city hotels, FAM trips and road shows. In MeliaPro, the platform offers 16 per cent commission for resorts and 12 per cent for urban hotels. Exclusive promotional offers are available to registered users. The majority of room bookings originate from OTT and direct online travel agents.

Melia collaborates with certified sustainable organisations, emphasising their commitment to sustainability. They offer certificates to MICE groups for reducing carbon footprints when hosting events at eco-friendly hotels. Many hotels source locally to lower their environmental impact. Participants receive certificates and redeemable points. Melia's approach prioritises responsible management to combat climate change and protect destinations through innovation, technology, and strategic partnerships.

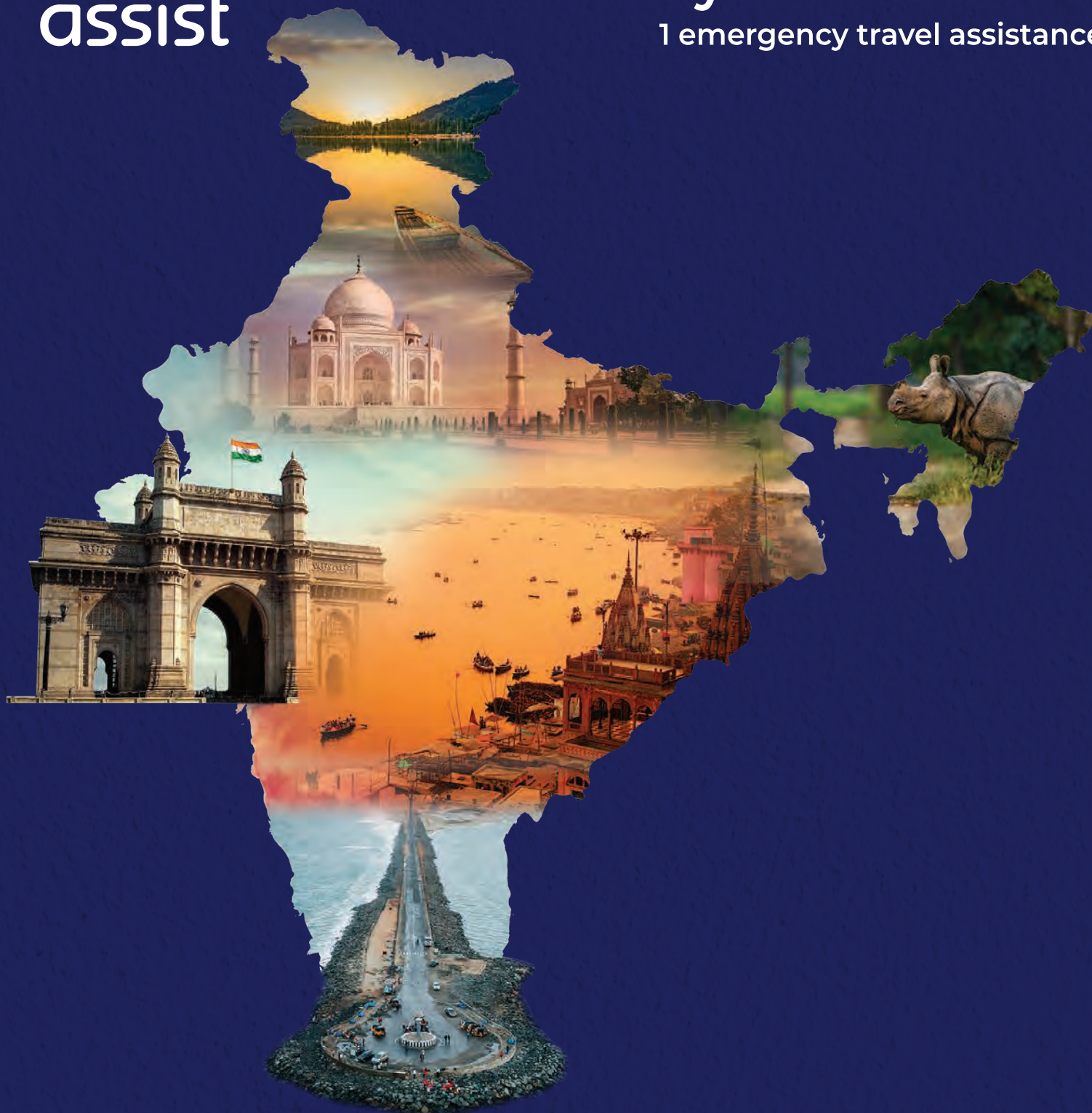


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The stage is set, more impetus is needed to promote inbound tourism

The hospitality industry has much to look forward to in 2024 as travel demand has continued to grow faster than expected over the last few years. Things are brightening for inbound travel as it is gradually recovering, and India is well poised to welcome a surge of foreign visitors. TTJ interacts with Gagan Katyal and Digvijay Diwakar who provide valuable insights on a few aspects of the current inbound travel scenario in India.

Prashant Nayak

In India, although domestic tourism remains a consistent contributor to the economy, inbound tourism continued to face challenges in 2022, but there was a notable recovery in 2023. However, the segment is expected to grow further in 2024.

Gagan Katyal, Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Ananta Hotels and Resorts, says, "As the world is opening up very fast and the pandemic now is a thing of the past, inbound travel is growing rapidly, and we are witnessing international guests travelling to India to enjoy its rich culture, history, food, and developed infrastructure."

According to a recent Nangia Andersen report, increasing awareness of India as a tourist destination is cited as one of the major causes that will propel India's growth in inbound tourism. Digvijay Diwakar, Director, Diverse Hotels and Marketing, mentions, "Inbound tourism post COVID has picked up, and India now seems to be on the list of must-visit destinations for most international travellers. The good point is that we are no longer considered an unsafe country. It may take some more time for big numbers to see (volume business) because of international airfares, but we certainly have a great future."

Diverse Hotels and Marketing is a sales and marketing representation company for individual hotels based in Delhi. During the pandemic, when inbound business was at a halt, domestic travel was the saviour for all travel businesses. Digvijay says, "COVID was a learning lesson for all of us and has opened new avenues of business. It not only taught us to survive but actually gave a big boost to domestic travel. Now domestic travel and the concept of taking short breaks will remain dominant factors in the tourism business."

Ananta Hotels and Resorts runs landmark resorts across the country and guarantees endless pleasure with



▲ Gagan Katyal

exclusive facilities and exquisite locations. "At Ananta Hotels, our inbound share has been growing steadily among other segments. Discussions are on for FIT, group, and series travel from almost all the source markets. However, domestic travel has indeed taken the hotels through a stable period when there was no inbound travel. Weddings and MICE have also been large contributors," said Gagan.

Tourism is an interesting segment where all stakeholders have to make efforts to grow themselves as well as their destinations. A few states are doing exceptionally well to push business for their states, like J&K, MP, Rajasthan, and Kerala. "I feel more states should come forward to promote their destinations in domestic forums. Creating awareness of products and world-class infrastructure is the key. As today's travellers are mature and well aware of what they want, meeting their demands and sending them back with great memories are the most important factors," says Digvijay.

