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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Friends,

The prevailing times are tough for the tourism, hospitality, aviation and all verticals of travel trade industry. The impact of Coronavirus outbreak is being severely felt across the global tourism industry. Presently, it is anyone's guess about what would be the long-term effect or for how long and how much but the economic disruption from Covid-19 outbreak is humongous and may ripple well into 2021-22.



The world currently stands in a gloomy state with hopeful hearts – this too shall pass one day. But, till then, all one can read or talk about is the lockdown, cancellations, flights grounded, hotels locked, trains suspended – it is as if everything around us has come to a standstill. It's depressing, disheartening and utterly disturbing. And yet, amidst all this, I often read posts on social media, saying – which is your favourite holiday destination? Where will you go for a vacation when all this is over? And more and more... the Covid-19 has had its catastrophic impact but it has not diminished the spirit of the travel fraternity and I strongly feel that this “spirit” and “positivity” will help us sail towards a better and safer future.

There is little doubt that tourism has been the worst hit industry and it will take plenty of time to recover. As I write this edit, news of more deaths, more positive cases come in from Italy, Spain, UK, and now even India. China, after having recovered, is facing a second round of infections. But amidst all this, there are tales of recovery also, where not just the youth but many elderly people are also getting cured. So my friends from the industry, let us keep our faiths intact and stay home till the worst is over.

To help you keep yourselves informed and entertained, BOTT India is happy to come out with the E-Magazine, which has in it some extremely insightful interviews where we have highlighted the women power in the industry. From the stalwarts working in the Ministry of Tourism to those contributing in the private sector, our wide range of interviews will surely inspire you and leave you in awe of these special ladies. In addition to this, our news stories, destination features, etc. will keep you busy and informed for sure.

Please do send us your feedback at priyanka@bottindia.com

Priyanka Saxena Ray

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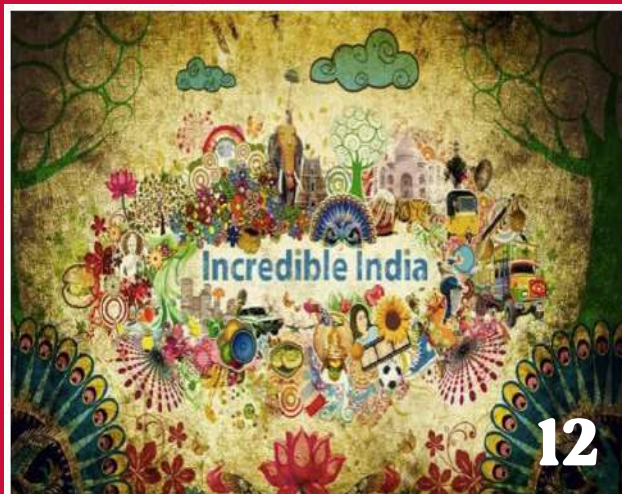
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Arabian Travel Market postponed; will be held from June 28 – July 1, 2020

Reed Travel Exhibitions has announced that it has postponed Arabian Travel Market (ATM) to 28th June – 1st July 2020, at the Dubai World Trade Centre in Dubai, U.A.E. We at Arabian Travel Market want to express our concern for everyone impacted by coronavirus. Like all of you, we have carefully monitored the global health crisis related to COVID-19 coronavirus. Our top priority is the health and safety of everyone involved in Arabian Travel Market; employees, partners, customers and exhibitors. Due to the escalation of the COVID-19 epidemic around the world, after consultation with all our stakeholders, the venue management, supporting associations, and in alignment with the advice from the UAE public health authorities regarding travel to and from impacted countries, we have taken the decision to postpone our event which was due to take place on April 19 – 22, 2020 in Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC).



OTOAI meets MoF in its ongoing endeavour to stop implementation of TCS

We are all aware that taking an international trip is most likely to become more expensive from April 1, 2020. Budget 2020 proposed to amend section 206C to levy TCS on overseas remittance and for sale of an overseas tour package. According to this, while buying an overseas travel package or purchasing foreign currency above Rs 7 lakh, you will be liable to a tax collection at source (TCS). Given the challenging times that we are facing with almost all overseas travel plans put on hold by people, conventions cancelled and even big sports events' postponed, this move will only deter people further to travel and will make the survival of the Travel Agent tougher.



TAT India hosts Indian travel agents and media on a FAM Trip to Thailand

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi Office invited travel agents and media from New Delhi, Chandigarh, Kolkata for a familiarization trip to Bangkok from 4th– 6th March 2020, while Tourism Authority of Thailand, Mumbai Office invited travel agents and media from Mumbai, Pune, Vishakhapatnam, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Kochi, Ahmedabad and Nagpur to Bangkok from 4th– 8th March 2020. The purpose of this trip was to give the participants a first-hand experience to witness the current situation in Bangkok with reference to the Coronavirus or COVID-19 spread. This trip would help to boost confidence of the people that tourism and everyday life in Thailand is as usual and the tourism industry is looking forward to welcoming Indian travelers.



Golden Chariot gets a makeover; resume services with IRCTC

The railway's catering arm IRCTC will resume services of the luxury train Golden Chariot on March 22 2020, after a gap of a few years, according to an official communication released recently. IRCTC once again took over the operation, management and marketing of the special train through a recent agreement with Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC), which launched the Golden Chariot train in 2008. "The Golden Chariot is again going to hit the tracks in a new look and feel on an exciting week long itinerary. IRCTC has planned three trips of Golden Chariot on 'Pride of Karnataka' itinerary on March 22, March 29 and April 12, 2020.



ITDC organises a session on self-defence & wellness on International Women's Day

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), a public sector undertaking, on the occasion of International Women's Day, organised an in-house training session on self-defence & healthy living for all its women executives at Hotel Samrat. The session was conducted by the women personnel of Delhi police from the SPUWAC cell (special police unit for women and children) also Ms. Parmeet Kaur (Chief Dietician- AIIMS) was invited for conducting the session. The same was managed by ITDC's Human Resource Development Division - Ashok Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (AIH&TM). The session was also attended by Shri Piyush Tiwari, DCM, ITDC & Mr. H.K. Bhutani (GM - HRD).



Mr. Vachirachai Sirisumpan takes charge as Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi

Mr. Vachirachai Sirisumpan has been appointed as the new Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi Office from February 1, 2020. He has been with TAT for more than 20 years with extensive experience working in various divisions including International Relations Division, Europe, Middle East and Africa Markets Region, Domestic Marketing, and Policy and Planning Department. Prior to his assignment to head the TAT Delhi Office, Mr. Vachirachai Sirisumpan was the Director of Southern Market Division promoting and coordinating Thailand's Southern Region for domestic tourist market. In his previous assignment, Mr. Vachirachai Sirisumpan had been posted at TAT Dubai Office as Deputy Director for Middle East between Market 2012 - 2016.



Can Incredible India turn the **Coronavirus** impact on Global Tourism to its advantage?

BOTT Council

Fathom this:

— According to World Health Organisation (WHO), as on February 27, 2020, the confirmed corona virus cases reported are 82,294 with China alone having 78,630 cases.

- The leisure and business travel contributed \$884 billion to gross domestic product in 2017 in Asia according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. The projections for 2018 is around \$1 trillion.
- As per one estimate, the airlines alone are expected to lose about 29 billion dollars in revenue this year, and for tourism revenue losses in principle, are expected to reach 3 billion USD worldwide.
- Bain & Company estimated that a growth in international arrivals into India of 20 million people would lead to \$19.9 billion in incremental tourism receipts from international travellers and the creation of approximately 1 million additional jobs

It seems so if India can enhance its value proposition and both government and private players can come together to aggressively push its untapped potential and foster an enabling environment.

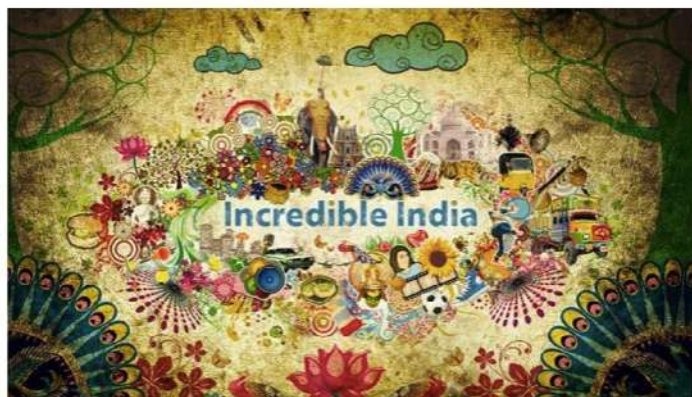
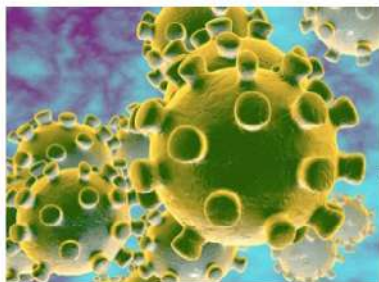
The impact of Coronavirus outbreak also known as Covid-19 is being severely felt across the global tourism industry. Presently, it is anyone's guess about what would be the long-term effect or for how long and how much but the economic disruption from Covid-19 outbreak is humongous and may ripple well into 2021-22.

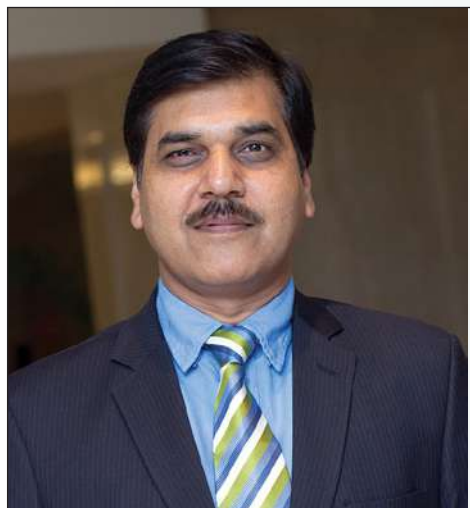
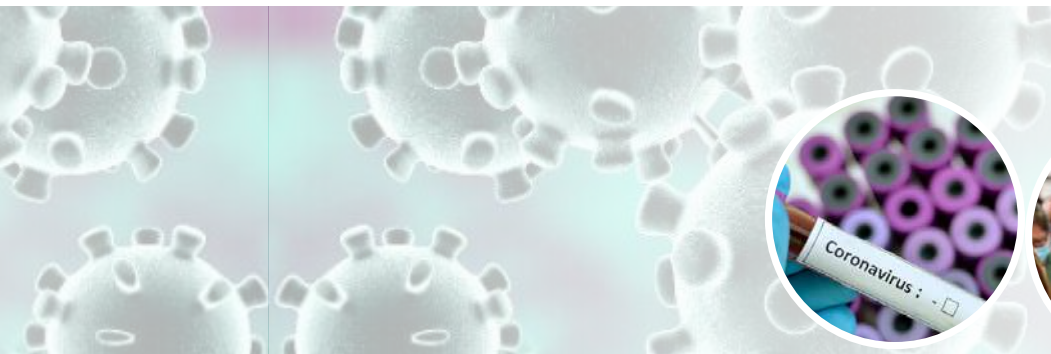
From the tourism perspective, China, Japan and South Asian Countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand are suffering huge losses with as high as 60-80% cancellations. With the rising confirmed cases of Covid-19 every day, travel agents, operators, and hoteliers are bracing for one of the worst tourism periods in recent memory. Unfortunately, the focus of the coronavirus outbreak is shifting - from China to the rest of the world, particularly Europe. The rise in Italy, the main focus of infection in Europe, represents a 25% surge in recently. Several European countries announced new cases traced to Italy.



Ashwani Lohani, former Chairman & Managing Director, Air India

However, not everything is gloomy from Indian perspective because the virus has largely affected China and South Asian countries. As the numbers of cases rise in these regions as well as in countries like Italy, India has done exceedingly well with just 3 confirmed cases so far. One among them is free of the virus and the other two are recovering well as per the media reports. Government's timely





Amaresh Tiwari,
Vice-Chairman, ICPB

actions in putting up process at airports, adequate quarantine and medical facilities have reduced the risk to almost negligible. It further helps that Indian doctors and healthcare professionals are said to be the best in the world. Given these circumstances, can and should India rise up to the occasion to project herself as viable, safe, world-class tourism destination in Asia?

“Yes. With China and South Asia affected, it is but logical that India should project itself as a viable alternate. The most important step is to launch focused campaigns positioning India’s tourism destinations as alternate to the South Asian destinations. Indian carriers can also reduce their frequencies to South Asian markets and deploy this capacity elsewhere to attract more tourists. The Ministry of Tourism can play a very vital role in this positioning of India’s tourist destinations”, says **Ashwani Lohani, former Chairman & Managing Director, Air India.**

A recent report from Hopper, the flight and hotel booking app showed a roughly 20 percent drop in demand

to Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam. The company said it was seeing a shift in Americans searching for new locales. The recent successful visit of President of the United States of America, Donald Trump along with his family to — two of India’s most popular tourist destinations — Taj Mahal, Agra and Mahatma Gandhi’s Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad — couldn’t have come at a more strategic time. It sent a clear message that India is not only safe but has much to offer for all kinds of tourists.

