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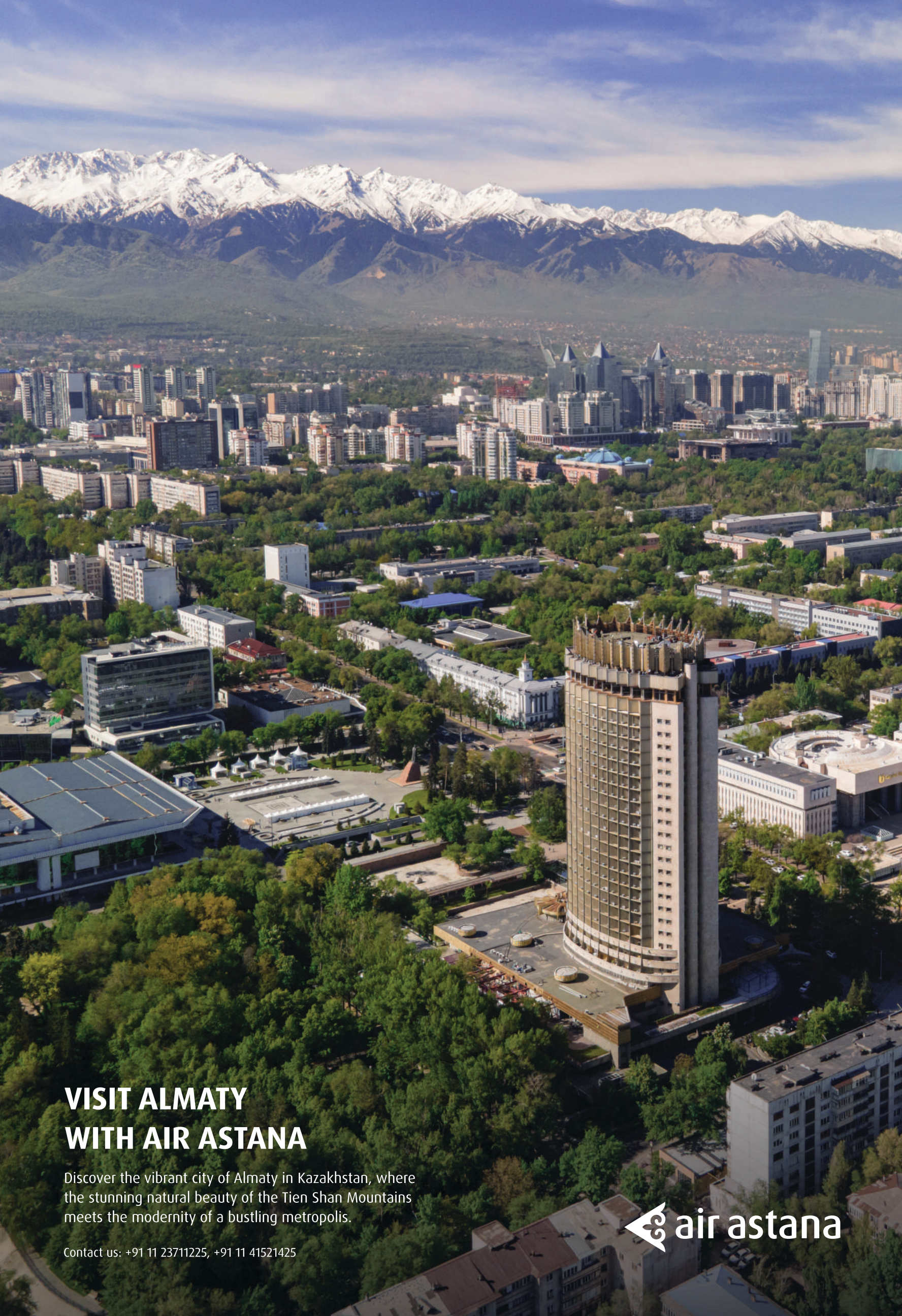
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Dear Friends,

As we welcome the warmth of May, we are thrilled to present the latest issue of TTJ, filled with insightful content designed to inspire and inform.

In this May edition, we offer extensive coverage of both domestic and global hospitality, delving into its ever-evolving landscape and the innovative trends shaping the industry.

Our outbound travel pages transport readers on a journey of enticing chronicles of boundless opportunities and enriching discoveries from around the globe.

Be sure not to miss the 'Big Byte' column and the pages on the sensory delights of Spain's wine trails, taking you on a captivating journey through the vineyards of this vibrant country. Additionally, our collection of articles provides invaluable insights for businesses navigating today's competitive market terrain.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to our advertisers and patrons whose unwavering support, showcased in this issue, fuels our endeavours and makes each edition possible.

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk



Sunset Therapy

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QuadLabs onboards Iain Andrew; achieves new milestone of serving 2000 customers on Konnect.Travel



Iain Andrew has joined the QuadLabs board as Chairman and Non-Executive Director. An inspirational and visionary leader, Iain brings a wealth of board-level experience in aviation, logistics, retail, and travel management. Having worked with globally recognised brands such as TUI, Thomas Cook Business Travel, American Express, dnata, and more recently NEOM and the Saudi Tourist Authority, Iain's extensive Middle East expertise, coupled with his background as a chartered accountant, will be instrumental in delivering QuadLab's ambitious growth strategy as one of the leading travel and expense management companies.

Recently, QuadLabs reached a significant milestone by successfully onboarding its 2000th customer on Konnect.Travel, marking a momentous achievement in its mission to deliver innovative products to the travel industry by leveraging its cutting-edge technology. Konnect.Travel has empowered travel agencies to efficiently manage bookings, payments, and client interactions to elevate their competitiveness in the dynamic travel industry. It offers post-booking management with workflow automation using internal booking queues, auto-import, and fulfilment processes. It has a comprehensive financial accounting system to automate accounting and reconciliations.

Dubai to build 'world's largest airport' with 400 terminal gates and five parallel runways



Dubai has embarked on the ambitious development of a \$35 billion airport terminal project, slated to become the world's largest upon completion.

Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, stated that Dubai's growth has always gone hand-in-hand with the growth of its aviation infrastructure, and today, one sees another bold step in that journey.

"The announcement of phase two of Dubai World Central – Al Maktoum International Airport's (DWC) expansion, representing a substantial investment of AED128 billion, marks the start of a huge investment of resources by our many stakeholders in designing and building a state-of-the-art airport that will provide a quick, convenient, and high-quality 21st-century experience for our customers,"

he said at the start of work on the new passenger terminal.

The new terminal will ultimately enable the airport to handle a passenger capacity of 260 million annually. It will be five times the size of the current Dubai International Airport, and all operations at Dubai International Airport will be transferred to it in the coming years. The airport will accommodate 400 aircraft gates and feature five parallel runways.

IndiGo orders 30 Airbus 350-900 wide-body planes for international expansion



IndiGo is ramping up its international presence with the addition of 30 Airbus A350-900 wide-body aircraft to its fleet. This move solidifies its position as a global aviation player, building on its success since 2006. The aircraft, powered by Rolls Royce's Trent XWB engine, will enhance IndiGo's connectivity from Indian metros to destinations worldwide.

Currently, IndiGo operates over 350 aircraft. Last year, in June 2023, IndiGo placed the largest-ever single aircraft order by any airline for 500 aircraft with Airbus. With that, the outstanding orderbook of A320 Family aircraft stands at almost 1,000 aircraft which are yet to be delivered well into the next decade. This IndiGo order-book comprises a mix of A320NEO, A321NEO and A321XLR aircraft.

This milestone was celebrated on April 25, 2024, in Gurgaon at InterGlobe's corporate headquarters by Pieter Elbers, IndiGo's CEO, Benoît de Saint-Exupéry, Airbus' Executive Vice President of Commercial Aircraft and Ewen McDonald, Rolls Royce's Chief Customer Officer – Civil Aerospace, in the presence of Dr. V. Sumantran, Chairman of the Board of IndiGo and Christian Scherer, Airbus' CEO of Commercial Aircraft.

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Hollywood sensation Ryan Reynolds appointed Yas Island's newest Chief Island Officer



Yas Island Abu Dhabi, the region's leading leisure and entertainment destination, appointed Hollywood's most charismatic superstar Ryan Reynolds as its newest Chief Island Officer (CIO). Following in the footsteps of former CIOs

Kevin Hart and Jason Momoa, Reynolds brings his trademark charm and wit to the role, promising an unforgettable era of adventure and excitement.

Liam Findlay, CEO of Miral Destinations, enthusiastically remarked, "With the appointment of Ryan Reynolds as our latest Chief Island Officer of Yas Island Abu Dhabi, we continue the tradition of excellence established by Kevin Hart and Jason Momoa. Reynolds brings his own unique blend of charisma, energy, and enthusiasm to the role, promising to elevate the Yas Island experience to even greater heights. We're thrilled to embark on this exhilarating journey with him, inviting fans worldwide to be part of the legacy."

From speeding through rollercoasters at Ferrari World Yas Island, Abu Dhabi to exploring Gotham City at Warner Bros. World™ Yas Island, Abu Dhabi Reynolds is rolling into Yas Island with unmatched energy and style, inviting fans to #RollLikeRyan and experience the island like never before.

Bhutan lifts mandatory requirement of travel insurance for tourists



Bhutan has lifted the mandatory requirement of travel insurance for tourists, as announced by the Department of Tourism Bhutan in a notification dated April 23, 2024.

This requirement was initially introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to cover unforeseen emergencies, including medical expenses related to the pandemic.

The decision to remove this requirement is aimed at facilitating seamless travel for tourists.

The notification stated, "The mandatory requirement of travel insurance is hereby withdrawn with immediate effect for processing visa to facilitate seamless travel for tourists. However, it is recommended for tourists to possess travel insurance as a precaution in case of unlikely emergencies associated with any international travel."

IRIS Reps expands portfolio with NOOE Resort in the Maldives



IRIS Reps, a representation company, has added NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi to its portfolio. This new island resort, nestled in the captivating "Wow Atoll" of the Maldives, is introduced by La Vie Hotels and Resorts, a leading independent hotel management company in the Asia Pacific region.

Designed with balance in mind, NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi offers travellers an unparalleled experience with 72 villas spread across 3 hectares. Among these, 38 overwater villas provide the ultimate holistic and romantic escape, featuring private plunge pools, expansive deck areas, and breathtaking views of the Vaavu Atoll.

Conveniently located just 75 minutes from Male city and international airport by speed boat or 25 minutes by seaplane, NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi offers easy access to luxury and tranquillity.

The resort boasts five Food and Beverage Outlets, a Dive and Watersports Centre, a Kids Club, a Boutique Shop, and Th-āri by Mandara Spa, offering a range of curated treatment options.

At NOOE, food and beverage experiences take center stage, offering themed buffets, live-action stations, Japanese-inspired dining, poolside comfort at the Pool Bar, and an overwater restaurant showcasing the best of air, land, and sea.

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Riya Group's CSR Project Swapnam

26 FAMILIES, 26 DREAM HOMES

Meet GMJ Thampy, Chairman and Managing Director, Riya Group, the visionary force whose 40-year legacy in travel and tourism is matched only by his unwavering commitment to social welfare. Join us as we explore the remarkable story of a leader and his strong belief in giving back to society.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

Social welfare has always been one of the significant avenues to explore for GMJ Thampy, Chairman and Managing Director, Riya Group. His strong belief in giving back to society also comes from feeling a sense of responsibility towards homeless labourers and their families in the rural area of Thenmala, which is also the place where G.M.J. Thampy was born. A stalwart in the travel and tourism industry with over 40 years of dedicated service, he has been successfully spearheading the business conglomerate that offers holistic travel experiences to travel partners and customers.

Although the travel and tourism industry has been his arena for decades, he has continued to stay involved in community service. Over the years, he has deeply pondered the search for a greater calling, longing to satisfy his innate desire to make a meaningful impact on society.

Seeds of Service

Born and raised in a small town in Thenmala, Kerala, Thampy had to work his way through challenges and hardships to build an empire that caters to millions of travel partners and customers in India and globally today. His social aspiration found a purpose when he came across 26 families living in Rubber Estate in Thenmala, Kerala, for generations and had dedicated their services to the landowners by working at the rubber plantation estate. A witness to their efforts and perseverance for years is what led Thampy to undertake the CSR project for the underprivileged by Riya Travel and Tours (India) Private Limited

and one of its most significant initiatives - Project Swapnam.

Thampy said, "Swapnam means dream. Every family deserves a home of their dreams, a place they can call their own. It is one of the best feelings in the world. It brings joy, security, and a sense of belongingness."

Cherished Dream to Reality

Project Swapnam is an endeavour by Riya Travel & Tours (India) through Riya Social Welfare Foundation to make their dreams a reality for these families. A place where they can restart their lives and feel a sense of belongingness and also give their future generations a secure environment to grow in.

Initiated more than a year ago, the welfare programme approached and offered these 26 families a home in Thenmala. Thampy knew that offering land may not suffice their needs or fulfil his purpose. He decided to build these families a home that they could call their own. His thoughts were soon put into action with a ballot event, where houses were allotted to each family before the foundation stone was finally laid.

"It was a humbling experience to witness hope in the eyes of these families on the announcement of Project Swapnam. I truly am grateful to be a part of a project that can give these families a future to look forward to," Thampy pointed out.

Throughout the year 2023, Thampy, along

with Riya Travel & Tours, was personally involved in the project to ensure every stone was turned in making these dream homes a reality.

Explaining the purpose behind the project, Thampy said, "I wish to bring about a change in the lives of people living and working at the Rubber Estate in Thenmala, Kerala. I want them to discover a feeling of happiness and build a better future for their children."

An Exemplary Beginning

Renamed Riya Gardens, the doors to these 26 beautiful homes were finally opened to its occupants on February 07, 2024. Surrounded by the picturesque view of Thenmala's flora and fauna, the keys were handed over to the families with pomp and grandeur.

A pivotal part of the project from its initiation to its completion, Thampy has etched the opening of Riya Gardens into the history of Riya Group. It is an initiative that he has been searching for, and to finally see it come true is indeed a personal accomplishment for the travel business mogul. However, this is just the beginning, as he continues to anticipate more such projects in the future in his endeavour to give back to society.



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Fortune Hotels enters Nepal's hospitality landscape

Established as a 100 per cent subsidiary of ITC Limited, Fortune Hotel focuses on the asset-light space in the mid-to upscale hospitality segments, complementing ITC Hotels' luxury presence. Fortune pioneers its first-mover brand significance with rapid expansion into tier-two and tier-three Indian cities. Samir MC, Managing Director, Fortune Hotels, announces the launch of a new property in Nepal, marking the brand's inaugural step into the international market.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla



▲ Samir MC

Nestled within the winding lanes of Durbar Square, The Fortune Resort and Wellness Spa is situated in the historic UNESCO heritage town of Bhaktapur. Renowned for its vibrant art and culture, the destination presents a unique chance to experience the age-old Newari heritage amidst serene hillsides while indulging in a transformative wellness retreat. Only an hour's drive from Kathmandu, the resort offers 66 spacious rooms, cottages, and suites packed with thoughtful, modern amenities. The chic Neptune and the Pool Bar provide the perfect setting for relaxed sojourns with a wide choice of beverages, while the Rainbow Restaurant offers exclusive vegetarian dishes from seven different cuisines across the world along with other choices.

The Wellness Spa offers rejuvenation for the mind, body, and soul with an array of signature massages and beauty therapies by a team of trained therapists. Marked as a potential destination for weddings, this resort features versatile event and meeting spaces of varying sizes, suitably equipped to host large social events, conferences, and special gatherings. An expansive open deck area spanning over 1000 sq. m next to the pool doubles as a picturesque events venue with a capacity of 600 pax.

Crossing Borders

On Fortune Hotel's expansion, Samir points out, "We wanted to look at locations well within reach of the Indian travel market, where Indian brands like ours have good acceptance and with whom we have good trade and cultural relations. The decision to go into Nepal was fairly easy as it is a proximal market, where our parent company already has an existing business in the FMCG space, so hospitality was a natural progression."

Target Segment

Fortune as a brand is well entrenched in the mid to upscale segment. It is designed to effectively serve multiple segments, including destination weddings, MICE, leisure, and business travel. Recognised as reputable and dependable operators in this space, Samir explains, "Our hotels have a great sense of functional efficiency. At the same time, we continue offering good products with a very strong service culture to deliver great value to our guests. In this resort, we have come up with an extensive spa and a wellness centre, spread over

5000 sq. ft with stunning views, offering relaxation and rejuvenation."

The Fortune USP

"We have had an exceptional year of growth, opening eight properties across India. From Amritsar in the north, where we have opened two hotels, including one situated next to the Golden Temple, to locations in the south like Hosur, near Bengaluru and Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu, to Kalimpong in West Bengal, we have expanded our presence significantly. This financial year, we anticipate opening more hotels and are eager to incorporate them into our inventory," added Samir.

With the prestigious ITC ethos, the company remains committed to sustainability and community engagement. Their portfolio includes the world's first 12 carbon net-zero and four water net-zero hotels, all under the ITC Hotels brand. This commitment extends to all properties to encourage collaborations with local communities.

Samir concludes, "We had to go through a learning curve, going into a new country, but it was relatively easy due to similarities in the way business is conducted in India and Nepal. India has advanced more in terms of digital technology, which we hope to take to Nepal."




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Banyan Group continues to prioritise Indian market through targeted marketing

Banyan Group joyfully marked its 30-year anniversary this year. With TTJ, Benjawan Meksakul, Regional Director, Sales and Marketing, Banyan Group, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, and the Maldives, along with Tekla Maira, Regional Director, Sales, Banyan Group, India, discuss the transformation of Banyan Group, its recent advancements in the Indian market, distinct brands, and future aspirations.

