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# Travel Scapes

JULY 2022, PAGES 64, ₹100 VOL. 10, ISSUE. 07

## New Zealand

A small heaven of adventure

## The Moguls

Breaking the Mold



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# PUBLISHER'S NOTE



**Varun Malhotra**  
Publisher & CEO

## Dear Readers,

'And miles to go before I sleep' echoes in the spirit of every individual who aspires to become a successful entrepreneur, especially the ones who follow their heart and turn their passion into a profession. While daring to go big in the market, many hold back from taking the risk, while others prefer to take the leap of faith. Among the ones who dare to turn their dreams into reality, are few who turn their love for travelling into business endeavours. Having thought about the benefits of exploring the opportunities in travel while making money out of the same, some brilliant minds in our India tourism industry chose to venture into the travel range. Acknowledging their innovation-driven goals and passions to make people travel, we offer a glimpse into the entrepreneurial journeys of some top tourism moguls who are not just currently redesigning the map of tourism in India and worldwide but also are the ones who have had the spirit of entrepreneurship embedded in their genes.

While the countries are now reopening their borders to Indians, vacation seekers have started to plan their next adventure more than ever before. Tourism boards are getting active with even more aggressive strategies; hotels are turning towards sustainability; cruises are setting sail yet again; events have gone from virtual to live- all this seems like a brighter mirage of hope. Amidst all that has happened in the last two years, how our tourism industry has regained its stature and prominence is truly commendable. Kudos to all those frontrunners of the industry who have taken the risks and still moved forward with a will to never sit back.

Further, globetrotting to the most beautiful corner of the world, we take you on a journey through beautiful New Zealand. Across this tiny yet abundantly wonderful country, you will find everything from natural wilderness to rich culture and adventure galore. You have a choice to hike the towering mountains and mist-cloaked fjords, sink in the serenity of golden beaches curled around quiet bays, take strolls and make new friends in small towns or just throw yourself off from the open air during the bungee jumping. We list some of the gutsy and peaceful experiences that will surely suit your New Zealand bucket list.

Share with us your valuable feedback and suggestions at [varun@versatilemedia.in](mailto:varun@versatilemedia.in)

Happy Reading!

Varun Malhotra

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## MoT holds a meeting to discuss Draft National Tourism Policy

Ministry of Tourism organised a Consultative Meeting on Draft National Tourism Policy on June 01, 2022 at Hotel Ashok, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. To have a holistic discussion on the Draft National Tourism Policy, Union Minister of Tourism G. Kishan Reddy invited the Union Ministers from different Ministries. The meeting was attended by Nitin Jairam Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Ajay Bhatt, Minister of State for Tourism & Defence and Shripad Yesso Naik,

Minister of State for Tourism & Shipping were also present in the meeting. Secretaries and other senior officers of different Central Ministries also attended the meeting. The draft National Tourism Policy was deliberated in detail. Further, various valuable suggestions were given during the consultative meeting by the invitees. G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, appreciated the valuable suggestions and it was decided that the draft National Tourism Policy may be finalised after suitably incorporating the various suggestions received during the meeting.



## West Bengal Tourism and FAITH brainstorm on tourism strategic roadmap for West Bengal

The Department of Tourism, Govt. of West Bengal and Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) held a day-long workshop to formulate a tourism development strategy aiming at creation of livelihood and job opportunities was held on June 04, 2022 at ITC, Royal Bengal Hotel on the development of a tourism strategic roadmap for West Bengal.

FAITH, the policy federation of all the ten national associations representing the complete tourism, travel and hospitality industry of India held a detailed strategy formulation Meet on development of a tourism

roadmap in association with Govt. of West Bengal.

The day-long workshop, the first in series in pursuance to the Memorandum of Agreement signed between the FAITH and Govt of West Bengal on April 21, 2022, held discussions on multiple issues relating to strategy roadmap for tourism development for the state of West Bengal.



## Kerala launches QR code-aided e-guide to boost tourism

Kerala Tourism Minister PA Mohamed Riyas launched a virtual travel guide that gives access to all information on tourism locations through QR Code for visitors to the state.

The new digital tool will provide all relevant information such as distance to the nearest bus-stand, railway station and airport, working hours of a tourist destination and its contact numbers, the Minister said after inaugurating the facility in Fort Kochi.

The e-brochure, will be set up across the state's tourism centres and important airports within and outside the country. More content will be brought in the e-brochure including information on places of tourism potential which are now not widely known. More such technology-driven facilities will be popularised in tourism sector in the coming months to ensure hassle-free travel for tourists, Riyas revealed.

The e-brochure also ensures that a single click opens to pertinent social-media pages. The virtual guide will also facilitate information regarding tour packages and their bookings.

Holding that proper upkeep of tourism centres is important, the Minister said tourism clubs will be formed in colleges across the state to involve the youth in the maintenance and publicity of local travel destinations.

## MP Tourism Board eyes to develop 300 homestays

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is targeting to develop close to 300 home stays in the state in the ongoing financial year in villages and near famous tourist spots, a move aimed at luring tourist footfall and generating employment opportunities in rural belts. The board is working in about 70 villages in the state to develop home stays, upgrading infrastructure, involving local excursions, food, agriculture, horticulture, arts and crafts, local music and dance form to attract tourists in rural belts. Development work in 12 villages has completed and some of them have started

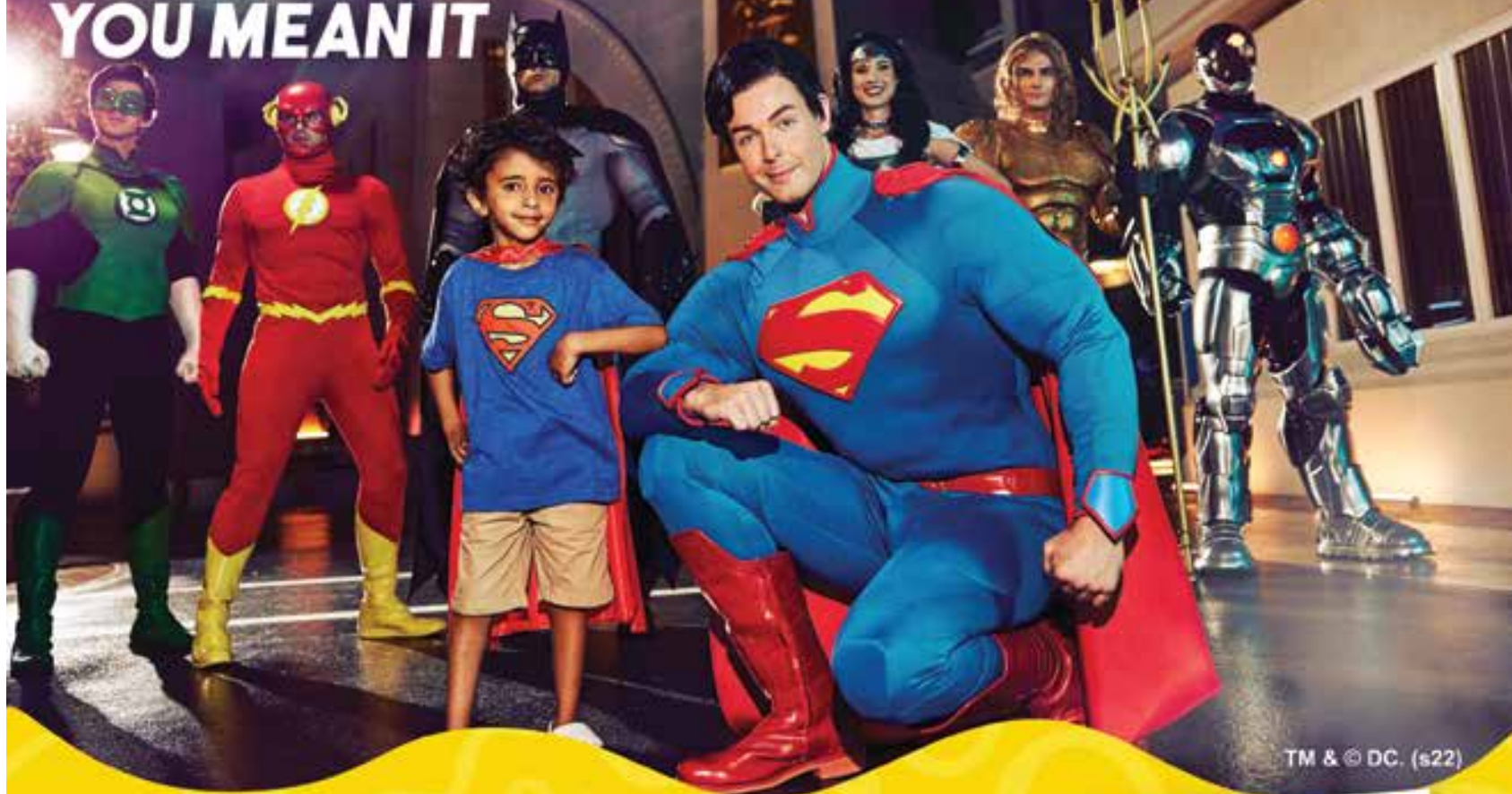


hosting guests. Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Madhya Pradesh Tourism said, "We are aiming to develop 200-300 home stays this year. Work is already in process in 70 villages of the state and more will be roped in over the period of time in a phased manner."



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## MoCA, Bihar Govt, FICCI join hands to promote civil aviation sector in Bihar

The Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India in collaboration with Government of Bihar and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry organised a Conference for promotion Civil Aviation Sector in the state of Bihar. The conference brought together experts from Indian Aviation Sector for strengthening the state's opportunities in Airports infrastructure, Heli services, agro-business and tourist destinations, increase regional connectivity, attract investment and identify business.

Civil Aviation is a key infrastructure sector that facilitates the growth of the business, and seamless flow of investment, trade and tourism, with significant multiplier effects across the economy. Over a third of world trade by value is delivered by air and about half of international tourism is



facilitated by air links.

Bihar is one of the progressive states in India and it has immense growth potential. In recent years, state's civil aviation sector has seen exponential growth in terms of air passengers, Airport Infrastructure etc. and holds the key to link the state to the other states of the country while it also taking ahead state's tourism, trade and commerce with the rest of the world.



## Kashmir sees 80 lakh tourists in recent months; breaks records of past 20 years

A record 80 lakh tourists have visited Kashmir since January, the deputy commissioner's office in South Kashmir's Anantnag district has claimed.

"Kashmir is witnessing a 'golden period of tourism' as 80 lakh tourists have visited the UT in the past few months alone, breaking all the records of past 20 years," the Anantnag deputy commissioner's

office said.

However, the figures quoted in the tweet are far from the actual number of tourists who visited the valley in the first five months of the calendar year.

According to officials in the tourism department, the number of tourists who have visited Kashmir this year is over nine lakh and is expected to cross the 10-lakh mark by the end of June.

"If we are talking purely about people who have come as tourists, the numbers have crossed nine lakh from January 1 to May 31," an official of the department said on the condition of anonymity.

"We are talking about an average of 51,000 tourists every day. This is a little more than the listed bed capacity of all the hotels, guesthouses and houseboats in the valley," the official said.

## Spiritual tourism boosting in India post-pandemic

The tourism industry is gaining strength once again as the COVID-19 restrictions have been eased in many parts of the world. While relaxing and exploring have been a point of travel for most people, after the pandemic, spiritual tourism is also increasing in the country. According to a Thomas Cook and SOTC Travel report, India has seen a 35 per cent growth in spiritual tourism.

The report also highlights the major reasons for boosting religious travel in the country. One of the major reasons is the feeling of gratitude. During the pandemic, people became

aligned with religious activities more than ever; they are now extending gratitude to the lords. Not just this, to revive the business or jobs, people are keen on seeking the blessings of God. Also, 'thanksgiving' for weddings and the birth of a child is another reason for spiritual tourism. The data shows that around 50 per cent of the population comprises of elderly with 35 % families. According to the study, the top pilgrimage sites include Char Dham Yatra, Do Dham Yatra, Muktinath in Nepal, Amarnath Yatra, Vaishno Devi, Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya, among others.



## Tourism sector of Bhubaneswar pins biz revival hope on Rath Yatra

The Odisha tourism industry, which was in doldrums owing to Cyclone Fani in 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic in the two subsequent years, is all set to receive a major fillip during nine-day Rath Yatra, starting July 1. The government expects a footfall of around 20 lakh devotees during the nine days, almost double the usual arrival of tourists during the period in the past. Tourists, who were barred from attending Rath Yatra in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, have already booked almost all hotels in Puri. Though tourism started showing the sign of

revival in September 2021, Rath Yatra, which is Odisha's biggest annual festival, is always considered as a big booster to the state's hospitality sector. Though the government has never compiled any specific data related to revenue generation from Rath Yatra, industry sources said the economy would run into crores. "Not just hotels, the arrival of tourists would give business to vendors, restaurateurs and transporters. The Jagannath temple also receives good donations during the period," Hotel Association of Puri (HAP) secretary Raj Kishore Patra said.



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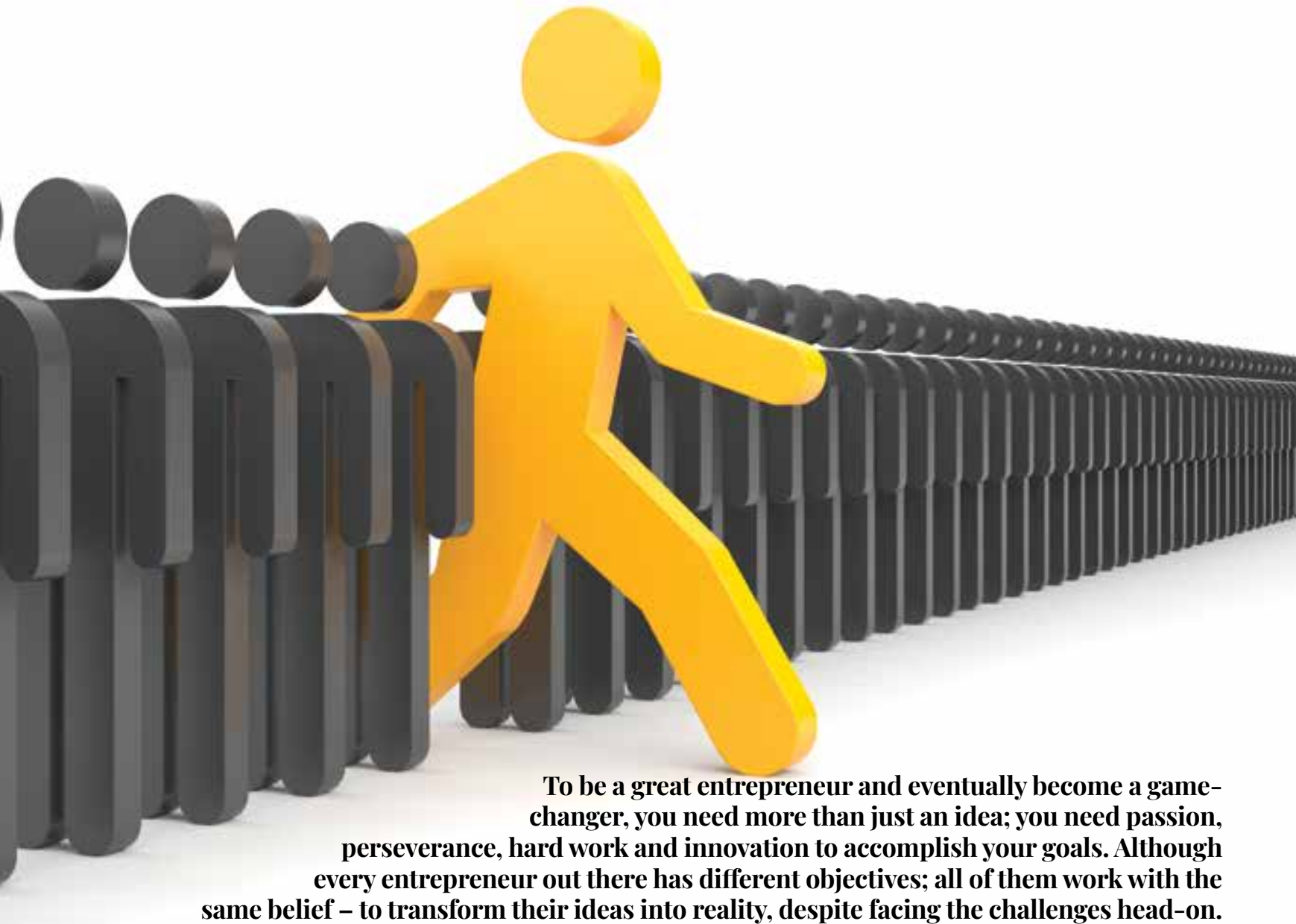
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# **THE MOGULS BREAKING THE MOLD**

**Know all and more about these innovation-driven entrepreneurs and their success journeys that are nothing short of inspiring**



**To be a great entrepreneur and eventually become a game-changer, you need more than just an idea; you need passion, perseverance, hard work and innovation to accomplish your goals. Although every entrepreneur out there has different objectives; all of them work with the same belief – to transform their ideas into reality, despite facing the challenges head-on. Acknowledging their sheer hard work and spirits to never-sit-back, TravelScapes features some dynamic tourism entrepreneurs who have put everything on the line to build and grow their respective businesses, carving a niche for themselves in the travel and tourism industry. Each of these dreamers, believers and achievers who chose to be different and innovative on every page they turned to while writing their success story, share how they got started, their brand-building journeys, what obstacles they had to deal with, the key learnings along the way and their respective mentors who sparked the motivation in them to get a foothold in tourism and businesses in general**

**By Gagneet Kaur**



# A THOUGHT LEADER LIKE NO OTHER

## RAJEEV KOHLI

JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR, CREATIVE TRAVEL

*It's impossible to discuss the most influential tourism leaders without mentioning Rajeev Kohli. With more than 26 years of industry experience, many opinion pieces and articles under his name and recognitions galore, Kohli is proud to have gained an unmatched reputation as one of the top thought leaders in the tourism industry. From being a traveller at heart who has been helping people plan exceptionally unique expeditions through his prominent family-run DMC to becoming the first Asian holding the global position of a President at SITE, from leaving no stone unturned to showcase India to the world, to making significant contributions to tourism industry at different levels, Kohli has always proved to be a true 'all-rounder'*



### **A sense of entrepreneurship that was always inherent:**

Right when I started the process to get my MBA, I realized the prominence of entrepreneurship. I was curious about the world of independent thinkers and got my MBA with a specialisation in Entrepreneurship from the University of Southern California, which was one of the top three programs in this area in the US. Entrepreneurship is a lot more than just starting a business. How to make a business plan, how to make a pitch, self-analysis as a business leader and much more that goes into being an entrepreneur. What I learned in the program was super useful in working with the family to make Creative what it is today. I never planned for this, just naturally happened.