India is developing its infrastructure, and new destinations are attractive. Good-quality hotels at all price points offer a variety of choices for where to stay. Gagan explains, "India is being seen as a country of interest for business and



▲ Digvijay Diwakar

leisure. New destinations are opening up, better infrastructure is available, and the train network is well-developed with high-quality trains like Vande Bharat. These should interest and attract a foreign traveller. On the other hand, various travel bodies and associations, along with the government, should continue to promote and market India as a destination of choice, not just for history and culture but also for a variety of reasons like shopping, nightlife, etc. Vigorous marketing campaigns abroad and FAM tours should help."

Tourism in India still has to be promoted by the government in a much more vibrant and aggressive manner. "I feel that within India, all states should promote their destinations, but internationally, we all should promote India as a destination with varied products. Our efforts should be more integrated. With improved world-class infrastructure available today, better connectivity all across, and great hotels and resorts that indulge in creating exceptionally great holiday experiences, I feel India is looking for a great tourism business in 2024," concludes Digvijay.

Increasing awareness of India as a tourist destination is cited as one of the major causes that will propel India's growth in inbound tourism.



DR DHARMA NARAYAN DAS
HON'BLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF BTC



SHRI PRAMOD BORO
HON'BLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF BTC

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Discover the Enchanting World of Bodoland!

Welcome to Bodoland, a mesmerizing paradise nestled at the foothills of Bhutan. As an autonomous region within the state of Assam, Bodoland is a captivating destination that beckons travellers with its breathtaking natural beauty and vibrant cultural heritage. Embark on a journey of a lifetime and immerse yourself in an experience like no other!

🌿 Nature's Abode 🌿

Bodoland's lush green landscapes, majestic hills, and serene river valleys create a perfect haven for nature enthusiasts. Explore the National Parks, especially Manas National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Raimona National Park, and Wildlife Sanctuaries, where you can witness a stunning array of rare and endemic species of flora and fauna – from Golden Langur and Bengal Florican to Royal Bengal tigers and One-Horned Rhinos



🚣 River Adventures 🚣

For adventure seekers, Bodoland's gushing rivers present thrilling opportunities for white-water rafting at Bogamati & Manas National Park and paragliding at Dangdudur hill, Kokrajhar. Feel the rush of adrenaline as you navigate through the untamed waters surrounded by pristine wilderness.



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At Bodoland, we believe in preserving our environment and uplifting local communities. Engage in eco-friendly tourism initiatives that offer a unique opportunity to connect with nature responsibly.



🍽️ Gastronomic Delights 🍽️

Savor the flavors of Bodoland through its delectable local cuisines. From mouthwatering Bodo delicacies to a fusion of Assamese and other northeastern cuisines, our gastronomic delights will leave you craving for more!



🚗 Connectivity

Nearest Airport: Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport
Airport to:

- Manas NP: 140.5 KM
- Raimona NP: 236 KM
- Chakrashila WS: 193.2 KM

Nearest Railway Stations

- Kokrajhar
- New-Bongaigaon

📅 Plan Your Escape Today! 📅

For more info: www.bodolandtourism.net





With plenty of scenery and outstretched landscapes along the way, road-tripping across India proves it's about the experiences, encounters, and self-discovery that occur during the journey.

Mithun Bangera

One road trip that remains vivid in my memory is the unforgettable adventure to Khajuraho with a group of close friends. It was a voyage that transcended mere physical travel; it was a transformative experience that etched an enduring impression on our lives. The allure of Khajuraho's mesmerising temples and its enchanting historical significance had beckoned us to explore this incredible facet of India. The place boasts many inspiring architectures that are a sight to behold.

With the destination set on our Google Maps to 'Khajuraho Western Group of Temples' and a sense of excitement in our hearts, we set off on a journey that also presented us with opportunities to discover places that we never knew existed.

On the Road

Road trips are fun because they offer complete freedom over your adventure. You can travel anywhere your car can take you; bring whatever fits in the trunk, let all of life's expectations melt away, and just enjoy the moments.

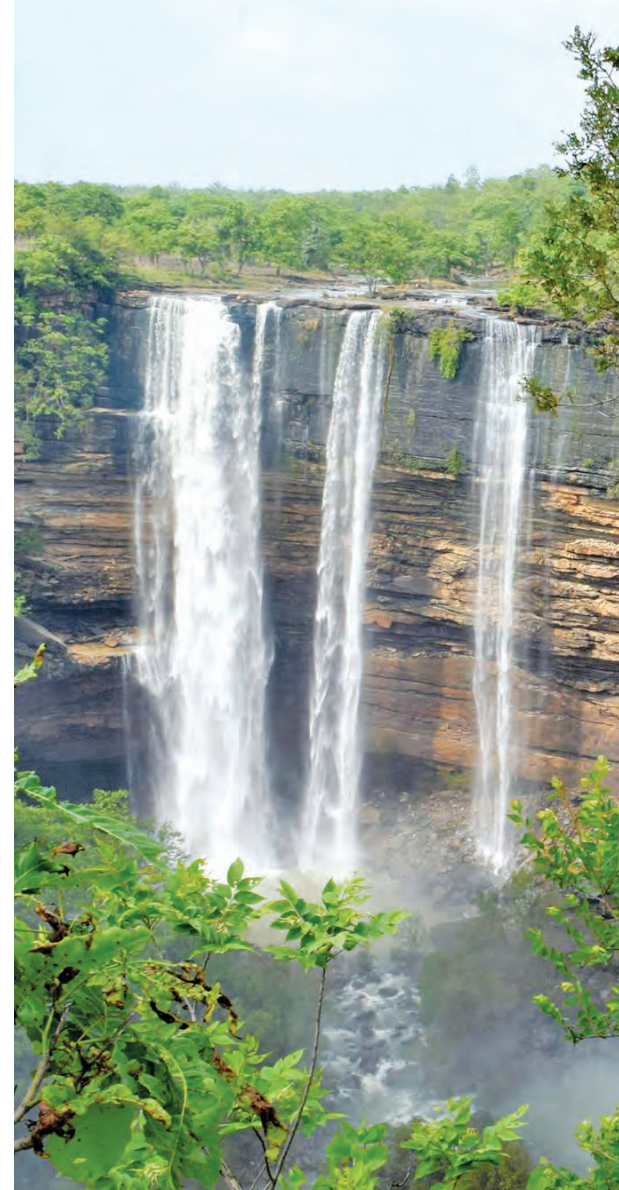
vast plains of central India. We spent our first night in Indore, around 750 km from Mumbai, and our best moments were savouring delicious street food at Chappan Dukaan, with Vijay Chaat satiating us with the best of titbits. A visit to the famous Johnny Hot Dogs revealed that they serve vegetarian hot dogs, which are nothing like their American namesakes, and if you have eaten one, you cannot resist having another.

