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# EDITOR'S Note

Dear Friends,

The year 2020, which kick-started as a fabulous and game-changing year for many turned out to be one of the scariest and depressing years for the entire mankind. The insurmountable loss that many of us faced, some in form of a near and dear one leaving and others in form of loss of work, job or business, will never be forgotten. The year 2020 will go down in history as a life-changing year for people across the globe as airplanes remained grounded, trains remained stationed and people remained locked up in homes.

However, being a thorough optimist, I would like to believe that not all was gloomy and infact there was some good that came out of 2020. Working parents got to spend more time with their kids. Couples, though did not go to a vacation, yet got an opportunity to spend quality time together. The forgotten passion for cooking, painting, gardening, playing an instrument, singing was re-discovered by many. Being home gathered a whole new connotation as families gathered around during zoom meetings to celebrate birthdays and festivals virtually. Oh! What a year it has been truly!

But all that seems to be coming to an end now. The skies that were gloomy can be seen marked with silver linings as Covid vaccines are being injected to people across the globe. India too seems ready to start its vaccination process by early next year and everyone in travel trade is hoping for a turn around in 2021. Well, what 2021 will bring, no one can say or be sure of but yes, we certainly can plan for it. BOTT spoke to the leading ladies in the Outbound Industry in India to know how severely their businesses were affected in 2020 and what their recovery plan is for the future. Our year-end issue is not a lookback on the downfalls of the year but is a look-ahead issue highlighting the encouraging news that we are all looking forward to next year.

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

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**  
[priyanka@bottindia.com](mailto:priyanka@bottindia.com)





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## The Leading Ladies of Outbound Industry in India

The Outbound Industry has been one of the worst hit segments within the global tourism fraternity. However, many feel, it will also be the first to pick when things go back to being normal. Keeping the same in mind, BOTT spoke to the leading ladies of the outbound industry to know how pepped and prepped they are for 2021.

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Mr. Thoyyib Mohamed, MD, MMPRC, spoke exclusively to BOTT on the traffic they have witnessed even during these COVID times and their plans to attract more tourists in future.

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The introduction of Safe Tourism Certificate Program has been a game changer for Turkey in these challenging times. In an exclusive chat with BOTT India, Mr. Timuçin Güler, Director General of Promotion of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey, shares more.



## Outbound Destinations

The pent up demand in the people will surely push them to look for safer, less crowded and attractively priced destinations for taking the much-needed break, once the COVID crisis settles down. We at BOTT, in our endeavour to help you plan your holidays better, have enlisted few destinations that we feel will recover faster than the others in terms of tourist traffic.

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## Fortune Hotels inks four operating agreements & adds over 300 rooms across India

Fortune Hotels, a member of ITC's hotel group recently announced the signing of four individual operating agreements for hotels in Candolim (Goa), Deoghar (Jharkhand), Haldwani (Uttarakhand) and Tirupur (Tamil Nadu). With these new signings, Fortune Hotels forays across the cardinal directions of India thereby solidifying its presence in these regions, adding more depth to its business and leisure portfolio. Highlighting the group's expansion strategy, Samir MC, Managing Director, Fortune Park Hotels Limited, said, "We are pleased to announce our entry into various growth markets of India. With these additions, we not only increase our appeal in the domestic market but also offer a very interesting destination mix to our business and leisure customers, thereby opening up new vistas for their travel."



## Aitken Spence Travels certified for "Safe Travels" by WTTC

Keeping abreast of global travel norms and primarily ensuring the safety of the operations, Aitken Spence Travels has been certified for "safe & secure travel" by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). The certification determines the highest levels of global protocols of safety and hygiene being followed by a destination. A first of its kind, the stamp was developed to help in restoring the confidence of the travellers and aims to revive an ailing travel sector in Sri Lanka. The certification entails an independent assessment by KPMG through the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) considering a comprehensive audit of safety standards adopted by the organization.



## Nijhawan Group becomes India Rep for Burj Khalifa & Emaar Entertainment



Nijhawan Group has been appointed as the official Sales & Marketing representative for Burj Khalifa and Emaar Entertainment (L.L.C) in India. The Entertainment chain carries a distinctive portfolio of attractions that are ultra-modern and transcend into entertainment and leisure. Its assets include some of the city's most unique entertainment venues including At the Top, Burj Khalifa, Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo, Dubai Ice Rink, KidZania, VR Park, Ekart Zabeel and the ultra-chic performing arts platform, Dubai Opera. Priyanka Nijhawan, Director – Representations, Nijhawan Group said, "We are prepared to help magnify and pave the path for the biggest entertainment chain in the country to enhance its reach in the B2B space."

## IHCL opens Taj Skyline in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Indian Hotels Company's (IHCL) iconic brand, Taj, has opened its new hotel in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Soaring over 18 storeys, Taj Skyline is located at a comfortable driving distance from the airport, important commercial centres as well as Gandhinagar – the state capital. It is a 315-room contemporary luxury hotel offering panoramic views of the city's skyline. The hotel's design captures the evolving spirit of the city, drawing subtle inspirations from the local design and culture in its interiors. In line with its philosophy of raising the bar of the culinary landscape, Taj Skyline introduces Shamiana, the popular all-day diner, to Ahmedabad – its third outpost after Mumbai and Dubai.



## Maldives bags the accolade for being the 'World's Leading Destination of 2020'

Maldives has received the World's Leading Destination award at the Grand Final of the World Travel Awards 2020 announced at a virtual event held recently. This is the first time that Maldives has won the award in the history of the island nation. Emerging as a winner, Maldives competed in this category with 22 other destinations including Dubai, Malaysia, Spain, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka. World Travel Awards established in 1993, is one of the most prestigious honours program in the global travel and tourism industry recognised globally. Maldives receiving such an esteemed recognition during the most challenging of times faced by the tourism industry has never been more important.



## OTOAI writes to NTOs to submit updated SOPs/ Guidelines for Indian traveller

Taking the lead by becoming the first and only Outbound Travel Trade Association in India to ask NTOs, Embassies and Consulates to lay down the travel guidelines for Indians wishing to go abroad, OTOAI has once again raised the bar of its commitment to the outbound travel community in India. Ever since the air-bubble arrangement started in India in July 2020, there has been a plethora of changes in the guidelines and SOPs to be followed. Also, since the number of COVID cases keeps changing, many countries often end up altering their travel guidelines, which are not made very clear to an outbound traveller. This letter by OTOAI, will require the NTOs to clearly state down the protocols and will give the much-needed clarity to the Indian outbound traveller.



## ITC Hotels introduces festive hampers to ring in the New Year

ITC Hotels has introduced a range of exclusive festive collection hampers with delicately crafted delicacies and boxes of goodies, all created to spread the cheer. 'Season's Selections by ITC Hotels' is a show stopping line up of festive signatures that combine the classics with the inventive. Traditional Christmas goodies are lavished with preserved mulled fruits, refreshing new flavours and exquisitely crafted with edible "baubles and ornaments". Presented by 'Nutmeg – The Gourmet Shop', the curations include Hampers of Joy and Festive Goodies showcasing artistically crafted delectable culinary gifts and the season's must shares.



## Travel services market to grow by \$56 bn in India during 2020-2024: Technavio

Technavio has announced its latest market research report titled Travel Services Market in India 2020-2024. According to the findings, the travel services market in India will grow by \$56 billion during 2020-2024. Technavio has been monitoring the travel services market and it is poised to grow by USD 56 billion during 2020-2024, progressing at a CAGR of about 19% during the forecast period. The report offers an up-to-date analysis regarding the current market scenario, latest trends and drivers, and the overall market environment. It states that the market will be driven by the rise in international tourist footfall. However, a significant price war led by stiff competition among players might challenge growth.





“Opening up of commercial international operations from India will boost the confidence of not just the travellers but also the various verticals of travel industry, who have been suffering immensely because of the COVID pandemic. It will be an integral step towards boosting the economy.”

**Riaz Munshi,**  
President, OTOAI



“We value our relationship with our partners and acknowledge their constant support to strengthen our bond during these unprecedented times. The year is ending and with the vaccine on horizon, the coming times look promising. We are hopeful for the good times to return soon.”

**Ankush Nijhawan,**  
Co-Founder TBO Group and M.D. Nijhawan Group

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, it puts a liquidity concern by blocking money and raises the issue of reconciliation. 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



People across the globe have already started marketing their destinations. We too should start talking about events in India. There is a need to develop a MICE policy / MICE fund and perhaps also work out an incentive scheme where people are motivated to hold their meetings and conventions in India rather than travelling abroad to do so.

**Amaresh Tiwari,**  
Vice Chairman, ICPB



Travellers today are receptive and eager. They're not simply satisfied with stunning sceneries, but also want to expand their cultural knowledge and grow as individuals. Untouched locations that allow people to get away from their urban lifestyles and reconnect with nature is what the affluent traveller is looking for.

**Kapil Chopra,**  
Founder and CEO, The Postcard Hotel



People have not ventured out much in last 10 months. This pent up demand to travel will push people to go out and explore once things go back to normal. Thus, I feel the summer of next year will offer a great opportunity to tourism and aviation industry to make up for the lost time. Going forward, the new normal will be the new way of travel and will have to be adhered by all.

**Pradeep Singh Kharola,**  
Secretary – Civil Aviation, Government of India







Outbound Tour Operators Association of India

## Strengthening the pillars of Trust



### Advantages of Membership

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- Opportunity to give back to society
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#### ✓ Networking

- Networking opportunities with Indian and Global Travel Industry stakeholders
- Platform to enhance your business and develop newer markets

#### ✓ Sharing

- Share your best practices with other members
- Help enhance competitiveness of Indian Travel Industry

# The Leading Ladies in Outbound Travel



**"The woman who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before..."**

**-Albert Einstein**



# ‘We have to learn to carry on with our jobs while practising safety norms’: Vasudha Sondhi

She is a veteran, an incisive professional who weighs the pros and cons of every business decision and strongly believes in putting sales back in the business for her clients. Handling a distinguished portfolio of hospitality brands, destinations and more, Vasudha Sondhi, Managing Director, Outbound Marketing, believes that it will not be before 2023 before the market can see the same business as 2019. Here are her views on the outbound scenario from India and where does it seem to be going.



