

BOTT

Business of Travel Trade

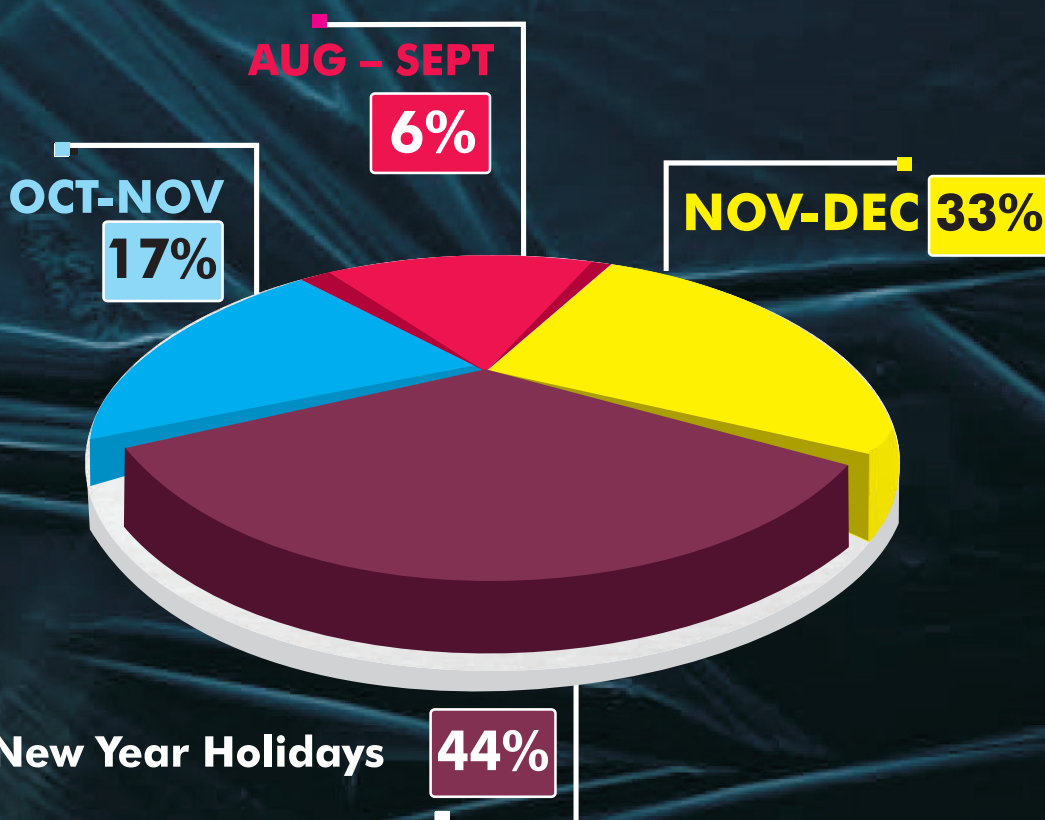
TOURISM | MICE | HOSPITALITY | AVIATION | LIFESTYLE

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44%
People

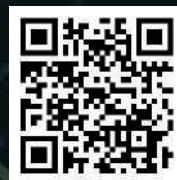
would prefer New Year
break for their holidays

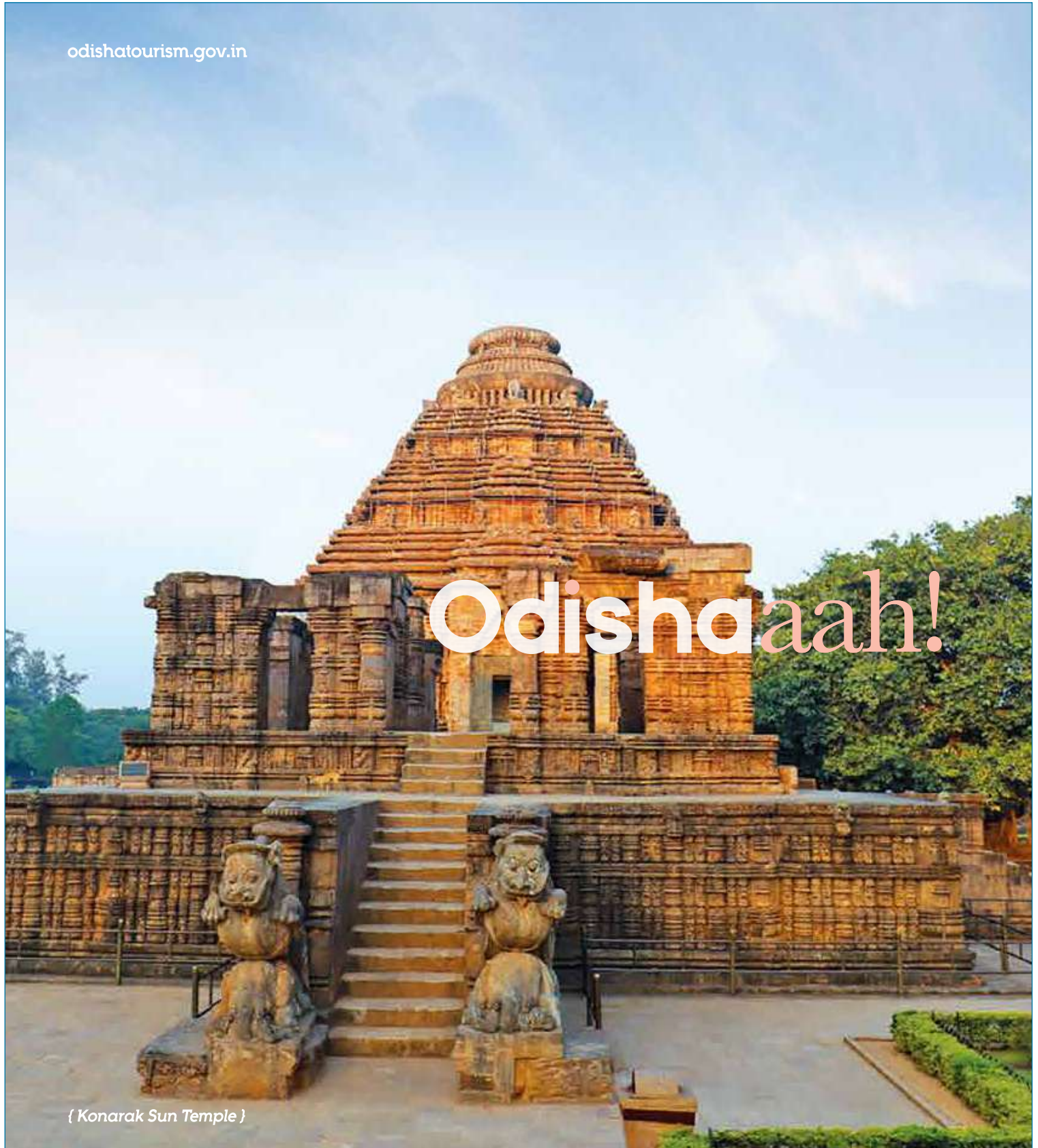
Around what time of the year would
you prefer to take a Holiday this year?



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**Travel
Sentiment
Tracker**





{ Konarak Sun Temple }

1,000 temples. 15 museums. 11 beaches. 15 waterfalls. 8 lakes. 19 sanctuaries. 24 islands...
there's a surprise at every corner.



ODISHA
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.

Editor's page



Dear Friends,

The testing times continue to cause ripples in the country as India registers one of the highest number of cases in the last few weeks. The fear has gripped the nation and is holding them back to lead life in a normal way.

The summer season is over and so is the glimmer of hope that the travel and tourism had about people resuming to their travel plans - all hope now lies on the coming New Year break. While the tourism fraternity has been left high and dry with no relief package, the Trade Associations haven't given up hope and can often be seen meeting with the Tourism Minister and Secretariat members in order to come out with some kind of a relief package for the industry. While being 'self-reliant' or 'atmanirbhar' is touted as the norm of the day, it would be extremely helpful and encouraging for the tourism industry to receive any kind of financial aid from the government.

Meanwhile, to keep the wave of positivity flowing in the Industry, Business of Travel Trade (BOTT) with its fourth edition of the magazine brings to you an eclectic mix of articles, stories and interviews that will definitely keep you hooked for some time and also give you a perspective of how things stand in the tourism sector. Hotel experts speak about the post-COVID scenario, President of a new association gives you an insight into what it really stands for, BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker with its third round of findings offers you an interesting bundle of facts and figures and our India special pages highlight some undiscovered destinations that you might want to try while planning a vacation. So sit back and enjoy reading our issue. Your feedback, criticism and appreciation is most looked forward to.

Happy Reading!

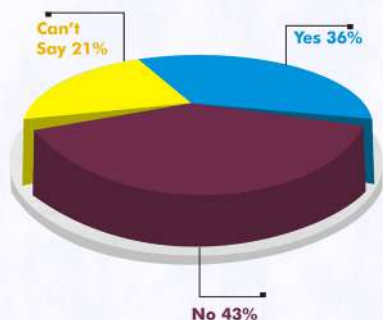
Please do send us your feedback at priyanka@bottindia.com

Priyanka Saxena Ray

CONTENTS

COVER STORY p10-p13

Would you like to go on a Family Holiday this year?



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Editor

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Assistant Editor

Arushi Bajaj

Sub Editor

Meghna Rai

Layout Design

Jagraj Chauhan

Marketing

Diptesh Singh

Published and Printed by
Rai Umraopati Ray on behalf of
More Media Pvt. Ltd. B6, Ground
Floor, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019.

BOTT INDIA Head Office
C-16, LGF, LSC, Block C Market
Paschimi Marg, Vasant Vihar,
New Delhi: 110057

Email: info@bottindia.com
Phone: 011-42750360

Only 36% people would like to go on a Family Holiday this year, says BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

staypositive

p8-p9



Short News

p6-p7

Tourism Minister approves five places for infrastructure development under MoT's PRASAD Scheme

Vistara to operate flights to London, Paris, Frankfurt starting mid-August

FAITH estimates R15 trillion losses for Tourism sector due to COVID-19

Sharjah assures top-level safety with 'Sharjah Safe for Tourism' stamp

Delhi airport to relocate UV sanitization tunnels to inline baggage handling system

ITDC posts noteworthy profit of Rs. 22.48 Crores (PAT)

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Hotels in India slowly and steadily pick pace amidst lockdown 3.0

Hospitable Hotels p14-p27



Industry Insight p28

Deepak Narula 'We must focus on selling all travel related products'



Guest Column p29

5 Golden Tips for young and budding Travel Sector Entrepreneurs

Associations in Action p30-p31

Naveen Manchanda: I will ensure that we rise up to meet the challenges facing us

Spain & Slovakia agree for issuing 'Gratis Visa' following OTOAI's request



India For You p32-p37

Let us explore the "UNDISCOVERED" treasures of India



Bott Spotlight p38

The 'Incredible' Taglines of Indian States & UTs showcase the true potential of the country

Tourism Minister approves five places for infrastructure development under MoT's PRASAD Scheme

Hon'ble Tourism & Culture Minister, Nitya Ramesh has approved the selection of five places for infrastructure development under the Ministry of Tourism's PRASHAD Scheme. These include - Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narsimha Swami Vari Devasthanam at Simhachalam in Vizag; Sri Krishnaguru Sewashram, Nasatra in Assam; Maa Ambaji Temple, Banaskantha in Gujarat; Chamkaur Sahib, Ropar in Punjab and Sundarbani, Rajauri in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nitya Ramesh



Vistara to operate flights to London, Paris, Frankfurt starting mid-August

Vistara plans to operate flights to London, Paris and Frankfurt starting mid-August, joining repatriation efforts to bring Indians home. The flights would be operated from Delhi under the travel bubble and will mark a milestone in the airline's growth. The airline is looking to operate scheduled flights to Europe with the proposed induction of its second Boeing 787-9 aircraft next month. Vistara has filed for slots at the Delhi airport and is also training pilots as it prepares for operations. The Delhi-London flight is being planned from mid-August, while services to Paris and Frankfurt would be launched later.