Discovering the Unknown

The next morning, we continued our journey towards Khajuraho. The roads were smooth, and the scenery was dotted with picturesque villages and lush fields. In the teak wood forest of Vidisha, we also crossed the Tropic of Cancer, which lies at 23.5° north of the equator. Vidisha is a historical town with ancient buildings that date back to the 2nd century, near the capital city Bhopal. Along the way, we made multiple stops to admire ancient temples, such as the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Panna and the famous Bodhi Tree of Madhya Pradesh. As a matter of fact, this Bodhi tree was planted by the President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa, in September 2012. It is a tree of special importance in Buddhism. According to Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha attained

Leaving behind the bustling streets of Mumbai, we embarked on a 1,350-km trip that would take us through the heart of India. As we drove through Maharashtra and into Madhya Pradesh, we marvelled at the changing landscapes—from the urban sprawl of Mumbai to the lush Western Ghats and then the





enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya. Emperor Ashoka also took shelter under the Bodhi tree.

More Than What Meets the Eye

Arriving in Khajuraho, we were greeted by the iconic temple spires rising against the blue sky. We spent our day exploring the Western Group of Temples, admiring the intricate carvings that told stories of love, life, and spirituality. We also hired a knowledgeable guide who explained the historical significance of the temples and the symbolism behind the sculptures. While Khajuraho is often associated with the Kama Sutra due to its famous erotic carvings, we soon realised that this represented only a fraction, around 10 percent, of the entire temple architecture, and the rest is more about profound spirituality and the art of living. It's a dictionary of life carved in stones for people to understand life from a different perspective.

More Enriching Moments

As we delved deeper into Khajuraho's treasures, our exploration led us to the Eastern and Southern Groups of Temples on the following day. Each group possessed its distinctive allure and charm. Unlike the Western Group, where the temples are in a closed area, the temples are scattered all around the old village of Khajuraho. We took leisurely walks in the lush surroundings

of the temples and had serene moments. By exploring the village, you will get the perfect insight into real rural India and how people live in villages.

On a Different Track

To add a touch of adventure to our trip, we decided to visit the nearby Panna National Park. Nestled in the Vindhyan Hills of northern Madhya Pradesh, this park stands as a premier tiger habitat and holds significant importance as a protected area within the north-central highlands of India. Verdant, vibrant green woodlands, deep ravines, wide plateaus, and flowing waterfalls welcome you into their depths. Two safaris through the dense forests revealed glimpses of India's amazing wildlife, including tigers, leopards, and a variety of exotic birds. It was a thrilling experience that added another layer to our road trip.

Adding New Dimensions to the Trip

Continuing our journey, we took a short detour to Maple Mines and Minerals. Here, one used to find some rare earth minerals like diamonds, but now they are completely mined out by locals and authorities. Nevertheless, it was a wonderful experience to see the deep mines in real life. Before leaving Khajuraho, we attended a mesmerising traditional dance performance, a fitting end to their cultural immersion in the town.

We watched as dancers brought ancient stories to life with graceful movements in vibrant costumes.

Back Home with a Rewarding Experience

After seven days, we reluctantly began our journey back to Mumbai. The road trip had been a revelation, not just for the stunning sights we had beheld but for the people we had met along the way. We made friends with fellow travellers and locals who shared their stories and their love for Khajuraho. To make the return trip a bit exciting, we drove nonstop (a couple of stops for food and refuelling) in 21.5 hours; we call it endurance driving.

As we returned, we realised that our road trip to Khajuraho had been more than a vacation; it had been a transformative experience that had deepened our appreciation for India's rich cultural heritage and the beauty of exploring the country's diverse landscapes by road. It was a journey we would fondly reminisce about for years to come.



About the Author:
Mithun Bangera
is the founder of
Cross Country Cars
(Road Trips and
Expeditions).

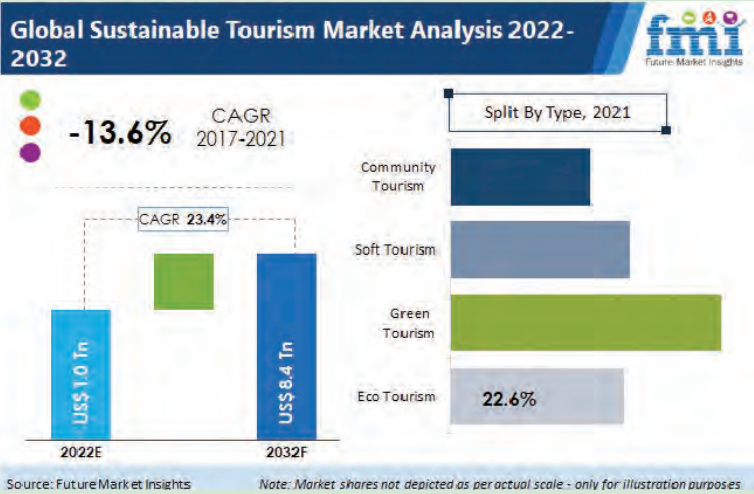
Rediscovering India Responsibly

Inbound Sustainable Tourism Trends

India, with its kaleidoscope of landscapes, cultures, and traditions, has always been a dream destination for travellers. In recent years, however, there has been a significant shift in the way people experience the country. Global awareness of environmental concerns grows, and sustainable tourism in India is gaining momentum. In this article, we will explore the latest trends in inbound sustainable tourism in India and how travellers are rediscovering this beautiful subcontinent responsibly.

Dr. Niraalee Shah

INBOUND TOURISM



In the bar chart below on the left, the total foreign exchange earnings (FEEs) from tourism in the country increased by 107 per cent from US\$ 7.86 billion (Rs. 65,070 crore) in 2021 to US\$ 16.26 billion (Rs. 1,34,543 crore) in 2022.

In the bar chart below on the right, India received 6.19 million Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in 2022 as compared to 1.52 million during the same period in 2021.



Image Source: India Brand Equity Foundation

1. EXPLORING OFFBEAT DESTINATIONS

While famous destinations like the Taj Mahal and Jaipur continue to draw crowds, many travellers are seeking offbeat, less-visited locations. This trend not only reduces the strain on popular tourist spots but also allows visitors to engage with local communities and cultures on a deeper level. The hidden gems of India are being rediscovered responsibly.

2. WILDLIFE AND NATURE CONSERVATION

India is blessed with a diverse range of wildlife and natural wonders. Sustainable tourism is now closely linked with wildlife conservation efforts. Travellers are participating in responsible wildlife tours and eco-safaris in national parks and sanctuaries. In India, Pundungee Safaris amongst many offer experiences that promote ethical animal encounters and emphasise the importance of preserving these fragile ecosystems.

3. CULTURAL IMMERSION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Cultural immersion is a cornerstone of sustainable tourism in India. Travellers are increasingly seeking authentic experiences that involve interactions with local communities. Homestays, cooking classes, and traditional art workshops are gaining popularity as tourists aim to connect with India's rich cultural heritage.

4. RESPONSIBLE TREKKING AND ADVENTURE TOURISM

India’s diverse topography offers numerous opportunities for adventure tourism. Trekking in the Himalayas, exploring the Western Ghats, and river rafting in the Ganges are just a few examples. Travellers are choosing responsible tour operators who prioritise safety, environmental protection, and adherence to ethical trekking practices.

The Ministry of Tourism has developed a National Strategy for Adventure Tourism in order to establish India as a preferred destination for sustainable adventure tourism worldwide. By 2032, adventure and sports tourism have the potential to generate 6 million jobs.

5. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Sustainable transportation is a key focus for eco-conscious travellers. India offers various sustainable transportation options, including electric rickshaws, cycling tours, and eco-friendly buses. Many cities are also investing in public transportation infrastructure to reduce the environmental impact of travel. In India, almost all 5-star resorts and hotels use EV Vehicles for the transportation of guests.

In India, organisations like the MTB Himalaya, over the years have established themselves as a real insider tip among mountain bikers worldwide. They organise events like ‘Hero MTB Himalaya: Extreme Mountain Bike Challenge,’ and such events attract inbound responsible tourism in India.

6. PLASTIC-FREE INITIATIVES

Plastic pollution is a global concern, and travellers to India are taking notice. Sustainable tourism trends include a commitment to reducing single-use plastics. Many eco-friendly accommodations and tour operators have adopted plastic-free policies, encouraging guests to do the same. Hotels like Taj Group of Hotels, ITC, Araiya Hotels and Resorts and Green Haven Resorts have shifted to glass bottles and are trying to go plastic-free in their operations.

According to The CSR Journal, the study found that a majority of Indian travellers believe that by conserving resources now and being more sustainable, one can help save the planet. In a bid to save water, 55 per cent travellers reuse their towels multiple times, with an aim to reduce, reuse and recycle, 57 per cent brought their own reusable water bottles, 52 per cent of individuals are utilising reusable bags, and 44 per cent practise recycling garbage while travelling.

7. EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Travellers are increasingly interested in educational experiences that provide insights into India’s environmental and cultural conservation efforts. Educational tours to conservation centres, organic farms, and heritage sites offer a deeper understanding of the country’s sustainable initiatives.

According to Outlook Traveller Reni Pani Jungle Lodge, Satpura Tiger Reserve, Diphlu River Lodge, Kaziranga National Park, Kipling Camp, Kanha Tiger Reserve, The Sarai at Torai, Panna Tiger Reserve, Samode Safari Lodge, Bandhavgarh National Park, these eco-resorts offer the perfect educational experiences for the guests.



Dr. Niraalee Shah holds a Ph.D. in Indian Tourism and Culture, and is the author of ‘Indian Etiquette - A Glimpse into India’s Culture.’ She serves as the State Convener of Maharashtra for the Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI), the Regional Vice President India of the International Tourism Studies Association (ITSA), and is a member of the World Tourism Network (WTN).

8. VOLUNTOURISM AND RESPONSIBLE GIVING

Some tourists are combining their love for travel with a desire to make a positive impact. Voluntourism programs in India allow travellers to contribute to local communities through various initiatives, such as teaching English, environmental conservation, or healthcare support. Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI), formerly the Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) is a non-profit organisation with an aim to promote and ensure Environmentally Responsible and Sustainable practices in the Tourism industry.

9. ECO-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATIONS ON THE RISE

One of the noticeable trends is the rise of eco-friendly accommodations. Travellers are increasingly opting for sustainable stays such as eco-resorts, boutique lodges, and homestays. These establishments focus on reducing their carbon footprint by employing energy-efficient practices, recycling, and sourcing local, organic materials.

According to Statista Research Department, Aug 24, 2023, the survey on Indian luxury travellers conducted during May 2020, the majority of the luxury travellers stated that they would pay extra to stay in hotels with eco-friendly and sustainable practices during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. About 38 per cent of Indian travellers preferred to stay in hotels that are part of trusted chains in that year.

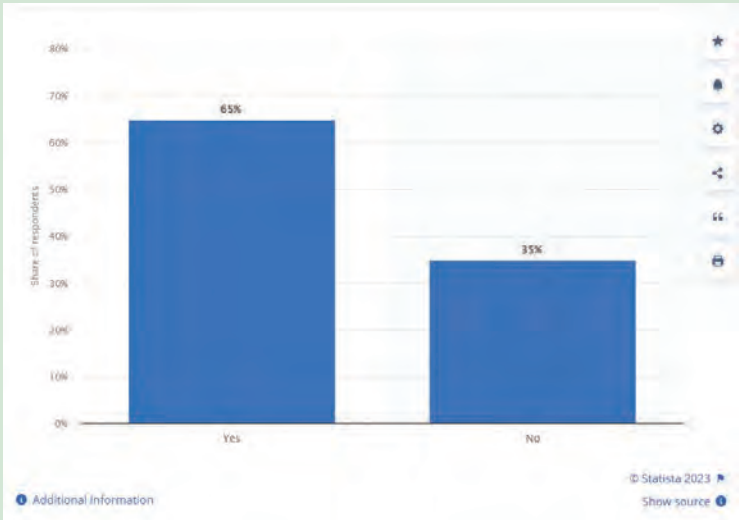


Image Source: Statista Research Department

10. SPREADING AWARENESS

Lastly, responsible travellers are becoming ambassadors for sustainable tourism. They share their experiences, encourage others to make eco-conscious choices, and advocate for the preservation of India’s natural and cultural heritage. Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI) works closely with the central and state government bodies responsible for sustainable tourism and a network of like-minded regional/state players across the country to facilitate and support the synergy of policies, initiatives and activities at the national and state level.

The society is open for membership to conscious companies and individuals who wish to walk the Sustainable path and lend support to the cause. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC®) manages the GSTC Criteria, and global standards for sustainable travel and tourism; as well as providing international accreditation for sustainable tourism Certification Bodies.

In conclusion, India’s inbound sustainable tourism trends are reshaping the way travellers experience this incredible country. From eco-friendly accommodations to responsible adventure tourism and cultural engagement, travellers are discovering the richness of India while treading lightly on its environment and culture. The world continues to prioritise sustainability, and India remains a prime destination for those seeking meaningful and responsible travel experiences.

TTM accelerating tourism business in Uttar Pradesh

On the occasion of World Tourism Day on September 27, 2023, the Travel Trade Association of Uttar Pradesh (TTAUP) organised the TTAUP Travel Mart (TTM 2023), a buyer-seller meet at the Holiday Inn, Lucknow.

Team TTJ

With the primary objective of bringing together various stakeholders of the tourism and hospitality industry under one roof, TTAUP organised TTM in Lucknow. Jaiveer Singh, the Minister of Tourism and Culture for the Government of

Uttar Pradesh, inaugurated TTM 2023. The event drew participation from over 400 travel trade partners and consolidators.

The event featured a range of sellers, including DMCs, airlines, travel insurance providers, and other B2B travel agencies. Notably, it witnessed a strong presence from the aviation

sector, with airlines like IndiGo, Air Asia, Air India, Air India Express, Akasa Air, Vistara, Fly Dubai, Saudia, Oman Air, Salam Air, and Flynas, to name a few.

The office-bearers of TTAUP who attended the

event were Mohd. Azam (President), Rajiv Arora (Vice President), Sandeep Srivastava (Hon. Secretary), Arshad Zaidi (Joint Secretary), and Gayatri Khanna (Treasurer). The other TTAUP members who attended were Akash Khanna, Pradeep Chaurasia, and Manoj Rawat. The occasion was also graced by the founder members of TTAUP, Vivek Pandey (Past President) and SMA Sheeraz (Past Vice-President).