### >VASUDHA SONDHI

There is no doubt that this year has been a tough one, for almost everyone, across countries, businesses, profiles – everyone has struggled in one way or the other. It is no secret that in the last eight months there has been almost NIL international travel except for repatriation travel or emergencies. As you know all countries or almost all countries across the globe shut their borders and some are not planning to welcome anyone till next year i.e. 2021. So it's been a crisis which has no parallel in recent times or maybe 100 years.

I strongly believe that commercial flights should commence operations now. After all, people do need to work and earn money and the wheels of the economy have to move otherwise there will be a worse calamity with empty government coffer. I think it is a great practice to set up some form of testing at the airports on arrival or prior to departure. Masks are here to stay, even after the pandemic goes away. So going about ones job with all safety norms practiced will help in opening up much quicker. Having said that flights should commence with airlines and destinations controlling numbers, following strict safety norms, testing etc.

It has been heartening to see some kind of movement happening with regards to outbound from India. Some of the destinations and hotels are seeing their business return. This is the right way forward and business

should return to some form of normalcy. Currently, Maldives and Dubai are seeing business grow from India. Both Dubai and Maldives are very much driven by tourism, especially Maldives. All the chains we represent in India have suffered a lot but most of the hotels are open now. The business that they are getting right now is from within their countries or staycations. As part of the chains we manage for sales, there is inventory in both the destinations mentioned that are open and they are getting business.

No one at this point can predict when things will go back to being normal though I hope it is sooner than we can imagine. However the writing on the wall is that 2019 level will take up to 2023 to return.

Concluding my view I would like to say that this is a good time for destinations and also states within India to look at their number of visitors. Very few destinations practice controlled tourism. In the recent past years we have heard about flooding in Europe, locals asking for tourists to go away, the uproar against the largest bed and breakfast portal making destinations too affordable therefore drawing in backpackers almost everywhere, the disastrous floods in the Himalayas and so on and on. All this was validated by the subsequent return of the green atmosphere during the lockdown. Thus, these are all indicators that we don't have time anymore for discussions, it's time to act if we need to preserve our planet for future generations. Tourism as an industry needs to lead from the front.



### ‘No moratoriums, no relief, no bailout package and TCS made this an extremely tough year’: **Jyoti Mayal**

She is the second women President of a travel trade association (that too after a gap of 20 years) and hasn't had an easy opening year in her new role. However, that has not deterred her from surging ahead on her path to not just get the due recognition for her association, benefit and skill for the travel agents in India but also fight for their rights by voicing their concerns and issues on every public forum possible. Fearless, vivacious and confident – Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI is unstoppable as she moves ahead, spearheading one of the largest travel agents' association in the country. Here's a look at her 'report card' of the year gone by.

#### ➤ JYOTI MAYAL

There is no doubt that the first year of my President as TAAI has been busier than what it would have been in the normal times. It was full of challenges and offered a new learning experience. My continuous meetings with the ministries, government airlines and stake holders helped me connect with them better, understand their limitations and put forth my issues better in front of them. Numerous rounds of meetings with the Government, be it Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Tourism, Niti Aayog or the Finance Ministry helped us in achieving some desired results, such as RTPCR Testing at airports, removing the quarantine rule, opening up of air bubbles, getting agents to see Air India repatriation flights tickets and more. We also connected with various Embassies and State Tourism Ministries – all to get our pleas heard and arrive at a mutually beneficial conclusion.

While we have achieved success on various fronts, the road ahead to recovery is definitely tough. All businesses – be it big or small have been hugely affected in the pandemic and even after the vaccine will be out, the travel industry will take about two years to reach complete recovery. The fact that we received no moratoriums, reliefs, incentivisation, taxes/TCS, ease of business, no bailout package has further deteriorated the condition of the travel agents in India.

Going forward, my aim is to diligently work towards safeguarding the businesses of the travel agents, form ways and means so that there is ease of business, create better and stronger relationship with IATA, DGCA, MoCA, MoT and

most important get tourism sector the much deserved and much delayed Industry Status. I would also work towards getting insurance on tickets booked by the travel agents. What we need is a travel and tourism task force under our PM, which is inclusive of all travel tourism and hospitality related ministries – Finance, Shipping, MSME, MoCA, MoT, Niti Aayog, Rural, Railways, Transportation, MSDE & more so that there is better understanding and coordinated approach towards handling the issues related to the tourism sector.

One of our major concern and top priority at the moment is TCS, which we have been taking up on war footing with the Government individually and along with FAITH as well. It is added burden upon the travel agents and we at TAAI are rooting for its complete removal. While the last few months have been extremely demotivating, we at TAAI have been successfully conducting Educational Webinars with tourism boards, hoteliers, holiday planning companies, DMCs, visa facilitators, Tax Consultants on MSME / GST, etc. in our endeavour to keep our agents informed and increase their knowledge.

I am forever grateful to the support and encouragement of my members, who have stood by me through these tough times. Infact, I can humbly concede that the TAAI members are extremely relieved to have someone voice their concerns so strongly at all platforms. I have left no stone unturned in fighting for their rights and I will continue to do so. Being a woman leader, I aim to herald an era where more women are promoted and supported to perform to the best of their ability.



### ‘With holiday season ahead, we are optimistic that Dubai will make up for the lost tourists’: **Priyanka Nijhawan**

She belongs to a huge family-run business conglomerate, which is spearheaded by her spouse. But that did not deter her from setting up a vertical of business that had potential, which coupled with her consistent efforts, vision and leadership is today not just a thriving trade but one that has helped her carve her name as an incisive ‘Businesswomen’. Priyanka Nijhawan, Director – Representations, Nijhawan Group, is a lady on a mission, successfully driving the outbound from India to Dubai and beyond.



#### >PRIYANKA NIJHAWAN

I am glad to share that ever since the air bubble has commenced, there has been an unstoppable growth between the two destinations – Dubai and India. The Emirate is showing the highest levels of safety and hygiene, which has added to our advantage. Indians were amongst the most travelled segment before the pandemic struck, and they indeed are the most confident lot about resuming their international travel endeavours with Dubai.

It is unfortunate but COVID-19 is one of the rare shared global experience, which united people in their grief, loss and fear. While the pandemic caused plenty of damage, the travel trade was one of the worst hits. With the worldwide lockdown, during the initial months, the pandemic caused a huge setback to the travel and tourism industry as a whole. However, taking the lead, Dubai was one of the first cities to reopen its international borders for tourists. The destination has been witnessing a good flow of inbound traffic and with the holiday season ahead of us, we are optimistic that the Emirate will make up for the lost tourists sooner than expected.

I am glad to share that there has been a substantial growth in Q4 of 2020 with regards to outbound tourist travel from India to Dubai. With flight connectivity re-started from almost every major tier-1 and tier 2 cities, the tourism activities are kick starting in the

Emirate. In my opinion, there has been a paradigm shift in the sentiment for travelling again; MICE tourism is still a few months away to begin. People are now looking at more personalized experiences, with safety and hygiene being the top priority, people are choosing to stay at luxury home-stays, which are growing in popularity and demand. Dubai has also launched a unique ‘Virtual Working Programme’ that enables overseas remote working professionals to live in Dubai while continuing to serve their employers in their home country. Furthermore, tourists are being extra cautious and are staying at trust-worthy hotel chains, which are assuring them of following complete safety protocols.

Dubai is a city that has something to offer to all – from extravagant theme parks to architectural marvels. Every time you visit the Emirate, it ceases to amaze you. Dubai has sent out a strong message that it is the global hub for health and fitness, by organizing the Dubai Fitness Challenge. The challenge is simple: complete 30 minutes of activity each day for 30 days. Dubai is also ready to host the much-awaited annual celebration of Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) starting this month!

India has been the number one source market for Dubai even before the global pandemic hit and continues to maintain its position. Dubai has also emerged as the most popular international destination for India tourists, despite the current global scenario.



### ‘There is huge pent up demand for leisure travel for both domestic & international destinations’: **Sheema Vohra**

Optimistic, encouraging and forever smiling, one immediately thinks of the USA upon seeing her, not because she has been promoting that destination in the India market for a long time but because her passion for doing so is almost unmissable. Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing talks about the outbound from India, not just on how severely it has been affected but more on what can be done for it to pick up again.

#### › SHEEMA VOHRA

Enough being said about the effects of the pandemic on the common man, I am positive and hopeful that the outbound leisure tourism will recover very fast in times to come. There are several positives that we are seeing in-market – there is a steady decline in coronavirus cases, a steady increase in flight capacity and most importantly, the COVID vaccine is expected to roll out by January in India. All these factors put together will definitely play a key role in fast-tracking the revival of international travel not just from India but also across the globe.

For the Indian customers, travel is a part of their lifestyle and not a luxury they indulge in from time to time. It is almost like a necessity. People are eagerly looking forward to be able to travel once again, reinforcing my belief that that there is huge pent up demand for leisure travel for both domestic and international destinations, which will kick-in the moment international flights start operating and countries open their borders.

As we can see already, international travel from India has started to pick up slowly and steadily within the air-bubbles created. However, I feel that with a revised set of SOPs in place, which follows the norms of social distancing, it is safe to open international travel all over the world as in the last 8 months, people have understood how to travel taking the necessary precautions and checks in place. Opening up of commercial international operations will boost the confidence of not just the travellers but also the

various verticals of the travel industry, who have been suffering immensely because of the COVID pandemic. It will be an integral step towards boosting the economy.