Adds Amaresh Tiwari, Vice-Chairman, ICPB (India Convention Promotion Bureau), “The Indian tourism and travel trade industry should come together to promote India to a wider world population who are keen to visit Asia. India has much untapped potential here, especially when you compare it to a



Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI

city like Barcelona, which received 32 million tourists, or a country like France, which benefited from 84 million international arrivals in 2015. With rich heritage & culture, historic monuments to snow-clad mountains, exquisite beaches and varied options of eco-tourism,



E.M. Najeeb, Senior Vice President, IATO

adventure tourism, wildlife and cruise tourism, we can create unique experiences for travellers along with unmatched hospitality. It is also an opportune time to aggressively and collectively push India to become one of the fastest growing destinations for conventions and meetings of all shapes and sizes.”

Avers Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India), “Just like every dark cloud has a silver lining, this is time to turn the adverse situation in our favour. India has much to offer. We all have to analyse and figure out the opportunities that would give Incredible India an edge over other tourism destinations. We need to channelise the mechanism for the flow of traffic towards India. As an association, we have escalated the matter to depute more aircraft for the smooth traffic movement and we as an association are also ensuring that the fares don’t surge high.”

Though it is also true that India is facing some brunt with the loss of the Chinese tourists. While countries that have relied heavily on

Chinese tourism, including Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore, are each expected to lose at least \$3 billion in tourism-related revenues, India is affected but not to a large extent.

Cautions E.M. Najeeb, Senior Vice President, IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators), "Chinese tourists were a big potential segment to many South Asian countries including India. For now India has put up precautionary restrictions to travellers from China. But all such negative situations would subside taking its time and Tourism would emerge again with strength. I personally feel that this is not the time for India to project ourselves as an alternative destination in a hurry, during this time of anxiety. We should stay patient for some more time for this to pass. But at the same time we should continue with our regular promotions, and tourism development activities and setting up infrastructure and our policies right." He further adds, "India should surely convey to the world that we are safe from this epidemic. We should keep continuing with our promotions in the tourism generating markets and empower the Government of India regional tourist offices to promote Destination India with new targets."

There is little doubt that the global travel boom has come to a screeching halt since late January. The knock-on effects are being felt around the globe. The latest being the cancellation of ITB Berlin 2020, one of the largest travel and tourism shows of the world.



Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel

However, going by the experiences of previous major viral epidemics, it is pertinent to have strategic and robust recovery plan for India to make up for lost ground, lap up the pent-up demand and lure people who are itching to travel.

Avers Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel, "At this point the situation is no longer a local one and it's globalised. So travel is slowing down across the world. Having said that, this will go away and when it does we must be prepared as a destination to come back with a vengeance. There is no doubt that our competition will go to market with amazing prices, proposals and offers. Destinations like Singapore, Thailand and others are already preparing recovery plans. So If India does not

have its act together, we are going to be left looking at the party from the outside. We need to have a marketing strategy in place, a price discussion and a pitch on why India should be the first point of call when travel comes back."

The travel & trade Industry and experts believe Ministry of Tourism can play a vital role at this juncture being a facilitator and primary funder of this process. Like giving the "industry an immediate tax or financial break, creating an industry-wide task force of people who actually understand the business, hire a world class agency to create a new India brand that will capture the imagination and be more communicative to the world," adds Kohli.

Mayal also concurs, India needs to indulge in vigorous marketing and promotions to portray that it's safe. In addition, she says, "there should be more focus on spurring up the domestic demand for the ensuing holiday season. A lot of Indians who travel abroad can be tapped and what better way to help balance the decreasing tourism numbers by looking inwards and boosting the morale of travel agents and tour operators in this time."

Trust, if only, Incredible India, with 29 states, each the size of a small country, a rich history and remarkable diversity of culture, can enhance its value proposition and foster an enabling environment.

With inputs from Priyanka Saxena Ray and Arushi Bajaj



Covid 19: How do we cope with this crisis of unimaginable magnitude?

It is a given that the tourism and hospitality industry are at the mercy of many external circumstances way beyond our control. This ranges from political upheavels, climatic considerations, natural calamities, diplomatic relations between nations, financial ups and downs – the list is endless!! And the same is proven once again, at the time of the Corona Virus. While all have been impacted globally, I do not think any industry has been as badly hit as tourism, hospitality and aviation.



*Himmat Anand,
Founder,
Tree of Life Resorts)*

It is unfair to profit in times like these and we at the Tree of Life Resorts are very conscious of this. All guests wanting to cancel any reservation till April 15 are being offered the option to re-book for a later date prior to 30 September 2020 at a 15% discount on the rate booked. Should he / she not want to do so, an immediate refund is processed – no questions asked. For bookings which are after 15 April, we are offering the same and should the guest still want to cancel, we will look at it case and case and may levy a minimum cancellation charge. Considerations for the domestic and inbound guests will vary.

How do we cope with this crisis of unimaginable magnitude? For starters, let us take it on the chin – it has happened and it is here to stay, I am honestly aghast at the defeatist and self-pitying attitude I am seeing on social media from so many people. Of course there will be a financial crisis in your Company; of course you will have to take tough decisions to reduce staff; of course things will come to a standstill – these are a given ! What counts most in times like these is constant and open communication with your team members. Please do not do anything behind their back!! It is most unfair of managements to spring surprises on those very people who have served your company well till ten days ago! It is equally important to keep your present and future guests update on how things stand.

We cannot pussy foot – quick and decisive measures have to be taken and the magnitude of the measures taken will really vary from business to business. We at the Tree of Life Resorts are sending a majority of our staff in every Unit on paid leave for 2 to 3 weeks. Only skeleton staff is being kept back for daily upkeep and caring for the few guests who check in. This will also ensure that our staff and guests do



Every individual Association is putting up its wish list with more or less the same points of appeal. However, ideal scenario should be that one nodal Association should put forth the wish list of the entire industry and that nodal Association should then be the contact point with the Government rather than each one adding to the confusion and being repetitive.

not come in close contact with too many unknown people. The situation will be reviewed in first week of April and depending on how the overall situation has progressed, we will take the next steps. No, we are not doing any lay-offs or pay cuts as the first step – there are our team members who are depending on us. Quite obviously, taking care of all protective measures for guests and staff is a given.

And it is in these trying times that everyone looks to the Government for support, for bail outs, for tax cuts and benefits. Unfortunately, our Government is also grappling with so many situations that I doubt it will have the time or the capacity to pay heed to any of the request that our various Associations are making. The fall-out of our reaching out to the Government is that every individual Association is putting up its wish list with more or less the same points of appeal. One nodal Association should put forth the wish list of the entire industry and that nodal Association should then be the contact point with the Government rather than each one adding to the confusion and being repetitive.

And when will this end? The dates of March 31 and 15 April are no magical ones. They are just an expression of optimism, of hope, that by then things should limp back to normal. However, there is no guarantee so please do not plan your future steps with these dates in mind. Go all the way to May 1, 2020 at least and if it 'normalises' earlier, good for all of us. These times are just one of the many tests for us in the industry. We have always bounced back and will do so this time too – just that the blow has been pretty lethal with this one!! God bless!

*(The article has been written by the industry veteran
Himmat Anand, Founder, Tree of Life Resorts)*

Meenakshi Sharma: Don't give up on your dreams and never take a short cut



The Ministry of Tourism has an all new vibe to it, thanks to the presence of two dynamic lady bureaucrats, who have redefined the way a lot many of the industry people viewed tourism. Ms. Meenakshi Sharma, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is one such dynamic officer who believes that there is immense potential in Tourism in India and that women can contribute majorly to its success and growth. Here's a look at her journey and her message for the younger aspiring women out there...

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Born and brought up in Delhi, Meenakshi Sharma belongs to one of the oldest families of Delhi – almost 350 years old – which gives her a perspective of Delhi that very few people have. Delhi is a place where everyone is welcome. This state has been a capital, a melting pot of cultures, but has also seen a fair amount of aggression and migration. “We look at things from a different perspective. For us, Delhi is the real hub of Ganga-Jamuni culture. The city has its own flavour and I never really lived outside it until I joined the services,” she shares.

Surprisingly, the younger Meenakshi was never very keen on joining the services. However, she always knew that whatever she will do in life will have to be both – challenging as well as satisfying. She did her graduation from SRCC followed by Delhi School of Economics and then specialisation in International Business and system analysis. “My mother always used to say that my sons need not work but my daughters have to work. Women should not be seen as a ‘support system’ always. All of us, men women alike, have a purpose of living, which must be lived and enjoyed. I am not saying that people who do not work in public area are not performing but everyone has a calling and each individual should be exposed to that calling – they should be allowed to make that choice,” elaborates the lady.

Meenakshi Sharma joined the audit and accounts service in 1988 and feels that she has been lucky and privileged to get the chances she got in life. In 31 years of service, she has worked in various divisions within the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, then Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Personnel and now Ministry of Tourism for last 4 years. Married for over three decades, Ms. Sharma has a daughter who is a lawyer and working with an Austrian firm.

Sharing her thoughts on India being a “safe” and “women-friendly” destination, she feels that there are two ways of gauging whether a destination is safe or not – one is the factual way and the other is the perception. “So factually speaking India is a safe destination, however, there is something more that we can do to make people feel that it is safe. A whole lot of work can be done to make India safer and make women feel safe in India. Unfortunately, the work with tourist police hasn't been a very successful move. We at MoT have been undertaking training of police staff,



immigration people, guides – the idea is that everyone should align with the theory – Atithi Devo Bhava. MoT does a lot of sensitisation and state governments also do a lot of sensitisation programs. Tourism ultimately has to be a state issue. MoT cannot do everything. It can only give guidelines and frameworks,” explains the DG.

These days, there is much talk regarding the ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ campaign, which propels people towards domestic tourism. According to Meenakshi Sharma, those who wish to truly explore the unexplored in India should follow the two way trail – destinations that are rich in architectural legacy and then those who enjoy abundant natural beauty. “India should be very proud of the architectural heritage it has – we have things which are over 2000 years old and still in relatively good shape. They will not remain forever so enjoy and appreciate them. Especially those in the various nook and corners – the lesser known architectural marvels. Secondly, destinations that have abundant natural beauty, whether in North East, J&K, Ladakh, Kerala and Karnataka coastal – people have not

explored it. In India, only 10-15 places are popular for domestic travel. You like beach – go to Goa, you like Hills – go to Shimla or Mussoorie. But there is so much to see beyond these destinations. Also, this is the time we should be thinking from the climate change angle – treat carefully, walk lightly – look up the options which are not thronged by people – go to lesser known places – you will also enjoy more and the nature is also protected more,” she elaborates.

She further went on to explain that one of the reasons for this lack of knowledge is that people do no research much before taking a vacation, just as we do before travelling abroad. Meenakshi Sharma explained how the Incredible India website can act as a one stop knowledge hub as it has information on 165 destinations and more than 400 attractions.

During the IATO Convention in Kolkata last year, Ms. Sharma has categorically told the hoteliers present on the occasion that most of the Hotels in India are not very women friendly. Services are very good and even the presence of women staff is enough, but it lacks

few things. First is the lack of a full-length mirror, which is such a basic thing. All women feel that a full length mirror with 4 feet of depth is a must for a women traveller otherwise you cannot see yourself complete, especially if they are draping the saree. Secondly, sometimes, the mini-fridge in the rooms have no items of particular interest to a woman. Either it has beer or junk food but never enough healthy options. No diet namkeen or low calorie food, keeping women dietary preference in mind.

Concluding by sharing a strong advice for the women in the travel trade, she says, “My advice to the women today would be – don’t give up on your dreams. Never take a short cut because a crisis has emerged. Look at the bigger picture. If you have an issue which you think is a roadblock, take a step back and then move forward. This industry is a very good industry for the women and we should see more women come to the fore. There are women working in this industry – they should be more visible – come forward – make their presence known as it will give confidence to the people who want to travel.”

Rupinder Brar: Woman can make Incredible India even more Incredible



Priyanka Saxena Ray

Born and brought up in New Delhi, the younger Rupinder was good at academics and wanted to become a doctor, given her love for biology. But destiny, it seemed, had different plans. "My father got posted to Tanzania and I did my middle and high school from there only. The switchover, once I was back, to the CBSE pattern of things was tough, and medical no longer was an option. At that time, it was my father who suggested I consider a career in civil services and I found that to be great option. Also, when this whole thing about civil services came up, it was again he who suggested that I should look for another option beyond Bio – such as History since it would bring me closer to my country and also help me understand my heritage and culture better. So I jumped into Hindu College History Hons in 1984 with a clear understanding that civil services is what the future is going to be. Once into it, my sheer love for the subject grew so much that for a while I even contemplated pursuing a career in academics in history, so much so that I even took the UGC exams in History after completing my masters. Yet, the passion to be part of the Governance structure remained and got the better of me," she reminisces.