Prashant Nayak

Celebrating three decades of crafting extraordinary experiences this year, the Banyan Tree Hotels have transitioned from “Banyan Tree Group” to “Banyan Group,” signifying a dynamic evolution into a multifaceted, multi-brand hospitality powerhouse. Managing 75 hotels and resorts across the globe, the group boasts a portfolio of 12 distinctive brands, including the iconic Banyan Tree. Each brand retains its unique identity while being unified under Banyan’s immersive membership programme. With plans to add 19 new properties and residences by 2024 in Asia and Mexico, the group strengthens its global presence, offering an unparalleled range of luxury experiences.

Strengthening Bonds

Banyan Group recently conducted roadshows in India and celebrated their momentous 30th anniversary at an event in Mumbai. Amidst the celebration, Maira provided invaluable insights into the group’s transformative journey and the evolution of its brands, and she invited them to experience the exceptional luxury that makes life beautiful.

Managing a diverse portfolio of 12 hotels, Benjawan’s objective to visit India was to foster enduring relationships within the travel trade through impactful roadshows. A large percentage of Banyan Tree Group’s assets are in Thailand, and its resorts have been attracting a growing number of Indian tourists. Benjawan mentions, “Our recent roadshow across India, spanning Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai, proved highly successful. We had eight hotel properties from Thailand and Indonesia participating in the roadshow. It provided an excellent platform to engage with our Indian trade partners and highlight the latest developments and luxury offerings from the Banyan Group.”

Expanding Horizons in India

2023 was an amazing year for the Banyan Group. It was their first year back in action after the pandemic, and the resurgence was remarkable. Maira says, “Demand for our Thai hotels soared, with our hotel in



▲ Benjawan Meksakul

Indonesia following suit, leaving no room for bookings. Weddings definitely came back big-time last year and are expected to grow this year. The outlook is even brighter in 2024 with Thailand’s visa-free status. This opens doors for many more celebrations, social gatherings, milestone birthdays, and other events. We are expecting more family and friends to travel to Thailand and Indonesia to celebrate special occasions. Our business is thriving, buoyed by the increasing influx of visitors, particularly from India.”

The Banyan Group has noticed significant growth in their business, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India. “Previously, our focus was primarily on major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai, which continue to perform exceptionally well. We are getting excellent responses from Bengaluru, our newest market. Also, we are now experiencing a surge in new markets, particularly from the southern regions of India,” asserts Maira.

The Indian market has been instrumental in driving growth across Banyan properties, not only in terms of FIT and leisure travellers but also in the MICE segment. Benjawan says, “Recognising its significance, India remains our primary focus for marketing activities such as roadshows and networking. We are particularly excited about the



▲ Tekla Maira

immense potential we are discovering in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. In our marketing efforts, leveraging social media has been pivotal to connecting with India’s vast population and tapping into its promising market.”

Signature Brands and Guest Loyalty

Situated in awe-inspiring destinations around the globe, the group’s exceptional brands—including Banyan Tree, Angsana, Cassia, Dhawa, Folio, Buahon, Garrya, Homm, Laguna, and Veya—each exude their own unique charm. Even amidst the challenges of the past three years, Maira says that guests continue to demonstrate a strong brand recall. She highlights, “We have remained steadfast in delivering on our brand promises, especially our dedication to sustainability, which has garnered trust and belief from our guests, intermediaries, and partners alike. This steadfast belief in our brand is a testament to its strength and growth trajectory.”

Benjawan also noted that travel operators have observed that due to the Banyan Group’s credibility, customers remain loyal and are eager to explore their hotels in new destinations, experimenting with the different brands and thus underscoring their unwavering trust in the company.

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TOPGOLF THAILAND | A 'Game' Changer in the South East Asia Market

In a detailed conversation with Tim Boda, Managing Director, Topgolf Thailand, the nuances of their strategic business expansion and deep dive into the Indian B2B travel trade market were revealed. Tim Boda's experience in the hospitality sector has profoundly influenced the direction and innovation at Topgolf, setting the stage for a dynamic integration of sports, leisure, and corporate engagement.

Vartik Sethi

Tim Boda, a veteran of the hospitality industry, has spent the last 24 years in Thailand after an equal number of years in Zurich. His journey before Topgolf saw him at the helm of various five-star hotels and leading the food and beverage operations globally for Minor Hotels, known for its Anantara and Avani brands. Transitioning to Topgolf was marked by seizing a "very unique opportunity." Under his leadership, Topgolf Southeast Asia has secured exclusive franchise rights across the region, indicating aggressive growth plans.

The first Topgolf venue in Bangkok opened one and a half years ago, was a pioneering project aimed at cementing the brand in the local market—a goal that has been successfully achieved. Today, Topgolf is a recognised name in Bangkok, mirroring its two-decade-long legacy in the U.S.

Strategic Focus on the Indian Market

With the foundation firmly laid in Bangkok, Topgolf is now turning its attention to inbound tourism, with a significant focus on the Indian market. India, known for its vast and varied traveller profiles—from backpackers and luxury travellers to large wedding parties—presents a dynamic market for Topgolf. The recent visa exemptions have made Thailand an even more attractive destination for Indian tourists, aligning perfectly with Topgolf's diverse offerings.

Tim Boda emphasises the adaptability of Topgolf to various segments of visitors throughout the day: professional golfers in the morning, families in the afternoon, and social seekers at night. The venue's design accommodates up to 1,800 people, making it ideal for large events and casual visits alike.

Innovation and Localisation

A key aspect of Topgolf's strategy is its innovative use of technology and local cultural integration. Each venue is tailored



▲ Tim Boda

to reflect local tastes and demands. For instance, the Bangkok venue boasts an extensive menu that includes Thai, Tex-Mex, Californian, Japanese, and Indian cuisines, catering to the cosmopolitan nature of its visitors.

Moreover, the integration of technology sets Topgolf apart. The use of microchipped golf balls and top tracer cameras that capture the flight and speed of each shot enhances the playing experience by gamifying traditional golf. These technological advancements not only

attract seasoned golfers but also provide a fun, engaging experience for newcomers.

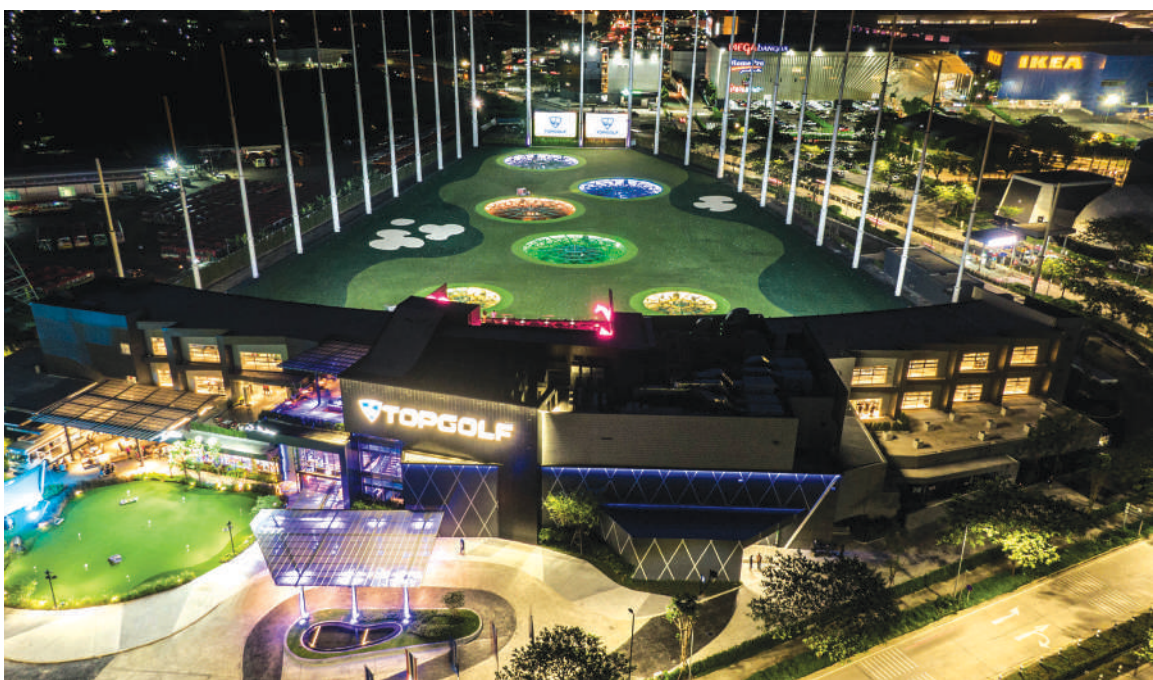
Corporate Engagement and Sustainability

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability are at the heart of Topgolf's operations. Tim Boda detailed initiatives such as zero waste to landfill, extensive use of solar power, and the employment of ozone solutions to minimise chemical use. The Indian corporate sector, with its robust demand for innovative MICE destinations, finds a great partner in Topgolf Thailand.

Looking Ahead

As Topgolf prepares to expand further into Southeast Asia with upcoming venues in Jakarta and other major cities, the focus remains sharply on penetrating the Indian market deeper. Plans for 2024 include extensive marketing initiatives, participation in trade shows, and hosting familiarisation trips for Indian corporate giants.

Tim Boda's vision for Topgolf extends beyond just being a leisure activity provider. It is about creating a community hub where technology, sustainability, and cultural diversity converge to offer a holistic entertainment and engagement platform. Topgolf Thailand has established itself as a pivotal player in Southeast Asia's travel and leisure industry, particularly appealing to the burgeoning Indian travel market.





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Palladium Hotel Group stands out for its innovative approach to luxury and experience-driven services. Sandra Polo Canudas, Asia and ME Commercial Director, Palladium Hotel Group, recently shed light on the group’s strategic directions, achievements, and future plans. With a portfolio of nine distinct brands, the group has carved a niche in creating unforgettable experiences for its guests, catering to a wide range of preferences and destinations.

Vartik Sethi

Diverse Brands, Unique Experiences

Palladium Hotel Group’s philosophy centres around offering more than just a place to stay; it is about creating indelible impressions. This philosophy is evident across its brands, each with its unique selling proposition. Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel has gained popularity for its integration of luxury accommodations with live music performances, appealing particularly to the vibrant Indian market.

The Bless Collection of Hotels and the Grand Palladium Palace Ibiza Resort and Spa further exemplify Palladium Hotel Group’s dedication to unique, experience-rich hospitality. The diversity of Palladium Hotel Group’s portfolio ensures that there is something special for every traveller, whether they seek the pulsating rhythms of a music festival or the tranquil luxury of a seaside resort. Highlighting the brand’s differentiation, Canudas shared, “The main USP is experiences! These nine different brands have their own unique sense.”

Expansion into the Middle East

Palladium Hotel Group is enhancing its global presence by introducing the Ushuaia Unexpected Hotels and Residences in the Middle East, specifically on Al Marjan Island in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE. Set to open by 2026, this expansion involves collaboration with Al Marjan and Almal Real Estate Development, marking the international launch of the iconic Ibiza-born brand under its new name. The project,

set to attract more than \$100 million in investment, will feature 442 luxurious hotel rooms and residential units. Amenities will include a sophisticated beach club, an exquisite restaurant, and a captivating infinity pool, all situated to provide stunning views of the Arabian Gulf. The Unexpected Al Marjan Island Hotel and Residences not only extends the group's footprint but also introduces branded residences into its portfolio, aiming to blend luxury with lifestyle and entertainment in one of the region's top investment destinations.

Strategic Achievements and Innovations

Palladium Hotel Group's success is not only marked by its innovative service offerings but also by its strategic achievements and expansions. Sandra highlighted several significant milestones, such as the launch of new properties in prime destinations like Seville and the comprehensive renovation of existing ones to enhance their appeal to global markets, including the Indian market.

Expansion Plans and Sustainability Initiatives

With plans to extend its reach to cities like Venice and beyond, the group is poised for global expansion. This includes leveraging the Only YOU brand to introduce unique city hotel experiences. Moreover, sustainability is at the heart of Palladium Hotel Group's operations. The group has also taken significant steps towards eco-friendly practices and community engagement, such as collaborating with NGOs through the Palladium Hotel Group Cares programme. Highlighting these initiatives, Canudas shared, "We now have a dedicated sustainability department that looks after the growing needs of the environment as well as the modern eco-conscious traveller."

A Blend of Luxury and Innovation

At the core of Palladium Hotel Group's success is its ability to blend luxury with innovative experiences. From offering VIP services designed especially for children

and experiences to all its guests. Palladium Hotel Group's vision for the future of hospitality is one of inclusivity, innovation, and sustained growth, with a keen focus on expanding its footprint in emerging and established markets alike.

Message to Stakeholders

Canudas conveyed a heartfelt message to stakeholders in the Indian market, ensuring them of Palladium Hotel Group's unwavering commitment despite the need to diversify attention across multiple markets. Establishing her commitment to the Indian market, she affirmed, "We will try to be in the market as much as possible, giving service experiences to the best of our capacity." This balance, she assures, will not diminish the group's dedication to providing exceptional service

Leading the Way in Experiential Hospitality

Palladium Hotel Group's journey is a compelling story of innovation, strategic expansion, and commitment to sustainability. Through its diverse brand portfolio, the group offers unparalleled experiences that cater to the evolving preferences of global travellers. As Palladium Hotel Group continues to expand its footprint and enhance its offerings, it remains dedicated to its mission of providing luxury, comfort, and unforgettable moments to guests around the world.



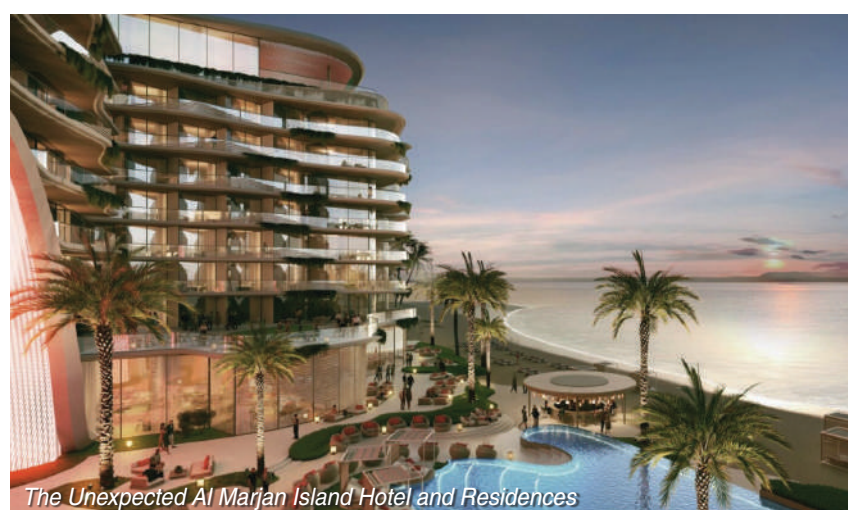
Bless Your Presidential Suite, Bless Hotel Ibiza



TRS Ibiza Hotel



The Unexpected Al Marjan Island Hotel and Residences



The Unexpected Al Marjan Island Hotel and Residences

With diverse offerings to suit every preference, Malaysia aims to attract every Indian

Malaysia’s tourism sector has experienced significant success in the Indian market, driven by strategic initiatives and increased accessibility. The newly implemented visa-free policy for Indians is poised to further bolster Malaysia’s tourism industry this year, aligning with the objectives set for Visit Malaysia Year 2026. Looking ahead, Noriah Jaafar, Director, Tourism Malaysia, Mumbai, reaffirms her unwavering commitment to showcasing the country’s diverse appeal to every Indian traveller.

Prashant Nayak

India remains a key market for Malaysia, with strong economic and cultural ties. In 2023, tourism in Malaysia witnessed remarkable success, welcoming 671,846 Indian tourists who spent a total of MYR 3,376 million. Tourism Malaysia’s proactive marketing approach included active participation in nationwide B2B and B2C events. The Malaysian government’s implementation of visa-free entry for Indians from December 01, 2023, to December 31, 2024, is a significant step to promote Visit Malaysia Year 2026. Additionally, the 183 weekly flights between India and Malaysia, operated by Malaysia Airlines, Batik Air, AirAsia, and IndiGo, facilitate seamless travel and strengthen bilateral tourism efforts.

Spectrum of Experiences

India ranks as the sixth largest source market for Malaysia, alongside Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, China, and South Korea. “Malaysia is a fantastic value-for-money destination boasting diverse natural attractions. As a biodiverse country with a rich tradition and culture, our environment teems with lush flora and fauna, pristine beaches, thrilling theme parks, adventurous activities, and vibrant nightlife—all incredibly appealing to Indian tourists. Luxury experiences at affordable prices define Malaysia,” says Noriah.

Malaysia boasts several new destinations and newer experiences that are being promoted to entice both new and repeat travellers, particularly from India. Noriah mentions, “Malaysia, now a visa-free haven, remains a top choice for Indian travellers. Our focus is on promoting Malaysia—beyond Kuala Lumpur—with a specific emphasis on attracting repeat Indian travellers. Malaysia offers something for everyone, from jaw-dropping theme parks for families to secluded beaches for honeymooners, making it a truly diverse destination. The rich sea-beds of Malaysia are particularly appealing to millennials, offering activities like discovery diving, snorkelling, and coral conservation experiences. For adventure-



▲ Noriah Jaafar

loving travellers, we provide unique and thrilling activities that cater to everyone, including non-swimmers. Malaysian cuisine is also diverse and incredible, with influences from Malay, Chinese, Indian, Thai, Javanese, and Sumatran cultures.”

Invitation to Every Indian

In light of changing travel trends, by understanding the evolving preferences and behaviours of Indian travellers and tailoring marketing strategies accordingly, Tourism Malaysia aims to attract a diverse range of visitors from traditional and emerging markets in India. On this, Noriah elaborates, “Our target audience includes every Indian because we believe Malaysia has something for everyone, regardless of age or background. Whether you are part of Alpha, Gen Z, Millennials, Gen Y or X, a parent, grandparent, or child, our strategies aim to engage families, solo travellers, backpackers, honeymooners, MICE participants, wedding enthusiasts, luxury seekers, adventure lovers, and those seeking educational experiences. Our comprehensive approach ensures that Malaysia’s diverse offerings cater to the varied interests and preferences of every Indian traveller.”