With regards to the US market, I am glad to note that both Air India as well as United Airlines have announced new direct routes beginning December, which is very encouraging news for the people travelling on this sector. Even while things have been slow, we continue to regularly engage with the travel trade and media as the USA offers a vast variety of unique and diverse experiences that are attractive to the Indian travellers.

Going forward, there is going to be a high demand for vacations that offer unique local outdoor experiences, road trips, national parks etc. Places that are less-crowded will definitely gain an edge, however, that does not mean that urban areas will be ignored. Travellers are eager to get back to doing things they did in the past like visiting cities for nightlife, culinary experiences, arts, culture etc. Needless to say, factors such as sanitation and hygiene will continue to be important and there will be more focus on responsible and environmentally conscious travel.

We as the caretakers of outbound from India must guide the travellers to destinations that are undertaking the necessary precautions of sanitisation and social distancing. We at the travel trade need to figure out opportunities that are not just extremely appealing but also ‘safe’. With a bit of research, knowledge and ground work, doing so is completely achievable.



### ‘Thailand is slowly opening up for international travellers with special visa schemes & safety checks’: **Pinki Arora**

Her name is almost synonymous with Thailand, not because her company represents the destination to the India market, but because her passion for the place is visible in the way she talks about it. Pinki Arora, Marketing Representative North & East India, Bangladesh & Nepal Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) shares an overview of how Thailand has handled the spread of the pandemic and its plans to get more visitors to the destination in 2021.



#### ➤PINKI ARORA

Thailand has curbed the COVID 19 pandemic very well in the country and was ranked number one in the world out of the 184 countries for its ongoing COVID-19 recovery effort, according to the Global COVID-19 Index (GCI). Thailand received an index score of 82.06, putting it on top of the global chart as an example of best practices in tackling the ongoing global pandemic. The situation continues to be good with not many cases reported for the past few months. As for the air-bubble agreement with India, there are on-going negotiations between the two countries and we are hopeful of the talks coming thru, keeping in consideration the COVID situation in both India as well as Thailand.

There is no doubt that tourism to Thailand from India and all over the world has been greatly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many service providers and tourism products have gone through difficult times due to a complete halt in tourism. There has hardly been any travel between both the countries (except for repatriation flights) since the pandemic. Now Thailand is slowly opening up for international travellers under the special Tourist visa and single entry Tourist Visa schemes under strict public health measures in order to keep both visitors and locals safe and healthy. However we are certain that the industry will bounce back better and stronger and Thailand will continue to remain a most favoured country for Indians and welcome Indian tourists with open arms.

India is a very important market for Thailand and stands at number six in the overall arrivals. Indians also remain as one of the highest spenders in Thailand. In 2019, the country welcomed almost 2 million Indian tourists, making Thailand one of the top destinations for Indians to visit. Thailand is also the number one destination for Golfers, Indian weddings and celebrations including honeymoon.

Going forward, we are certain that the outbound traffic from India to Thailand will reach pre Covid-19 levels once the country opens up next year. By summer of 2021 we hope to welcome international tourists to Thailand. TAT has taken several measures to ensure safety and hygiene as priority for all tourists visiting Thailand. Keeping the “New Normal” of travelling in mind, TAT has introduced “Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration” or SHA Certification. This is aimed at elevating the country’s tourism industry standards and developing confidence among domestic and international tourists. The Amazing Thailand SHA Certification is to prepare Thai travel and hospitality business to be ready for the return of tourism post COVID-19.

Thailand at present is issuing STV ( Special Tourist Visa), which is a special visa created during the Covid-19 Pandemic for long stay tourists who would like to travel in Thailand for at least 30 days. Foreigners will be able to apply for this visa until 30 September 2021 and can stay up to 90 days and get extension two times making a stay up to 270 days.



### ‘There is a great potential to promote tourism from India to Melbourne & AlUla’: **Huzan Fraser Motivala**

A stalwart who handles a myriad portfolio of destinations, Huzan Fraser Motivala, India Representative, Visit Victoria and Royal Commission of AlUla shares insight on not just the tourist traffic from India to Melbourne (which is not part of the air bubble) and Royal Commission of AlUla (which is part of the air bubble) but also on when tourism will go back to being what it was before the Pandemic struck.

#### ➤ HUZAN FRASER

Melbourne is not part of the air-bubble agreement yet; while this is government's call, we expect something good comes up soon and are hopeful that by mid-2021 tourism traffic can resume between Melbourne and India. It is sad indeed that since the lockdown, there has been no tourism between India and Melbourne.

For the year ending March 2020, Victoria registered 176.1K Indian visitors. We believe tourism will kick start once the borders open and flights resume. There is pent-up demand for international travel and once the situation is normal, travel will gradually pick up. Initially, we expect the VFR traffic to start, which will be followed by self-drive tours. Melbourne has wonderful self-drive routes including Great Southern Touring Route and Go Beyond Mel-

bourne. The news regarding vaccine has brought a ray of hope for the people and will definitely give confidence to people to travel.

The Indian cricket team is currently in Australia playing the Border Gavaskar series and the Boxing Day match starting December 26 is at the MCG in Melbourne with domestic spectators. The ICC world cup is planned in Australia in 2022, which we will be promoting once borders open to enable people to plan their holiday.

Meanwhile, India and Saudi Arabia are in talks on the air bubble agreement front and we can just hope that something positive comes up in the near future. Our company Beautiful Planet Destination Marketing received the mandate to promote AlUla in India from September 2020. Thus, it is only recently that we have started with trade and consumer activities to promote AlUla.



AlUla is a new destination. We are hoping that as soon as the borders open, visitation to Al Ula will be an interesting holiday to explore. Though there has not been large number of tourist visitors from India to AlUla. However, there is a great potential to promote tourism from India to AlUla. AlUla is a place of extraordinary human and natural heritage. The four key pillars of AlUla are Heritage, Adventure, Art & Culture and Nature. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz has a vision to turn Al-Ula County into a living museum, creating memories that visitors will share with the world. So while things are not moving much at this point in time, I am hopeful that 2021 and 2022 will bring good news for all of us.



# Odishaaah!

( Sunset, Chilika Lake )

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



**ODISHA**  
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.



### ‘We work towards creating engaging experiences for the global Indian travellers’: Neeti Bhatia

Intrepid Marketing and Communications, which was formed based on over 25 years of on-ground robust experience, is being successfully run by Madhuri Verma and Neeti Bhatia, who are the Directors in the company. Handling a varied bouquet of destinations, the ladies are setting new benchmarks in the outbound industry in India. Here’s a look at their vision and mission for the times ahead.

#### › NEETI BHATIA

Intrepid Marketing and Communications was formed based on over 25 years of on-ground robust experience which comes from working in diverse fields of work and making success stories. Our vision outline is – It made us realise that there must be ‘honour before the hustle’ and ‘people before profits’. Therefore our vision is based on ‘nothing can substitute focused services and transparency between our clients and us. This work ethos, our understanding of client requirements, and the India trade and consumer landscape, we work towards creating engaging experiences for the global Indian travellers.

Talking about professional achievements, currently we have Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, Greek National Tourism Organisation, FedHatta and Kenya Tourism Board as our clients. India outbound travel numbers have increased steadily to these destinations and have seen year-on-year growth consistently since the three years (debaring 2020). India is amongst the top 10 source markets for Bahrain and Kenya and the tourism boards of both the countries are keen for Indian numbers to return to normalcy in 2021.

With the closure of international borders and restrictions with terms and conditions on AIR Bubble flights, the outbound tourism segment has been severely affected. However we see that as Maldives and Dubai opened their borders, Indian travellers have been flocking these destinations and restoring the much needed optimism in outbound travel.

As the severity of the virus seems to be weakening globally and also in India, many Indian tourists have started to trickle very slowly in to Bahrain and Kenya and many travel agents and tour operators have expressed the interests of the Indian travellers for these destinations in the upcoming months. Our strategy is going to be at a micro and macro level. We are keeping our ideas and actions fluid and want to leave space for altering strategies as the coming months unfold the global tourism landscape and its situations.

The Indian traveller has very high intent and aspiration to take holidays in the coming times, however factors such as COVID 19, international border re-openings, airline frequencies, pricing and immigration rules will be the key determining factors for projections.



**Madhuri Verma**



# ‘Once travel restrictions are lifted, air traffic will boom from India to the rest of the world: **Komal Seth**

One of the youngest achievers in the outbound industry in India today, Komal Seth, Director Linkin Reps, has earned an impressive reputation and a buzzing portfolio of clients in a short span of time. She is best known for her astute sense of business, leadership and fashion sense! An avid traveller and a COVID survivor, Komal has come a long way in setting new standards in the outbound travel from India.



### › KOMAL SETH

There is no doubt that outbound tourist traffic has received an enormous fall – not only in India but all across the globe. Airplanes are grounded and international flights are just not taking off, except the repatriation movement. The scenario is not just sad but also extremely depressing. While India may not be in the top 10 source market for many countries in the world, yet the country is one of the highest contributors for tourism traffic to Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and the UAE. All these countries also must have witnessed a huge fall in their tourist traffic. The pandemic has created a lot of economic consequences for the industry we are still hopeful that soon things will be back on track and the industry will start booming.

As for our clients, India is an extremely important, very strong and potential market for many countries. Once the travel restriction is lifted from both the countries, I am confident that the traffic will resume immediately. People have stayed locked in their homes for too long and there is a huge pent up demand for travel, which will definitely see a surge in outbound from India.

While at this moment, it is beyond prediction level but yes, we are all hopeful with the vaccine news. I am positive that slowly the traffic will start picking up from India and the Indian skies will open up too. While the government right now is not easing the airlines to fly, it is only a matter of time before they start doing so. I strongly feel that opening up of commercial international operations will boost the confidence of not just the travellers but also the various verticals of the travel industry, who have been suffering immensely because of the COVID pandemic. It will be an integral step towards boosting the economy.