Just like any other candidate who has cleared the civil services, Ms. Brar started her professional journey with the induction training in Hyderabad Police Academy after which the IRS Officers are moved to Nagpur, which is the National Academy of Direct Taxes where the professional training that the candidates get for about 16 months is far more comprehensive in terms of book keeping, law, procedures – the whole thing about how to manage an office. She spent around 11 years in Delhi in different positions before being posted as the Additional Commissioner Investigation, Haryana zone. Returning to her books after a gap of 20 years, Ms Brar took a sabbatical and went to Singapore on a fully funded scholarship from the National University of Singapore to do her Master's in Public Administration. She came back and joined the services from Mumbai in 2011 and was in Mumbai till as recent as 2019, before joining the Ministry of Tourism. In the midst of her inspiring professional journey, Ms. Brar tied the knot in 1992 to a fellow service mate and has a daughter, who is an architect currently working in Tokyo.

As a woman who is not just a part of the travel industry but has also travelled fairly in her own personal capacity, Rupinder Brar feels that India is as safe a tourist destination as a London or a New York or a Milan where one would undertake the same set of precautionary steps to keep trouble

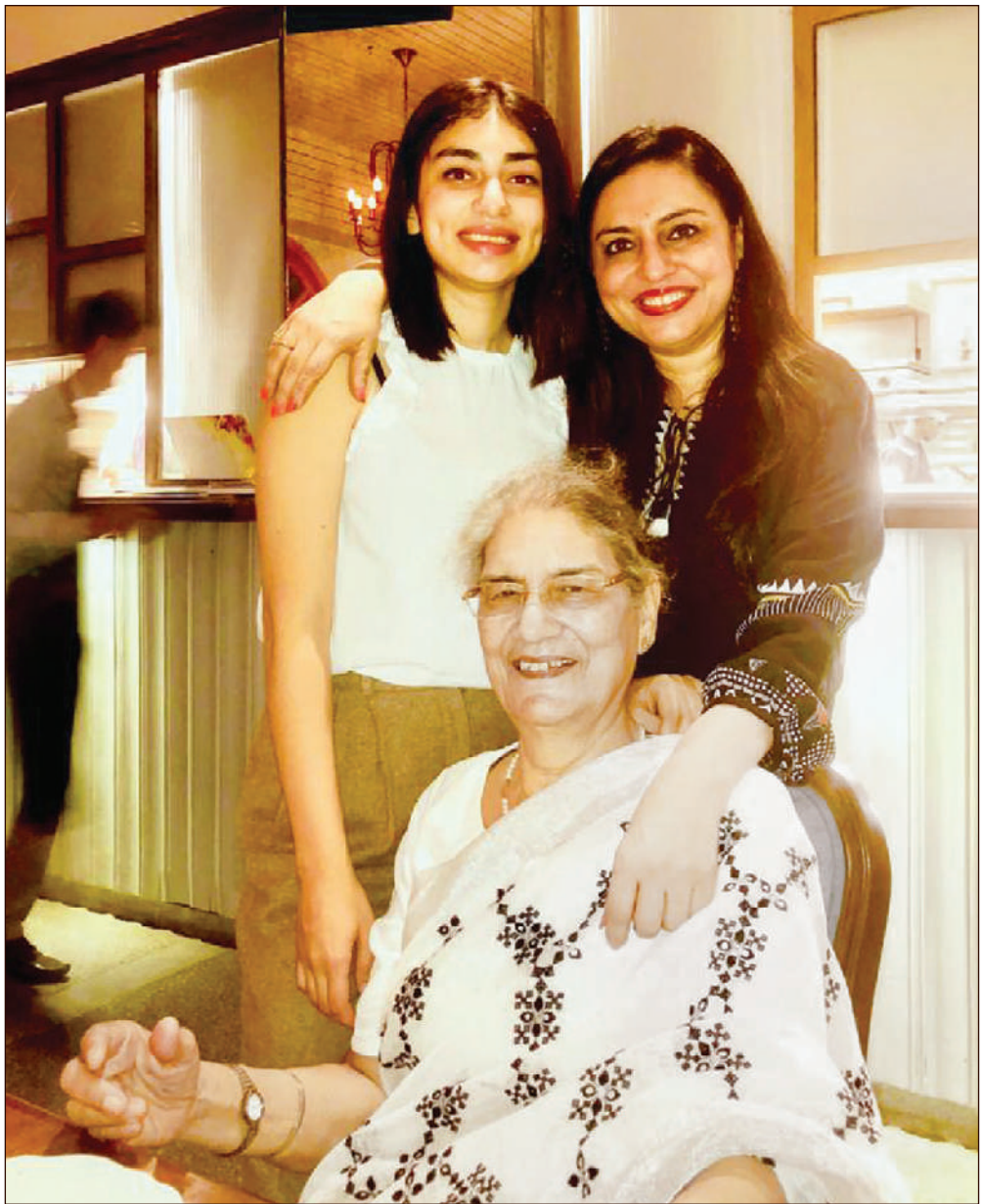
As I sat across the table, awestruck, gawking like a teenager at her beautiful persona, soft demeanour, well-manicured hands and immaculately kept office, I couldn't help but wonder what her story must be – the one that got her where she sits today... and as soon as she started talking, not only did my respect for her journey grew manifold, but also my admiration at her knowledge of the tourism industry reached an altogether new high.

BOTT India is delighted and honoured to feature Ms. Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in its "Women Bureaucrats" exclusive story. Here's her journey, as told by her...

“Most parts of India are very safe though somewhere a perception has been built on the basis of a one-off incident and an image has been created that the “country is not safe” – this is not true.”

at bay. “Most parts of India are very safe though somewhere a perception has been built on the basis of a one-off incident and an image has been created that the “country is not safe” – this is not true. For example if you would go to Gujarat and go shopping late night into the Laad Bazaar, you are absolutely safe – as safe as taking a taxi at 2 am in the night in Mumbai. I have travelled to a number of southern destinations and felt absolutely safe. So I feel India is as safe as any other country in the world. What we must understand is that each and every city, each and every town has layers – certain areas are more sensitive than others – so one must take precautions while going through those areas. There are greys and obviously you have to look into them and one shouldn’t categorise or label the entire country an “unsafe”,” explains the dynamic lady who not only believes in the tourism offerings of her country but is a staunch supporter of its policies too. The Ministry of Tourism is doing some promotional films and also trying to create subtle messaging in its movies, reassuring people that India is a women-friendly destination.

As the clock ticks indicating hours way past the usual office time and Ms. Brar continues to explain and talk about the touristy offerings of India and initiatives of MoT, her passion and dedication for work reflecting clearly in her conduct, I cannot help but wonder how she would manage the two challenging portfolios of her life – motherhood and job – especially when her daughter was younger.



Ms. Rupinder Brar with her mother and daughter

I ask and smilingly says, “It was challenging of course but one has to be organised to manage both fronts well because at the end of the day everyone has 24 hours but a mother’s journey is more challenging because I personally feel – mother is the giver. You have to be organised, you have to create systems and you need to make sure those systems work. Also, you have to be more macro in your approach and look at the long term. Support of the family that understands the importance of your presence in office is the most crucial aspect.”

Holidays and small breaks have been a way of life through not just her growing up years but also when her daughter was younger. “Manali is an all-time favourite destination and I have to go to Rajasthan once a year for sure! Goa also has great

charm. However, every year, I do try to do a place that I haven’t been to before. This year, there are many destinations on the list – I haven’t been to Uttarakhand in a while and I am looking for a place close to the mountains. I definitely want to see the Araku Caves, Bikaner in Rajasthan and want to visit Coorg again – see places I haven’t been to before. Kazhira, Gir, Chhattisgarh... the list is endless,” she concludes with a smile.

It is not every day that you see a beautiful and dynamic lady bureaucrat discuss the journey of her life with you and it was my true honour to be a part of hers. This one is definitely one of those interviews that will be etched in my memory for long and with her at the helm of things, the travel industry has suddenly become a more charming place to be a part of.

Rina Mohapatra: Women best understand the philosophy of “Atithi Devo Bhava”



A perfect example of beauty with brains, this dynamic lady officer is on a mission – to build the perfect image of Odisha in the eyes of every traveller and to ensure that the image built matches the reality and all deliverables promised are well in place. Ms. Rina Mohapatra, Joint Resident Commissioner, Govt. of Odisha, who is also an amateur painter and writer, shares details of her journey in an exclusive chat with BOTT India for its Womens Special Series.

Arushi Bajaj

Q. Can you please share with us some background about your education qualification?

A. I hail from the State of Odisha and have done my Masters in Mathematics from Utkal University, Odisha. I obtained my Trade Fair Management Certificate from Trade Fair Authority of India (TFAI), New Delhi presently ITPO, New Delhi. I worked for more than two years in different corporate houses before joining Odisha Administrative Service (OAS).

Q. How did you enter the Tourism Industry?

A. Administration job is pretty versatile. It puts you through different kind of places and situations during your career span. It is mere by chance I got the assignment to look after tourism wing while being posted as Joint Resident Commissioner, Odisha.

What potential do you foresee in India regarding its Tourism growth?

A. India is a fascinating destination having multiple tourist attractions. You name anything and you will find it in India. From History, Culture, Tradition, Exotic Locations, to mouth-watering Cuisine, everything is amazing and appreciated worldwide. Each State and its cities have huge potential for tourism experience. For example, India's villages have the hidden potential for sustainable tourism which can give traveller an authentic experience of ethnic culture and tradition while helping the community's economic growth. One such example is Mangalajodi Chillika in Odisha where one experiences the 2nd largest congregation of migratory birds in Asia's largest brackish water lake. This is a UNWTO award winning destination where the community is involved in the growth of Tourism. This model maximises local stakeholder participation thereby turning poachers to protectors. Effective development of similar tourist places will definitely take India tourism to a greater height and would be the biggest contributor to the GDP in India.

As a lady, would you say India is safe for women travellers?

A. I believe if you follow the travel advisory and common sense, India is as safe as any other tourist friendly nation.

Do you find it tough to manage work and home? Does your family support you?

A. It's not tough at all because I am passionate about both the areas. I consider myself a workaholic and a passionate home maker at the same time. To better manage both I set priorities from time to time. Fortunately, my family



"This industry needs a lot more fine tuning to make it big and happening. Who else other than the women can understand the intrinsic philosophy "Atithi Devo Bhava." Go women folks grab the world of opportunities so that your work speak volumes."

support is much more than I had expected for which I can give as much time needed for my work. I cannot ignore the fact that I also had a few understanding seniors who allowed me to attend to my family whenever needed. So, till today, I have not faced any challenge, rather managed both with dexterity.

Q. Would you like to share any message with the women in the Travel Trade?

A. There is ample opportunity for women in travel trade. It is quite



encouraging to find a huge chunk of women population in this industry. In my personal opinion women can be much more caring and involved in whatever they do. This industry needs a lot more fine turning to make it big and happening. Who else other than the women can understand the intrinsic philosophy "Atithi Devo Bhava." Go women folks grab the world of opportunities so that your work speak volumes.

Q. Which is your favourite Travel destination in India?

A. My favourite destination is not limited to one location. I love being at the pristine beaches of Odisha, lush green forest at Bhitarkanika whose

incredible beauty and exuberance in absolutely mesmerizing. Other than Odisha, I love a small hill destination near Maldevta in Tehri-Garwal called Hill-Stream resorts where you enjoy the solo spiritual sojourn as much as you enjoy the place with your family.

Q. What is the one change you would like to see in the Travel Trade Industry?

I would like to see the travel trade more organised and participating. Government is always there to help but not self-sufficient to bring about a huge transformation. So my imagination in tourism growth lies in private participation in terms of investment, skill and passion to the hilt.

Women Power at Ministry of Tourism



Ms. Meenakshi Mehta
Asst. Director General
Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India

"The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organization but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights..."
- Gloria Steinem



Ms. Annabella Arya
Dy. Director General
Ministry of Tourism,
Government of India



Rachna Chhabra,
Ministry of tourism
Government of India



Susheela Tigga Asstt. DG(Publicity)
Ministry of tourism
Government of India



Sarojini Shekhar & Jyoti Sarma
Ministry of tourism
Government of India



EKTA WATTS: Love & enjoy the privilege of being a mother, sister, wife & a friend

Arushi Bajaj

Travel was an integral part of her growing up years, which is why perhaps she decided to pursue a career in the same field. Known for undertaking numerous women-centric initiatives as part of ADTOI's CSR activities, Ekta Watts, EC Member, ADTOI, is certainly strengthening women power in the travel trade and we are glad to feature her as part of our women special series.



A convent school pass-out, Ekta graduated from Delhi University and qualified from tourism course from IITC. Having an immense passion to explore new destinations was the inspiring factor that led her to pursue travel business as a profession.

"Tourism potential in our country is immense – for outbound, inbound as well as domestic. If you talk about outbound for example, the figures are increasing every year and we expect the numbers to only further grow. And for inbound and domestic, there lies immense potential there as well but we need the support of the government in

improving infrastructure and taxation policies," she shares.

Having travelled the quite a bit of India herself, Ekta feels that while India is a great country it is yet not 100 per cent safe, especially looking at the incidents in the past. However, she strongly feels that if the laws are strict and action oriented India can surely overcome this problem and be regarded as an absolute safe destination for women. The principles of 'women respect' should be inculcated in the minds of everyone in the country.