FAITH estimates ₹15 trillion losses for Tourism sector due to COVID-19

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (Faith) has estimated the industry's losses for the year at ₹15 trillion owing to the covid-19 pandemic. This is significantly higher than the ₹5 trillion loss estimated in March. Amid the relentless spread of the virus, tourism supply chains have broken down in India and recovery is not possible until the next five months, said the associations representing the tourism, travel and hospitality industry in India. The direct and indirect economic impact of the tourism industry in India is approximately estimated at 10% of India's GDP. This roughly puts the full year economic multiplier value of tourism in India at ₹20 trillion. Faith said at least three quarters of tourism will be fully impacted due to the global virus outbreak.



Sharjah assures top-level safety with 'Sharjah Safe for Tourism' stamp

To assure tourists that Sharjah's travel and tourism establishments are looking after their health and safety, the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) has launched the 'Sharjah Safe for Tourism' stamp, a mark of assurance given to all establishments in Sharjah which fully adhere to the public health protocols and guidelines aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. The stamp follows the measures set out by the World Travel and 'Safe Travels' stamp, the world's first global safety and hygiene stamp for travel and tourism. Residents and tourists visiting the emirate can look for the 'Safety Assured' stamp displayed in the establishment prior to making a booking or upon entry from both continued and discontinued operations.



Tourism Council's (WTTC)

Delhi airport to relocate UV sanitization tunnels to inline baggage handling system

Delhi airport will relocate ultraviolet tunnels installed outside the departure terminal to sanitize passengers' luggage amid the COVID-19 pandemic to the inline baggage handling system, its operator DIAL said recently. Once the new system is put in place, passengers will not have to queue up at the departure forecourt area and go through manual loading and unloading of baggage. Before resumption of domestic passenger flights in May, the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) had installed eight UV tunnels outside the entry gates in the departure forecourt area of Terminal 3.



ITDC posts noteworthy profit of Rs. 22.48 Crores (PAT)

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) has posted a notable performance for the financial year 2019-20 despite severe impact of COVID-19 on the tourism, travel, and hospitality sector during last quarter of financial year including lockdown in the second half of month of March'20 which brought entire industry to a standstill. Total Income during the year was Rs. 357.49 crore and Revenue from operations was Rs. 336.27 crore. The Corporation posted profit before tax (PBT) of Rs 42.68 crore and profit after tax (PAT) of Rs. 26.12 crore from both continued and discontinued operations.



#IndustryStayPositive



Priyanka Nijhawan
Director
Representations,
Nijhawan Group



Guldeep Sahni
Managing Director,
Weldon Tours & Travels



Subhash Goyal,
Chairman STIC Travel Group;
Chairman, ASSOCHAM Tourism
Council and Hony. Secretary, FAITH

This is a difficult time but it's just that - a time. It has been an immensely tough situation right now, but certainly it is time to let your hopes high and work towards improvement and constant innovation. There's always a better tomorrow and a better way to achieve things. I believe that the Indian Tourism sector will bloom and flourish in the new normal. The key driving factors of the overall travel sector, in the coming times will be Safety, Sanitization, Health & Hygiene and brand value.

History is the proof that humans have always looked for new experiences and are avid travellers since the start of time. The need and desire to visit and see new places is what makes us human in the first place. Thus, I strongly feel that once people settle down with this situation, they would love to explore the world, yet again. The demand for travel will increase, yet again. In the meanwhile, let us – the providers of travel memories, innovate and assess what next our customer will want.

Things have started to limp back their way to normalcy, or the “new normal” as people refer to it. Travel too has started – air travel with social distancing, hotels and resorts are opening with extra safe and sanitised measures and self-precautions such as mask and gloves are all well in place. For a foreseeable future, this is how travel will be and we will all have to learn to live with the norms of this “new normal”. I am sure the tough times will be over soon and that will be the time to focus on travel.

#IndustryStayPositive



Vasudha Sondhi,
Managing Director,
Outbound Marketing



Rohit Kohli
Jt. Managing Director,
Creative Travel



Meena Bhatia
General Manager and
Vice President,
Le Meridien, New Delhi

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way..." - ikigai. Anything we do repeatedly becomes a habit. Likewise with staying positive. This attitude enables us not only to recognise opportunities when it passes by but also to utilise our time to learn new skills. The whole world being in this situation gives us courage that we will all come out through this together.

Tourism is currently decimated, but I believe this is a perfect reset for the entire industry - globally. This crisis will be the proverbial opportunity for those who evolve and run their businesses responsibly in the future. I am very confident in the India story, this horrible phase will soon be a memory of the past. These testing times will not last forever and are here only to make us more strong and resilient. With passage of time, life will slowly go back to normal and travel will return.

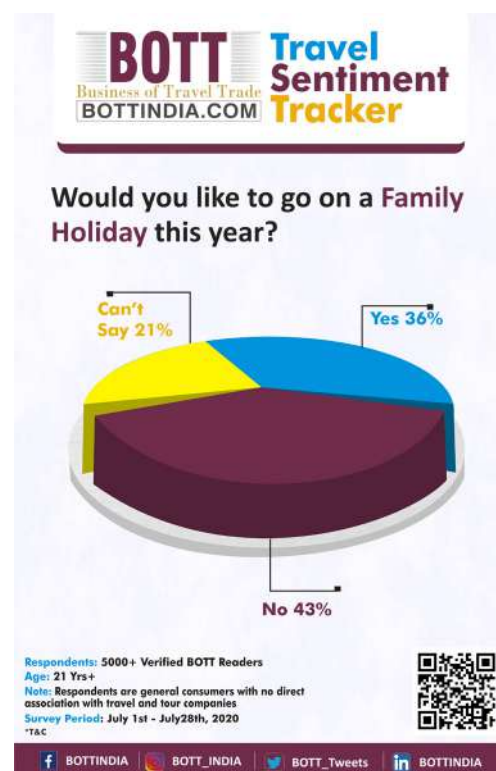
Hospitality is all about creating memories. Our business may be paused temporarily, but we are in the dreams of millions of people across the globe. Let us be prepared to smile with our eyes and care from our hearts to let them live their dreams soon. People cannot stay away from travel for long. This tough period will soon be over and when it is, people would like to travel like never before. Have faith because we will travel again!

Only 36% people would like to go on a Family Holiday this year, says BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

The BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker found about 44% people would prefer New Year break for their holidays as most of them are cautious as we enter Unlock 3.0 in India.

Key Highlights

- **A mere 36%** people would like to go on a Family Holiday this year while 43% have no plans to holiday this year due to the fear of Covid-19 pandemic.
- **About 44%** people will prefer to holiday during the New Year break followed by 33% who would prefer holiday in the months of November-December.
- **Around 39%** of the people would like to go on a Weekend Getaway while 35% people would prefer 3-5 Nights Stay and 18% would like to go on a Day-Trip.
- **About 32%** of the people would like to go on a holiday using a Private / Self Transport followed by 28% and 25% people who would prefer taxis and flights respectively.
- **41%** of the people would like to spend somewhere between INR 50K to 1 lakh on their holiday, followed by 30% people who have a budget of INR 1 to 2 lakhs.
- **Around 24%** people would prefer plush Hotels and Resorts followed by 19% each who prefer Religious Destinations and Hills & Adventurous destinations for their holidays. 18% people would head to Beach Destinations.
- **A huge 75%** people will opt for Hotels & Resorts which are Covid safe/prepared followed by 15% who would go for Hotels & Resorts offering good deals.
- **About 62%** people will prefer Airlines that are Covid safe/prepared followed by 32% people who would go for Airlines offering good deals.



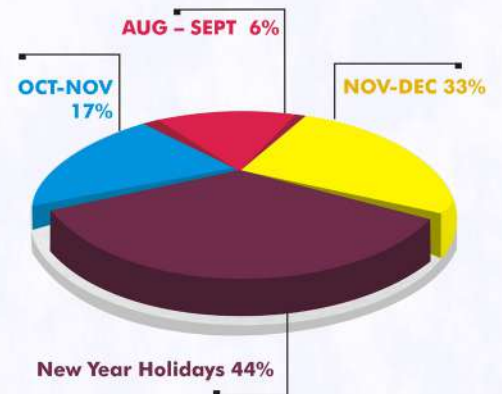
The Covid-19 pandemic continues to severely impact the travel and tourism sector with just 36% people willing to take a family holiday this year while about 43% have decided to skip holidaying this year due to the fear of the pandemic. A recently concluded survey by BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker to understand the travel sentiments, has revealed that 44% people would prefer to holiday during the New Year break followed by 33% who would like to holiday in the months of November-December. According to the BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker survey, where over 5000 verified travellers participated over a period of 28-days, 39% of the people would like to go on a weekend Getaway while 18% would like to go on a day-trip.

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India says, “Despite such enormous effect of the pandemic, it is good to know that there is demand and inclination to go on a family holiday. The ministry has also taken several other steps to shore up the beleaguered travel industry. It has created a set of guidelines for travellers, monuments, guides, hotels and restaurants, tour operators and other stakeholders. The Ministry of Tourism is working towards opening tourist spots across the country, implementing confidence-building measures and supporting the industry. As a part of this thought, we started a series of webinars, exploring different facets of India. We need to join hands and create a synergy that will propel people to explore the treasures of their own country first, thus giving boost to domestic tourism in India.”



As per the survey, about 32% of the people would like to go on a holiday using a private or self-owned transport followed by 28% and 25% people who would prefer taxis and flights respectively. Around 41% of the people would like to spend somewhere between INR 50K to 1 lakh on their holiday, followed by 30% people who have a budget of INR 1 to 2 lakhs.

