

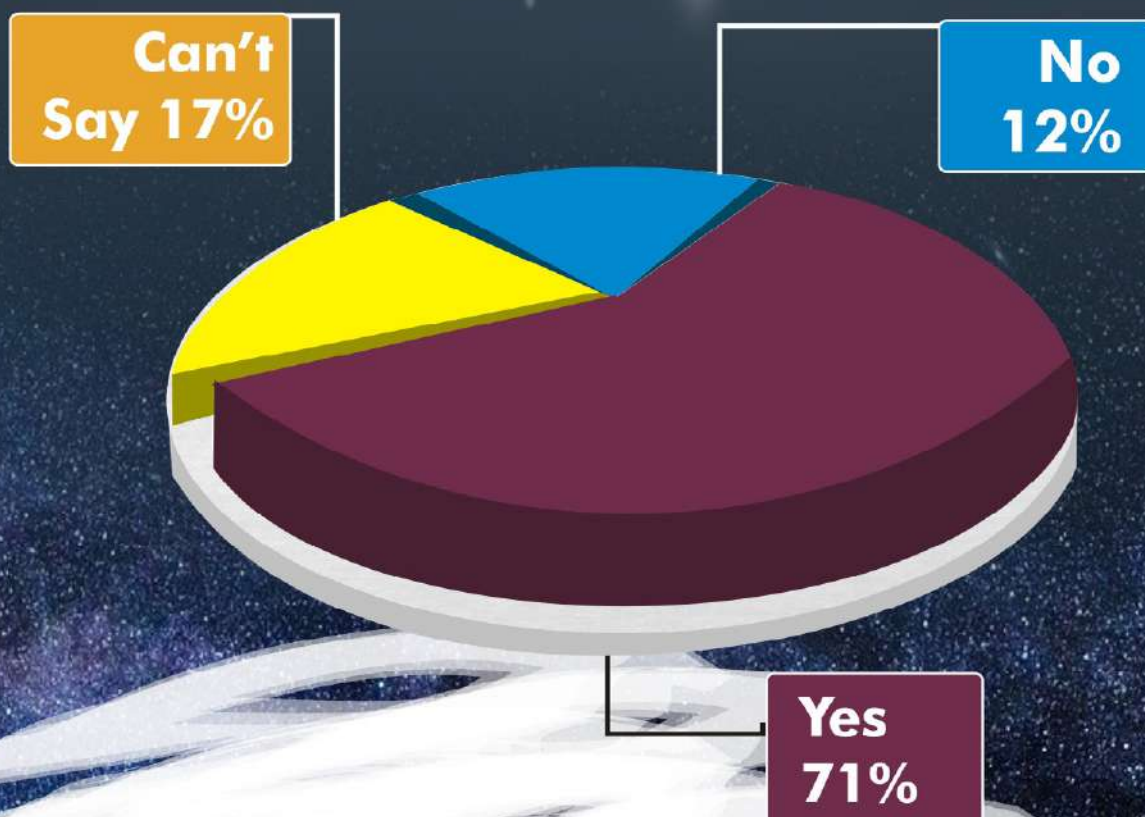
BOTT

Business of Travel Trade

TOURISM | MICE | HOSPITALITY | AVIATION | LIFESTYLE
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71% Millennials prefer 'Incredible India'

With international travel restrictions continuing,
will you explore 'Incredible India' in the next 6 months?



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends,



T

he COVID crisis continues to reign, though slowing its intensity in India. Future is uncertain for sure but the travel industry is coming together to find ways and means to come out of this crisis. Each vertical of our tourism industry is under deep stress - travel agents, hotels, tour operators, tourist transporters, restaurants, guides, destinations ...the list is endless. The RBI risk survey, the Income tax & GST collections data, the GDP data, findings of BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker, all have repeatedly highlighted our industry's plight. The situation is grim and the only ray of hope that appears on the horizon is Domestic Tourism.

India's domestic tourism market is currently estimated to be the second largest in the world by size next to China which is estimated at double our size. In the post COVID period, the travel sector should collectively focus to double India's share of domestic tourism to almost 4 billion domestic tourism visits in the first 5 years post normal and then further increase it again to 8 billion domestic tourism visits in the next five years post that. This will rightfully put Indian tourism domestic tourism market as a global leader. I know these figures sound aspirational but this is the time to think big and plan accordingly.

Helping you get an overview of what's the latest happening in the industry, BOTT October -November Issue yet again features some insightful interviews of a variety of people from a broad spectrum of verticals. The debate regarding the draft document of the New Tourism Policy has also been addressed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for increasing the visits and reach on its digital platform. We are, undoubtedly, one of the strongest digital medias in the travel trade sector today and we will continue to work hard to retain this position.

Your feedback, criticism and appreciation is most looked forward to.

Happy Reading

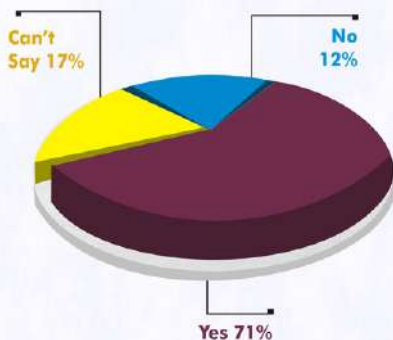
at priyanka@bottindia.com

Priyanka Saxena Ray

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71% millennials are willing to explore and travel within India in the next six months due to various international travel restrictions. Read more findings.

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An industry veteran and travel expert, Sarab Jit Singh, MD, KTC, after going through draft National Tourism Policy circulated by Ministry of Tourism, happened to discuss the same with one of his esteemed colleague and here is what they had to share – their suggestions.



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Sumant Jaidka, VP – Operations shares details on Trippin' with Lemon Tree, Rest Assured and House Rules initiatives of the company.

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The Board & the Presidents of the 10 FAITH Associations held a national press conference to address the theme for the year and share their views on the 'survival' and 'revival' plan for the future. Read on to know what their suggestions were –

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ICPB is holding its flagship event, the 13th Conventions India Conclave (CIC) – as a hybrid event with the theme – 'Physical & Digital Meetings



India For You

Following the norms of new normal and social distancing, the millennials, who are itching to take a break from the whole 'work from home' scenario will surely plan a holiday in the coming months. So how about exploring something less explored? BOTT shares an overview of few 'lesser known' destinations in India.

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ETAA's physical event at Pride Plaza Aerocity sparks positivity in the industry

ETAA in association with Pride Hotels hosted its North India members for this amazing event called 'The Comeback'. The event took a kick start with a dose of positivity from Sangeeta Manocha, Chairperson - ETAA North India, who during her opening remarks, shared that this is the time to comeback as the Travel Industry has started taking baby steps. Saurabh Tuteja, General Secretary was full of high energy and added that travel industry has gone through many ups and downs from time to time and will



surely bounce back. Dinesh Kumar, Treasurer emphasized that keeping patience is the need of an hour. Praveen Ghai, Joint Secretary is very hopeful that domestic tourism has a golden time ahead and international will follow. Punit Bhasin, Joint Secretary added that this is the time, when we need to forget the past and be more innovative in creating the golden time ahead. Arush Mittal, Head-Alliance emphasized members that helping and supporting each other will be the key to success. Gaurav Arora, Head – Events added that soon industry will move to the normal state, MICE will surely pick up as people want to move out of their stress zone. Jagat Mehta, President – ETAA & Dharmesh Advani, General Secretary also shared their thoughts with the members by a video message.

A New High! Nearly 1.39 crore domestic fliers have flown since May 25, 2020

All is not as gloomy as it seems. In the recent stats shared by the honourable Minister for Civil Aviation, Government of India, a total of 1581 flight departures have taken place in last 148 days. With 3168 total flight movements, airports across the country witnessed 3,63,757 total footfalls including 1,80,838 domestic passengers as on October 18, 2020. Nearly 1.39 crore domestic fliers have flown since May 25, 2020. The figures depict a steady growth trajectory. "No citizen will be left behind. We are reaching out to all the stranded and distressed Indians around the world. More than 2.2 million people have been repatriated and flown out so far. Vande Bharat Mission continues..." shared the honourable Minister.



Six travel agents undertook 18,000 km road trip to promote Domestic Tourism

In this corona crisis when international tourism is set aloof, 6 participants (four from Surat, one from Mumbai and one from Ahmedabad), with the message of VOCAL FOR LOCAL and promotion of domestic tourism, have begun a road trip on September 18, 2020 from Surat. This trip will be spanned over a period of 36 days covering 18,000 Km. Reaching New Delhi on September 22, 2020, they were welcomed by Mr. P. P. Khanna, President, ADTOI; Ms. Geeta Maheshwari, President, IAHRC; Praveen Ghai, Joint Secretary, ETAA and many other members from the associations as well as the travel trade. The idea was to motivate people to begin domestic travel by revealing how all hotels and destinations are COVID ready and looking forward to welcome tourists with utmost health and safety measures. They collectively felt that this expedition will enable people to slowly and gradually begin travelling once again.



SriLankan Airlines gets awarded 'Marketing Carrier' title by PATA Gold Awards

SriLankan Airlines, the National Carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the oneworld alliance, reaffirming the global appeal of its marketing communication endeavours, bagged a gold award at the PATA Gold Awards 2020. The National Carrier was among the 20 winners announced at the virtual PATA Travel Mart 2020. SriLankan Airlines was awarded the title 'Marketing Carrier' for its Pan India campaign- Next Door Neighbour and Serendipity Next Door. SriLankan Airlines' Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Vipula Gunatilleka said, "Winning an award is a reason for celebration and an affirmation that we are heading in the right direction. Receiving this coveted title from PATA, specially under the prevailing circumstances, gives us hope that we are capable of facing the challenging times ahead and our remedial communication content aiming to garner long-term, universal appeal can have a strong impact on our business recovery."