### **Rohit & Rajeev- The dynamic duo of Creative Travel:**

One strong differentiator between us and others is the grounded training I and Rohit had. We were bottom-rung employees for many years and had to work out way up. That gives us a deep respect for the skills and seniority of the team we have. One can run a company as a corporation, or one can run it as a start-up; we have always strived to reinvent ourselves every few years, if not sooner. We have a strong desire to experiment, to try new things. We have a strong heart to accept failure. To be successful, you need inspiration. That comes in different ways to different people. Personally, I am inspired by colour, by art and architecture. I take that inspiration into our processes and how we deliver amazing travel experiences. My brother does the same in his way. We encourage our team to think differently as well. Our success will never come from better rates

or larger volumes. Our success will always come from our mindset, our approach and our objective to always be different. So, when you ask how we are different from others, it is simply because that is our main mission.

(\*Rohit Kohli is the Joint Managing Director at Creative Travel group with a demonstrated history of working in the tourism industry. Along with Rajeev, Rohit runs the very successful business of Creative Travel which today is India's largest privately owned Destination Management Company)

### **Emerged strong and bold despite the road-blocks:**

When Rohit and I joined Creative 27 years ago, we were very tiny. Creative is what it is today because of the hard work of not just the family but the team we had and have. We, of course, have faced tremendous business challenges over the years like every other company in our space. But with every challenge comes the opportunity. And we took those opportunities and made lemons out of lemonade. Tourism is a perpetual roller coaster and not for the faint-hearted. But nothing tested our resolve like the pandemic did. We prioritised the livelihood of as many team members as we could bear. We put our lives on a hold. We had people who were hurt and that shattered us inside. But we also realised this was our opportunity to change Creative yet again and look at new ways of doing things. We have emerged strong and bold.

### **Our People, Our Strength:**

A leader leads from the front. Leads by example. I have always tried to follow this. At Creative, we do not have staff or employees, but we have team members. We consider ourselves

to be a family. We care about the men and women who work for us. Our people are our only asset. So, grooming them, inspiring them and mentoring them is what we consider to be our path to success.

### **Word of the Wise- "It is we who must change, think afresh and show the world we mean business"**

The day the private sector stakeholders in Indian tourism understand and appreciate the need & necessity for self-improvement and continuing education, you shall see a new Indian Tourism emerge. I have no hope from our government institutions. Everything that India has achieved in tourism in the past 20 years has solely been on the backs of the private sector. If we want a brighter tomorrow for India, it is we who must change, think afresh and show the world we mean business. Pay heed - "Only a fool expects different results from doing the same thing again and again."

### **Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:**

My primary mentor has been my father. But I have also had so many people along my journey, some far senior to me and some junior, that have affected my thinking and approach. I like to observe, listen and then take that spark into what I do. But if I was to pinpoint one thing, it was back in B-school where one of my professors once said, "Telling an entrepreneur how to run his company is like telling a partner how to raise their child". So true. I saw that in how I approached my father, and it took me a while to learn how to adjust myself when working with a very successful A-type personality like he was. I see that in myself in how I work with people. Real entrepreneurs can be a very difficult lot.

# A HOTELIER AT HEART AND A LEADER LEADING BY EXAMPLE

## JK MOHANTY

CMD, SWOSTI GROUP

*Well-known as the pioneer of Odisha's burgeoning hotel industry and the recipient of 'Odisha Living Legend Awards (Entrepreneurship)', JK Mohanty is the most admired leader in the industry and an iconic hotel veteran in the state of Odisha. He has not just successfully put up several boutique hotels under the Swosti brand in the temple city but has also played a pivotal role in promoting Odisha on a global scale. His business sojourn of over four decades including his struggle to start from scratch and his zeal to work for the betterment of the state's hotel and tourism industry has made Mohanty earn a remarkable reputation. From working in close cooperation with the state government to putting forth the recommendations to the Government for quick implementation and to donning several roles in the associations, Mohanty is a true example of a leader leading by example. Proving the quote "age is just a number" right, this dynamic man embodies the values of a persistent and innovative leader who has an appetite to keep going and growing*



### Passion, perseverance and parent's support made Swosti what it is today:

When I was a student, I had dreamt to become an entrepreneur and was always curious to be an employer and not an employee. After graduating with B.A. (Hons.) from Delhi University & completing a special Training course in Hotel Sales, Marketing & Planning under CORNELL UNIVERSITY, the USA in the year 1971, I wanted to do hotel management in Austria but when I applied I was informed that there is only one vacancy left but by the time I arranged funds, that vacancy was occupied and I had to let go off my dream of doing hotel management course abroad. However, my passion for hoteliering did not die.

I started Swosti Hotel in 1984 and the major credit goes to my parents for their utmost support. The inspiration and support that I got from my mother who mortgaged her jewellery worth INR 1.00 lakh and gave me money and seed capital to start my business, was truly a blessing. For me, she had already become a bigger entrepreneur who took the risk of mortgaging her jewellery at that time just to support my dream. My father, who was in the construction business, was a very hard worker whom I never saw taking a leave from his responsibilities. Seeing them working so hard to earn a good life for us was truly inspirational for me. I then just dedicated myself and started contributing in a manner where society would benefit in general. My passion for good food and luxury living motivated me to venture into the hotel business and 1984 turned into a milestone

“ My passion for good food and luxury living motivated me to venture into the hotel business and 1984 turned into a milestone year as I started my career in Hotel Swosti

year as I started my career in Hotel Swosti (now known as Swosti Grand).

### Swosti- a brand offering personal comfort and satisfaction:

The USP of Swosti has always been "Once our Guest, Forever our Friend". Swosti Group, in its constant endeavour to provide the best of services, has been the pioneer in the state of Odisha's hotel industry since 1981. Having a very strong corporate clientele, we give our utmost attention to every personal comfort and satisfaction to our every guest (be it leisure, business, or wellness). Our professional team will ensure that every possible comfort is extended during their stay with us. At Swosti Group, we are committed to making a difference every day; continually getting better to keep ourselves at the top. We strive to understand our clients' needs by listening to their requirements and responding in a competent, accurate and timely fashion. We upgrade, design and deliver our services and products to address their needs.

### Pinning Odisha on the MICE map:

During the 90's, one of the most significant challenges that we were facing as an Indian state was the acute shortage of a big conference hall because of which Odisha was not able to host any

mega national/international level conferences/exhibitions. I thought if other states are offering such facilities, then why not Odisha? With the grace of the almighty, by the blessings of my parents, my superiors and my dedication to bringing in more corporate crowd to the state, I ventured to set up SWOSTI Premium Ltd. in 2000 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha with the highest room inventory and largest Convention Centre in Eastern India which also had a Discotheque, Health Club, Swimming Pool and more.

### Training and team motivation- the core values at Swosti:

The first and primary object of Swosti Group is to bring down the guest complaints to ZERO level and for this, training is quite significant and coordination between workers and supervision of their work by the supervisors is equally important. Further, to keep our staff motivated to work with all the dedication, we are adopting various strategies such as regular training, incentives, rewards, promotions, house parties, inviting their family members for a complimentary stay at any of the Swosti Hotels & Resorts. This has helped us immensely in not just keeping our staff happy and motivated but also ensuring the highest level of guest satisfaction.



# THE FABULOUS 'FEMPREENEUR'

## PRIYANKA NIJHAWAN

DIRECTOR – REPRESENTATIONS, NIJHAWAN GROUP

*A versatile professional, a go-getter for perfection and truly the leading lady of our tourism industry, Priyanka Nijhawan is an ideal example of beauty and brains personified. An inspiration to the aspiring woman entrepreneurs and a mentor to many in the industry, Priyanka is known to be a seasoned expert with over a decade of experience in leading the representation vertical of Nijhawan Group as well as in leveraging key channels through her strong trade relations. Under her supervision, the Nijhawan Group has to its credit an amazing portfolio of top tourism boards including Dubai Tourism, luxurious international hospitality brands and top global attractions. Topper at the Delhi University, "Best Student" at the Kings College London, the Chairwoman for CII- Indian Women Network - Delhi Chapter, "Leading Woman Entrepreneur of the Year" and more- she has defined her success with poise, time and again, making integrity and efficiency her foremost values*



### **Zeal to excel in a field that is competitive for women, kept me moving forward:**

There is no right way to be inspired to be an entrepreneur. I am often asked this question which helps me self-reflecting on my journey from being a homemaker to heading one of India's largest Representations- Nijhawan Group. My interest to begin this journey was irked at a roadshow that we hosted for Address Hotels + Resorts when I found myself very interested in the Sales and Marketing part of the meeting. During the same time, we were looking to expand our representation division and I was keen to get on the steering wheel to get this started! My educational background is in math and computer science and certainly, I never envisioned working in this line. But the zeal to excel in a field that is competitive, especially for women, has helped me so far in establishing the brand.

### **Nijhawan Group- banking on its strong market and global presence:**

Nijhawan Group is one of the oldest travel conglomerates in India. We take pride in providing the best services possible to all our clients. We are a team of seasoned professionals from the travel, luxury lifestyle and hospitality space- people who share a passion and track record in delivering high-impact and goal-oriented campaigns through strong communications and relationship-driven strategies. Our strong market



**Coming from an entirely different educational background, I was lucky to be married into a family that understood and trusted me while initially establishing myself in this industry**

presence in India along with a strong network within the travel trade has helped us stand apart.

### **Commitment and consistency helped clear the roadblocks:**

Coming from an entirely different educational background, I was lucky to be married into a family that understood and trusted me while initially establishing myself in this industry. Picking the right combination team was equally stressful as you have no idea how the team will work together even if the candidates are right on paper and efficient working alone or on their own. But more after 12 years in the business, I have been fortunate enough to reach newer heights of excellence with commitment and consistency.

### **Work-life balance = happy workspace:**

I think the most important thing to keep the team going is to create an environment within the workspace to maintain their work-life balance. I also strongly believe, that when you combine the energy, knowledge and skills of a motivated group of people, then you and your team can accomplish anything you set your minds to.

### **Word of the Wise- "The government in India should work towards flexible policies":**

The Indian middle-class segment holds the maximum potential for spending on travel but has limitations due to financial constraints and liability. The government in India should work towards flexible policies for increasing their disposable income in order to create more opportunities to spend on their intended travel.

# YOUNG REVOLUTIONARY IN INDIA'S TRAVEL INSURANCE SPACE

## DEV KARVAT

FOUNDER & CEO, ASEGO

*Thanks to the young and smart minds like Dev Karvat who have had a greater role to play in revolutionising the concept of travel insurance and bringing forth its importance as a 'much-needed' pre-requisite while travelling. With hordes of experience and expertise, Karvat has continuously grown to offer the new-age travel ancillary services with a customer-centric approach. And the living testimony is his brainchild-Asego, a company with a strong foothold in the travel and health insurance sector. From starting to weave his entrepreneurial dreams at 16 to working across reputed corporate brands and to eventually growing his brand name with innovation and sheer dedication, Karvat is truly a go-getter in every sense*



### The entrepreneurial visions driven by the passion for 'travel' :

At 16, I found myself at an insurance company to help a friend get travel insurance for his Visa the next day. I managed to secure the necessary policy issued within 5 hours, during times when it would take 2 whole days to get a policy from an insurance company. My friend who was also a travel agent was thrilled to get it that quick. He asked me if I could deliver insurance at the same speed more often. What began as a means of earning pocket money eventually made me realise the gaps in the industry. That's when I decided to start a business that addresses every pain point in the industry, adding to the fact that I was extremely passionate about –TRAVEL.

### Asego – An undoubted, best-in-class travel assistance and insurance leader

The most significant differentiating factor when it comes to Asego is that we are the only dedicated providers of Travel Assistance and Insurance in India. Our special focus on travel and strong ties with travel agent partners helps us to understand their business inside out. We offer their customers customized travel protection to suit the current times, which in turn adds immense value to their business.

Moreover, with collaboration at the core of our organizational philosophy, we conduct regular engagement programmes to pay attention to their needs regularly and ensure that our clients can offer relevant services to their customers. For the travellers, our focus is not limited to just claims reimbursement. We offer 24X7 global assistance services such as doctor-on-call, emergency evacuation and more. Also, during emergencies, we immediately bring together all stakeholders such as the affected family, the underwriter, the hospital and more on the same

“ It's not only the desire to succeed that drives you towards your goals but it's the hard work and commitment that takes you to the next level

platform to ensure that assistance is provided with the fastest TAT.

### Challenges become an obstacle only when you bow down to them; I chose not to:

Like any other business, we've had our share of highs and lows. During our initial days of business about 22 years ago, the challenges were enormous, from brand building, hiring, keeping up with technology interventions, to privatization and FDI in the insurance sector. I believe that challenges become an obstacle only when you bow down to them; I chose not to and constantly innovated to ensure our business stayed ahead of time.

In the recent past, with all other organizations, our business was also affected by the pandemic. However, the team adapted to the situation and worked alongside our partners to explore the possibilities of designing products and services relevant to recent times. Moreover, we also sharpened our focus on travel assistance services tailored to support travellers affected by distressing situations.

### Making work a source of satisfaction for team:

To keep the team motivated, it is critical to have a culture of collaboration in the workplace where everyone feels valued for their inputs and

contribution. Therefore, I always solicit opinions and ideas from all the team members before devising and implementing any major business strategies. Besides, I also feel that one of the biggest factors accelerating employee burnout and attrition is the lack of work-life balance. Hence, I always encourage my team to not overwork and leave their deadlines and targets at work.

Furthermore, providing opportunities for my team to enrich their skills and maintaining a positive work environment has helped me keep my team motivated for more than two decades.

### Word of the Wise- “Relevant innovations in Travel and Tourism Infrastructure will propel India to the next level”:

Greater initiatives by the Ministry of Tourism such as the launch of e-visas, promotion of the Incredible India campaign and niche tourism products across the globe, along with tech innovations will help India to stand out in the international tourism market. Further, we now live in a world governed by algorithms and I feel that relevant innovations in Travel and Tourism Infrastructure will propel India to the next level in terms of sustainable international tourism.

### Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:

The most important life lesson I learned is from my father, Late. Mr. Ashokbhai Karvat. He taught me early in my career, that it's not only the desire to succeed that drives you towards your goals but it's the hard work and commitment that takes you to the next level.

Further, I look up to everyone in the Travel Trade especially after they have all risen from one of the most challenging eras for the industry- the pandemic, however, one special mention would be Sudhir Patil- Founder, Veena World, as his journey is truly inspirational.





**The Standard**

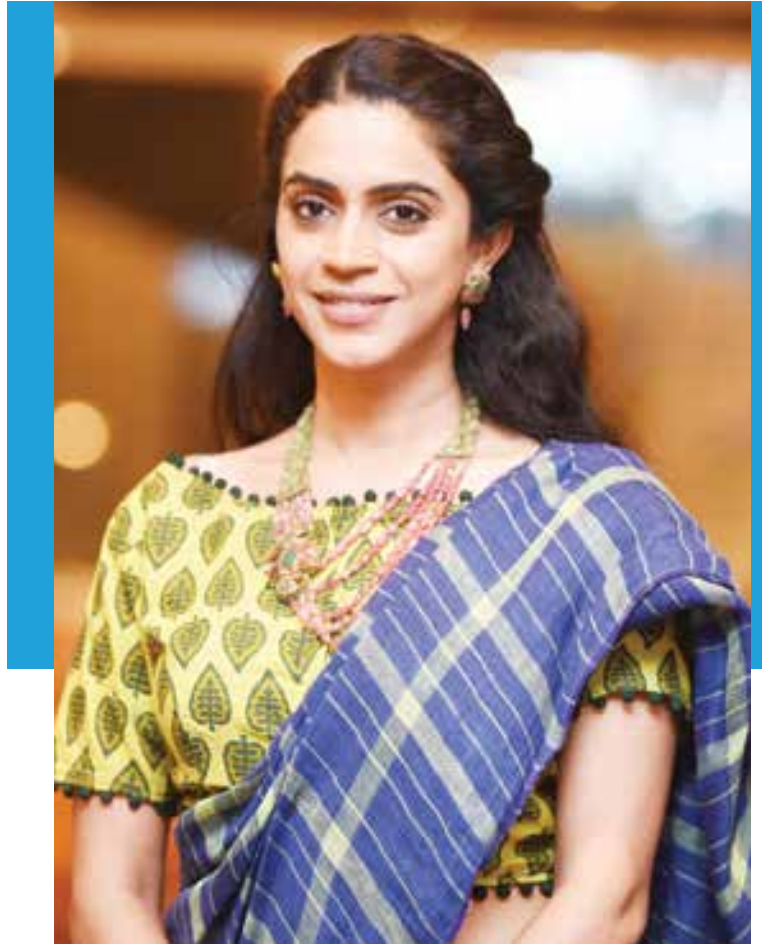
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# ASTUTE, ACHIEVEMENT-DRIVEN 'WOM'PRENEUR

**KOMAL SETH,**  
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, LINKIN REPS

*There is nothing as admirable as a smart, success-driven woman entrepreneur and Komal Seth is one living example. For a woman like her who ventured into the travel business almost 18 years ago—the time when the industry was quite a bit male-dominated, it was her identity, passion and the will to sit on the steering wheel that helped her drive towards success. With years of extensive leadership experience in managing operations, client servicing, corporate communication for several hotel brands, tourism boards and airlines, Seth grew as a philanthropist in the true sense. A young, self-made 'wom'preneur that she truly is, Seth believes in leading by example. She not just gracefully wears multiple hats in her business vertical but is also a happy soul that attracts just the positive vibes. Sitting down for a casual conversation with Seth in her 'greens-loving' office feels a whiff of fresh air. With her 'You-have-one-life-to-live' approach and the commitment to following her heart in the business while walking just the right path, Seth aims to empower many others with her happy success stories*



### **A day that changed my life for good:**

I clearly remember the day when I was working on an important project and was challenged and demeaned. However, somewhere inside, I knew I had done something extraordinary and at that particular moment, I decided that I would work for myself and make it count as a happy journey. I consider it an unforgettable day for me; if that wouldn't have happened, I would not have been the person I am today.

### **Preaching and encouraging 'to be different':**

Finding that motivation and taking action when initial solutions do not work are the keys to excelling in the respective businesses. For me, as well as for each member of my team, it matters deeply to be different from others. Whenever I am motivated to solve a problem, there is nothing that can stop me, whereas if my team is motivated to solve a problem, we together find a solution.

### **If you believe in yourself, miracles do happen:**

Just like any other business, there were quite many hurdles that I had to go through. But trusting your instincts is the key to every solution. Readers here might be interested to learn that when I started my company, I was the youngest female entrepreneur in the industry. Besides this, my first five bank loans which were applied to start the business were rejected. But then eventually, life is all about falling and rising back again and for me, finally,

“Whenever I am motivated to solve a problem, there is nothing that can stop me, whereas if my team is motivated to solve a problem, we together find a solution”

the breakthrough happened. Because if you believe in yourself, miracles do happen.