I am also happy to share that during the pandemic and lockdown, SriLankan Airlines, standing true to its commitment of serving its people, organised several repatriation flights to bring home the stranded citizens back to their country along with its regular cargo activities. These have been tough times for everyone, all across the globe, but there is a ray of light that can be seen now and hopefully by mid-next year, we will see some good movement happening in the outbound sector from India.



### ‘Open landscapes and uncrowded attractions will definitely bring people to Ireland’: **Beena Menon**

Having been associated with representing the destination in India for over a decade now, Beena Menon, India Representative, Tourism Ireland, is a veteran who feels passionately about travel and tourism. While this year, just like that of everyone else's, has been a challenging one for destination Ireland, she is confident that the year 2021 – 2022 will see the traffic pick up again. Here's what she feels about the year that has gone by.

#### ► **BEENA MENON**

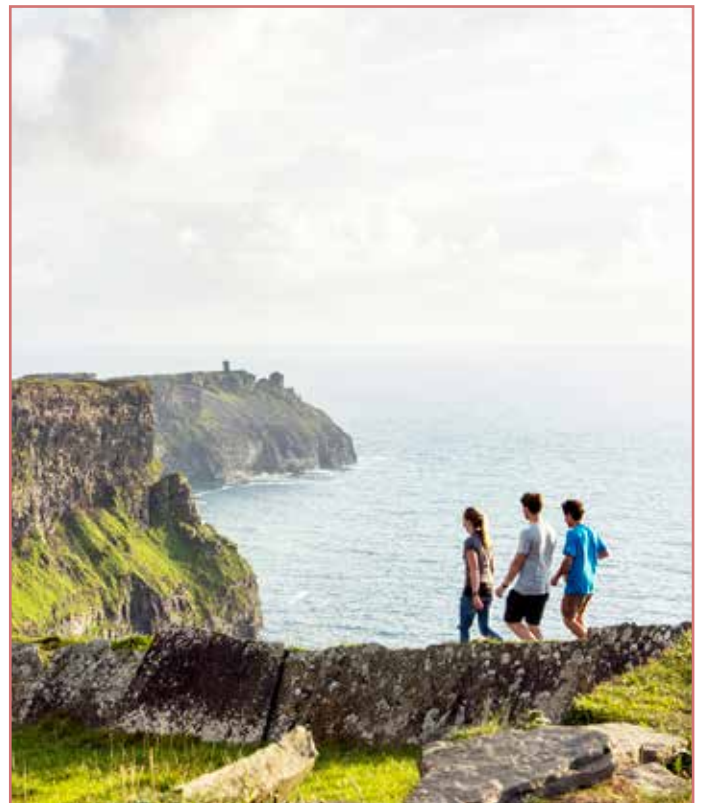
Ireland is not part of the air bubble yet and there is nothing much that anyone can do about it. The air bubble agreement is completely dependent on the government's decision and we can just hope that something positive comes up in near future with regards to air traffic opening up between India and Ireland. It is no secret that ever since the onset of the pandemic, there has been absolutely no tourist visitors from India to Ireland.

However, before things turned gloomy, all wasn't so bad. In the year 2019, Ireland received an estimated 46,000 Indian visitors. Going forward, I am hopeful that once the borders open and flights resume, there will be a surge in travel, especially given that there is a huge pent up demand to travel. To ensure public safety and limit the spread of Covid-19 on the island of Ireland, the authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have 'Covid-19 Safety Charter' and 'Good to Go Policy' respectively. These have been developed to ensure complete safety and to not allow the virus to spread more.

There is no doubt that post Covid, travellers will look for less populated destinations, open landscape and uncrowded attractions will definitely top the list of places they would want to go to. I am glad to share that Ireland meets all these criteria. Social distancing being the new normal, self-drive tours will be popular. Ireland is a best destination to self-drive as it has amazing self-drive routes – Wild Atlantic Way, the Causeway Coastal Route, Ireland's An-

cient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands are some of its best kept secrets. We believe Indian visitors to Ireland will show an upward trend in 2021-2022 once the borders open and flights resume and we are confident that tourist outflow from India will get back to 2019 figures soon.

The news regarding vaccine has given much hope to people and almost everyone is waiting eagerly for the vaccine, which will be the game changer.





# ‘Once countries open their borders to tourists, outbound tourism will gradually revive’: **Sheetal Munshaw**

Promoting France in India for many years now, Sheetal Munshaw, Director – India, Atout France, is a lady on a mission - to position France as a premier tourist destination and enhance its visibility in the Indian landscape. With a vision to tap the burgeoning outbound traffic from India, which has remained stagnant these last few months, the lady with a radiant smile is optimistic that once countries will open up their borders, outbound travel will pick up from India.



### › SHEETAL MUNSHAW

France was one of the first four countries with which India had initially formed an air bubble. This is indeed a good indicator of the strong bilateral relations that exist between both the countries and we are optimistic that once countries open their borders to tourists, a gradual revival of outbound tourism could take place through the air bubble arrangement.

The pandemic has massively affected the travel and tourism industry across the globe and traffic between India and France is no exception. The tourism and its allied industries worldwide have been severely hit because of the pandemic. In the current scenario, only essential travel and certain categories of travellers are allowed to enter France and tourism most definitely for the moment, is ruled out at the moment. The last nine months have not seen any movement of Indian tourists to France at all with the exception of students who are allowed to enter France to pursue their higher education.

From travelling in large group tours to discovering destinations independently with families or friends, the Indian traveller has evolved over the years and so has France's positioning in keeping with the changing trends. The contemporary Indian globe trotter has an insatiable appetite for experiential travel allowing for France to showcase its wealth of innovative and exclusive travel experiences to offer. Today's Indian traveller prefers curated experiences in sync with

his requirements. The holidaymaker does not want to compromise on the quality of services and does not mind paying a bit more to ensure his comfort. We have seen a rise in the number of luxury seekers visiting France for specific experiences such as wine and culinary trails, shopping or relaxation and well-being. Current trends also indicate that overseas travel is not restricted traditionally to summer holidays alone. Travel aficionados prefer to stagger their holidays over a year and take regular short escapades. The trend of overseas weddings has seen a surge and this augurs well for destinations such as France which have a variety of picturesque locales that lend themselves as idyllic backdrops for weddings.

The big question staring right back at all of us is when will things go back to being way they were in 2019?! Well, at this point, it is a wait and watch situation. We will need to first await the availability of a vaccine and the opening of borders to see what happens next. However, what is certain is that there is a pent up demand in people to travel, which will provide the much needed surge to the tourism sector.

Under the air-bubble agreement, travel to France has only been for essential purposes in the last few months and we haven't seen any tourist traffic. However, even during the pandemic, there have been a lot of queries on when borders would, when commercial flights would resume and more, which has been an extremely encouraging sign for us.



### 'It was a challenging year, but plenty good came out of it too': Mamta Pall

Radiant and sparkling, not just on the outside but inside as well. Mamta Pall, Group Director - Outbound Marketing is a thorough optimist who believes in turning every challenge into an opportunity. The outbound from India has been literally on hold. But that has not deterred this beautiful soul to keep her positive outlook towards life intact. So amidst talks of a bad year full of failures, Mamta shares her views on the 'good that came out of 2020'.

#### >MAMTA PALL

I am truly happy to be writing about this topic purely because we all seem to be concentrating on the negative and the good hasn't been given any focus yet. Would like to thank BOTT for this opportunity to pen down my thoughts. A lot of good has actually come out for me this year and I shall try to summarise it to the best of my ability.

The most important thing that came out this year is the realisation of self-love and investment of time in self before anything else. Be it a health / fitness regime, reading habits, self-grooming, or simply putting my thoughts together – I was able to pay more attention to all these issues. Rediscovering the singer in myself, finding time to sing some amazing melodies, which I thought I had long forgotten was truly an enriching experience. Becoming a part of certain forums with friends wherein I could share positive thoughts / ideas and encourage some other friends who have been feeling low gave me utmost satisfaction. These months also gave me time to improve my writing skills and I tried my hand at writing on various subjects, however, my first love continues to remain travel, a subject that I am most passionate about.

As the months progressed, one got to unravel some innovative and creative aspects of one's personality by celebrating milestones in a very different manner. I tried various new recipes, made all kinds of eggless cakes, pancakes and lots more to delight the taste buds of my kids and loved ones. I got to spend quality time with my parents and learned a variety of things from my mother too.

On the professional front, I was extremely humbled and honoured to be featured in the Series of "Super Women of Travel" by the Dope News. I shared my journey with

everyone, spoke about all the ups and downs that I have experienced through my career, the successes and failures and how I have been enjoying this journey and the learnings that I have acquired from this. This not only gave me a high but also inspired me further as I received a lot of inspiring and encouraging messages from industry friends and colleagues who had seen my interview. It truly motivated me to strive further and achieve a lot more in life.

Other than the above, I think the one more really good thing that came out this year is that I connected on a totally different level with industry friends, colleagues and clients. The main reason behind this was because our conversations were centred on wellbeing, counting our blessings more than ever plus above all, gratitude to the almighty for giving us the strength to go through this phase of life. Conversations moved beyond work, deadlines and targets. The sense of being surrounded by family, friends and well-wishers and having food on the table in these troubled times was a blessing that everyone acknowledged.

Though I have always been a strong person, because of my Armed Forces background, I feel I have become a lot stronger, resilient, patient as well as grateful during this year. It's not that I did not face any negative thoughts – many times it felt as if life has come to a standstill; sometimes it brought with it the feeling that one is just getting pushed back with the current situation, but my willpower, positivity, resilience and the love of family and friends kept me going. Truly, what more can one really ask for?

I'd like to conclude by sharing a beautiful quote: "Sometimes in life, you have to take a step back to move forward".



## ‘Coming together of like-minded people to form IATTE was the best thing that happened in 2020’: Veena Robinson

While 2020 was primarily a tough year for almost everyone, there was also some good that came out of it. Veena Robinson, General Secretary, IATTE, has had an eventful 2020 mainly because of the birth of Indian Association of Travel and Tourism Experts (IATTE) – a new one-of-its-kind innovative online platform for travel trade partners, which was conceived, formed, put in action and grown virtually.



