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From the Editor's Desk

Dear Friends,

As the struggle and cure for Corona continues to exist alongside in various parts of the world, the mankind, it seems, have learned to live with this new normal. Hybrid meetings have become the norm and online interactions definitely seem to be the way forward. Amidst the global chaos, it is somewhat heartening to note that India has dealt wonderfully with the pandemic and managed to keep the scare, the deaths and the spread under control. Supplementing the same, the Covid vaccine drive in India is also going smoothly and has, in fact, picked up pace in the last few weeks. We were the quickest in the world to go past 7 million vaccine doses. The aim, since the very start has been to achieve a target of 30 million in about 100 days and looks like we will be well within our time to meet it soon. The recent announcement regarding privatising Vaccine has also been received well by the people as everyone waits for March to begin.

Yes March, an entire year gone by and the world has changed – how! It was just early days of March 2020 when one of the biggest travel trade shows – ITB Berlin 2020 was cancelled mere days from its schedule. The mayhem that followed has settled somewhat but the loss left behind is unsurmountable and will take a long time to recover from. The tourism fraternity is still grappling with the aftereffects of the crisis and devising means and ways to overcome them. Amidst all this, the travel trade associations in India have played an extremely crucial role in the last one year as they went from one Ministry to another, spoke to Government officials, submitted letters, requests, recommendations, suggested strategies and did everything in their power to ensure that the pleas of the travel sector – the plight of their members is not left unheard. While some issues got their solution, some others were left unanswered. But the hope is not lost – the zeal not broken as they continue to highlight the needs and difficulties of the travel sector and seek resolutions.

This Feb – March issue of Business of Travel Trade is dedicated to these associations who have been working tirelessly for the benefit of its members. We also bring to you an exhaustive coverage of the ITM 2021, which was mainly virtual, barring the inaugural event at ITC Maurya New Delhi, which was well attended by industry stalwarts and Ministry of Tourism officials. Coupled with a few more around the globe travelogues and hotel stories, we hope you will like going through the current issue of BOTT Magazine.

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

Happy Reading!

Priyanka Saxena Ray
priyanka@bottindia.com

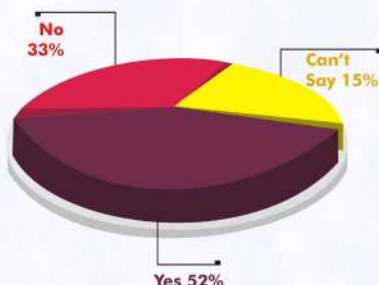


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With Covid-19 Vaccination drives in full steam across the world, BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker found that 52% Millennials are keen to take an International Holiday this summer season



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The leading travel trade associations in India have had an extremely tough year as they went from one ministry to another, knocking at every possible door in the corridors of power and making sure the pleas of the travel fraternity is heard. Many gave concessions on annual membership fee while others hosted skill development and knowledge webinars to enhance the skill set of the members. BOTT spoke to few leading travel trade associations to get their feedback on the year that was and their views on the way forward.

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In this new post Covid-era, the demand for Adventure Tourism has increased as the sector has immense potential to cater to a variety of tastes and preferences says Tejbir Singh Anand



Kochi Cruise Terminal will boost Indian tourism; initiative was undertaken by FAITH / IATO

Heralding a new era in Cruise Tourism, PM Shri Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Kochi Cruise Terminal – part of the Sagar Mala Project, which incidentally got initiated as a joint effort by FAITH/IATO and their consistent meetings with Secretary Ministry of Shipping and Bombay Port Trust officials, who proposed for dedicated Cruise Terminal in Mumbai that was scaled up by Mr. Gadkari to include all major ports on western coast.



Choice Hotels to open up to 10 hotels in India in 2021

As per reports in PTI, Choice Hotels India is looking to open up to 10 hotels across the country during the current year. The company, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Choice Hotels International, currently has 35 operating hotels in India. "We plan to open up to 10 hotels across our various brands in 2021," said Vilas Pawar, CEO, Choice Hotels India. The company currently operates three brands — Comfort, Quality, and Clarion — in India, and the upcoming hotels will be across these brands, he added.



Oman tightens entry norms; 7 day mandatory quarantine from Feb 15

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are tightening entry norms due to increasing Covid-19 cases and also at stopping the spread of the UK and South African variant. The latest to add new regulations is the Sultanate of Oman. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health, Oman has mandated that all passengers travelling from India to Muscat or Salalah are required to carry pre-confirmed hotel bookings for a seven-day mandatory quarantine period from February 15.