While the motive behind the event was to enhance tourism in the state, this Travel Mart will surely accelerate tourism in the state and be an essential source of foreign exchange earnings. This will serve as a vital economic catalyst that fuels job creation and rapid development, thus generating revenues and contributing towards making the state a one-trillion-dollar economy.



GET READY FOR THE ADVENTURE SEASON WITH MPTB'S TWO MEGA FESTIVALS IN OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

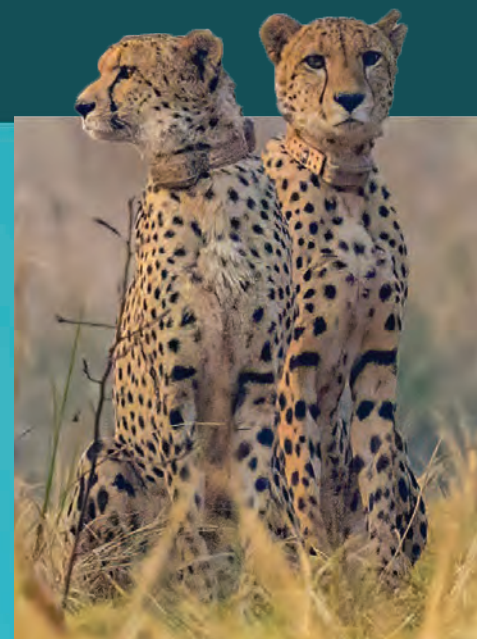
Get ready to embark on an exciting journey packed with adventure, wildlife, and cultural reflections. Madhya Pradesh has two fun-packed festivals lined up for October and November that promise to offer glamping experiences, adventure activities, and cultural engagements.

Kuno Forest Festival

Witness the new home of the cheetah after 72 Years

The first edition of the Kuno Forest Festival near the Kuno National Park will take you on an enthralling journey. The festival, being held after the reintroduction of cheetahs in India after 72 years, will soak you in the beauty of forest life, besides taking you on a sojourn through Kuno National Park. The Sheopur Fort, Dob-Kund, dating back to the Mughal dynasty, the 150-year-old railway bridge, and the ancient caves will remain a re-invigorating experience for you.

Explore the wildlife with guided safaris and spot the leopards, deer, bluebucks, and migratory birds of the region. Tourists will be able to spot the cheetahs after the completion of their acclimatisation period. The beautiful flora and fauna, and the thrilling nature walks are a journey to paradise. The Kuno Festival is not just an adventure; it is a lifetime experience, a traveller's dream to behold.



Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival

An adventure extravaganza!

The second edition of the Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival sets sail on the tranquil backwaters of the Gandhi Sagar Dam near Mandsaur. The festival will be a blend of adventure, entertainment, and culture near the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Engage in various adventure sports like

kayaking, jet skiing, hot air ballooning, horse riding, air gun shooting, speed boating, parasailing, and other recreational activities. Spot the leopards, otters, mugger crocodiles, and chinkaras during jungle safaris and discover the rich cultural heritage of Madhya Pradesh through soulful performances, traditional arts, and culinary delights.

**TENT CITIES
YOUR HOME AWAY
FROM HOME
FOR THREE MONTHS!**

Both the Kuno Forest Festival and Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival will take you on a rejuvenating ride. The sprawling tent cities nestled in the heart of nature will offer all the comforts of modern living while drowning in the scenic landscapes of Madhya Pradesh. Relax in the luxury tents equipped with all the essential amenities.

Whether you are a nature enthusiast, an

adventure seeker, a culture aficionado, or someone looking to escape from the daily humdrum, the adventure season in Madhya Pradesh has a platter full to offer.

Block your calendar and get ready for an adventure-stuffed journey.

Join us in Madhya Pradesh for a season of adventure, culture, and recreation that will redefine the way to experience the world.



TAMILNADU TOURISM



EAST INDIA TRAVMART

Exploring New Horizons

The much anticipated first East India TRAVMART, held from September 15-17, 2023, concluded successfully at the Vedic Village Spa Resort, Kolkata. Well attended by Industry stakeholders, decision-makers and industry stalwarts, the show was lauded as a milestone event.





EITM provided networking opportunities for both buyers and sellers to interact, collaborate, and form meaningful partnerships. The inaugural lamp was lit by Dharma Narayan Das, Executive Member Tourism BTC (Bodoland Territorial Council), along with other dignitaries PP Khanna, President of ADTOI, Manav Soni, Chairman of Eastern Region TAAI, Hemant Mediratta, Founder of One Rep Global, Riaz Munshi, President of OTOAI and Dr Shagnik Chowdhury, Regional Director India Tourism Kolkata. Representing the Organising Team were Ravi Sharma, Convener and Gurjit Singh, Co-Convener.

The first edition of EITM was an exclusive B2B gathering of travel industry professionals with 227 hosted and pre-registered buyers and 40 exhibitors resulting in over 8000 meetings over the duration of the three-day event.

Having accomplished 67 successful travel marts in tier 2 and tier 3 cities of India over the past six years, TTJ TRAVMART is now expanding into the regional arena, promising a greater reach and excellence. EITM was the first initiative in this direction.

EITM successfully established a congenial workflow within an ideal setting, spanning three rewarding days. This approach allowed business meetings to occur at a relaxed and productive pace, yielding focused outcomes.

This remarkable event was ably supported by its Gold

Sponsors: Tamil Nadu Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, and Uttar Pradesh Tourism, Silver Sponsors: Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, Bodoland Tourism, Assam Tourism, Air India, IndiGo, VFS Global, TBO.com, Yorker DMC, and The Samsara Holidays. Exhibiting Partners: Alula, Auxilia Networks, Chocolate Hotels, Dynasty Holidays, Etrav, Evoke Experiences, Global Travel DMC, Guideline Travels, Hung Anh Travel (HA Travel), Impression Tourism Services, India Assist, JanDec Travel, Jetsave India Tours, Palomino Hospitality, Paul Merchants, Regency Tours, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts. Rezbook, Saffron World, Sterling Hotels and Resorts, Sumi Yashshree Hotels and Resorts, The Yellow Trails, Travel and I, Travel Mudra, Travels Factory, and Travstarz Global Group. Vedic Village Spa Resort served as the Hospitality Partner for the event.

The highlight of EITM was undoubtedly the two knowledge sessions, which garnered tremendous popularity and were exceptionally well-received, drawing a full audience on both evenings. Seasoned industry veterans, entrepreneurs and domain experts shared their opinions, expertise, insights and market trends with the audience.

Talks, Panel discussions and presentations were delivered on pertinent topics ranging from TCS, Artificial intelligence, and GST compliance to VISA processing. These addresses and the following Q&A sessions left attendees with a deeper understanding of the industry's current landscape and future potential.



On Day 1, the panel discussion titled "Unveiling Unique Experiences in East and Northeast India" was expertly moderated by Debjit Dutta, Director and CEO of Impression Tourism Services. The esteemed panel comprised Sneha Bhattacharyya, Manager of Project and Research at Contact Base (Banglanatak.com); Darshan Dudhuria, Director and Co-Founder of Bari Kothi; Sushila Ramamoorthy, Consultant in Inland Waterways; and P.P Khanna, President of ADTOI.