### › VEENA ROBINSON

Year 2020 was a year of reality check! We all got clarity about a lot of things ranging from professional to personal, priorities in life and a lessons for the future. The current year placed limits on us in more ways than one. It showed us how we could not wish away and do all those things we took for granted. Ironically it left me feeling grateful for all the things I was left with. Nothing out of the world and nothing spectacular – good health, family, relationships and bonding are the basic things that matter the most.

However, one of the best things that happened professionally in 2020 is IATTE, which just happened or maybe it was just waiting to happen. We all invested a lot of time and hard work and now things are taking shape and seems to be going in the right direction. I am extremely grateful to the Almighty for leading me to it and somehow making it my destiny!

IATTE is the first Virtual & Digitalised platform / forum that includes all tourism stakeholders including Hoteliers and Tour Operators under one roof. From late night coffee/tea/ maggi chats to serious discussions on Zoom, Whatsapp, Facebook, and other social media chats – the members of the association have has various ‘virtual’ discussions but no one has met physically till date. The first online discussion took place on March 21, 2020 where Mr. Naveen Manchanda shared the idea of bringing the different verticals of travel trade together with his

travel trade friends on Facebook. The initial discussions happened between 7 people and the platform started taking shape. Naveen Manchanda (President, IATTE) spoke to me for handling the post of General Secretary, to Mr. Subhash Verma for becoming the National Advisor while Jatin Mehta, Gaurav Khandelwal, Aanal Singh and Nischay Manchanda took on their respective roles and an association was formed.

Keeping up with the new realities of meetings and networking of the present times, IATTE gained momentous strength in very little time. The association, which was floated during the pandemic, 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 has virtually launched its state chapters with Gujarat and Andaman and Nicobar Island. The association also launched a new concept – “Know Your IATTEIANS better over Koffee”, which is basically an informal chat with a fellow IATTEIAN. With the aim to bring in positivity during these challenging times and keep the fraternity and people motivated, IATTE has been successfully setting up weekly chats on the zoom platform and providing a platform to the IATTEIANS to interact amongst themselves.

# Thailand

## The focal point of world-class Wellness Retreats

The unique country of Thailand is a perfect amalgamation of the traditional and contemporary existing side-by-side. Friendly yet classy, sophisticated but buzzing, exotic still affordable – Thailand is home to some of the best Spa Retreats and Wellness Centres. Here you will find the very best of Yoga and Pilates retreats along with Spas centres where you can shed pounds or simply detox, and if pampering is top of your list, then there really is nowhere finer to go. Here's a look at some of its top wellness retreats –



### The Peninsula, Bangkok

One of the leading refreshed and refined spa, wellness and healthy dining hub, the resort often comes out with attractive lifestyle programme and personalised packages. The Peninsula Bangkok offers 'Active Body and Healthy Mind', a personalised retreat programme that is designed to offer guests a sense of tranquillity and harmony of body and mind. The holistic approach is based on four elements: a healthy dining choice, an exercise programme, sleep and mindfulness.  
<https://www.peninsula.com>

### Amanpuri, Phuket

Overlooking the sparkling Andaman Sea, this serene beach resort blends in with the natural surroundings and offers the perfect escape from everyday life. The programmes, better known as 'Immersion' here are created to promote profound change. There is a nutritionist on hand to sort your diet and give you a bespoke meal plan, so you can ensure that you achieve maximum results. The gym is state-of-the-art, but if you want to learn Yoga or maybe Tai-Chi, then this is the place to perfect your art.

<https://www.aman.com>





*As the cacophony of everyday life engulfs us in its clutches, it becomes vital for our mind, body and soul to seek some rejuvenation from time to time. We seek respite from our routines and yearn to be someplace where we can soothe our senses, rest our thoughts and pamper our body with the indulgence it deserves... and there is no better place than Thailand to do it all. Brimming with wellness options that are not just affordable but also truly world-class, Thailand undeniably is a country that has it all.*



### **Amatara Wellness Resort, Phuket**

The Amatara Wellness Resort Phuket specialises in Hammam with a Thai twist. You can enjoy a traditional sauna, cooling bath, herbal steam, heated stone beds, body scrub, head massage to soothe your body and soul. Secluded in a tranquil bay of Cape Panwa, Amatara Wellness Resort features all-inclusive healthy retreat programs as well as leisure holiday for all guests. The Retreats focus on detox, yoga, weight management, couple, fitness, relaxing spa as well as total-tailor made program.

<https://www.amataraphuket.com>

### **Kamalaya, Koh Samui**

This adult-only centre takes a holistic approach to healing from the inside out, and the incredible team of experts administer acupuncture, colonics, healing and more to guests who lean on the team to help them cleanse, clear and rebuild their minds and bodies. It is widely regarded as one of the most authentic healing spiritual resorts in Thailand, where quietness, stillness and peace can be found at every corner. Organic wine and wheatgrass shots sit side by side on the menu offering your sense utmost pampering.

<https://www.kamalaya.com>



### **Chiva Som International Health Resort, Hua Hin**

Chiva Som, which is an internationally-recognised wellbeing sanctuary offers an encyclopaedic range of spa and alternative treatments including some of the very best massages you will ever experience. The activity roster is just as impressive with T'ai chi, Pilates, meditation, Thai boxing, Zumba, AquaBox and several different types of Yoga all available. Hailed as the world's leading health retreat, Chiva Som is as luxurious as shedding toxins can be. Chiva Som's naturopaths and holistic practitioners are the best in their industry, creating detox programs tailor-made to individual guest needs.

<https://www.chivasom.com>





# Industry Insight

## India becomes the second-important source market for Maldives

It is currently the favourite getaway hub for everyone in India, not just because of proximity but also given the fact that it is an island destination where people can stay away from crowds and holiday in the greens and blues of Mother Nature. The impressive line-up of world-class hotels and resorts is definitely an added bonus. **Mr. Thoyyib Mohamed, MD, MMPRC** share more in an exclusive with BOTT.

►PRIYANKA SAXENA RAY

**The Maldives has been a part of the air bubble from the start. Has that been encouraging news for you?**

Air travel bubble, which was initiated between India and Maldives was one of the first in this region. That has indeed created a positive pathway for additional flights from India giving much required opportunities to travellers to visit Maldives. Because of this early initiation, the arrival from India is increasing. After reopening our borders, we have recorded 9,764 arrivals from the India market and it holds the second place in our market ranking.

**How severely, in your opinion, has the tourist traffic between the two countries been affected?**

By the end of 2019, we had recorded 166,030 arrivals from India and it is our second biggest source market. Due to the pandemic and border closure, our tourism industry is one of the most affected sectors and until now, all the authorities, especially Visit Maldives, is trying out every effort to regain the arrivals and recover our markets such as India with their various efforts.

**Most of the people consider Maldives to be an "expensive" destination. Do you think that's true? How do you plan to break that perception?**

Maldives is perceived as a luxury destination across the globe, however, we do have affordable options as well. Over the past years we have diversified our tourist offerings. Currently we have 159 resorts with different



star categories that cater to everyone. Furthermore, we now have 552 guesthouses, which are located in local islands that are perfect fits for the budget travellers and for those seeking to experience the local culture and cuisines. Additionally, we have 130 live boards in Maldives, catering to a comprehensive range of accommodation facilities on board. Cruising on a live-board is an ideal way to explore the country. With that being said, we continuously put efforts in creating an awareness for all the product range we offer to our travellers.





### **Maldives is also looked upon as a 'Honeymoon getaway'. How are you planning to pitch it to family vacationers?**

We are truly blessed with abundant natural beauty and excellent hospitality, which makes us an excellent destination for honeymoon couples. However, our tourism industry's diverse product range and experiences caters to various segments such as family holidays. The fun side of life is specifically focused on the families that travel to Maldives. From kids' activities to family oriented excursions and activities, Maldives offers experiences that uniquely caters to every individual.

### **How important is the India market for you?**

Being our closest neighbours, India has become the second largest source market to Maldives in pre-pandemic and it was one of the fastest growing markets in Maldives. Last year, the market share grew significantly to 9.7 % and India became the second largest source market for us. One of the reasons for this is the close proximity between the countries along with strong connectivity. With the upward growing graph that we have seen in the past five years, India has become one of the focused markets to our tourism industry. Hence, we are continuously carrying out various marketing activities to further enhance and increase the arrivals from the India market.

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

We re-opened our borders on July 15, 2020 with strict safety measures for our travellers, our resorts, live-boards and guesthouses have now opened their doors for tourists in line with HPA guidelines. Maldives has become the ideal location for travellers as it is geographically blessed by its isolated nature, making it

one of the safest destinations to travel to right now. The Maldives has won as the World's Leading Destination at the World Travel Awards 2020. This award is a true testament of constant efforts done by the stakeholders of the travel and tourism industry and the love for Maldives by our tourists. Further, we foresee a positive change in the arrival numbers in coming days.

Additionally, we have launched a Maldives Border Miles program initiated by Maldives Immigration. This program is a three-tiered loyalty program for tourists. Tourists who enrol in this program will earn points based on the number of visits and duration of stay. Additional points will be awarded for visits to celebrate special occasions. There are three categories in this program; Aida (bronze tier), Anantara (silver tier) and Abaarana (gold tier). Each tier will be defined by a set variety of rewards, services or benefits, which increase in value as member's progress.

Furthermore, Allied Insurance Company, in association with the Ministry of Tourism, has launched a COVID-19 insurance policy focusing on tourists visiting Maldives. Tourists who do not hold a valid resident visa of Maldives will be eligible for this plan, which comes in two options; Allied Inbound and Allied Inbound Plus. Tourists who are interested in this insurance should apply for the plan 24 hours prior to their arrival in the country through Allied's website. The resort establishment in which the tourist is staying can also take this plan on their behalf, if the beneficiary will be insured.