Responsible Tourism Society of India launches Responsible Traveller campaign

RTSOI is proud to announce the Responsible Traveller campaign supported by Ministry of Tourism, GOI. The campaign aims to establish India as a 'Sustainable Tourism Destination' where the traveller, the tourism industry and the government will need to join hands for responsible action. The Responsible Traveller Campaign by RTSOI is supported by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Wildlife SOS, calls out to everyone to take a pledge and follow The Responsible Traveller Guidelines. RTSOI urges the traveller to join hands in their endeavour towards a lighter footprint on this planet. A list of good each one of us can undertake in our lifestyle and travel choices to help reduce negative impact on the planet have been put together by the Responsible Tourism Society of India. Announcing the campaign through a video clip with messages from the Governing Council of RTSOI, Mr. Rakesh Mathur, President, RTSOI said, "On this World Tourism Day 2020 we have now launched the Responsible Traveller campaign to sensitise travellers and to complete this loop. As they say – a thousand mile journey starts with a single step and we believe we have walked a few by now."



practises as guidelines that

Tourism Authority of Thailand New Delhi and Mumbai together host #TogetherThailand contest

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi in association with Mumbai office announced a #TogetherThailand themed contest for the travel agents with interactive quizzes and surveys with focus on beaches, cuisines and new destinations that received 500+ qualified travel agents and operators' participation from across the country with weekly winners announced for each theme. The month-long campaign that commenced on August 5 included four weekly contests had following themes: a) Amazing Beaches of Thailand; b) Food Experiences in Thailand; c) Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration Certification (SHA); and d) Hidden Gem Destinations of Thailand. Throwing light on the success of the campaign, Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director, TAT New Delhi – North and East India, said, "On behalf of TAT India offices, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to all the tour operators who participated and shared their response for the #TogetherThailand campaign, which was recently successfully completed. I would like to congratulate all the winners for cherishing their memories about Thailand!"



#STAY POSITIVE



It is all about leadership and resilience in these challenging and unprecedented times and maintaining a positive and balanced mind set in all situations while dealing with stakeholders. Being innovative in our planning and transformation of the organization and people in line with the future will help us all sail through the crisis collectively as one team. Most important is that we keep our selves emotionally and physically healthy and stay safe.

Kunal Shanker,

GM, Holiday Inn New Delhi
Mayur Vihar Noida



The Travel and Tourism industry has huge capacity to bounce back. I have been in this industry long enough to see it fight the impacts of Plague, 9/11, Mumbai Attacks and more, and yet bounce back each time with renewed vigour. This is purely because of the entrepreneurship that people possess in the tourism sector. We cannot keep hoping for government help and have to learn to swim on our own. Good times will return again.

Rakesh Mathur,

Founding Member and President, RTSOI;
Former CEO, IHG - South and West Asia



The present situation that we are all in is a big lesson for the entire world. Nature was giving us warnings but everyone was competing in unhealthy ways. We have been given this time to respect nature and practice safe and responsible living. We need to increase our knowledge and become multitaskers. Travel, Tourism and Hospitality industry will bounce back. Don't quit. Life is like riding a bicycle - to keep our balance, we must keep moving forward.

Rajan Sehgal,

President - India Golf Tourism Association;
Co-Founder, PASSIONALS; Chairman-Skill and Education, TAAI



We need to utilise this time to begin and anticipate what that new normal might look like and prepare for it. Friends, we must be patient and stand ready with all our tourism products be it domestic tourism (Aaaas Paaas Dekho), within India (Dekho Apna Desh) or international tourism through (Dekho Duniya Sari). Brighter days are surely ahead once we complete this phase of the pandemic eclipse.

Effective June 2021, India shall regain its supremacy and once again be called "Sone ki Chidhiya".

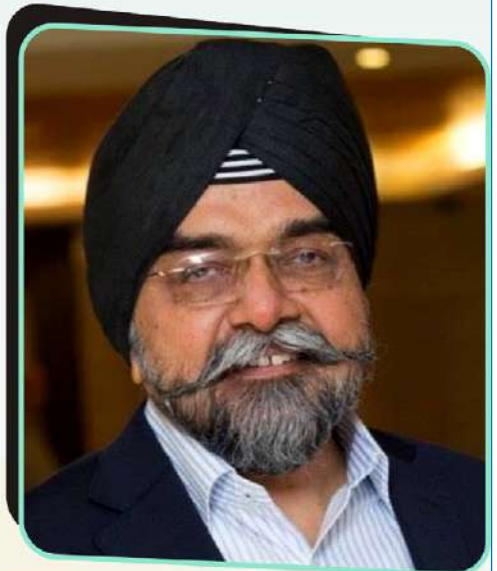
Jay Bhatia,
Vice President, TAAI and Director,
Tulsidas Khimji Holidays



Given the state of our economy and other bottlenecks, the Government currently is in an extremely difficult financial position.

Seeking monetary relief will lead us nowhere as the Government is not in a position to give huge monetary benefits to any industry, not just tourism. Instead, this is the time to ask for tangible benefits, which does not involve money and yet will provide relief to the tourism industry in the long run.

Sarab Jit Singh,
Managing Director, KTC India



The world as we know it, has been halted for a while currently, but not forever. The Travel and Tourism Industry has faced the brunt of it, but we know and believe that this is the time to reflect, reboot and remind the traveller in everyone that we will be back very soon...better and bigger to explore, learn, discover and rebuild memories for life. Until then, let us dream... let us hope and ensure that we stand by each other in these challenging times.

Vishal Bhatia,
Country Manager - India, VisitBritain



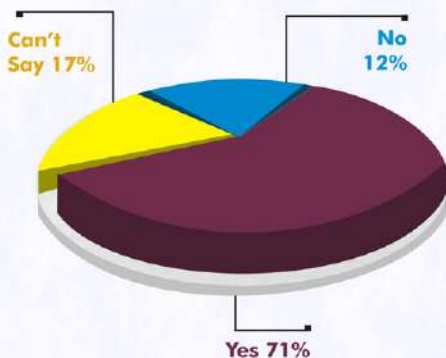
BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker: 71% Millennials prefer 'Incredible India'

The BOTT Survey found that about 40% of millennials would base their decisions to travel on the 'COVID policy' of the states while 38% of the millennials want to stay in plush resorts that have limited inventory.

Key Findings of BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker Business of Travel Trade BOTTINDIA.COM

With international travel restrictions continuing, will you explore 'Incredible India' in the next 6 months?



Respondents: 6000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Years - 45 Years
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: September 1st - September 24th, 2020
*T&C



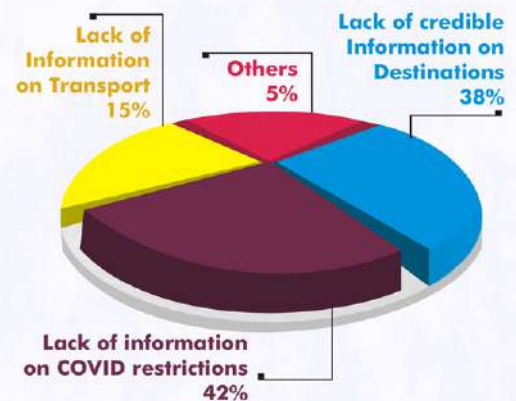
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71% millennials are willing to explore and travel within India in the next six months due to various international travel restrictions.

About 42% millennials consider lack of proper information on Covid restrictions as a major challenge while planning a holiday within India while 38% feel there is not enough credible information on unique travel destinations.

BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker Business of Travel Trade BOTTINDIA.COM

What are the main challenges while planning a holiday within India?



Respondents: 6000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Years - 45 Years
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: September 1st - September 24th, 2020
*T&C



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BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

Business of Travel Trade
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What kind of **Holiday** do you want to take in India?



Respondents: 6000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Years - 45 Years
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: September 1st - September 24th, 2020
*TAC



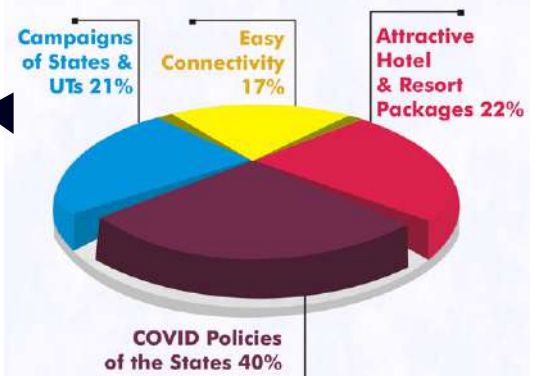
Around 22% millennials would like to go to beach destinations while 21% of them would prefer wildlife parks and sanctuaries. 20% each would like to go to plush hotels & resorts and hills/ adventure destinations. A mere 10% would like to visit historical destinations and 7% would opt for religious places.

40% millennials feel that Covid policies of respective states would play a major role in selecting holiday destinations followed by 22% who would go for attractive hotels and resorts packages. About 21% of them opined that their decisions would be based upon seeing tourism campaigns of respective States & UTs.

BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

Business of Travel Trade
BOTTINDIA.COM

What would influence your decision to select a **holiday destination**?



Respondents: 6000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Years - 45 Years
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: September 1st - September 24th, 2020
*TAC

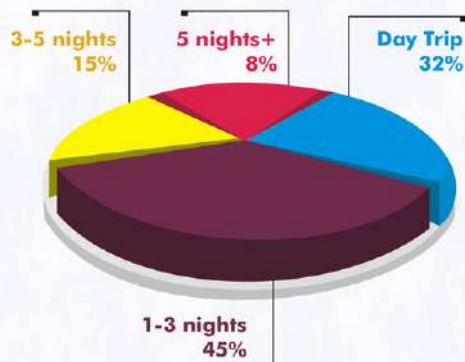


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BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

Business of Travel Trade
BOTTINDIA.COM

How long a **trip/tour** would you like to take?



Respondents: 6000+ Verified BOTT Readers
Age: 21 Years - 45 Years
Note: Respondents are general consumers with no direct association with travel and tour companies
Survey Period: September 1st - September 24th, 2020
*TAC



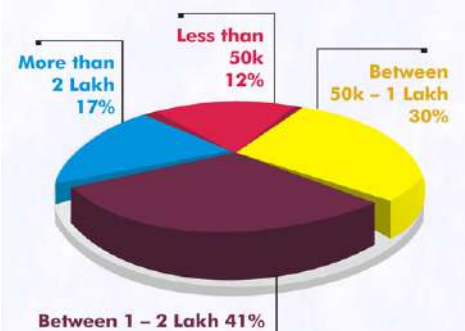
A good 45% millennials would go for 1 to 3 night trips followed by 32% who would prefer a day trip. About 15% of them will opt for 3-5 nights tours.