### **Binding the team beyond just communications:**

Creating a healthy office environment does not need to be hindered by communication. A clear and frequent exchange of information and ideas has always helped my team accomplish its goals.

### **Word of the Wise: “Developing honest connections with tourism products and increasing market visibility is the key”**

It is only the attractiveness and accessibility of destinations that limit the geographical distribution of businesses. Digital businesses, such as online travel agencies and accommodation platforms, have needed a change to transform international tourism.

It should be accomplished by developing honest connections with tourism products and services anywhere in the world in real-time, as well as significantly increasing market visibility for international tourism.

### **Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:**

During my years in the travel industry, I have learned that if the opportunity intrigues you, say yes. Figure out how you're going to pull it off later. But get yourself in the trenches. Get your hands dirty, and know, deep down, that you have what it takes to get it done.

In the tourism industry, I look up to Jyoti Mayal who is currently the President of the largest nodal travel and tourism association - TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India). She is an extraordinary, strong and successful woman with a 'never-say-die' attitude which truly inspires me.



# THE BOLD & BRILLIANT BRAND STRATEGIST

## LUBAINA SHEERAZI

CEO & CO-FOUNDER, BRANDit

*Like many others on this prominent list of entrepreneurs, Lubaina Sheerazi stepped away from her thriving career in the fashion industry to make a profession out of her passion for travel. Be it her successful roles in marketing destinations, her broad industry experience, her exceptional capabilities and smart strategies to launch new verticals for the India outbound market, Sheerazi has always had her finger on the pulse of the travel sector. Even though her stint at Blue Square Consultants was a turning point where she played a contributory role in promoting Oman and several other key brands in the Indian market, her brainchild-BRANDit proved her strengths in working well through the intricacies of outbound travel. Taking challenges head-on as golden opportunities to learn and thrive and moving forth like the true brand strategist that she is, Sheerazi is counted among the top experts in her field*



### **Making a natural leap into entrepreneurship:**

Early in my career, I had the opportunity to experiment with various industries and roles, which eventually led me to embark on my entrepreneurial journey. It appeared to be a natural progression. Leaping into entrepreneurship can be intimidating, but sometimes all it takes is a gentle nudge in the right direction. Through my journey, I learned the intricacies of the tourism industry and I like to think beyond what has been, constantly learning and adapting to new ways of doing things and innovating our approach.

### **BRANDit banking on the team's expertise and skill sets:**

Our greatest asset, in my opinion, is our team's experience, diverse skill sets and understanding of the pulse of the Indian traveller as well as the Indian travel trade. It is not simply having the right skill set but also having the ability to apply it where appropriate that allows a team to stand out. We aim to bridge the gap and maximise the impact for both trade and consumer audiences by leveraging our expertise in public relations, sales, and marketing communications.

### **Effective strategizing helped in sailing through the challenging times:**

The pandemic taught us all how to be resilient, both professionally and personally. We had to face every challenge that came with it, especially since we were in the tourism



**Many times in my life, whether personal or professional, I have faced adversity, which has taught me to pick up the pieces and forge on**

representation business. Given travel bans and other restrictions, the tourism boards followed the required protocol and chose to reduce their marketing-related activities to promote their destinations. It was a difficult time to navigate, but it taught us a lot about adaptability and adjusting to the times. By conceptualising and executing India's first virtual roadshow, we were one of the first representation companies to use technology as a tool to engage and educate the travel trade fraternity. We also used the digital platform to create and improve a brand presence through various tools such as online webinars, training, and so on. These strategies were not only cost-effective, but they also filtered the best profile of travel agents for each destination.

### **Making the team feel valued:**

Simple actions demonstrate to team members that they are cared for. Small courtesy is what gives a person and a conversation value. The genuine effort to make my team feel appreciated and valued is critical to me; I

believe these two elements combine to form an organic factor that drives motivation. In my leadership style, a balance of emotional intelligence and logic is also essential.

### **Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:**

The lessons have been numerous, but one that I have consistently applied in my life journey is to look a challenge in the eye and wink, adapt to circumstances, and move on when appropriate. I'm reminded of Rudyard Kipling's line – 'And lose and start again at your beginnings'. I believe that many times in my life, whether personal or professional, I have faced adversity, which has taught me to pick up the pieces and forge on, as this line suggests. When it comes to mentorship, I have had the good fortune to look up to my father because he only preached what he practised and watching him live his life with that principle has been a core learning. And, once again, in the tourism industry, there have been several people from whom I have been able to pick up on what has strongly resonated with me.

# PRAGMATIC, PASSIONATE AND BORN TO BREAK BARRIERS

## ALEFIYA SINGH

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, IRIS Reps

*The flame of passion, a burning desire to accomplish what you love is the first requisite to starting your own empire. Driven by a similar notion, Alefiya Singh never needed a nudge to venture into the industry; she was rather born into it. From how she nurtured that seed of desire to how she found the business inspirations and turned those passions into reality, Singh has been on the roll ever since she launched IRIS Reps in 2011. Today, under her dynamic supervision, IRIS represents some of the renowned global hotel chains, destinations and DMCs in India. With her impressive abilities to develop the business with a client-centric approach, adapt to the aesthetic demands of the travel industry and her exceptional marketing skills, Singh believes in championing everything that comes her way because deep down somewhere she knew that she was born to break barriers and make a difference*



### Doing and seeing things differently:

I was never truly satisfied with the status quo and there was something in me that always wanted more. I think that's one way you find out that you were destined to be an entrepreneur. Something in you just feels different. Your reward system is different. The way you see and relate to the world is much broader than the people around you. You just do and see things differently and naturally.

For the most part, it is unconscious until it becomes conscious. But I don't think there's a particular time "when" you know that you want to become an entrepreneur. You just somehow go with what feels good and gives your life a purpose.

### IRIS Reps- a brand that has won trust and connections

IRIS Reps is an ISO-certified company for hospitality and tourist destinations that believes in the philosophy of 'Connect and Convert'. With over a decade of credibility and operations in India, IRIS Reps is a trusted partner to some of the most prestigious travel brands internationally. We have provided our dedicated services to more than 30+ clients over the past decade including Beachcomber Hotels and Resorts, Mauritius, Regal Hotels Hong Kong and China, Coco Collection Maldives which comes under Preferred Hotels & Resorts to name a few.

We are extremely well-connected within



**I reach out to people to take their advice, learn from their wisdom and at times, follow the path they often take**

the travel industry like Tour Operators, FIT/ MICE, Corporates, Wedding & Event Planners. We launch the brand across India with Travel Marketing, Content, Digital Solutions, Media Strategy, Public Relations, Sales and Influencer Marketing.

### Crossing over the challenges:

I have faced many obstacles, including ensuring the businesses in which I have put my blood, sweat and tears, continue to stay afloat. On top of that, retaining many of the employees that we were trying to protect and reassure, was a monumental task when you are struggling with burnout yourself. But losing faith and confidence was no option.

We indeed faced many challenges in today's ultra-competitive business world. Fortunately, with the help of our resources, we successfully tackled those problems.

### Piloting a team of happy and highly motivated people:

IRIS Family is known for its happy team with

high morale. I allow them independence in their tasks and serve as a mentor to help them develop their strengths. This immensely helps in sustaining motivation amongst them since there is no better way to make your employees feel valued and supported.

### Word of the Wise- "Making tourism in India more sustainable"

It is essential to create proper guidelines and regulations for making tourism in India more sustainable. This, I believe, would give the much-required push to India as a safe and sustainable tourism destination.

### Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:

Most of the learnings in my life have come from the people around me. I reach out to people to take their advice, learn from their wisdom and at times, follow the path they often take. The key learning was failures are bound to happen. You should always be prepared to handle them. Handling failure and moving forward, no matter what, is something that defines us.





**IRIS Reps connecting you to:**

**TOP HOTEL BRANDS**  
**SPECTACULAR DESTINATIONS**  
**THRILLING ADVENTURE EXPEDITIONS**



**Maldives**



**Maldives**



**Sri Lanka**



**Hong Kong**



**Mauritius**



**Azerbaijan**



**Fiji**



**South Africa**



**Australia & New Zealand**



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# LEADING THE LEGACY WITH INNOVATION

## RUCHI UBERAI

DIRECTOR, AMRITARA HOTELS & RESORTS

*An idea, a deep passion to operate the business, a committed work ethic, a zeal to grow every day and the ability to overcome failures— that's what Ruchi Uberai's morning tea is made of. The art of hoteliering runs through her nerves as it was a special gift from her father, Gurmeet Uberai, a known name in the hotel industry. Learning to rope in the opportunities from him while adding her innovative abilities and integrity to the secret success recipe of Amritara Hotels & Resorts, Uberai has proven to be that woman entrepreneur who is determined to rise and shine. A true team player who lives by her beliefs and portrays her Amritara squad as the frontrunners, Uberai has lofty aims of taking the brand to greater heights and build #unforgettableexperiences for the guests*



### Entrepreneurial opportunity not offered on a platter; I earned it:

I started my career with Oberoi Hotels & Resorts in 2011; back then it never struck me that I wanted to be an entrepreneur. Like any other fresher starting new in the industry, I had the zeal and enthusiasm to do something of my own. My father always wanted me to take Amritara Hotels & Resorts forward but he too wanted me to learn and grow from scratch. Only after noticing my hard work and dedication to my profession, he offered me to join Amritara, but the designation and management role that I hold today was not offered on a platter; I joined the brand as a GM of one of our smallest inventory hotels. The challenges were different but each offered a good learning experience. Being an entrepreneur looks and sounds like a fancy job but one has to carve their own niche to be a successful entrepreneur. And my aim as an entrepreneur is to take my brand to greater heights and build unforgettable experiences for my guests. I still don't consider myself an entrepreneur I am just heading a family of creative and innovative minds that are building this brand brick by brick and step by step.

During my initial years, I even faced the major challenge of being a female leader as people were not taking me seriously; everyone thought that this designation was handed over to me on a plate but that's not the case; I established myself, proved the management of my professional capabilities and paved my own path.

### We don't beat drums; we learn and expand each day:

We are not your typical hotel brand with cookie-cutter rooms and standardized practices we are all about experiences, we treat our guests



**I still don't consider myself an entrepreneur I am just heading a family of creative and innovative minds that are building this brand brick by brick and step by step**

as our family we go out of our way at times to give our guests what they want. We are a tailor-made brand that has over the years changed the definition of 'Namaskar Hospitality' we believe in greeting our guests with a smile, a hug or a memory that will remain with them for a lifetime. Unlike other brands we at Amritara, don't beat drums and claim to be industry pioneers; we are learning, growing and expanding each day.

### Female entrepreneurs finally breaking stereotypes:

Unlike any other industry for a female to excel and be in leadership position was definitely one of the biggest challenges our gender faced. But I'm glad to be a part of this generation where women are breaking the stereotypes; they are not just at the helm of leadership positions but are excelling in their fields as well. The dynamics of the hotel industry have drastically changed and earlier what was perceived to be male dominant fields in the industry are now successfully headed by females. This paradigm shift in the gender role was the need of the hour and I'm overjoyed to see this change finally happening.

### Putting people first:

I strongly believe that your employees/colleagues are your company's biggest asset, and empowering and engaging with your staff is

a strong tool to boost their morale. As a leader, I believe listening to your employees' ideas, offering feedback and valuing their inputs will not just empower your team but will also build a high-performing team. One of the key qualities of a leader is their ability to control their emotions and stay calm and collected when faced with hardships. When it comes to empowering people, you need to always maintain positivity. Demonstrating appreciation and basic courtesy is critical to empowering people. No matter how small or insignificant the task maybe – make sure you're saying thanks.

### Word of the Wise: "The industry needs to be more dynamic in its approach"

We need to walk past 'INCREDIBLE INDIA' the world knows India is incredible and we have proved that with our world-class services and hospitality. Now is the time to UP our game, sell customized packages as the industry needs to be more dynamic in its approach. Sticking to standardized practices is good but doing something extraordinary is even better.

### Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:

My mentor, my father Gurmeet Uberai taught me that "It's Okay to Make Mistakes" but one should not dwell and crib about them. We need to learn, improve and grow beyond our mistakes. To err is human to learn from them is divine.





*Rohit Shetty*

MICE Tourism Ambassador for  
Kazakhstan & Founder of Kazin DMC



*Vishal Jain*

(Director CIS)  
with Team Kazakhstan

## We are the Best when it comes to Kazakhstan

Kazin DMC is the most trusted, Innovative & Reliable incoming agency for Kazakhstan with offices in India, Kazakhstan, UAE & Belarus. We are recognised by Kazakh Tourism Board & Kazakhstan Tourism Association. With our own team & fleet of vehicles on ground, our partners are assured of top-end quality

### Specialising in:

- ◆ MICE
- ◆ Leisure tourism
- ◆ Golf tours
- ◆ Adventure tours
- ◆ Eco tours
- ◆ Ladies Tours
- ◆ Milestone celebrations
- ◆ Weddings
- ◆ Ski tours
- ◆ Educations trips

### Trusted by:



# THE VERSATILE SUPERWOMAN OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

## MAMTA PALL

FOUNDER & CEO- FootprintsWorldwide

*Call her the 'Leading Lady of Outbound Industry' or the true 'Superwoman of Travel', Mamta Pall has gained a reputation like no other female industry leader. A true industry professional with almost two decades of colossal experience, Pall is driven by her passion for leadership, her expertise in sales and marketing, international business development and powerful management. She was one of those few people during the pandemic who got motivated by the impulse, seized the right opportunity and created a brand she proudly calls her own. The launch of her brainchild - 'FootprintsWorldwide' has not just defined her role as a woman leader known for her versatility but also her incredible journey she has had in the industry over the years*



### **Taking on the right opportunity at the right time:**

It was a few years ago when I did realize that I wanted to become an entrepreneur, however, as the saying goes, life always has a different and better plan. It was during the pandemic that I was absolutely sure about starting my own venture and the rest, as they say, is history. I felt that there wasn't a better time to implement my plans.

### **Market-understanding worked in favour:**

I think it's the hands-on knowledge of the market and the uniqueness in approach towards all aspects of Sales and Marketing that truly distinguishes us from others. Further, the ability to understand that with new trends and ever-evolving techniques around us, we believe in

learning, unlearning and learning again to cater to the expectations of our clients and deliver results effectively.

### **Going with the flow to fight the uncertainty:**

The biggest challenge of being an entrepreneur has been to maintain patience levels, waiting for the situation in the industry to improve. I had registered the company with just one client that we were representing. But we grew gradually as things improved.

### **Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:**

A few lessons that I have learned from my mentors are 1) To always stay focused on one's goals and objectives, never lose concentration,

2) To take life as it comes, one day at a time & 3) To always be myself, despite any situation in life. There are many people that I look up to in the tourism industry but there are the ones who have inspired me the most. The list starts with Vasudha Sondhi, who has been a true mentor, friend, philosopher and guide. I have not just learned a lot from her professionally, but she has also taught me several important life lessons. I also admire Himmat Anand, Anil Parashar, Dolly Sahn, Rajeev Kohli and last but not least, Kanika Hasrat. They have all inspired me in many ways and I believe would continue to motivate me. Apart from being exceptional leaders, the one thing common amongst them all is that they are wonderful human beings.

# THE VISA CONNOISSEUR

## IMRAN KHAN

CEO AND MD, VISAWAAL.COM

*Starting his career as a grass-root worker to inventing his own realm in the visa facilitation space, Imran Khan is no new face in the travel industry. Keeping humbleness at the core of his business relations while cementing his stature as one of the talented visa experts, Khan kept moving forward from the time he started visawaale.com and the rest is history! He has been expanding his company's horizons and has risen to sheer prominence at quite a young age*



### **The 'humble' beginnings:**

I started my career in a Visa Travel Company as a grass-root worker. I was quite active and functioned as a Visa executive extremely well and therefore, respected for my efficiency and commitment by one and all. After working for over 10 years in the company, I dreamt of starting out as an entrepreneur. It was in the year 1996 that I began my career as a budding entrepreneur in the visa travel industry. Once I took off keeping my humble background, strong work ethic and industry knowledge at the core, there was no looking back. To date, our performance as a company shows an upward graph and speaks volumes.

### **Having my way with business:**

To run a business, I always preach the two most important things- being modest and fair and leading by example. I have always believed that if you are being humble while your business dealings, it not just retains a long-term client relationship but also motivates you to inspire others. Secondly, being a self-made entrepreneur, I have always been curious to learn new things from different people. I do not restrict myself to the traditional boundaries of situational leadership which helps me lead my team effectively. .

### **Appreciating the team is crucial:**

All the team members at my company are well

taken care of in all respects of welfare. There are tests conducted every month -as a competition- and the best out of the performing lot gets a medal and his/her name is displayed on the Achievers Board. The activities like these keep the team motivated as well as make them feel appreciated for all the hard work they do.

### **I learned; I grew and am still growing**

There are several senior people in the travel industry that I look up to and it is, therefore, difficult to name one single person as my mentor as I have learned a lot from each one of them through various phases of my work life. Imbibing each of their philosophies in my professional life, has been quite a useful tool for me.



# SMART, STRONG AND SPIRITED

## KARISHMA KAZI

FOUNDER AND OWNER - BLACK TURTLE REPS

*The passion for travel and a will to overcome obstacles has driven Karishma Kazi to become an entrepreneur in the representation space. Currently, her company "Black Turtle Reps" is representing the luxurious Cora Cora Maldives in India. Beginning from an HR background, moving out to join her family's travel business, proving her unmatched dedication for travel and terrific promotional skills in Explora to finally, building a brand she calls her own- Kazi is a go-getter in every sense!*



### Driven by the love for travel:

Entrepreneurship is always a sort of calling; in my case, it came naturally because of my utmost love for travel. It's a lifestyle that many people know they want to lead before they're even able to do so. I, therefore, considered myself an entrepreneur much before I became one, but I came to that realization after the year 2016.

### Representing luxury at Black Turtle:

Black Turtle is a boutique-sized luxury travel representation company known for focused sales, marketing and PR activities. We are committed to bringing our clients tailor-made solutions and tangible results, that exceed expectations, every time.

### Self-confidence is the key:

Challenges have always been a part of the entrepreneurial journey. But I strongly believe that

with self-confidence and strong willpower, we can beat all the storms. Being focused and determined plays a vital role too. On the professional front, I did face some challenges in the initial phase of my entrepreneurial journey but everything came on the line when I ventured into my business. Being from the HR background and then sinking my teeth into travel to set up my company was an adventurous journey. Plus, my know-how in HR helped me hire the right talent for my company. Since then, there is no looking back as we have the right people working with the right kind of motivation.

### Team building is imperative:

As a leader, I have always believed in giving a free hand to my team members to operate as per their flexibility and experience in their own domain. Team building exercises and creating a warm

environment are the key to having the best team as well as to progressing as a company.

### Word of the Wise:

Post-Covid, we all have learned to live with the New Normal and therefore, creativity and innovation play a key role in the way we market our destinations. Hence, thinking out of the box is the only way to move forward.