# Spotlight

## Turkey

# India is one of the most potential emerging tourism markets for Turkey

Turkey, which is not yet part of the air-bubble agreement with India, was one of the first countries in the world that opened its borders to international visitors. This step was taken by introducing the Safe Tourism Certificate Program, which has been a game changer for the country in these challenging times. In an exclusive chat with **BOTT, Mr. Timuçin Güler, Director General of Promotion of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey**, shares more.

›PRIYANKA SAXENA RAY

**Are you hopeful of Turkey being added to the air-bubble agreement that exists in India? How is the COVID situation being tackled in Turkey?**

As known, Turkey is one of the first countries in the world to open its borders for the international visitors. This step was taken by introducing the Safe Tourism Certificate Program for the tourism industry, which covers a broad range of measures including transportation, accommodation, health condition of employees of the facilities and passengers. The resort destinations of Turkey such as Antalya, Bodrum, and the classical destinations such as Istanbul and Cappadocia are among the main attractions experiencing most number of international tourists since the mid of June 2020. The majority of international visitors came from United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Germany and Ukraine. Thanks to all precautions being taken in the touristic facilities, our country received around 13.5 million international visitors between January – October 2020. I am very happy to mention that we do not have a particular increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in these touristic destinations. I believe that Safe Tourism Certification System has played an important role for achieving this success.

Turkey has already officially applied to the



Indian government for the resumption of direct air connectivity between our countries, either by establishing an air-bubble agreement or by resuming the scheduled flights. The reply of Indian government is still pending.

**How severely, in your opinion, has the tourist traffic between the two countries – Turkey and India been affected? When do you see outbound traffic from India to Turkey going back to what it was in 2019 or pre COVID times?**





We have witnessed 70 % and 56 % growth in 2018 and 2019 respectively in terms of the Indian tourist traffic to Turkey. In this regard, the number of Indian tourists who preferred to visit Turkey in 2019 reached to 2.3 lakh which was an all-time record for Turkey tourism. Between January – March 2020, when air traffic was still acting in a normal way, we had 35 per cent increase in comparison to the same period of 2019. We believe that together with the resumption scheduled flights in India, the tourist traffic between our countries can reach similar numbers as we had in 2018 and 2019.

### **How important is the India market for you?**

Turkey has some classical source markets in terms of tourism. In 2019, Russian Federation, Germany, United Kingdom, Iran, Poland and Ukraine were the main source markets for our tourism industry. However, one of the main goals of our tourism policy is the diversification of markets which contributes to overcoming of the seasonality issue in our tourism industry. In this regards we attach great importance to the countries called as emerging markets for our tourism industry. India is considered as one of the most potential emerging tourism markets for our country. Hence, we will continue to conduct different marketing activities in India in the years to come and will actively promote our country as

a destination in India and strive for increasing the numbers of Indian tourists visiting Turkey. in this insurance should apply for the plan 24 hours prior to their arrival in the country through Allied's website. The resort establishment in which the tourist is staying can also take this plan on their behalf, if the beneficiary will be insured.



# Germany is considered the safest travel destination

The United Nations World Tourism Organization expects international arrivals to have dropped by between 60 and 80 per cent this year. But **Petra Hedorfer, Chief Executive Officer of the German National Tourist Board (GNTB)**, is not completely disheartened by the statistics and she feels that the world needs to be prepared for the long process of recovery.

### What gives you cause for optimism in these difficult times?

There are a number of good reasons to be optimistic. The most important one is that millions of people are looking forward to worry-free travel again, to discovering other countries and experiencing other cultures, to going on successful business trips and to sharing their experiences with others. Studies by market research institute IPK International also show that the willingness to travel abroad has already increased significantly in many countries over the course of this year. Then there are reasons that make Germany stand out as a travel destination. The 2020 Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI), for example, has once again confirmed Germany's excellent image with a no. 1 ranking. It should be noted that the survey of 20 countries was conducted between 7 July and 31 August, i.e. in the midst of the pandemic.

And safety is an important factor in the choice of travel destination. International surveys have shown that Germany is considered the safest travel destination worldwide when it comes to the risk of coronavirus infection.

### What can you as a national tourist board do to boost tourism while the coronavirus pandemic is still with us?

We have identified various areas of action to focus on. First of all, we are analysing markets and market segments very carefully for their potential for recovery. It is here that we will concentrate our marketing activities. This leads me directly to our second area of action: customer centricity – anticipating what tomorrows' customers will expect. We are not only seeing that travellers are becoming more safety-conscious, but also that they are showing greater interest in sustainable tourism. And we are

using this shift in attitudes to refocus our brand. The third area of action is digital empowerment – gaining a competitive edge through innovative marketing. As destinations begin to compete again in the 'new



normal', digitalisation will play a crucial role. We and our partners are putting our faith in digital solutions, including chatbots that rely on artificial intelligence to answer questions, the use of digital voice assistants, and a major open-data solution for the German inbound tourism industry.

### Germany is a major destination for trade fairs and conferences. What about business travel?

This segment will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. In 2019, the proportion of all inbound travel to Germany accounted for by business travel was above the international average, at 23 per cent. Not only because we are the world's leading trade fair nation but also because we are the top conference destination in Europe. We expect significant changes in these areas, in particular. Alternatives such as virtual event formats and hybrid events are likely to grow in significance in the future.



## United introduces daily non-stop flight on Delhi – Chicago route

United Airlines is now successfully operating a daily non-stop flight on the Delhi – Chicago route. The new connection started on December 12, 2020. UA713 departs from Delhi at 01:55 and arrives in Chicago at 06:15 while UA712 leaves Chicago at 18:25 and arrives in Delhi at 20:10 +1. United Airlines has also introduced customer COVID-19 testing from Houston to Latin American, Caribbean Destinations, New York and London. The airline on its USA – India route is providing individual hand sanitizer wipes to all its customers in the aircraft and using electrostatic spraying to disinfect most aircraft.



## SriLankan Airlines named the 'World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean' at WTA

SriLankan Airlines, the National Carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the oneworld alliance has won the prestigious 'World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean' title once again at the World Travel Awards Grand Final held in Moscow. SriLankan Airlines' Chairman Ashok Pathirage said the latest accolade demonstrates the Airline's commitment to delivering the Government of Sri Lanka's vision of making Sri Lanka an aviation hub in Asia and the company was building on its business plan to strengthen its position as fully-fledged international airline. "Yet again, SriLankan Airlines has made a tremendous mark in the region. We have a proud history that spans over four decades of operations," he said. The Airline has been winning the coveted title since 2016 and this year the National Carrier not only won the title as 'Asia's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean' but also was honoured with the title 'Asia's Leading Marketing Campaign' at the WTA Asia ceremony in 2020.



## Ethiopian Airlines restarts flights to Delhi & Mumbai



Ethiopian Airlines is pleased to announce that it has resumed its operations between Mumbai, Delhi and Addis Ababa under the Air Bubble Agreement, starting December 2, 2020. The flights from Mumbai will depart on Wednesdays and Fridays while flights from Delhi will operate on Thursdays and Saturdays. People who can travel from India includes stranded nationals/residents of Ethiopia; foreign nationals destined for Africa and transiting through Ethiopia or spouses of these persons whether accompanying or otherwise; any Indian national, National of Nepal or Bhutan destined for any country in Africa and holding any type of Visa from the destination country and Seamen of foreign nationalities destined to Africa and seamen holding

Indian passports destined to Africa, subject to clearance from Ministry of Shipping.

## American Airlines, BA & oneworld launch transatlantic COVID-19 testing trial



American Airlines, British Airways and oneworld have launched an optional COVID-19 medical-based testing trial on selected flights from the United States (US) to London Heathrow (LHR), in a combined effort to scientifically demonstrate how COVID-19 testing can reopen international travel and remove the need for passengers to quarantine on arrival. The free tests will initially be offered to eligible customers booked on American Airlines flight AA50 departing Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) to LHR; British Airways flight BA114 departing New York's John F. Kennedy Airport (JFK) to LHR; and British Airways flight BA268 from Los Angeles (LAX) to LHR, beginning 25 November. The test will be expanded to American Airlines flight AA106 from JFK to LHR, with a launch date to be communicated.

Looking  
ahead  
at 2021

# Countries that will bounce back faster in **2021!**



The news of vaccine already being injected to people in few countries has enveloped the world in a positive wave. The insurmountable loss of lives and business that marked the better part of 2020 seems to be fading slowly as people are eagerly looking forward to some good times greeting them in the New Year. The pent up demand in the people will surely push them to look for safer, less crowded and attractively priced destinations for taking the much-needed break. We at BOTT, in our endeavour to help you plan your holidays better, have enlisted few destinations that we feel will recover faster than the others in terms of tourist traffic.