Tourism sector on comeback trail from COVID-induced crisis: Kerala CM

Setting sight on the post-pandemic upsurge in tourism activities, Kerala has rolled out a string of new projects at a cost of Rs. 60 crore, giving greater visibility to 25 spots, many of them in rural and semi-urban areas in the length and breadth of the state. Inaugurating the projects through video conferencing, Chief Minister Shri Pinarayi Vijayan said that tourism in the state is on the comeback trail from the pandemic-induced crisis and the government is committed to providing all support to the sector.



The Fern Hotels and Resorts partners with Singapore Airlines for special offers

The Fern Hotels & Resorts and Singapore Airlines have partnered to allow members of Singapore Airline's Kris Flyer program to avail multiple benefits across all the group properties in India. Noshir A Marfatia, Senior Vice President - Sales & Marketing, The Fern Hotels & Resorts says, "Singapore Airlines is launching the Kris+ program in India for frequent flyers and all the global members of the Kris Flyer program will be able to enjoy various offers. Our all three brands – The Fern, The Zinc and Beacon Hotels, along with the independently branded hotels in their portfolio will be participating in the ongoing tie up.



Vistara inaugurates non-stop flights between Delhi – Frankfurt



Vistara has inaugurated its non-stop flights between Delhi and Frankfurt, under the travel bubble agreement between India and Germany. The airline will fly twice a week between the two cities, on Thursdays and Saturdays, as part of the 'transport bubble' formed between India and Germany. Vistara has deployed its brand-new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, which departs from Delhi at 03:30 hours (IST) and lands in Frankfurt at 07:55 hours (CET). The flight departs from Frankfurt (FRA) the same day at 12:40 Hrs (CET) and reaches India at 00:50 Hrs (+1) (IST). Vistara's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Leslie Thng, said, "The launch of our services to Frankfurt is another

important step ahead in our commitment towards growing our global network and strengthening our presence in Europe. As one of world's busiest aviation hubs, Frankfurt promises great opportunities for India's best airline to grow in the global market. We are sure that travellers will appreciate having the choice of flying India's favourite airline on this route."

Thomas Cook India inks strategic agreement with Destination Maldives

In a focused initiative to give fillip to travel to the Maldives, Thomas Cook India has signed a strategic agreement with the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation to enhance visibility and visits to the destination. With Maldives having re-opened its borders in July 2020, Thomas Cook India has witnessed an encouraging increase in demand/interest. To catalyse this demand, its strategic agreement with the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation intends to create high visibility and steer India's demand potential towards Maldives.



StreetGooser reaches 4,000 partner hotels and counting!



Launched in December 2019, StreetGooser, a Cloud-based accommodation management system has enrolled 4,000 hotels eager to use its array of cutting-edge technology products. Not yet a toddler in human terms, StreetGooser has even signed up revenue management companies, associations and hotel aggregators, and many more are queuing up, confident in the knowledge that StreetGooser delivers on its promise. Essentially, StreetGooser is a one-stop-shop, crafted to make life easier for small to mid-sized accommodation providers. This innovative start-up is the brainchild of three out-of-the-box thinkers and pioneers, SHAKTHIVELU.M, John Varghese and Deenath Sharma.



“Tourism was the most affected industry during the Covid 19 pandemic but positive attitude and effective planning of the government is helping this industry to rebound in a magnificent way. The greatest strength of India lies in its distinct and diverse culture, which can be introduced to the world only through tourism.”

Shri Prahlad Singh Patel,

Minister of State (Independent charge) for Tourism and Culture



“The state government has initiated a lot of special projects for the revival of the sector, where around 15 lakh people are directly and indirectly employed. With the inauguration of these 18 tourism projects in seven districts, the government has completed more than 100 projects in the last six months. Among the 300 tourism projects that had been given administrative sanction since the government took power, 80 per cent has been completed.”

Shri Kadakampally Surendran,

Tourism Minister, Kerala, Government of India



“I have no doubt that while the Covid-19 pandemic affected several sectors of the economy, it had the most detrimental impact on travel and tourism, not just in India but across the globe. But I also have no doubt that tourism will bounce back with vengeance and drive India's recovery both in terms of employment as well as growth. Infact, the best of tourism will be seen in the next decade as it will grow and expand in a manner we never envisaged.”

Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog



“There have been encouraging reports regarding spurt in domestic tourism across many states. A large number of people, who used to earlier travel abroad, are now travelling within India for longer periods of time. As we try to recover from the impact, focussing on domestic tourism potential while encouraging fellow countrymen to explore their own country, taking a much-needed break within their own borders, will definitely be a winning strategy for the country.”

Shri Arvind Singh, Secretary Tourism, Government of India



“The vision of ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ rests on five pillars – economy, infrastructure, systems, demography and demand. India's quest for self-reliance is about creating strong enterprises in India – enterprises that can become global forces. Self-reliance is all about generating employment and empowering people to come out and create solutions that can define the future of our country.”

Shri Rakesh Verma IAS, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India



With the extended ban on international commercial flights, domestic tourism offers strong potential. Innovative and viable initiatives like UDAN that catalyse regional connectivity and offer access to India's hidden gems needs to see sustained delivery. Budgetary outlay that retains long term impact via infrastructure development is equally essential – roads, railways, airports, waterways; as also health, safety and sanitation – are a top priority in travel decisions in this COVID era.

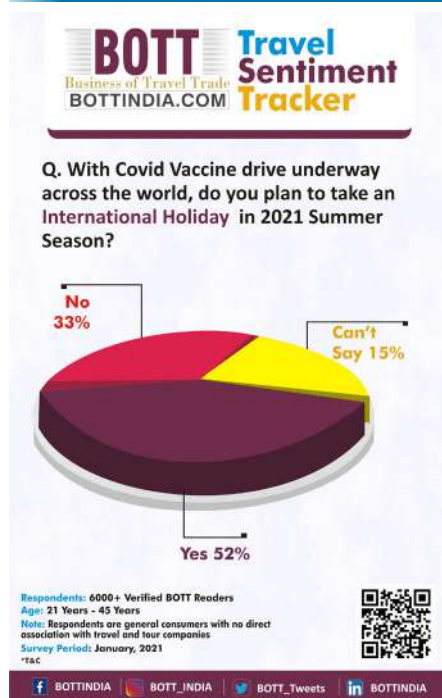
Mr. Madhavan Menon,

Chairman & Managing Director, Thomas Cook (India) Ltd.

52% Millennial are keen to take International Holiday this summer season

With Covid-19 Vaccination drives in full steam across the world, BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker found that 75% millennial travellers would prefer foreign destinations with fewer Covid cases and about 71% would want to go to destinations with defined Covid protocols.

Key Findings of BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker-February 2021



•52% Millennials are keen to take an International Holiday this summer season

•75% Millennials would prefer foreign destinations with fewer Covid cases

•71% Millennials would want to go to destinations with defined Covid protocols



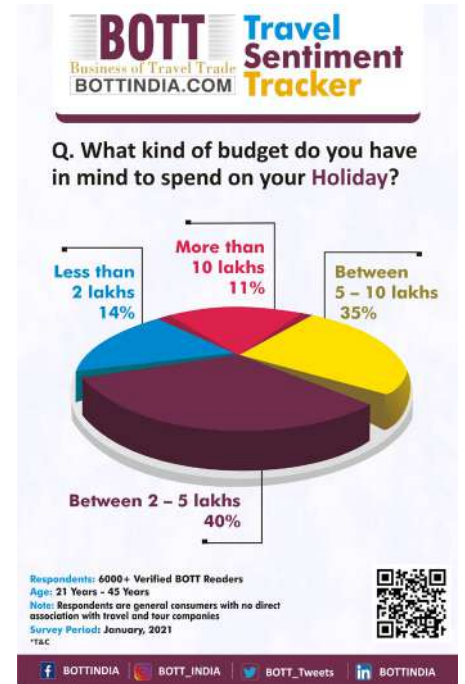
•Thailand (62%), Singapore (58%), UAE (52%), Maldives (46%), Saudi Arabia (40%), Malaysia (39%), Indonesia (39%), Sri Lanka (36%), Bhutan (31%), Turkey (28%) and Seychelles (24%) are the top short-haul destinations preferred by Millennials this summer season.

•France (53%), Germany (51%), Australia (50%), Switzerland (49%), USA (46%), Britain (45%), Canada (45%), Japan (38%), Mauritius (31%), South Africa (25%), Kenya (25%) and New Zealand (21%) are the top long-haul destinations preferred by millennials this summer season.