Around what time of the year would you prefer to take a Holiday this year?

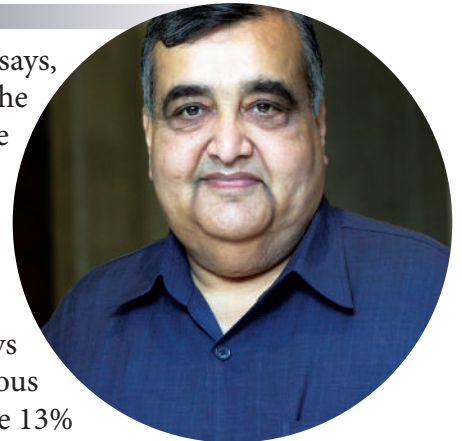


Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
*T&C



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Rajiv Mehra, Vice President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) says, “Even if people want to travel, the bigger question is where will they travel? With the states changing rules on a weekly basis, the choice for a traveller becomes tough – he is simply being harassed by all the new policies and decisions taken at the state level. There is a dire need for the Centre government to intervene and lay down some rules for everyone to follow. As we enter Unlock 3.0, there should be a coordinated efforts to revive tourism with all the precautions in place.”



Interestingly, 24% people would prefer plush hotels and resorts for their holidays followed by 19% each who prefer religious destinations and hills & adventurous destinations for their holidays. 18% people would head to beach destinations while 13% would opt for wildlife parks & sanctuaries and 7% for popular historical destinations.

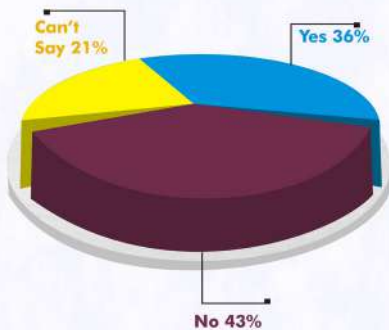


P.P. Khanna, President, ADTOI (Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India) says, “It is time to realise, showcase and position India, which has immense tourist attractions for our domestic travellers. States across the country should come forward and highlight their tourist attractions along with the Covid-safe measures taken by them. The Centre and state governments should work towards systematic tourism promotion campaigns. The pandemic has only altered the progress of tourism, not stopped it. This has the potential to become the biggest job creator for India.”

Key Findings of BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

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Would you like to go on a Family Holiday this year?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
*T&C



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A mere 36% people would like to go on a Family Holiday this year while 43% have no plans to holiday this year due to the fear of Covid-19 pandemic.

About 44% people will prefer to holiday during the New Year break followed by 33% who would prefer to holiday in the months of November-December. 17% people would like to holiday in October – November and a very minuscule percentage of 6% people may travel in August and September.

BOTT Travel
Business of Travel Trade Sentiment
BOTTINDIA.COM Tracker

Around what time of the year would you prefer to take a Holiday this year?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
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Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
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BOTT Travel
Business of Travel Trade Sentiment
BOTTINDIA.COM Tracker

What kind of Holiday / Break would you like to plan post COVID crisis?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
*T&C



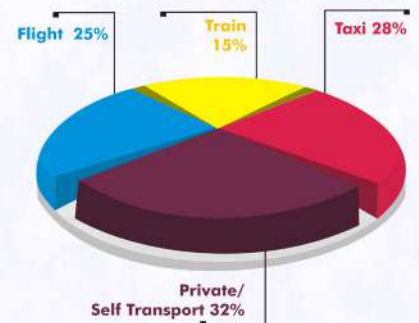
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Around 39% of the people would like to go on a Weekend Getaway while 35% people would prefer 3-5 Nights Stay followed by 18% would like to go on a DayTrip.

About 32% of the people would like to go on a holiday using a Private / Self Transport followed by 28% and 25% people who would prefer taxis and flights respectively. About 15% of people would prefer train for their holidays.

BOTT Travel
Business of Travel Trade Sentiment
BOTTINDIA.COM Tracker

What mode of transport would you prefer to use for the Holiday?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
*T&C

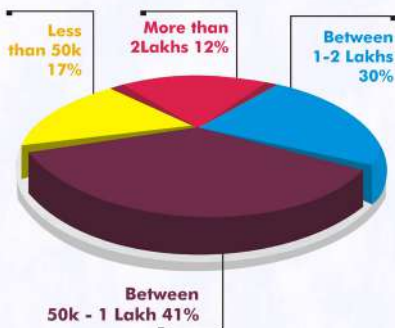


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Key Findings of BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

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What kind of budget do you have in mind to spend on your Holiday?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
*T&C



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About 41% of the people would like to spend somewhere between INR 50K to 1 lakh on their holiday this year, followed by 30% people who have a budget of INR 1 to 2 lakhs. Around 17% of the people would spend less than INR 50K while about 12% people shall spend more than INR 2 lakhs.

Interestingly, 24% people would prefer plush hotels and resorts for their holidays followed by 19% each who prefer religious destinations and hills & adventurous destinations for their holidays. 18% people would head to beach destinations while 13% would opt for wildlife parks & sanctuaries and 7% for popular historical destinations.

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Business of Travel Trade Sentiment
BOTTINDIA.COM Tracker

What kind of tourist destinations would you like to visit?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
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What kind of Hotels & Resorts would you like to opt?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
*T&C



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A huge 75% people will opt for Hotels & Resorts which are Covid safe/prepared followed by 15% who would go for Hotels & Resorts offering good deals. 10% people would go for their usual preferences and brands.

About 62% people will prefer Airlines that are Covid safe/prepared followed by 32% people who would go for Airlines offering good deals. Just 6% of the people would opt for their usual preferences.

BOTT Travel
Business of Travel Trade Sentiment
BOTTINDIA.COM Tracker

What kind of Airlines would you prefer?



Respondents: 5000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Yrs+
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: July 1st - July 28th, 2020
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Hotels in India slowly and steadily pick pace amidst **lockdown 3.0**



Kerrie Hannaford

Vice President – Commercial India and South Asia Accor

Priyanka Saxena Ray

As the country is in the unlock phase, 45 Accor properties have started operations. The remaining hotels will open as the situation evolves.

What kind of concerns are you facing from the customers who are engaging with you for bookings?

The most important concern for any individual right now is safety and hygiene and our guests are also solicitous about it. To ensure their safety, we have launched the ALLSAFE label in association with Bureau Veritas which represents our new cleanliness and prevention standards. We have developed the ALLSAFE label certification, our 16 guiding principles and commitments, keeping cleanliness and safety at the helm of our policies.

The ALLSAFE label consists of over 35 actionable guidelines and 200 SOP's – the safety, security and comfort of our guests and employees is at the very heart of who we are. The ALLSAFE label provides assurance that these standards will be met by our hotels

Never in our lives would we have thought that there will come a time when airplanes will remain grounded and hotels closed... when the world-famous monuments will remain deserted and travel and tourism will come to a complete halt. Well, we all witnessed it, braved it, faced it and the worst is hopefully now over. As many cities in India witness the flattening of the COVID curve, Hotels and Resorts across the country, slowly and steadily open their doors to public. The “new norms” of travel have been laid down and amidst fear and apprehension, there is also a deep desire to take a break and stay in a place that guarantees you safety and precaution. BOTT India thus spoke to few hoteliers to gauge the kind of business they have been able to generate in the post-covid opening phase and here is what they had to share –

in anticipation of the progressive reopening of our hotels across regions. Every hotel will also have an ALLSAFE Officer to ensure all protocols are followed.

Has your Hotel (Individual or Chain) come out with a special package to attract more traffic?

Our teams are in the process of rolling out various stay and F&B offers and incentives for our guests. We announced our first offer to provide our friends and family discount for healthcare professionals across our hotels in India and Sri Lanka. All first responders and medical health workers are entitled to a 30 % discount on the best available rate for bookings made between now until December 31, 2020.

Accor has also introduced ‘Holiday Plus Vouchers’ i.e. prepaid vouchers for its Accor Plus members. The members can purchase the voucher priced at INR 5000+ GST where they get to redeem it for INR 6000, hence, they get a 20 per cent additional value on the voucher.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, as part of our exciting new campaign ‘Let us Take Care of You,’ we are offering great discounts across all our 51

hotels. Our guests can enjoy Accor’s impeccable service and facilities with a 20% off on the best rate available, including breakfast, any one major meal, double ALL points and same day free cancellation.

Also, many of our properties are offering ‘Work from Hotel’ and workcation packages. Our ibis brand in India has introduced Work@ ibis. Novotel Hotels in Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Goa, Chennai, Kolkata are also offering a dedicated plug and play office space which can be clubbed with various add-ons such as food and beverage options, special rate for an overnight stay and much more. Our hotels in Goa and Mysore are offering workcation packages as well.

When do you see the Hotel industry in India going back to normalcy? How much time, in your opinion, will things take to settle down?

We are witnessing some positive signs and are hopeful that in the coming weeks hospitality industry will prosper. People have started travelling and dining out. We have noticed that a lot of people are taking long workcation deals, weekend breaks and also celebrating special occasions in hotels.

There will be no Government bailout for the industry and we should stop hoping that something can still happen. Assistance delayed is just as good as assistance denied and what is the point of giving us dole-outs once 40% of the industry has gone under, which could actually happen in the next 6 to 8 months? Each of us have to fend for ourselves to survive and those who can see it through till early 2021 are the ones who will continue to stay in business.

What kind of concerns are you facing from the customers who are engaging with you for bookings?

Quite obviously, safety and hygiene are the key concerns for any traveller, which we are addressing as recommended by the Ministry of Health. The other concern is about the ease of crossing borders. While Rajasthan has been open without any flip-flops since mid-June, Uttarakhand continues to keep changing its policies and even those which are put in place are not properly implemented by the staff on ground. This is obviously creating a rather negative image of the State in the mind of the travellers. Potential guests also ask us about the dining possibilities in the resort and if regular in-room dining is possible. Given that all our properties have limited number of keys in very large land areas, physical distancing is not an issue at all with us.

Has your Hotel (Individual or Chain) come out with a special package to attract more traffic?

We at the Tree of Life were very clear from the time we opened that one of our main objectives was to re-activate demand and price plays a very important role in this. We were also of the opinion that the standard 10-15%

discounts would really be a waste of time and would not give the desired results. We hence came out with deep 50% discount for June and as demand picked up, we reduced the discount levels. We feel that we will be at the regular discounting levels of 10% odd by October this year.

When do you see the Hotel industry in India going back to normalcy? How much time, in your opinion, will things take to settle down?

When lock down was being lifted early June, I was rather confident that driving holidays would come back quickly. This has not happened and people are still cautious, thanks partly to the 24x7 negative media coverage, making Corona larger than life! 'Normalcy', if understood as how things were before Corona, will come back only by 2022. Having said that, I do believe that domestic leisure travel momentum will pick up by October 2020 and corporate travel / MICE by early next year. Hotels depending on inbound business have a long wait till winter 2021 – a little movement will happen in the first quarter of 2021. But this is a marathon and we have to keep the pace accordingly – opening up full throttle too soon will wear one out, without the desired results.