41% millennials would like to spend somewhere between INR 1 lakh to 2 lakh on their holidays, followed by 30% of them who have a budget of INR 50K to 1 lakh.

BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker

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

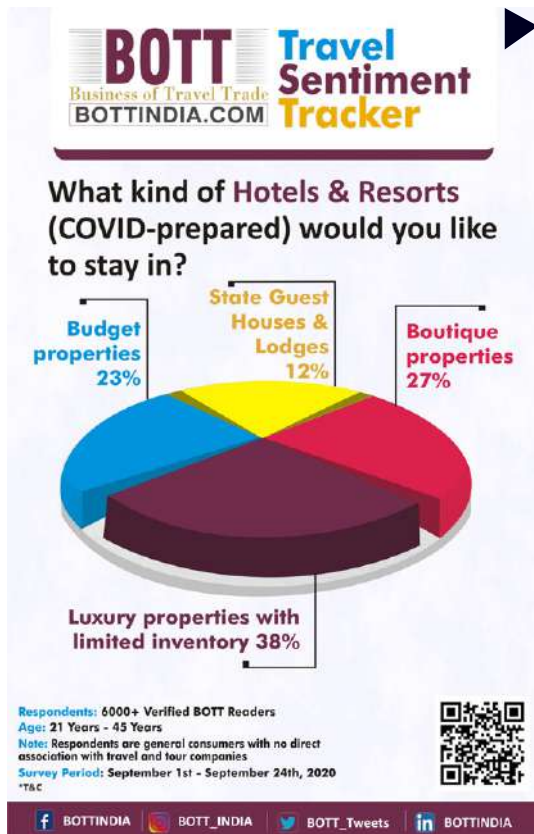


Respondents: 6000+ Verified BOTT Readers
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Survey Period: September 1st - September 24th, 2020
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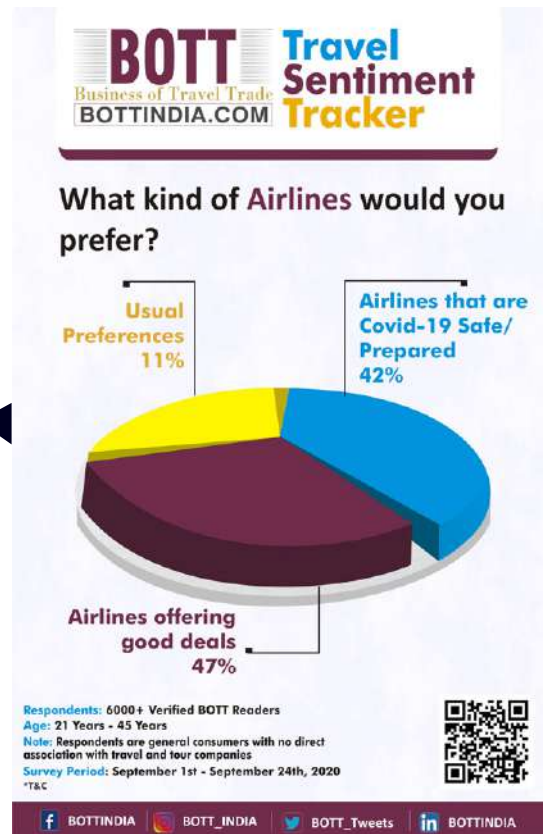
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Key Findings of BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker



Around 38% millennials will opt for Luxury properties with limited inventory followed by 27% and 23% who would go for Boutique properties and budget hotels respectively.

About 47% millennials will prefer Airlines that are offering good deals followed by 32% of them who would go for Airlines that are Covid safe/prepared.



Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators), says, “Millennials today form a very important chunk of the travellers. The fact that 71% of them are keen on exploring India in the coming months is an extremely positive sign for the growth of domestic tourism in our country. States must come forward and try to come out with policies and campaigns to attract this segment of travellers.”

The survey conducted over a period of 3 weeks in September where 6000+ millennials participated shows that they are much more likely to go on trips and holidays if they are actively offered tailor-made, hassle-free seamless travel experiences with proper communication.

About 40% millennials feel that Cover policies of respective states would play a major role in selecting holiday destinations followed by 22% who would go for attractive hotels and resorts packages. About 21% of them opined that their decisions would be based upon seeing tourism campaigns of respective States & UTs.



Interestingly, 41% millennials would like to spend somewhere between INR 1 lakh to 2 lakh on their holidays, followed by 30% of them who have a budget of INR 50K to 1 lakh and 17% who have more than 2 lakh to spend on their vacations. To add to this, millennials seem to have a wide range of destinations where they would want to holiday. Like Around 22% millennials would like to go to beach destinations while 21% of them would prefer wildlife parks and sanctuaries. 20% each would like to go to plush hotels & resorts and hills/ adventure destinations. A mere 10% would like to visit historical destinations and 7% would opt for religious places.

Concurs Subhash Goyal, Chairman ASSOCHAM Tourism Council & Hony. Secretary,

FAITH, “I agree that domestic and regional tours will be the only tours taking place in the next few months. We have to look at the bigger picture and promote domestic tourism on numerous levels. But to push domestic tourism, MoT has to go beyond the Dekho Apna Desh campaign. They need to implement a uniform policy across all states with regards to COVID guidelines and no quarantine restrictions should be there. Students in schools and colleges must be encouraged to travel within India and explore and write about their cultural findings. Additionally, all hotels and MICE venues in the country should be allowed to host events with the new guidelines of safety and social distancing protocols.”

Adds Sarkar, “It is high time that the Government should release some kind of relief package for the travel and tourism sector. This World Tourism Day, financial aid will be the best gift the government can give to the people suffering in the tourism sector.”



As per the findings of the BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker, a good 45% millennials would go for 1 to 3 nights trip followed by 32% who would prefer a day trip. About 15% of them will opt for 3-5 nights tour. Additionally, around 38% millennials will opt for Luxury properties with limited inventory followed by 27% and 23% who would go for Boutique properties and budget hotels respectively.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to severely impact the travel and tourism sector in India, millennials may become the key driver of its revival with 71% millennials willing to explore ‘Incredible India’ in the next 6 months, according to BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker released on the eve of World Tourism Day.

Contrary to perceptions, millennials are very much interested in exploring ‘Incredible India’ more than ever provided they are given hassle-free seamless travel experiences. About 42% millennials consider lack of proper information on Covid restrictions a major challenge while planning a holiday within India while 38% feel there is not enough credible travel information on unique destinations.

Hemant Mediratta feels India is ready to take its luxury quotient to the next level

After spending 16 years of his career with the Oberoi Hotels – handling international sales for many iconic luxury properties, Hemant Mediratta, Founder, One Rep Global and Co-Founder and COO, Antara Luxury River Cruises, took the entrepreneurial plunge and entered the ‘representation’ industry earlier this year. In a mere span of six months and keeping the global COVID challenges in mind, the dynamic entrepreneur has already achieved an enviable portfolio comprising the best of ‘luxury hotels’ across the globe. In an exclusive with BOTT India, he shares details of his journey and his plans for the future.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Handsome, suave, witty and polite – if you met Hemant Mediratta in the corridors of any Oberoi property, you would be completely touched by his warm hospitality. His personality, it was believed, was best suited to the brand he was associated with – Smart and Classy. A popular name in the travel trade industry, a pleasant sight in almost all IATO Conventions, Hemant was branded as the quintessential hospitality veteran and not the risk taking entrepreneurial kinds... So what changed?

“I believe entrepreneurship is a state of mind, which stems from a very high degree of ownership. You don’t need a designation of a business owner to be running any business. In every assignment or a job one can operate like an entrepreneur. The motivator for me is to have the freedom to create and translate your dream in a world class organisation,” he hares, adding, “I took the decision in January 2020 to turn an entrepreneur and despite being advised against doing so by industry colleagues and friends (even said no to job offers), I was ready to take this plunge. I believe it is the calling and one has to try and experiment with life. After all if you believe in yourself then destiny takes you to your chosen path.”

Since he had always been passionate about sales and marketing and that had also been his forte the last couple of decades, Hemant, through his years of experience in the field, saw a clear gap in the market where majority of the representation companies were being run by travel agents and young hoteliers who lacked experience, exposure of global markets and more importantly the luxury market. “I felt we needed an hotelier run company that understands the nuances and are culturally more adept to understanding the needs of luxury hotels. So we have a team of 14+ enthusiastic and connected sales, marketing and communication professionals covering 30+ cities across 7 countries across India and Middle East to give extensive reach and distribution. We are supported by a great advisory board comprising the “who is who” of the Indian luxury travel trade. We are also the only representation company in this part of the world to be the First Traveller Made member, which gives us unrestricted access to any luxury agents in the region,” he fills in enthusiastically.

The client tally at his company – One Rep Global is a testament to his skill



“I took the decision in January 2020 to turn an entrepreneur and despite being advised against doing so by industry colleagues and friends, I was ready to take this plunge. I believe it is the calling and one has to try and experiment with life. After all if you believe in yourself then destiny takes you to your chosen path.”

and hard work not to forget his sharp insight and focussed approach that helped him and his team reach out to the potential patrons. “We have had a pretty rapid growth in the last two months getting on board some like-minded clients who shares our vision of luxury. Our client list comprises the top luxury products right from Private Jet Company to Hotels that are part of Luxury consortiums like LHW, Virtuoso, SLH and Traveller Made. Ours is probably the only company that has added so many clients in the COVID times,” adds Hemant.

The primary goal of his company One Rep Global is conducting business in new territories for a luxury hotel or product. This requires sales professionals that have segmental market expertise and can deliver the right content by being respectful of cultural nuances. Embodying this mind-set requires strong leadership, unique strategies and execution with precision. With over 200 years of collective experience, One Rep Global strives to be more than just an extension of the existing team. “We bring to life to the client’s brand values and service philosophy. In-depth knowledge, insider access, an enviable Advisory Board, extensive sales distribution and people led, customer-centric organisation are some of the strong virtues of our company,” quips the entrepreneur.

The next big step he has taken is the introduction of Antara Cruises in the India market. The lavish ‘all Suite’ cruises takes you to untouched destinations along the rivers while you experience the ‘all inclusive’ warm personalised and unmatched hospitality. Owned by Heritage River Journeys that has over 15 years of proven expertise in innovative small ship design that is socially and environmentally



Hemant Mendiratta,
Co-Founder and COO
Antara Luxury River Cruises

responsible, Antara Cruises, with over 100 team members has already set high standards in the luxury river cruising ships making it the ideal choice for top international cruising partners.