### Empowering Life Mantra and Mentors:

Over the years in this industry, I have learned that nobody else but you- are your biggest competition. I always strive to do my best every time to out beat myself and my abilities.

I look up to my father Sunil Bijlani - (VWI Travel Management LLP) as my ideal role model in the travel industry. He is a renowned veteran and has been in the industry for the last 39 years.

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## IATO raises concerns on the issues creating hurdles for revival of inbound tourism

Rajiv Mehra, President IATO has requested the government to remove hurdles which are creating hindrances in revival of inbound tourism to our country and also has requested to help in getting refund of travel agents from Jet Airways.



Rajiv Mehra

In his communication to the Ministry of Tourism, Mehra has requested the Tourism Minister to impress upon the Government to withdraw requirement of submission of self-declaration form on the online Air Suvudha Portal for foreign nationals. Presently, all foreign tourists who intend to visit the country need to submit a self-declaration form and attach documents which foreign tourists especially the elder person find very difficult. Due to this, many foreign tourists reported to have been offloaded and now are skipping to travel India.

In a letter to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Mehra has brought to the knowledge

the foreign travellers are facing while travelling in India due to compulsory web check-in forced by all the domestic airlines. Mehra has mentioned that basic purpose of web check-in is to avoid rush at the baggage counters but the very purpose of the same is defeated as all travelers have to stand in queue for handing over check-in baggage as there are no separate queues or counters for those who have already done the web check-in. Also airlines are charging Rs. 200/- per traveller who has not done the web check-in. Hence, IATO has requested to abolish

any additional charges for the boarding pass.

In an another letter, IATO has also raised an issue of pending refunds of the travel agents from Jet Airways for over two years. Mehra has stated to DGCA that large amounts is lying with Jet Airways accounts for over two years towards the amount paid by the ticketing agents which Jet Airways has not refunded in spite of repeated reminders by the agents. In addition to this, advance deposits towards group bookings made by the travel agents for the ticketing of groups are also with Jet Airways. IATO has requested that operation of Jet Airways flights should be kept in abeyance till the time refunds are made as well as it should be made compulsory for all the airlines operating in India to give bank guarantee / financial security to be kept with DGCA or an appropriate Statutory body to protect the interest of travel agents/tour operators/airline travellers.



## TAAI meets Sanjay Verma in Ministry of External Affairs regarding visa issues

On June 17, 2022 Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI had an interaction with Sanjay Verma, Secretary - West, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The meeting request was made to the MEA to discuss and deliberate on the delay in the issuance of Visas to the United States, Schengen and other countries. In a communication addressed to the Minister of External Affairs TAAI sought interference of MEA through a government-to-government dialogue to address the issues.

TAAI has been regularly taking up issues related to the ease of travel & tourism with concerned ministries & stakeholders & thus increasing footfalls for outbound, inbound & domestic markets. While sharing the concerns of the industry with Verma, Mayal said that we at TAAI are seeking MEA's assistance by way of addressing the issues and challenges faced by the travel trade fraternity of India to make it more robust.

Mayal conveyed that the issuance of Visas to the United States, and many Schengen countries, especially Greece is a major hurdle that travel trade fraternity is facing these days. Members & clients have been reaching out to TAAI that they are unable to secure an appointment for visas for travellers & then the long delays in visa issuance with no proper communication is another challenge.

In addition, some missions keep the passports for an indefinite period resulting in uncertainty & cancellations which incur a huge cost to the traveller given that confirmed air tickets & hotel vouchers are a requirement for visa applications, which must be done away with, requested Mayal. Further, she conveyed that the extension of the free visas to India and the duration to be of minimum 6 months with multiple entries must be resumed immediately. In line with that, e-Visa must be reinstated for all countries including UK & Canada as pre covid, to boost inbound tourism.

Verma took the note of suggestions and issues and conveyed his assurance to look into some of the matters on priority.

## VFS Global to promote Bahrain Tourism in India

VFS Global has signed a contract with the Bahrain Tourism & Exhibitions Authority to serve as their Market-Based Representatives in India. In this role, VFS Global will be responsible for building trade relations with regional stakeholders, and promoting the destination through online and offline marketing, including social media, as well as public relations.

The contract was signed by Dr. Nasser Ali Qaedi, Chief Executive Officer, BTEA and Arzan Khambatta, Head – Tourism Services, VFS Global.

Khambatta said, “We thank Bahrain Tourism & Exhibitions Authority for their faith in VFS Global, and look forward to promoting Bahrain as an ideal destination for Indian travellers, be it for leisure, weddings or MICE. With rich cultural heritage, relaxing white sandy beaches, eclectic cuisines and adventure activities, the destination is a must-visit for the avid Indian traveller.”

Bahrain is well connected with India by their national carrier, Gulf Air, with direct flights



from 8 key cities - Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru Chennai, Hyderabad, Calicut, Kochi & Thiruvananthapuram. Air India also provides direct connectivity from India to Bahrain. Indian travellers are eligible for e-Visas to Bahrain for short-term visits.



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## TAFI signs MoU with IDFC first bank for digital payment solutions

Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has recently announced the signing of a MOU with IDFC first bank to facilitate the gamut of digital payments. TAFI members can avail of this opportunity to get digital payment platforms for their Agencies, like POS machines, Payment links and more. The rates negotiated between TAFI and IDFC First Bank will be a winning proposition for both entities.

With RHC = FS coming in from July 4, 2022, TAFI member agencies will have better options for improved working capital and cash flows. Member Agencies can contact the TAFI Secretariat or their local chapter for details.

## Vas Island and DCT Abu Dhabi host a Mega FAM with Indian travel agents for the 22nd IIFA

Experience Hub, the trade and promotion arm of Yas Island Abu Dhabi and a subsidiary of Miral and Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi (DCT) partnered to host 45 Indian leisure and MICE travel agents on a four-day familiarization trip to Abu Dhabi. The group was invited to be part of the glitz and glamour of the IIFA Awards along with discovering and participating in all of Abu Dhabi's and Yas Island's attractions.

Yas Island, one of the world's fastest growing leisure and leading entertainment destinations hosted the grandest celebration of the Indian Cinema; the 22nd International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) 2022. The event took place at the Etihad Arena, the Middle East's largest state-of-art indoor entertainment venue and was organized in collaboration with the Department of Culture and Tourism—Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) and Miral, Abu Dhabi's leading creator of immersive destinations and experiences.

## Cordelia Cruises aims at pumping in \$1 bn by 2025 to boost India operations

India-focused Cordelia Cruises is planning to pump in excess of USD 1 billion by 2025 for acquiring at least three cruise ships as it aims to target the domestic market, which has world's third-largest coastline of 7,500 kms, a top company official said.

The company's bullish outlook is in line with the government's projection of a 10-fold growth for this industry over the next decade. "India will do extremely well in the cruise sector. I am confident that in the next 5-7 years India will be one of the top five cruise destinations of the world, similar to China five years ago. We have aggressive expansion plans. We want to add at least three cruise vessels by 2025 that could cost over USD 1 billion,"



Waterways Leisure Tourism CEO Jurgen Bailom told a national news agency.

Cordelia is owned by Waterways Leisure Tourism - an arm of Dream Hotel Group - controlled by the Indian American hotelier Sant Singh Chatwal.

Bailom said with government's focus and support, the investment from this Indian venture could rise to even USD 1.5-2

billion to meet the growing appetite for cruising by Indians over the next few years. Many foreign cruise liners have already shown interest in entering India, he said. Asked about financing the expansion, Bailom said the Indian banking system does not have enough experience in vessel financing but there are "specialist financiers" for cruise liners.



## ITDC initiates foreign language training program for taxi drivers

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism launched Tourism Awareness Programme (TAP) for taxi, cab, and coach drivers to offer behavioural and soft skill training.

G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, IAS, MD, ITDC said, "As we strengthen our focus towards redefining the tourism segment, it is vital to recognize the efforts and contributions of important

segment such as Drivers of Tourists' transport. With the initiation of the Tourism Awareness Program, necessary steps toward the growth and learning of this sector would be undertaken. Ashok Institute of Hospitality & Tourism Management (AIH&TM); HRD Division of ITDC; is proud to be a part of this program."

The training programme has been designed very

professionally and is flexible in nature, keeping in mind the daily wage/earning pattern of the Drivers. Spread across 16 hours, it focuses on imparting knowledge about behavioural & soft skills, personal hygiene and grooming, basic acquaintance of foreign languages, first-aid administering etc. enabling the drivers to serve the tourists.



## Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau teams up with SITE

The Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau (ADCEB), part of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), has signed a strategic partnership with the Society of Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), in a move designed to position the Emirati capital as a significant player in the global incentive travel market.

The partnership enables DCT Abu Dhabi and ADCEB stakeholders to receive specialised professional certification and avail of SITE's educational programme of global incentive travel industry best practices. Year round access to SITE's incentive travel events and conferences is also included, providing networking and destination awareness and marketing opportunities for Abu Dhabi.

As part of the agreement, Abu Dhabi will host the SITE Executive Summit during the second annual edition of Abu Dhabi Business Events Week, organised by MCI Global, and set to be held on October 25 to 27, 2022 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre. During the summit, key ADCEB stakeholders will participate in SITE's Certified Incentive Specialist (CIS) qualification programme.



## Travelport chosen as US-Bangla Airlines' first GDS partner to push its strategic expansion

Travelport, a global technology company that powers travel bookings for hundreds of thousands of travel suppliers worldwide, and US-Bangla Airlines, the largest private airline in Bangladesh in terms of fleet size, announced today that they have reached a distribution agreement that will enable modern airline retailing and technology innovation that will support the airline's aggressive growth plans.

Travelport is the first Global Distribution System (GDS) partner of US-Bangla Airlines, and as part

of the agreement, will provide agency customers access to the airline's content via Travelport+, Travelport's next-generation travel retailing platform.

As travel industry recovery in Bangladesh is reaching pre-pandemic levels, this new relationship solidifies the value of modern, indirect channel retailing for airlines and agencies alike. Travelport agencies will benefit from seamless access to US-Bangla Airlines content, further enabling them to provide the most valuable, relevant offers for their travellers.



## ADTOI Elections to be held on August 6, 2022

The current management of Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) has decided to hold elections to elect the XIII Management Committee Team of the Association. The committee will comprise of six (6) Office Bearers and eight (8) Managing Committee members and the elections are going to be held on Saturday August 6, 2022. Varun Chandiook, Advocate has been appointed as the Returning Officer to conduct the elections in a free, fair and peaceful manner. Currently, the key office bearers are PP Khanna (President), Rajesh Arya (Vice President), Chetan Gupta (Hony. General Secretary), Dalip Gupta (Treasurer) and Anil K Rajput (Joint Secretary).



## Zanzibar appoints Zubin Karkaria as Goodwill Ambassador

Zubin Karkaria, Founder and CEO, VFS Global has been appointed the Goodwill Ambassador for tourism for Zanzibar by the Ministry of Information, Youth, Culture and Sports. Karkaria was among four leaders from distinguished walks chosen to help promote tourism-driven investments in the picturesque destination, off the east coast of Africa in Tanzania, through new avenues for sports, entertainment and culture.

"It is, of course, a great honour and privilege to be appointed as Goodwill Ambassador for the tourism vertical by the Ministry of Information, Youth, Culture and Sports. From the tourism perspective, I have

been an ardent admirer of Zanzibar's natural beauty, its warm, hospitable, and tourism-friendly people. With this opportunity, I can personally and professionally add value to this outstanding destination, and I am sure in the years ahead, Zanzibar will make its mark in the tourism spectrum," said Karkaria.

Zanzibar has attracted tourists from across the world for more than two decades. Its top attractions include Stone Town, its ancient city that became a designated a UNESCO Heritage Site in 2000, its vibrant beach life, surfing and water activities, and its indigenous cuisine, among others.

# HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND ITS JOURNEY FROM SURVIVAL TO REVIVAL

As we move into the 'new normal' and hotels steadily reopen for business, the expectations for innovative customer experience is higher than ever and the hospitality veteran KB Kachru, **Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group**, couldn't agree more. In this insightful guest column, Kachru pens down how consumers are demanding enhanced stay experience going forward and how the hotels are leveraging the benefits of bringing in innovation to serve them. From hybrid travel model to tech-driven personalised communications, implementing sustainable practices to use of smart equipments, Kachru suggests the leading-edge innovations that the hospitality sector can put into action in the post-COVID to accelerate the revival process

It is said that "necessity is the mother of invention" and the hospitality industry has proved it right. Hoteliers all over the world acted quickly to mitigate the compounding impact of the pandemic by reducing touch points and other measures until given the green signal to reopen. Complying with and adapting to shifting consumer behaviours will be critical to the hospitality sector's revival. To gain and sustain customer trust, hotel operators need to adapt quickly to meet the new-age consumer demands. Simultaneously, hoteliers need to optimize their operational efficiency and adaptability while taking into consideration all contingencies in the hospitality business.

Modern hotels in the hospitality industry have recognized the benefits of innovation and have already implemented automated hotel management systems. This allows them to make the most of their employees, services, and facilities to boost their business productivity while improving the overall experience of hotel guests.

## **Bleisure travellers & co-workspaces**

While the last two years have drastically changed the hospitality landscape, the emergence of hybrid travel as a major trend is an exciting opportunity for properties to regain momentum and expand the idea of what their best guest looks like. When courting hybrid travel guests, it's important to think beyond the single, remote-working traveller. For Bleisure travel in particular, many of these guests bring a spouse or the whole family along to upgrade the business trip to a family getaway. By embracing these travellers and making tweaks to already existing processes, you can create the one-of-a-kind experiences that bring those guests back for future visits and transform them into loyal advocates for your brand.

## **Tech-driven personalization**

Touchless technology and innovations have been helping hoteliers to successfully transform

ineffective and disengaged processes into workflows that are completely advanced, centralized, streamlined, and seamlessly integrated. Hoteliers are more productive because of the use of automated systems, which makes it easier for them to facilitate their routine, repetitive work. While this digital technology emphasis continues to persist, it results in a constant rise in the hospitality market. It is enlightening to see how our hospitality industry is moving swiftly and staying focused on understanding and quantifying the operating and economic impact on their operations.

## **Sustainable travel**

Sustainable travel is a fast-growing trend in the industry as increased number of travellers is aware of the environmental consequences of their travel habits. Today's travellers, restaurant patrons, hotel bookers and shoppers care about sustainability. They want to know that the companies they give their business to follow environmentally, socially, and culturally sound practices. An overwhelming majority of millennials and Gen Z travellers will pay more for products and services that don't harm the environment, deplete natural resources, or negatively affect the lives of people or wildlife. The industry has been quick to respond to these changes and is progressively turning 'green' by reducing their environmental impact through best practices in maintenance, services, logistics, products, and supplies. The core elements revolve around reducing waste, saving energy, and cutting down on water usage. Hotels around the world are rolling out a plethora of green initiatives like smart showers, solar power installations and waste diversion to cater to the evolved consumer.

## **Expense optimization**

Utilities are indisputably an expensive endeavour in the hospitality space. Higher spending and unsustainable practices deplete profit margins and jeopardize the property's



financial health and long-term viability. With technological implementation such as smart equipment and smart sensors, the hospitality industry is quickly streamlining operations, optimizing costs through real-time tracking, and timely interventions in case of any challenges. From machines to food trays, the use of innovative technology can assist in managing assets and inventories in real-time, all of which improve the visitor experience.

## **In a nutshell:**

Consumers today expect a hassle-free, efficient and convenient experience, and with their ever-changing expectations, creating exceptional customer service is an area where all brands can innovate. So, the hospitality industry is well on its way to revolutionizing the way it operates and caters to customers with its innovative approach.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

An experienced hand in the hospitality, K.B. Kachru has not only brought the global chain to India two decades ago but also built it into one of the leading hotel companies in the country. Kachru has been instrumental in building the business in India since 1998 and has succeeded by pioneering growth in metro cities and later venturing into tier II and III locations. KB Kachru was previously Chairman, South Asia of the Group. Prior to that, he served as executive vice president, responsible for the overall strategy, hotel development, management and functional support of key markets within South Asia, overseeing Radisson Hotel Group's joint venture companies in India. He is an active member of various Tourism and Hospitality Advisory Committees at the state and national level. He is presently a member of Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) National Tourism Committee and Vice President of Hotel Association of India (HAI) and a proud recipient of various prestigious accolades.



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# WelcomHeritage

## embarks on a promising growth journey



Indian luxury hospitality chain ITC-promoted WelcomHeritage Hotels & Resorts has had a busy and exciting year. After unveiling its portfolio expansion plans in March this year, WelcomHeritage rolled out innovative packages like 'Drivable Holidays', 'Head for the Hills' and several digital-friendly initiatives. Moving forward, it seems like a no-stopping time for the hotel brand! **CEO of WelcomHeritage, Abinash Manghani**, who is spearheading this position since 2020, has astute views to share about the Indian hotel industry in general, the market-ruling trends, evolving guest demands as well as the immersive expansion roadmap for the WelcomHeritage brand. Here, Manghani shares his thoughts on it all and apprises how his hotel brand is developing a reputation for quality and safety while expanding its wings swiftly to face the unprecedented demands

By *Gagneet Kaur*

### Post-COVID, how is WelcomHeritage adapting to customers' evolving needs?

Selling comfort, convenience and trust in that the guests were absolutely safe- every brand had a similar proposition around the second wave of Covid-19. We studied the trends that emerged - Local before Global, Drivable holidays, road trips, remote working, luxury staycations, pod travel to the concept of bleisure combining business and leisure travel.

Addressing these, we adopted a very proactive approach and introduced various innovative packages like 'Work from Here', 'Drivable Holidays', 'Head for the Hills', Staycation packages and more alike to suit the requirement of different types of travellers. We also partnered with Indigo, ICICI Bank, SBI Bank and introduced special packages for their clients. Drive-in campaigns across social media and big banners were promoted by hotels of exotic and salubrious locations.

To tackle the growing need for flexible travel options with refundable and zero cancellation bookings, we also adapted our full refund policy on cancellations.

### Exclusivity and safety have now become more important than ever. In the last two years, how have the WelcomHeritage properties capitalized from this trend?

Travellers will remain cautious and will choose to holiday with brands that they trust in terms of safety and hygiene and will be willing to pay more for that too. Thus, brands that will go the extra mile will be preferred.

Following all the government-released protocols, we adopted and continue to follow a unit-based manifesto, 'Travel safely with WelcomHeritage':

- A 10-point safety measure - this included mandatory use of the Arogya Setu App; thermal

screening for guests and staff; Sanitizer access points within the hotel premises; adequate steps to ensure social distancing; regular health-check of staff; F&B Operations as per FSSAI guidelines; and more

- Contact-less check-in & check-out and services
- Passport to travel -This is a guide that has the protocols that one needs to offer while travelling to any city in India
- Sanitised rooms and amenities
- Cash-less transactions

### Tell us more about the "Buy now, pay later" scheme. How is this aimed at offering stress-free holidays to the guests?