The keynote speakers held the attendees captivated during their presentations. Chetan Mehta, Director - Taxation and Regulatory Services at Ernst & Young, addressed the topic that was on everyone's mind, which was "Increased TCS Levy on Travel and New TDS Levy on Business Perquisites." Sampat Kumar Damani, National Committee Member, TAFI, who also heads the Diplomatic Missions Relations Committee, discussed the perfectly tailored topic of "Processing Visas in the Current Scenario and Best Practices". Arjun Akruwala CA, LLB, held the audience enraptured as he shared his expertise on "TCS - The Impact, Implications and Perils of Non-Compliance" and fielded questions from the audience.

On Day 2, the focus shifted towards a discussion on "Tech-Driven Tourism: Crafting a Sustainable Tomorrow." This session was moderated by Debjit Dutta, and the panel featured prominent figures such as Mufaddal Dahodwala, Managing Partner at ICE INDIA; Gaurav Chiripal, CEO and Chief Architect

at Quadlabs; and Arup Banerjee, Vice President at Infogain. The conversation provided valuable insights, highlighting how the synergy between social media and artificial intelligence (AI) can play a pivotal role in the advancement of the tourism industry.

The individual speakers drew another packed house during their presentations. Hemant Mediratta, Founder of One Rep Global, delivered a talk aptly titled "Show Me the Money." Riaz Munshi, President of OTOAI, eloquently tackled the topic of "Challenges and Opportunities in Outbound Traffic from India." Ravi Gosain, Vice President of IATO shared his insights on "Current Business Trends".

As a perfect conclusion to the event, attendees enjoyed a FAM Trip hosted by Chocolate Hotels at Sun City Mandarmoni. Nirmalya Chaudhuri, Director, Chocolate Hotels, welcomed the guests with the traditional Dhak and Tilak ceremony, setting the stage for a delightful evening on the shores of the Bay of Bengal.

To ensure continuous improvement, feedback was actively sought from participants. This valuable input will shape future editions of the event, tailoring it to the evolving needs of the travel industry.

The first of many to come, EITM has indeed set the standard high for B2B collaboration, knowledge sharing and expanding global outreach for the Indian Travel Industry.



“

Manav Soni
Chairman, TAAI (Eastern Region)

Seldom one has such a rocking beginning. The 1st EITM organised by TTJ was a great event. Perfectly balanced between knowledge sessions, B2B meetings and interactions. The organiser's intent of enhancing and sharing the current day market trends as well as learning about the future products was very eminent. Wish all the success to the team and good luck for all the future endeavours.





“

Koushik Banerjee Chapter Chairman, ETAA (Eastern Region)

What I liked most was the Panel Discussions with eminent speakers on extremely relevant topics. The quality of exhibitors and buyers is worth mentioning and ample scope was provided for networking. I look forward to participating in similar events in the future.



“

B. Parthasarathy Manager (Tours), Tamil Nadu Tourism

EITM was a well-executed event, and participants were enthusiastic and well taken care of by the organisers. The visitors to our Tamil Nadu Tourism booth were open-minded and engaging, showing keen interest in our products. Our Managing Director, Sandeep Nanduri is a highly efficient leader and has been instrumental in revitalising Tamil Nadu's tourism sector. Efforts to promote Tamil Nadu tourism are updated, upgraded and expanded across different regions of India.



Dr Anushree Banerjee Publications Officer, Uttar Pradesh Tourism

“

EITM 2023 proved to be a great platform for the B2B stakeholders. Various renowned buyers and sellers met and interacted. The duration of the sessions provided a great opportunity for detailed discussions. Uttar Pradesh Tourism was able to explain in detail about the various circuits. The evening presentation sessions were also very informative for the stakeholders as they gave insights into how one can increase their business. Great team effort and what a great show. Best of luck for the upcoming events.



“

PP Khanna
President, ADTOI

I am truly impressed by the way Team TTJ organised this fantastic event, featuring not just B2B sessions but also valuable knowledge sessions on understanding the market. It would be wonderful to see TTJ organising similar shows across India, as it can significantly boost tourism and benefit all stakeholders, helping in business promotion, job creation, and revenue generation for the country. Promoting “Dekho Apna Desh” is essential, and it’s heartening to witness the active participation of state tourism boards and international destinations in TRAVMART.



“

Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

The event was well organised and the panel discussions were informative, relevant and useful from a growth and technology perspective. The technology-focused knowledge sessions were spot on, and we must learn to leverage technology to enhance our businesses. The format was precise, and the B2B interactions were thriving, with plenty of information exchange and networking opportunities. Moving forward, we must organise knowledge sessions of a similar nature, with a particular focus on topics like the one we explored on Day 2 of TRAVMART regarding TCS. These sessions were invaluable and offered numerous clarifications and insights to participants.



“

Ravi Gosain
Vice President, IATO

I have attended TTJ TRAVMART before, but I am pleased to see it is now larger and more diverse. It is a positive change to have buyers from all over India, not just the East, as it benefits exhibitors. The quality of buyers is good, and if this leads to successful business deals, everyone is happy to participate. As part of the IATO association, we fully support such events, and many of our members are present here. This event encompasses buying, selling, networking, and travel insights, allowing smaller agents to expand their reach. TTJ is helping bring organisations from Delhi and Mumbai to different regions of India and nurturing smaller travel partners into national players in the travel industry.



“

Prateek Hira
Chairman, IATO (Uttar Pradesh Chapter)

EITM was well organised and thoughtfully planned. The format gave each buyer and seller enough time to interact and network. The panel sessions and presentations were carefully curated to include all the right topics that matter to the industry. For a change, the sellers were relevantly paired with the buyers to give both equal advantage and opportunity. Government participation at EITM added to the knowledge of the delegates about new destinations and policies. Overall, it was worthwhile to be at EITM.



“

Lata K Rastogi, Director of Sales, One Rep Global
(India Representative for Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority)

The event was truly remarkable, offering us a valuable opportunity to engage with numerous agents. My primary goal for attending this event was to connect with agents from the Northeast, and I am pleased to say that we had ample time for meaningful interactions. The event’s organisation and crowd management were commendable, allowing us to meet a diverse range of people and gain insights into their markets and businesses. As a result, we were able to generate a significant number of leads and hope to take it further.



“

Kavya Chawla
Account Manager North & East India, AIUIa

EITM was an apt gateway to dive into the lesser-explored market for outbound travel. There were agents from cities like Nagpur, Raipur, Bhubaneswar, Puri, and all over Kolkata. Where else was it possible to meet all of them together to showcase the premium destination of AIUIa. Along with the mart, the knowledge sessions gave insights and a better understanding of the new trends in the trade. The networking events were a great opportunity to informally chit-chat with the trade colleagues and build better relationships.