“We felt the time was right to introduce this best kept secret to Indian consumers and we have launched Bespoke Charters where you can take the entire ship of 28 cabins (56 guests) for your family and friends while you cruise on the scenic routes on Ganges starting from Kolkata. There is a very high degree of personalisation and customisation that is possible. We have received multiple queries for wedding and related events apart from milestone birthdays and anniversaries where people want to spend time with their loved ones in safe environs, making unforgettable memories. We have currently opened two fixed departures over Christmas and New Year’s which are 3 days and 4 days respectively where individual bookings can be made by guests,” concludes an enthusiastic Hemant.

He may have started alone on his entrepreneurial journey but over the course of time, like-minded people, who understood the luxury market and shared the same vision kept joining him, making the tribe bigger and bigger. Given his experience and skill, one can confidently vouch for this successful entrepreneurial journey into the future, as he gears to set new benchmarks of ‘luxury’ in India.

Sumant Jaidka talks about Trippin' with Lemon Tree, Rest Assured & House Rules

In March 2020, when the lockdown began, travel came to a grinding halt across the country. However, the Lemon Tree Hotels has kept a substantial number of hotels operational over the last 6 months, and welcomed a large number of quarantine guests returning under the Vande Bharat Mission as well as some individual travellers who booked through the website or online travel agents. The hospitality chain has introduced a plethora of safety initiatives and programs over the months to restore the faith of the travellers in the brand. Sumant Jaidka, Senior Vice President-Operations, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd, shares more in an exclusive chat with BOTT.



Sumant Jaidka,
Senior Vice President-Operations, Lemon Tree Hotels

How severely were the Lemon Tree Hotels in India affected during the Pandemic?

Lemon Tree Hotels has kept a substantial number of hotels operational over the last 6 months, and welcomed a large number of quarantine guests returning under the Vande Bharat Mission as well as some individual travellers who booked through the website or online travel agents. Hotels have been running with reduced teams on account of mobility constraints (during the lockdown), and a tactical plan to keep a team of employees on the premises itself and minimize exposure to the virus (if they were to travel to and fro every day). We implemented a number of cost saving initiatives, both fixed and variable, which led to a positive Gross Operating Profit (at an operational level).

Have the Lemon Tree properties opened across India?

Lemon Tree has strictly followed the guidelines of state and central governments while keeping its hotels operational or temporarily closing them, as required. The impact of COVID-19 on hotel business has been felt a little more strongly in Tier 2 & 3 cities. As mentioned, a substantial number of hotels have been kept open through these months.

As people are now beginning to slowly start traveling, with a preference to drive to a nearby location in their own vehicle – Lemon Tree Hotels has launched 'Trippin' with Lemon Tree' where the guests can do pre-defined driving routes with family or friends. Our hotels can be booked for transit stays and/or at the final destination. With Lemon Tree's great locations, 'Rest Assured' sanitization program

and value-for-money packages, guests can choose from 79 hotels in 47 destinations across India.

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

This pandemic has helped people understand the importance of health and safety measures that hotel companies have to take to safeguard their guests. Most of our customers enquire about our sanitization and cleanliness measures, social distancing, food safety and other norms, before they finalise their reservation with us.

This is where our new hygiene initiative 'Rest Assured', in partnership with Diversey, comes into play. The cleaning and sanitization standards of this program ensure the health and safety of our guests and team members. The new 'House Rules' help customers understand what to expect from our hotels as well as what they must do to ensure their safety e.g. masks, maintaining social distancing, washing/sanitizing their hands, etc.

For our restaurants, we have made the ordering and payment process contactless with the QRestro app. This allows guests to scan a QR code and access the entire menu of the coffee shop/In Room Dining and select the items they want to order. Our team reconfirms the order with the guest on the phone and delivers it hygienically in the defined time. Once the guest has finished his meal he can pay online with the link sent to their phone. Our guests feel more reassured with this process being made contactless.

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

Most hotel companies are focusing



on the domestic market which is expected to be the first to recover. International travel will take a few months to restart and stabilize. Lemon Tree Hotels has several offers available at this time including day use accommodation (work area with high speed WiFi, meal offers); seclusion packages at our hotels within an easy driving distance; the 'Godzilla Sale' where guests can book at highly discounted rates for a future date; Lemon Tree Vouchers in values of Rs.1000 to Rs.5000 – these can be used personally or gifted, 'Trippin' With Lemon Tree, etc.

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?

Our estimate is that the hospitality sector will take another one and half to two years to stabilize and go back to pre-COVID growth levels. In the interim, hotel companies must pursue and develop new market segments, as demand evolves. This includes quarantine requirements, healthcare segment, MSME business

travel and small conferences. In the leisure segment, we expect people to take short driving holidays and we are developing packages for all our hotels at such locations. Hygiene and cleanliness will continue to be of prime focus over the next few years.

What Special Precautions has your hospitality ground undertaken regarding the safety of its employees and guests?

At all our hotels we are maintaining best-in-class hygiene standards, as per our 'Rest Assured' initiative in partnership with Diversey - a global leader in the space of cleanliness and hygiene standards. This program creates an environment focused on health, hygiene, safety and wellbeing of people. The safety and wellbeing of our guests and team members is of the utmost importance to us, and we want everyone to be rest assured that they are in safe hands. As mentioned above, under this initiative Lemon Tree has also executed a new set of 'House Rules' to be followed by guests, visitors and team members to maximize safety and hygiene.

Rohit Katyal believes that the journey towards full recovery is slow, but will happen



Rohit Katyal,
National Sales Head
Justa Hotels & Resorts

A journey spanning over 15 years, a hotel company that grew up from one hotel to 15 hotels and resorts in six cities, namely Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Udaipur, Gurgaon and Chittorgarh, Justa Hotels and Resorts, which operates about 450 plus keys as of now, continues to stand tall in the turbulent pandemic crisis. Rohit Katyal, National Sales Head – Justa Hotels & Resorts, in an exclusive chat with BOTT India, shares what the plans of the hotel company are for the future.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

How many Justa Hotels are there in operation at the moment?

We started our 5 hotels last month. Four of our Resorts in Rajasthan are fully operational and one of our Gurgaon hotel reopened about two weeks back. We are in process of reopening two of our Delhi hotels early October.

What makes Justa Hotels stand apart from its competition?

We started as a small luxury hotel company way back in 2005 and with self-reliance and vision as hoteliers first then business enterprise made us stronger and helped us to stand apart from our competitors in the similar segment.

How much occupancy have you experienced since the re-opening?

We are in the process of re-opening all hotels and are confident by October all hotels will be open to welcome our guests. We have seen traction at Resort locations as of now. Though weekends are more in demand as compared to weekdays as of now. Occupancies are erratic as of now and are varying from 20-50% in Rajasthan. Metro cities are under tremendous pressure due to lean occupancy levels.

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

Sentiments are varying from city to city and some people are more concerned about how many people are staying in the hotel when they are likely to be at the hotel, some are interested if the hotel will allow them the usage of swimming pool, on the other hand some are enquiring if they



will be allowed to move around in the city without any restrictions.

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

We have been running our promotional offer as #Staysafe #staycation at our Resorts in Rajasthan to boost occupancy levels from drivable distance cities and these are value for money.

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?

As individuals we work on sentiments and will be more willing to travel if we get confidence of some improvement as far as new cases are going to be under control. Though occupancy level in metro cities are still at least six months away before they come to consistent levels. In-bound travel may not start before end of 2021. To reach pre-Covid levels it may take about 18 months from now.

Are you also seeing some movement in the meetings / events / weddings market?

Unfortunately there are no signs of recovery in meetings and events segment at any of our locations. Though there are decent number of queries for small weddings for Rajasthan and Delhi hotels coming up. Going forward this would be a saving grace to some extent though the ticket size has shrunk.

How are the F&B outlets performing at the property?

Keeping hygiene factor in mind people are more comfortable eating at the hotel and specifically at Resorts guests are opting for inclusive meal packages.

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

We are confident that sooner or later situation will get better and keeping

this fact in mind, we are bullish to look for opportunities to sign up new hotels on Management or Revenue Share model in tier two and tier three cities. We have just launched our first hotel

during pandemic in Mukteshwar, Uttarakhand on October 1, 2020 and are hopeful that we may be looking at launching another hotel before the end of this year in Rajasthan too.



Beyond Boundaries

DTCM hosts virtual media FAM showcasing their preparedness in COVID era

Following the guidelines of the new normal, the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing in Dubai in association with its India partners – the Nijhawan Group, recently hosted a two-day virtual media fam wherein a panel of experts briefed the travel trade media on how Dubai as a destination is moving ahead in the COVID era.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

With the sole aim to highlight Dubai's preparedness is not just handling an event as huge as IPL but also opening up its touristy sights and inviting people to come and visit it, an expert panel representing various sights and attractions in Dubai briefed the Indian media regarding the same. Present during the two-day virtual FAM were Srushti Hatwar – Sales Manager, Travel Trade, IMG Worlds of Adventure; Bader Ali Habib, Manager – Indian subcontinent, International Operations, DTCM; Chris Newman, COO – Emaar Hospitality Group and few more.

Sharing details about what's open and what's not in Dubai, Bader Ali said, "The Expo, which was slated to be a huge event, has been postponed to October 1, 2021. Meanwhile, local events have started taking place in Dubai since September 15 while International events will start from October this year. Dubai is well-prepared to handle its tourists once again with all the necessary checks in place."

Meanwhile, the other panellists present highlighted the safety and security measures being undertaken by their brands in order to be safe for the tourists planning to visit Dubai. Neil Shah and Linda Abdul Hay from Atlantis, The Palm showcased the various breath-taking aspects of the unique hotel and briefed the media regarding the upcoming highlights of the hotel.

In addition to all this, Dubai has been busy launching a series of new initiatives and plans to keep the number of visitors growing even in the pandemic times. It recently launched a unique new programme that enables overseas remote working professionals to live in Dubai while continuing to serve their employers in their home country. The move offers remote workers – and their families - the opportunity to re-locate, on an annual basis, to one of the world's leading tourism and business destinations. Remote workers can take advantage of emirate's strong digital infrastructure,



Bader Ali Habib,
Manager-Indian
subcontinent,
International
Operations, DTCM



Chris Newman,
COO-Emaar
Hospitality Group



robust connectivity, safe and high-quality lifestyle, global networking opportunities and zero income tax for individuals.