Sharing her thoughts on the challenges being faced by working women today she says, "I don't think life of a working women is particularly tough except for some phases which generally can come in anybody's life. But having a supportive partner and understanding kids makes everything manageable. I have triplet daughters and they are going to be 18 and I used to leave them and go for work when they were 3 months. So they know that their mother's work is as important as they are."

A true feminist at heart, Ekta strongly feels that there is no limit to what the women can accomplish. All they have to do is come forward, participate and make a change. "Being a women is an honour. People say bring up your child as boys, strong and hard. But I believe let the girls grow up as girls – elegant and emotionally strong. And let them feel the authenticity of womanhood. Let them love and enjoy the privilege of being loved as a mother, sister, wife and a heartfelt friend."

Q. Your favourite holiday destination in India?

A. There are many, not just one... Rajasthan for all its vibrant colours and culture. Kashmir with its serene beauty and south with its diversified and warm culture.

Q. One change you wish to see in the industry?

Tourism is one of the most taxed sectors in India. Government should change the pattern and come to the realisation that tourists contribute a lot to the local economy.

NIDHI GUPTA: I urge Women to work with passion and not burden

Priyanka Saxena Ray

She is a lone wolf. Unlike the other ladies of our industry, she doesn't click too many selfies and post it on facebook, she is not an Insta buff and certainly not the one to shout about her achievements from roof tops. It is only when you sit down and chat with her do you realise the magnitude of her success with the bandwidth of her portfolio. Nidhi Gupta, Director, Numen Hospitality, shares details of her journey in our BOTT Women Special Series.



She has handled various portfolios with numerous hospitality chains and it was only much later in career that the entrepreneurial bug bit her. A Hotel Management graduate from the Bangalore University, Nidhi did her Post Graduation in Public Administration from the Punjab University, Chandigarh and then went on to pursue her career in Hospitality. She did her training at Taj Bangalore, worked in the Aviation Industry with Chartered flight handling, then joined Park Plaza Ludhiana as GRE in Front office and later moved to handle the Sales and Marketing portfolio with top hotel chains.



Humble and extremely polite, Nidhi is a known face in the travel industry and almost anyone you meet will have a kind word to say about her. Her warm nature and easy going manner makes her a hit with people, which is why perhaps she has a long list of friends and well-wishers rooting for her success. "Yes, I enjoy working with the trade partners, many of them have become very close family friends. In my opinion, travel trade respects women entrepreneurs and I personally believe women are more dedicated to their work in general - be it in office or at home," she elaborates.

So does she find it tough to manage the work and home front? "Hospitality is a highly demanding profession. Work-life balance is very important especially when you are a Mother. I do try my best but at time it becomes difficult when we have to travel and work long hours. It is not easy to balance work and home without the support of the family. We try to work and share responsibilities with each other," she adds.

What is that one advice that she would like to share with the women in the Travel Trade? "The era of women entrepreneurs has just started. I would like to advice all women to work with passion and not with burden. There is no doubt that women are more creative as compared to men and hospitality is the best industry to showcase their talent and enterprising skills. Women add a lot value to an organisation," she concludes and we couldn't agree more with her!

Q. Which is your favourite Travel destination in India?

A. Rishikesh and Goa

Q. What is the one change you would like to see in the Travel Trade Industry?

A. Business growth for the hotel Industry and India.

KARISHMA KAZI: Every woman's success should be an inspiration to another

Priyanka Saxena Ray



Her social media is always buzzing with posts that clearly indicates 3 things about her – her love for Travel, her passion for Cooking good food and her affection for her sonmy boy. Karishma Kazi, Managing Partner, Explora floated her company 5 years back and hasn't looked back since. Always a people's person, being a PR was her calling and Representation business her passion. Here's a brief look into her journey in the travel trade.

A Mumbai girl who always believed in living life on her own terms, Karishma loved to travel since forever and knew that ultimately it would be the travel industry only that would be her calling. Thus, even while she was working with the Reliance Group as their HR Head, the idea of forming her own company was a secret passion she nurtured, waiting for the right time to make it happen. A graduate in Arts with specialisation in Sociology as my main subject, Karishma entered this beautiful industry joining her father and brother's company and in

the beginning, used to handle all women Group Departures and B2B sales for long haul destinations. Explora today is a boutique Travel Representation company having a bouquet of luxury hotels & resorts along with experiential DMC partners, being led by Karishma Bijlani Kazi and Sunny Katara.

So, did she feel that the travel trade in India was a conducive place for women entrepreneurs? "Yes personally I feel that our industry is a perfect conducive place for a woman entrepreneur. A lady can just do perfect justice through her aggressive promotional skills to promote nice travel through a perfect blend on social media platforms," she explains.

Was managing work and home front together, tough? "Absolutely not! I balance my professional and personal life very well. My husband takes full charge and has been my strongest support when I am busy travelling for work or have to explore new products and destinations. It's



all about time management, I work for 8 hours dedicatedly, spend time with my family, never miss having fun with my 2 Labradors and still find time to do chores that I love, such as cooking!," adds the enthusiastic lass.

So what message would she like to out to the women in the travel trade? "Over the period of years I have noticed that our industry is well connected, t h e y share contacts to help each other on files etc., but I truly feel and even recommend that there should be a women's travel association to discuss about travel, health and women related issues – pertaining to the travel industry," she elaborates, adding, "My mantra in life is – when it rains, it pours – we know, but soon, the sun shines again. Stay positive. Better days are on their way. If we all are positive, we will surely see opportunities instead of obstacles."

Q. Which is your favourite Travel destination in India?

A. My personal favourite remains Puducherry! It's so so colonial!!!

Q. What is the one change you would like to see in the Travel Trade Industry?

A. To be positive even during challenging times - Coronavirus is the best example here.

REENA CHOPRA: Young talent will join Industry when they see success stories



Priyanka Saxena Ray

A passionate traveller and a seasoned travel professional with a wide experience across multiple travel verticals, Reena Chopra, Director, Magical Holidays, with over two decades of work experience is a known name and face in the travel trade. A charming lady with a radiant smile, she is forever willing to extend a helping hand and greet you with a compliment. Here's more on her life in BOTT Women's Special series.

A Delhi girl who was always fond of travelling, Reena did her Bachelors in English (Honours) from Delhi University followed by a Diploma in Travel and Tourism. She is IATA UFTAA qualified from Switzerland and entered the tourism industry for two main reasons – her love for travel and her passion for interacting with people and getting to know them. “You do your best when your Passion becomes your work and that’s exactly what happened in my case. Being a Travel Curator has always been my passion and that is what has kept me going in my professional journey.

So how and when did the entrepreneurial bug bit her? “As I learnt multiple facets of the travel industry, after getting an in-depth experience of setting up Outbound Tour’s vertical in Thomas Cook Delhi operations, I conceived the idea of starting my own venture, which allowed me the freedom to interact with customers and help them plan

and design their dream holidays. That was the start of my entrepreneurial journey in the travel industry.”

The struggle of a lady, especially an entrepreneur, is at times made extra tough by the industry of which she is a part. In Reena’s case, her journey was made smooth with the support of her family. “Over the years we have seen more and more women joining the travel trade. All the associations should encourage young women to become tourism entrepreneurs and work closely with tourism institutes as they are going to be the future of tourism of India. A time will come when there will be equal number of females in every aspect,” she explains, adding, “My Family is my backbone and whatever I am today is because of the unrelenting support of my family, be it my understanding in-laws, my caring husband or my lovely daughters, who have stood beside me like a rock and enabled me to travel, manage office and home simultaneously. My husband is my strongest supporter and also the toughest critic, who goaded me to improve and move ahead.”

What is that one message that she would like to share with the women in the travel trade. “I would like to tell the women in the travel trade that as you achieve success, try and be a role model for the next generation of young agents. Recruit, inspire, and mentor them.

This industry desperately needs new blood and young talent will only join when they see successful role models,” she concludes.



Q. Which is your favourite travel destination in India?

A. For me, if there’s heaven on earth, it is in Kashmir.

Q. What is the one change you would like to see in the Travel Trade Industry?

A. I would like to see more Global Networking and International collaborations with multi-racial participation merged with high level of technology and user and pocket friendly applications that will see India ride high in future in the tourism and hospitality segment.

TINA WADHWA: A successful business woman needs good balance in life



Priyanka Saxena Ray

They say that behind every successful man there is a woman. But in some cases, the man is often the reason behind the success of a woman entrepreneur. Tina Wadhwa, Director, Lets Travel, is one such lady, who took the capitalist plunge with the support and back-up of her better half. Here's her story - her journey - featured in our women's special issue.

A Graduate in Hotel Management from IHM Bhopal and MBA in HR, Tina, at the time of her marriage in 2005 was working in the radio media industry in Dubai while her Husband was part of the tourism industry. One day the couple decided to get back to India and started their own travel company - Lets Travel in 2007 wherein Tina was the main handler, initially. Over a decade later, the duo is now actively running one of the successful companies of the travel

trade today.

So, as a lady, does she find the travel trade in India a conducive place for women entrepreneurs? "Tourism is a great industry and has given birth to numerous super powers. It is a very interesting field for a women to work, I feel that the majority of its workforce are female and I am glad to share that even in my office, majority of my colleagues are females. With a huge range of skills women have, they are even rocking the industry and living their dreams," she adds.

Not just the better half, Tina's extended family too was extremely supportive of her career choice and stood beside her like a rock. "I always treated Lets Travel as my baby. To be a successful business woman, all you need is to balance your life well and I always believe that if I am happy at home, I come into the office with

tremendous energy. And if I am happy at work, I come home with tremendous energy. It actually is a circle. Yes, my family has been very supportive," she explains.



Not one to have been a victim of gender judgement, Tina feels that the discrimination between a man and a woman is always going to be there and it's beautiful difference that

should be enjoyed. "What matters is the inner you - fight with your inner self. Happy Women's Day!", she concludes.

Q. Which is your favourite Travel destination in India?

A. Goa

Q. What is the one change you would like to see in the Travel Trade Industry?

A. Running a travel company is a consultative sales job: Most of us can sell a lot more if we can be perceived as a trusted advisor. This means relationship-building and trust-building skills rather than pushy sales skills.

Celebrating Women Power in



n Travel Trade #NariShakti



The hospitality industry has started to acknowledge & appreciate Women



A hospitality veteran with over 19 years of experience in the industry, Sunaina Sharma Menerkar, General Manager, Grand Mercure Mysore, has handled numerous hospitality related portfolios in the last few years and gained more experience with each. She strongly feels that the hospitality industry has started to acknowledge and appreciate the commitment shown by women to create a safe culture, which has in turn opened up numerous opportunities for them. Here's more in an exclusive chat with our lady GM.

Arushi Bajaj

Q. Please share with us a brief introduction about your background?

I grew up in Delhi and completed my higher education with a commerce background. There was no one in my family who knew or had heard of hospitality and it was definitely not something that my family initially approved off. A friend, who was studying hospitality, felt that this would be something I would enjoy and thought would be a great fit. I completed my Hospitality Program at IHM Ahmedabad in order to pursue a different career path.

Where and what was your first job like?

A. While I was perusing hotel management I used to pass by this beautiful building in central Delhi, Le Meridien, and I knew instinctively that one day I will work here. I started working with them at the Front Desk and it was a great learning experience during my tenure.

Q. How did you climb up the ladder?

A. I started my career at the Front Desk and later handled Rooms Division and later Sales & Marketing. I have had over 19 years of hospitality experience particularly in the luxury space. Prior to joining Grand Mercure Mysore, I was the General Manager at Lebua, Lucknow. Also had successful assignments with international brands such as Le Meridien, Westin, Ramada, Lebua, as well as pre-opening experience with IHG and Alila Hotels and Resorts.

Q. Could you share with us details of some of the challenges you faced along the way?

A. Having come a long way within the Hospitality industry, I have seen the glass ceiling break that existed where the women had to work harder or give up working due to their family commitments. For me this has been a long and fulfilling journey.

We are living in a changing world where more women are following their dreams with the passion, desire, and spirit to lead. The hospitality industry has started to acknowledge and appreciate the commitment shown by women to create a safe culture and opening up numerous opportunities for them.

Q. How long have you been attached with the current Hotel? How has your experience with the property been?

A. I joined Accor in May 2019 and it has been my first stint in Mysore. The experience has been exceptionally good as Mysore has a lot of heritage and culture which



is also embedded in the hotel culture.

Q.What Special changes / touches have you added to the property? How have you ensured that your Hotel stays ahead of the competition?

A. Grand Mercure Mysore is a premium hotel that embodies the authenticity of the local culture and reflects the rich heritage of historic city of Mysuru. The key to success is attention to guest services at its core, and to make every guest feel welcomed and cared for.

Q. Do you have any new plans or policies or initiatives in the pipeline that you would be introducing in the near future?

A. We are working towards increasing our social cultural responsibility and look forward to implement ideas and initiate that are in line with Acting Here Planet 21 Accor's green initiative. We also use technology along with personalised services to engage with our guests and create lasting memories.

How do you handle the increasing attrition rate facing the hospitality industry in India?

A. One of the biggest challenges that hospitality leaders are facing is to continually motivate the employees and to help them fulfil their potential. Leaders offer guidance to an employee to make their own decisions, think outside of the box and solve a problem. This in turn keeps the employees engaged and also helps in reducing attrition.