"Buy Now, Pay Later", known as BNPL is a short-term financing avenue that allows consumers to make purchases and pay for them at a future date or in installments, often interest-free.

We've recently brought this new method of payment into WelcomHeritage through our collaboration with GetSimpl. This system integration allows guests to book any hotel of their choosing from the WelcomHeritage website. Currently, WelcomHeritage offers this payment structure only at the best available rates. A first-of-its-kind in the Indian hospitality industry, we hope to ease our guests' financial stress of travel; we expect it to boost direct business from our website and its touchpoints.

### What all Indian states do you see most of the surge from? Any new and interesting destinations to be added to the portfolio?

The demand for hill destinations like Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh was already on a rise, and in response to this, we added three new hotels last year including WelcomHeritage Elysium Resort & Spa, Shimla (Hill Resort), WelcomHeritage Badi Kothi, Allahabad (Heritage Hotel), and WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa, Bera

(Wildlife Retreat) to our portfolio.

As per the survey done by YouGov, 24% of travellers will be looking to travel to the hills. Destinations like Manali, Mussoorie, Nainital, Ooty, Munnar, Coorg, and Kashmir will be highly sought-after. While we're prepared to welcome them at our properties in most of these places, we're soon opening our resorts in Ooty and Solan too. Also, with international travel opening up, we would now like to focus on Heritage destinations as well. Azora by Ayatana, our very soon-to-be launched property in Fort Kochi is a step towards this.

### While the staycation concept kept the hospitality industry afloat in recent times, what other trends/ segments do you see ruling the hospitality industry?

The pandemic has fundamentally changed the way consumers plan their travel as well as the way we, as hoteliers look at our markets. International travel restrictions had ensured that the Indian travellers who would earlier look abroad began to focus here on holiday too and have, in the process, discovered how interesting and varied Indian destinations and hospitality offerings are. We can safely say that domestic travel will be at much higher levels than pre-pandemic. Remote working has also inspired people to take short or long breaks that don't impact their work schedule whilst exploring a destination. This opened many new consumer markets for Indian hoteliers.

### Any expansion plans in the pipeline for 2022?

WelcomHeritage is planning to continue the brand's expansion within the country with three planned openings in 2022, including WelcomHeritage Azora, Fort Kochi, WelcomHeritage Ayatana, Ooty and WelcomHeritage Parv Vilas, Kasauli Hills and Solan. When operational, these properties will add 101 keys to the existing inventory of 919 keys.



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# Udaan Group of Companies

## EXPANDING FOOTPRINTS FAR AND WIDE

With an impressive portfolio of rapidly growing chain of hotels situated amidst the quintessential Himalayan threshold and the fast-expanding online air ticketing portal AIRIQ having exceptional expertise in the series and group fares business, Udaan Group of Companies aims to move forward incessantly on the growth graph, with its recent expansions in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Read on to know more about the company's signature products, the masterminds behind its success as well as the expansion plans for the immediate future

### UDAAN HOTELS & RESORTS- EXPANDING IN DARJEELING & SIKKIM:

One of India's most popular and fastest-growing chains of hotels in the North East, Udaan Hotels & Resorts is spreading its footprint far and wide. The group is scaling at a remarkable pace and is on track to soon complete 10 hotels under its wings. Currently, Udaan operates seven hotels in North East with three properties in Darjeeling, two in Gangtok, one in Pelling and one in Siliguri and by the end of March 2023, six new Udaan hotels will be made operational, making the brand one of the fastest growing hotel chains in the country with the vision of opening around 25 - 30 hotels in the coming years.

Udaan Hotels & Resorts launched its first property- Udaan Woodberry in Gangtok in 2017. The Woodberry Hotel & Spa in Gangtok, a 4-star pure veg hotel is located amidst the panoramic views of Gangtok. The hotel mirrors a paradigm blend of ethnic tradition and modern amenities to conceive a comfortable and holistic stay for the guests. The next few years after 2017 saw a focus on aggressive growth with the brand opening six new hotels. Only six months back, the group opened another luxury property, Udaan Himalayan Suites & Spa in Darjeeling.



Udaan Group also prides itself as a pure Vegetarian chain of hotels with our specialty vegetarian restaurant 'GRAINS' an all-day dining restaurant with excellent guest reviews offering fresh seasonal specialties from the region along with a holistic menu with signature Indian, Continental and Chinese dishes.

### AIRIQ: BANKING ON TECHNOLOGY AND EXPERTISE

The fastest growing online air ticketing portals for fixed departures, pre-purchased tickets and group fares. The company started with the vision to consolidate the air tickets business and today AIRIQ has expertise in the series and group fares business. AIRIQ is purely a B2B company with a network of more than 25000 agents in India and offering the lowest airfares for most of the domestic airlines flying in India. AIRIQ is



supported by a strong technology infrastructure and has an online portal [www.airiq.in](http://www.airiq.in) to enable the registration of an agency, once activated agents can check all our series flights and special fares with the ability to issue tickets with a PNR instantly and receive immediate online payments updates.

### THE BRILLIANT BRAINS BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF UDAAN:

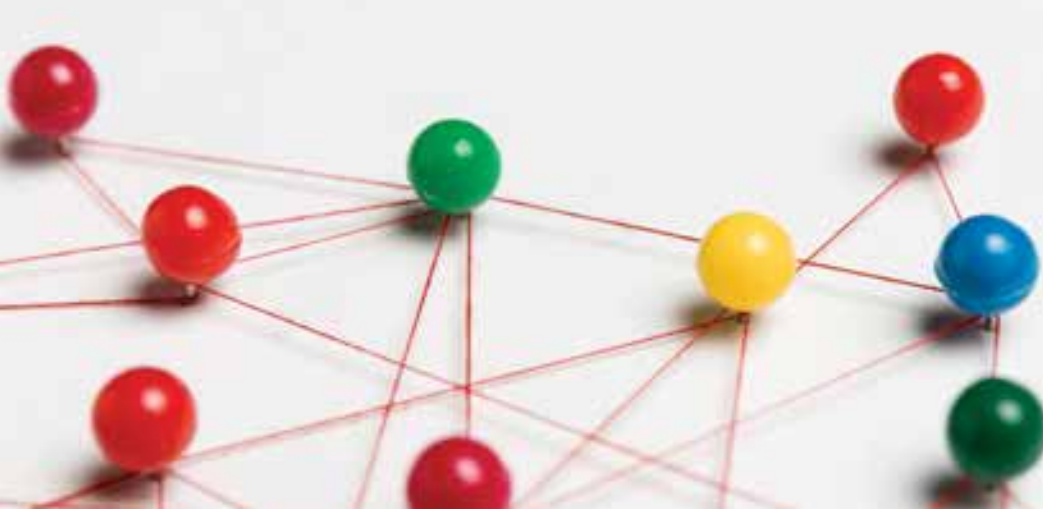
The chief moguls and sailors of the ship are Nishikant Aggarwal and Shashi Kant Aggarwal who are the Managing Directors of the company. Under the umbrella of the Udaan Group of Companies, both the directors opened Udaan Hotels & Resorts and AIRIQ.IN, paved their way through growth and success and eventually made a mark in the industry with exceptional products and market expertise.

### THE STRENGTHENING PILLAR OF THE COMPANY:

Well, the person spearheading the sales and marketing department indeed has the potential to map potential customers, create and implement short and long-term marketing strategies as well as scale the company's revenue to the next level. These strengthening pillars are the actual frontrunners. For Udaan, the story is no different! Neeraj Kumar Ailawadi, the Head of Sales & Marketing at Udaan Hotels & Resort



and AIRIQ has played a key role in achieving the company's set goals since the time he joined in 2021. With over 30 years of experience in the travel and tourism industry, he plans on growing with the company and generating new opportunities for each brand while building long-lasting customer relationships.





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# A LOOK-BACK INTO THE STARRY NIGHT





# VERSATILE EXCELLENCE TRAVEL AWARDS 2022



# STEERING STEADILY TOWARDS SUCCESS

## An exclusive tête-à-tête with Aarish Khan, Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) of Travel Boutique Online



To run a company in any vertical, it's very important to understand the dynamics of business growth as well as what the company will look like in the coming years. At the epicenter of this is the Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), a diverse top-level leader who's responsible for developing the company's commercial strategy as well as for driving growth. Being one of the most important working members, CCOs have the unique ability to provide a bigger picture of the organization to the consumers. Here, we speak to **Aarish Khan, Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) of Travel Boutique Online (TBO)** who is not just the backbone of the company but also a brilliant manager having broader leadership skills as well as a solid grasp of business fundamentals. Khan talks about his role in the company, the opportunities and learnings that made him reach for higher horizons

By Gagneet Kaur

**“I firmly believe in being open to learnings on an everyday basis, being agile and transparent at the same time”**

### **What is your business strategy when it comes to your leadership role at TBO? How has your journey been at TBO so far?**

At TBO, our business strategy revolves around our core values of quality, reliability and trust guided by international standards and best practices and is driven by our aspiration for excellence in the overall business performance. TBO's approach has always been 'technology-first' and we continue to invest in newer innovations and fresh offerings to make travel services easy and simple.

I feel glad to share that it has been my longest professional and personal association with TBO. With dedicated hard work, consistent efforts and expertise, I have seen our small team grow into what you all know as the "Leading B2B Travel Platform in India". This renders various interesting chapters during my journey but being a curious learner, I am always keen to explore and discover more on the horizon.

### **What according to you, makes TBO and its services unique from others ?**

We aim to simplify the buying and selling process; address the complex travel needs of travel partners across the world seamlessly

in time while being cost-effective and competitive at the same time. Our proprietary platform relies heavily on AI/ML to offer unique listings and products, thus increasing conversions. Our extended support to our partners is having multifold touchpoints which are highly transparent and from a reach perspective, we aim to become accessible to every individual. All of this combined with our team's strenuous efforts and expert knowledge provide a unique experience during the association with TBO.

### **Being one of the most important members of the management team, how do you ensure continued progress? How did you manage the same during the peak times of the pandemic?**

There are the four key areas that we worked upon to gain customers' confidence as well as attain growth, even during the pandemic times 1) We empowered our managers and teams to lead changes 2) We maintained consistent communication with the industry and the partners 3) We kept our team on the topmost priority by being supportive to them while engaging with them on daily basis 4) We focused a lot on learnings and developments

rather than just sitting back and waiting for the things to get back on track.

### **Talking about your overall professional journey, what were the most important milestones? Can you recount a few of them?**

My professional journey began by being a sales manager and I have eventually climbed my way up the ladder today. The journey hasn't been too easy but was full of learnings and experiences. I understood a lot of dynamics while witnessing the changes that the trade had gone through. Working from scratch to build a large team, simultaneously engaging and exploring new business verticals and building an effective network within the industry has been the important milestones throughout this journey.

### **Any life lessons that changed you both as an individual and a leader?**

Indeed. I followed and observed plenty of them however, a few that worked well in my favour were:

- To always practice self-awareness
- Be willing to talk about difficult subjects
- To serve as a role model in all situations
- To lead from within, which also was my gut feeling

### **A tip of success that keeps you motivated?**

I firmly believe in being open to learnings on an everyday basis, being agile and transparent at the same time. I often share the same learnings with my team, which facilitates me to resolve concerns or remove the roadblocks within the business- this excites me. Thus, I strongly feel you can still do the right thing for yourself if you have faith in God and move forward while consistently learning everything, every day!





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# NETWORKING OVER COCKTAILS AND CASUAL CONVERSATIONS: CORA CORA MALDIVES HOSTS AN EVENT FOR TRAVEL AGENTS AT ARDOR 2.1





# One Above News Today

## ONE ABOVE NEWS AND BULLETIN UPDATE

### ANNOUNCEMENT

**“We are growing to serve you better.”**

It gives us immense pleasure to introduce **Ms. Nisreen Bulbulia** as the Managing Director of One Above South Africa. Nisreen brings 14 years of progressive experience in the travel industry. She will be heading the South Africa DMC for contracting, MICE & Logistics. Please join us in welcoming her.



**Name: Nisreen Bulbulia**

Managing Director

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South Africa







# RESORTS WORLD CRUISES SETS SAIL; KICKS OFF WITH MAIDEN VOYAGE OF GENTING DREAM







June 15, 2022 was bookmarked as the most opportune time for Resorts World Cruises as this newly established Asian luxury and dynamic lifestyle cruise brand celebrated a double milestone. It not just flagged off with its maiden voyage as a new cruise line in Asia but also marked the start of its flagship Genting Dream's inaugural cruise from her homeport in Singapore. By introducing its flagship - the first ship of a planned fleet that are 'Resorts Cruising At Sea', the aim is to redefine the cruising experience altogether by providing exciting and unique offerings, a variety of accommodations, including the world-class luxury accommodation. From "The Palace" – a luxury ship-within-a ship private enclave with its own exclusive restaurant to sundeck, gym, spa and other facilities, a theme park, on board entertainment to retail outlets and luxury boutiques, popular and fine-dining and bars to corporate retreats, team-building activities and what not- Resorts World Cruises is an ideal vacationing choice if you are looking to spend a quality, peaceful time with friends, family or even colleagues.

While beaming with pride on the inaugural sailing, President of Resorts World Cruises, Michael Goh expressed his thanks to Singapore Tourism Board and the relevant authorities, travel partners and customers for their constant support in making the sailing and launch a reverberating success. "We look forward to creating more memorable experiences for our guests with each cruise voyage from ship to shore," Goh added.

Tan Sri KT Lim, Executive Chairman of Resorts World Cruises called this first sailing and global launch a noteworthy historical milestone for Resorts World Cruises and the city of Singapore. "We are excited and honoured to have a new home-grown brand headquartered in Singapore with deep Asian heritage to represent the cruising industry in the international arena," he highlighted. Representing the Asian culture and catering to the wide diversity of Asian travellers' needs remain the cornerstone of Resorts World Cruises. This includes being the only ship fitted with Halal restaurant certification and Indian vegetarian cuisine on board.

As of July 1, Resorts World Cruises plans to sail from Singapore to Indonesia, offering a two-night weekend cruise to Bintan and Batam Islands. Subsequently, Genting Dream will also sail from Singapore to Malaysia with two- and three-night cruises to Kuala Lumpur and Malacca (via Port Dickson), as well as Penang. Genting Dream is a former Dream Cruise Ship, this 18-deck, 150,695 gross ton ship has a capacity for 3,352 passengers and 1,700 crew. Seventy percent of staterooms feature balconies. The ship features 35 restaurants and bars, a top-deck pool, and a waterslide park with six different rides. Further, beginning October 2022, Resorts World Cruises will add a series of new itineraries with more destinations to Malaysia (Langkawi), Indonesia (North Bali, Surabaya) and Thailand (Phuket, Krabi).

With this inception of Resorts World Cruises, the brand aims to position itself as the leading cruise line in the region for Asian sourced markets, providing the highest standards in safety and precautionary measures.

CRUISE EXPERTS SHARING THEIR VIEWS ON THE RESPONSE AND EXPECTATIONS FROM THE INDIA MARKET



Naresh Rawal, VP – Sales & Marketing, Resorts World Cruises

*"We are very excited to have officially launched Resorts World Cruises to the world with the first sailing of the Genting Dream from Singapore recently. Resorts World Cruises is a new brand, but what sets us apart is our deep Asian heritage, coupled with over 50 years of affiliated experiences in the cruise and hospitality industry. With India being an important source market for us, our valuable experiences and unique perspective of offerings will enable us to be a key driving force in re-igniting the Fly-Cruise sector in India."*



Kishan Biyani, Managing Director, Ark Travel Group (ATG)

*"I am delighted to share that Resorts World Cruises was launched during SATTE and as a result, we are seeing a huge positive response from the India market. It is a well-known ship with a familiar team as far as the trade is concerned. The ship is as new and charming as it always was. The quality of food and entertainment is excellent. MICE and group business is promising and trends for FIT demand are good. With this, we hope to reach pre-pandemic level of sales in 2023."*

# “We will continue to explore new possibilities with new ports in the following year”

As the Resorts World Cruises rejoiced its first sailing on June 15, **Michael Goh, President of Resorts World Cruises** couldn't be more thrilled. Speaking with TravelScapes on the sidelines of the much-awaited sailing of Resorts World Cruises, Goh shared his key thoughts and expectations from the Indian market as well as the differential factors of this fresh Asian luxury cruise brand. Apprising that the growth looks quite promising from Indian travel trade and consumers, Goh summed up his excitement by adding that the brand is consistently exploring newer opportunities in the Asia region with a series of the planned fleet in the near future

By Gagneet Kaur

**For this particular launch sail, has the Indian market responded as you expected? What percentage of Indian travellers do you expect to be cruising in 2022?**

The response from India has been fantastic and very encouraging from both the travel trade and consumers. This is clearly reflected in our confirmed bookings of over 20,000 cabins from India in just under two months since we first opened bookings. We expect bookings from India to continue to grow and dominate the Fly-Cruise sector for our sailings with the Genting Dream in Singapore. In addition, we also observed a significant surge in demand for the MICE segment in India, contributing to the overall growth of the cruise sector.

**How is Resorts World Cruises aimed at reinvigorating the cruise industry in Southeast Asia?**

For the cruise industry in Southeast Asia and greater Asia to continue to flourish, it's important to have Asian representation in the cruise industry; and Resorts World Cruises is that brand to do so. As a home-grown Asian brand with decades of valuable affiliated experiences, we are committed and focused on making the region one of the major year-round cruise destinations in the world. Starting with the Singapore deployment, we are exploring new opportunities in the region with a series of the planned fleet in the near future.

**What key and differential offerings do Resorts World Cruises has in comparison to the older Genting fleet? What makes it unique for an Indian traveller?**

Resorts World Cruises has reimagined and elevated its cruise offerings to a new level, redefining personalized cruising lifestyle experiences with diverse international offerings. Our unique highlights include our High Energy Zones, packed with fun-filled and adrenalin-pumping activities, as well as our Quiet and Chill Zones, for that alternative relaxing atmosphere.

We are also introducing a fusion of entertainment and dining experiences that



**Overcoming the times of pandemic, when things are more in favour of responsible tourism, what sustainable practices is the brand putting to action?**

The post ripple effect of the pandemic had

**Resorts World Cruises will continue to strive to deliver the ultimate cruise adventure aboard the Genting Dream**

is truly unique to the senses, complemented by fusion cuisine at different venues, which include Omasake, Korean-Japanese cuisine, Asian popular delights and more. The Genting Dream is also the world's first OIC/SMIIC standard Halal-friendly cruise ship, which offers Halal and authentic Jain Vegetarian certified cuisines in dedicated venues. On top of that, the luxury The Palace – ‘A ship-within-a-ship’ private enclave with exclusive amenities will continue to be a popular choice of accommodation for many travellers from India.