Dubai, and the UAE, have been recognised for setting a global model for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) awarded Dubai the Safe Travels Stamp in acknowledgement of its efforts to ensure the highest standards of hygiene and COVID-19 precautionary measures. The emirate also introduced the 'Dubai Assured' stamp to certify that establishments have implemented all public health protocols for the prevention and management of COVID-19.

Enchanted Princess officially joins Princess Cruises fleet



The newly completed Enchanted Princess was delivered to Princess Cruises on September 30, 2020 in an official handover ceremony presented via live streaming video from the Fincantieri Shipyard in Monfalcone, Italy. With the arrival of this 145,000-ton, 3,660-guest ship, Enchanted Princess expands the Princess Cruises global fleet of MedallionClass vessels.

BOTT DESK

The ceremony was virtually attended by executives from Carnival Corporation & plc including Micky Arison, Chairman of the Board of Carnival Corporation; Arnold Donald, President and CEO of Carnival Corporation; Stein Kruse, Group CEO of Princess Cruises, Holland America Line, Seabourn, Carnival Australia and Carnival UK; and Jan Swartz Group President of Princess Cruises and Carnival Australia. Fincantieri was represented by CEO Giuseppe Bono. International media and stakeholders for Princess Cruises across the globe also joined the ceremony virtually.

Enchanted Princess is the 100th cruise ship built by Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri. This milestone is significant for both companies since Crown Princess was the first ship to launch Fincantieri into the modern passenger ship building business, when it was delivered in 1990. The finalization of Enchanted Princess also marks the first ship to be completed during the time of COVID. In fact, Fincantieri was one of the first businesses to reopen in Italy, helping to energize the economy, while operating in new and innovative ways

to ensure a safe and productive work environment.

“We officially welcome Enchanted Princess into the Princess global fleet and recognize the strong bond between Carnival Corporation, Princess Cruises and Fincantieri, our long-standing shipbuilder partner,” said Jan Swartz, President, Princess Cruises. “Fincantieri shares the Princess spirit of delivering the highest level of excellence, and we know they will also share in our enthusiasm with pride when the ship welcomes its first guests.”

Enchanted Princess represents an evolution of the design platform used for her sisterships - Regal Princess, Royal Princess, Majestic Princess and the most recently introduced Sky Princess - offering an elevation of spectacular style and elegance that is distinguished by Princess. The cruise ship introduces new dining experiences, the most pools and whirlpool hot tubs ever, world-class entertainment venues and the breathtaking Sky Suites, offering expansive views from the largest balconies at sea.

Nishith Saxena, Founder & Director, Cruise Professionals shared, “The



Nishith Saxena,
Founder & Director, Cruise
Professionals

completion of Enchanted Princess and her induction in the Princess fleet is a mark of resilience of mankind, commitment towards growth & wellbeing & faith in the efforts we all put in the recovery of the cruise industry. Having spent nearly 20 years of promoting Princess Cruises in India, we're confident that passenger demand for premium cruises would start building up soon and we shall witness very busy booking offices.

Corona dampens German incoming tourism in the long term



Romit Theophilus,
Head, German National
Tourist office, India

BOTT DESK

The effects of the corona pandemic are shaping German incoming tourism longer than previously assumed. This is the conclusion reached by the update of the study by Tourism Economics, commissioned by the German National Tourist Board (GNTB), which analyses the impact of the pandemic on Germany's 19 most important source markets.

At the beginning of June, analysts were still forecasting a year-on-year decline of 46.2 million in international overnight stays in Germany for 2020 as a whole and a drop in tourist consumer spending of 17.8 billion euros. Based on the latest available data as of the beginning of October, Tourism Economics now expects the number of overnight stays to fall by 51.2 million to 38.1 million and a loss in tourism consumer spending of 18.7 billion euros.

According to current calculations,

According to the updated study by Tourism Economics on behalf of the GNTB - the recovery phase will be longer than previously assumed - the pre-crisis level will not be reached until 2024 and recovery will be driven by leisure travel.

only a recovery to 86.4 percent of the pre-crisis level of 2019 is predicted for the end of 2023. At that time, the June forecast was still predicting a full recovery over the next four years.

"Especially the current situation in important European source markets for the German Incoming tourism and developments in German cities make it clear that the recovery phase will probably take years," explains Petra Hedorfer, CEO, GNTB, adding, "This makes it all the more important now to use anti-cyclical marketing to retain customers in the long term and to continue to make the brand strengths of Destination Germany visible."

Romit Theophilus, Head, German National Tourist Office, India adds for the source market India: "Despite setbacks from the COVID-19 crisis GNTB, India prepares to bounce back in the later part of the year by organising a series of events with Trade to promote Germany's appeal as a Travel destination."

Faster recovery for European source markets

The detailed forecast of the regions of origin of potential travellers to Germany reinforces the basic statement made in June that European source markets are more likely to recover than overseas markets. The order of the largest source markets for German inbound tourism remains the same in the Corona crisis: In 2020, the most important source market for incoming travel will continue to be the

Netherlands, followed by Switzerland, the USA, the UK and Austria.

However, the longer-term forecasts for demand from abroad are much more cautious than in June of this year. According to the latest analyses, Europe will fall short of expectations in 2023 with a minus of 9.4 percent in international overnight stays, and demand from overseas will remain well below expectations at minus 24.6 percent negative range. According to this, the overall balance for 2023 would also remain negative at minus 13.6 percent, and reaching the pre-crisis level does not appear realistic again until 2024.

Business travel market faces major challenges

The updated analyses by Tourism Economics basically confirm the previous assumption that the business travel segment is recovering more slowly than leisure travel. For the year 2023, the forecasts for the business travel segment are currently significantly worse than the recovery for leisure travel, with a minus of 26 percent in arrivals than the recovery for leisure travel at plus five percent.

Germany maintains competitive position

According to current analyses, Germany occupies an excellent position in the competition among European destinations during the crisis years. For 2023, Tourism Economics forecasts second place for Germany after Spain and ahead of Italy, France and Great Britain.



Sarab Jit Singh

He felt that there are a lot of useful things written in this document. However, with more than sixty pages it is rather a very long statement for a National Policy document. It is a bit difficult to find the pertinent policy matters at one place or join these assertions cogently. This document seems an amalgam of various exercises, all together. I think a policy statement more than ten pages is bound not to be succinct, punchy and is liable to lose focus.

A government policy is a profound statement of principled intent, underpinned by the need to achieve economic development, social justice and the excellence in the chosen field of activity. In case of tourism, besides the usual attributes, there would always be an element of projection of history, heritage and culture too. The concomitant and universal spinoffs could be national integration and international understanding.

To accelerate the growth in inbound and domestic tourism, welcome a tourist, develop new circuits etc. and many more regular and routine matters are not a matter of policy. These could feature in reports like action plans for the year or achievements of the year.

Policy matters are profound, unique

‘The new National Tourism Policy document needs to be made succinct’

An industry veteran and travel expert, Sarab Jit Singh, MD, KTC, after going through draft National Tourism Policy circulated by Ministry of Tourism, happened to discuss the same with one of his esteemed colleague and felt that what he had to say was not just quite apt but should also be shared with other tourism professionals. So here is what he had to share

and are departure from the past. A new initiative, new direction, new inclusions are policy matters.

Frankly speaking, the document needs to be reworked, made succinct and focus of the policy elements brought back. This will bring in clarity. The current document can be treated as a working document or explanatory document and treated as an annexure to the policy document and also should have proposed action plan.

The New Tourism Policy 2020 which has been formulated revolves around ten strategic pillars which are – welcome the visitor, seamless connectivity, destination planning, investment promotion, develop and diversify tourism products, market India, quality assurance & standards, market research and intelligence and skill development said sources privy to the development. The draft new tourism policy 2020 has been

floated to ministries for comments and is awaiting cabinet approval.

The policy marks a decisive shift from department and scheme centric approach to a tourist and destination centric approach. The government is looking at providing incentives to attract investors to make investments viable and competitive. Incentives like Infrastructure status to hospitality projects by central government, Industry status to the hospitality projects under industrial policies of the state, rationalisation of taxes, GST refund to tourists while they leave the country are being proposed said sources. Specific strategies will be chalked out to promote investments in various tourism sectors like accommodation, travel agents, tour operators, adventure tour operators, cruise etc. With the New Tourism Policy in place the government estimates increase in domestic visits to 3.6 billion.

FAITH organizes 'India Tourism Vision Day'

Indian tourism needs to be structured through a constitutionally empowered legislative body -A national tourism council headed by our Honourable Prime Minister along with the presence of all chief ministers. This will enable fast track centre state level tourism decision making and work on a One India One Tourism approach leveraging and utilising full synergies of India's tourism potential across all our states. This will raise the decibels for going Vocal with Local. 🗣️



Nakul Anand | Chairman, FAITH



We need a financial legislative mechanism to make adventure tourism activities bankable at priority interest rates. The adventure tourism activities are based on natural assets & competences and not on collateral assets and thus need a different financing guarantee mechanism. Thus, to create structured global awareness we look forward to branding Indian adventure tourism through creating a sub brand to our Incredible India main brand. 🗣️

Captain Swadesh Kumar

President, ATOAI (Adventure Tour Operators Association of India)



GST on Tour operators should be 1.8% with full set offs and not 5% which is making domestic tour operators uncompetitive. Outside of containment zones all the states should synchronise their border policies to enable Indians to travel freely and without confusion. For our domestic tourism to become world class, we need to have a consistent national focus on three S – Safety, Sanitisation and Sensitisation. 🗣️

P.P. Khanna

President, ADTOI | (Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India)



This is a highly stressed time for everyone. However, we are confident that our concerns will be addressed by the government and they will be able to prioritise a relief package for the Indian tourism, travel and hospitality from their limited resources. 🗣️

Subhash Goyal

Hony. Secretary, FAITH



“GST rates for hospitality in India are one of the highest in the world. This makes both domestic and inbound tourism in India expensive. The 18% GST category for hotels above room rates of ₹7500 must be abolished and merged with the category of 12% GST. Gradually it should be brought down further below 10% with full set offs in line with global trends. Restaurants too have an 18% and also 5% slab but which is without setoffs. The 18% category needs to be abolished and there needs to be an option made available of GST at 12% with full set offs.”