Sustainable and Community Tourism Appeal

By integrating sustainability into all aspects of the tourism industry, Malaysia aims to promote responsible tourism practices and ensure long-term benefits to its tourism sector. Once again, the “Malaysia—Beyond Kuala Lumpur” initiative aims to showcase both existing and new tourism products around the country’s rich biodiversity and local communities in states like Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Penang, Perak, Terengganu, Sabah, and Sarawak of Borneo.

The destination offers several opportunities for Indian tourists to engage in community-based tourism and interact with local communities. One of the strategic approaches to bolstering the rural economy and attracting more visitors is through the process of ‘digitalisation’. Additionally, community-based tourism (CBT) homestay programmes have been a longstanding government initiative to support rural tourism since the mid-1990s. “Both Indian and foreign tourists appreciate these offerings. Despite the availability of travel packages and itineraries offered by many Malaysian DMCs, Indian tourists often prefer exploring independently through homestay programmes, engaging in activities such as kite making, handicrafts, batik painting, and rural fishing,” shares Noriah.

Tourism Malaysia’s 2024 Agenda in India

In 2024, Tourism Malaysia will be focusing on the Indian market with a strategic tactical campaign, participating in various B2B platforms both online and offline. They are also forging strategic tie-ups with travel trade partners. Specifically, for MICE operators, the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MYCEB) is creating enticing incentive packages. “Through strategic partnerships with product collaborators and state tourism boards, we’re offering enticing incentives to both MICE operators and wedding planners, highlighting Malaysia’s rich diversity and allure,” concludes Noriah.

THE PLACE TO BE

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Forever Revitalising

AlUla's Timeless Allure and ongoing transformation

AlUla, nestled in Saudi Arabia's northwest, is primed to emerge as a distinguished cultural, heritage, and luxury destination, captivating not just Saudi Arabia but the entire globe. We caught up with Melanie deSouza, Executive Director, Destination Marketing, Royal Commission for AlUla, where she spearheads a team of specialists dedicated to crafting the brand and poised to unveil AlUla to the world. With us, she highlights the mystical destination and their first global campaign, 'Forever Revitalising.'

Prashant Nayak



▲ Melanie deSouza



The Saudi Arabian government has been making significant investments in the tourism sector as part of its Vision 2030 initiative, which aims to position the country as a leading tourism destination in the region. AIUla, nestled within the kingdom, stands as a veritable treasure trove of historical significance, archaeological treasures, natural beauty, and unique cultural offerings brimming with the promise of becoming a premier tourism destination.

Bridge Between the Past and the Future

For millennia, humans have traversed and inhabited the Arabian Peninsula, with evidence of organised societies dating back at least 7,000 years. AIUla is home to a wealth of archaeological and historical sites, including the ancient city of Hegra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With its well-preserved Nabatean tombs and rock-cut architecture, Hegra offers a glimpse into the ancient civilisation that thrived there. AIUla's cultural heritage extends beyond its Nabatean roots. The region boasts ancient inscriptions, rock art, and remnants of civilisations that inhabited the area thousands of years ago, offering a fascinating glimpse into the past. AIUla is also characterised by stunning natural landscapes, including rocky mountains, expansive deserts, and verdant oases.

"In terms of its physicality, AIUla is undeniably breathtaking. With 980 million years of geological history, the landscape is a marvel of sandstone outcrops set against the verdant greenery of the Oasis, stretching nine km along AIUla's spine. When it comes to heritage, Hegra stands as our crowning jewel, boasting 110 exquisitely preserved Nabatean tombs. The Nabateans were an advanced civilisation, and Hegra's vast 50-hectare expanse is a testament to their enduring legacy," shares Melanie.

The Nabateans, renowned for Petra in Jordan, showcased their mastery of rock-cut architecture and water conservation. Preceding their era, AIUla thrived under the Lihyanite and Dedanite kingdoms, strategically positioned along ancient trade routes. AIUla's Islamic history, marked by

rule under the Umayyads, Abbasids, and Ottomans, further enriches its cultural tapestry. The Old Town of AIUla, approximately 900 years old, epitomises the region's heritage with narrow streets, mud-brick houses, and ancient fortifications. It offers visitors a captivating glimpse into AIUla's diverse past, underscoring its significance as a cultural treasure trove.

Melanie adds, "When considering the natural landscapes, they offer a plethora of experiences, from wellness retreats to thrilling outdoor adventures. Trails for hikes, opportunities for rock climbing, and desert exploration abound. Stargazing under pristine night skies and early morning ballooning add to the allure. This diverse array of experiences is bound to captivate the Indian market, offering a truly remarkable range of activities to indulge in."

The New Global Campaign

As a seasoned marketing leader with a proven track record in the tourism and hospitality sectors across Australia and Asia, Melanie has been instrumental in shaping the strategic positioning and market prioritisation for AIUla. Notably, she spearheaded AIUla's inaugural domestic brand campaign, "World's Masterpiece," in 2022, followed by the recent launch of their global marketing campaign, "Forever Revitalising," initially across nine markets, including India, in 2024.

The multifaceted campaign is weaving its narrative across a diverse array of platforms, including a dynamic blend of digital, outdoor, cinematic, and print media. It revolves around the compelling theme of renewal and transformation, perfectly mirroring AIUla's vision of evolving into a destination that seamlessly merges its rich historical legacy with contemporary relevance, ensuring its enduring allure remains eternally relevant.

"We hope that the film and creative assets do justice to a truly unique destination, capturing the essence of AIUla across our rich heritage, vibrant arts and culture, breath-taking natural beauty, thrilling adventures, and rejuvenating





wellness experiences. This campaign we hope will not only resonate with travellers but also support and engage our travel partners who are critical to curating the unparalleled experiences of our evolving tourism landscape,” says Melanie.

The campaign spotlights iconic AIUla destinations and attractions such as Hegra, Jabal Ikmah, the oasis, the old town, balloon adventures, Dada, Sharaan Nature Reserve, Banyan Tree’s canyon pool, local crafts, Elephant Rock, Maraya, and the vibrant food and beverage scene. The campaign targets a specific audience, identified into four core personas: luxe seeker, wanderlust nomad, intrepid voyager, and affluent and active retirees. In essence, the campaign endeavours to communicate that a visit to AIUla promises enriching and transformative experiences, fostering profound connections with the region’s rich tapestry and offering deep connections with its heritage, culture, and natural splendour.

Facts and Figures

In 2022, AIUla welcomed 185,000 visitors, increasing to 263,000 in 2023, marking a 44 per cent growth and aligning with the 2030

target. The visitor split evolved from 27 per cent international and 73 per cent domestic in 2022 to 35 per cent international and 65 per cent domestic in 2023. The 2030 goal aims for a split of 45 per cent international and 55 per cent domestic visitors. Looking forward, targets are set at 292,000 visitors in 2024, 381,000 by 2025, 1.1 million by 2030, and 2 million by 2035.

In recent years, AIUla has been undergoing significant development, bringing in infrastructure projects, luxury resorts, cultural events, and international acts to attract visitors from around the world. By the end of 2023, AIUla boasted 728 hotel keys across renowned properties like Habitas AIUla, Banyan Tree, Shaden Resort, and Cloud 7. In 2024, landmark additions included Dar Tantora in AIUla Old Town and Chedi Hegra, the inaugural hotel within a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Targeting 824 keys by year’s end, the ambitious plan aims for 5,500 keys by 2030 and 8,500 by 2035. Fast-tracking these developments not only primes AIUla for global tourism but also fuels investment opportunities and job creation, with Chedi Hegra alone expected to provide 140 jobs for locals.

A Promise of Luxury with Sustainability

As AIUla evolves into a luxury tourism destination, it strikes a delicate balance between modern amenities and conservation, offering travellers a unique blend of opulence and authenticity. Through immersive cultural events and global collaborations, AIUla serves not only as a destination but also as a bridge, fostering cross-cultural exchange and appreciation. In its transformation, AIUla not only elevates Saudi Arabia’s tourism profile but also enriches the global cultural landscape, inviting visitors to embark on a journey where the echoes of the past resonate with the promise of the future.

Melanie says, “AIUla’s vision is clear; we will remain steadfast in our commitment to preserving our status as a luxury boutique heritage destination and not a mass tourism destination. Along with welcoming visitors, our focus is on sustainable and responsible growth, prioritising the well-being of the people of AIUla and the protection of our precious heritage and environment above all else.”



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Farasan Islands
Jazan

Unveil Mexico and craft memories with bespoke adventures by Trip to Mexico

With a steadfast commitment to excellence, Ramon Delgado H, Director, and Ksenia Tarasova, Deputy Director, Trip to Mexico, unveil the country’s myriad charms and exotic attractions with finesse, reflecting that each journey is a seamless blend of adventure, luxury, and authenticity.

Prashant Nayak

Headquartered in Cancun, Trip to Mexico, one of the leading DMCs for travel services to Mexico, has been a trailblazer in crafting bespoke travel experiences since 2011. Recently, they hosted a destination training workshop for travel agents in Mumbai with their Indian representative, Global Destination. The focus was on showcasing Mexican hospitality and unique experiences, enriching the travel fraternity with insights into the DMC’s exceptional offerings.

Trip to Mexico’s forte lies in curating exclusive tours that span various levels of complexity and duration, immersing travellers in the essence of Mexico’s cultural tapestry. From intimate groups to captivating one-day escapes, they offer a spectrum of experiences. But what truly sets them apart is their business relationship with hotels, luxury villas, haciendas, boutique hideaways, and top-notch transportation services.

Crafting Passionate Journeys

Ramon and Ksenia are passionate about curating the exclusive travel odyssey. Ramon says, “Our passion at Trip to Mexico stems from a deep appreciation for the country’s unique character. It is a land woven with rich history, diverse landscapes, and vibrant culture—a perfect match for the global traveller seeking exclusive and authentic adventures. This appreciation fuels our mission to unlock the true potential of Mexico through expertly curated travel sojourns.”

“By specialising in exclusive itineraries, we go beyond the typical tourist experience. Trip to Mexico crafts journeys that connect you with local communities, allowing you to experience the true essence of this magical land and create unforgettable memories. It is an opportunity to uncover the enchantment of Mexico, delving into extraordinary adventures with each step. Each meticulously crafted trip unveils hidden treasures and allows you to truly understand the country’s soul,” asserts Ksenia.

Unlocking Mexico’s Magic

Ramon’s portrayal of Mexico evokes a sense of wonder and adventure. He says,

“Mexico’s rich tapestry unfolds as you explore. Ancient civilisations like the Maya and Aztecs left their imprint on stunning archaeological sites, while charming colonial towns whisper tales of a bygone era. This captivating journey through time extends to vibrant contemporary art scenes, reflecting Mexico’s evolving cultural identity. Yet, Mexico’s allure transcends history. Its diverse landscape mesmerises, from turquoise waters along the Mayan Riviera to lush rainforests, surreal deserts, and pristine beaches, each facet showcases the remarkable diversity within this enchanting country.”

“And let us not forget the food!” exclaims Ksenia. She reminds us, “Mexican cuisine is a global phenomenon for a reason. Beyond the familiar favourites like tacos, there is a world of regional specialties waiting to be discovered.”

Ramon believes that India’s rich cultural heritage fosters a deep appreciation for ancient civilisations, and appreciation for the spiritual often extends to many Indian travellers. “Mexico’s Mayan and Aztec ruins, like Chichen Itza and Teotihuacan, echo this fascination. We offer exclusive tours led by expert guides who delve into history and symbolism, creating a meaningful connection to the past. Imagine yourself standing atop the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan, a site some believe to be a powerful energy centre, or exploring the ancient city of Chichen Itza, unravelling the mysteries of the Maya. These experiences resonate with a sense of wonder and a connection to a shared human story,” shares Ramon.

Adding on, Ksenia says, “Weaving spiritual experiences into your journey, we can incorporate visits to sacred sites like the Basilica of Guadalupe, a pilgrimage



▲ Ramon Delgado H and Ksenia Tarasova

destination for millions in Mexico. Here, you can witness the deep faith and vibrant traditions that resonate with many cultures. We highly recommend the Temazcal Ceremony, a unique Mexican ritual led by a local Shaman that plunges you into the heart of an ancient indigenous tradition—a testament to its enduring power. We also incorporate experiences like attending the Guelaguetza festival in Oaxaca, a dazzling display of indigenous dance and music, or the Day of the Dead festivities, a unique and colourful exploration of Mexico’s relationship with mortality.”

Tailored Experiences

Indian travellers seeking a deeper connection with Mexico can also look beyond the tourist hotspots. Understanding the challenges of a long-haul trip to the country, the Trip to Mexico personalises the experience from the start. “We also discuss dietary preferences (vegetarian, Jain, etc.) and curate a delicious journey filled with familiar flavours, from restaurant options to private cooking demonstrations. Our English-speaking guides are well-versed in both cultures and undergo sensitivity training, ensuring respect for your traditions. We offer 24/7 support throughout the journey, ensuring a smooth, safe, and unforgettable experience,” wraps up Ramon.

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On time performance



Most punctual airline
in India for 2023
(DGCA)



Amongst the top
10 global airlines for OTP
(OAG)



Highest technical dispatch
reliability of 99.92%
(Internal data)



Faster deboarding with
Third Ramp saves up to 5 min



Affordable fares



Reduced booking fee
on direct channels



Making air travel accessible
for millions of Indians



Periodic sales
across network



Best Low-Cost Airline
in India and South Asia
(Skytrax)



Courteous and hassle-free service



6E Eats: Revamped and quicker
catering service on board



Lowest level of
baggage mishandling
(Internal data)



One of the highest customer
NPS in India
(Internal data, OTA survey)



AI-enabled chatbot for an
elevated customer experience



Unparalleled network



88 domestic and
33 international destinations



8 airline codeshare
partners




2,000+
flights a day



Over 537 routes within
India and international

Bringing Vision to Reality

Christine Galle Luczak's Blueprint for Authentic Luxury Experiences

A portrait of Christine Galle Luczak, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a black blazer over a black top. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a calm expression. She is wearing a necklace with a blue and white pendant and a ring on her finger.

With a career that seamlessly bridges passion and enterprise, Christine Galle Luczak, Founder and CEO, Heavens Portfolio, has meticulously built a company that offers more than just luxury accommodations; it promises unforgettable experiences steeped in authenticity.

Vartik Sethi

Christine's journey into the realm of luxury travel was sparked by her tenure at Chiva-Som in Thailand, a pivotal role that not only honed her insights into hospitality but also kindled the entrepreneurial spirit that led to the creation of Heavens Portfolio. Her departure from Chiva-Som was marked by encouragement from a mentor who saw her potential to innovate beyond conventional boundaries. This support was instrumental in her decision to establish a company that would represent properties offering unique travel experiences rather than mere accommodations.

ORIGIN AND ETHOS OF HEAVENS PORTFOLIO

Launched nearly two decades ago, Heavens Portfolio was conceived with a mission to elevate and enhance the visibility of distinctive properties around the world. This was a time when wellness as a travel incentive was nascent, and luxury travel was predominantly about opulence rather than holistic experiences. Christine's forward-thinking approach aimed to redefine what travellers could expect from their journeys, focusing on deep, enriching interactions with destinations.

With a clientele that spans chic urban retreats, captivating beachfront escapes, immersive wilderness camps, and rejuvenating wellness sanctuaries, Heavens Portfolio is synonymous with luxury travel and unforgettable experiences. Today, the company boasts over 50 esteemed clients across various markets, with a significant presence under the Heavens Portfolio India umbrella. Among its diverse partnerships, Heavens Portfolio counts industry giants such as Chiva-Som, Cheval Blanc, Belmond Worldwide, Oetker Collection, Ultima Collection, and Capella Group. These alliances have not only elevated the company's stature but have also enabled it to deliver exceptional results through pioneering solutions. Commenting on

the exponential success of Heavens Portfolio, Christine shared, “Through dedicated efforts and unwavering commitment to excellence, we have experienced remarkable growth since our inception. From our humble beginnings, we have expanded our client base exponentially, forging enduring partnerships built on trust and mutual success.”

EVOLVING CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS IN LUXURY TRAVEL

Reflecting on the changes over the past 20 years, Christine notes that the core principle of providing authentic, destination-true experiences remains as relevant today as it was when Heavens Portfolio was founded. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, accelerated a shift towards more profound engagements with travel destinations. Modern travellers seek to immerse themselves in local cultures, from cooking with Italian chefs in their homes to exploring the traditional healing techniques in remote corners of the world. She said, “It’s all about very authentic experiences, going cooking with an Italian chef in their kitchen or discovering how the locals live.”

A notable success story is the company’s work with the Oetker Collection, particularly in the Indian market. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Heavens Portfolio managed to keep the brand engaging through initiatives like a Virtual Afternoon Tea and a chef exchange programme with The Oberoi Mumbai and The Oberoi New Delhi, featuring Michelin-starred chefs; she added, “We had Michelin starred chefs from Oetker Collection properties doing a pop up at their restaurants. The response received from the visiting guests was very encouraging, and overall brand recall proved to be very strong.”

Christine points out that there is a growing demand for travel experiences that are both unique and secluded, offering insights into local life that go beyond the typical tourist trails. This shift is evident in the popularity of destinations like Antarctica and remote African locales, which have moved from the periphery to the forefront of many travellers’ bucket lists due to a heightened sense of urgency and a desire for more profound and meaningful travel experiences.

An evolved traveller is more interested in experiencing a destination as locals do. Christine shared, “We also rely on locals’ knowledge. I think the new age travellers look into this because they (locals) know where to go, as the destination is their own place.”

STRATEGIC EXPANSION AND ADAPTING TO NEW MARKETS

The recent expansion of Heavens Portfolio into the Middle East reflects a strategic response to both market demands and opportunities for team growth. Christine’s approach emphasises the importance of having local expertise on the ground, which facilitates a deeper connection between her company’s represented properties and their respective markets. Harnessing vast experience in the industry, Christine shared, “We’ve been in operations for 20 years in Asia, and I think the best way to represent hotels and destinations and remarkable luxury hotels is to have the expert on the ground.” This philosophy has not only guided the company’s physical expansion but also its service offerings, which now include tailored operational support for hotels to help them adapt to diverse market conditions.