Q. Is there any more information that you would like to share with us?

A. Being a strong and effective leader can be challenging at times, but it is



also incredibly rewarding seeing the industry and community change and shift towards more inclusivity and harmony.

Q. Would you like to share a Women's Day message for the younger women in the industry?

A. Having come a long way within the Hospitality industry, I have seen the glass ceiling break that existed where the women had to

work harder or give up working due to their family commitments. For me this has been a long and fulfilling journey. We are living in a changing world where more women are following their dreams with passion, desire, and spirit to lead. The Hospitality industry has started to acknowledge and appreciate the commitment shown by women to create a safe culture and opening up numerous opportunities for them.

SITE India to hold “India Incentive Day” on July 24, 2020



SITE India, recently on a roundtable talked about launching of the “India Incentive Day” which is likely (tentative as of yet) to be held on July 24, 2020. Considering that Incentive travel constitutes 70% of MICE and hence becomes a very important segment, yet the ‘I’ in MICE is not being given its due importance. Read more...

Arushi Bajaj

The event will pave way for ideation and discussion about thinking out of the box and the format will be very different from the ones that have happened in the past. The show is aimed at augmenting the Incentive Travel covering the major areas such as – Risk Management, Current technologies and digital activities, lifestyle and modern living and Destination Marketing.

In the evening, a black-tie charity sit down dinner is also being planned.

Commenting on this one of a kind event, Mr. Sanjeev Joshi, President, SITE said, “We are extremely delighted to hold this show as MICE is the fastest growing sector of Business Events Industry. We are definitely not looking at the number of participations, rather it is the quality that matters to us. It’s high time that we include MICE as a compulsory subject in Travel and Tourism institutes as majority

of those students are not aware of what MICE is.”

“Amidst this Coronavirus outbreak, we need to communicate with our partners, clients and patrons as I feel that communication is the key. We need to grab the opportunity and take it as an advantage. If India gets business, everyone will get business and the major thrust is we need to encourage learning as I have a very firm belief that ‘the day you stop learning, you start dying,’ shares Mr. Rajeev Kohli, JMD, Creative Travel, and SITE Board Member.

ICPB urges industry to show solidarity and plan a road map for future

Amidst the Covid-19 outbreak, where the travel trade is going through an extremely challenging phase, ICPB advocated the need to take necessary steps that would help overcome the prevailing challenging scenario. In a recently concluded second interactive luncheon meeting, held at Taj Mansingh New Delhi for the travel trade and media, ICPB discussed ways and means to form a roadmap for the future and their strategy to hold India prominently on the global MICE map. Here are the highlights of the event.

Arushi Bajaj

Addressing the trade and media, Mr. Girish Kwatra, Hony. Secretary, ICPB, said, "We are elated to welcome Mr. RK Verma as the ICPB Chairman. We presently have 130 members as should soon be touching 150. There are numerous events planned for the new financial year such as launch of MICE planner, domestic roadshows, training programs, Convention India Conclave and international roadshows, which we hope to carry on with without any glitch. And, as far as Coronavirus outbreak is concerned, rather than pressing the panic button, we can think of better options and focus on relocations and postponing."

Commenting on the occasion, Mr. Amaresh Tiwari, Vice Chairman, ICPB, said, "We all are facing this sorry plight with the Covid-19 epidemic. Crisis communications can be either reactive or proactive, therefore, comprehending the given circumstances, we need to raise awareness and act proactively. China is a strong market and they will definitely bounce back. I wish for the speedy recovery from this outbreak."

He went on to stress that going by the experiences of previous major viral epidemics, it is pertinent to have a strategic and robust recovery plan for India to make up for lost ground, lap up the pent-up demand and lure people who are itching to travel. "There is no doubt that our competition will go to market with amazing prices, proposals and offers. Destinations such as



Singapore, Thailand and others are already preparing recovery plans. So if India does not have its act together, we are going to be left looking at the party from the outside. We need to have a marketing strategy in place, a price discussion and a pitch on why India should be the first point of call when travel comes back. This is where the travel trade Industry and Ministry of Tourism can play a vital role by being a facilitator and primary funder of this process," elaborated the dynamic VC.

Talking to the audience, Mr. Rakesh Kumar Verma (IAS), Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Chairman ICPB said, "These are the times when we are facing a crisis situation - how do you deal, face the problem, get down to business is the talk of the hour. ICPB is a wonderful format that keeps both the ministry and the industry on the same platform. With futuristic approach, the Bureau and the ministry would develop partnership over a period of time. My suggestion to the bureau is to figure out long term goals that are realistic and aspirational and whatever the case may be, support

from the ministry would always be there. Most importantly, we need to think on the infrastructure roadmap for MICE tourism, Incentives to encourage more and more people, output of roadshows and promotions for the growth of industry."

Motivating the trade and media, Mr. Rajeev Kohli, JMD, Creative Travels who was the keynote speaker on the occasion said, "What we need to understand is that MICE is business - not tourism and it generates huge revenue for the country. India is the perfect hub - mainly because of the experience we offer. We do a damn good job in making people happy. We have some really good spaces and venues and offer cultural experiences like no other. No other tourism industry has the skill and know how like India does. It's time to have each other's back and figure out what kind of assistance we need. We need to figure out how to get our business back - we need to collectively work on a deal that no one else offers - no other country and I am sure once we have that, we will bounce back!"

A look at some landmark achievements by Team **IATO** (2018-2020)

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) is one of the strongest travel trade associations of India, which has, over the years, been judiciously working with the Ministry of Tourism to seek reliefs and benefits for the members of the association in particular and travel trade community in general, in an endeavour to up the business numbers as well as image of India. The strong and dedicated team of IATO, comprising Mr. Pronab Sarkar, (President); Mr. E.M. Najeeb (Senior Vice President); Mr. Rajiv Mehra (Vice President); Mr. Rajesh Mudgil (Hony. Secretary) and Mr. Ravi Gosain (Hony. Treasurer) have been the torchbearers of the same. As the IATO Elections get scheduled for April 25, 2020, here is a look at some of the landmark achievements of the Association in the last two years –



Team BOTT

Achievements in 2018

1. The efforts of IATO with Bureau of Immigration about the problems being faced by the foreign tourists at the Immigration Counter for clearance and also for the e-Tourist Visa applicants to complete the formalities for bio-metric process the yielded fruitful results
 - **First/Business Class counters restored**
 - **55 additional immigration counters planned**
 - **Additional Bio-metric machines installed**
 - **Additional staff posted especially for peak hours.**
 - **Instructions given to address the issue of long queues at the immigration counters**
2. With regular follow up from IATO Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India on 20th December 2017 exempted the cruise tourist arriving with E-Visa at the ports of Mumbai, Cochin, Mormugao, Chennai and New Mangalore from the requirement of biometric enrolment for a period of three (3) years i.e. till 31st December 2020, for the persons above the age of 12 years and below the age of 70 years.
3. On IATO recommendations many short distance circuits under Regional Connectivity of Udaan Scheme were added by Ministry of Civil Aviation.
4. Inclusion of IATO recommendations on GST in strategy papers by department of economic affairs, ministry of finance, government of India
5. IATO made representations and had regular meetings with Ministry of Finance, GST Council, State Finance Ministers, Tax Research Units. The results were –

- Input Tax Credit (ITC) of input services in the same line of business at the GST rate of 5% in case of tour operator service have been achieved.
- GST under Reverse Charge Mechanism on services like monuments entry fee, guide fee, camel, horse, jeep Safaris has been deferred till 30th September, 2019.
- Hotel rate of tax on accommodation service shall be based on transaction value (Value of Supply) instead of Declared Tariff.
- Lower rate of GST of 18% on hotel room rent below Rs. 7500/- which was earlier 28%.



Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO

6. On the recommendation of IATO the Global Media Campaign, which was started by the Ministry in 2018 on IATO recommendations continued for 2019 also.
7. IATO liaised with various ministries on cascading effect of GST on tour operators, E-Visa, according status of deemed exporters to Tourism industry and extended all benefits to tour operators, revised Guide Policy, Group Reservation Policy with the Railways, based on feedback received from members.

2019 & 2020 till date

1. On the persuasion of IATO, GST rates were lowered to

make India more a competitive destination.

2. With regular follow up of IATO and with the support from the Ministry of Tourism Government of India, e-Tourist Visa Fee was reduced by the Ministry of Home affairs. Government of India announced the reduction of VISA FEE
3. The landmark 35th IATO Annual Convention was organized from 12-15 September 2019 in Kolkata at Kolkata with commendable attendance of over 1000 delegates. The inaugural, well-appointed sessions, state presentations, FAM Trips and the presence of policy makers augured well for the promotion of tourism, especially West Bengal – the gateway to Eastern India.
4. IATO planned apt sessions of training programme in 2019 and organized 7 training programme (April- July) and were attended by over 270 participants. Training Programme covered subject viz. Tourism - Opportunities for Gen-X', Office Attendants, Digital Marketing Workshop on Double Your Leads & Get Overbooked - The Science of Attracting Clients Magnetically.
5. IATO prepared a vision document – "TOURISM - AN ENGINE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION" that elaborated the problems which Indian Tourism industry is facing and the suggestions to overcome such problems.
6. IATO video on women safety was launched by the Hon'ble Minister of Tourism on 14th September 2019 during the Valedictory Function of the 35th IATO Annual Convention. It would immensely aid tour operators in marketing India globally. IATO has made one exclusive Video on Thematic Destination which was also released by the Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Government of India on 23rd October 2019 at the inaugural function of ITM at The Ashok Hotel.
7. IATO New Look Newsletter is the first of its kind and an instrument for maintaining link with our membership.
8. With the regular efforts of IATO the validity of Airport Passes was extended till 31st March 2020 for the tour operators.
9. On issue of SEIS a representation was made by IATO in consultation with M/s. Ernst & Young with follow up meetings with the authorities. We placed before them that the SEIS benefit was a relief to boost our industry which has encouraged tour operators to venture into new markets to promote and market India Tourism at their own cost. This has been sorted out and pending cases have been cleared.
10. Tax Refund for Tourists (TRT) Scheme would significantly boost India's appeal for travelers and put local retailers on a level playing field in competing with regional travel and shopping destinations such as the UAE, Thailand, Singapore, China and Malaysia – each of whom offer a tax refund scheme for visitors. This will significantly increase the Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) for the country and foreigners will be encouraged for shopping in India.
11. IATO successfully took up with Air India, IndiGo, Spice jet and Vistara to introduce or add additional flights on certain sectors which are important for the tourism industry and need better air connectivity
12. Mr Pronab Sarkar and Mr. Rajiv Mehra were felicitated by Aurangabad First (AF) and Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation (ATDF) for taking painstaking effort in taking up the demand of air-linking Aurangabad to major destinations like Udaipur, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, in one year



Mr. E.M. Najeeb (Sr. Vice President)



Mr. Rajiv Mehra (Vice President)



Mr. Rajesh Mudgil (Hony. Secretary)



Mr. Ravi Gosain (Hony. Treasurer)

ADTOI strengthens presence down south; opens a new chapter in Tamil Nadu



Priyanka Saxena Ray

In an endeavour to increase and strengthen its presence down south, the Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India launched its Tamil Nadu Chapter amidst an August gathering. ADTOI with the support of its members in the State launched its eleventh State Chapter in Tamil Nadu at Hotel Ambassador Pallava, Chennai on February 13, 2020 in the presence of Chief Guest Thiru. K. Pandia Rajan, Hon'ble Minister of Tamil Development, Culture, Archaeology, Govt. of Tamil Nadu and Guest of Honour, Thiru. V. Krishnamoorthy, Deputy High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, Thiru. Saravanan Karathihayan, Consulate General of Malaysia, Dr. V Irai Anbu IAS, Addl Chief Secretary, Director - Anna Institute of Management, Government of Tamil Nadu, Officials from Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, officials from national Associations of TAAI & TAFI, invitees from local Travel, Tourism & Hospitality fraternity including ADTOI members.

ADTOI delegation of 11 Managing committee members led by Mr. PP Khanna, President from Delhi participated in the launching ceremony. During the launch of the Chapter, Kalaimamani V.K.T. Balan of Madura Travel Service Pvt.Ltd., Chennai, ADTOI member has been nominated as the Chairman of ADTOI Tamil Nadu Chapter supported by Mr. P. Ashok Kumar, Secretary, Mr. Vishnu Vasanth Kumar, Treasurer and Mrs. R. Saraswathi as Lady Entrepreneur Officer (LEO) of the Chapter.



Laxmikant Vaigankar: Goa soon to be revamped as a complete adventure hub

Arushi Bajaj

A beach lover's paradise, family vacationers' hub and soon to be an adventure hub, Goa, is one destination that needs no introduction considering the number of footfalls it gets. In an interaction with Laxmikant Vaigankar, General Manager, Goa Tourism Development Corporation Ltd., he outlines how Goa is a promising destination and that no one shall never return disappointed from here. Here's a detailed look at all that he had to share.

Goa, as me all know, is a favourite beach destination not just for the domestic travellers in India but also inbound. From honeymooners to family vacationers, people have been thronging the place for many years, which is why it is home to some of the most plush and vibrant hotels. It is one of the few destinations in the country that is ideal for backpackers as it caters to tourists of not just different tastes but also different pockets. Having created a niche for itself, the destination, given its shoreline, is now keenly focussed on improving and strengthening its adventure activities as it strongly feels that going forward, adventure will be a big crowd puller.