“

Mukesh Jagga
Director, Viva Holidays Tours and Travels

From the buyer’s perspective, it was worthwhile visiting the exhibitors. The presentation subjects were well chosen and speakers like Chetan Mehta and Arjun Akruwala were worth listening to. Hemant Mediratta from One Rep Global provided good insight into how to run a business. Progressive topics such as how to use social media platforms, artificial intelligence and technology were new topics that provided insights to travel agents.





Vistara commences daily direct flights between Delhi and Maldives

On September 30, 2023, Vistara inaugurated daily, non-stop flights between Delhi and Maldives. The inaugural flight, operated by an Airbus A320neo aircraft, departed from Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi at 10:45 Hours (IST) and arrived at Velana International Airport, Maldives Airport at 14:20 Hours (MVT). With this, Vistara now offers direct daily flights connecting Maldives with two Indian airports – Delhi and Mumbai.

Vinod Kannan, Chief Executive Officer, Vistara, said,

“In addition to the 7x weekly service between Mumbai and Male, which has been getting very good response since its launch in March 2021, we are pleased to introduce our second route connecting this exquisite beach destination with Delhi. Maldives has evolved as one of the most popular leisure destinations for Indian travellers and we are happy to be able to offer more choices and flexibility to our customers on this route. We are confident that customers will appreciate having the option of flying with India’s most loved airline when travelling to or from Male.”

Uganda Airlines launches direct flights between Entebbe and Mumbai

Uganda’s national airline commenced three weekly flights to Mumbai from October 07, 2023.

Jennifer Bamuturaki, the CEO of Uganda Airlines, expressed her anticipation for the launch of the Entebbe-Mumbai route and her confidence in its future growth. She said, “This route is important to the airline because of the anticipated traffic that we will accrue for the network. The route means so much to our Indian brothers and sisters because it will reduce journey times from nine hours to exactly five and a half hours.”

Uganda’s Minister of Works and Transport, Edward Katumba Wamala, also highlighted the route’s potential to create more opportunities for both Ugandan and Indians.



Air India announces non-stop flights between Kochi and Doha from 23 October

Air India is set to connect Kochi, the commercial hub of Kerala, with Doha, the Capital of Qatar, with a daily non-stop service from October 23, 2023. This new flight will fulfil the need for a convenient and comfortable direct connection between the two cities, and further densify and strengthen their operations to the Middle East.

AI953 will depart at 0130 local time to reach Doha at 0345 hrs. The return flight AI954 will take off from Doha at 0445 hrs to land at Kochi at 1135 hrs (All Local Time). The flight, operated with an A320neo aircraft, will offer 162 seats (150 in Economy and 12 in Business Class).



Oman Air re-launches Lucknow and Thiruvananthapuram routes

Oman Air has resumed its operations on two of its popular Indian routes, Lucknow and Thiruvananthapuram. The carrier will be operating nine flights from Lucknow to Muscat (increasing to ten from December) and five flights a week from Thiruvananthapuram to Muscat (increasing to six from December). The two routes bring Oman Air’s Indian destinations up to 10, with 113 weekly flights between India and Muscat in operation currently, rising to 123 per week from December 2023.

Meanwhile, other updates to the airline’s winter schedule include increased frequencies to Hyderabad, Bangalore and Goa, and its new wide-body service on its Mumbai and Delhi routes, offering maximum comfort and convenience.

Connecting the Indian Subcontinent’s major cities to Muscat and beyond, Oman Air ensures a seamless travel experience that is enhanced by award-winning on-board amenities, including in-flight entertainment, quality meal service and comfort touches, all designed to make every journey more refreshing.





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2023

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Atmosphere Core to enter India with 8 new properties, aims for 25 by 2025

Following a successful journey in the Maldives, of launching 3 brands and 8 resorts within 10 years, Atmosphere Core has unveiled an aggressive plan of 25 properties in 2025 for India. The eight remarkable hotels and resorts within two brands to open from 2024 to 2026 are the Ozen Mansion Kolkata, Ozen Privado Goa, Ozen Nandi Hills Bangalore, Sadar Manzil Heritage by Atmosphere Bhopal, Stillwood Retreat a Signature Atmosphere Coorg, Varsā Elements of Nature by Atmosphere Kannur, Atmosphere Bhubaneswar and Atmosphere Lake View Kolkata.

These properties embody Atmosphere Core's commitment to creative storytelling and curating exceptional guest experiences. "Atmosphere Core has always stood for redefining hospitality experiences, and today, we're taking this legacy to India," said Salil Panigrahi, Managing Director, Atmosphere Core. He added, "Our commitment to organic growth, sustainable development, and distinctive brand experiences has transformed the Maldives, and we are thrilled to bring this transformation to India."



The grand unveiling took place in New Delhi, where Atmosphere Hospitality Private Limited's visionary Chairman, Dipti Ranjan Patnaik, expressed his dedication to establishing Atmosphere as a prominent hotel brand in India, with a focus on delivering 'Joy of Giving' to guests. Souvagya Mohapatra, Managing Director, Atmosphere Core - India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan, highlighted the company's expansion plans in South Asia, echoing the ethos of giving joyfully from the heart and soul, and refining and elevating the individual experiences crafted for guests.

QuadLabs Technologies welcomes Richard Roberts as Chief Commercial Officer

With an illustrious career spanning over 32 years in the travel industry, Roberts brings a wealth of experience and expertise to QuadLabs Technologies. In his role as CCO, Roberts will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of QuadLabs Technologies and Reshaping Travel together.

Prior to joining QuadLabs Technologies, Roberts held prominent positions at renowned companies such as Travelport, Saudi Tourism Authority, British Airways, Vodafone, and Thomas Cook Group, among others. His deep understanding of the travel landscape, coupled with his record of driving innovation and growth, make him an invaluable addition to the QuadLabs executive team.

"We are thrilled to welcome Richard Roberts to the QuadLabs family," said Gaurav Chiripal, CEO, QuadLabs Technologies. He added, "His extensive industry knowledge, strategic vision, and proven leadership abilities will be instrumental in shaping our future endeavours. With Roberts on board, we are confident that we will continue to innovate and lead the way in travel technology."



Chaitra Dwivedi appointed General Manager at Fortune Resort Benaulim Goa

Fortune Hotels, a member of the ITC hotel group has appointed Chaitra Dwivedi as the new General Manager of Fortune Resort Benaulim Goa.

Chaitra provides a wealth of expertise and experience to her new position, as she has over 16 years of experience in the hotel industry and a 20-year career in the hospitality sector. Over the years, she has successfully transitioned through various roles, including front office and revenue management, before ultimately overseeing the overall operations of hotels over the course of her career.

In acknowledgment of her outstanding contributions to the hospitality industry, Chaitra was honoured with the "Outstanding Contributions to the Hospitality Industry" award in 2021 and "Goa's Best General Manager" award in 2022 by Best of India Biz Awards. Furthermore, she received the "Women Achiever Hospitality Award" from IHC London and IIHM Goa in 2023, highlighting her remarkable dedication and achievements in the field.





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No Inner-line Permit required to go to Milam Glacier in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand

The ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police) has made a significant decision to facilitate tourism in the Uttarakhand district by allowing tourists, mountaineers, and trekkers to visit the Milam Glacier without the need for an inner-line permit, which had been mandatory for decades.