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli

Vice President, Federation of Hotels & Restaurants Industry of India (FHRAI)



“Hotels require to be declared as a social infrastructure sector so that long term funds are accessible at suitable interest rates to attract private capital hospitality, to create all India jobs and to build quality accommodation supply. Land banks are the most critical resource for hospitality projects. They are also the biggest capex drivers. Very high quality land assets are available with public sector units and government which can be used to enhance hospitality growth.”

M.P. Bezbaruah

Secretary General, Hotels Association of India (HAI)



“To target global congress, conventions and conferences, and social events we need to create a global mice bidding fund with a corpus for ₹500 crores to enable our entrepreneurs undertake techno economic bids for events which have a bid cycle of 2 years plus. We need to create city convention bureaus in each of our main cities which will work with ICPB as their hub to carry out a global bidding activity. Our GST rates are one of the highest in the world and to revive we should move immediately to a 12% GST rate for all MICE related events.”

Amaresh Tiwari

Vice Chairman, India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB)



“Lack of cash inflow is the most pressing issue during the COVID and thus it is most critical that refund of unutilised GST credit lying with government to the operators must happen which will get liquidity into the system. It is important to have exemption from payment of insurance premium for the tourist transport vehicles for the financial year till a complete stability happens.”

Sharat Chandra

Treasurer, Indian Tourist Transportation Association (ITTA)



“We need to create special focus on Indian heritage through a heritage sub brand which is linked to the main brand of Incredible India. In the post-Covid normal, we need to have India heritage evenings in each of the top 100 cities of the world. We need to create a heritage restoration fund and set up a corpus of at least ₹1000 crores.”

Gajsingh Jodhpur

President, Indian Heritage Hotels Associations (IHHA)



“In the post-Covid period our vision is to double India's share of inbound tourism to 2.5% in 5 years post normal and then double it again to 5% in the next five years post that. This will rightfully put Indian tourism in the global league where it belongs. However, we do not see a normal start to inbound tourism till October 2021. To survive till then, the inbound tour operators need to have an operating cash subsidy to pay salaries and operating costs as has been effectively done in the USA & the UK. Our SEIS rate should be made effective 10% for the next 10 years and should be payable immediately on our financial year 2019-20 gone by.”

Pronab Sarkar

President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO)



“A key requirement is to make Indian travel agents globally competitive. The recently introduced TCS makes Indian travel agents uncompetitive by 5 - 10% via their global counterparts. This comes on top of the GST which makes our travel agents even more uncompetitive. We are in close discussions with the ministries and hope that it will be rolled back. A favourable GST regime for travel agents is extremely critical as part of our vision for the future and we are in constant dialogue with aviation and finance ministries to address that. We hope to see a competitive GST regime for our travel agents being rolled out soon.”

Jyoti Mayal

President, Travel Agents Association of India and Vice Chairman, FAITH



“The applicability of TCS puts our travel agents business models under threat as they make us expensive to book by almost 5 - 10%. Even though the advance tax is settled at the end of the year during year, it puts a liquidity concern by blocking money and will also raise the issue of reconciliation. Today our travel agents are under a huge business stress and we keenly look forward to a mechanism to ensure they get support for survival.”

Pradip Lulla

President, Travel Agents Federation of India

WTTC grants 'Safe Travels Stamp' to OTOAI



Team Member OTOAI

OTOAI (Outbound Tour Operators Association of India) has recently joined the list of Global Travel Trade Associations to have been granted the WTTC Safe Travels Stamp. Achieving the Safe Travels Stamp is not an easy task as there are a bunch of protocols to be followed and commitments and criterion to be met. OTOAI has become the second Association in India to receive the prestigious accreditation.

While it is essential that each industry within the travel and tourism sector develops clear and practical protocols so as to enable the sector's recovery, the approach of receiving a Safe Travels Stamp is even more important for tour operators given their dependence on other tourism entities such as destinations, airlines, hotels, transportation, travel

insurance as well as government policies such as border restrictions, as tour operators are often responsible for guests throughout their journey.

"As a user of the stamp, OTOAI will have the opportunity to assume the role of a Safe Travel Ambassador for its members, advocating the implementation of the Safe Travels protocols and the uptake of the Safe Travel stamp to the association members and ensure their ongoing compliance with the said protocols. We are delighted to receive this accreditation and will ensure that all of our members too follow the protocols and get the WTTC Safe Travels Stamp," said Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI.

For the purpose of alignment across industries within the travel and tourism sector, WTTC has divided

the protocols in four pillars namely – Operational and Staff Preparedness; Delivering a Safe Experience; Rebuilding Trust & Confidence and Implementing Enabling Policies. A detailed document mentioning the protocols and procedures has been put up on the OTOAI website for the members to observe and follow.

OTOAI, meanwhile, has been actively pursuing the '#PhirGhoomegaIndia' campaign on all of its social media handles wherein not just the OTOAI members but also the important people in the international travel trade sector have come forward to share a positive message with the industry and people in the tourism sector. Active participating in various webinars and talks, the leadership at OTOAI is hopeful of the good times returning soon.

Chetan Gupta suggests promoting India to Indians will help save Tourism Industry

A well-versed travel professional who feels highly about promoting Domestic Tourism in India, Chetan Gupta, Director, R G Destinations Pvt. Ltd.; Hony. General Secretary, ADTOI; member of CII and board member FAITH is a man not just with a clear vision but also an extremely kind heart. Apart from promoting India to Indians, the last few months have been well-spent by his NGO in doing some path-breaking charity work. From addressing menstrual hygiene of women to distributing raw and cooked food packets, he has contributed much to the society in the months gone by. Here's his 'Industry Insight' into what he feels will get the tourism industry out of its present pothole.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Please do tell us something about the charity work being done by you during COVID 19?

Covid 19 has actually made most people suffer across the world and the travel industry is on the top of the list of the most suffered ones. We have seen lot of people suffering from hunger, hygiene, health and more. Thus, through our NGO - "Sutra Foundation", we tried to help and support the deprived people in the locality in whatever best way we could. We organized a camp for the deprived women on 28th July on Awareness on Women Hygiene wherein we distributed 6000 sanitary pads, 10,000 face masks, 15,000 tablets of Vitamin D, Calcium & Iron to cover one month cycle. The program was warmly welcomed by the local women and appreciated the cause. More details on the same can be found on our website. We also recently organized another

camp on "Food Distribution" wherein we distributed ready food to approx. 2000 poor and hungry people on road. We made simple Rice, Chola and Halwa to feed them atleast for one meal. Apart from this, we have distributed 500 food packets to poor people living in slums. Each packet contained 2kg of Rice, 2kg of Flour, 1Kg Dal, 1 Litre oil, salt and other spices.

Our forthcoming event is for the blind children. We are planning to take 100+ blind children on a day trip of Delhi Darshan in September 2020. We will hire 3 buses and take them to all the important places in Delhi where we have the facility of Braille language system along with a lunch and tea/coffee snacks.

How severely has your business been affected by the pandemic? Did you also have to let go of some of your staff because of the crisis?

Business is totally shut for more or less last five months. We are just following



Chetan Gupta,
Director, R G Destinations Pvt.
Ltd.; Hony. General Secretary,
ADTOI

up with hotels, airlines and cruises for the refund as we are getting lot of pressure from our clients for refund of tour cancellation. At the moment we have only skeleton staff working full time on full salary coming in office for follow up on refunds, payments and complete accounting work. We have requested the other half of our staff to stay at home at 50% salary and the remaining at 25% till the lockdown gets over completely and work resumes. We have to retain our staff as they are with us since over a decade. We cannot leave them at this stage of life but it is very unfortunate and sad that our government is not supporting the travel industry at all. **What way forward do you see for tourism? Do you think Domestic Tourism has the potential to pull**

India Tourism out of the dark?

I see that only Domestic Tourism has the potential to pull India tourism out of the dark. This is the only segment of tourism which has started to show a bit of activity and will be the first to kick start until a proper vaccine comes for Corona. At the same time I strongly believe that tourism stakeholders and TA/TO should come out and start visiting places to show that it is safe to travel. We have to bring the fear out from our client's mind and convince them to travel. I think this is the way forward to start tourism in India. Even our Hon'ble Prime Minister also urged citizens to travel atleast 15 domestic places till 2022, which is what our target should be as we promote India to Indians.

What, in your opinion, are some of the points that a person must consider before selling Domestic Tourism in India?

Not everyone can be an expert in selling Domestic Tourism. Due to Corona and lockdown and its aftereffects, TA/TO of specialised sectors have started selling Domestic Tourism now. But I feel you should have complete product and destination knowledge before you start your promotions and selling any destination. Clients come to us for an experience and not just to book a hotel or transfer or excursions.

Do you feel states in India are active or let's say proactive enough in keeping this domestic tourism energy buzzing?

States in India are always very proactive in promoting their region not only in India but to the world. Few of the states like MP, Gujarat and Kerala are on top in terms of promoting their states on all platforms. Their main source market is not inbound and they have



kept focus on domestic market. We are talking about 180 crore domestic travellers (visits), which is a huge number that can profit all stakeholders in the travel and tourism and each state can benefit from it.

Are you disappointed with the way Tourism sector has been ignored by the government? Are you hopeful of receiving any financial aid from the govt. in the near future?

Being an office bearer of ADTOI and board member of FAITH, I had a chance to be a part of several meetings with the Tourism Minister, Secretary Tourism, Jt. Secretary, DG and other senior officials and discussed the problem at length. However, the conclusion every time is that they have their own limitation as tourism involves one of huge unorganized sectors on which the government has no data and cannot support. The fight is to support all but on what grounds. We have suggested to go for GST certificate means all registered agents or with MOT approved agents, which the Ministry can also acknowledge.

What all has ADTOI been doing to keep the domestic tourism

momentum going in the country?

We at ADTOI, over the last few months, have been trying our best to arrange educational session, product presentations etc. for our members on a regular basis. Starting from big chain luxury 5* dlx hotels to 4* category of hotels, technology companies, GST compliances etc. we have also been regularly sending all updated information to members such as current situation in state and SOP's and we feel that this will help our members to stay abreast with the situation and our hotel/tech partners will get a chance to interact with our members and share their products/specials.