Himmat Anand
Founder
Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels

With consistent and planned communication strategy, the group had announced way back in the month of May that it would be starting operations from June 19 and they have stayed true to their word. The response that they have received has been very positive and they have registered an occupancy of 68% at the Tree of Life's flagship property in Jaipur, which is even better than July 2019! The Tree of Life Resort Udaipur opened on July 1 and is yet to pick up steam. They are now looking at opening its other properties in a slow and planned manner.



Vijay Wanchoo

Sr. Executive Vice President
& General Manager
The Imperial New Delhi

A landmark hotel in New Delhi, The Imperial, is shut at the moment as per government guidelines. However, they are accepting quarantine rooms being directed to them as part of the government's 'Vande Bharat Mission' initiative for repatriation flights.



In the post COVID world, it will be important for all organizations to adapt to the constantly changing scenario. Hotels which are able to cut costs and at the same time offer a safe and secure environs to guests, are the ones which will be able to sustain.

What kind of concerns are you facing from the customers who are engaging with you for bookings?

We have been engaging with a number of our regular guests on constant basis and all are eager to return and experience our hospitality. We have also received a few queries on the safety precautions being taken and the revised processes that we have rolled to ensure the highest standards of hygiene. Infact, we have been receiving a number of queries for room and banquet bookings, however we cannot accept these at the moment in line with government directives.

Has your Hotel come out with a special package to attract more traffic?

We have planned and will be introducing special room packages once hotels are allowed to open again. Attractions such as early bird offers, free cancellations and bundled packages are to name a few.

When do you see the Hotel industry in India going back to normalcy? How much time, in your opinion, will things take to settle down?

Business growth will be slow in the next few months and occupancies are expected to return to normalcy only in the next financial year as international

travel restrictions are expected to stay till the end of this year. However, with hotels in Delhi, another challenge will be that by the time we see the effects of COVID-19 diminishing we will enter the lean season of next financial year. So, I would say anywhere between the next 12-18 months is when business can be expected to return to normalcy. MICE business will be affected to a great extent as most companies will not be budgets to hold conferences/exhibitions and most organizations will prefer to carry out their discussions via online modes.

play office space which can be clubbed with various add-ons such as food and beverage options, special rate for an overnight stay and much more. Our hotels in Goa and Mysore are offering workcation packages as well.

When do you see the Hotel industry in India going back to normalcy? How much time, in your opinion, will things take to settle down?

We are witnessing some positive signs and are hopeful that in the coming weeks hospitality industry will prosper. People have started travelling and dining out. We have noticed that a lot of people are taking long workcation deals, weekend breaks and also celebrating special occasions in hotels.



Shibil Malik

General Manager
Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel
at Brigade Gateway

The Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway re-opened beginning June but with limited dining venues. The hotel currently is taking all the necessary measures and precautions to ensure utmost safety and hygiene for its guests at the hotel and the occupancies are gradually increasing to a 25% plus figure from an 8 to 10% when they reopened in June.



As the number of cases continue to rise in India, things will not be back to normal this year for sure. It will take around 6-8 months for people to travel without carrying the fear of COVID-19. Travel will definitely bounce back, probably with a vengeance, and when it does, our hotels will be buzzing once again!

What kind of concerns are you facing from the customers who are engaging for bookings?

Post Covid-19, guests have become critical about hygiene and cleanliness measures adopted at the hotel. They are regularly engaging to understand the steps taken for their safety while they are at our premises. The guests are also very keen to understand if the hotels are offering a flexible cancellation policy, as they want to have an option of exercising this option should the government impose restrictions or lockdown anytime basis the situation, restricting travel.

The response for weddings and intimate events is something we had expected, but has turned out to be better than we anticipated. Our team has been actively engaging with our guests and we are proactively communicating our rigorous 'Commitment to Clean' safety standards as a confidence building activity. Our guests have been reassured at various touch points of their journey. We have been able to successfully execute various social events at the hotel, in adherence with the new govt. guidelines.

Has your Hotel (Individual or Chain) come out with a special package to attract more traffic?

We had started the contactless experience of home delivery right at the early stages of lockdown and this segment has been very successful for us in driving our F&B revenues. To

increase our local visibility, we have also partnered with aggregators to leverage their platform to promote sales.

The rooms and suites at the hotel have been converted into a safe haven for 'Gourmet In-Suite' experiences. Guests can celebrate exquisite flavours in the comfort of their very own room and indulge in an exclusive 3 hour intimate experience in our luxurious suites with a private butler on standby.

We have also introduced the experience of office spaces out of the hotel, offering reliable and safe plug and play workstations to just-in-time meeting spaces. The main focus of this package is to offer highest levels of hygiene and safety to our customers while they work and play. We offer them packed meals at work desks and complimentary parking.

The team has also rolled out various all-inclusive room offers at the hotel, that includes the 'Self Isolation package', where one can stay socially responsible and self-isolate themselves in the comforts of the specially curated rooms, making the most of a host of luxe amenities extended. Guests can book their special stay for 7 nights or more and keep themselves away in the luxurious, clinically sanitised rooms along with exclusive offerings like an unconventional In-room restaurant dining experience, Virtual fitness sessions by trained experts, Fitness equipment's on demand and ergonomically designed workspaces.

Mohd. Shoeb: If you are alive till December & have a Job, consider yourself lucky!



Mohammed Shoeb,
Associate Vice President, Pride
Plaza Hotel Aerocity

Priyanka Saxena Ray

An IHM pass out who has gradually worked his way to the top and worked for every merit that has come his way, Mohammed Shoeb is a passionate hotelier, who doesn't believe in tough times pulling him down. Starting his career as a mere Associate at Holiday Inn Crown Plaza New Delhi way back in 1988, Shoeb has been concomitant with numerous hospitality chains over the years – wearing different hats and adding more and more experience to his kitty.

Mohammed Shoeb has been a GM since 2005 and from 2005 to 2015 he has opened as many as five hotels – with different brands and at different locations. The first Hotel that he

opened as a GM was with the ITC Welcom Group – the Fortune Murli Park in Vijayawada wherein he was also awarded the GM of the Year Award by the ITC Welcom Group for his performance. After a couple of years, he opened Four Points by Sheraton in Vishakhapatnam before moving on to the Accor Group in 2010 and opening the Novotel Varun Beach in Vishakhapatnam in 2011. He was the first Indian GM ever to be hired with the Novotel, brand of Accor Group. Moving on, he opened Novotel Chennai Sipcot IT Park in 2013 followed by ibis Sipcot in 2014 to finally moving back to the capital and joined Radisson Blu Dwarka New Delhi in July 2015.

He is a complete hospitality professional who can undoubtedly be termed as the “opening expert” considering his active participation in the pre-opening teams of almost five hotels in the last decade. Mohammed Shoeb, Associate Vice President, Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi, is a veteran in the industry with vast experience, acute business acumen and the perfect humane touch necessary to carve a niche in the field of hospitality. Here's a look at his business journey in an exclusive chat with BOTT India.





“I was the GM of the Radisson Blu Dwarka New Delhi, which is a huge hotel. After being with them for almost 4 years, I finally moved to Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity. My reasons for coming to Aerocity were plenty but my decision was mainly based on my relationship with Mr. S.P. Jain, who is the owner of the hotel. I had initially worked with The Pride Nagpur as the rooms division manager from 2000-2003 and had shared a good rapport with Mr. Jain. After all these years, he wanted me to return and take charge of his flagship property, which I think was the ultimate testament of my hard work and loyalty,” shares Shoeb.



Sharing his thoughts on how the hospitality industry across the world has been severely affected by the COVID-19, Shoeb ruefully admitted that the business at the Pride Plaza Aerocity has also been hugely impacted – almost 75% and the coming couple of months also look to be the same. “We have been hanging on to the business we get from pharma and medical industries as they have remained beneficial even during these challenging times. We keep getting some odd business from them still. But in the meantime, we have engaged our teams with online

trainings - teaching them the SOPs of the new normal, even those who are sitting at home. Our staff who is in red and orange zones have been asked not to come to work and get the training at home only,” he enumerates.

Having said that however, Shoeb is hopeful that come September things will start to come back to what they were and another 4-5 months after that, everything might even become ‘normal’ again. “2020 will be a great year for the hospitality industry. Infact, things might start to pick up from this winter season only. The

domestic demand will pick up first - people are sick of being at home so when business will open – it will be better than before. Remember, every crisis has an opportunity. However, MICE and the big fat Indian weddings will take some time to bounce back. At Pride Plaza, hotels that surround us are in competition as we have well-trained staff and a great product to offer, which is at par with them. Our services and guest experiences have been great, perhaps that’s why we stand at No. 3 out of 1,295 hotels in Delhi/NCR in TripAdvisor rankings,” he concludes.

Davinder Juj: Together, we will come out of this crisis stronger and better



Davinder Juj,
General Manager, Eros Hotel
New Delhi, Nehru Place

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Davinder Juj, after completing his IHM, started working at the Hyatt Regency New Delhi as a steward in F&B Service. “Even today when I look back, it gives me a great feeling that I had the opportunity to join such a great establishment with huge volume of business that apparently taught me all the basic tricks and groomed me for the future course of life. The learnings at that level and the motivation to grow and reach new heights is what I learned from my first job,” he reminisces.

A firm believer of the fact that the key to success in any field is hard work and dedication and that it comes from the passion and willingness to learn, followed by skill development at all levels and habit of responding to change as per new circumstances, Davinder feels that the hospitality industry works on pillars of relationship building and thinking on your feet to handle situations. “In 25 years of my carrier, I have worked with only two hotel groups – Asian Hotels and Eros Group of Hotels. Although over this period, I have had the experience to learn from many brands such as Hyatt Regency, Hilton Hotels, InterContinental Hotels and Eros Group of Hotels,” he adds.

Sharing his thoughts on the challenges he faced in the professional journey, he says, “It’s not about the challenges that we face rather it is our response to those challenges that makes a difference. I have had similar challenges like many others in the hospitality industry. There are certain low impact challenges that distinguish our job

from others like meeting revenues and GOP numbers, long working hours, insufficient family time, pressure to exceed guest expectations, waiting for the right opportunity to move ahead in professional journey etc. Additionally, there are other significant challenges that turn out to be the life changing moments and dealing those challenges always defines a person. Gulf War, 9/11 US Attack, Mumbai Attack and now the ongoing pandemic because of which the businesses have suffered a big hit and the prospect of the entire industry got affected. To safeguard your colleagues, your business, ensuring to keep the trust and confidence of your customers becomes very important during these periods. The restart post any such events is always of great significance and ensuring a steady growth out of these challenges and bouncing back strongly has always been the focus and key to sustain.”