# Indulge in some best deals at the **Dubai Shopping Festival, UAE**

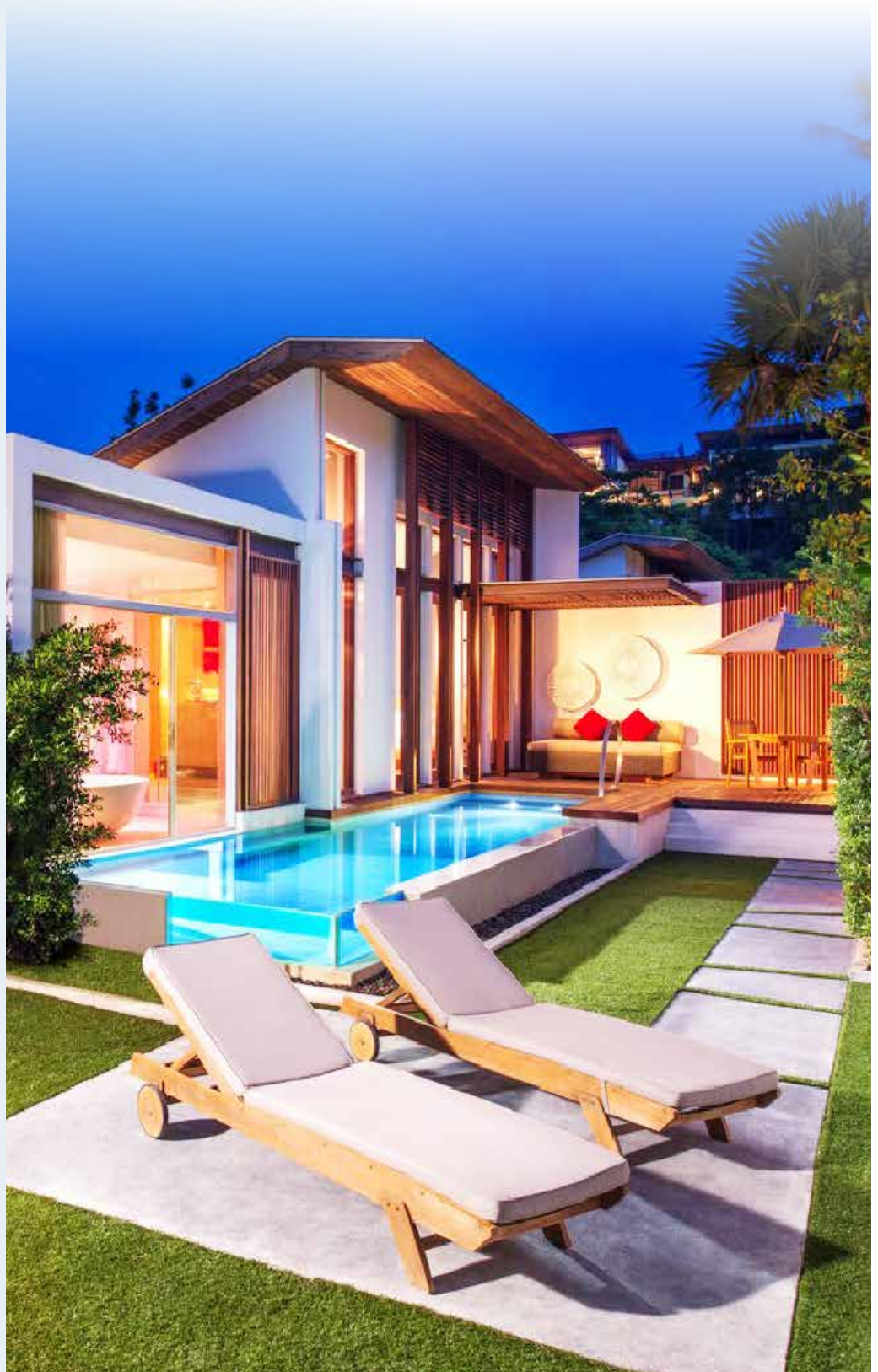


Known as the largest, most-anticipated shopping festival in the world, Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) is setting the bar higher for its 26th edition, offering you a taste of the future through a showcase of innovations in retail, dining, entertainment, and more. Shopping malls and centres across the city continue to implement stringent procedures such as temperature checks, regular cleaning and sanitation processes, as well as follow strict government-recommended precautions. They also provide contactless payment methods and click-and-collect services that are not only convenient, secure, and save you time, but also put your safety first and ensure you have a worry-free and comfortable shopping experience. This year's edition will feature over 800 brands participating across more than 3,500 outlets and will be held from December 17, 2020 to January 30, 2021. Shopping destinations across Dubai come to life with unbeatable deals on everything, from fashion and jewellery, to electronics and home furnishing. There's also a thrilling line-up of world-class entertainment, fashion shows, live concerts, firework displays and more. You'll even get the chance to experience life-changing raffles and win cash prizes, cars, gold, and giveaways every single day of the festival.



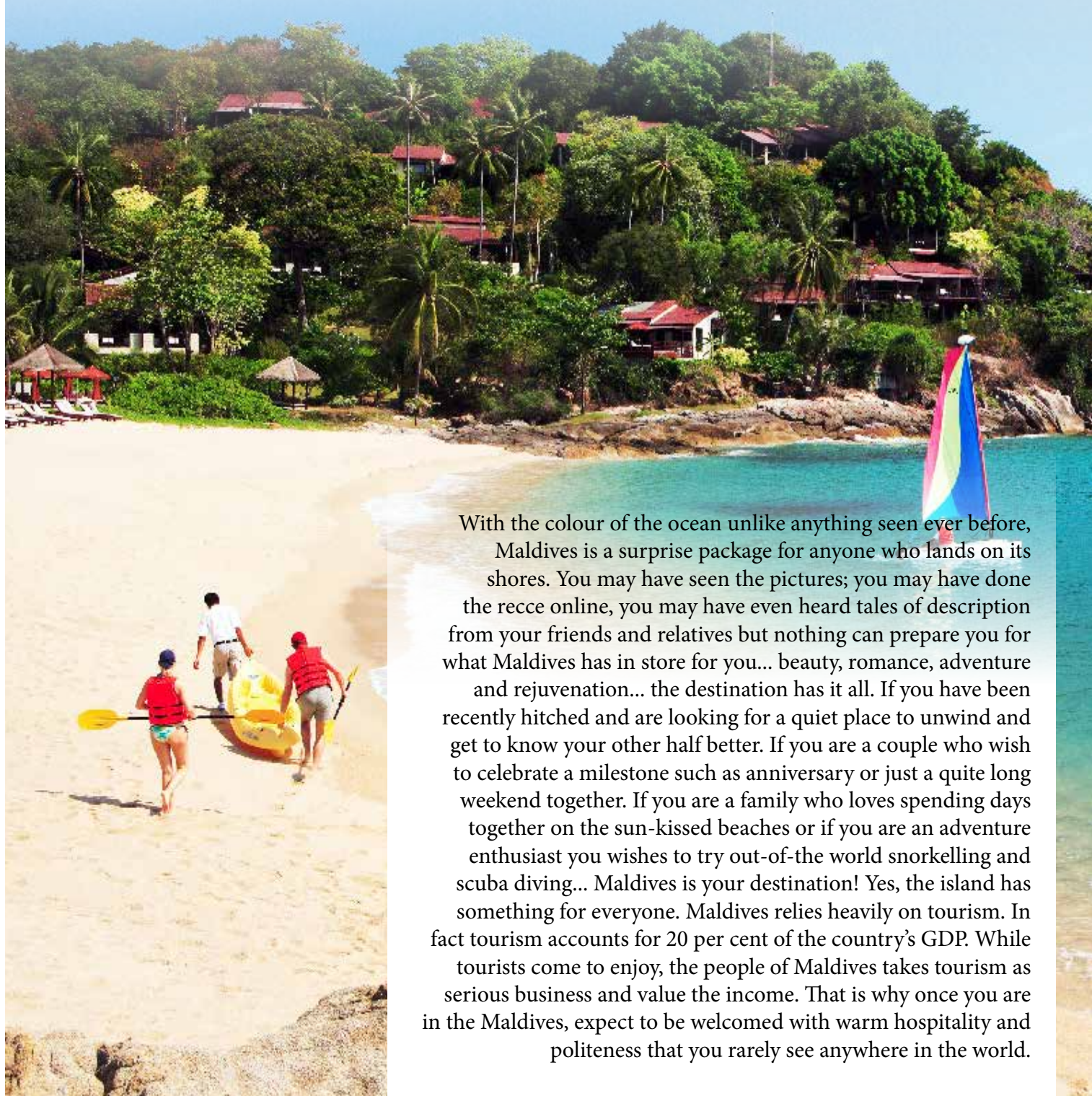
# Stay at one of the many luxurious resorts in **Koh Samui, Thailand**

Koh Samui (Samui Island) is a cosmopolitan melting pot, attracting budget travellers staying for a month or two in simple beachside bungalows, to the wealthiest holidaymakers dropping in for a weekend at one of the many luxury resort or villa on the many white sand beaches of Koh Samui. From the hustle and bustle of Chaweng Beach to the lively yet relaxed atmosphere of Lamai Beach to the timeless feel of Bophut's Fisherman's Village to the tropical beach paradise of Maenam, Koh Samui is unique among Thailand's islands in maintaining a broad appeal for everyone. Koh Samui's repertoire of things to do and see is varied and interesting. The island hosts a great deal of splendid natural and man-made attractions from mummified monks to the famous grandma and grandpa rocks (Hin Ta & Hin Yai) to attractive waterfalls and more, there's nothing to stop you having a blast on Samui Island. For those interested in religious imagery and architecture the Big Buddha will impress – especially at sunset. Nature lovers can visit Ang Thong Marine National Park on a day trip to enjoy a genuine 'get away from it all' feel in the splendid tropical islands it hosts.





# Take an ideal beach family holiday in **Maldives**



With the colour of the ocean unlike anything seen ever before, Maldives is a surprise package for anyone who lands on its shores. You may have seen the pictures; you may have done the recce online, you may have even heard tales of description from your friends and relatives but nothing can prepare you for what Maldives has in store for you... beauty, romance, adventure and rejuvenation... the destination has it all. If you have been recently hitched and are looking for a quiet place to unwind and get to know your other half better. If you are a couple who wish to celebrate a milestone such as anniversary or just a quite long weekend together. If you are a family who loves spending days together on the sun-kissed beaches or if you are an adventure enthusiast you wishes to try out-of-the world snorkelling and scuba diving... Maldives is your destination! Yes, the island has something for everyone. Maldives relies heavily on tourism. In fact tourism accounts for 20 per cent of the country's GDP. While tourists come to enjoy, the people of Maldives takes tourism as serious business and value the income. That is why once you are in the Maldives, expect to be welcomed with warm hospitality and politeness that you rarely see anywhere in the world.