Commenting on the year 2019, Vaigankar shares, "It was a great year altogether, though recession was there, but people are flocking to Goa in huge numbers. The footfall recorded in the year 2019 was 80,00,000 visitors and we wish the number to surge to 1 crore for the year 2020. Though the numbers are challenging and so is the current situation, keeping in mind the adverse effects of Coronavirus, we wish to pass through this phase with ease."

Connectivity is also a big plus as the state is well-served by flights across the country. "Flight rates are increasing every moment and we do not want the traffic to divert because of the surge in prices. We are planning to revamp Goa as an absolute adventure destination with activities such as Bungee Jumping, Hot air ballooning, white water rafting and a lot more is on the cards for the adventure lovers," he explains.

Talking about the strategy for the year ahead and their plans to tap in more numbers, the veteran feels that 2020 will be the year dedicated to adventure activities.



"We would try to build up more adventure activities and hub in the area with complete focus on introducing these under expert supervision. We are in talks for introducing a Hanging Restaurant in Goa as part of our plan to give people a taste of "adventure" tourism. The restaurant will be one of a kind wherein we will also organise motorcycle tours and offer feni-brewery tours," he says, adding, "Goa is a place for anyone and everyone which can be visited any time for the year. Already established for world class destination weddings, Goa, has infinite options in its kitty. I can say with pride that Goa is a safe destination for solo women travellers and that the destination is here to stay and grow for the rest of the years to come."

Kerala Tourism witnesses a surge of 16% in its domestic tourist arrivals

After the successful completion of the first phase of its domestic marketing campaigns, Kerala Tourism kicked-off the second phase in all earnestness, with a string of Partnership Meets being organised in 10 Indian cities, participating in some of the significant tourism trade fairs across India and showcasing a combination of the state's traditional art forms and its attractive products of touristry appeal.



Team BOTT

The second phase of the National Partnership Meets commenced in January 2020 and will go on till March 2020. With remarkable participation in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Kolkata and Guwahati during January, and in Amritsar and Chandigarh during early February, Kerala Tourism officials are delighted to be in Delhi now and look forward to the Partnership meets being held later on at Jaipur (20 February), Bengaluru (03 March) and Chennai (05 March 2020).

Tourism Minister Shri Kadakampally Surendran said, the meets, coinciding with the upcoming festival season, would provide opportunities for the tourism trade in these cities to interact with tourism industry players from Kerala. Domestic tourist arrivals in Kerala in 2019 saw an overall increase as against last year's figures.

The Minister also announced that the 11th edition of Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) will commence on September 24, 2020. The event will be held from September 25-27 at Sagara and Samudrika convention centres of Cochin Port Trust in Willingdon Island. It will focus on finding global buyers and exploring new markets for Champions Boat League (CBL), adventure tourism, and Meetings,

Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE).

Tourism Secretary Smt. Rani George said the increase in domestic tourist footfalls is a firm reiteration of the fact that the powerful promotional campaigns connected with the people instantly. "Travellers from across India will find the state not only heritage-rich and enchanting but also a welcoming destination, especially with Vishu, Thrissur Pooram, and a host of other festivals lined up," she added.

The Nishagandhi festival, conducted by Kerala, is a seven-day cultural fiesta held in the Nishagandhi Auditorium from 20th to 26 January, in the majestic premises of the lush green Kanakakkunnu Palace in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram.

Smt. George said, "It is a grand occasion for art lovers to get familiar with some of the best and upcoming talents in India and also to enjoy the magical performances of masters. Odissi, Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Mohiniyattam, Chhau, and Kuchipudi are some of the dance forms staged as part of the festival."

Tourism Director Shri P. Bala Kiran said Kerala has added an array of new and exciting products and experiences that are tailor-made for the domestic traveller and would also make the state a 365-day destination.

"Another popular attraction is the Jatayu Earth Centre, which houses the giant statue of Jatayu that is 200 feet long, 150 feet wide and 70 feet in height, making it the largest functional bird sculpture in the world. The destination is easily accessible as it is right at the epicentre of south Kerala," he pointed out.

In a bid to make tourism a sustainable enterprise, the Responsible Tourism Mission introduced the concept of Village Life Experience. The customised experiences include serene backwater cruises, calm boat rides, thrilling canoe cruises, and silent walks through lush greenery and paddy fields. Kumarakom, a sleepy hamlet, situated in Kottayam district in Kerala, became India's first RT destination. More than just sightseeing, one can experience the essence of God's Own Country through RT Mission.

Gaurav Dogra: A 'Passionate' Travel Professional and Golfer

Priyanka Saxena Ray



A dynamic personality who believes in letting his work speak for himself, Gaurav Dogra is a man who dons many hats. He is the Founder of Plan Your Holiday, Co-Founder of Passionals and Hon. Secretary of Travel Agents Association of India (Northern Region) and carrying each responsibility with equal vigour, dedication and passion. Here's a brief overview of his journey and what he plans to do in the future.

Q. Please share a little background on how you entered the Travel Trade industry? Was it a family Business? Was this something you always wanted to do?

A. PLAN YOUR HOLIDAY was founded in 1992 and is part of a group of companies called S.S. Trading International, which is owned by my father Shakti Dogra. S.S. Trading is primarily into Oil Trading and Waste Management. I joined my father's business in 1995 and since then have been handling all verticals of it, including travel.

Q. How has the progress been of your organisation over the last decade? Many dynamics changed in the industry – how did you cope?

A. We have also been into corporate travel management and have periodically changed our business model based on our client's requirements. We had anticipated the changing dynamics of the travel industry and thus we offered solutions accordingly to our client's needs. If I am to name a few, it would include services such as self-booking tool, corporate fares, tax refund software, etc. Currently we are working on our website to offer a wide variety of holiday options.

Q. Tell us about your love for Golf and your position in the association? Any interesting activities you carry out under this wing of the company?

A. Golf runs in our family – my father, myself, my kids (son and daughter). Plan Your Holiday was one of the first to start Golf Tourism Business. We effectively understand the needs and limitations of both – the golf courses and the golfers and thus we provide solutions accordingly. We also provide golf tourism and tournament solutions to corporates as well as educational institutes.

Q. Please share information on the journey of Passionals and how is it performing today?

A. About two years back, Mr. Rajan Sehgal (co-founder) and I realised that our industry lacks both effective recruiting and training of human resource and we thus came up with the idea of www.passionals.in. Passionals went live on January 1, 2019 and in just a year, it is today the No.1 job website dedicated to only travel, tourism, hospitality industry professionals. The website also offers tourism expert programs and will soon be conducting online training programs.

Q. Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

A. I see myself doing very much what I am doing now but on a much larger scale. Going forward, in our travel business, our complete focus will be to grow both our products, namely, www.planyourholiday.com and www.passionals.in

Q. What do you like to do in your "free" time?

A. Well, I am an early riser so my day starts at 5 am and I love spending balanced amount of my time with my family, at work, at gym and playing golf!

Q. Is there any more information that you would like to share with us?

A. I contribute back to the travel trade industry by working as the Honorary Secretary of Travel Agents Association of India (Northern Region). In 2020 we shall be conducting a string of programs to educate and train the human resource of our industry.

Amit Kishore: Relationship capital acts as the gold standard of one's credibility'

Priyanka Saxena Ray

He is one of the most deserving occupants of the 'successful start-up club', who over the year has not just made a mark with his achievements but has also been able to retain meaningful relationships with his partners, who are also his closest friends. Amit Kishore, Co-founder & Director, Eastbound Group, is a young entrepreneur with principles who believes that the only way you can 'outdo' competition is by performing even better and doing things "differently". Here is more on his journey in a BOTT exclusive Fab 40s.

Born into a family that was inspiringly ambitious and dauntingly scholarly, Amit, in hindsight, sees it as an elite blessing. "My grandfather Rai Bahadur Ram Kishore, was a leading lawyer and one of the longest serving Vice Chancellors of Delhi University (my alma mater). He was a philanthropist and had set up many religious and charitable institutions that were later run by my father and now by me. My mother was a respected journalist with the Times Group with a mind that was as sharp and unshakeable as her soft and compassionate heart. Ours was a large family and I grew up around a lot of cousins which helped me develop skills that I couldn't put on resumes but certainly equipped me for the world," he reminisces.

While he was always drawn to the travel industry, he didn't really think that the field would become the core of his life. "Mark Twain says the two most important days in your life are the day you are born, and the day you find out why. After I graduated from Delhi University, I landed an opportunity with a boutique travel company and, on a whim, took my first steps into the travel sector. The stint lasted only six months but it was enough for my tryst with destiny. I saw the opportunity that existed and knew the gap had to be filled," he shares.

Sharing details on the formation of Eastbound, which was set up in 2006, he clarifies that the initial focus of the company was solely on high end experiential travel in the inbound sector leisure. However, when in 2008, the travel industry took a heavy blow with the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the subsequent 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, they quickly diversified and



began focusing on other segments including education trips, etc. In a short span of time, the company moved aggressively towards becoming the leading specialist for handling non-educational logistics of some of the most prominent Ivy League business schools like Harvard, Cornell, Stanford, among others. This development turned out to be the cornerstone of our upward growth trajectory.

"In 2009 we acquired BTS (Business Travel Services), focusing at the French speaking travel markets. In 2011, we set up a representations business focussing on international tourism boards and products. In 2012, CHIME kicked off to address the growing MICE market and tap the luxury weddings segment. In 2018, with 2HUB, we entered the B2B distribution business as aggregators of hotel inventory and other tourism products particularly for tier II and III markets in India.

The same year we also launched Eastbound Discoveries and, in 2019, acquired Distinct Destinations to expand our market share in destination management,” Amit elaborates.

Over the years, many new clients have entered the representation, PR and marketing arena. So does the competition worries him? “When Prithvi, Manish and I started the organisation we decided we will run our own race. We’ve never looked at competition and said “we’re going to do it better”, we’ve said “we’re going to do it differently”. You might not be able to out-think, out-market or outspend your competition, but you can outwork them. We’ve charted our own path, and carved our niche. In all humility when you’re really good at what you do, no-one is competition. No one,” he explains.

Back in 2006, when Eastbound was established, there were either large MNCs that dominated the market or much smaller owner driven enterprises. While the former was bereft of a personal touch, the latter lacked the structure of a professionally run organization needed in order to scale. The entrepreneur in him realised that while a cookie cutter approach may get them quantities but it will lack detailing and they will never retain such business. Thus, they decided to put their energies in not just acquiring clients but also servicing existing clients in such a personalised way that they become their custodians for he firmly believes that the most important thing one can earn is trust. “Once you have a certain relationship capital, it acts as the gold standard of one’s credibility. Our clients have continued to trust us over our competitors year after year and that’s the only proof of the pudding that matters,” he shares, adding, “Destination management, tourism representation, corporate, leisure and educational travel along with our B2B distribution network have acted as our pillars of growth enabling partnerships with several marquee players of the industry. Not only do we have a strong foundation but we have industry coverage in almost all areas. Our focus is now on digital transformation and using technology to expedite our next phase of growth. We are aiming to be a \$100 mn company in the mid-term which shall be achieved through organic growth and acquisitions.”

Married and father to two beautiful children – Suhani and Arjun, Amit loves to spend most of his free time reading and playing tennis and tries his best to spend quality time with family. “I am passionate about driving and Vishakha and I have a shared interest for driving along scenic routes. We’ve done most of the Shivalik and Dhauladhar range in northern India, Great Ocean Road in Australia, Swiss Alps, Autobahn in Germany, Lake District and the Scottish Highlands in the UK and the Pacific Rim in California. Next on the bucket list is India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. I would also like to mention that my partners, Prithviraj Singh and Manish Pratik are my strengths and sounding boards. I credit my success to the fact that I walked my journey with such brilliant individuals as partners who continue to be my closest friends, even after 20 years,” he concludes.

‘Eastbound Connect Series’ debuts with a motivational session by Thyrocare founder A. Velumani



Eastbound Group recently launched its experiential trade engagement event series ‘Eastbound Connect’ on January 24, 2020 at Hotel Le Meridien, Gurgaon.

The first chapter of EBC Series featured Dr. Arokiaswamy Velumani, CEO & Founder, Thyrocare who delivered a thought provoking session titled ‘Focus, Learn, Grow & Enjoy’ citing examples from his inspirational journey led by determination, belief and consistency.

on the occasion, Amit Kishore, Co-founder and Director at Eastbound Group said, “Eastbound Connect series is about the responsibility we take as a stakeholder of the travel industry and the importance we see in collaborative development. It is very heartening that we opened and closed to a full house in the first chapter itself. The event portfolio would eventually include multiple areas of knowledge, skills and leadership development.”

Finland witnessed 100,000+ overnights from India in 2019; hopeful for a better 2020

Arushi Bajaj

When it comes to Europe, people generally flock to Switzerland, Prague, etc. ... All thanks to Bollywood! But there's lot more that is hidden and needs to be discovered. Finland is one such destination, which is the most underrated and definitely has to be seen to be believed the beauty it holds. Ms Tarja Koivisto, Account Manager, Global Sales Promotions, Visit Finland, recently at a road show in New Delhi, briefed the travel trade on the pleasures that the destination holds. Here's what she discussed with BOTT India.