**What can guests expect in the years ahead? More ports, new experiences, or key developments?**

Resorts World Cruises will continue to strive to deliver the ultimate cruise adventure aboard the Genting Dream, the first ship of a planned fleet that is “Resorts Cruising At Seas”, expanding the Resorts Brand from land experiences to the seas of the world. We have already announced our new destinations cruises starting July 1 to Indonesia, Malaysia and soon Thailand. We will continue to explore new possibilities with new ports in the following year.

shifted the mindset of consumers and cruise lines alike on safety. At Resorts World Cruises, the safety and well-being of our guests and crew are our first priority; and we have implemented enhanced and best practices in our safety and precautionary measures from ship to shore, based on global standards and local government guidelines.

We remain committed to sound environmental practices in which a high standard of responsibility has been established to preserve the environment in which we operate. These include increasing energy efficiency, conservation of fuel and water, reducing solid waste generation, increasing recycling, protecting marine life and preventing oil pollution. For instance, our ship is equipped with Eniram trim optimization; and the exterior hull coating system incorporates the most advanced silicone-based paint to decrease drag in the water and increase fuel efficiency. Also, we follow the highest marine industry standards and our Bio Waste Treatment system is equipped with dryers with the ability to incinerate or bag waste materials for offloading and disposal.



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## IHG Hotels & Resorts marks 6,000 hotels milestone

IHG Hotels & Resorts is celebrating 6,000 open hotels by unveiling the '6,000 Club' and announcing partnerships with major sports and entertainment events.

The 6,000 Club features a collection of stunning newly opened hotels from IHG's iconic portfolio, showcasing the global reach of its 17 brands and the many ways its hotel teams delight owners and guests by delivering True Hospitality for Good, every day.

The milestone was commemorated by IHG CEO, Keith Barr, at the New York Stock Exchange on June 7 when he rang the bell to signal the close of trading, alongside local hotel General Managers and colleagues.

In the past five years, IHG has broadened its appeal to owners and guests by acquiring or launching six exciting brands to take the portfolio to 17 - providing more choice and amazing experiences than ever before. The new additions include Luxury & Lifestyle brands Six Senses, Regent and Vignette Collection; Premium brand, voco hotels; Essentials brand, avid hotels; and Suites brand, Atwell Suites. IHG is set to grow its portfolio by a further 30 percent, with more than 1,800 hotels already signed in its development pipeline, illustrating how much owners value the strength of IHG's scale and brands.

## The Imperial New Delhi appoints Louis Sailer as Senior Executive VP

The Imperial New Delhi is pleased to announce the appointment of Louis Sailer as Senior Executive Vice President as of May 2022. Reckoned an authority in the industry for building bespoke customer satisfaction-oriented entities, he enjoys an international recognition for his particularly tenacious commitment to offering an uncompromised high standard of service across all companies' front and back of house operations.

Throughout his career, he has managed and operated some of the finest hotels and has turned around global luxury hospitality brands and operations in Germany, Japan, Singapore, China, London, California, Hawaii, the Caribbean and India. Published author with an extremely progressive career path around the world, he is now set to take the reigns of the capital's most distinguished address, The Imperial New Delhi.



Louis Sailer

## Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata launches the Ozone Convention Centre

Since its launch in December 2019, Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata has become an acclaimed destination for its accommodation, dining and events, corporate and social alike. The hotel is adding another feather to its cap with the inauguration of Ozone Convention Centre on May 28, 2022, a multilevel offering of meeting and event spaces. This latest edition is a short twenty minutes' drive from the airport and offers a panoramic view of the Newtown skyline with natural light streaming in at all levels.

The Ozone Convention Centre comprises of three multipurpose venues, namely –Empress Hall, Monarch Hall and Regent Terrace. Each floor has distinct look and feels to create a multi-faceted overall atmosphere suitable for a variety of occasions. Details in each space, such as the flooring, walls and ceiling have been meticulously selected to create a unique experience on every level. The halls have a blend of neo-classic and contemporary elements with handpicked artefacts enhancing the overall appeal of the dynamic spaces.

The presence of abundant natural light and judicious use of glass and mirror surfaces lends a spacious and airy feel to the halls. With the use of direct and indirect diffused lights, the ambience can be altered to suit the occasion.



## IHCL announces opening of Vivanta Katra at Vaishno Devi

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) announces the opening of Vivanta Katra, Vaishno Devi in Jammu and Kashmir. Nestled along the foothills of the Trikuta mountains, the hotel is located in the picturesque Himalayan range with easy access to the holy shrine of Vaishno Devi.

Strategically located on the Jammu-Katra highway, the 77-room Vivanta Katra offers travellers views of the mighty Himalayas. The hotel features stylishly designed rooms and suites including a Vivanta Suite, which spread across 176 square metres, is one of the largest in the city of Katra. Guests can indulge in eclectic culinary offerings at Mynt, the all-day diner, or enjoy a comforting cup of hot brew at The Tea Lounge. With multiple meeting rooms and outdoor spaces, this hotel is ideal for social gatherings. Guests can embark on holistic wellbeing at the Tattava Spa or rejuvenate at the hotel's fitness centre and swimming pool.

With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have five hotels in Jammu and Kashmir, including three under development.





## 7th edition of GHC held in Capital after a hiatus of two years

The National Capital Region witnessed the seventh Global Hospitality Conclave (GHC) at The Oberoi, New Delhi. A dynamic event in the hospitality industry, the GHC has over the last seven editions raised the bar of discourse on critical issues impacting the world in general and hospitality in particular. This much awaited event took place after a hiatus of two years due to lockdowns and Covid restrictions

across the world. This year, the Conclave discussed and debated the way forward in a post Covid scenario in the travel and tourism sector with focus on Business in a world between orders, Permanent changes after Covid, Empowering your business and Digital disruption. Oberoi alumni as well as guest speakers from across industries shared their expertise and knowledge on these issues.

## Park Inn by Radisson Surat opens its doors to guests

Park Inn by Radisson is proud to announce the opening of Park Inn by Radisson Surat. Nestled in the coastal state of Gujarat, the hotel is situated in the heart of Surat and enjoys proximity to the magnificent Tapi River. Located within seven kilometers of the Surat International Airport, Park Inn by Radisson Surat is also accessible from Mumbai National Highway 48, making it easily accessible by road from Mumbai and Ahmedabad. "We are thrilled to strengthen our brand portfolio in India with the launch

of Park Inn by Radisson Surat. The hotel corroborates our footing in the beautiful coastal region of Gujarat and further strengthens our position as one of the leading global hospitality groups in India with a robust domestic footprint. The hotel combines Radisson Hotel Group's best-in-class hospitality with Gujarat's cultural heritage through its design and architecture for delivering a memorable stay to our guests." said Zubin Saxena, Managing Director and Vice President of Operations South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group.



## Le Méridien Hotels & Resorts debuts in Qatar

Le Méridien Hotels & Resorts has unveiled Le Royal Méridien Doha, marking the European-born brand's debut in Qatar. Located in the heart of the country's future city, Lusail, the 377-room hotel encourages guests to savour the good life through the brand's distinctive European-chic lens.

Featuring striking neo-classical architecture, the hotel seamlessly connects to Place Vendôme

Qatar, an iconic Parisian-inspired luxury complex home to 580 retail outlets, fine dining experiences, theatres, office and residential spaces and more. With sprawling waterfront views of Lusail, Le Royal Méridien Doha is an illuminating getaway for creative-minded travellers looking to discover Qatar's newest city that combines true modernity with the richness of Qatari traditions.

## StayWell launches Park Proxi brand; first hotel in Egypt

StayWell Holdings has announced the launch of a new hotel brand, Park Proxi, a unique hotel offering that has flexibility and hoteliers at its core. Park Proxi will allow hotel owners to co-create and customise the hotel they desire, by deliberately minimising the brand mandates that usually accompany a hotel design, said a statement. This approach creates space for true collaboration, and from room styling to flexible zones to the hotel logo, to a choice of seven signature colours, Park Proxi offers owners the opportunity to develop a hotel that suits



not just their personal tastes, but also cultural preferences. Designed to create a truly local hotel experience, the Park Proxi model welcomes collaboration with hoteliers to take advantage of the best that each location has to offer.

## Hilton's Flagship Brand makes debut in the Maldives

Leading global hospitality company Hilton announced the opening of Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa, marking the expansion of Hilton's award-winning flagship brand into the Maldives. The all-villa resort features an array of thoughtful amenities which are new to the archipelago, setting a new benchmark in hospitality that will captivate the next generation of travelers. Hilton Maldives Amingiri is the fourth resort under the company's portfolio of brands in the country, complementing Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island and Saii Lagoon Maldives, Curio Collection by Hilton, bolstering Hilton's ability to take care of different travelers and their unique needs in one

of the world's most sought-after destinations. The hotel is owned by Amingiri Holdings Pvt Ltd and managed by Hilton. "The Maldives is one of the most desired vacation destinations for travelers around the world – seeing a continued pace of bookings even throughout the last two years when it was the first country to open its borders to international travelers during the pandemic. The expansion of our flagship brand here underscores our commitment to bringing our world-class brands to key locations, and we are confident Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa will build on our legacy of delivering an exceptional stay to delight and inspire our guests," said Alan Watts, President, Asia Pacific, Hilton.



## The Fern Hotels & Resorts celebrates The Fern Environment Week

In their efforts to spread awareness about the importance of environment preservation and sustainability, the sales associates at The Fern Hotels & Resorts celebrated The Fern Environment Week.

During the entire week (June 6 to June 10) the Fern sales teams in Mumbai interacted with various corporates and travel agents and tried to educate them about the importance of going green. The team also gifted potted plants to all their business partners.

Kevin Ashley Martis, General Manager-Sales & Marketing (West), The Fern Hotels & Resorts said. "This year we have tried to take environment conservation to

a new level by involving our business associates. They have appreciated our efforts and taken note of our seriousness towards the cause of the environment and were thrilled to receive live plants."

The Fern Hotels & Resorts is India's leading environmentally sensitive hotel chain and amongst the fastest growing hotel brands in India, with 88 hotels & resorts currently operational under management or opening shortly across 72 locations in India and internationally, under The Fern, The Fern Residency, Zinc by The Fern and Beacon Hotels brands. The company is a part of CG Corp Global, a multi-dimensional Nepalese conglomerate.

## Radisson to expand in APAC, eyes 400% growth by 2025

Radisson Hotel Group (RHG) has announced its APAC Expansion Plan – a major initiative that will unleash the power of its diverse brands and partnerships to drive 400% growth across the Asia Pacific region by 2025.

The APAC Expansion Plan will enable Radisson Hotel Group to increase its regional footprint in Asia Pacific. By 2025, it will add 1,700 hotels and resorts to its current portfolio of over 400 properties. It will aim to achieve this through a combination of organic growth, mergers and acquisitions, master license agreements, and leases in key locations. Focused on five strategic growth markets, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, and New Zealand, the plan builds on existing initiatives to harness the vast potential of China with Jin Jiang and



its subsidiaries, both as a destination and an important source of outbound business.

In India, Radisson Hotel Group is one of the most recognized and respected hospitality companies, with a portfolio of 100+ properties in operation across more than 60 locations nationwide. To further propel its holding in the Indian market, the Group will leverage its deep existing relationships and seek new strategic partnerships to strengthen its status as the hotel provider of choice in the country.

## Centara expands airline partnership network with new Thai Vietjet deal

Centara Hotels & Resorts announces a partnership with Thai Vietjet, bolstering its growing airline partnership network which already includes Thai Airways and Singapore Airlines.

The partnership comes at a time when Thailand has broadly relaxed entry rules for travellers arriving from overseas. Foreign nationals are now only required to provide passport and vaccination details, as well as a USD 10,000 health insurance policy to apply for the Thailand Pass which is automatically issued usually within 24 hours. Fully vaccinated travellers are then free to start exploring Thailand on arrival.

"As more passengers return to the air, we are excited to partner with Thai Vietjet to



welcome travellers back to Centara, The Place to be. With six distinct brands ranging from luxury beachfront retreats to family resorts and affordable lifestyle hotels, we are able to meet and exceed the needs of travellers of every age and lifestyle, and we are delighted to offer exciting benefits to Thai Vietjet's customers through their communications network" said Tom Thrussell, Vice President – Brand, Marketing & Digital of Centara Hotels & Resorts.





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# Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism stages a three-city roadshow in India

Aims at luring more Indian tourists with the city's renewed portfolio of products

By TS Desk



To familiarize the Indian travel agents, tour operators and the media about the city's newest offerings as well as to expand their business network in India, Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), commonly referred to as Dubai Tourism, hosted a series of roadshows in Mumbai, New Delhi and Ahmedabad. The delegation of over 30 exhibitors led by Bader Ali Habib, Head of Region- South Asia, International Operations, DET, was present during these networking events. The roadshows were organised under the supervision of Dubai Tourism's India Representative – Nijhawan Group which is spearheaded by Priyanka Nijhawan.

The key aim was to showcase DET's promotional efforts in showing Dubai's ever-evolving tourism proposition to the Indian travel trade fraternity and also to acquaint them with the beyond-usual attractions and segments. Looking at strengthening relationships with the Indian stakeholders and achieving the pre-pandemic tourist arrivals from this burgeoning market, Habib highlighted the new experiences and the diversity of the city's lesser-explored offerings during a presentation. He also emphasized the strong growth in tourism numbers from India that is aided by factors like vast air connectivity and easy visa process.

Some of the new segments that DET will be focusing on this year include wedding, luxury, adventure, culture and golf. "Our key focus now is to promote new and bespoke experiences and tap into newer segments," said Habib. He added that DET is also working on a comprehensive strategy to promote Dubai as a wedding destination and India, being its number two



source market, will be the top priority. For Indians seeking adventure, DET is gradually highlighting locations like Hatta Mountains and Deep Dive Dubai. For those looking to explore the cultural marvels in and around the city, Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Centre for Cultural Understanding and Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood top the lists and are a must-visit.

Undoubtedly, Dubai has emerged as a world leader in reviving international tourism as the emirate sprints towards pre-pandemic arrival numbers. According to the DET data released at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai, the number of international visitors during January-March reflected the best first-quarter performance since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a clear pathway for the city to progress towards its coveted goal of becoming the world's most visited destination. March 2022 was an exceptional month for post-pandemic tourism arrivals as the city welcomed 1.78 million international

visitors, an 11 per cent jump from the pre-pandemic period. Around two million Indian tourists visited Dubai in 2019, making it Dubai's top source market. "We hope India will regain its number one position by the end of this year," said Habib. "India, as well as the other key source markets like the UK, USA and Saudi Arabia, are going to play a major role in our target of welcoming 25 million international tourist arrivals by 2025," he added.

## The New & The Unmissable in Dubai

- Museum of the Future
- The View at The Palm
- Deep Dive Dubai
- AURA Skypool
- Ain Dubai
- Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood
- La Mer
- Hatta Mountains
- Al Seef
- Gold Souk
- Spice Souk



# Dubai increasing the appetite of new-age Indian travellers

When it comes to its positioning on a global tourism map, Dubai is no new player. Over the years, it has not just built its reputation as a global mega city as well as one of the top international tourist destinations; it also has continued to prove itself to be the true 'master of innovation'. Banking on its reputation around the world and its excellent marketing skills to promote itself in its top source market- India and broaden its appeal through its beyond-the-usual offerings, Dubai Economy & Tourism Department (DET) is going all out to make more Indian tourists come back. In conversation with **Bader Ali Habib, Head of Region- South Asia, International Operations-DET**, TravelScapes learns about the newly tapped segments, fresh opportunities and offerings for the India market, exciting hotel openings, Dubai's push for sustainability and a lot more

By Gagneet Kaur

## What is your destination promotion strategy for the India market in 2022? What percentage of Indian travellers are you expecting this year?

India is a top source market for travellers to Dubai. We welcomed around 376k visitors from India between January and March 2022. As travel continues to boom, we expect these numbers to grow in Q2 and Q3 as well. Travellers from India have always had an affinity and familiarity with Dubai, a world-class destination when it comes to infrastructure, luxury, and experiences.

Given that many people are looking for budget friendly-affordable travel, we recently introduced the 'Stay More Pay Less' campaign, a citywide initiative where over 60 hotels & resorts have united to offer visitors to Dubai an outstanding value this summer. Additionally keeping in mind that many people are still working from home, our Virtual Working programme allows people to work from Dubai. We have received numerous applications and are seeing a huge interest from travellers for this programme. Taking advantage of the quality of life here, as well as the safety and security offered, many travellers are now choosing Dubai as a permanent base to live and work remotely. Furthermore, our Retire in Dubai programme in collaboration with the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA-Dubai) allows foreigners aged 55 and above to retire and settle in Dubai. Based on the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, it is to further enhance Dubai's position as the most preferred destination to live and work.

## How are you positioning Dubai in the India market? Are there any trade collaborations in loop to amplify the interest of Indian travellers in Dubai?

The growth in the UAE's tourism sector in the first quarter of 2022 outpaced the pre-pandemic levels. Dubai is increasingly becoming a one-stop destination for Indian travellers belonging to all age groups be it Bollywood stars, corporate executives, ministerial delegations, or entrepreneurs. In fact, Dubai is the most preferred destination for Indian bleisure



**Bader Ali Habib**, Head of Region- South Asia, International Operations, DET

travellers. Corporates are also looking for a place where they can strategize their growth initiatives. To attract more Indians, Dubai Economy & Tourism's top aim is to capture 400 global economic events yearly by 2025 (Source). As a result, it continues to look at hosting business events in Dubai and collaborating with local stakeholders to give meeting planners a safe, impactful platform for knowledge exchange and networking. Dubai Expo 2020 is one such global example that served as a world-class platform for Indian Businesses.

## How is Dubai riding the wave of innovative trends?

The city has returned to normalcy after demonstrating a high level of resilience, foresight and agility in safely navigating its way and accelerating out of this unprecedented challenge under the guidance of our decisive leadership. Dubai is known for its infrastructure throughout the world and it has been innovating very rapidly. The Museum of Future is one of the attractions that showcase the advancements and living in the future. Opened recently in February 2022, this serves as an exhibition space for futuristic and innovative services, ideologies, and products. Dubai is also planning to transform the site of Expo 2020 into Expo City Dubai, the Emirate's new destination for "business and innovation, driven by sustainability, innovation, education,

and entertainment".

Not just innovation, the travellers today are focusing on sustainable travel. Dubai has numerous goals to achieve and look forward to, when it comes to the environment, like the 2040 urban plan as well as the 'Dubai Can' initiative. Also, on account of the 50th World Environment Day, the city recently celebrated sustainable practices across the city to mark the day, as it strives to further enhance Dubai's

**“We hope India will regain its number one position by the end of this year”**

position as a leading sustainable destination. From desert conservation reserves to sustainable restaurateurs and eco-hotels, to cultural pursuits and eco-tourism attractions, Dubai Economy & Tourism shined a light on 50 of the city's pioneering initiatives in environmental conservation and sustainability across tourism ecosystem.