From its inception with a visionary group of clients, Heavens Portfolio has experienced exponential growth. A recent milestone is its expansion into the Middle East, with the opening of its 16th office in Dubai. This strategic move involved acquiring The Travel Collection, founded by Jacqueline Campbell, a well-established agency in Dubai, which has been rebranded as The Travel

Portfolio to further the mission of representing top global luxury travel partners in the GCC region. Discussing future expansion plans with TTJ, Christine shared, “Additionally, Heavens Portfolio is constantly on the lookout for new talents to onboard and actively exploring new markets to diversify and expand its reach within Asia Pacific and globally.”

MEMORABLE CAMPAIGNS

Heavens Portfolio’s innovative approach to marketing has been demonstrated through its successful B2C campaigns, particularly those involving Chiva-Som in India during 2023 and 2024. The campaigns, dubbed “A Taste of Chiva-Som in India,” were conducted in collaboration with Sequel Mumbai and Kathiwada City House in Mumbai. These events featured Chiva-Som’s wellness cuisine and included pop-up spas, drawing participation from high-net-worth individuals (HNIs), influencers, and prominent Mumbai personalities. Supported by Conde Nast Traveller, these events not only heightened brand awareness but also led to a surge in inquiries and confirmed bookings directly during the events.

Additionally, a dynamic collaboration with Cheval Blanc over the past two years involved consumer events in Mumbai and Delhi aimed at engaging both past guests and potential new clients. Sharing her event’s success, Christine added, “Both editions garnered tremendous interest, resulting in a notable surge in inquiries immediately following the events. We are delighted to share that our efforts translated into confirmed bookings made directly during the events, underscoring the success of our approach.”

DIGITAL INNOVATION AND FUTURE VISION

Looking forward, Christine is committed to integrating more digital solutions into the travel experience while maintaining the personal touch that is synonymous with luxury. The introduction of an artificial intelligence platform aims to enhance operational efficiencies and offer quick, comprehensive insights into market behaviours and client needs.

CHAMPIONING DIVERSITY AND EMPOWERMENT

An advocate for diversity and inclusion, Christine proudly notes that Heavens Portfolio’s workforce is over 90 per cent women, a testament to the company’s appeal to passionate professionals in the hospitality industry. She attributes this hiring strategy to the inspiring, inclusive culture the company upholds, which naturally attracts a diverse pool of talent. The composition of Christine’s team was not deliberate; she shared, “I didn’t purposely only cherry-pick ladies; they came to me perhaps by being inspired.”

LEADERSHIP AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Personal development is a cornerstone of the company’s ethos. Leadership training and personal coaching are integral to empowering employees, helping them align their personal passions with professional objectives. This approach not only fosters a motivated workforce but also enriches service quality, as employees are more engaged and personally invested in the experiences they curate for clients.

LEGACY AND HUMAN TOUCH

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Heavens Portfolio has maintained a strong focus on the human aspect of business. Christine values continuity and community within her team, emphasising that the strength of her company lies in its people. This philosophy has carried Heavens Portfolio through tough times, ensuring that the company not only survives but thrives by prioritising human connections over mere financial transactions.

REZLIVE.COM SIMPLIFIES TRAVEL

Provides comprehensive support to travel partners

Leveraging cutting-edge technology, RezLive.com is known to simplify global travel complexities and ensure that travel remains effortless and accessible for all. In this exclusive interaction with TTJ, Jaal Shah, Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group, provides insights into the company's exclusive offerings whilst delving into its pivotal role in technological innovations and strategic alliances, promising unmatched solutions for both partners and their valued customers.

Prashant Nayak



Jaal Shah

What enhancements and key features has Rezlive.com implemented to strengthen its product portfolio?

RezLive.com's innovative platform leverages proprietary technology to streamline the intricate landscape of global travel. By seamlessly connecting a diverse array of travel partners and suppliers on a large scale, RezLive.com simplifies the complexities inherent in the travel industry. With a steadfast commitment to prioritising technology, we consistently invest in pioneering innovations and new offerings to ensure that travel remains simple and accessible for all.

Some potential additions or enhancements that RezLive.com has made to its product portfolio include:

Expanded Hotel Inventory: RezLive.com has added quite a few new hotels and accommodations to its platform for the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, offering travel partners a wider range of options in various destinations.

Expanded Transfer Inventory: RezLive.com has added directly contracted airport-to-hotel and vice versa transfer options for all major Indian cities, providing our travel partners with a wider range of options across destinations.

Improved Booking Systems: enhancements to the booking process, such as a more user-friendly interface, faster loading times, and additional features to streamline reservations.

Enhanced Partnerships: strengthening partnerships with hotels, DMCs, and other travel service providers to offer exclusive deals and discounts to travel partners.

How is RezLive.com adapting to travel industry trends, and which trends have shaped its enhanced product portfolio?

In response to the evolving needs and preferences of travellers, we are committed to aligning our offerings with current industry trends to empower our esteemed travel agent partners. Our enhanced product portfolio is meticulously crafted with a keen focus on industry trends that directly impact the B2B travel sector. Through diligent market research and insightful analysis, we continuously adapt our offerings to meet the dynamic demands of the market.

In particular, we closely monitor trends such as personalised travel experiences, sustainable tourism practices, and the increasing reliance on digital platforms within the B2B travel ecosystem. These trends serve as guiding principles in the

development of our product portfolio, ensuring that our partners have access to innovative solutions that resonate with today's travellers.

By prioritising alignment with industry trends, we aim to equip our travel agent partners with the tools and resources necessary to stay ahead in a competitive market. Through collaborative partnerships and a shared commitment to excellence, we remain dedicated to empowering our partners to deliver exceptional value and service to their clients.

Have there been any technological advancements or innovations implemented to improve the user experience?

Our latest achievement is the launch of our NEW UI, which introduces a refreshed look and feel and significantly improves platform speed and responsiveness. With intuitive navigation and modern design elements, users can now enjoy a seamless booking process and find their desired travel options more efficiently.

In addition to these enhancements, we are excited to announce that we are currently developing a mobile app aimed at further improving the user experience and providing easy 24/7 connectivity. While the app is still in the development stage, it is expected to offer a range of features to enhance convenience and accessibility for our users. From simplified booking processes to real-time updates and personalised recommendations, the mobile app will empower users to access RezLive's services anytime, anywhere, directly from their smartphones or tablets.

Are you working on any collaborations or forging new alliances to enhance its offerings and global presence?

We continuously explore opportunities to collaborate and forge new alliances within the travel industry to enhance our offerings and expand our global presence. As one of the leading global travel wholesalers in the B2B travel domain, we understand the value of strategic partnerships in delivering unparalleled support to our travel partners worldwide.

Presently, we can only assure you that we are actively engaged in discussions with various stakeholders across the industry. These collaborations may include rail, hotels, technology providers, and other key players, all with the aim of enriching our product portfolio and strengthening our global footprint.

Our commitment to forging new alliances is driven by a shared vision of delivering exceptional value and service to our travel partners. By leveraging the strengths and expertise of our collaborators, we strive to offer innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of the modern traveller and empower our partners to thrive in a competitive market environment.

How does RezLive.com support its partners during the summer travel season? Are they designed to meet the needs of a particular segment of travellers?

We understand the significance of the summer travel season and the increased demand it brings for our partners. To ensure our partners are well-equipped to capitalise on these opportunities, we have implemented several strategic initiatives aimed at providing enhanced support and value-added services.

One such initiative involves expanding our inventory for key destinations by securing exclusive rates for selected properties. This enables our partners to offer competitive pricing and a wider range of options to their clients, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and driving business growth.

As part of our commitment to exceptional service, we continue

to uphold our practice of reconfirming each and every booking, ensuring accuracy and reliability for our partners and their clients. Furthermore, our round-the-clock support team remains readily available to provide assistance and address any queries or concerns, offering peace of mind and reliable guidance throughout the summer travel season.

Any special offers or incentives for users? Are there loyalty programmes or rewards for frequent users?

Currently, we are pleased to offer our exclusive 'Top-Up' promotion, available for transactions made through various payment methods, including net banking, debit cards, UPI, and credit cards on RezVault, wherein they get an instant bonus as per the T&C in place. Additionally, during this offer period, which is valid until June 30, 2024, we do not levy payment gateway charges on American Express card usage, providing added convenience for our valued travel partners.

Furthermore, to express our appreciation for the loyalty of our users, we already have an exclusive loyalty programme through which our esteemed travel partners earn reward points for each successful reservation made through RezLive.com. Notably, for our travel partners based in India, each reward point holds a value of INR 1, further enhancing the benefits of our loyalty system, which they can use to buy any voucher of their choice from the rewards store.

What kind of support is available for users who may need assistance with the updated or summer travel offerings?

We understand the importance of providing comprehensive support to our travel partners, especially when navigating through updated or seasonal travel offerings. Whether it is understanding the latest updates to our offerings for the summer travel season or seeking assistance with booking inquiries, our support team is well-equipped to provide prompt and personalised assistance. Travel partners can reach out to us via various channels, including phone, email, or live chat, and our knowledgeable representatives will be more than happy to address their concerns and provide guidance.

Furthermore, we recognise that each travel partner may have unique needs and preferences, which is why our support services are tailored to accommodate a wide range of inquiries and requirements. Whether it's troubleshooting technical issues, clarifying booking details, or providing recommendations for summer travel destinations, our dedicated team, available round the clock, is committed to ensuring a seamless and hassle-free experience for all travel partners.

Can you provide an insight into the company's roadmap for future developments?

As a forward-thinking company, innovation is at the core of our strategy. We are actively exploring ways to leverage emerging technologies and industry trends to drive meaningful enhancements across our platform. This includes improvements to the user experience, the introduction of new features and services, and the expansion of our offerings to cover a broader range of travel-related needs.

Our commitment to excellence extends beyond product enhancements. We are also focused on strengthening our partnerships and collaborations within the travel ecosystem, forging new alliances, and exploring opportunities for strategic growth and expansion into new markets.

While our future developments may vary in scope and timing, our overarching goal remains consistent: to provide our travel partners with best-in-class solutions that empower them to thrive in a dynamic and competitive industry landscape.

NCL launches 2024 Europe Travel Season with spectacular itineraries

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) kicked off its 2024 Europe travel season on April 19, 2024, with the arrival of the Norwegian Epic to its seasonal homeport of Civitavecchia (Rome), Italy. The ship embarked on a 10-day Greek Isles and Italy voyage, marking the start of an exciting summer travel season in Europe.

Team TTJ

Guests embarking on NCL cruises in Europe this season will have a wealth of options, with 101 distinctive itineraries to choose from. These include 38 roundtrip and 63 open-jaw sailings, visiting 140 captivating ports across Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Greek Isles, and the Atlantic Coast.

New Homeports and Ships

One of the highlights of this season is the opportunity for guests to fully explore popular destinations such as Istanbul, Turkey; Florence (Livorno), Italy; and Reykjavik, Iceland, with select itineraries offering overnight calls. This season, cruises will depart from 13 homeports, including three brand new options for NCL voyages to Europe: New York City; Le Havre (Paris), France; and Oslo, Norway.

NCL will have a total of nine ships in the region, including its newest vessels, Norwegian Prima, and Norwegian Viva, as well as Norwegian Escape, which returns to Europe following its successful season in 2022.

Unique Excursions

With an average of 10 hours in port, guests can explore each destination at their leisure or choose from a wide range of shore excursions. NCL provides exclusive experiences like 'Beyond Blueprint,' inviting guests to delve into the hidden marvels behind Europe's renowned landmarks. Additionally, indulge in 'Gourmet Tours' tailor-made for culinary aficionados to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of local cuisines. For those seeking a deeper dive into European culture and history, NCL offers

Cruisetours, which include roundtrip flights, hotel stays, transportation, and excursions. Cruisetours are available in 10 European destinations, including Istanbul, Turkey; Paris, France; and Barcelona, Spain.

Freestyle Cruising

In addition to the exciting destinations, NCL offers a variety of onboard activities, including high-production entertainment, world-class dining options, and activities suitable for the whole family. With NCL's Freestyle Cruising philosophy, guests have the freedom to tailor their holiday experience to their preferences, with no fixed schedules or dinner times.

NCL's European voyages across 2024-2025 offer great value and a significantly enhanced experience. With the convenience of unpacking just once and waking up in a new destination almost every day, guests are invited to explore the world while enjoying the comforts of home. With NCL's 'Free at Sea' offer, guests can customise their holiday with perks such as specialty dining, unlimited beverage packages, shore excursion credits, and more.

Itinerary Highlights

Norwegian Star Sails a Series of Open-Jaw Sailings to Iceland, Greenland, and Canada: Norwegian Star, NCL's sole ship capable of polar navigation, can reach ports above the Arctic Circle, allowing for unique voyages. It will be the first in NCL's fleet to offer a new summer series of 12-14-day open-jaw sailings between New York City and Reykjavik, Iceland, with stops in Akureyri and Grundarfjordur, Iceland; Qaqortoq, Greenland; and St. John's (Newfoundland) and Halifax,

Canada. These voyages will embark in July and August 2024.

Explore the Blue and Greek Isles with Norwegian Getaway: Beginning June 25, Norwegian Getaway will homeport in Athens (Piraeus), Greece, offering 7-10-day roundtrip Greek Isles itineraries. Each day, the ship will dock at a new port, allowing guests to explore destinations like Istanbul, Turkey; Iraklion, Santorini, and Mykonos, Greece, as well as Izmir (Ephesus), Turkey. Select departures include overnight stays in Istanbul, providing guests with more than 24 hours to visit key attractions.

Norwegian Viva's Cruises to the Mediterranean: From May to November 2024, Norwegian Viva presents diverse open-jaw Mediterranean cruises lasting nine, 10, or 11 days. With varied embarkation and disembarkation ports like Athens (Piraeus), Lisbon, Venice (Trieste), and Rome (Civitavecchia), guests can plan extended pre- or post-cruise holidays.

No Days at Sea Onboard Norwegian Escape's Mediterranean Sailings: Norwegian Escape, the Company's largest vessel in Europe this season at nearly 165,000 gross tons, will homeport in Barcelona, Civitavecchia (Rome), and Trieste (Venice), Italy. It will sail 8-10-day roundtrip voyages in the Western Mediterranean, with daily stops at ports. Additionally, it will offer 7-11-day open-jaw voyages, visiting Italy, Greece, and France, with only one day at sea.

NCL cruises in Europe are already on sale through December 2025, giving guests the chance to plan and book their next European summer getaway early.



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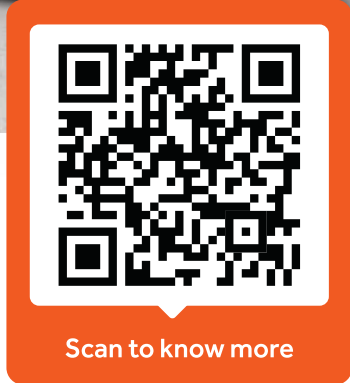
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SRMPR Global Railways revolutionising train travel experience in India

The SRM Group ventured into private train service last year with the aim of facilitating train services for passengers across India. The trains of SRMPR Global Railways transcend mere transportation; they are time capsules, preserving the essence of each journey. Ravi Pachamuthu, Chairman, SRM Group, elaborates on their transformative vision as they intend to revolutionise tourism in India’s dynamic railway landscape.

Prashant Nayak

SRMPR Global Railways, an esteemed member of the Bharat Gaurav consortium operating under the aegis of Indian Railways, is dedicated to pursuing a multitude of significant objectives to embrace numerous pivotal goals aimed at transforming the train travel experiences for passengers across all demographics. They aspire to encourage more Indians to choose trains as their preferred mode of travel and provide train journeys to all significant pilgrimage sites, along with accommodation, food, transport and stays for the passengers.

Transforming Rail Tourism in India

Through their commitment to enhancing comfort, convenience, and safety, SRMPR Railways aims to instil confidence and enthusiasm among Indian travellers for train journeys, making them a preferred choice for domestic leisure travel. “Many destinations in our country are worth visiting and exploring; however, there is often no airport access, limiting tourists’ options. By utilising the expansive railway network, we can unlock these hidden gems and provide access to previously unexplored destinations. Our aim is to attract NRIs to experience train travel in India seamlessly. Prioritising comfort, hygiene, and contemporary amenities, our goal is to address any concerns or impediments travellers may have about train travel, ensuring a pleasurable and stress-free journey,” elucidates Ravi.

He further elaborates, “We aspire to create memorable experiences for foreign tourists exploring India. Our focus on offering diverse destinations, enriching cultural experiences, and top-notch services aims to leave a lasting impression on international travellers, encouraging them to choose train travel as a preferred mode of transportation during their visit to India.”

The Unique Approach

Distinguishing itself from conventional tour operators, SRMPR Railways sets a new standard in travel by owning its own



▲ Ravi Pachamuthu

fleet of trains. This allows for meticulous customisation of every facet of the journey to enrich the overall travel experience. At the destinations, tourists are provided with diverse lodging options, ranging from deluxe accommodations to luxurious star properties, catering to a wide spectrum of preferences and budgets.

Ravi further adds, “One significant USP of SRMPR Railways is the ability to charter trains for events such as weddings, corporate meetings, large group pilgrimages, and other special occasions. Customers have the opportunity to reserve the entire train for their exclusive use. From the itinerary to the destination, every detail can be customised to meet the specific needs and preferences of the group, providing unparalleled flexibility and exclusivity.”

Safety is Paramount

SRMPR Global Railways prioritises tourist safety with a comprehensive strategy. Each train features trained crew members, ensuring comfort and security. Dedicated security personnel, reporting to the train captain, oversee operations and safety. GPS tracking enables constant communication with the control room. CCTVs enhance surveillance, while skilled paramedical

staff are onboard for emergencies. As an added measure, every tourist receives complimentary travellers’ insurance as part of their package, providing further peace of mind throughout their journey.