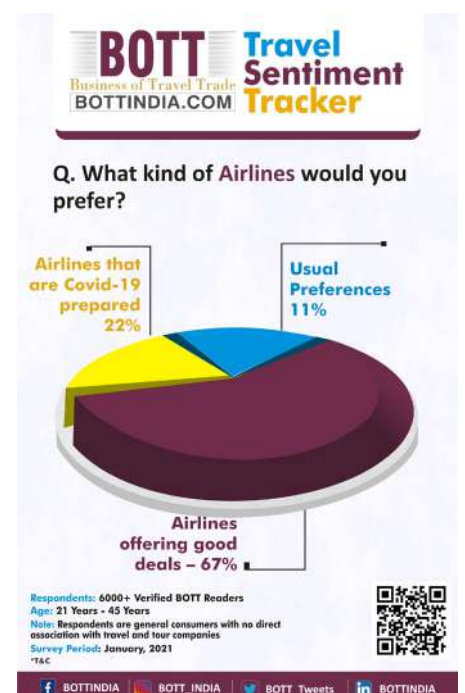
•About 37% millennials would like to take 5-7 nights long vacation followed by 32% Millennials who would opt for 3-5 nights packages



•40% millennials are open to spend anywhere between INR 2 lakhs to 5 lakhs for their holidays followed by 35% who would spend between INR 5 to 10 lakhs.



•Around 34% Millennials would like to book Luxury Hotels with limited inventory while 25% each would go for Boutique and Budget properties respectively



•67% Millennials are keen to book Airlines that will offer good deals.

TEAM BOTT

Things are looking up for 2021 as **52% millennials** are keen to take an international holiday this summer season. With COVID-19 vaccination drives picking up steam across the world, bringing hope to millions that an end to the pandemic is on the horizon, 75% millennials would prefer to go to foreign destinations with fewer Covid cases, according to the report by BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker. While 71% millennials would opt for destinations with defined Covid protocols to avoid unnecessary hassles while planning their international holiday in the summers of 2021.

“The fact that more than **50% of the millennials** in India are keen to undertake an international holiday this summer season is extremely encouraging news for the travel industry. The findings are motivating and will certainly generate more confidence in an industry which is currently extremely disappointed by being ignored in the Union Budget. However, inbound and outbound are two verticals of travel that go hand in hand and growth of one pushes the growth of the other sector too. I hope the government will look into opening up borders in India soon, & so will other countries’ said **Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Vice Chairperson, FAITH.**



The BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker was done online with over 6000 millennial travellers across the country over a period of 30 days in January 2021 has revealed that **62% millennials** would prefer Thailand, followed by Singapore (58%), UAE (52%), Maldives (46%) and Saudi Arabia (40%) in the short-haul category of foreign destinations.

Malaysia and Indonesia are chosen by **39% millennials** each with Sri Lanka (36%), Bhutan (31%), Turkey (28%) and Seychelles (24%) coming close among the top short-haul foreign destinations preferred by the millennials for holiday this summer season.

In the long-haul category, the top-ranked international destinations includes France (53%), Germany (51%), Australia (50%), Switzerland (49%), USA (46%), Britain (45%), Canada (44%), Japan (38%), Mauritius (31%), South Africa (25%), Kenya (25%) and New Zealand (21%), which are preferred by millennials this summer season.



“The successfully ongoing vaccine drive coupled with dropping Covid cases in India has instilled confidence in the travellers, especially the millennials. The findings of the survey are a testament of this emotion. However, the road to complete recovery is long and tough but we are definitely seeing an uptick in trip-planning and requests right now for the holidays and into 2021, as well as far-flung international trips. Many of our members are planning trips for 2021 and 2022 because they know demand will be high in popular destinations eventually. The Indian government too should seriously consider opening up commercial flight movement from India under the new norms of travel,” said **Riaz Munshi, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI).**

According to the survey, 40% millennials are open to spend anywhere between INR 2 lakhs to 5 lakhs for their holidays while 35% millennials would spend between INR 5 to 10 lakhs. Around 34% millennials would like to book luxury Hotels with limited inventory while 25% each would go for boutique and budget properties respectively

The survey also touched upon new travel trends like rise of solitary & Do-it-yourself travel and innovations like popularity of touch-less technology, voice-activated services and more automation in the hospitality sector. Travellers are still looking for places with fewer crowds.