## Any new destination offerings/ major hospitality projects on the cards for 2022?

Being home to nearly 200 nationalities and welcoming over 6.17 Mn visitors from Jan – May 2022, Dubai has always been ahead in attracting the world to visit and explore Dubai. In fact, in 2022 alone, the city has several highly anticipated new openings in the pipeline, such as Atlantis The Royal; Marriot Resort Palm Jumeirah; Hilton Dubai Palm Jumeirah to name a few.

## Are there any plans to boost the air connectivity between the two destinations?

Since the 'full normalcy', India has regained its position as the number one source market for travel in Dubai. The flights have been operating at full occupancy since the travel demand rose in India and Dubai. Since April 2022, Emirates had already planned to increase the weekly flights to India; the airline currently operates 170 weekly flights from nine cities in the country.

# ICIB, the Embassy of Ethiopia in India and Toogle jointly organize Tourism Forum

Indian Chamber of International Business (ICIB) and the Embassy of Ethiopia in India together with their industry partner Toogle jointly organised a Tourism Forum on June 7, 2022. The forum was inaugurated by H.E. Ambassador Tizita Mulugeta (PhD.), Hon. Ambassador of Ethiopia, presided by Rtn. Manpreet Singh, President of the Indian Chamber of International Business (ICIB) and virtually attended by State Minister of Ethiopian Ministry of Tourism, H.E. Seleshi Girma.

The event was attended by a number of Indian travel and tourism organizations, tour operators, travel agents, media representatives and other esteemed guests. Toogle, being the industry partner at the event, put their best foot forward in getting the finest Indian Travel industry representatives to make this event a reverberating success. On the occasion, H.E. Ambassador Tizita Mulugeta (PhD.) addressed the gathering by briefing about the tourist attractions in Ethiopia. She said, "Ethiopia has more UNESCO Heritage Sites than any other country in Africa but receives fewer tourists, despite being abundantly rich in culture, natural beauty, dramatic landscape, wildlife and biodiversity; Ethiopia has not been able to realise its full tourism potential."

Sisay Getachew from Ministry of Tourism

made detailed Power Point presentations about Ethiopia's tourism potential followed by a presentation by Ethiopian Airlines representative in Delhi about the elevated services of the airline for tourists travelling to Ethiopia.

Rtn. Manpreet Singh, President of ICIB welcomed the initiative of the Ethiopia Government and highlighted the commonalities between the Indian and Ethiopian culture and civilisations, both of which are centuries old.

Megha Sharma, CEO of Toogle - a travel curated networking company, requested the Minister of Tourism to organise a

familiarization tour for the travel industry to introduce them to the country so that the industry gets a first-hand overview of the possibilities of mutual growth. All the invited guests and participants witnessed the highly celebrated Ethiopian coffee ceremony and the unique coffee indeed appealed to everyone with its distinctive aroma and taste. The roasting and brewing process was showcased live for the audience. The guests expressed their delight in tasting Arabica coffee from the land of its origin.







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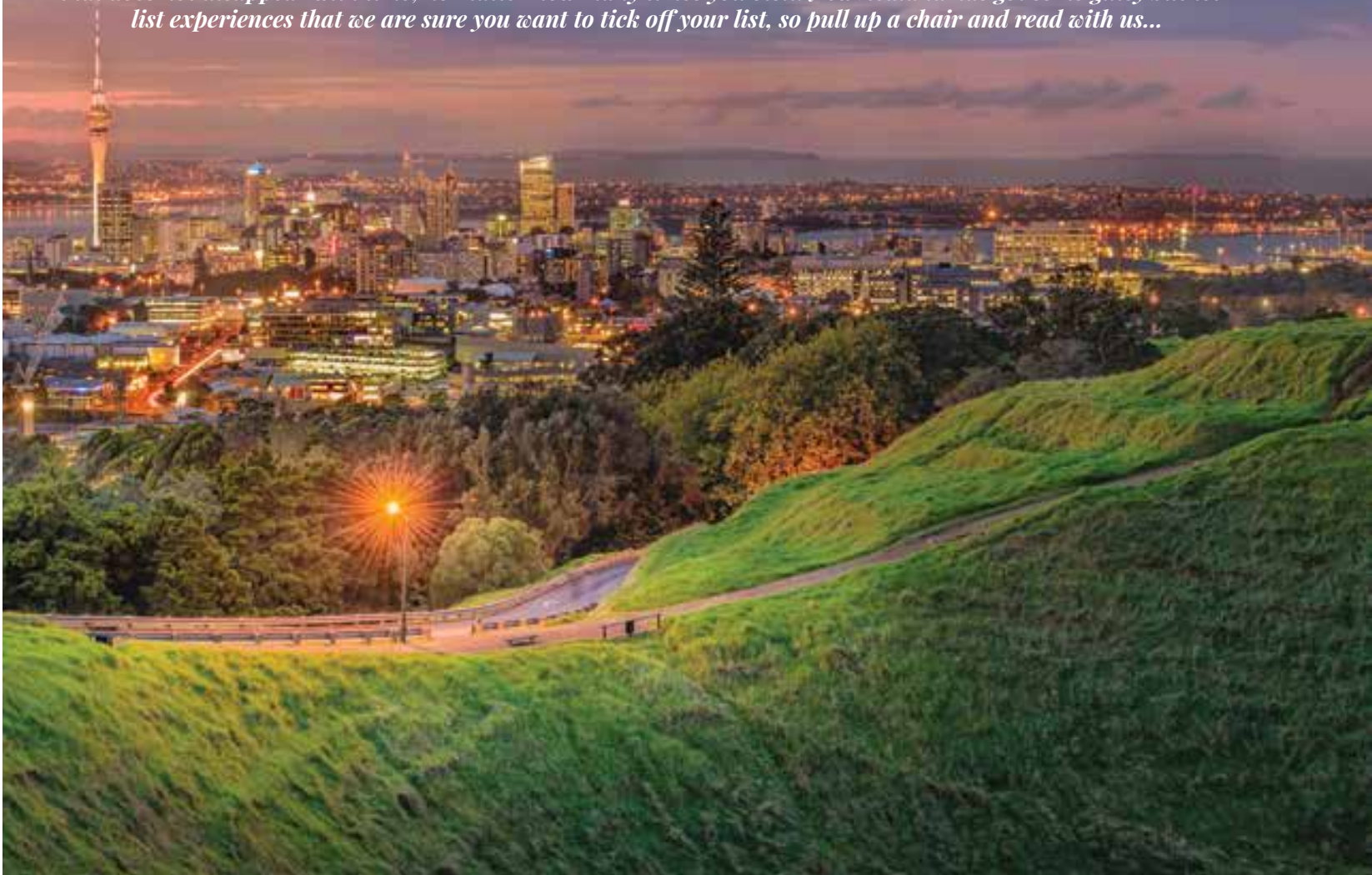
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# New Zealand

## *A small heaven of adventure*

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### **Roy's Peak- A delightful hike**

The six-hour-long hike on the Roy's Peak of South Island is one of the most challenging yet best day hikes in New Zealand. The hike provides breathtaking views as well as unlimited adventure. As you travel from Wanaka Lake over open grasslands to Roy's Peak on this trip, you will experience the wonderful Wanaka landscape. The hiking at Roy's Peak is open throughout the year except October to November and can be done any time in the day. Some people like to hike early in the morning so that they can watch the sunrise while some like to hike in the late hours to just enjoy the journey. Don't miss out on the spectacular scenery along the way.





### Bungee Jumping- A breathtaking excursion at Queenstown

On the south island of New Zealand, near Lake Wakatipu, in Queenstown, the location of the world's first bungee jumping. It is the world's highest bungee jumping location, which is why it is on every daredevil's bucket list. If you are in New Zealand and love a thrill, then Bungee Jumping is something that you can endure on this tour. There are three bungee jumping sites in Queenstown, Kawarau bungee (the world's first bungee site), Ledge bungee and Nevis bungee. All three of them offer bungee jumping from different heights and at different places. To get into the insane experience of bungee jumping with jaw-dropping views at Queenstown is the most exhilarating trip you will ever get.



### Black water rafting- An unimaginable experience

Have you ever heard of black water rafting? Sounds surprising, right? However, it will be the most amazing experience you have ever had. It's exciting since this is a challenging and adventurous experience. There are two types of black water rafting tours available: one in Black Labyrinth and one in Black Abyss. The Black Labyrinth will take you tubing through the cave for three hours. The five-hour journey in Black Abyss begins with an abseil into the cave and then a jump into glowing water beneath a sparkling layer of glowworms. Swimming in glistening black water is a once-in-a-lifetime experience worth having.



### Southern lights- A soothing ecstasy

Southern lights in New Zealand is a nature's wonderful paradise which may be less known among the tourists but still, a large number of tourists flock to this wonderful country to witness Aurora Australis live. Unlike the northern lights, which can only be seen at specific times of the year, the southern lights can be viewed all year. There are places where you can have this remarkable experience of seeing southern lights such as Queenstown, The Catlins, Lake Tekapo, Stewart Island, the Great Barrier Island and Invercargill. When the entire sky is bathed in the hues of the southern lights, New Zealand's stunning sky becomes even more enticing and dazzling.

### Museums- Flaunting the history at its best

Museums in New Zealand do not house dusty relics of the past; instead, they highlight the country's rich history, culture and ongoing traditions. If you want to understand a country's history and culture in deep, then the best way is to visit the museums of the country where you can learn everything in detail. It will add an extra thrill to your travel. All the museums in New Zealand offer a different encounter when you visit them such as Auckland Museum has an impressive collection of Maori and Polynesian artefacts, Canterbury Museum has more focus on Antarctica and Otago Museum has a lot to offer about the natural and social history of the South Island.





## INDIA'S TRAVEL & TOURISM MAY SURPASS PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS BY 2022 END, SAYS WTTC

Research conducted by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has revealed the Travel & Tourism sector's contribution to the Indian economy could surpass pre-pandemic levels this year, with a year-on-year growth of 20.7%.

The forecast from the WTTC's latest Economic Impact Report (EIR), shows the sector's contribution to the nation's economy could reach almost INR 15.9 trillion (USD 215 billion) in 2022, 1% above 2019 levels.

Employment levels are set to grow to almost 35 million Travel & Tourism jobs, with an 8.3% growth this year.

Over the next decade, India's travel & tourism's GDP is expected to grow at an average of 7.8% annually, compared to 6.7% of the India's overall economy, to reach almost INR 33.8 trillion – representing 7.2% of the total economy.

Julia Simpson, WTTC president & CEO, said: "After the pain suffered by India's travel & tourism sector, the future looks bright with Travel & Tourism to and from India set to exceed 2019 levels. The outlook for the next decade is looking very positive with India accounting for one in five of all new travel & tourism jobs globally."

Before the pandemic, India's travel and tourism sector's contribution to GDP was 7% in 2019, falling to just 4.3% in 2020, which represented a shocking 41.7% loss. The sector also supported more than 40 million jobs in 2019, falling to just over 29 million in 2020, when the pandemic devastated the sector.

Following the significant decline in 2020, the global tourism body's latest EIR report reveals that 2021 saw the beginning of the recovery for the country's travel & tourism sector. Last year, its contribution to GDP climbed 43.6% year on year, to reach INR 13.2 trillion.

While the sector also saw a recovery of just fewer than three million travel & tourism jobs, representing a positive rise of 10.2% to more than 32 million, this is still 8 million fewer jobs than in 2019.

The sector's contribution to the economy and employment could have been higher if it were not for the impact of the omicron variant, which led to the recovery faltering around the world, with many countries reinstating severe travel restrictions.







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## Vietnam witnesses surge in international arrivals in first five months

Vietnam witnessed more than 365,300 international arrivals in the first five months of this year, a 4.5-fold increase from the same period in 2021, the General Statistics Office said recently.

In the period, visitors entering the country via air travel accounted for around 87.8 per cent of the total. Over the five months, approximately 230,988 foreign visitors to Vietnam were from Asia, tripling the figure of the same period last year.

The number of tourists from Europe, America and Oceania also saw hikes of about 11 times, 23 times and 30 times respectively from the same period last year. Vietnam fully reopened its borders to international visitors on March 15 as part of its efforts to revive the country's tourism and economy after nearly two years of interruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Ministry of Health,



the only requirement for the international visitors to Vietnam is that they should have a negative Covid test. The communist state's tourism sector was worth up to USD 32 billion a year before the pandemic, but it ground to a standstill during the pandemic as the government restricted travel.

## Saudi Arabia, Seychelles sign pact for co-op in tourism

Saudi Arabia's Tourism Ministry has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Seychelles to boost cooperation and exchange expertise between the two sides.

The MoU, which was signed by the Minister of Tourism, Ahmed Al-Khateeb, and his counterpart, Sylvestre Radegonde, emanates from the importance of tourism and its role in increasing economic growth, creating job opportunities and promoting sustainable development and

cooperation between the two countries.

It also aims at supporting and developing the activities and efforts of tourism institutions and associations and encouraging the establishment of investments, projects and tourism activities via holding conferences, entertainment programs, seminars and exhibitions.

As per the MoU, the two sides will exchange expertise in planning, tourism investment and developing tourism sites and projects.



## Turkey removes COVID restrictions for Indian travellers

Turkey has relaxed all the conditions for travellers entering the country and is expecting to welcome the highest-ever number of Indian tourists this year, Turkiye Tourism Board said.

Earlier, Indian travellers were required to submit either a vaccination certificate or an RT-PCR test report to visit Turkey, according to a statement.

Now, Indian travellers no longer have to show proof of vaccination against coronavirus or proof of recovery from the disease or a negative RT-PCR test result, it added.

With both IndiGo and Turkish Airlines resuming direct international flights to Turkiye, the country is expecting to welcome the highest-ever number of Indian tourists this year, it said.

Turkey's tourism, which touched almost USD 25 billion revenues last year recording a 103 per cent growth since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, is set to create a new record in 2022, it said.

The country emerged as one of the top destinations for Free Independent Travelers (FIT) and Meeting, Incentive Travel, Conferences and Events (MICE) tourists from around the world last year, having welcomed over 30 million international visitors in 2021, Turkiye Tourism Board stated.

Of these, 50,000 were Indian tourists, which was a sizable number taking the pandemic into consideration.

## Kazakhstan introduces visa-free travel with 65 countries

Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Qatar H E Arman Issagaliyev has said that Kazakhstan introduced a visa-free regime with 65 countries of the world, including Qatar.

"Qatar Airways operates four direct flights a week from Doha to Almaty. This is especially convenient for citizens and residents of Qatar, who can spend the weekend in Kazakhstan and return to work on weekdays," said the Ambassador.

He was addressing a roadshow under the theme "Tourist opportunities of Kazakhstan" in Doha, organised by the national company 'Kazakh Tourism' within the framework of the exhibition 'Hospitality Qatar' at DECC. The event was attended by Secretary of the Maslikhat of the Republic of Kazakhstan Bahadur Madaliyev, as well as representatives of Visit Almaty, SkyWay and the Department of Tourism and External Relations of Shymkent.

Hospitality Qatar is the only event of its kind in Qatar, which enjoys the support of the country's main tourism stakeholders, such as Qatar Tourism and Qatar Airways, and gathers under one roof all the main groups of market buyers, government agencies, private investors and project owners.





## International tourism witnesses 182% y-o-y increase in Q1 of 2022

Tourism continues to recover at a strong pace. Globally, destinations welcomed almost three times as many international arrivals in the first quarter of 2022 as in the same period of 2021, with Europe leading the sector's rebound. According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, international tourism saw a 182% year-on-year increase in January-March 2022, with destinations worldwide welcoming an estimated 117 million international arrivals compared to 41 million in Q1 2021. Of the extra 76 million international arrivals for the first three months, about 47 million were recorded in March, showing that the recovery is gathering pace.

UNWTO data shows that during the first quarter of 2022, Europe welcomed almost four times as many international arrivals (+280%) as in Q1 of 2021, with results driven by strong intra-regional demand. In the Americas, arrivals more than doubled (+117%) in the same three months. However, arrivals in Europe and the Americas were still 43% and 46% below 2019 levels.

## Japan eases foreign tourism ban, allows guided package tours

Japan eased its borders for foreign tourists and began accepting visa applications, but only for those on guided package tours who are willing to follow mask-wearing and other antiviral measures as the country cautiously tries to balance business and infection worries.

The Japan Tourism Agency says tours are being accepted from 98 countries and regions, including the United States, Britain, China, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore, which are deemed as having low infection risks.

Japan's partial resumption of international tourism that was halted during the coronavirus pandemic is being carried out under guidelines based on an experiment conducted in late May. It involved about 50 participants, mostly tour agency employees from Australia, Singapore, Thailand and the United States.

## RAKation summer campaign launched for the ultimate summer vacation

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) launches RAKation, a new summer campaign inviting visitors to explore the nature-based Emirate and discover an endless list of activities and experiences.

Running from June 15 – September 15, 2022, RAKation offers guests booking a stay of three nights or more at participating three, four and five-star hotels in Ras Al Khaimah, two free tickets for the Jais Sledder. The latest thrilling experience to open on Jebel Jais, the country's highest peak, Jais Sledder is the region's longest toboggan ride, covering 1,840 exhilarating metres of

hairpin curves and undulating waves. Guests can choose to share the experience with a loved one or go solo, with the ride reaching up to 40 kilometres per hour as you swerve through the mountain – a fun-filled way to soak up the stunning views of the Northern Emirate.

Guests on RAKation will enjoy free return bus transportation from key locations across Ras Al Khaimah to Jebel Jais, plus a 30% discount on other mountain activities including the Jais Flight, the longest zipline in the world, the Jais Sky Tour (six consecutive ziplines) and dining at 1484 by Puro, the highest restaurant in the UAE offering breath-taking mountain views.



## Quarantine free travel is now allowed for South Korea

South Korea has taken a step further to welcome Indian travellers. Starting from June 08, all international travellers to Korea are not required to quarantine regardless of their vaccination status.

COVID-19 testing will still be in effect, making it necessary for travellers to submit a negative COVID-19 test result. Travellers must do a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test before departing to Korea. After arrival in Korea, another PCR test must be done within three days and a negative PCR test result must be submitted. If travellers do not have a negative test result or lack proper information, they will be unable to

board their flight. Also, if travellers get a positive test result upon arrival, they must directly get quarantined.

Central Disease Control Headquarters in South Korea recommend using the Q-code system before getting on the flight to make the arrival process quicker by scanning the QR code upon arrival.

As per earlier announcement, Indian travellers can now apply for a short term (C-3) visa which allows foreigners to stay up to 90 days for marketing research, travel, visiting relatives, meetings or similar reasons. The visa can be applied physically at the VFS Global centers.