Exquisite Hospitality

At SRMPR, hospitality is their forte. From the upscale elegance of Ramada in Chennai to the inviting ambience of the SRM Hotel in Trichy and the delectable vegetarian fare at Padam Veg Restaurants, they offer an unforgettable experience at every turn. Additionally, they uphold their dedication to outstanding service by offering onboard dining selections tailored to meet the varied choices of passengers throughout the journey. “Our tours typically range from two to six days, during which we prioritise fulfilling our tourists’ nutritional requirements. Each of our trains features live kitchens, ensuring passengers receive freshly prepared meals rather than pre-packaged food. We take special care to serve regional cuisine reflecting the cultural flavours of the departure location, providing our tourists with a taste of home away from home,” says Ravi.

Looking Forward

With India’s vast and varied landscape, SRMPR Railways aims to provide travellers with an opportunity to explore the richness and diversity of India. Their forthcoming mobile app will provide tourists with the convenience and efficiency characteristic of modern mobile applications, where they can unlock rewards, privileges, and exclusive offers. Ravi mentions, “SRMPR Railways is further expanding its offerings to include adventure, landmark, historic, and exotic tourism alongside pilgrimage and exploration. Our continuous improvements are based on tourist feedback, which includes adding amenities and enhancing services. Aligned with our commitment to innovation, we envision introducing modern trains and elevating train travel experiences in India. Through these advancements, our goal is to provide memorable journeys and bolster the growth of tourism in India.”



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Ozen Mansion Kolkata

Atmosphere Core's foray into India heralds a new chapter of Luxury Hospitality

Beyond their commitment and steadfast dedication to guest delight and environmental sustainability, Atmosphere Core is poised to embark on a remarkable journey for an impressive expansion in India, introducing a portfolio of premier properties spanning the nation. Souvagya Mohapatra, Managing Director (India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka), Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts, emphasises that with a blend of innovative offerings, personalised experiences, and a steadfast commitment to sustainability, Atmosphere is ready to set new benchmarks for luxury hospitality.

Prashant Nayak

Atmosphere Core is a dynamic hospitality firm renowned for its current operation of nine luxurious resorts nestled in the Maldives, each offering a unique experience under three distinctive lifestyle brands: THE OZEN COLLECTION, COLOURS OF OBLU, and Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts.

Ambitious Expansion in India's Vibrant Market

With a robust vision for expansion, the company is poised to introduce its signature hospitality to India. Their ambitious aim is to inaugurate 25 hotels and resorts across the country by 2025. As of April 2024, Atmosphere Core has unveiled plans for 10 properties set to open within the next three years, spanning two premier brands, THE OZEN COLLECTION and Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts.

Scheduled to open in July 2024, OZEN MANSION KOLKATA will debut as a flagship property boasting 300 rooms, embodying an opulent lifestyle experience. In August 2024, the heritage gem Sadar



▲ Souvagya Mohapatra

Manzil Heritage by Atmosphere will open in Bhopal, exclusively serving couples with an all-female staff. Also on the horizon is Stillwood Retreat Signature Atmosphere, nestled within a 40-acre coffee plantation in Coorg. Following them is Varsā Elements of Nature by Atmosphere. Kannur is set for a

wellness-focused launch in 2025, featuring 70 villas. In 2025, Allita An Atmosphere Experience Kurseong Darjeeling Hills will enchant guests, followed by the 2026 openings of Atmosphere Lakeview Kolkata and Atmosphere Bhubaneswar, offering 100 and 170 rooms, respectively. The newly announced Avongrove Tea Gardens by Atmosphere, Mirik, Darjeeling, is also scheduled to open in 2026.

Performance and Strategic Adaptations

Mohapatra reflected on the performance and challenges faced in 2023, highlighting the resilience of their resorts in Maldives. He says, "Our resorts in the Maldives have performed well despite some challenges in the year 2023. Diversifying guest nationality allocation was the strategy, and the tactic was instrumental in navigating the unpredictable landscape of global travel trends and political climates."

Mohapatra further elaborated on the Indian market, stating, "We have successfully achieved the required occupancy allocation from India without much difficulty. Our sales



Varu by Atmosphere, Maldives



Avongrove Tea Gardens by Atmosphere, Mirik, Darjeeling

and marketing representations across the globe are effective. However, our team is assessing whether any untapped opportunities in the Indian market could further enhance our business. This includes exploring targeted marketing campaigns, partnerships with Indian travel agencies, and special promotions tailored to Indian travellers' preferences."

Additionally, continuously monitoring the political and economic landscape in India, as well as other key markets, helps us adapt strategies accordingly and mitigate potential risks in the future. Overall, our sales strategy is robust; however, our ongoing success story hinges on our ability to remain proactive and adaptable in the dynamic Maldives hospitality landscape," affirms Mohapatra.

In 2024, the hospitality group will prioritise guest experience and embrace innovative ideas to remain competitive. By integrating smart technology into their services, they aim to enhance efficiency and improve guest satisfaction in both the Maldives and their upcoming properties in India. Mohapatra says, "We are developing a mobile app for guests to access resort information, make reservations for activities or dining, and communicate with staff. Using data analytics, we personalise amenities and services based on guest preferences. Our interactive experiences include cooking classes, mixology workshops, and cultural activities. We prioritise eco-friendly practices like reducing plastic usage and supporting local conservation efforts, appealing to environmentally conscious guests while preserving the global environment."

Redefining Luxury Hospitality in India

Mohapatra is enthusiastic and eagerly anticipates the expansion plans and upcoming debuts of the hotel properties in India. They are strategically placing significant emphasis on specific elements



Sadar Manzil Heritage By Atmosphere Bhopal

to ensure a successful launch and solidify their status as premier destinations for luxury hospitality.

Standardisation of Operations: Establishing SOPs for all departments. Consistency in service delivery across all properties is essential for maintaining the brand's reputation for excellence.

Training Programmes: Develop comprehensive training programmes for new hires to ensure they are well-equipped to deliver the level of service expected at upcoming properties in India. This includes both technical training on job responsibilities and soft skills training on guest interaction and brand ethos.

Brand Positioning and Marketing: Developing a strong brand positioning strategy for Atmosphere Core properties in India, highlighting unique selling points and the luxury experience they offer. The company will invest in targeted marketing campaigns to build awareness and attract the right clientele.

Commitment to Excellence

As a hotel group, Atmosphere Core strives to provide the utmost to its valued guests. By integrating select elements into their

resort offerings, they craft truly memorable experiences while also making positive contributions to the local environment and communities. Mohapatra shares, "We provide personalised experiences and tailor-made packages to suit the varied preferences of our guests. This encompasses customisable adventure sports packages, wellness retreats featuring personalised spa treatments, and curated culinary experiences highlighting local flavours. Catering equally to adults and children, our resorts boast family-friendly amenities, including children's clubs, kids' pools, supervised activities, and family-oriented entertainment options. With the design of family suites and interconnected rooms, we ensure comfortable accommodation for larger families."

Given Atmosphere Cores' emphasis on island properties and adventure sports, it is crucial for the company to prioritise environmental conservation and responsible tourism practices. Various eco-friendly initiatives have been implemented, including marine conservation programmes, waste management systems, and eco-tours aimed at educating guests about local ecosystems and wildlife.



Ozen Reserve Bolifushi, South Male Atoll



© Turespaña

WINE TRAILS OF SPAIN

A toast to heritage, culture and flavour

In the world of Spanish wines, tradition intertwines with innovation, where every bottle tells a story of rich regional heritage and cultural diversity, from the lush landscapes of the north to the sun-soaked vineyards of south Spain. Join us as we embark on a sensory journey along Spain’s acclaimed winemaking trails renowned for their exceptional quality and sheer diversity of flavours. Let us raise a toast to the essence of Spain, embodied in every exquisite sip.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

Spain’s age-old relationship with wine traces back to around 1,100 BC, marked by the arrival of the Phoenicians’ on the Andalusian shores. Following their footsteps, the Romans introduced winemaking techniques to Hispania, employing methods like fermentation in stone troughs and storage in clay amphoras. Despite seven centuries of Moorish rule, wine production persisted, albeit mainly for medicinal and cosmetic uses. With the gradual Christian reconquest of Spain, known as the ‘Reconquista,’ wine finally emerged as a prominent aspect of Spanish culture, spreading its influence across the country. The earliest wines produced in Spain were robust, categorised as either sweet or ‘rancios’, characterised by a rancid flavour due to complete oxidation and heavy reduction, making them suitable for long-term storage. These wines adhered to the Mediterranean tradition, closely resembling modern wines.

Spain’s diverse topography of mountains, plateaus, and rivers creates a multitude of micro-climates ideal for wine production. This contributes to the unique characteristics and flavours found in wines across the country. Spain’s climate encompasses three primary regions: ‘Green Spain’ in the north, renowned for ample rainfall, warm summers, and mild winters; La Meseta, marked by hot summers, low rainfall, and cold winters; and the Mediterranean climate in the south, featuring hot summers, mild winters, and minimal rainfall. These variations contribute to the renowned diversity of flavours found in Spanish wine.

Wine Routes

Wine routes are an ideal way to discover Spain’s abundant natural heritage and cultural attractions, from the villages of Don Quixote in La Mancha to the Great Mosque of Cordoba, Las Médulas in El Bierzo, and the Sierra y los Cañones de Guara Nature Park to name only a few. Spanish towns and villages keep ancient wine traditions alive through popular festivities like the Wine Battle in Haro, La Rioja, and wine-harvest celebrations in Jerez, Cadiz, and Logroño. While deeply rooted in tradition, the Spanish wine industry has embraced innovation by integrating cutting-edge technologies into grape cultivation.

Rioja Alta Wine Route

La Rioja’s claim to fame lies in its exquisite and globally popular wines, deeply ingrained in the area’s culture, traditions, and festivals. The route encompasses around 80 municipalities, and the village of Briones charms with its medieval ambience, highlighted during the Medieval Festival, and attractions like the Church of the Asunción and Davalillo Castle. Sajazarra, surrounded by vast vineyards, houses the famous ‘barrio de bodegas’ caves used for wine storage. The Village of Haro, steeped in wine tradition, invites exploration of its wine merchants and unique small wineries. Enjoy traditional cuisine at charming restaurants housed in former wine stores and partake in the lively claret battle in San Asensio, followed by tapas



Vineyard in La Rioja

sampling in local bars. For a sensory wine experience, visit the La Vista sensory wine centre in San Asensio, offering an extensive and innovative tour focusing on wine-making aspects associated with sight. The wine route offers extraordinary experiences, including balloon flights, electric bike vineyard tours, and visits to castle wineries dating back to the 14th century.



Castilla-La Mancha

The Madrid Wine Route

The Madrid region offers four wine subzones ideal for wine tourism: Navacarnero, Arganda, San Martín, and El Molar. Visitors can indulge in various activities, including winery tours, heritage town visits, themed excursions, tastings, workshops, and vineyard picnics. Exploring the charming towns along the route provides insight into their culture, gastronomy, and rich heritage closely intertwined with wine. Visitors can explore century-old wine cellars in Navacarnero and Colmenar de Oreja or modern facilities in Morata de Tajuña and Villacanejos.

The town of Chinchón showcases its medieval Plaza Mayor square, adorned with wooden balconies and lintelled galleries transporting visitors back in time, while the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción houses a renowned painting by Goya. Nuevo Baztán, founded by businessman Juan de Goyeneche in the 18th century, features attractions like the Palace of Juan de Goyeneche and the Church of San Francisco Javier. The Nuevo Baztán Wine Visitor Centre showcases local industries

through models, panels, and reproduction while sampling Madrid wines. Nature activities such as horseback riding, flat-bed truck rides, and bird-watching in the vineyards are also popular. Wine festivals and fairs, like the Colmenar de Oreja Wine Fair and the Entre Vinos Wine Day in Navacarnero, add to the vibrant wine culture of the region.

La Manchuela Wine Route

Explore the Wine Route in Albacete and Cuenca, nestled in the heart of Castile-La Mancha, where the plains of La Mancha blend seamlessly with Mediterranean influences. Discover picturesque landscapes, including the Júcar River Canyon and the Cabriel Valley Biosphere Reserve. Savour wine tourism with visits to renowned wineries offering diverse tasting experiences, from bold reds to aromatic whites. Indulge in local delicacies like gazpacho, migas, and Manchego lamb paired perfectly with regional wines. Wander through charming villages like Alcalá del Júcar, where white houses carved into mountainsides and ancient castles offer unforgettable vistas. Explore historic landmarks, including the 12th-century castle and unique bullring, for an immersive journey through Spain's rich cultural and culinary heritage.



UNVEILING THE WEALTH OF OPPORTUNITY IN THE UAE

A Message from Shakti Bansal, CEO of Rayna Properties, Dubai

Dear Investors, Partners, and Friends,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I address you today as the CEO of Rayna Properties, the real estate arm of the esteemed Rayna Group. As someone who has traversed the dynamic landscape of the real estate industry, having previously led with distinction at the Chicago-based International Property Consultancy, I am thrilled to forefront Rayna Properties on its mission to unlock the wealth of opportunities that Dubai's real estate market presents.

In the heart of the Middle East lies a city that has become synonymous with luxury, innovation, and opportunity – Dubai. For global investors seeking to capitalise on the thriving real estate market of the UAE, particularly in Dubai, Rayna Properties stands as a beacon of guidance and expertise. As the real estate arm of the distinguished Rayna Group, which boasts over 17 years of experience, serving over a staggering 3 million customers annually, Rayna Properties offers a comprehensive suite of services tailored to meet the diverse needs of global investors.

Why Dubai? Boasting a 10-year **Golden Visa** scheme with a **tax-free habitat** and an impressive **return on investment (ROI)** from both rental income and capital appreciation, Dubai presents an irresistible proposition for investors seeking stability and profitability. Moreover, its strategic location ensures that a vast majority of the global population can reach Dubai within six hours or less.

Dubai's allure extends beyond its economic advantages. As a leading tourism destination, welcoming over 17 million visitors in 2023 alone, the city offers a vibrant cultural tapestry, unparalleled entertainment options, and a thriving hospitality industry.

One of Dubai's most compelling attributes is its demographic diversity. With a population growth rate of two-three per cent annually, comprising less than 15 per cent native residents and over 85 per cent expatriates, the city epitomises inclusivity and cosmopolitanism. Moreover, Dubai serves as the regional headquarters for 70 per cent of Fortune 500 companies and hosts 63 per cent of the top 300 global brands, underscoring its status as a global business hub.

At the forefront of Dubai's real estate landscape, Rayna Properties has forged strategic partnerships with leading developers, including Emaar, Damac, Danube, Nakheel, and Arada. These collaborations ensure access to premium properties that embody unparalleled quality, design, and value, catering to the diverse preferences of investors.

Indian tourists, in particular, have demonstrated a keen interest in Dubai's real estate market, drawn by its lucrative prospects and cultural affinity. With Rayna Properties' expertise and personalised approach, Indian investors find a trusted partner to navigate the intricacies of the Dubai market and capitalise on its potential.



▲ Shakti Bansal

Investor protection is paramount in Dubai, facilitated by stringent regulations and oversight mechanisms. The Escrow account system, mandatory for all property sales, safeguards investors' funds by requiring developers to deposit 20 per cent of the project value into a secure account. Additionally, the Real Estate Regulatory Agency (RERA) penalises developers for non-compliance, ensuring accountability and transparency throughout the transaction process.

Rayna Properties offers a diverse range of investment opportunities, including apartments, villas, penthouses, townhouses, hotel rooms, plots, and commercial spaces. Beyond property acquisition, **Rayna Properties provides comprehensive support services to facilitate investors' seamless transition into the Dubai market.** From resident visa assistance and mortgage facilitation to company formation and property management, Rayna Properties is a one-stop solution for all investor needs.

In conclusion, Dubai's real estate market represents a confluence of unparalleled opportunities and robust investor safeguards. As a trusted advisor and partner, Rayna Properties empowers investors to unlock the full potential of Dubai's dynamic landscape, leveraging its expertise, network, and dedication to excellence. With Rayna Properties by their side, investors embark on a journey of prosperity and success in the City of Gold. With its **strategic partnerships**, unwavering commitment to investor protection, and comprehensive range of services, Rayna Properties emerges as the preeminent choice for investors looking to capitalise on Dubai's burgeoning real estate market.

50 per cent of high-net-worth investors in Dubai's real estate market are Indian nationals





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Experiential travel perfectly aligns with Teardrop's offerings

Teardrop Hotels has earned its recognition as one of Sri Lanka's most exciting boutique hotel groups. What truly distinguishes their hotels is their unwavering commitment to delivering an experience that transcends mere accommodation. Manoj Devaraj, Group Head, Sales and Marketing, Teardrop Hotels, says, "Each of their seven boutique hotels has a distinctive narrative awaiting discovery."

Prashant Nayak

From historic merchant houses in Galle Fort to vintage tea bungalows overlooking the valley below, Teardrop Hotels in Sri Lanka are defined by each destination and encourage travellers to explore, experience, and shape their own Sri Lankan holiday. Each of their hotels offers bespoke experiences that deeply immerse guests in the vividness of Sri Lanka's regional history, culture, cuisine, and immersive experiences amidst stunning landscapes.

USPs and Unique Experiences

With a commitment to sustainability, Teardrop Hotels endeavours to empower and uplift local communities by integrating their rich culture and heritage into travellers' experiences. Manoj explains, "Consider our Camellia Hills hotel, where guests embark on serene voyages across the tranquil waters in traditional canoes, accompanied by local fishermen as guides. This immersive experience allows travellers to deeply connect with the tranquillity and authenticity of the Sri Lankan landscape, fostering a profound appreciation for the local culture and environment. This not only provides a quiet and sustainable way to experience the reservoir but also contributes to the livelihoods of local fishermen and their families. At Fort Bazaar in Galle, our workshop, led by skilled artisans, offers a fascinating insight into the intricate art of Sri Lankan mask-making, allowing guests to delve deep into the country's rich cultural heritage. These experiences are just a glimpse of the adventures awaiting our guests at our hotels."