Looking  
ahead  
at 2021

# Unwind amidst the beauty in **Santorini**, Greece

Greece is a land of colour, diversity, culture and natural splendour, combined with authenticity, elegance and beauty. Serene and atmospheric, wild and unpredictable, Greece offers a warm embrace for everyone. For history fanatics, wine and food lovers, shopping addicts, adventure enthusiasts, or simply sea and sun seekers, a friendly welcome and special treat is awaiting. Thousands of lands, and islands in all shapes and sizes. Find uncrowned spots off the beaten track, discover its hidden gems in mainland, picturesque, stone-built villages, soaring mountains, deep gorges, rivers, lakes, and rare wildlife. Perfect stage for a whole range of activities, from sailing and diving to cycling, climbing, hiking, and bird watching.





# Spend your summer in **Paris, France**

The capital of France seems to have been designed specifically for the enjoyment of its visitors. Its streets, squares, buildings, gardens and monuments beckon tourists to return, and indeed, many do. Some of the most memorable things to do in Paris include visiting the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and Notre-Dame Cathedral. During the evening, experiencing one of the legendary Moulin Rouge cabaret shows, strolling through some of the most picturesque neighbourhoods, like Montmartre, or climbing the Montparnasse Tower are a must.

It is always a good time to visit Paris. Depending on where you fly from, you can either make the most of the low-cost airlines flying into the city from other European cities, or take one of its direct flights from further away destinations. For those with children, a trip to the Disneyland in Paris offers the largest concentration of tourist attractions in France, and possibly in Europe. Besides some of the world's most famous museums, it has a vibrant historic city centre, a beautiful riverscape, an extensive range of historic monuments, including cathedrals, chapels and palaces, plus one of the most famous nightlife scenes in the world. Paris is also famous for its cafés and restaurants, its theatres and cinemas, and its general ambiance.





**Ministry of Tourism**  
Government of India



# ‘Assure and Insure people to travel once again to India’: Rupinder Brar

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) recently hosted an insightful and interactive session with **Mrs. Rupinder Pannu Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India**, highlighting the path forward to once again establish India as a popular tourist destination. **Mr. Subhash Goyal, Hony. Secretary FAITH** moderated the session in the presence of over 200 industry members who had joined in virtually.

## ►PRIYANKA SAXENA RAY

Addressing the virtual members and the chief speaker of the occasion, Mr. Nakul Anand, Chairman, FAITH, outlined how the industry should collectively strive forward towards not just a survival but a thrival plan as there is immense potential in the tourism sector.

Ms. Brar, in her insightful and exhaustive remarks mentioned that various points of which the government and the tourism stakeholders need to work together for the achievement of a common goal. “The pandemic has created a sense of insecurity amongst the travellers. They have to be assured that all is well and perhaps also be incentivised to come to India. We are in talks with the insurance providers and the Ministry of Finance to work out the same,” she shared. The ADG further went on to explain how her recent trip to Kolkata helped clear her doubts regarding travel, which she narrated in a brief video made from the airport itself.

“Going forward, we are planning to come out with a series of short videos, which will reassure people that it is safe to travel again. It is important to send out positive messages so that the fear that people have regarding travel is put to rest,” Ms. Brar cited, adding, “The Ministry and the tourism industry needs to come together to create more information platforms, which is something that is lacking at the moment. Our Buddhist sector, which we are promoted, needs to be leveraged further to get the desired results. Putting things together in an organised manner is all that is needed – an ideal example of which is talking about the infrastructure. In our channels



of advertising and communication, we need to highlight the infrastructural growth of our country as well. After USA, India has the second largest road network in the world and there are not many who know this. If we do things together and we do it right, we can together look at a strong bounce back in 2021.”

Following the talk, there were suggestions pouring in from the various Association heads. While the IATO President talked about opening the monuments in Maharashtra, especially given the fact that the flights to the region are open, the ICPB Vice Chairman talked about not just having a separate marketing plan for MICE in India but also creating a fund to promote this very integral branch of tourism that contributes immensely to the economy. TAAI President raised a very valid point regarding training the front liners in the travel industry and skill and educate them to sell domestic tourism. President ADTOI emphasised that inter-state travel and communication is still lacking and there needs to be developed some incentive for people to start travelling domestically



## Join hands with ICPB and get exposure in potential domestic & international MICE markets

India Convention Promotion Bureau, sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is the marketing arm of the Ministry to promote India as an attractive MICE destination. The Governing body of ICPB is chaired by the Joint Secretary, ministry of Tourism. The bureau undertakes various activities for the benefit of the members, offering them excellent business opportunities for networking and showcasing their products.



Incredible India



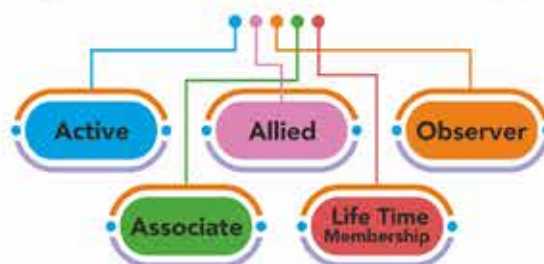
(Established in 1988)

**India Convention Promotion Bureau**

(Sponsored by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India)



### Member Categories



### Membership Benefits

- ◆ Use of ICPB logo. (only for Active & Allied member).
- ◆ Increased exposure and opportunities for business networking.
- ◆ Upgrading of professional skills through Training Programs.
- ◆ Free listing on ICPB's website and member's directory.
- ◆ Participation in the 'Conventions India Conclave', for showcasing products / services to the clients across the world and also networking with potential buyers at nominal cost.
- ◆ Eligible for assistance under MDA Scheme of Ministry of Tourism, for bidding for International Conventions. (Only for Active Members)
- ◆ Eligible for assistance under MoT's Champion Service Sector Scheme.
- ◆ Sharing of business leads - (only for Active category members).
- ◆ Part of decision making by contributing your inputs for submission of proposal to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Regularly updating information received from the Ministry of Tourism, regarding new policies, schemes, guidelines etc.
- ◆ Participation in international trade shows like IMEX Las Vegas, IMEX Frankfurt, AIME-Melbourne etc under India tourism stand at nominal cost. (Only for Active Members).

To apply for ICPB membership, please call

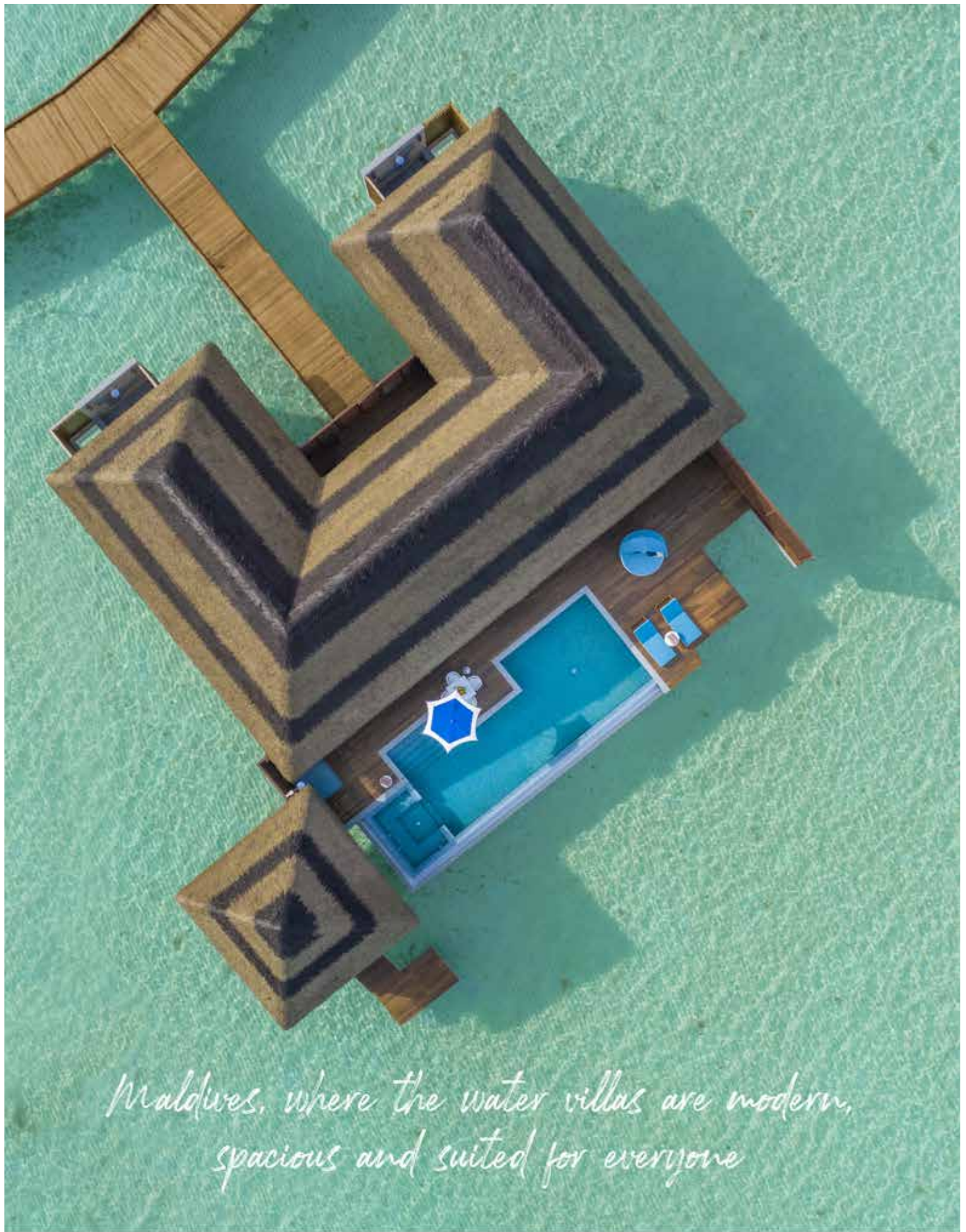
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