The GM states that at the Eros Hotel, safety and hygiene of guests and team members have always been of paramount importance. In the new normal, awareness and preparedness of team members will play a significant role to keep everyone safe at the premises. To ensure that everyone visiting the hotel feels the warmth and comfort while having the sense of safety, the hotel has implemented a stringent yet comprehensive outline of measures which will be thoroughly followed once the hotels re-open. Over the past few months, the team at Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place has been continuously engaging with all its guests and keeping them informed about the protocols, which the hotel has adopted to keep them safe at the premises after re-opening.

A man hailing from a small town in Punjab, for whom his father was the first role model, who chose hospitality as he wanted to make his career in an ‘unconventional’ field - Davinder Juj, General Manager, Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place, who has been associated with the property since October 2002, has indeed come a long way. Geared to handle any challenge life decides to throw his way, the visionary has introduced a plethora of initiatives to make his hotel safe and COVID free. Here’s more on his journey and initiatives in an exclusive with BOTT India.

Protection protocols being followed at Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place

- Glass shielding at Reception desks to maintain safe distance from others
- Reduced contact points during check-in and check-out
- Digital/Contactless payments
- Automatic sensor taps & sanitizers
- Touchless soap dispensers
- PPE in all relevant areas
- Staggered seating and foot marks for safe distancing
- Scanning of team members for temperature checks and Aarogya Setu App upon arrival.
- Wearing masks and gloves is mandatory for them at all times.
- A dedicated Hygiene and Safety Manager to ensure that all protocols are followed
- Guests to fill Self-declaration forms during check-in to assess their medical and travel history
- Appropriate assistance will be provided to unwell guests as per Govt. guidelines
- Mandatory trainings and mock

drills for all team members in order to sensitize them about the guidelines prescribed by the Government of India for maintaining personal hygiene and safety. Awareness and emergency posters are placed in all back areas for a lasting impression on team members

- Rooms will be blocked keeping in mind the 24 hours cleaning/ resting period
- In-Room service will be provided on request
- Touchless buffet service and pre-portioned individual dishes in buffet will be provided
- Dedicated separate entry for banquet guest and availability of sanitizer and temperature check at the entrance
- Door of pre-function area and banquet area to open for significant time to maintain the cross ventilation
- Sanitization of guest luggage at the entry point
- Use of Electrostatic sprayers with hospital-grade disinfectant to sanitise surfaces throughout the hotel. Electrostatic spraying technology uses the highest classification of disinfectants recommended by the Centre for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) to treat known pathogens

- All touch points in rooms like door handles, bathroom fixtures, furniture, drawers, remotes, table tops go through highest levels of sanitization and hygiene standard. All guest laundry and room linen is treated with enhanced wash cycles
- All dining areas are properly cleaned and disinfected on regular intervals. The furniture and fixtures of the restaurant like tables, chairs, workstations, table tops, and linen etc. are thoroughly cleaned with disinfectants and sanitized on daily basis
- In addition to the restaurants, protocols have been defined for the kitchen areas in order to prevent any sort of contamination
- Various signage with messages on social distancing, safety and hygiene measures have been placed in guest and back areas for encouraging them to adhere to the norms
- Awareness and emergency posters have been placed in all back areas for a lasting impression on team members

“I would like to say something before concluding – one is my message to all the hoteliers that due to the ongoing pandemic, we are all going through tough times yet I believe that this phase too shall pass soon. We are in this together and will come out of it stronger and better. The learning from this phase will guide us towards a brighter future. Secondly, we at Eros Hotel have always believed in the ideology of giving back to the society. During this pandemic also, we came forward and joined our hands with NGO's to feed the needy ones with packed food boxes prepared by our chefs with all their love and warmth. We will continue our support in future,” concludes the dynamic GM.



Hospitable Hotels

Mehul Sharma: We aim to curate plush hotels with authentic experiences



Mehul Sharma,
CEO & Founder,
Signum Hotels & Resorts

A thorough hospitality professional who decided to take the entrepreneurial plunge, Mehul Sharma, CEO & Founder, Signum Hotels & Resorts, is a man on a mission keen to up the hospitality game in India. The core vision of Signum Hotels and Resorts is to provide authentic experiences set in a background of comfortable and hidden luxury. The main focus is to offer affordable yet aspirational luxury where there is seamless integration with immersive inclusions. Here's more on the journey of this hospitality veteran.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Please share with us a brief introduction about your background - how did you get into the field of hospitality education? Was it a conscious choice or an accidental entry?

My father was a Colonel in the Indian army so once I cleared my 12th, I had the options of NDA, Engineering and Hotels – I cleared all but chose to join the hospitality industry as hotels in India were booming at that time. Thus, I joined IHM Pusa and became the first generation hotelier in my family and I am quite happy about it.

What was your first Job (in which hotel and at what profile)?

My first job was as a management trainee wherein I got placed in my college with the Park Group of Hotels in front office, so I joined the Park Delhi and then moved on to work at the Park Kolkata.

How did you climb up the ladder?

I have primarily worked in TAJ ITC and Shangri-La and moved my way up from Operations to Sales for quicker growth. I have worked in all capacities from sales executive to heading a hotel.

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

Well, to be honest, I haven't faced many challenges as I was always blessed with wonderful colleagues, bosses and subordinates and therefore I have enjoyed a very smooth professional and journey full of growth and development and learnings.

How did the idea of Signum Hotels come about? When and how did you conceptualize it?

This was in 2018. Actually, my first two businesses were in the fnb space, which took a huge capital until I realised that I should do what I am best at so we made a great team with industry stalwarts and started Signum





Hotels and Resorts, which is a Latin word that means creating a mark. Thus, we launched this brand Signum and started taking hotels under Management agreements. Some of the properties that we manage today includes Camp Wild at Dhauj Bandh, Hotel Marigold, Jaipur, Woodville Palace Hotel, Shimla, Ferndale Apartments, Slough, Heathrow, Royal Imperio, Faridabad, The Peru Resorts, Dhanaully and Zen Suites, Jasola

What Special changes would you now be implementing in light of the pandemic? How severely has your business been affected?

Well it has affected us as much as it has affected all others. However, the good part about it is that this time helped us in making our back-end very strong in terms of technology, food, central procurement, loyalty program, mobile app, green hotels, robotics, AI, etc. We

are now getting extremely prudent of cost structure and enhancing our sales and distribution network. I believe guests want to stay in a place where the hotel does the thinking for them, offer fantastic spaces for them to relax, meet like-minded people and experience local cultures.

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

Yes we will initiate a lot of CSR activities in future. Now since we have our own architect, we want to ensure that the hotels speak for the brand itself this is to ensure brand consistencies in terms of services / design. We would also like to explore possibilities for joint ventures and acquisitions and the only way to grow is to grow TOGETHER. We feel it is an open ground and we all should come together to help our fellow colleagues.

In this present COVID scenario, where people are scared to travel again, how is your company planning to address the trust and confidence issues amongst the consumers?

We have clearly listed down measures which we have taken in our hotels and this has gone to all our customers as newsletters – all our testimonials have been shared with our customers. Our top priority is ensuring that our team and staff feels safe and we are conducting a lot of sessions with team members who essentially are the front line warriors

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

We are on an expansion spree and would like to invite all standalone hotel owners to come work with us and to ensure they come out of this situation sooner than later.

Anuj Chaurasia: Hotels are trying to find alternative ways to monetize their inventory



Anuj Chaurasia, Corporate General Manager, Essentia Hotels
a unit of Averina Hotels Pvt Ltd

Born and raised in Delhi, Anuj Chaurasia, Corporate General Manager, Essentia Hotels – a unit of Averina Hotels Pvt Ltd, moved to Kolkata for doing hotel management from the Institute of Advanced Management and since then, has been enjoying an exciting journey filled with multiple challenges, learning under various professionals whom he looks up to as his mentors and gaining diverse experience in various cities and hotel brands. Here is more on his journey, featured exclusively in BOTT

Priyanka Saxena Ray

What was your first job (in which hotel and at what profile)?

I started my career as a Management Trainee in Housekeeping with "the Leela Hotels". I worked with them for two years. It was great that at the initial point of my career, I got an opportunity to work with them as during that time "The Leela" was considered to be the epitome of luxury hospitality in India.

How did you climb up the ladder? How many hotels have you worked with and in what capacities?

I consider myself lucky to have been mentored by some excellent leaders in the industry wherever I worked, and I have backed that up with a lot of hard work overtime. I believe there is not shortcut to hard work. In hindsight I think I was there at the right time with the right set of people and the work environment allowed me to grow. This growth mindset supported by a good team and guided by great mentors and the working opportunity with some of the best brands in the market, prepared me adequately to not only be a good housekeeper but also an efficient business manager.

After a stint as an HK executive

at the Leela, I joined Lemon Tree hotels, which turned out to be a great decision for my career. At Lemon Tree, I learned a lot about pre-opening and operations as I worked at the pre-opening of multiple Lemon Tree hotels in Bangalore, Hyderabad, and renovation in Goa.

I then spent some time at the Taj group, where I worked at the Taj Ambassador and the Taj Holiday Village. Since my time at the Taj, I have further worked as an Executive Housekeeper in the Maldives and then worked with an upscale hotel project in Varanasi as an advisor to the businesses Managing Director and did pre-opening and execution of the complete hotel project.

After this I joined an entrepreneurial spirit driven start-up in Spree Hotels, run by Mr. Keshav Baljee of the Royal Orchid group. At Spree, I learned a lot about the commercial side of the management model as I oversaw not only operations for 600 rooms across 12 hotels but was also involved in financial reviews, contract negotiation, development, and sales and marketing efforts.

After Spree, I moved to Treebo Hotels a Head Operations for Managed



Business where I managed 550 rooms across 18 hotels before finally joining Essentia Hotels a subsidiary of the Averina Group, which owns and operates Holiday Inn hotel Goa and fisherman wharf restaurants apart from Essentia where I currently serve as Corporate GM for Essentia.

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

I think there were many challenges along the way and every day presented some new challenges, the key somehow I feel is in the approach or personal attitude as to how you rather choose to respond rather than react.

How long have you been attached to the current Hotel (or chain)? How has your experience with the property be?

I have just completed 1 year with Essentia Hotels and the experience has been great. Before the pandemic we were working on aggressive growth plans. We have signed a 151-room hotel in Ghaziabad, 71 rooms in Chennai OMR, 50 rooms in Pune Hinjewadi, 108 in Indore and another 120 rooms in Udaipur all these are mid-scale hotels. We plan to go live with our Ghaziabad hotel towards September and rest all are next year onwards.

What Special changes would you now be implementing considering the pandemic? How severely has your business been affected?