Sustainability and Community Initiatives

Sustainability and community are integral



▲ Manoj Devaraj

to Teardrop's mission. They are dedicated to preserving Sri Lanka's heritage while embracing sustainable practices. Through careful restoration of historic homes and support for local farmers and artisans, they aim to make a positive impact in the region. Teardrop's charitable foundation, CARE, empowers local communities through initiatives like providing essential resources to those in need. Sustainability and community engagement are core values that guide everything at Teardrop, as the company strives to create memorable experiences while making a meaningful difference.

Increasing Demand for Boutique Properties

India is the top source market for tourism in Sri Lanka, with an anticipated 2.5 million arrivals this year alone. On this, Manoj shares, "We have

noticed a significant shift towards experiential travel among well-heeled Indians, who are increasingly drawn to boutique properties that offer more than just a place to stay. It is all about immersion; these travellers are seeking opportunities to delve deep into the culture and essence of the destinations they visit. As multi-generational trips and milestone celebrations gain prominence, the demand for boutique properties is only expected to rise. And with Sri Lanka being just a hop, skip, and jump from India, the proximity and connectivity make it an even more convincing choice for travellers."

Staying Ahead of Travel Trends

Manoj perceives an array of exciting trends unfolding in the travel industry, and Teardrop Hotels is keenly attuned to these shifts to ensure they continue providing exceptional experiences for their guests. "Wellness tourism is on the rise, and we recognise the importance of incorporating wellness into the travel experience, which is why several of our properties offer wellness amenities and experiences tailored to our guests' needs," conveys Manoj.

Travellers increasingly seek active vacations centred on pursuits like hiking and trekking as they venture into unfamiliar territories, drawn to the thrill of exploration and immersion in nature. At Teardrop Hotels, guests can embark on exhilarating hikes along the stages of The Pekoe Trail, accessible from three of their tea estate bungalows at Camellia Hills, Goatfell, and Nine Skies. Besides multigenerational and private group travel, which is on the rise post-pandemic, silent travel, another growing trend, offers a mindful escape from daily noise. Teardrop Hotel properties, nestled in the scenic landscapes of Sri Lanka, offer ideal settings for these emerging trends.

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India one of the top 10 global source markets for Meliá Hotels International

Mahmoud Abdelnaby, Director, Global Sales for APAC, Middle East, and Africa, Meliá Hotels International, highlights how the hotel group is positioned for ongoing success as a prominent player in the hospitality sector. With a diverse portfolio of brands spanning the globe, Meliá offers a wide range of experiences to travellers worldwide.

Prashant Nayak

Established in 1956 in Mallorca, Spain, Meliá Hotels International set forth in early 2024 with a robust strategy for its international expansion and growth. Emphasising quality, the expansion drive is poised to target the luxury and premium segments, forging strategic alliances with the industry's best partners. The initiative aims to reinforce Meliá's position as a leader in the resort sector across the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and the Mediterranean regions.

Expansion and Reflection

In 2023, Meliá signed 26 new projects and opened a dozen hotels, concluding the year with 350 operational hotels and 92,057 rooms. Another 64 projects, with 13,524 rooms, are in the process of being introduced. Among the most recent additions, notable ones include Gran Meliá Nha Trang (Vietnam), Palazzo Cordusio Gran Meliá (Milan, Italy), the Ngorongoro Lodge, Meliá Collection (Tanzania), Meliá Durres (Albania), and the INNSiDE Bangkok Sukhumvit, their first hotel in the Thai capital. In 2024, the company's expansion plans will remain equally ambitious, with an initial goal of opening more than 20 hotels while continuing to sign multiple new projects.

Abdelnaby says, "Reflecting on 2023, the performance of Meliá Hotels worldwide has been notably strong, particularly in Europe. There are a few destinations, like Japan, where we have not fully recovered yet. However, we have worked hard during the three years of the pandemic and introduced four different brands."

Meliá Hotels International has a portfolio of more than 400 hotels (portfolio and pipeline) throughout more than 40 countries and 10 brands: Gran Meliá Hotels and Resorts, The Meliá Collection, ME by Meliá, Paradisus by Meliá, Meliá Hotels and Resorts, ZEL, INNSiDE by Meliá, Falcon's Resorts by Meliá, Sol by Meliá, and Affiliated by Meliá.



▲ Mahmoud Abdelnaby

Insights into the Indian Market and Beyond

As India emerges as a hotspot for global hospitality investment, we inquired with Abdelnaby about Meliá's potential venture into the hospitality scenario. Abdelnaby stated that there are currently no plans for Meliá Hotels to enter the Indian hospitality market. However, Abdelnaby expressed optimism about India's outbound potential for Meliá's global hotel portfolio, recognising it as one of their top 10 source markets worldwide. He highlighted that all their hotels cater to diverse categories, aiming to attract all segments of Indian travellers. Nearby, in Dubai, they have two hotels that are suitable for MICE, while their European properties draw a wide segment of travellers. In terms of marketing in India, they are expanding beyond metro markets like Mumbai and Chennai and reaching cities like Ahmedabad and other tier-2 cities of the country.

Vietnam has remained a significant destination for Meliá, boasting 21 properties. "We have noticed a growing trend of Indian travellers favouring the

country, often staying for extended periods of 10–15 nights. As air connectivity between India and Vietnam shows signs of improvement, certain cities within Vietnam still face limited exposure to the Indian market, posing a notable challenge. Meliá Hotels recently opened the Gran Meliá Nha Trang, the first Gran Meliá resort in Southeast Asia, featuring 94 private pool villas," notes Abdelnaby.

Empowering the B2B Travel Trade

Meliá Hotels recently unveiled the new version of its platform for the B2B segment, Meliá PRO, which aims to improve the user experience and help travel agents, companies, event organisers, and tour operators in their day-to-day operations. By providing enhanced personalisation and efficiency for professionals utilising the platform to streamline travel management and event organisation, the platform witnessed a notable 16 per cent increase in sales in 2023. Currently boasting a user base of over half a million registered companies and more than 60,000 travel agencies, it continues to cater to the evolving needs of businesses worldwide.

Setting Sustainable Standards

In their unwavering commitment to responsible tourism, Meliá Hotels has achieved the remarkable distinction of becoming the most sustainable hotel company worldwide. "Emphasising our commitment to sustainability, our hotels have been recognised as the best in Europe and the third-best globally," stated Abdelnaby. The company has also begun implementing its new sustainable event initiative: "Road to Net Zero Events." The hotel chain has developed its own measurement technology and is committed to offsetting the carbon emissions of all major events held at its hotels.

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Relaxed visa norms shaping India's travel evolution

In recent years, India has positioned itself as one of the leading source markets for destinations in Asia and the Middle East. The ease of visa access has been pivotal in boosting tourism to nearby destinations, which offer diverse attractions. Insights from destination management companies (DMCs) in emerging international destinations shed light on the promising outlook, indicating sustained growth in Indian tourist arrivals and continued collaboration for enriching travel experiences.

Prashant Nayak

The surge in outbound foreign travel among Indian tourists has been notably fuelled by the growing number of Asian countries offering visa-free entry. In 2023, this trend was further buoyed by the relaxation of visa guidelines across various destinations. After enduring three years of stringent travel restrictions and entry requirements owing to the pandemic, the documentation process for travelling to numerous countries has significantly eased. This shift underscores the pivotal role visas play in shaping the travel decisions of Indian travellers, with visa-free entry surfacing as a crucial factor in destination selection.

Visa-Free Gateway to Wildlife Thrills

Kenya is popularly known for its diverse wildlife and scenic, naturally expansive backdrops. It has gained prominence in the recent past as the rising wildlife tourism market grows across the globe. India, with its humongous population, is no different and seeks to witness rejuvenating, luxurious overseas destinations where they can unwind amid nature and witness the incredible fauna Kenya has to offer. A significant development that is slowly driving Indian traveller footfall in the region is Kenya's recent move to abolish visa requirements for all global visitors from January 2024. This landmark decision by President William Ruto comes in the wake of the country's take on adopting globalisation and aiding socio-economic development through the opening of borders.

Aman Shah, CEO, Wild Whispers, Nairobi, says, "Kenya, through its electronic travel authorisation programme, offers visa-free travel to any passport holder from across the world, making it simpler for Indians to explore the region and its beauty along with luxury trails curated especially as per their needs. The region is home to 20 plus national parks, which has led the Kenyan safari experience to be globally recognised, creating a stay filled with breath-taking moments. With a 90-day visa-free window to explore Kenya, Indians can plan their luxurious sojourns amidst the diverse wildlife and infinite scenic backdrops, while delving into the immersive experiences and hospitality that the region offers."



▲ Aman Shah

Awaiting Visa-Free Extension

Sharing ancient heritage and culture, Sri Lanka has been a preferred destination for Indians to explore, given its geographical proximity to India. In December 2023, Sri Lanka launched a pilot

project granting visa-free entry to travellers from India and six other countries for 30 days, initially valid until March 31, 2024, and later extended until April 30, 2024. Notably, at a session at OTM 2024, Harin Fernando, Minister of Tourism, Sri Lanka, indicated the extension aiming to boost the tourism sector of the country.

Mario Stubbs, Managing Director, The Serendipity Collection, mentions, "We at The Serendipity Collection look forward to more such initiatives and are keen to promote Sri Lanka and make it the number one destination for Indian travellers. Sri Lanka is known for its culture, age-old traditions, local recipes, impeccable seafood, warm hospitality, wildlife, and breathtaking water and land-based excursions that can be arranged."



▲ Mario Stubbs

Seamless Access to Luxury in Qatar

Known for its diversity, Qatar boasts stunning architecture, from age-old ruins and modern-day skyscrapers to state-of-the-art football stadiums. One can enjoy signature excursions, an exuberant city, amazing nightlife, and a unique desert with an Inland Sea. Qatar is a treasured destination for Indian travellers and corporates to plan their power-packed events, elaborate weddings, luxurious group tours, and bespoke FIT travel.

"The Indian market remains crucial for Qatar throughout the year. The destination is preferred by individuals, group travellers, weddings, and corporates from India, given the infrastructural prowess and deeply rooted culture and heritage that the destination offers. Qatar is easily accessible to Indian travellers with visa-on-arrival entry to the country for 30 days. The proximity and easy access make Qatar a top pick for Indian travellers around the year for exploration of adrenaline-heavy activities like dune bashing and water sports, shopping at traditional souqs as well as world-class malls, and staying at luxurious hotels," says Manoj Kumar Tiwari, General Manager, Regency Travel and Tours.



▲ Manoj Kumar Tiwari

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SCHENGEN VISA

Favourable new rules for Indian travellers

BUT HURDLES REMAIN

The recent updates to Schengen visa regulations by the European Union (EU) have sparked a wave of optimism within the travel industry, especially among Indian travellers. The alterations are poised to foster greater enthusiasm and encourage more frequent travel among experienced travellers, particularly those with a penchant for exploring the continent. Despite the immediate challenges like visa appointment logistics and waiting times, industry insiders are buoyed by the prospect of promising advancements in the European travel landscape.

Prashant Nayak

As of April 18, 2024, the European Commission has introduced new regulations governing the issuance of multiple entry visas to Indian nationals. These rules are notably more advantageous compared to the standard regulations outlined in the Visa Code that were previously prevalent. According to the newly adopted visa “cascade” regime for India, Indian nationals can now be issued long-term, multi-entry Schengen visas valid for two years after having obtained and lawfully used two visas within the previous three years. The two-year visa will normally be followed by a five-year visa if the passport has sufficient validity remaining. During the validity period of these visas, holders enjoy travel rights equivalent to those of visa-free nationals.

Currently, the enduring problem of extended wait times and appointment delays for Schengen visas continues to vex many Indian travellers, leading to significant frustration. Travellers who begin their visa application process as early as March encounter difficulties securing visa appointment slots, with wait times extending from two to three months and even six months in few cases. This delay is exasperating for them, as it affects their travel plans. Even with all the necessary documents, travellers are struggling to secure a visa appointment.

While these changes that have come into effect are perceived as “favourable” by the industry, many have noted that they may not yield immediate benefits for those eagerly anticipating European travel. However, this decision comes in the context of strengthened relations under the EU-India Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility, which seeks comprehensive cooperation on migration policy between the EU and India, with the facilitation of people-to-people contacts being a key aspect due to the importance of India as a partner for the EU.

Schengen visas offer holders the freedom to travel within the Schengen area for short stays, capped at a maximum of 90 days within any 180-day period. These visas are versatile and not tied to a specific purpose. Also, it is important to note that they do not confer the right to work within the Schengen area.

The Schengen area consists of 29 European countries (of which 25 are EU states): Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, and Sweden, along with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

Industry Insights and Reactions

Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI

“The recent news reports about long-term Schengen visas have created a buzz among travellers and agents alike. This is a welcome move and, frankly, was long overdue. Outbound travel from India is increasing exponentially, and the world is wooing the Indian tourist. Many countries have adopted a visa-free or visa-on-arrival procedure, and it was high time that the Schengen countries altered their attitude. Unfortunately, the continuing logjam and backlog of scheduling visa appointments is still a stumbling block, as are the irrational procedures at certain consulates. For instance, some require separate email addresses for each applicant, even when members of the same family are traveling together! We hope that these issues can be addressed at the earliest and that there is consistency in procedures across the various consulates so that Indian travellers can fully take advantage of the liberalised visa regime.

Rajan Dua

Co-Founder & MD, Udaan India

“While reports have surfaced regarding Indians’ eligibility for long-term Schengen visas, we have yet to receive official confirmation from any of the embassies. However, it is important to highlight that long-term visas are indeed issued to eligible Indian applicants who demonstrate genuine intent for Schengen entries through legitimate channels without resorting to visa shopping practices. It is worth noting that the visa fee for Schengen visas remains consistent, regardless of the duration—six months or an extended period.

Samina Munshi

Director, N Chirag

“The recent updates to the Schengen Visa process have sparked significant excitement and relief in the market. Previously, many travellers hesitated to apply for Schengen visas due to perceived complexities such as appointment scheduling issues and processing delays. However, recent developments reflect a shift in approach, with authorities acknowledging the expanding market and the commendable track record of travellers. The new process notably emphasises transparency and lawful visa usage. Travellers who have adhered to visa regulations in the past may now qualify for extended validity visas, such as two-year or five-year visas. This newfound flexibility is poised to greatly benefit frequent travellers and is expected to catalyse a significant boom in the travel industry.

Dhrupen Shah

Founder, TravelSukha and TS Visa Services

“The introduction of long-term visas indeed signals a promising shift, aligning with the growing interest among Indian travellers in exploring international destinations. Addressing the practical challenges, such as visa appointment backlogs and procedural inconsistencies, will be crucial to maximising the benefits of this liberalised visa regime. Moreover, the extended validity of Schengen visas opens up avenues for enhanced business engagements and cultural exchanges, further enriching the travel experience.

CPaT Global and Minar Group Join Hands

Houston, Texas USA based CPaT Global, the world's leading provider of distance learning for the airline and aviation industry has entered into a strategic partnership with India based **Minar Group** to market CPaT products and services in India.

CPaT Global, LLC (CPaT) is the market leader in distance learning for the aviation industry delivering, software-as-a-service applications to more than **350 global aviation customers and airlines, serving 200,000+ individual training users each year**. CPaT pioneered the use of distance learning in aviation training 30 years ago and has built on that legacy to offer new and imaginative training solutions that are practical, forward-looking, and invaluable.

CPaT team in India is led by aviation industry veteran, **Mr. Pawan Dhariwal, General Manager of Business Development at Minar Group**.



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Chugging Through Heritage

Must-experience train journeys in India

Travel is not just about reaching a destination; it is about the enriching experiences along the way. When it comes to exploring India’s timeless heritage sites, train travel offers a unique blend of comfort, convenience, and historical immersion that simply can’t be replicated.

Sripad Vaidya

India boasts a rich legacy of history and vibrant culture, woven intricately into its diverse landscapes adorned with heritage sites. Each of these sites offers travellers a glimpse into India’s rich cultural past and its beautiful countryside, making them an integral part of the country’s historical narrative. Fortunately, most of India’s heritage sites are conveniently located near major railway stations, making train travel an ideal choice for exploring these destinations.

The Indian Railways offers some of the most picturesque train routes in the world, traversing breathtaking landscapes and heritage-rich regions. With a vast network stretching from north to south and east to west, Indian Railways provides travellers with a multitude of choices to reach these heritage sites. Beyond offering a memorable journey across varied geographies, train travel allows passengers to immerse themselves in the incredible diversity of India firsthand. Interacting with locals, savouring regional cuisine, and witnessing traditional arts and crafts along the way add to the enriching experience of train journeys.

Moreover, travelling by train contributes to environmental preservation by reducing carbon footprints compared to other modes of transportation. This aspect of sustainable tourism aligns with efforts to conserve heritage sites and promote responsible travel practices. With comfortable seating, onboard amenities, and hassle-free booking options, train travel offers a convenient and eco-friendly way to access heritage sites without

the stress of driving or navigating unfamiliar roads. Some of the most captivating train experiences to heritage places, one rail journey at a time, are:

The Northern Splendour

On a train journey in the northern region of India, one can explore the Mughal legacy in Agra and the Rajput regalness in Jaipur and Jodhpur. Agra, the crown jewel, boasts the timeless Taj Mahal, an architectural marvel immortalised in marble. Its treasures extend even beyond. Explore the majestic Agra Fort, marvel at the intricate details of Fatehpur Sikri, and lose yourself in the beauty of Baba Taj, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Jaipur, the vibrant “Pink City,” is a cultural kaleidoscope. Immerse yourself in the opulence of the City Palace, climb the majestic Amber Fort, and marvel at architectural wonders like Jantar Mantar and Hawa Mahal. Jodhpur, the enchanting “Blue City,” casts a spellbinding aura. Wander through its labyrinthine streets, each turn revealing a glimpse into Rajasthan’s rich heritage. Gaze upon the imposing Mehrangarh Fort, a majestic sentinel overlooking the city awash in azure hues.