The Milam Glacier, situated at an elevation of approximately 18,000 feet, is a highly popular tourist destination in Uttarakhand. The previous requirement of an inner-line permit had been adversely impacting tourism in the region.

"The ITBP has ordered its staff to let every tourist go up to the Milam glacier without carrying an inner-line pass," Munsiyari Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Yashbir Singh said.

"We received a letter from Robin Kumar, Deputy Commandant of the 14th Battalion of the ITBP, informing us about its decision to do away with the restriction as it was affecting tourism," Singh said.

Renowned for its breathtaking beauty, the Milam Glacier, about 61 km from Munsiyari, serves as a prominent destination for trekking enthusiasts. It is a key component of the popular Milam Glacier Trek, which takes trekkers on an awe-inspiring journey through pristine landscapes, dense forests, and remote villages.



Kerala marks record growth in domestic tourist arrivals in first half of 2023

According to the statement presented by Tourism Minister Shri P. A. Mohamed Riyas in the state assembly, domestic tourist arrivals in Kerala grew by an impressive 20.1 per cent. In the initial six months of the calendar year, a total of 1,06,83,643 tourists from within the country explored the diverse landscapes of Kerala. This marked a substantial increase from the 88,95,593 visitors during the same period in the previous year.

The number of foreign tourists in the first half of 2023 was 2,87,730 as compared to 1,05,960 during the corresponding period a year earlier. There was an increase of 1,81,770, and a growth of a whopping 171.55 per cent.

The state also witnessed a steady rise in revenue from the tourism sector from 2020 to 2022. The tourism sector pocketed a revenue of Rs. 35,168.42 crore in 2022 against Rs. 12,285.91 crore in 2021 and Rs. 11,335.96 crore in 2020, the minister said.

The statistics provided by the Tourism Department revealed that Ernakulam emerged as the top district in terms of domestic tourist arrivals, with a remarkable figure of 22,16,250 visitors. It was followed by Idukki (18,01,502), Thiruvananthapuram (17,21,264), Thrissur (11,67,788), Wayanad (8,71,664), and Kozhikode (6,74,237).



Japan's Hatsukaichi implements visitor tax

The Hiroshima prefecture city of Hatsukaichi has commenced collecting the Miyajima Visit Tax from October 01, 2023 onwards. The island of Miyajima is home to the Itsukushima Shrine, a World Heritage site. Residents of the island will be exempt, as will commuters, students and preschool children. Other visitors will be required to pay the tax as an addition to their fare on ferries. The tax is 100 yen (67 cents) per person per visit, but an annual payment plan of 500 yen is also available. Tax-exempt certificates will be issued to residents, commuters and students.

In 2019, Miyajima, with a population of 1,400, saw a record 4.65 million visitors. The regular local allocation tax grant from the national government is not linked to the number of visitors, leading to a pressing need for securing an additional revenue source to cover swelling expenditures for tourism management measures. In a survey of tourists conducted by the city in September 2020, 93 per cent of the respondents supported the introduction of a tax on visitors. A growing number of Japanese islands are introducing an "entrance tax" on visitors as they try to curb overcrowding.





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Ankit Pandey	Zenith Leisure Holidays	New Delhi	Sahil Tangri	Paradise Holidays	Amritsar
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Deena Nath Nayak	Zplus Global Holidays	Jaipur	Siddhi Shah	The Travel Planners	Ahmedabad
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Mohan Singh Dhouni	JSR Hospitality	New Delhi	Syed Basheer Uddin	Globus Tours and Travels	Hyderabad
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Priyanka Padghakar	Fanatic Sports	Mumbai	Vansh Arora	Flag Holidays	New Delhi
Qamar Abbas	Hotline Travel Services	Lucknow	Vinay Arora	ATG Holidays	New Delhi
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ADTOI Uttar Pradesh Chapter celebrates World Tourism Day at Chandauli

The Uttar Pradesh Chapter of Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) organised a remarkable event to celebrate World Tourism Day, based on its theme for 2023, "Tourism and Green Investment." The event took place at Rajdari Resort in Chandra Prabha Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandauli.

Abhishek Sankrit, Secretary, ADTOI UP Chapter, gave the welcome speech, inviting the guests and briefing them about the theme of the event. He explained that Chandauli makes the perfect ground to celebrate the occasion as it matches the theme. He said Chandauli has a great opportunity to promote rural and eco-tourism. On the occasion, the local tribal community showcased tribal dance and music.

Nikhil T. Phunde, District Magistrate, Chandauli, was the chief guest and he welcomed all ADTOI members to Rajdari and explained the importance of the place. He also suggested that tour operators combine Chandauli in their tour programmes with Varanasi and informed them that the government will do all that is possible to support the promotion of tourism and infrastructure in Chandauli.

TAAI MP and Chhattisgarh Chapters celebrate World Tourism Day with heartwarming trip for hearing and speech-impaired girls

On World Tourism Day, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh Chapter organised a special trip to Ujjain for 80 hearing and speech-impaired girls. The journey, which commenced from Indore and continued to Ujjain by bus, was filled with enriching experiences as the girls explored the beauty of Ujjain, visiting iconic landmarks such as Mahakal Lok, Mahakal Temple, Iskcon Temple, and various other tourist attractions.

The event was graced by the presence of Hemendra Singh Jadon, Chapter Chairman and Amit Nalani, Secretary, TAAI- MP and CG Chapter, along with other enthusiastic members, who shared this unforgettable experience with the students. It was a truly fulfilling and heartwarming event that left lasting memories for all involved.

Tatabye Tours add Mauritius to its portfolio

Tatabye Tours, a Destination Management Company (DMC) based in Chennai, has expanded its portfolio to include Mauritius. This addition complements its existing offerings in destinations such as Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia.

Before adding Mauritius to their portfolio, Roshan Jain, Founder and Director, along with Muralidharan, Director of Operations, went on a recce to the island country. "We extensively toured every corner of Mauritius and visited around 13 hotels and unique attractions to understand the products well so that we can educate our travel agent partners about the destination," said Roshan.

Roshan and Murali visited various luxury resorts for site inspections, enjoying sumptuous lunches and dinners, and engaging in a range of exciting activities. The list of hotels they visited included Shangri-La Le Touessrok Mauritius, Anantara Iko Mauritius, Preskil Island Resort, Four Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita, Lux Grand Baie, Le Meridien Mauritius, Anelia Mauritius, Long Beach, C Mauritius, Constance Belle Mare Plage, Heritage Awali, Heritage Telfair, Dinarobin Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa, and The Oberoi Resort Mauritius. Additionally, they had the opportunity to experience thrilling adventures such as the Vallée des Couleurs visit, which featured the Indian Ocean's longest zip line spanning 1.5 km, as well as excursions to Casela Nature & Safari Park, and underwater adventures including a Submarine Scooter adventure at 3 meters underwater and another submarine experience at 35 meters underwater.



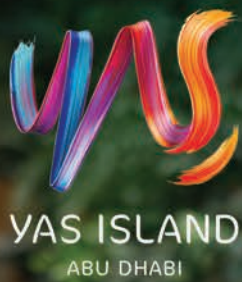


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