It has strained the industry; many hotels are running dangerously short of working capital with no demand on the horizon. Hotels are trying to find alternative ways to monetize their inventory or risk bankruptcy in the coming months. The closure of hotels is leading to mass layoffs in the short term creating significant unemployment. However, I remain optimistic that in the long run, hotels will bounce back as they have done in the past.



After Covid-19 hotels will need to fundamentally alter the way they function, with much leaner staffing, higher operational efficiency, tighter control on costs, and a focus on health and hygiene as many guests will have apprehension about cleanliness and safety. So, while Covid-19 will cause short term challenges, in the long run, it presents the industry an opportunity to fundamentally change the way it functions.

At Essentia we have been adapting to all the new changes, we have been preparing to open our Ghaziabad hotel by September in a limited way. We are working on QR code menus, we are about to launch our new SOPs as per the guidelines, etc, few offerings have been altered as per the crisis and lots more is currently work in progress.

In this present COVID scenario, where people are scared to travel again, how is your company planning to address the trust and confidence issues amongst the consumers?

We believe demand would take time to come but it is important to build confidence with our guests that while they stay at a hotel they should not only feel safe and secure, but are actually safe and secure. To ensure the same we are following all laid down norms such as –

Staff wearing safety gears, such as, mask gloves and practicing not social but physical distancing, as we believe that our industry is such a social industry, meaning people centric and we can still try to flatten the curve by remaining physically distant as per global safety guidelines but still remain social by leveraging modern communication tools and giving the non-touch version of human touch to our guests

- All staff screened for temperature daily
- All luggage disinfected on arrival and departure
- Disinfection at property regularly
- Sanitizers being installed
- Oximeters available at reception
- IRD trays getting sanitized after every order etc.
- And many more...

While we do follow the all laid down standards and try to build confidence, the major change in pattern would only happen once the Covid-19 curve becomes flat or starts dropping or with the launch of vaccine. Till that time, we all would have to manage with keeping cost low and work with innovative methods to boost revenue like laundry service, Covid related business, food delivery or co-working spaces, etc.

Naresh Rawal: Fresh initiatives are crucial to boost consumers' confidence

He has been a known name in the Cruise Industry in India for close to two decades now and his knowledge and understanding of the same is a testimony of his passion for this sector of tourism, which too, like all others, is bearing the brunt of the pandemic. However, Naresh Rawal, Vice President – Sales (India & South Asia), Genting Cruise Lines, is an optimist who firmly believes that the global pandemic has brought about a sea of change in the cruise industry landscape and new methods of operation will now be put in place. In an exclusive chat with BOTT India, here is all you need to know on the future of Cruise Travel.



Naresh Rawal,
Vice President
Sales (India & South Asia)
Genting Cruise Lines

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Please share with us a brief introduction about your background - how did you get into the field of travel? Was it a conscious choice or an accidental entry?

As a child my father served in the Indian Army and we had the chance to travel and meet new people across India as per his postings. The exposure of meeting new people and traveling had gradually shape my interest in the hospitality and travel industry.

I started my early career in the F&B and hospitality service but I was very fortunate to be able to be part of the travel industry, especially in the cruise sector. I can say to this very day that the experience in the cruise industry has been truly unique from witnessing beautiful cruise ships come to life to making holiday dreams come true together with our valued travel partners.

What was your first Job (in which company and at what profile)?

I completed my course in Hotel Management at the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology

and Applied Nutrition, Mumbai in 1994 and got my first job in the F&B service at the Hotel Taj Mahal in Mumbai, which is part of the Taj Group of Hotels.

How did you climb up the ladder? How many companies have you worked with and in what capacities?

With my early foundation in the F&B sector, I had the opportunity to move forward and be part a leading and international fast food chain like McDonalds. The chain had just started entering the Indian market and through first-hand experience, I had gained valuable insights on how brands are established and marketed as I was a part of the first McDonalds restaurant opening in New Delhi. I was with McDonalds for 5 years and went through a very structured program of Management development and training through a series of management courses offered by the organization, the last one being an Advanced Operations course conducted by the Hamburger University in Sydney, Australia. Subsequently, I continued my career in a similar path with Domino's Pizza

in Mumbai for over 2 years. However, moving back to Mumbai was a brand new turning point in my career as I had the opportunity to join Star Cruises as the Sr. Marketing Manager in 2003, which is now part of the Genting Cruise Lines division. Personally, it was one of the best decisions I made to venture into a totally different and exciting new sector. I have grown with the company over the last 17 years from a single brand like Star Cruises to three new amazing brands, including Dream Cruises and Crystal. This has allowed me to take on a wider portfolio over the years from marketing to sales to promoting three brands and running five offices in India to date.

How long have you been attached with the current project? How has your experience with them been?

I have been with Genting Cruise Lines, formerly known as Star Cruises for over 17 years. The journey has been exceptional as I had opportunities to harness my skills in business and brand development for 3 very distinct brands, including the launching of a brand like Dream Cruises, which is the very first home grown Asian brand for the premium and luxury market.

What special changes would you now be implementing in light of the pandemic? How severely has your business been affected?

The global pandemic has had an adverse impact on businesses globally, including the cruise sector. Cruise companies alike worldwide are going through a challenging period with operations and businesses affected. The global pandemic has brought about a sea of change in the cruise industry landscape and we can no longer operate the way we use to. Consumers' mind set, requirements and expectations have evolved when it comes to leisure and travel with focus on health and well-being. As such, Genting Cruise Lines has been at the forefront to enhance and introduce safety and preventive measures that will become the new norm for our fleet and we hope for the industry too.

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

During Genting Cruise Lines' hiatus period we have reviewed and bolstered our overall prevention and response plan for the eventual recommencement of its fleet to

ensure the safest environment for our guests and crew.

These include stringent health screening processes and protocols such as mandatory temperature screening and pre-boarding health declarations for embarkation and disembarkation; thorough and higher frequency sanitization, disinfection and enhanced hygiene procedures for guest cabins and public areas; online check-in and boarding at designated times to minimize congestion and on board venues operating at reduced capacity. Self-service at F&B buffet restaurants will also be suspended with all food and beverages served by crew wearing face masks and gloves as added precautionary measures.

We are also working closely with various local authorities and also key international bodies, including Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) to ensure the highest standards of safety and preventive measures are adopted. In addition, we are also proud to announce that Explorer Dream under Dream Cruises is the first cruise ship in the industry to receive the Certification in Infection Prevention for the Maritime industry (CIP-M) from the world's leading classification society, DNV GL. The CIP-M is customised for maritime and based on DNV GL's stringent healthcare foundation and expertise in infection risk management, used in the accreditation and certification of more than 630 hospitals worldwide.

In this present COVID scenario, where people are scared to travel again, how is your company planning to address the trust and confidence issues amongst the consumers?

We understand that recent publicity focusing on cruises may deter new cruisers from embarking on their maiden cruise voyage. The landscape has evolved and fresh initiatives are crucial to boost consumers' confidence once again.

Educating the public is key and providing a better understanding of the high levels of preventive measures and sanitation standards on board cruise ships will contribute to regaining customers' confidence.

At Genting Cruise Lines, we will continue to inform and educate trade partners and consumers' on our enhanced preventive measures and facilities. These include our ship designs that enable 100% external fresh air to be filtered and supplied to the cabins and on board public areas – ensuring a constant and healthy flow of fresh air with no recirculation within the ship – an important feature on our cruise ships. Other enhancement measures include mandatory temperature screening and pre-boarding health declarations for embarkation / disembarkation, higher frequency and increased levels of sanitization and disinfection in cabins. Public areas were previously sanitized once daily and are now sanitized 2 - 4 times daily with hospital grade disinfectants. Selected on-board venues will be operating at reduced capacity to provide ample space for safe distancing between guests.



Deepak Narula: We must focus on selling all travel related products

GRNconnect.com, an online B2B hotel booking portal, is widely successful, offering facilities to book transfers and activities tours to over 400K hotels and 200K apartments across the globe. BOTT is happy to share excerpts from an exclusive chat with Mr. Deepak Narula, Managing Director, GRNconnect, who has had to make some tough choices during the COVID crisis and yet he remains optimistic for the future.

The parent company of GRNconnect.com – Aman Travels Limited, has been in existence since 1993 and is dynamic and innovative in its approach as a service provider and wish to create a niche for itself in the B2B segment. GRNconnect being the flagship product has over 30K registered agents located in 108 countries across the globe & is expanding rapidly. Today as one of the largest aggregators, GRNconnect's core competence lies in consolidating global hotel inventory and distributing it to the partner members through its portal equipped with state of the art technology.

When was GRNConnect floated and how has the growth graph been since then?

GRN was launched in 2012 and it has been growing steadily ever since.

Do you feel the purpose with which the company was fulfilled has been achieved over the years?

Yes, GRN has proved to be a very useful tool for the travel agents across the Globe. We have been able to add value in travel agent's day to day working.

How was the year 2019 in terms of business for GRNconnect?

It was a good year as we were able to roll out a new version of GRN and it

was very well accepted and in terms of sales too the year was good.

How severely has the business been affected because of COVID19?

The business has been severely damaged because of Covid-19 and it will take long time before we reach back to pre-Covid levels.

Did you had to let go of some of your staff or undertake measures such as pay cuts, etc.?

Unfortunately we had to let go of some staff and some pay cut too.

As the world slowly opens, has there been some kind of business in the last few weeks?

Yes there has been movement in few global markets.

When, in your opinion, will things go back to being what they were before COVID?

My opinion is that business will start improving towards the end of this year and by next summer season, it should be close to normal.

How are you dealing with the demands of "new normal" hotel bookings?

We are designating hotels as Safe2Stay in our portal as more and more chains are accepting the new standards of hygiene.



Deepak Narula,
Managing Director,
GRNconnect

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

2020 has been one of the toughest years for travel and tourism industry. We, at GRN have felt the impact that Covid-19 has brought upon the industry and we have been amazed at the support of our partners and suppliers in their effort to assist us in getting through this period. We would like to thank all of them and appreciate their support. It is my advice to all my friends in the travel trade that this shall pass too and there is a light at the end of the tunnel and we must all strive to become a total travel management company selling all travel related products rather than specializing in one segment of the trade.

5 Golden Tips for young and budding Travel Sector Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship must be more exciting than roller coaster ride, as it is filled with highs and lows. The business leaders can tell you that as a young and budding entrepreneur especially for the travel and tourism sector, you'll have to work longer hours at a small margin along with the threat of instability when a pandemic situation arises. Here are five golden tips for travel sector entrepreneurs to develop the winning mindset – shared by Vinod Tiwari.

1 Be passionate and love what you do

If you don't love it, don't do it just for the sake of starting a business to make money. As what you hate working cannot be carried over for a longer time, and chances are you will give up, sooner or later. Whereas if you love the travel industry, working hard will not feel like working anymore, rather you will enjoy it.