The train journey to these gems promises to be a visual treat in itself. So, buckle up and prepare to be dazzled by the splendour of North India!

Soul train to salvation!

For those seeking spiritual solace and enlightenment, the pilgrimage circuit of

Varanasi, Bodh Gaya, and Rameshwaram by train offers a transformative journey of the soul. From the ghats of Varanasi to the serene tranquillity of Bodh Gaya and the divine shores of Rameshwaram, each stop on this pilgrimage route is steeped in spiritual significance.

As the train traverses India’s heartland, passengers are immersed in the sights, sounds, and spirituality of these sacred places, forging a deeper connection with their inner selves and the divine.

Majestic Mountain Toy Trains

For a whimsical journey through the enchanting landscapes of India, the toy train circuits offer a nostalgic ride aboard quaint locomotives that traverse picturesque hills and valleys. From the misty mountains of Darjeeling to the scenic hills of Himachal Pradesh and the idyllic hill station of Matheran in Maharashtra, each trip on the toy train is a delightful journey back in time.

Three of the mountain railways—the Kalka-Shimla Railway, Nilgiris Mountain Railway, and Darjeeling Himalayan Railway—have been recognised as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and are renowned for their enterprising engineering solutions. The Kangra Valley Railway ride in Himachal Pradesh is also a memorable local experience!

So, if you love train journeys, these train routes should be on your travel wish list.



Kalka-Shimla Railway



About the Author
Sripad Vaidya is the COO of ixigo Trains and ConfirmTkt



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Air India elevating passenger experience through dynamic approach to expansion

Air India's recent endeavours exemplify a proactive and dynamic approach towards expansion and prioritising customer needs. These forward-looking initiatives represent a notable stride in the airline's pursuit of excellence.

Team TTJ

Air India's recent efforts signify a major advancement in the airline's pursuit of excellence, enhancing connectivity and elevating passenger satisfaction. The airline and All Nippon Airways (ANA) have inked a new codeshare partnership to enhance connectivity between India and Japan. The agreement, effective May 23, 2024, will offer passengers a seamless travel experience and a wider choice of flights between the two countries. Under this agreement, Air India and All Nippon Airways guests will fly to their desired destination by combining

those flights between India and Japan with a single ticket.

Available for sale from April 23, 2024, Air India added its 'AI' designator code to ANA's flights between Tokyo Haneda and Delhi and Tokyo Narita and Mumbai, while All Nippon Airways added its 'NH' designator code to Air India's flights between Tokyo Narita and Delhi. Both airlines are exploring the possibility of extending their collaboration to include more routes. In one more development, Air India deployed its brand-new A350 aircraft on the busy Delhi-Dubai route from May 01, 2024. Air India guests can now fly between Delhi and Dubai and experience the A350

in its bold new livery. With this, Air India has become the only carrier to operate the A350 between India and Dubai.

In April, Air India deployed five new contact centres, offering round-the-clock assistance to its customers worldwide. It has partnered with Concentrix to manage premium services from centres in Mumbai, Cairo, and Kuala Lumpur. The airline has also signed up iEnergizer to operate contact centres in Noida and Bengaluru, focusing on domestic inquiries. A dedicated grievance management desk operates 24/7 to promptly address all customer queries and escalations and provides round-the-clock support.



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Udaan Hotels and Resorts raising the bar for eco-conscious getaways in Eastern India

With a focus on wellness, sustainability, and cultural richness, Udaan Hotels and Resorts offers a distinct and eco-conscious getaway for travellers seeking tranquillity in the hills of Eastern India. With a keen eye for innovation and a passion for hospitality, Nishi Kant Agarwal, Managing Director, Udaan Hotels and Resorts, leads the brand in delivering exceptional guest experiences. With us, he shares invaluable insights into the brand’s ethos and plans for the future.

Prashant Nayak

Udaan Hotels and Resorts, with a network spanning 15 operational hotels, gracefully dot the landscapes of Darjeeling, Gangtok, Pelling, Lachung, and Siliguri and prides itself on its dedication to providing guests with unparalleled experiences. Firmly rooted in the values of #Goodstay, #Goodfood, and #Goodpeople, the brand is committed to delivering exceptional amenities ensuring guests enjoy a comfortable and memorable stay. With a team of well-trained employees, the brand consistently strives to offer excellent guest service, embodying its commitment to quality and hospitality.

Strategic Location Selection

Udaan Hotels strategically selects hilly locales for its properties, providing guests with serene and picturesque surroundings setting them apart from urban or coastal hotels. The process of choosing new locations involves a comprehensive assessment that ensures the success and sustainability of each property while delivering exceptional experiences amidst nature’s beauty.

“Selecting new locations for Udaan Hotels involves a meticulous process, encompassing market analysis to understand demographics and tourism trends and evaluating the competitive landscape to identify market gaps. Accessibility to transportation hubs and key attractions is prioritised, ensuring convenience for guests. Additionally, the potential for market growth, whether in tourism, business, or residential sectors, is carefully assessed to ensure long-term viability,” says Nishi Kant.

Green Getaways

As a pure vegetarian leisure hotel group, Udaan Hotels and Resorts uniquely caters to guests who adhere to vegetarian diets or prefer vegetarian options. This specialisation ensures that vegetarian guests enjoy a diverse range of high-



▲ Nishi Kant Agarwal

quality and tailored culinary offerings, filling a niche that may not be as readily available in other establishments.

Nishi Kant further elaborates, “We regularly emphasise our wellness with spa offerings, complementing the serene ambiance of hilly locations for guests seeking respite from city life. We prioritise environmental sustainability through eco-friendly practices and preserve the natural beauty of our surroundings. The unique experiences curated at our hotels showcase the cultural richness and historic heritage of hilly locales. Overall, the combination of all these aspects sets Udaan Hotels apart as a distinct option for travellers seeking a tranquil and eco-conscious getaway in the hills.”

Setting Benchmarks

With accolades such as ‘Fastest Growing Hotel Chain’ and ‘Best Boutique Hotel Chain,’ Udaan Hotels continuously innovates and evolves its guest experiences to stay ahead in the competitive hospitality industry, meeting the ever-changing preferences of travellers.

“At Udaan Hotels, we prioritise guest satisfaction through meticulous market

research and guest feedback analysis. Leveraging technology, we enhance experiences with our smart room features and high-speed internet, meeting the demands of tech-savvy travellers. Our attention to design and aesthetics creates unique environments that delight guests and differentiate us from competitors. Culinary excellence is paramount for us, with locally sourced ingredients and signature dishes curated by renowned chefs. Our personalised services ensure each guest’s needs are met, leaving a lasting impression. We also invest in continuous training and development, empowering our staff to consistently deliver exceptional service while embodying hospitality best practices and cultural sensitivity,” assures Nishi Kant.

Shaping the Future

As the hospitality industry evolves, the MICE and wedding segments continue to be lucrative avenues. Udaan Hotels has invested in state-of-the-art facilities in its current properties, including spacious conference rooms, banquet halls, and exhibition spaces equipped with the latest technology and amenities. These venues are designed to accommodate average-sized events, meetings, conferences, weddings, and social gatherings. Nishi Kant adds, “We are also coming up with new properties that will cater to larger groups for MICE and wedding sections. For these, we have chosen locations like Gajoldoba in West Bengal.”

Looking forward to 2024, Udaan Hotels is prioritising the mastery of trade, specifically in the North Bengal and Sikkim regions. They have ambitious plans to have 15 more hotels operational by 2025, aiming for a total of 30 hotels. This year, the hotel group’s top priorities centre around enhancing the guest experience while advancing their commitment to sustainability and innovation. Key areas of focus include excellence in guest experience, employee well-being, skill development, and professional growth.



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The Farm at San Benito to mark an exciting new chapter in wellness tourism

Celebrated for its life-changing healing experiences, the globally renowned eco-luxury resort, The Farm at San Benito in Lipa Batangas, Philippines, has earned over 100 prestigious global wellness and hospitality awards. Expanding its presence, the resort has partnered with Qrius Connect to bring its top-tier wellness programmes to the Indian market, promising a holistic approach to wellness for all.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

A member of CG Hospitality, the hospitality division of CG Corp Global, The Farm at San Benito, a hidden gem, is just a 90-minute drive from Manila International Airport. Nestled in 52 verdant acres of a life-enhancing ecosystem surrounded by majestic Malarayat mountains, the property offers a truly transformative retreat experience. Over the span of two decades, The Farm at San Benito has made significant contributions to the Philippine tourism industry while providing transformative health and wellness experiences to countless global guests. As the sole health resort in the country, it offers exclusive programmes aimed at addressing chronic lifestyle illnesses through natural and holistic methods. Meticulously crafted and supervised by internationally trained integrative medical doctors and licensed health professionals, these programmes include health promotion, disease prevention, and immune support initiatives.

Expanding Horizons

Setting out to amplify its local impact, The Farm has introduced Isla Royale Villas, offering families a tranquil retreat amidst nature to experience holistic wellness. Additionally, it provides spacious event venues spanning 2,126 sqm for various gatherings. Alongside its current dining choices, the newly launched Upper Deck Restaurant presents vegan farm-to-table fare adhering to wellness cuisine principles. The San Benito property recently announced its prestigious collaboration with

the historic Laperal Mansion of Malacanang, selected to provide in-house spa services. Designated as the country's Presidential Guest House, it showcases elegant staterooms to host visiting foreign heads of state and represents a significant stride in advancing the Filipino wellness brand, which honours the nation's rich heritage of healing traditions and hospitality.

As pioneers of the Wellness Lifestyle Real Estate concept in the country, The Farm also offers wellness-focused residential communities with holistic health services. This trend of long-term stays highlights a growing preference for holiday homes outside the city. The four-bedroom Mahogany Luxury Residences and the three-bedroom Acacia Luxury Residences offer residents personalised wellness programmes, farm-fresh organic produce, and a supportive wellness community.

Global Foray

Promoting the Filipino brand of wellness to the international audience through strategic partnerships and collaborations, The Farm aims to showcase unique Filipino healing traditions, products, and therapies to global health and wellness seekers. With plans to expand across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, The Farm in San Benito serves as the flagship location to be duplicated in different parts of the world, offering customised treatments tailored to local culture.

Qrius Connect - India Representation

The Farm at San Benito has partnered with



Qrius Connect to enhance brand awareness, expand market share, and optimise sales and marketing activities in the Indian market. Nishant Gulliya, CEO, Qrius Connect said, "This partnership with The Farm at San Benito marks an exciting new chapter for Qrius Connect. We are honoured to be entrusted with bringing their renowned holistic wellness haven to the Indian market. We believe The Farm's unique blend of luxury, nature, and transformative programmes resonate deeply with the growing wellness consciousness in India, and we are eager to unlock its potential for a discerning audience seeking a profound journey of rejuvenation and wellness."

From Royal Weaves to Vibrant Prints

Discover TEXTILE TOURISM IN MADHYA PRADESH

Unveil the magic of Rich Textile Heritage

Madhya Pradesh is inevitably a kaleidoscope for textile lovers, with a centuries-old tradition of handloom weaving and dyeing skills passed down through generations. Textile Tourism in Madhya Pradesh offers an immersive experience that surpasses the souvenir collection dating back 5,000 years. Let us take a peek into some of the top destinations in Madhya Pradesh for textile tourism.

CHANDERI

The thin air-like chanderi cotton textile, a hand-woven interlacement of gold and silver warp and weft forming popular motifs like paisley, guinea design, peacock, mihrab, and flowers beholds the rich and prestigious culture of chanderi.



The fabric was exclusive among royals, and the then Queen of Baroda put a price on sarees after rubbing the fabric onto her cheeks. Folklores are prevalent; the softer the cloth, the higher the price. Chanderi sarees are not just a textile or a cloth but a handwoven saree exemplifying the history and the century-old tradition of sarees that come in three types of fabrics - pure silk, silk cotton, and chanderi cotton.

MAHESHWAR

Nestled on the banks of the Narmada River, Maheshwar, a centuries-old centre for handloom weaving, has been famous



for its beautiful Maheshwari sarees characterised by vibrant colours, gold zari borders, and unique pit loom weaving techniques. These sarees, known for their unique style, were introduced by a queen about 250 years ago. Traditionally made from cotton, they come in a variety of designs, including plain, striped, and even geometric patterns. Explore the bustling handloom market, visit heritage havelis showcasing the craft, or try a hand at weaving a small piece of cloth under the guidance of a master weaver.

HAND BLOCK PRINTING ON TEXTILES

One of the few art forms practised through its original technique, the Nandana print is a colourful block print produced in the village of Tarapur in Neemuch and Umedpura. This comfortable clothing is the traditional attire of the Bhil and Bhilal tribes.



The town of Bagh near the historic city Mandu boasts a 1,000-year-old tradition of Bagh print, a unique form of natural dye block printing. Visit a printer's workshop to witness the meticulous process of hand-carving wooden blocks and printing intricate floral and geometric patterns onto fabric.

Bherugarh is the centre of Batik printing

near Ujjain. This age-old wax-resist dyeing and printing craft is considered to have been practised in Egypt, Japan, and India for over 2,000 years. At present, textile lovers can visit Bherugarh and witness over 800 men and women working as printers in the village.

Handblock printing, fabric-tying, and dyeing crafts belong to Indore. For Handblock printing, vegetable and natural dyes such as indigo, turmeric roots, pomegranate skin, lac, iron, etc., are utilised to create the colours. This technique produces a complex yet understated impression. The amazing part is that since the natural colours penetrate the cloth, they do not quickly fade, enhancing the fabric's aesthetic appeal. While in fabric tying and dyeing, the craft is referred to as bandhani or bandhej in Madhya Pradesh.

Recognising the potential of textile tourism, The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is taking steps to promote this unique travel experience. Pranpur village in Chanderi is India's First Craft Handloom Tourism Village developed by the tourism department. This unique initiative intends to allow tourists to visit the weaver's community in Pranpur and directly interact with artisans, witness the weaving process, and understand the cultural significance of these textiles.



Lucknow plays host to TTJ TRAVMART, facilitates 2400 business meetings

Fortune Park BBD, Lucknow, was the hub of business networking activity on April 20, as 138 pre-registered and hosted travel agents from Lucknow and other cities in Uttar Pradesh converged at the TTJ TRAVMART-Lucknow to meet with 29 sellers including airlines, hotels, DMCs,

air ticket consolidators, travel technology companies, and tourism boards. Presentations were made by Rezlive and Sampan Tech. The TRAVMART witnessed the launch of the TRAVMART Marketplace as the beta website went live. The event was organised in association with TTAUP

and supported by all significant travel associations. Mementos were presented to association office-bearers for their support, and lucky draws were conducted. The lucky winners received hotel stay vouchers from Chocolate Hotels, cash discount vouchers from Rezlive, and smartwatches.



Hina Sheeraz
Director, Sheeraz Tours;
Chairperson, TAAI UP & Uttarakhand

TTJ TRAVMART is a crucial event for us. It consistently introduces new suppliers and hoteliers, both from international and domestic sectors. It serves as a valuable business networking platform for the travel community of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, particularly as summer vacations are being planned. We extend our gratitude to TTJ for bringing this opportunity to Lucknow.



Vikram Singh Yadhuvasnshi
Rayna Group, Country lead India

As a major player in the Dubai market, we are thrilled to participate in TTJ TRAVMART for the second consecutive year. Our first show was in Raipur, and Lucknow is our second show with TTJ. You cannot fathom the overwhelming response we have received; we have had very positive business meetings with travel agents and look forward to the next TRAVMART in Chandigarh. TTJ has put together a tremendous show, and I congratulate Ravi Sharma, Gurjit Singh, and Team TTJ for having put together this great show.



Sandeep Bhasin
Founder, Bingo Holidays

I am very happy and excited to be a part of TTJ TRAVMART Lucknow this year yet again and am overwhelmed by the phenomenal response we received. We have had good-quality meetings and interactions with new prospective partners who are keen to work with us on our new product segments and destinations. I am glad I could be here again with TTJ TRAVMART, as Lucknow is a very important market for us. I congratulate Team TTJ for organising a great show.



Shefali Gupta
Director, Amigo Travels

It is our first time with TTJ TRAVMART, and it is our pleasure to be here in Lucknow. We attend these events to meet new agents who need more information and destination knowledge, and we have had reasonable interactions.





Fahim Qureshi
Director & Founder,
Stay Pattern Hospitality Services

We manage hotels in Kashmir, and this is the first time we are attending as sellers at the TTJ TRAVMART. The event is exceptionally well-organised and managed and surpasses my high expectations with its level of promise and professionalism. I congratulate Team TTJ for a job well done and look forward to being a part of their upcoming events.



Rajneesh Pandey
Founder & Owner, Dream Vacation Tour

I have been regularly attending the TTJ TRAVMART here in Lucknow for the past six years. It is a great platform for stakeholders in the travel industry to meet and network. It is especially beneficial as we come to know about the latest developments and new products and destinations available, and this helps us grow our business as travel agents. I congratulate TTJ for coming to Lucknow again.



Nirmalya Chaudhuri
GM Sales and Marketing, Chocolate Hotels

We have been participating in TTJ TRAVMART for the past two years but are here in Lucknow for the very first time and have received a fantastic response beyond our expectations. We are positive about getting more business from this market for our portfolio of eight hotels. TTJ has always rocked, and I congratulate team TTJ for a very successful event. Chocolate Hotels looks forward to being a part of more TTJ TRAVMART in the future, too.