The 2019 World Happiness Report ranked 156 countries and for the second consecutive year Finland bagged the top spot based on factors including generosity, life expectancy and freedom. The country has also been previously ranked among the countries with the highest quality of life by the Legatum Institute's Prosperity Index and among the most peaceful countries in the world by the Global Peace Index.

Sharing her thoughts on Finland as a tourist destination, Tajra mentions, "Finland is relatively an untouched destination and it needs to be taken more seriously as the place is a Pandora box of experiences. It is a year round destination for all seasons both summer and winter alike and has something in store for people of all age groups."

Talking about the India market, she says, "India is a relatively new market and we are pleased to be hosting this roadshow in New Delhi. Our aim is to encourage people to not just visit Finland but also stay for a longer period of time as it's a great standalone destination and need not be clubbed with another one. Finland witnessed 100,000 visitors from India in the year 2019, which is a milestone for us and we are hoping to take this number higher in 2020."

In order to develop traffic to any destination, connectivity is very important and Finland luckily enjoys good flight connections to and from India. Throwing light on the same, she says, "There is a direct flight from Delhi to Helsinki with a frequency of four



flights a week and the other one is Turkish Airlines with one stop in Istanbul. As far as VISA is concerned it's not an issue as the process is smooth with a turnaround time of 20-25 days. We fall in the category of Schengen countries."

"Finland has many beautiful things to offer and we are the only country to have the cleanest air and water in the whole wide world. The beauty here is absolutely serene and the nature has a wide bouquet of wonderful things to offer and admire," she concludes.

Embassy of the Slovak Republic & Representation World organise a Destination Showcase Event in New Delhi

Representation World in association with Embassy of Slovak Republic in New Delhi organised a Destination Showcase - '1 Lakh reasons to visit Slovakia' for the travel trade professionals in the capital and media. The highlight of the evening, besides showcasing the destination to the people present was the signing of the MoU between Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) and Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents (SACKA). OTOAI President Riaz Munshi and President of SACKA - Roman Berkes inked the deal in the presence of H.E. Ivan Lancaric - Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to India.

Known for its expansive national parks, vibrant culture, historical castles and chateaux, Slovakia has caught the attention of the well-heeled Indian traveller. The Destination Showcase and Cocktail was organised to increase awareness about the destination; acknowledge the potential agents and media for their continued support to Slovakia.

Welcoming the gathering, H.E. Ivan Lancaric shared, "Last year our Embassy had initiated a campaign with the intention of spreading awareness regarding the touristy attractions and opportunities in our beautiful country, we couldn't have asked for a better response. We are delighted to share that a Bollywood movie titled 'Chehre' starring Mr. Amitabh Bachchan and Mr. Emraan Hashmi and other celebrities has been shot in Slovak Republic and would be releasing in India in summer this year."

Sharing his thoughts on the occasion, Riaz Munshi said, "This MoU is not just a piece of paper but an understanding between the two countries to promote



tourism. We at OTOAI would be undertaking a string of initiatives to promote Slovak Republic in the India market. Usually people treat it as a one-night destination coupled with Vienna or any other place close to it but we want to change the perception and make tourists stay in Slovak Republic for two or maybe even three nights. The destination has plenty to offer to people of all age groups. The outbound market from India is huge and we see immense potential in Slovak as a destination."

Sameer Singh, Vice President, Representation World shares: "Slovakia is undeniably a hub of natural

treasures, historical monuments and modern entertainment. With century-old castles, Carpathian Mountains, hiking & cycling trails, fabulous ski resorts, Slovakia ensures a plethora of options for travellers. Our entire focus is to educate the potential agents about the varied tourism products the destination has to offer and at the same time create awareness and take the destination to the end consumer through all possible channels. With this partnership, and the response of the Destination Showcase witnessed today, we are buoyant to unravel the full potential of growing Indian outbound numbers in favour of Slovakia."

TBO hosts a Grand Party for the Travel Trade; awards its best performing assets

It is, undoubtedly, one of the most talked about parties of the year and social media was buzzing not just through the party hours but long after the celebrations were over. Yes I am talking about the TBO Annual bash, which once again raised the bar as it hosted the biggest and the most awaited party of the year for its trade partners on February 15, 2020 at Nijhawan Farms in Delhi.

A notch above last year, the party was buzzing with more than 2400 trade partners from the travel fraternity including representatives from Hotels, Airlines, Tourism Boards, Media, Government bodies and the who's who of the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality industry. This one of its kind 'Sundowner Party' created waves from late afternoon until midnight. The celebrations began on a cheerful note preceded by an Awards Ceremony to felicitate productive partnerships for top performers.

Addressing the gathering Mr. Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder, TBO Group and Managing Director, Nijhawan Group thanked the travel fraternity for their continued support and contribution. The evening concluded with pulsating music that set the stage ablaze, lavishly spread food palate and cocktails. Mr. Nijhawan, like a true host, was seen shaking a leg and having a fun time with his industry colleagues.



Kempinski Hotels aims at curating memorable guest journeys

Arushi Bajaj

Amazed and in awe of the meticulous level of services offered in our country, Amanda Elder, had no qualms in admitting that she wishes to incorporate the essence of Indian hospitality in their hotel chain. Currently not having any property in the India market, the Kempinski Group considers India as a perfect and potential outbound market. In terms of new hotels, the group aims to work towards enhancing the level and quality of services worldwide.

“With 76 properties in Kempinski Group’s kitty, we consider India as a huge market and that when it comes to the Indian customers, they are a wonderful sales force. However, I also believe that social media and influencers have built horizons for newer and lucrative opportunities over the years,” she mentions.

Kempinski Group targets the luxury mindset and considering the evolving portfolio of guests coming from India, they are delighted to observe that a majority of them come from the premium segment. Holding India market as a high benchmark, the group aims at curating the guest journeys like never before along with showcasing an orchestrated performance.

She said, “We feel a great opportunity for outbound weddings as we specialize in creating a ‘stage’ – a platform where we put the guests up on the stage and give them the environment to perform, thus creating everlasting memories for them and leaving lasting impression of our hospitality,” adding, “We are an excellent company when it comes to MICE as we have dedicated facilities for meetings all throughout Europe. We really appreciate India and the way Indian customers have embraced Kempinski is beyond imagination and absolutely delightful. The 120 years of European History is rich in European heritage and seamlessly grabs the attention of the Indian customers. Currently, we have 76 operational properties and we wish to reach 100 properties by the end of 2021.”



One of the oldest and the most prestigious Hotel groups of Eastern Europe, Kempinski, swears by the grandeur it bestows and legacy that it inherits. Spreading its wings worldwide, Kempinski Hotels, aspires to be known as the eminent hotel chain, especially in the India market. In a chat with BOTT, Amanda Elder, CCO, Kempinski Hotels talks about the group’s planning and operations in the near future.

Preferred Hotels and Resorts welcomes 24 new member hotels

Preferred Hotels and Resorts, representing more than 750 hotels, resorts, and residences across 85 countries, is pleased to welcome 24 new member hotels to its global portfolio from October 1 – December 31, 2019. From a historic retreat in central Mexico to the brand's first-ever properties in Finland and Brunei, this expansion at the end of 2019 also includes a luxury property in Amritsar, Punjab. Here are more details on the same.

Additional member hotels to join Preferred Hotels & Resorts in the last quarter of 2019 are -

1. Alma Resort (Cam Ranh, Vietnam)
2. Ayana Midplaza, JAKARTA (Jakarta, Indonesia)
3. De Zalze Lodge (Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa)
4. Downtown Grand Hotel & Casino (Las Vegas, Nevada, United States)
5. Excelsior Belvedere Hotel & SPA (Ischia, Italy)
6. H10 Villa de la Reina (Madrid, Spain)
7. Hotel C Stockholm (Stockholm, Sweden)
8. Hyde Beach House (Hollywood, Florida, United States)
9. LA Résidence Paris (Neuilly-sur-Seine, France)
10. Locanda Rossa (Capalbio, Italy)
11. Marina Hotel Kuwait (Salmiyia, Kuwait)
12. The Fullerton Hotel Sydney (Sydney, Australia)
13. The Guardsman (London, United Kingdom)
14. The Londoner (London, United Kingdom)
15. Ultima Courchevel (Courchevel, France)
16. Villa Dagmar (Stockholm, Sweden)



Team BOTT

WelcomHotel Amritsar (Amritsar, India)

Set in the quiet Raja Sansi area of Amritsar in the Punjab region of India, WelcomHotel Amritsar features 101 rooms set on eight acres nestled in the lush North Indian Plain. Housed in a historic building in an area home to thousands of years of cultural mixing, the hotel merges traditional artistry with modern hospitality to capture the enduring spirit of this storied region. Indigenous cuisine with the finest ingredients come together at the 4 dining outlets, to create signature dining experiences. This exquisite hotel brings impeccable service, delicious cuisines and curated experiences in Amritsar. It offers complimentary shuttle service from the hotel to the Golden temple, exclusively for the guests.

Klaus K Hotel (Helsinki, Finland)

Located in Helsinki's historic city center, the 171-room Klaus K Hotel takes its narrative and design cues from the Finnish national epic, The Kalevala

and the country's mythological creation story that the world emerged from seven eggs. The egg shape is characterized throughout the hotel, most prominently in the check-in desk design, which features a halo of antler-like artwork, and in one of the Sky Suites, which boasts an egg-shaped bed. Guests can opt for one of the Art Rooms inspired by culturally relevant local artists or indulge with a stay in The Nympheus Suite, which pays tribute to designer William Turner through its ornate décor and textiles depicting his 1915 illustration of water lilies and birds.

The Empire Brunei (Brunei Darussalam)

Set on 445 coastal acres on the South China Sea amidst tropical rainforests, The Empire Brunei - rich in Malay culture and warm Bruneian hospitality - boasts 522 exquisite accommodations, seven international restaurants, and five swimming pools. Seasoned luxury travelers will love the 16 secluded villas featuring gardens, living areas, and balconies with ocean views. Experiences include stand-up paddle boarding at the Grand Lagoon, an eight-lane bowling hall,

a deluxe spa, a three-screen cinema showing box office hits, and almost two miles of private beaches. Golfers can test their handicap on the 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course at The Country Club, which offers night golf and a golf academy.

Paramount Hotel Dubai (Dubai, United Arab Emirates)

Inspired by Old Hollywood glamour and Dubai's innovative design aesthetic, Paramount Hotel Dubai opened its doors in November 2019 as the region's first Paramount property. The hotel offers 823 guestrooms that present an in-room blockbuster cinema experience through vintage Hollywood artwork, movie set-inspired lighting, and high-tech entertainment systems. Movie buffs will revel in the themed suites, which pay homage to classic Paramount Pictures, including The Godfather tribute Don Corleone Suite, the diva-inspired Carole Lombard Suite, and the Great Gatsby-era Charleston Suite. Other standout facilities include a private dine-in cinema, a live entertainment stage, a chocolate lab, and a 1920s speakeasy bar.

Naad Wellness turns 2; hosts travel trade leaders on the occasion

Naad Wellness, a holistic wellbeing centre near New Delhi, recently commemorated two years of its inception with a series of retreats, which were attended by the who's who of the city.



Team BOTT



Located within the National Capital Region (Delhi NCR), Naad is a 39-room features a bouquet of curated experiences that aim to heal and initiate you towards holistic wellbeing. Rooted in the ancient principles of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, our therapies and services restore balance to your five senses and help you tune into a sound you.

The wellness centre features a bouquet of experiences that begin at 3 nights and go up to 28 nights and include a combination of both experiential (Detox, Destress, etc.) and medical packages (Diabetes Management, PCOS management, Spine Care, Sports Injury Management, etc.).

Each experience is preceded by a one-on-one consultation with a resident Ayurvedic or Naturopathic physician, basis which an itinerary is customised which includes a combination of therapies, yoga, kriyas and nutrition. The objective is to heal the body, mind and spirit from within, addressing the root cause of any imbalance, rather than offering a superficial short-term solution.



As Naad turned 2, it hosted stakeholders from the travel trade to commemorate the occasion. The diplomat fraternity, corporate honchos, travel trade leaders, fashion icons and game-changers of the industry came together to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Manoj Khetan, Co-founder of Naad Wellness expressed his gratitude to the distinguished guests present at the centre and said, "We have truly come a long way since 2011 when our other co-founders and I came

together to fulfil our collective dream of setting up a centre that promotes holistic wellbeing and offers a glimpse into India's ancient healing techniques. We hope to, continuously, make a positive impact on the health and lifestyle of our guests and showcase our country's rich medical heritage."

As part of the festivities, Naad has also extended its Anniversary Offer wherein two guests can stay at the price of one to March 31, 2020.



Rajaji National Park

Shivaliks, Uttarakhand

Spread over an area of 820.42 sq. km, Rajaji is a magnificent ecosystem, representing vegetation of several distinct zones and forest types, such as, sal forests, riverine forests, board-leaved mixed forests, scrubland and grassy.