DISCOVER

five unforgettable journeys in Arabia

Saudi is a country of extraordinary natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Still largely unexplored by international visitors, the country offers a dizzying array of experiences for the curious traveller. Explore the sights, scents and sounds of authentic souks. Bask in the crystal clear waters of the Red Sea, surrounded by a myriad corals. Walk in the footsteps of ancient civilizations. And, wherever you go, experience the unparalleled hospitality of the Saudi people. Whatever your pleasure, this list of Saudi's five must-visit destinations offers you a journey you've never imagined.

Diriyah

On the outskirts of Riyadh is the UNESCO World Heritage site of Diriyah, the ancestral seat of the ruling Al Saud family. Wander through the narrow alleyways between the mud-brick houses and uncover a way of life that goes back for generations. Explore the museums of Saudi culture and history, including the Salwa Palace, the most massive standing structure in the citadel. Then stroll around the local eateries and coffee shops to sample traditional Najd delicacies, surrounded by lush greenery, ponds, and much more. Escape to a vision of Saudi's storied past.

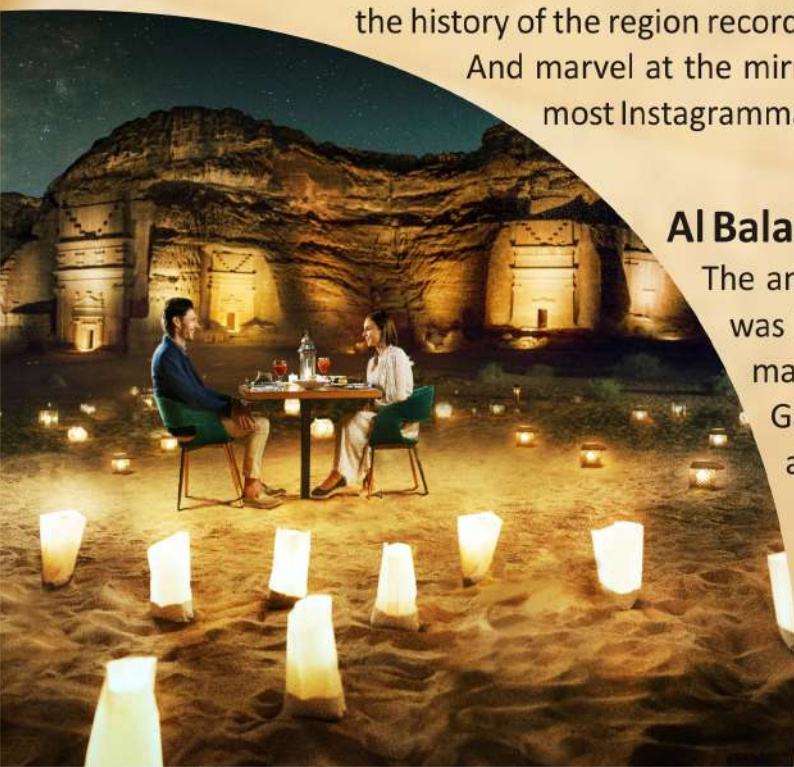
AlUla

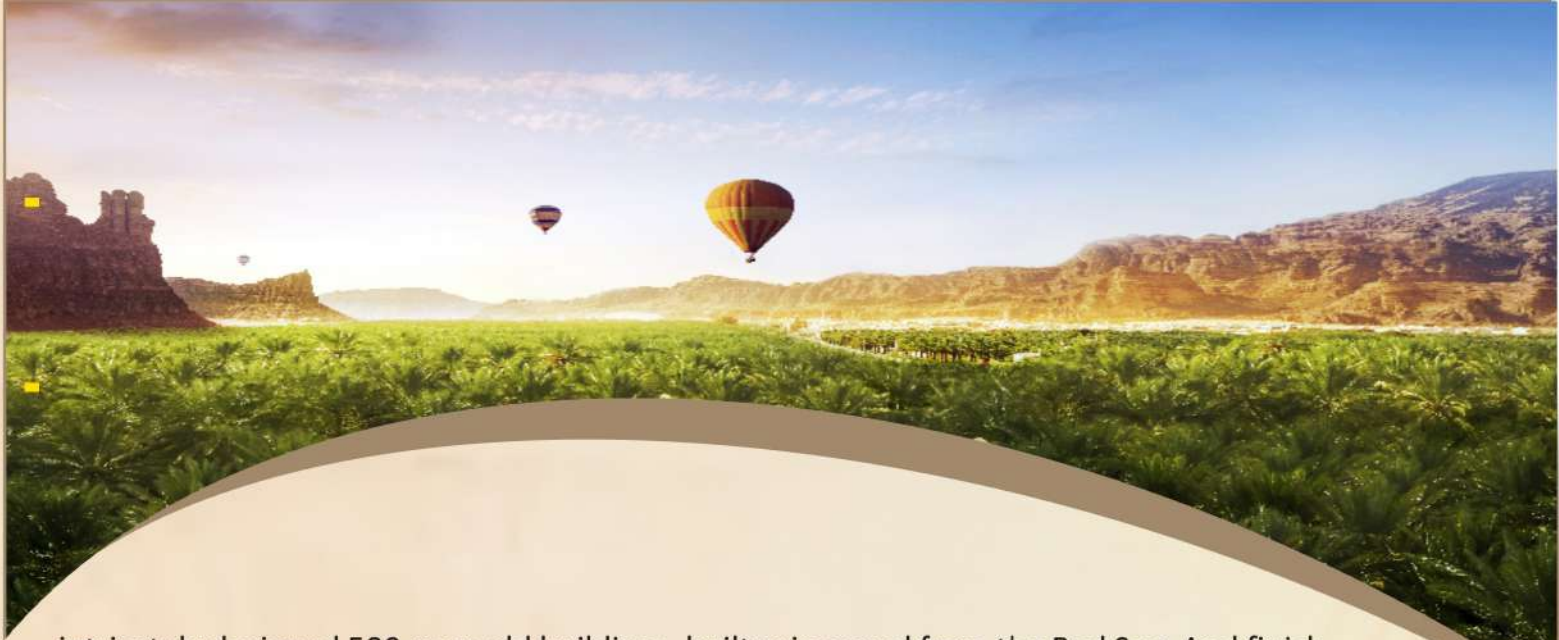