Steve Jobs noted that the only way to be satisfied in your life is to do work that you truly believe in. Believe in your instincts. The best thing about starting at your own is you can lead it your way.

2 Don't underestimate the power of Mentor

When you learn from your own mistakes, you are smart. When you learn from other's mistakes, you are wise. But when you don't learn at all, you are otherwise. Many budding entrepreneurs point to mistakes as being their best teacher.

Being successful in a stipulated time often means learning from those leaders who have already achieved success. Having a mentor is a blessing to an entrepreneur. You really cannot see the way a mentor can see you and your business. If you haven't yet found your business guru, it must be a top priority to search one.

3 Travellers are paying to collect memories

Many entrepreneurs want to start businesses for the sake of building it and making money out of it. There's

nothing wrong with it, but your focus should be on solving their problem and providing solutions and not selling products. In the travel industry, people want to buy and collect memories, not air ticket/ hotel reservations.

Bill Gates once said that your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning. Did you ever try to ask your unhappy customer that where are the holes existing in your service? If not, you must ask them individually, and then listen to them carefully.

4 Challenge yourself, every single day

Don't view your challenges as hurdles on your success path, rather embrace all challenges, as a learning opportunity. Taking unnecessary risks could be stupidity, but taking calculated risk is required. If you're not willing to take risks, swiftly you'll be moved out the race.

Jeff Bezos said it helped to know that he wouldn't regret failure, but he would regret not trying. Don't stop trying new ventures, new ideas, new possibilities with a 100% positive approach, because either you learn or you earn from it. Surely, you will come across a lot of hurdles, but those are stumbling blocks.

5 Let your actions speak louder than words

Your words must not contradict your actions there must be sync to what you say, what you think, and what you do. You need to go out of your comfort zone and put some hard actions to your dream strategy. Working hard is



Mr. Vinod Tiwari,
Entrepreneurship Consultant,
Bestseller Author,
International Speaker
and Mentor of Change for
Niti Aayog Think Tank for
Gujarat

very good, but smart working is the need of the hour.

Walt Disney once said that the easiest way to get started is to quit talking and start doing. That's true for your travel industry, as well. You will also agree that the world is full of great ideas, but success only comes to those who put action into it.

Your goal must not be to become something, but of doing something, great.

(Quote from the book – From Dreaming to Achieving, in LIFE – Secret 2/Page 61)

It could lead you to frustration if you will not become what you want to be, but if you make a goal of doing something great, you will always have a sense of fulfilment and achievement. Remember, every successful entrepreneur was a budding and struggling entrepreneur once, the same as you. Keep the above-mentioned 5 tips in your mind to make your success path to the top.

Naveen Manchanda: I will ensure that we rise up to meet the challenges facing us

He is, undoubtedly, one of the most 'influential' travel trade expert on social media, who engages frequently with his friends, colleagues and followers. Lockdown handed a tough time to everyone but, being the visionary that he is, Naveen Manchanda, Founder and CEO, Tour Passion, decided to turn the adversity to his advantage and floated one of the most unique online trade forums with a difference – IATTE (Indian Association of Travel Trade Experts). In his first ever interaction as President IATTE, here is all you would like to know on this latest addition to the tourism sector.



**Naveen Manchanda,
Founder and CEO
Tour Passion**

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Congratulations on your new venture. How did the idea of IATTE come about?

Ever since last year, I have been feeling that there is not a single forum, which brings all tourism players together on a common platform. When Corona hit us, I then realised that this is the right time to unite the different verticals of the travel trade. To start with, I shared this idea with Ms. Veena Robinson who not only identified with the cause but also wanted to take it forward to a logical conclusion. I then took this idea to Mr. Subhash Verma, who being the veteran of the trade with more than 45 year of experiences, not only agreed but also gracefully accepted to be our national advisor. Following this, we started adding like-minded people to our cause and IATTE was formed.

What makes IATTE different from other trade associations?

We are different because we are not an association. We are an online Trade forum which brings different sections of the tourism industry together

What is the mission and vision of IATTE? Don't you feel the industry is already full of many associations and yet remain unheard to those who matter?

The Vision of IATTE is to unite the Indian Tourism Industry. The mission of IATTE can be summarised in three words – Empower, Connect and Sustain. I agree that the industry has many associations, but we are not an association but a forum which seeks to fill in the gaps and bring the Travel Trade together by promoting responsible and sustainable tourism.

Please do share with us the broad organizational structure of your association?

We have a national core committee with seven members and different sub committees. The total number of committee Members as of now is 20.

What special do you - Mr. Manchanda - as President - bring to IATTE?

With my experience in the travel sector, I seek to plug the loopholes in this industry and to stand in front of the fraternity rather than at the back. I will ensure that we rise up to meet the challenges facing us and make way where there were none.

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

It took us 91 meetings with our committee members before IATTE could be launched. All meetings that happened were virtual – not even a single physical meeting took place. We decided to convert this adversity into an opportunity.

Spain & Slovakia agree for issuing 'Gratis Visa' following OTOAI's request

OTOAI feels delighted in informing the travel community that Embassies of Spain as well as Slovakia have agreed to issue 'Gratis Visa' to all the people who were issued a visa earlier this year but could not undertake travel in the last few months because of COVID scare. This news comes in light of a letter sent out by OTOAI to European Embassies in India, requesting them to issue Gratis Visas to all those travellers who despite having received valid travel visa this year could not undertake the planned holiday.

"As Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to India I have the power to grant visa fee waiver for any relevant case. Applicants, who could not travel on their Schengen visas to Slovakia, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, can apply for this visa fee waiver individually at the time of the submission of their



TEAM OTOAI

new application. This possibility covers not only tourists, but all the Schengen visa categories. As we have relatively small numbers of tourist applications and since we are keen on promoting travel destinations in Slovakia, my visa section will assist the tourists travelling to Slovakia in this matter once they reapplied for Schengen visa," shared H.E. Mr. Ivan Lancaric – Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to India.

The Embassy of Spain too was forthcoming to the request and responded positively. "Please be informed that the Embassy of Spain will reissue the visa without any cost. The petition for the same should be routed through BLS only for which the applicant will be asked to pay the service tax to BLS," said the official statement from the Embassy.



Meanwhile, **Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI** is pleased with this development and remains hopeful that in times to come, more European Embassies agree to issuing Gratis Visa. "We understand that it will take some time for outbound travel to pick up from India but moves such as these will help in building people's confidence for international travel while also offering some relief to their pocket. At OTOAI, we will continue our correspondence with the various embassies and are hopeful of receiving a few more positive replies in the near future. This is the time to show solidarity so that together we can get travel and tourism back on its feet.



Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI

Let us explore the **UNDISCOVERED** treasures of India

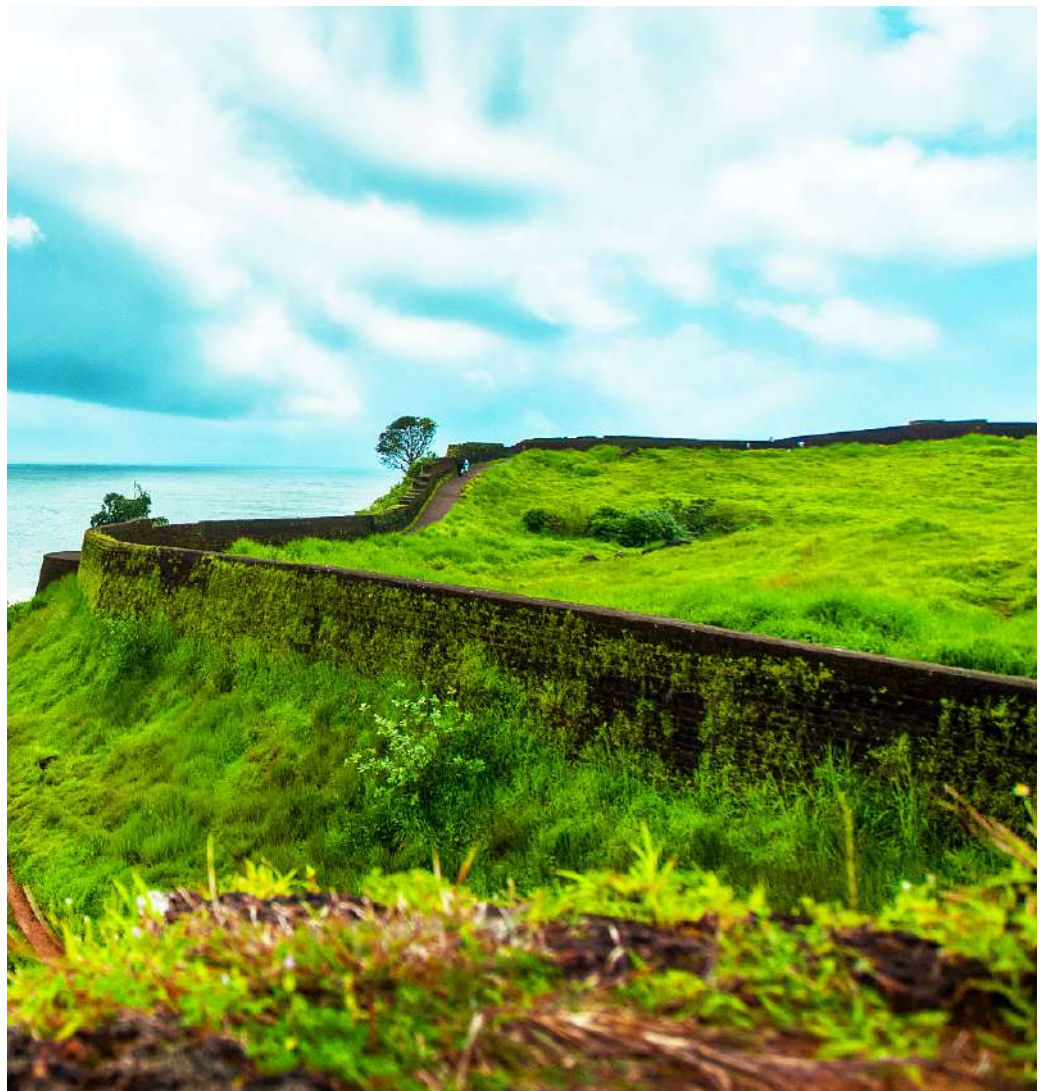
Priyanka Saxena Ray

BEKAL | KERALA

This is the hidden gem of South India, which has all the ingredients in place that makes any destination popular on the international tourist map. The name Bekal has travelled down from Baliakulam, meaning big palace, to Bekulam and then finally settling to what we call it today. The place is believed to have once been a seat of power of a big palace, built as a giant keyhole shaped fort, remains of which are a popular tourist attraction called the Bekal Fort.