Uttarakhand is one of the few states in India that has such a balanced mix of all offerings – hill stations, religious places, wildlife parks and sanctuaries, trekking trails, quaint hideaways, bustling towns and more. Amidst all this, the famed Rajaji Tiger Reserve is a perfect weekend holiday option for the wildlife enthusiasts. It is both a national park and a tiger reserve, which is also famous as an elephant habitat as there are around 600 elephants in Rajaji.

Amid the lush green environs of the Shivalik Hills near Haridwar lies Rajaji National Park; a beautiful place that rightly boasts of its rich flora and fauna. The park was named after the famous freedom fighter and first governor general of free India, Sri C Rajagopalachari, who was popularly called Rajaji. Until 1983, the zone was known as the Rajaji Wildlife Sanctuary (estd. 1948). But it was later merged with Motichur (estd. 1964) & Chilla (estd. 1977) wildlife sanctuaries and Rajaji National Park came into existence.

Spread over an area of 820.42 sq. km, Rajaji is a magnificent ecosystem, representing vegetation of several distinct zones and forest types, such as, sal forests, riverine forests, board-leaved mixed forests, scrubland and grassy. It possesses as many as 23 species of mammals and 315 bird species.

Jungle Safari

To enjoy the wild life and nature in its pristine and undulated form, the

HOW TO REACH

By Air:

Nearest airport is Jolly Grant, Dehradun, 35km. Jolly Grant Airport which is only a few kilometres away from the Northern Boundary of the Park has a daily 55 minutes flight from Delhi.

By Rail:

Nearest railhead is at Haridwar (24Km), Dehradun (56Km) and Rishikesh (18 Km)

By Road:

The National Park is 220 km from Delhi and from Lucknow it is at a distance of 510km. Chilla is 8 Km. from Haridwar Railway Station which is well connected to major cities and 24 Km. from Rishikesh.

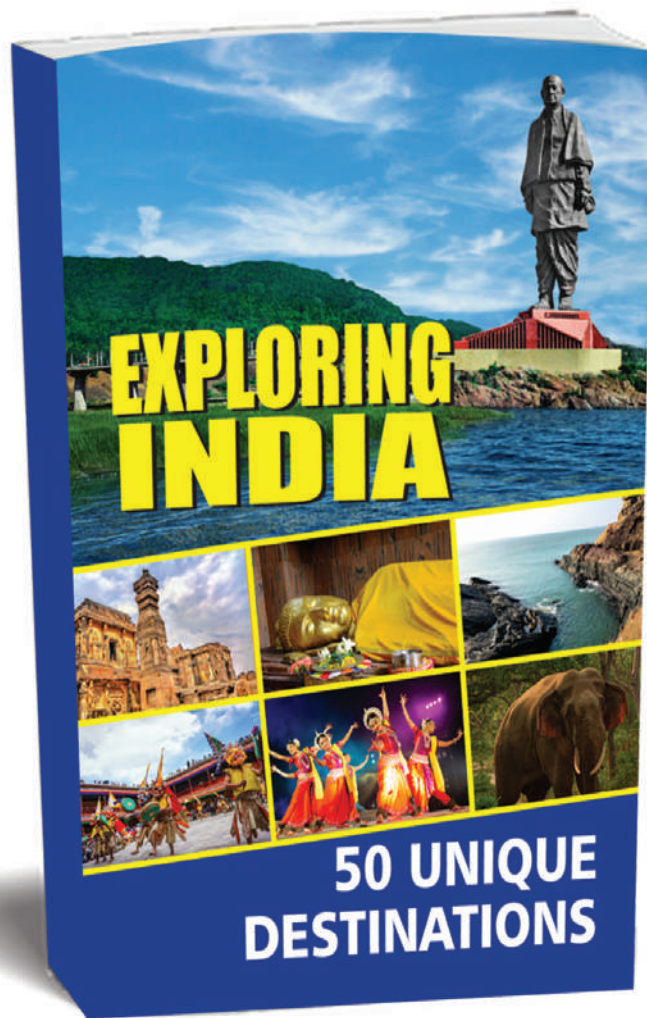
DESTINATION WINDOW

jungle safari in Rajaji National park is a perfect option. The enchanting experiences of nature walks, Jungle safari by walk or by vehicle at Rajaji National Park is really awesome. Adventurous tourists can venture out for Jeep Safaris and Elephant Safaris in the 34 km long tracks of Rajaji National Park. One can take a breath taking safari through hilly terrains, lush greenish valleys and plains, undulating forest tracks, vegetated river beds, thick and dense forest lands and unexplored sprawling grasslands.

Wildlife galore

While taking a safari tour of the Rajaji National Park, one can spot many wild animals including Asian Elephants, Tiger and King Cobra, Panther, Bear, Chital, Sambar, Wild Boar, Kakar, Python, Monitor Lizard, Wild Cats. You can also spot many birds and species of different plants, shrubs and trees.





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प्रधान मंत्री
Prime Minister

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that Ministry of Tourism and Business of Travel Trade (BOTT), in collaboration with Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) are bringing out a special book – “Exploring India through 50 unique destinations” to coincide with the India Tourism Mart (ITM 2019).

India is a nation blessed with picturesque tourist destinations dotted throughout the country. Our tourism sector holds immense potential to boost employment and make a sizeable contribution to the growth of our economy. I renew my appeal to every citizen to make an effort to visit at least 15 destinations within our country by 2022, when we will celebrate 75 years of freedom.

The book will provide an exhaustive list of unique tourist destinations. Visiting various places with children will help them learn from first-hand experience and impart practical lessons in learning about the various states and the diverse cultures of our country.

May the book succeed in inspiring citizens to read it and travel to various destinations. The print and digital versions of the book will make it easier for the people to read the book anywhere and any time.

Best wishes for successful publication of the book.

(Narendra Modi)

New Delhi

भाद्रपद 28, शक संवत् 1941

19th September, 2019

Shri Rai Umraopati Ray

Publisher, BOTT India

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Paschimi Marg, Vasant Vihar

New Delhi-110057

Visit ‘Molecule’ for an ‘out of the box’ experience in cuisine & ambience

Priyanka Saxena Ray

As cold and foggy days pave way for sunny breezy weather ahead, make sure you spend an easy evening enjoying not just the zephyr but the Yummilicious out of the box dishes at Molecule, which after being a hit with the Gurgaon crowd is now getting rave reviews at its Green Park outlet in New Delhi. India's first place for gastronomic adventures and mixology masterpieces with a futuristic look is fast winning hearts of the people. Here's our take on it.

Under Mr. Manish Sharma, each concept introduction has been the first-of-its-kind brands to have become the cult favourite in no time. With iconic properties under their flagship from Molecule, a themed air bar and restaurant, The Drunken Botanist, Viet: nom & Distillery, Yuvi Brands add another venue of Molecule to their portfolio – already making it a hit with the people who enjoy finer things in life.

“While creating Molecule in Green Park I knew we are creating something out of the box but the love and success of Gurgaon motivated us to land at the country's capital after expanding to tier 2 and 3 cities in India,” adds Manish Sharma.

The food menu at Molecule explains the finesse and craftsmanship of Chef Anas Qureshi who after travelling the entire world has picked up produces, ingredients & veggies focussing on seasonality keeping in mind the preservation of diversity and traditional practices. Giving contemporary twists to old classics, Molecule in Green Park has introduced new flavours with bold and alluring twists. The menu includes dishes like edible lava coal ‘dahi ke kebabs’ to Chat Island, spicy ‘Red Harissa Mushrooms’, and ‘Asian Gunpowder Chicken’ with seven spices, ‘Tawa Masala Chicken’ sausages to house special ‘chilli garlic prawns’, ‘black pepper garam masala fish tikka’ and more to begin with. From authentic dim sums from ‘chilli garlic vegetable’, ‘antidote tandoori momos’ to red curry chicken dumplings, between the ‘bread chicken’ and ‘cheese bunny chows’. Enjoy a diverse range of chef specials from ‘Laal Maas Taco’, ‘Pathar ka Ghost’ served live on table, wood-fired pizzas, ‘appam with mutton sukka’, ‘paneer kandhari roulade’ to inviting desserts from ‘kulfi panna cotta falooda’ to chocolate comet crash, ‘tilli kulfi’ and more.



The drinks menu at Molecule are produced sans preservatives and synthetic syrups and are home made with magical combinations and amalgamations of global experiences with elements of traditional culture. With a desi look with international flavours, sip stirred drinks made of fresh fruits, home-made flowery syrups, organic herbs and spices with a swig of alcohol of course! The well nurtured menu at Molecule, invites you to enjoy cocktails crafted with tales of magic and mystery savoured along with some Yummilicious dishes.

Cafe Delhi Heights launches new stellar menu with Dineout's Gourmet Passport

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Vikrant Batra's most loved Café Chain Café Delhi Heights & Rocky Mohan's Gourmet Passport the most famous F&B loyalty application & community are all set to partner for a celebratory event bringing the café's new look across the country. Known for its large hearted portions and an unparalleled taste, Cafe Delhi Heights is one of the most famous brands to reckon with. Introducing its newly curated menu which is a take on Cultural infusions, Global delicacies and Indian signatures, the café is ready to unveil an exciting look and alluring options for its customers. With over 2000 fine dining, 5-star restaurants, bars and stand-alone concepts in their kitty, Dineout's premium membership program, Gourmet Passport is known to offer unmatched saving deals to their diners with much more innovative events on the table. A one-of-its-kind fun and witty café and iconic brand, Café Delhi Heights is revving up to celebrate the novel offerings in a successful partnership with Gourmet Passport

Café Delhi Heights was conceptualized at a time when the capital was not exposed to the café culture. But, we had a clear vision of taking Indian gastronomy and the café vibe to as many Indian cities as possible. "The idea of coming together with Gourmet passport is not only to bring Café Delhi Heights to the forefront in Delhi NCR but to create a buzz and set benchmarks for other cities that are in our mind for expansion. Keeping in mind our outlets in Pune, Mumbai and Chandigarh; this Pan India event with Gourmet Passport & Rocky Mohan, India's only platform to offer the most unique and sensational experience to its customers would definitely open new expectations, options and opportunities for us in the near future," added Vikrant Batra, Founder Café Delhi Heights.

Rocky Mohan, Founder, Gourmet Passport shares, "The Gourmet Passport and Cafe Delhi Heights partnership goes back a long way and has stood the test of time. We are proud to associate with this glorious brand that has



re-defined the cafe culture in Delhi and beyond. Cafe Delhi Heights has yet again displayed their unwavering support for Gourmet Passport by partnering with us for this unique initiative, wherein together we'll unveil the new menu through a string of simultaneous events across 16 of their most prominent outlets, across the country. Cafe Delhi Heights is synonymous with innovative dishes, great food, and bringing global cuisine on a platter to us – everything that Gourmet Passport endorses and supports."

The all new menu at the onset of the new year 2020 is set to attract even more footfall to the restaurant. The Miso broth with noodles is a colourful meal bowl with Asian flavours depicting health and taste with subtle yet sensational flavours stacked in broccoli, mushrooms, bok choy and more. Fresh of the freshest Tilapia fish is a popular one that will be served whole with choice of sauce in the new menu. Tandoori mushrooms marinated, charred and seasoned to perfection & a Lebanese signature Olive hummus and falafel pita wrap is another exciting plate with our signature hummus & soft and tasty falafel kebabs are few of the must-try dishes from the new menu.

Ministry of Tourism launches Incredible India website in multiple international languages

The multi-lingual Incredible India website was recently launched in international languages, such as, Arabic, Chinese and Spanish. The launch function took place at The Ashok Hotel, New Delhi. The website was launched by Mr. Prahlad Singh Patel, Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Govt. of India in the presence of Ms. Meenakshi Sharma, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Ms. Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Mr. Yogendra Tripathi, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Mr. Rakesh Kumar Verma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Mr. G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, Chairman and Managing Director, ITDC. Ashok Events division is proud to be associated with the launch and manage the event.

The Incredible India website, having over 2700 pages, is rich in content with 1 Million words and 6000 images. The website and mobile app aim to project India as a popular tourist destination across the globe. It showcases the varied tourism products of India by providing visitors with relevant, personalised and contextual digital experience enhancing tourism awareness, attraction and opportunities. The website features immersive digital content comprising of plethora of information around major tourist destinations from across the country, multiple attractions under each destination and a range of experiences associated with each destination. There are



multiple walk throughs and stories consisting of engaging content on multiple experiences related to food and cuisine, heritage, nature and wildlife, luxury, spiritual, adventure, art, shopping and more.

There is a vast variety of user generated content originating from multiple feeds from social media channels like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The vast repository of digital media content is organised into a digital online repository of categorised images and videos. Lastly, to cater to the requirements of the tech savvy new-age tourists, there is a constantly available support ecosystem through helpline support and a dedicated chatbot service.



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Incredible !ndia



Khushboo Gujarat Ki

The sand is exactly as white as shown in this picture.
The ocean of white sand stands out stark and pristine in its
colourlessness, interrupted only by passing herds of camels.
On moonlit nights, the desert reveals another colour.
Something that can hardly be described in words.

Which colour of Kutch will catch your eye?
Maybe one that I couldn't find !

Amitabh Bachchan

Amitabh Bachchan



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