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

Media always plays a vital role in the tourism industry. We want Media to stay focused and promote positive news. We all are suffering due to this pandemic and TA/TO need encouragement to stand up again to start running. With positive reading and positive atmosphere, I am sure we will come back soon, stronger than ever.

IATTE launches Gujarat Chapter, membership crosses 1300 in 80 days since launch

Indian Association of Travel and Tourism Experts (IATTE) – a new one-of-its-kind and innovative online platform for travel trade partners, recently launched its Gujarat Chapter and crossed the 1300 membership mark in mere 80 days since being formed.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Keeping up with the new realities of meetings and networking of the present times, the Indian Association of Travel and Tourism Experts (IATTE) has gained momentous strength in very little time. The 'unique' association, which was floated during the pandemic, has crossed the 1300 members mark in less than 100 days of its existence. In today's challenging times, the strength of the travel community lies in coming together and standing tall in the prevailing crisis. The growing numbers of IATTE reaffirms the same.

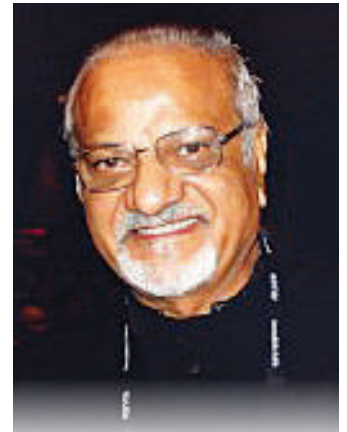
Taking another step in the path towards strengthening its existence and impact, the association recently virtually launched its very first state chapter with Gujarat. Mr. Jenu Devan, Managing Director, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Ltd. & Commissioner of Tourism, Government of India and Mr. Nirav Munshi, Manager, Commercial Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Ltd. graced the virtual launch. He not only applauded IATTE for the commendable work it is doing but also assured complete support for the smooth functioning of the Gujarat Chapter. Naveen Manchanda, President, IATTE, humbly accepted the praise and stated that the association has a long way ahead of it before it reaches its target. Subhash Goyal, Chairman ASSOCHAM Tourism Council & Hon'y. Secretary, FAITH was also present at the launch and commended the team of IATTE for the good work that they are doing.

Meanwhile, adding another 'first' to its list, IATTE recently became part of The Museum of Tourism. The association has achieved 1300 members in 75 days under leadership of President Naveen Manchanda and advisor Subhash Verma and other core members.

IATTE through its virtual meets has already provided insight to its members on how to balance strategy and operational excellence post-Covid-19 pandemic.



Naveen Manchanda,
President,
IATTE



Subhash Verma,
National Advisor,
IATTE

Other topics that the forum has focused on included how businesses can heal at present scenario and focus on efficiency, collaborations and creativity.

"This unique forum will provide Indian and global perspectives on how organizations are reacting to current unforeseen circumstances and overcoming challenges by converting them into opportunities. Members will have a comprehensive understanding to take back and implement in their operations, processes and businesses as a whole which should stand them in a better place than before," adds Manchanda.

IATTE membership is complimentary for the financial year 2020-2021. Industry veteran, Subhash Verma has been appointed as the National Advisor of the forum. Veena Robinson has been appointed as the General Secretary while Gaurav Khandelwal and Jatin G. Mehta have taken up the role of Joint Secretaries of the forum. The key members of the Managing Committee also include Aanal Dhahi as Treasurer and Nischay Manchanda as Head-Youth Wing.

ICPB readies to hold its 13th CIC as a hub-hybrid event on October 30 – 31, 2020

ICPB is holding its flagship event, the 13th Conventions India Conclave (CIC) – as a hybrid event with the theme – ‘Physical & Digital Meetings – A Harmonious Blend’ on 30 – 31 October 2020 to promote India as a Safe and Attractive MICE destination, post COVID19. The physical event is taking place at J W Marriott Aerocity New Delhi while there are hub-hybrid meetings from Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, CIDCO Mumbai and more.

This year when the COVID19 crisis has disrupted the meetings industry, with the need for social distancing and other safety protocols, ICPB with the support of members and Industry, is using these challenging times to demonstrate the resilience of the industry in hosting the 13th CIC as a ‘Hybrid Event’.

At present, due to restrictions in the number of participants permissible, 100 attendees will be participating at the event in person at the J W Marriott Aerocity and about 800 participants are expected to participate virtually including 100-150 potential buyers, exhibitors, stakeholders of the MICE industry, tourism students, government officials, industry colleagues etc. for networking, updating and forging new alliances to kick-start MICE business post the pandemic crisis.

Amaresh Tiwari, Vice Chairman - ICPB and Convention Chairman says, “The MICE Industry in India is slowly and steadily gaining momentum. As the apex body of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, we at ICPB have to set an example and be at the forefront of getting the events industry back on its feet. The venue partner for the hybrid event is JW Marriott Aerocity, New Delhi which will host the event showcasing their world class MICE facilities, applying all safety protocols in compliance



Amaresh Tiwari (centre), Girish Kwatra (left) with Anuj Wadhwa (right)

with govt. guidelines. Government of Gujarat is Supporting State Partner for the Conclave. We have received positive response from the industry as people are now eager to cautiously return to the MICE arena. Challenging times call for innovative approach and with this hybrid-event we are setting an example for others to follow.”

Mr. Ori Lahav, President, IAPCO will deliver the Keynote Address on the theme – Physical & Digital Meetings – A Harmonious Blend, which will set the tone for the 2 days events. Interesting sessions/panel discussions and parallel sessions will be insightful and provide perspectives of eminent speakers of the industry.

“This year, keeping the unique format

of the Conclave in mind, the focus of CIC will be knowledge exchange. We are fortunate to have Mr. Ori as the keynote speaker and ICCA has also agreed to partner with us for the 13th CIC. In addition to this, there will be dedicated sessions for students pursuing MICE as a career, which is something that is happening for the very first time,” says Girish Kwatra, Hony. Secretary, ICPB.

More than 800 attendees will participate on the virtual platform for a delightful digital experience. Prescheduled meetings with the buyers and exhibitors will be on virtual platform providing opportunity for business networking.

Let us explore and make India **'Incredible'** once again

Our country is a treasure trove – a jewel box that is brimming with precious ornaments rich in nature, wildlife, monuments, hills, monasteries, beaches, lakes, temples and much much more. Given the scenario where commercial international travel is restricted and the COVID curve is dipping in India, we feel the time is just right for you to set off and explore your neighbouring city, state, monument or a historic temple. Following the norms of new normal and social distancing, the millennials, who are itching to take a break from the whole 'work from home' scenario will surely plan a holiday in the coming months. So how about exploring something less explored? BOTT shares an overview of few 'lesser known' destinations in India.

Araku Valley Andhra Pradesh



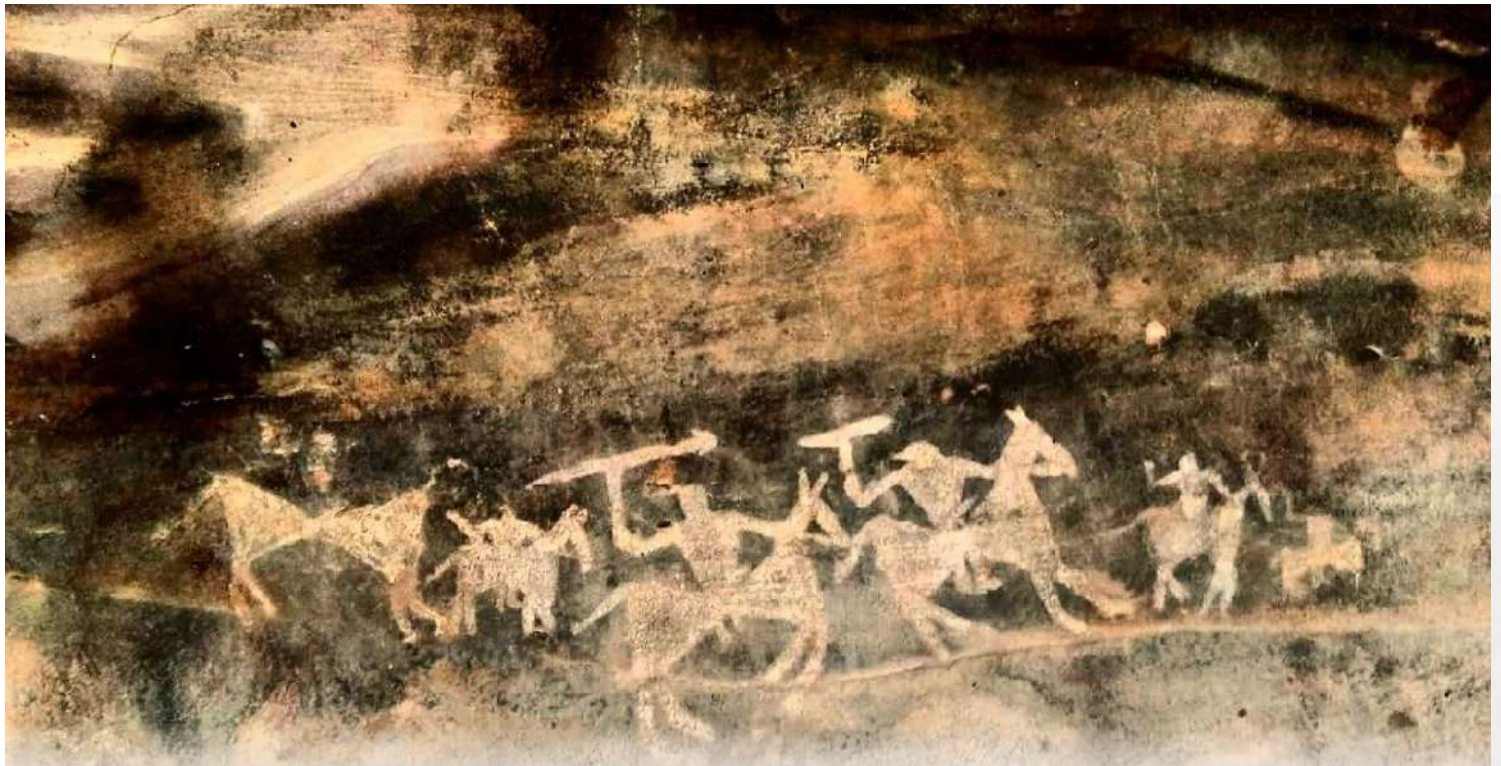
There are no dearth of hill stations in India. Infact, almost every state of the country is home to plenty – each more unique than the other, varied in its offerings and different in its typography. Besieged with enchanting streams, lush green forests, beautiful waterfalls, sprawling coffee plantations, rich landscape and wonderful weather, Araku Valley in Vizag, Andhra Pradesh is one of the most popular hilly destinations in the region.