Located on the shoreline of Pallikkara village of Kasaragod, Bekal, under the sovereignty of Kolathanadu became an important maritime centre and an important port town of Thulunadu. Over the years, the place kept attracting many rulers who kept successively attacking and taking control of the region. The economic importance of the port

The tourism sector in the country is currently struggling not for growth but mere survival. Even as we enter Unlock3.0, the apprehension and fear in people in stopping them to make any travel plans. Also, given the fact that international flights has remained suspended for last few months and doesn't seem likely to take off anytime soon and India being the country with highest number of COVID infections – both outbound and inbound tourism will take a long time to get back on its feet. In the light of all these circumstances, the only sector that will help sail tourism industry out of the crisis is Domestic Tourism. So to help you plan your holidays better and also assist those around you with some 'less-discovered' spots in India, BOTT brings to you an overview of some destinations that are definitely worth exploring.



town prompted the Jeheri Nayak dynasty to fortify Bekal.

A quaint and serene village, Bekal is a land which has a storied past – tales of royalty and vigour, remains of which can still be felt and seen at the popular Bekal Fort. A popular attraction in the region is its beautiful shoreline, which offers a perfect sun-kissed beach ideal for couples to take a walk or for kids to build a sand castle along the shore or for a loner to simply sit back and bask in the beauty of a sunrise or a sunset.

The majestic hills surrounding the area adds more beauty and regality to the place that you would have ever hoped for. The meandering rivers along with rich cultural traditions gives the town of Bekal a special place on the tourist map. The fact that it is not frequented by tourists in large numbers has only helped in retaining the erstwhile beauty and significance of a bygone era, which can best be experienced anytime of the year.

HEMIS | JAMMU & KASHMIR

There are no dearth of touristy places in Jammu and Kashmir, each prettier than the other. The charm, the charisma and the lure of the place, the scenic beauty along with a pleasant climate makes the valley a popular tourist destination all through the year. Amongst its many treasures, Hemis deserves a special mention and a visit next time you make a plan to visit the state.

Hemis is popular tourist attraction given the number of options that it provides to its visitors. The primary attraction to the region is the Hemis Gompa, which is located 40 km south-east of Leh on the west bank of the Indus River. The Monastery, situated on top of a green hill is surrounded by breath-taking mountains, offering a captivating view with its beauty and serenity. The Hemis



monastery was built in 1630 and it belongs to the red sect, Brokpa.

One can also visit the Hemis National Park, which is popularly known as the Snow Leopard capital of India and is home to a variety of other animals such as langurs, wolves, marmots, deers, red foxes etc. The park, infact, has been identified as a Snow Leopard reserve under a project launched by the Central Government aimed at conserving the species, its prey base and its fragile mountainous home. Another attraction to the region is its annual festival, which is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava. The festival is held for two days in the months of June-July, enlivening the courtyard of the monastery. The festival of dances, where good triumphs over evil in a colourful pageant, is also the annual 'bazaar' where Ladakhis from remote areas buy and sell wares. Besides its other attractions, Hemis is also popular for activities such as trekking, where one can make the most of the royal, widespread and pristine scenic surroundings.

COONOOR | KARNATAKA

In the polluted cacophony of everyday living, where the desire to see star-lit skies and breathe in fresh air has become a desire for many, it is refreshing to have a hill pot closer to the populous city, offering a perfect breakaway option for many. Coonoor is located at a distance of 18 km from Ooty, 71 km from Coimbatore and 32 km from Mettupalayam and is a popular choice for the youth of not just South India (primarily Bengaluru) but also those across the country.

Located at an altitude of 6,000 feet above the sea level, Coonoor is the second largest hill station nestled in the Nilgiri Hills and can be coupled along with Ooty if time permits you to visit two hill stations. Known as the lungs of the South, the greens spread across the region can help detox any



person who is tired of the city traffic, pollution and mundane routine. The wide-spread lush Tea Gardens not just make for an amazing trip but also offers enriching flavour to carry back home. Sim Park – a well-maintained botanical garden spread over 12 hectares houses many unknown and unheard varieties of plants. In addition to this, Dolphins Nose, St. Catherine Falls and Law's Falls are some of the popular places to see in the region. For the adventurous lot, the Trekking Trails to Lamb's Rock, which is 9 km from Coonoor is an experience worth undertaking. The Lam's Rock overlooks the Coimbatore plains and offers splendid views of the tea and coffee plantations. Bird watching is a popular activity enjoyed by the locals and visitors alike in Coonoor. The region houses unique variety of birds such as thrushes, babblers, larks, cuckoos, robins, vultures, eagles and song birds. A major fruit and vegetable festival is held in the month of May at the Sim's Park which draws a major crowd. The tea and tourism festival is another important festival of Coonoor held in the month of January. The festival attracts tea specialists from all over the world.

MANDU | MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh, the heart of India, is brimming with touristy offerings, so much so that a vacationer is truly spoilt for choice. Perhaps, this is why some of its most prized jewels are lost in the bouquet of options and not given their due prominence, despite having all the ingredients of a popular tourist attraction. One such place is Mandu, which is now slowly gaining prominence on the tourism map of MP.

Mandu or Mandavgad is a ruined city, which is celebrated for its fine architecture, created during Malwa period. Located in the Dhar district of Western Madhya Pradesh, Central India, Mandu



provides various impressive views of lakes, waterfalls, and incredible monuments, to lure tourists to visit the region. The region is an epitome of architectural excellence that our ancestors seemed to have achieved. This city is testament to the unconditional love between Prince Baz Bahadur and Rani Roopmati. Mandu also boasts of the oldest erected monument of India.

The city of Mandu is adorned with spell-binding Afghan architecture surrounded by baobab trees, native to Africa. The grand palaces are still alive with royal romance while the gateways (darwazas) speak of a history of imperial conquests. A walk through Mandu will leave you awe-struck, the way you used to be listening to stories from grandparents.

Floating over its own reflection, the Jahaz Mahal in Mandu looks like a ship that's about to sail. However, for centuries, this ship, made of stone and mortar never did. Instead, it stood floating over the twin lakes, bearing a silent witness to Mandu's long, rich and varied history.

There are several places to visit in Mandu, such as, palaces, mosques, Jain temples of the 14th century and other buildings and the oldest mosque here dates from 1405. The finest of them all is Jama Masjid, which is a unique piece of Pashtun architecture. Some of the buildings in this region are recognised by UNESCO World Heritage Site, including Rupmati's Pavilion, which is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Mandu.

GOKARNA | KARNATAKA

If a quaint beach holiday is what you are looking for, away from the bustling crowds and cacophony of city populous, Gokarna – the ancient temple town located in the Uttara Kannada district of



Karnataka is the ideal destination for you. Often rated as the favourite beach destination by many enthused travellers, the peaceful town of Gokarna, which means 'Cow's Ear in Sanskrit, is a perfect hideaway, nestled at a safe distance from the maddening city.

The town of Gokarna lies between the rivers Gangavali and Agnashini and is situated along the Karwar coast by the Arabian Sea. Gokarna also finds mention in the Shrimad Bhagawat Purana. This temple town is also called the Kashi of the South and has been attracting numerous pilgrims for hundreds of years. Gokarna is also an important centre of Sanskrit learning and houses Bhandikeri Math and Toggu Math. Many Hindus perform the last rites of their loved ones here.

Given its pristine beaches and mythological significance, this trend has divided Gokarna into two parts, one that is for the religious devotee who comes to seek blessings of Shiva, and the other of the carefree tourist looking for some peace and quiet in nature's lap. Owing to its growing popularity, several hotels and restaurants have come up in Gokarna. Most accommodation is in thatched bamboo huts along the town's several stretches of blissful coast. The temple town is now an emerging beach destination that offers something to different types of tourists with its natural beauty and its history steeped in mythology.

So if a beach holiday has been on your mind for some time but you have been postponing it because of crowded spaces, high-priced resorts and bustling shorelines, visit Gokarna to enjoy an ideal beach vacation. Though it is getting popular among the beach lovers, the town somewhere still falls in the category of lesser known holiday spots in India.



The 'Incredible' Taglines of Indian States & UTs showcase the true potential of the country



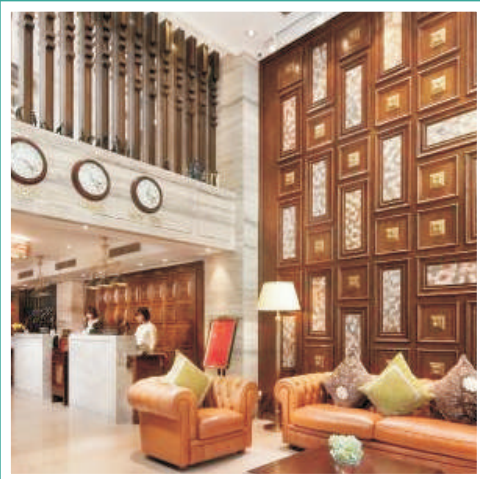
U.T./States without 1 particular taglines and/or in the process of finalising it. The same shall be updated upon information.

Disclaimer: Map not to scale; The India Map has been adapted from India Government Website. All information is derived from public domain including states & their border areas and taglines for the purpose to promote tourism in India. For any changes and updation, please write to us: info@bottindia.com

There have been numerous ‘webinars’ and ‘discussions’ on how tourism has been the worst affected sector in this pandemic and how it will take a long time to recover. Several people in the industry have lost their jobs, surrendered their office spaces, not paid salaries to staff and are struggling to make ends meet. Yet, resilient as we are, the hope to bounce back remains strong in each of us and the only boat on which everyone seems to be clamouring upon in Domestic Tourism. In the light of restricted air travel and norms of social distancing, holidays will be completely redefined to travelling to places that are accessible by road, have large expanses (read hotels & resorts) and safety parameters duly followed.

There is no dearth of touristy pleasures that India as a destination has to offer – from sights that are proof of one of the oldest civilizations to temples and caves that are epitome of architectural marvels – waterfalls, wildlife, monuments – we have it all and as an industry, we have to put enough efforts in marketing them to the world. This is the time, the perfect phase when India can take its Domestic Tourist travel many notches up provided the numerous states and their tourism departments come forward and put their best foot forward. ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ looks good on posters and campaigns but will not kick-start effectively until the respective states leave no stone unturned in highlighting what a traveller must come to “see and experience” in their state. The Ministry of Tourism’s effort in this direction is worth a mention here for it truly showcases the hidden potential of our country.

In an effort to promote Indian Tourism domestically, BOTT has compiled the ‘Incredible’ Tagline India Map in order to showcase the immense tourism potential of India to one and all. With Prime Minister and Tourism Minister focussing on domestic tourism in a big way, if India has to deliver and take jobs to the poorest parts of the country to enable the economic transformation at the community level, there is no engine better equipped than tourism to deliver on the growth. India can and should leverage the domestic tourism equally and strongly to revive Indian travel and tourism industry from the huge impact it has been facing due to Covid-19 pandemic.



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**Get in touch : +91 73036 78412
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