## 'Thailand Pass' registration scheme to be lifted from July 1

Thailand's Centre of COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) approved the removal of the Thailand Pass registration scheme and an US\$10,000 health insurance requirement for foreign visitors, effective July 01, 2022. Both requirements were initially removed for Thai nationals from June 01, 2022. From July 01, 2022, foreign nationals are only required to show proof of either a certificate of vaccination or a negative RT-PCR or professional ATK test result within 72 hours of travel. These can be in a print or digital format. Random checks will be made on arrivals at Thailand's international airports or land border checkpoints (in 22 provinces).

Unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated travellers who are random checked and who are unable to show proof of a pre-arrival negative test will be required to undergo a professional ATK test at the point of entry. Meanwhile, the CCSA also approved the designation of Bangkok and 76 provinces as the Surveillance or green zone, thus allowing resumption of new normal businesses and activities nationwide. And while maintaining the safety and health measures under the universal prevention, the Royal Thai Government is preparing to announce a new set of guidelines as the nation is stepping into post-pandemic.



## Egypt lifts all COVID-19-related entry restrictions

Egypt lifted all COVID-19-related entry restrictions for all travellers, whether Egyptians or foreigners. The decision was made by Egypt's Supreme Committee for the Management of the Epidemiology and Health Pandemic Crisis according to the pandemic conditions in Egypt and abroad, said Nader Saad, a spokesperson of the Egyptian cabinet, in a statement.

Nearly 86.6 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, as well as 4.5 million booster shots, have been provided for the people, the statement said, adding that there are nearly 57.5 million doses in reserve to continue the vaccination campaign.

The statement said that 800 DNA reagents were distributed by the Egyptian health ministry to detect the monkeypox cases, and strict measures are taken to have veterinary quarantine for the animals coming from abroad.



## Qatar partners with GKA Kite World Tour; announces new kite beach resort

Qatar Tourism has become an Official Tourism Partner of the Global Kitesports Association (GKA) Kite World Tour for three years, with a new world-class kite beach resort set to open in the northeast of the country later this year.

Qatar Airways also becomes the Kite World Tour's Title Partner and Official Airline, while Qatar Tourism will become title sponsor for events held in Qatar. The exciting partnership combines the skies and the seas to celebrate one of the fastest growing and most exhilarating new sports.

The announcement was made

at the site of an upcoming state-of-the-art kite beach resort in Fuwairit. Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Akbar Al Baker, said, "Kitesurfing is a travel sport where adventure seekers compete in beautiful destinations across many continents around the world. At Qatar Airways, we are proud to support this growing sport and become the preferred airline for athletes and fans travelling to GKA events all around the globe including Qatar, our home country, to experience something new and exciting."

## Bahrain records 'world's fastest recovery in tourism

Bahrain has recorded the world's fastest tourism recovery rate of 95% since the pandemic, with its 2021 tourist numbers reaching 3.8 million, a new research report said. However, its 2021 tourism revenue of \$1.8 billion is only 49% of what the island country accumulated in 2019 (\$3.7 billion), meaning travellers are spending less when they visit, according to analysis, a UK-based price comparison website. In second place, Albania welcomed over 5.3 million tourists in 2021, just short (89.8%) of its 2019



total. With a varied blend of mountainous and coastal regions, this south-eastern European country will hope to return to its pre-lockdown visitor peak soon, the report noted. The Caribbean nation Dominican Republic, the third in the top three countries posting highest

recoveries, which saw five million visitors in 2021, which was around 78% of its total for 2019 (6.4 million). According to the country's Ministry of Tourism, the country attracted more tourists (700,000) in December 2021, than it had in any other month on record.



## AAI works for barrier-free facilities at airports

In continuation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of equipping airports with additional services or people with reduced mobility, the Airports Authority of India under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has been endeavoring to accomplish the objective of making airports a barrier-free facility. And today, one can see ramps, railings, water facilities and other public utilities being brought about at airports' premises with a special focus on the convenience of such people.

At Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata, right from the entry point, passengers with mobility issues are rendered special attention by the airport staff. And their movement is not just facilitated by the recently developed infrastructure but they are accompanied all along by one or the other department to provide



them with a premier-level airport experience at par with others. C Pattabhi, Airport Director at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata, said, "We have installed various special things for impaired persons. Starting from the main entrance, we have provided a ramp so that they can have easy access inside the terminal building. Apart from that, we have tactile strips for easy movement."

## Alliance Air launches flight on Bilaspur-Bhopal route

The Centre-run Alliance Air started a flight between Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, which will operate four days in a week. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who was in Kanker district, virtually launched the inaugural flight which took off from the Bilasa Devi Kevat Airport in Bilaspur, located nearly 125 km from the state capital Raipur. The aviation services at the Bilaspur airport started on March 1 last year, with two flights connecting the city to Delhi via Jabalpur and Prayagraj, he said.

On the occasion, CM Baghel

said three-and-a-half-years ago, only Raipur was the destination for flight services, but now such services are also available in Jagdalpur (Bastar district) and Bilaspur.

The Bilaspur-Bhopal domestic airline service will particularly be beneficial to the people from northern part of the state, he said.

"We have been making every possible effort to enhance air services in the state. The expansion of the Ambikapur airport runway is going on at a cost of Rs. 43 crore, while work is also underway on the project to set up a commercial airport in Korba," Baghel said.



## IndiGo introduces addl. flights on Delhi-Leh, Delhi-Srinagar & Lucknow-Pantnagar routes

IndiGo announced additional frequencies between Delhi-Leh, Delhi-Srinagar, and Lucknow-Pantnagar effective from July 01 and July 15, 2022, respectively. The Delhi-Leh flight will operate daily at 4:20am from July 1 and will operate at 4:30am from August 1, 2022. To cater to the high demand IndiGo will be adding two additional daily flights for Srinagar from the period between July 1 till August 11, 2022, departing from Delhi at 05:20 and 21:30 and from Srinagar at 07:20 and 23:15. These flights will strengthen IndiGo's network in northern India.

Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer, IndiGo said, "We are pleased to strengthen our network by adding frequencies on Delhi-Leh, Delhi-Srinagar and Lucknow-Pantnagar routes, catering to increased demand for travel to Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Kashmir. Delhi - Leh is one of the most popular routes and we have been witnessing high demand on this



Sanjay Kumar

route, with this new addition we will have 3 daily flights from Delhi. We are getting a good response to our Lucknow-Pantnagar flight and with the increase in frequency, this flight would now operate five days a week. These new frequencies will not only promote tourism, trade, and commerce in the states, but also make travel affordable to these destinations through additional capacity. We will strive to stay true to our promise of affordable fares, on-time performance, courteous and hassle-free service across wide network, onboard our lean clean flying machines."

## Akasa Air's first aircraft lands in India

First time in eight years – a domestic jet aircraft with new livery seen in Indian skies," Akasa Air said recently as it welcomed the arrival of the first of its 72 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft at Indira Gandhi International Airport. India's newest airline received the ceremonial keys for the aircraft at Seattle, USA on June 15. The delivery of the carrier's first

aircraft brings it even closer to receiving the Air Operator's Permit, which is needed to launch commercial operations in the country. Stating that it is a testimony to the country's vibrant start-up ecosystem, Vinay Dube, Founder, MD and CEO added that Akasa Air is a prime example of the progress made by Indian aviation in recent years.



## GO First announces new direct flights to Kuwait and Muscat from Kochi

In line with its vision to strengthen international connectivity between India and the Middle East, GO FIRST (formerly known as GoAir) announced the commencement of daily direct flights from Kochi to Kuwait and Kochi to Muscat starting June 01, 2022. The inaugural flight departed from Cochin International Airport at 20:15 hours (local time) and arrived at Kuwait International Airport at 23:05 hours (local time). The new flights to Kuwait and Muscat from Kochi will offer connectivity and convenient travel options to blue collar workers/migrant working class flying abroad for employment.



Situated on the western front of Asia, Kuwait is a country in the Middle East that has a lot to offer to travellers. The rich cultural and commercial heritage makes it a must-visit Gulf country. The city is a perfect amalgamation of lively restaurants, pristine beaches and antiquated

museums. Furthermore, wedged between the mountains and the sea, the capital city of Oman is a glorious wonder of white elegance. Muscat, the chosen capital for trade and commerce across the Indian Ocean, is a meticulously clean and organized city.

## Turkish Airlines reaches 80% load factor in May

Turkish Airlines said it reached 80 percent load factor, carrying 6.3 million passengers during May 2022, releasing its passenger and cargo traffic results for the month.

The flag carrier increased its seat capacity offered to passengers by 12.6 percent compared to same period of 2019 due to the increasing demand despite several countries still continuing travel restrictions.

Turkish Airlines General Manager Bilal Ekşi said, "Although our sector was

almost brought to halt during pandemic, we as Turkish Airlines never stopped. We worked towards today as we knew we would be returning to our route to success even stronger. May 2022 numbers show that our goals and dreams are starting to materialize. We believe we will be meeting again above the clouds with the 6.3 million passengers who chose the privileged travel experience of Turkish Airlines during May and extend our thanks for choosing us. Now is the time to talk about good things again."



## Ethiopian Airlines launches flights to Chennai, India

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's leading airline, has started thrice weekly operations to/from Chennai, India as of July 2, 2022. Chennai has joined the vast Ethiopian network as a fourth destination in India after New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Ethiopian started its service to India with a debut flight to New Delhi in 1966, just 20 years after the airline was founded. Ethiopian pioneered the air transport linkage between Africa and India. Recently, Ethiopian marked its 50th year anniversary of uninterrupted service to Mumbai, the commercial capital of India.

Ethiopian Airlines Chief Commercial Officer, Lemma Yadecha Gudeta said, "It is great honour to be here in Chennai today as we launched our fourth destination in India and the first new destination after the pandemic. After a very tough journey in the last three years, we are now able to overcome the challenges and embark on a new growth path. Currently we are operating 38 weekly Cargo and a Passenger flight to/from our destinations in India and the commencement of flight to Chennai is a testimony of our commitment to serve Indians in all corners of the country."

## Oman Air increases flight frequency to eight Indian cities

Oman Air has amended its summer schedule to reflect increased frequency to eight Indian destinations including Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kozhikode, Kochi, Delhi, Goa, Hyderabad and Chennai.

Oman Air will now fly seven times a week to Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kozhikode and Kochi and three times a week to Goa.

Between Muscat and its operational India destinations, the airline introduced wide-body service, including the B787 Dreamliner and Airbus A330 in addition to the Boeing 737. Guests should check omanair.com for the most up-to-date flight schedules and times, as they are subject to change, an airline statement said.



## LOT Polish Airlines takes off from Mumbai

Star Alliance member carrier LOT Polish Airlines increases its footprint in India and has now integrated Mumbai in its global route network. LOT Polish Airlines and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport Mumbai jointly celebrated the launch of the new nonstop service between Mumbai and Warsaw.

Amit Ray, Director India at LOT Polish Airlines, "After the successful launch of our Delhi to Warsaw operations in September 2019 and based on positive feedback from our customers and trade partners in India, it has always been our desire to add Mumbai to our passenger route network. We are delighted that the inaugural flight between Mumbai and Warsaw has been launched, providing guests from India with a greater choice of travel options, not only to Poland, but also to many other popular European and North American leisure and business destinations."

Speaking on the maiden flight from Mumbai, a Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) spokesperson



said, "With a commitment to provide exceptional international connectivity, CSMIA is delighted to extend its network to LOT Polish Airlines who also aims to provide Indians and International travellers Gateway to India and also offer enhanced connectivity to Poland and Europe at large. The launch of the new nonstop service between Mumbai and Warsaw is a testament of CSMIA's longstanding promise to continue to be a partner to the airlines in our endeavour to provide seamless access not just to Europe, but also be a gateway to the global destinations."

## Jazeera announces successful implementation of IFG for Group Bookings

Jazeera Airways informed that they have successfully implemented payment through the IATA Financial Gateway (IFG) as a new and additional Mode of payment for Group Bookings. IFG (BSP) payment is only available for Travel Agencies registered with Jazeera Airways.

IFG is a system designed to facilitate and simplify the selling, reporting, and remitting procedures of IATA-accredited passenger sales agents, according to the IATA website. As a response to this decision, everyone has highly appreciated and mentioned that this mode of payment has indeed enhanced yet simplified the business experience for the travel partners. This new and



additional Mode of Payment was introduced when the Airways decided that they will discontinue its availability on all GDSs (Galileo & Amadeus) about 15 months ago. The availability of the IFG (BSP) payment will be for Travel Agencies registered with Jazeera Airways only.



## Virgin Atlantic launches second daily service between Delhi and London

Virgin Atlantic launched its second daily service from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport to London Heathrow. The new flight will depart Delhi at 1000hrs and arrive at London Heathrow at 1520hrs. The additional daily connection from Delhi to London Heathrow offers more choice than ever, benefiting both business and leisure travellers. Customers will also enjoy seamless connectivity to US destinations such as New York, Boston, Austin, Los Angeles and Atlanta.

Speaking about the new service Liezl Gericke, Head of Middle East, Africa, South Asia – Virgin Atlantic said, "This year is our largest every flying programme from India and reflects the strong demand for our flights. We will be offering 100,000 additional seats this year with the launch of our second daily Delhi to London Heathrow service, and we have strong bookings for the coming months. Offering our customers the choice of a morning or night departure from Delhi is proving popular with both business and leisure travellers."

## Star Air launches direct Ahmedabad-Bhuj flight

Star Air is set to operate Bhuj as its 17th destination under the regional connectivity scheme UDAN. With the launch of the new destination, Star Air will operate its Embraer 145 jets for direct and connecting flights between Bhuj, Ahmedabad and Belagavi as part of its summer 2022 schedule.

Star Air will operate five times a week between Bhuj, Ahmedabad and Belagavi on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. This flight service between Ahmedabad and Bhuj covers 297kms of the distance between these cities in 60 minutes.

Shrenik Ghodawat, MD - Star Air, said, "We are pleased to announce Bhuj as our 17th destination. The launch of Bhuj would provide easy access to tourist attractions like the famous Rann Utsav, the Aina Mahal and religious destinations including the Swaminarayan temple.



Enhanced connectivity in Bhuj, will boost tourism, trade and commerce in Gujarat. We hope to continue connecting many other regional cities to the travel map of India in the times to come."

Currently, Star Air offers scheduled flight services to 17 Indian destinations that include Ahmedabad, Ajmer (Kishangarh), Bengaluru, Belagavi, Delhi (Hindon), Hubballi, Indore, Jodhpur, Kalaburagi, Mumbai, Nashik, Surat, Tirupati, Jamnagar, Hyderabad, Nagpur and Bhuj.



**ANKUR CHANDRA**

**PROMOTED AT:** Sarovar Hotels  
**TO:** General Manager- Development  
 Sarovar Hotels has announced the appointment of Ankur Chandra as the new General Manager – Development. Chandra has close to 20 years of experience in Hotel Operations to Pre – opening, Development and Projects. In his new role, along with his team, he will be responsible for underline Sarovar’s Strategy to boost new projects and development. His last assignment before becoming the part of Sarovar Hotels was with Cygnett Hotels as the Director of Operations and Development.



**VINEET MISHRA**

**PROMOTED AT:** Accor India  
**TO:** Cluster General Manager  
 Accor India has been announced the appointment of Vineet Mishra as Cluster General Manager of Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, along with Novotel & Ibis Bengaluru Outer Ring Road and Novotel & Ibis Chennai. A seasoned hospitality veteran, Mishra brings on board an illustrious career spanning over 23 years with an exceptional network in the industry. In his new role, Vineet will take on an elevated leadership role, taking charge for leading the overall operations.



**GAURAV THAKUR**

**PROMOTED AT:** Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa  
**TO:** General Manager  
 Hilton has appointed Gaurav Thakur as the General Manager of the upcoming Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa. An accomplished hospitality veteran with a 17-year long career in Hilton across the Waldorf Astoria, Hilton and Conrad brands, Thakur’s diverse experience includes roles in countries such as the United Kingdom, India and the Maldives, where he oversaw operations across different departments.



**PANKAJ JASWAL**

**PROMOTED AT:** Cordelia Cruises  
**TO:** National Sales Head  
 Cordelia Cruises is delighted to welcome Pankaj Jaswal on board as its National Sales Head. Jaswal brings with him an extensive 22 years of experience in Hospitality Sales and has worked with brands such as Taj Hotels, The Park Hotels, The Paul Hotels and Resorts, Sterling Resorts and Zuri Hotels and Resorts. Prior to joining Cordelia, Jaswal was the General Manager – Resort Sales at Mahindra Holidays and Resorts and has developed strong relationships with clients from India, Southeast Asia the Middle East and Europe.



**PRAMOD KUMAR**

**PROMOTED AT:** Jaipur Marriott Hotel  
**TO:** Director of Sales & Marketing  
 Jaipur Marriott Hotel is pleased to have Pramod Kumar as Director of Sales & Marketing. Kumar brings along a wealth of expertise in the Sales & Marketing and Revenue Management domain. In his new stint, he will be responsible to drive commercial objectives and enhance the brand positioning. Armed with a rich experience of more than 16 years including 7 Pre- openings and Re-Branding, his journey is no less but exemplary.



**VIKAS OSWAL**

**PROMOTED AT:** Aloft New Delhi Aerocity  
**TO:** General Manager  
 Aloft New Delhi Aerocity has announced the appointment of Vikas Oswal as the General Manager of the hotel. With three decades of experience in the hospitality industry all across India and South East Asia, he has attained expertise in the skills of managing and strategising successful operations. After acing the hospitality industry with his precise management skills, and strategies to drive business, Vikas Oswal is all set to take Aloft New Delhi Aerocity to new heights of success.



**ATUL UPADHYAY**

**PROMOTED AT:** Pride Group of Hotels  
**TO:** Senior Vice President  
 Atul Upadhyay has been promoted to Senior Vice President of Pride Group of Hotels. He has an illustrious journey of 13 years with the Pride Group of Hotels. In his new role, Upadhyay will continue to oversee the entire operations of the group, spearhead strategic partnerships and drive the company’s expansion plans. Prior to this, he was the Vice President of the group. Atul Upadhyay is a seasoned professional with over 28 years of pivotal experience in the realm of the hospitality industry.



**PIYALI SAHA**

**PROMOTED AT:** Novotel Guwahati  
**TO:** Director of Sales  
 Novotel Guwahati has promoted Piyali Saha to the position of Director of Sales. A strategic and passionate hotelier, Piyali brings with her an experience of over a decade from renowned hospitality chains, Accor, The Oberoi and Marriott in India. With her core expertise in Sales & Business development, Piyali is presently responsible to take care of sales, revenue, and marketing for the property.



**PRADEEP PETWAL**

**PROMOTED AT:** Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort  
**TO:** Indian Chef  
 Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort has appointed Pradeep Petwal as Indian chef, effective immediately. In his new post, Chef Pradeep will be responsible for the wide range of Indian food in all Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort outlets, mainly Mercado and Edgewater. Chef Pradeep will also prepare dishes for Edgewater. It also includes a wide vegan selection and Mauritian and European-inspired dishes in the evening.



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