TRAVMART



2024

JUL

27

CHANDIGARH

AUG

16-18

SITM

SOUTH INDIA TRAVMART (CHENNAI)

SEP

20-22

EITM

EAST INDIA TRAVMART (KOLKATA)

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INDO JAYA CUP

Building Bonds and Camaraderie through Cricket

The UPTCL 2024 Indo Jaya Cup showcased the vibrant synergy between cricket and the travel trade industry. Beyond the scorecard, the event was a joyous celebration of the travel trade community's resilience and teamwork. The trophy was lifted by Team Rezbook-Allahabad Warriors.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

The second edition of Uttar Pradesh Travel Cricket League – 'UPTCL 2024 Indo Jaya Cup' was organised by Team UPTCL on Saturday, April 20, 2024, at RR Cricket Ground, Lucknow. Team UPTCL is spearheaded by SMA Sheeraz, Director, Sheeraz Tours; Vivek Pandey, Director, Rivotrip Holidays; Mohd Azam, Owner, Citylink Travels; Rajiv Arora, Director, Rayhan Travel House; and Sandeep Srivastava, Owner, Tourland. The Travel Trade Association of Uttar Pradesh (TTAUP) supported the tournament well.

More than just a cricket match, the tournament was a celebration of the travel trade community's resilience, teamwork, and enduring spirit. Eight teams, namely RTH-Varanasi Legends, One Above-Bareilly Blasters, Rezbook-Allahabad Warriors, Trip Shapers-Lucknow Nawabs, Udaan India-Noida Strikers, and Yorker Holidays-Kanpur Titans, were put together with 120 players from the travel fraternity across the state of Uttar Pradesh. More than claiming the trophy, it was a spirited battle in which teams embraced the honour of embodying the pride and passion associated with representing the vibrant and dynamic travel industry.

At the UPTCL 2024 Indo Jaya Cup, the endeavour was to combine the spirit of travel with the passion for cricket and put it to play with strategy, skill, and a bit of holiday magic. The event united professionals from the industry, transcending mere runs and wickets and evolving into a spectacle that celebrated camaraderie, skill, and the unwavering spirit of unity.

Approximately 400 plus travel trade professionals registered from Lucknow, Agra, Bareilly, Basti, Dehradun, Delhi, Faizabad, Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur, Greater Noida, Kanpur, Kushinagar, Mathura, Meerut, Moradabad, Prayagraj, Raebareli, Rudrapur, Saharanpur, and Sultanpur.

The objective of hosting the event in Lucknow was to enhance the relationship of Uttar Pradesh travel trade professionals with travel fraternity stakeholders based in metro cities in India and overseas while simultaneously highlighting an opportunity that Uttar Pradesh offered.

With Lucknowi kebabs and gourmet delights on the grounds, along with various lucky gift surprises, including cash prizes, UPTCL-2024 was a ticket to an unforgettable experience mixing informal networking with fun. Travel

Trade Journal (TTJ) was one of the event's official sponsors and supporters.

Team Rezbook-Allahabad Warriors lifted the UPTCL 2024 Indo Jaya Cup, and Team Yorker Holidays-Kanpur Titans were the runners-up. Given the grand success and extraordinary response, Team UPTCL is committed to hosting such events in the future.



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Celestyal Cruises appoints STIC Travel Group as its GSA in India

STIC Travel Group and Celestyal Cruises have joined forces, with STIC Travel Group now serving as the General Sales Agent for Celestyal Cruises in India. This collaboration signifies a significant milestone, allowing STIC Travel Group to handle marketing, distribution, and representation of Celestyal's travel packages, including dynamic and performed options, as well as cruise-only services across India.

Celestyal Cruises, renowned for its award-winning and year-round cruise experiences in the Greek Islands, the Adriatic, and the Arabian Gulf, sets the standard for unmissable travel adventures. With a focus on authentic Greek heritage and exceptional hospitality, Celestyal offers cultural immersion both onboard and onshore. Operating two brand new vessels, each accommodating up to 1260 passengers, Celestyal is committed

to providing highly personalised services, welcoming over 100,000 passengers annually from more than 130 different nationalities.

Celestyal decided to cooperate with STIC Travel Group because the India region is an important market with great potential. Celestyal is convinced that with the new cooperation, it will be able to accelerate further growth in this region and at the same time offer new touring products to a wider audience by leveraging STIC Travel Group's robust distribution and technology platforms.



Nijhawan Group to represent Berjaya Hotels and Resorts in India



Nijhawan Group has been appointed as the India Sales, Marketing and Public Relations representative of Berjaya Hotels and Resorts, boasting 34 hotels and resorts across 21 destinations in eight countries. From island resorts to city hotels in Malaysia, the group's prominence extends across borders with the establishment of international hotels and resorts in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, United Kingdom, Vietnam, Japan and Iceland. Berjaya Hotels and Resorts is one of the leading and preferred event partners and has an excellent record of delivering outstanding and reliable services to both local companies and international corporations.

"We are elated to announce our partnership with Berjaya Hotel and Resorts as their India representative. We are dedicated to establishing unparalleled relationships with key Indian travel and media partners and fostering stronger collaborations for the brand in India," said Priyanka Nijhawan, Director- Representations, Nijhawan Group.

Being the largest hospitality group in Malaysia, Berjaya Hotels and Resorts wants to promote Malaysia as a must-visit destination for Indians and showcase the USPs of the brand.

JNTO Delhi office designates AllKnown Marketers as its India representative



L-R: Ryo Bunno, Executive Director, JNTO Delhi Office; Neeti Sharma, CEO, AllKnown Marketers

AllKnown Marketers along with Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) is mandated to execute Travel Trade and PR initiatives in key target markets, marking a significant milestone in Japan's endeavours to expand Tourism from India to Japan.

Ryo Bunno, Executive Director, JNTO Delhi Office, expressed his enthusiasm on the appointment, stating, "India is one of our primary markets, and we certainly have high expectations owing to its performance trajectory in the recent past. AllKnown Marketers team will serve as our extended arm in the market to orchestrate strategic marketing and communications outreach that drives a consistent flow of Indian arrivals. We are excited to appoint a team of market leaders who will navigate us to introduce our diverse offerings and position Japan as the most coveted getaway for Indian experiential travellers."

Acknowledging the latest addition to AllKnown Marketers' growing portfolio, Neeti Sharma, CEO, shared her excitement, stating, "We are elated to represent Japan National Tourism Organization Delhi Office and lead its strategy in key Indian markets and target segments. Our team will work closely with the travel trade and media in India to enhance Japan's visibility among travellers and amplify arrivals from segments such as Family Trips, weddings, honeymoons, and luxury travellers through concentrated and continuous efforts and continue its aspirational quotient in India."

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RAJ PACHAR

Cuba hosts event in Delhi to showcase the island nation's tourism potential



The Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in India, in collaboration with Meliá Hotels International, organised an interactive session on April 19, 2024, to promote Cuba as a tourist destination in the Indian market. The event welcomed over 40 representatives from travel agencies, national and international airlines, businessmen, and print and digital media.

The Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Abel Aballe Despaigne made a presentation about the exotic and unique features of Cuba as a tourist destination and launched the promotional campaign "Cuba Única" (Unique Cuba). The event aimed to foster alliances between Indian and Cuban companies for the marketing and commercialisation of Cuban tourism products and investments in the tourism sector. Additionally, details about the International Tourism Fair FITCUBA 2024, Cuba's most important event in the sector, scheduled from May 1 to 5, were shared.

Tonia Sehan, the Head of Sales in India for Meliá Hotels International, showcased Meliá's properties in Cuba. Meliá, one of the largest and oldest foreign hotel chains in the Caribbean nation, operates more than 30 properties across the country.

In recent years, Cuba has taken significant steps to attract Indian tourists. In February 2024, Cuba participated for the first time in a sector fair in India, the OTM 2024 Travel Fair, where it received the award for "Most Promising New Destination." Cuba has also undertaken initiatives to form alliances with agencies, tour operators, and advertising agencies to promote and market Cuba as a destination.

Taiwan Tourism Administration launches Taiwan Specialist Program to upskill trade partners



In a bid to foster stronger ties between Taiwan and the Indian tourism market, the Taiwan Tourism Administration has unveiled a new initiative – Taiwan Specialist Program. This e-learning program is crafted to educate and empower Indian travel professionals about the myriad attractions of Taiwan, positioning it as a top-tier destination for Indian travellers.

Dubbed "TIME FOR TAIWAN," the program comprises nine comprehensive modules covering a wide array of topics, ranging from cultural insights and visa procedures to transportation options, accommodation choices, itinerary planning, MICE incentives, Indian restaurants and venues. Through engaging content and interactive webinar sessions, participants will gain invaluable insights about Taiwan.

Upon successful completion of each module, participants undergo a rigorous Q&A session to assess their understanding and unlock the next module. Those who achieve a score of 70 per cent or higher ultimately earn the prestigious title of "Taiwan Specialist" certified by the Taiwan Tourism Administration.

Certified specialists are eligible for exclusive rewards and events sponsored by the Taiwan Tourism Administration, including the chance to win exciting prizes such as a Fam trip to Taiwan, electronic gadgets, and Taiwan Tourism Hampers, etc.

To enrol, visit tlnconnect.com/courses/time-for-taiwan

ADTOI launches its 13th State Chapter in Uttarakhand



The Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) inaugurated its 13th chapter in Uttarakhand on April 20, 2024, in Dehradun. The event was led by PP Khanna, President of ADTOI, along with other office bearers. The event was graced by senior state tourism officials including Poonam Chand, Additional Director of Tourism, Yogendera Kumar Gangwar, Joint Director Tourism, Sandeep Sahni, President of Hotel Association of Uttarakhand, and Bhaskar Dimri, Member of Badri & Kedarnath Nath Temples Committee.

The new chapter is led by Chapter Chairman Mahendra Ghildiyal of Mahendra Destinations, Chapter Secretary Mohit Gupta of Alpine Adventure, Treasurer Sunil Kumar Saini of India Easy Trip, and Advisor Praveen Sharma of Chevron Hotels and Resorts.

Khanna emphasised the importance of Uttarakhand as a nerve centre of pilgrimage and spiritual tourism, with the four dhams attracting a lot of domestic tourists. He also highlighted the significance of wildlife tourism and the pristine beauty of hill stations in the state. He expressed confidence that the opening of the chapter would boost tourism in the state and facilitate networking among ADTOI members pan India to promote Uttarakhand.

Thematic HOLIDAY DESTINATION with CINE-MAGIC



Ramoji Film City is a filmmakers' paradise and dream holiday destination. It presents an inimitable experience of the make-believe world.

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It is also home to Wings – the mesmerising Bird Park, Ramoji Adventure @Sahas – Asia's finest adventure land,

Sukhibhava Wellness, the wellness facility that promotes lifestyle modification and detoxification and live set for Motion Capture & Virtual Shoot.

The land of cine-magic hosts spectacular events and Carnival extravaganzas and offers wide-ranging stay options to suit every budget. It's the go-to-destination for family holidays, experiential corporate events, grand weddings, honeymoons, celebrations, edutainment tours and group vacations.



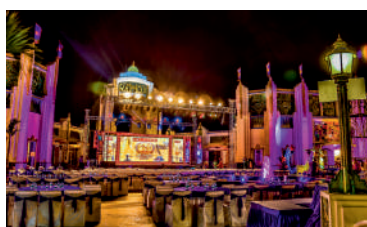
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Minar Group

Minar Group has appointed **Deepak Kumarr Bhatnagar** as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Tours division. With over 36 years of experience in the tourism industry, Bhatnagar joined Minar in July 2023 and has swiftly risen to this leadership role. In his new position, he aims to enhance Minar’s industry position by driving growth and spearheading the expansion of the incoming travel division, including penetrating new global markets and boosting team performance to elevate Minar and Vilasa Luxury Travel to unprecedented success.



Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts

Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts has appointed **Palak Shah** as the Vice President of Sales for Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts. Palak brings 24 years of unparalleled hospitality experience, especially in India and Southwest Asia. In his new role at Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts, Palak will lead its strategic sales initiatives, particularly focusing on accelerating growth in key source markets and India. He will also oversee the Global Sales Office initiatives and efforts set up in these markets.



The Ozen Collection

The Ozen Collection has appointed **Luisa Lalli** as Vice President of Operations and General Manager for its first property in India, Ozen Mansion Kolkata. She has held prominent positions at leading international hospitality brands across the globe. Before accepting her role in Kolkata, Luisa consistently exceeded expectations in team management, operational processes and guest satisfaction, setting new standards of excellence at both Ozen Reserve Bolifushi and Ozen Life Maadhoo, where she held the key position of General Manager.



Ethiopian Airlines

Ethiopian Airlines has appointed **Bezawit Tassew** as its new Regional Director for the India Subcontinent. Bezawit will be based in Mumbai, where she will oversee the airline’s operations and growth strategy in the region. She brings extensive experience, having joined the airline in 2002 and served in various roles, including Marketing and Sales, Manager Customer Relations, and most recently as Area Manager for Rwanda. Bezawit’s leadership will be vital in navigating challenges and enhancing Ethiopian Airlines’ presence in the Indian Subcontinent.



Marriott International

Nikita Ramchandani has been elevated to the position of Multi-Property Vice President for the Marriott International Mumbai Market. She will undertake this pivotal role while concurrently serving as the General Manager of JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu. In her new role, she will oversee the strategic direction of hotels like Westin Powai, Moxy Mumbai, and Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai, among others. Her responsibilities include streamlining processes, managing owner relations, and supporting General Managers in achieving their goals.



Aalia Collection

Aalia Collection, a boutique hospitality venture by JPL Hospitality Services, has named **Kavinder Besoya** as its Chief Operating Officer. In this role, Kavinder will oversee the operations of Aalia Collection’s four hotels in India. With over 20 years of experience in luxury hospitality, Kavinder brings valuable expertise from his previous role as Assistant Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, where he was instrumental in driving sales strategies and increasing brand visibility.



Finnair

Finnair, the national airline of Finland, has appointed **Anupam Vig** as the new General Manager for the India market. With over two decades of experience in the airline industry, Vig’s expertise lies in developing and implementing innovative sales strategies that drive growth and expand market presence. His leadership will help further Finnair’s goal of providing top-notch service and connectivity to customers traveling from India to Finland and Nordic destinations.



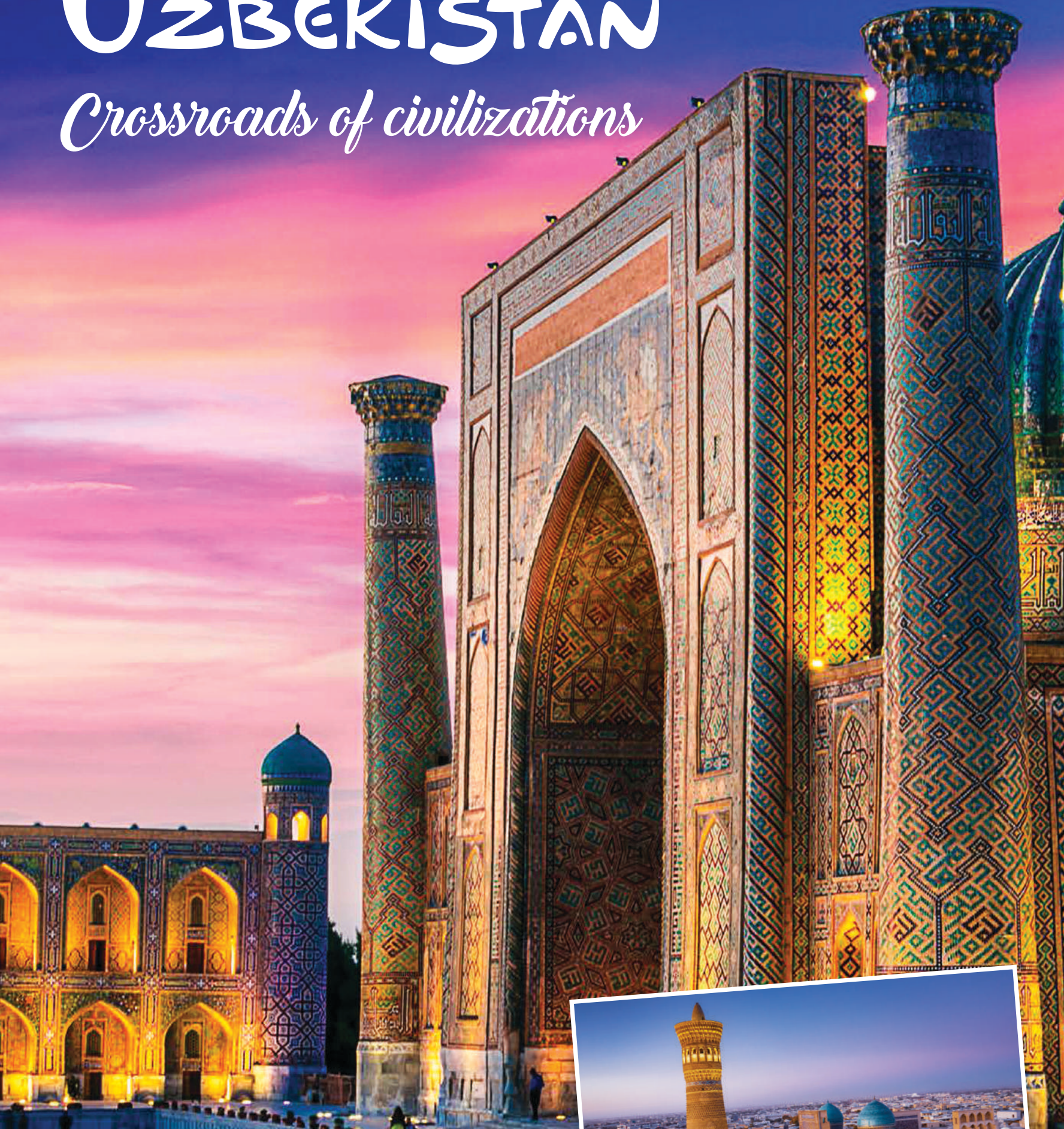
The Standard Maldives

The Standard Maldives has appointed **Shushant Tiwari** as the Sales Manager for India and the Middle East. With over 15 years of B2B Sales experience in hotels and airlines, Shushant has played a pivotal role in introducing and establishing Maldives resorts in the Indian market since 2016. He has successfully introduced brands like Baglioni, Heritage, and Adaran, positioning India as a key feeder market. Leveraging his expertise, The Standard Maldives aims to maximise opportunities in the Indian and Middle East markets.

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