Situated at an altitude ranging from 600-900 m above the sea level, Araku Valley offers visitors an extremely pleasant climate all through the year, which makes it one of the most sought after places in the district. Surrounded by mountains, namely, Galikonda, Raktakonda, Sunkarimetta and Chitamogondi, the splendour of this place is tough to put down in words and can be best left to experience. Extremely rich in biodiversity, coffee plantations and high quality bauxite ore, these hills are one of the highest in Andhra.

One of the most visited places in the region is the Borra Caves. Located in the middle of the Ananthagiri Hills in Araku Valley and are mysterious and majestic. These are completely naturally formed and are believed to be around 150 million years old. Research conducted by anthropologists have discovered stone tools of middle Paleolithic Age that date back to 30,000 to 50,000 years. There are many crystal white calcium stones which have also taken sculptural forms. All these shapes create an optical illusion of hidden treasure as it is illuminated, decorated and glittered by 63 lamps of made of mercury, sodium vapour and halogen.



Araku, a pleasant hill station, offers plenty of touristy options for the discerning traveller. The Botanical Garden at Padmapuram, Government Silk Farm with Mulberry gardens are some of the live examples to know better the socio-economic conditions of the area. In addition to this, the Tribal Museum is also a big attraction of the Araku. Chaaparai, a picturesque place about 15 km from Araku is a popular picnic spot in this region.



Bhimbetka

Madhya Pradesh



For those who appreciate history, the rock shelters of Bhimbetka, which are located in the Vindhyan Range in the heart of India, are a mecca to understand what cave paintings are all about. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003, some of the paintings in these rock shelters date back to as many as 30,000 years and exhibits the earliest traces of human life on the Indian Subcontinent, which is what we refer to as the Stone Age era.

The numerous paintings – broadly divided into five clusters, have been broadly classified under periods of Upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Historic and medieval. Every era represented through the various cave paintings and period had its own unique artistic and decorative style. Thankfully, the paintings have been well preserved because of the dense foliage surrounding the caves, thus preventing them from exposure to extreme climatic conditions.

The cave paintings at Bhimbetka has been mainly made using white and red colours along with the sporadic use of green and yellow. Studies over a period of time have revealed that these colours were made with the combination of hematite, manganese, soft red stone and wooden coal with the occasional addition of animal fat and leaf extract to the mixture. The use of such unique combination is perhaps the reason why the colour has not vanished over the years.

These paintings take us back in time and are often treated as evidence of the socio-cultural aspects of the earlier civilizations and ages. They depict scenes such as hunting, dancing, horse riding – other everyday activities along with popular religious symbols and animals like bison, tigers, elephants, lions and reptiles. Of particular interest are the Auditorium Rock Shelter, Zoo Rock and Boar Rock in the Bhimbetka Cluster. Experiencing and seeing them in real life will simply transport you to another era, which we have heard and read so much about.

Chitrakote Falls Chhattisgarh



Fondly called as the Niagara Falls of India, the Chitrakote Falls is a gift from nature and a spectacular sight to one's eyes. Waterfalls are anyway a delight to watch and as one gazes at them in awe, you realise the power and glory of nature, which can be witnessed through these gushing streams of water in high speed and momentum from a great height. One of the widest waterfalls in India, it is located 38 km from Jagdalpur and is accessible only by road.

Flowing from 95ft above with intense force, the falls are a treat for eyes and senses. Located in Jagdalpur of Bastar district on Indravati River, Chitrakote Falls attracts thousands of tourists throughout the year. With wild swirling eddies and a roar that can be heard for miles, these falls have an untamed character that evokes equal amounts of fear and awe. The large amount of silt in the Indravati River during the monsoon makes the water quite muddy and swimming is out of the question. The Falls are surrounded by a surfeit of resorts, camping sites, picnic spots, yoga and meditation centres.

Not only waterfall, Chitrakote is also popular due to the Hindu legendary Lord Ram. There has many Hindu spiritual temples and pilgrimage place. And also various Hindu festivals like, Makar Sankranti, Ramnaamvi and Somvati Amavasya are celebrated here with a complete spiritual system.

The state of Chhattisgarh is blessed with some amazing eco-tourism destinations and the Chitrakote Falls is one of them. It is an ideal place for picnics, getaway and stunning panoramic views, which offers plenty of opportunity to click good pictures. One can spend some time in isolation away from the commotion of the cities for detoxification amidst nature.





Though the place has been fairly publicised and talked about on various platforms by Gujarat Tourism, the destination still has huge potential to receive more visitors who would like to see and experience a unique region. World's largest salt desert measuring about 10,000 sq. km, the region here is divided into two distinct areas -- the Great Rann and the Little Rann -- each offering different experiences. The former is best known for its spectacular landscapes, while the latter destination is a hub of wildlife and salt farming.

The Great Rann of Kutch

Gujarat

Kutch, which means “intermittently wet and dry”, is a unique destination for its distinctive feature of staying submerged in water during the monsoon season and then drying up to become this white salty plateau during the winter months. Given the tempestuous climate, most travellers visit the Great Rann in winter for the best chance to see the lunar-like landscapes. There is nothing more breath taking than to watch these white expanse of lands during a full moon-lit night – a sight that will leave you with memories to last a lifetime.

The Rann of Kutch region is also home to a range of ecologically rich wildlife such as the flamingos and the wild ass that can be spotted around the desert often. Rann is also a part of a few sanctuaries such as the Indian wild ass sanctuary, Kutch desert wildlife sanctuary etc. It is a paradise for wildlife photographers and nature enthusiasts alike.

A popular time to visit the place is during the Rann Utsav, organised by the Gujarat Tourism from November to February, each year. A temporary city with hundreds of luxury tents is set up near the Gateway to Rann Resort at Dhordo along with rows of food and handicraft stalls. It is a Carnival of Music, Dance, natural beauty of White Rann and much more, when visited under the full Moon. Kutch Rann Utsav is the shimmering landscape that gives the enchanting moments of this Fest, which feels like ‘Heaven on Earth’ during festival time.



Kanatal Uttarakhand



Located at a high altitude in the suburban area of Mussoorie on the main Chamba – Mussoorie road, Kanatal is a serene and picturesque hilly town that offers solace and peace from the maddening rush of the city. With picture perfect sceneries and plenty of greens, this quaint town has much to offer in terms of recreation and adventure to the discerning traveller visiting the region.

Popular served as a weekend getaway for the local populous, Kanatal is a picture perfect hub that boasts of heavenly scenery, luxuriant vegetation, and bountiful adventure activities. If you are looking for a holiday with solemn peace but wouldn't really mind a bit of fun as well, take a trip to Kanatal – away from the urban hassles. Besides stunning natural beauty, there are a number of interesting things to do in Kanatal.

The destination also offers plenty of adventure opportunities and is also chosen as a favourite spot for campers. You can also take a walk through the Kodia Jungle, which is a dense forest area located at a distance of around one kilometre away from Kanatal. You can spot a few wild animals by taking a ride through the jungle in a jeep, and you can also see Tehri Dam and many natural springs that are quite prevalent in the region.

Not just summers, Kanatal is also best enjoyed during the winter months as it experiences good amount of snow – perfect for celebrating a White Christmas or a Snowy New Year. There are many places that you can visit during your trip to Kanatal and the Surkanda Devi Temple is the most popular religious destination, situated at a distance of around 10 km from Kanatal. Thus, be it for adventure, religious or just a getaway into the quiet and beautiful place – Kanatal can be your perfect getaway to spend some quality time with your loved ones.



Visa Curbs eased; OCI card holders can visit India but not for Tourism

In a big move to get air travel back on track, the government has restored the validity of all existing visas, nearly eight months after they were suspended in the wake of the virus crisis and the nationwide lockdown.

BOTT DESK

All OCI and PIO card-holders as well as all foreign nationals intending to visit India for any purpose, except on a Tourist Visa, are permitted to enter by air or water routes through authorized airports and seaport immigration check posts. This has been announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs today.

This also includes flights that are operated under Air Transport Bubble arrangements, the Vande Bharat Mission, or by any non-scheduled commercial flights that are allowed by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. However, all those travelling under these categories, will have to strictly adhere to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare regarding quarantine and other health/COVID-19 related matters.

Reportedly, under this graded relaxation, the government plans to restore with immediate effect all existing visas (except Tourist Visa, electronic visa, and Medical Visa). As per the ministry, foreign nationals intending to visit India for medical treatment can apply for a Medical Visa, including those of medical attendants. However, if the validity of these visas has expired, one can apply for fresh visas for appropriate categories, which can be obtained from Indian Mission/Posts concerned.

As such, the latest decision will enable foreign nationals to travel to India for various purposes, such as studies, business, employment, conferences,



employment, medical, and research purposes etc.

The latest decision by the government comes in view of making graded

relaxation in visa and travel restrictions for Indian nationals and more categories of foreign nationals who wish to enter or leave India.

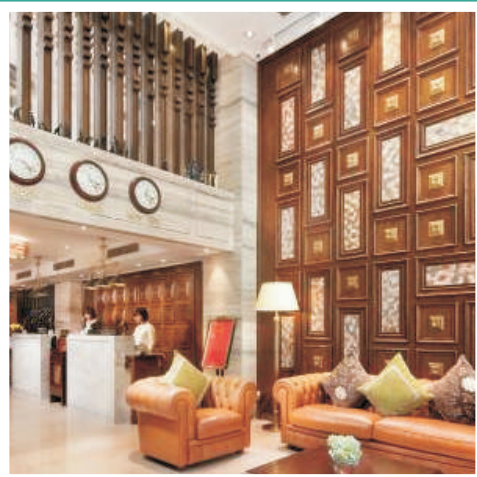
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