AlUla is a stunning destination embracing 200,000 years of human history, breath-taking natural rock formations, iconic modern architecture and Hegra, one of the most recognizable images of Saudi. Explore more than one hundred, monolithic rock cut tombs carved by the Nabatean civilization. Read the history of the region recorded in ancient inscriptions on the surrounding cliffs.

And marvel at the mirror-clad Maraya Concert Hall – one of the world's most Instagrammable buildings. Explore a world like no other.

Al Balad

The ancient centre of Jeddah, the Bride of the Red Sea, was built in the 7th century as a gateway for pilgrims making their way to Makkah. The refurbished Makkah Gate today serves as the entrance to an intriguing and cosmopolitan blend of ancient and modern. Browse through the colourful Souq Al Alawi, Saudi's largest souq, which fills the narrow alleyways, with the scent of exotic spices and a kaleidoscope of colourful wares. Visit the heritage houses, galleries and museums among the

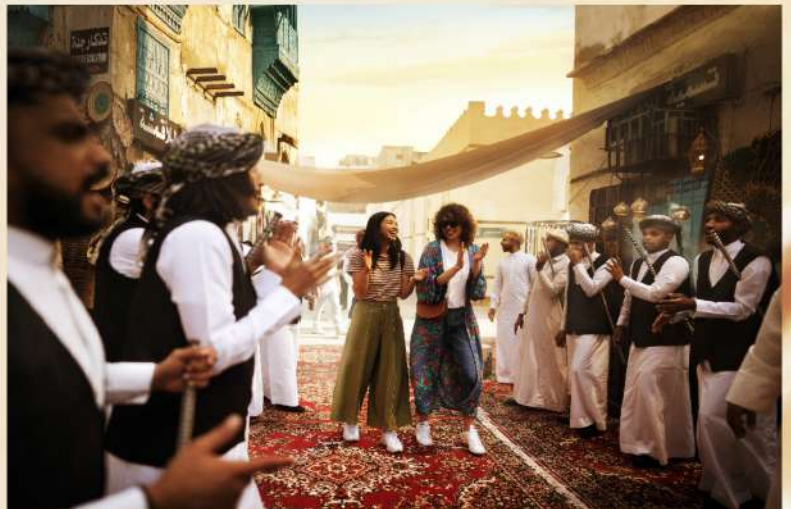




intricately designed 500-year-old buildings, built using coral from the Red Sea. And finish your day with a sumptuous meal of fresh seafood as you look out over the waters of the Red Sea. An experience to delight all the senses.

The City of Roses

Journey to the cool northern mountains to experience Taif, the City of Roses. In the spring, the clear mountain air is infused with the scent from more than 90 rose farms which give the city its name. Taif produces some of the world's most expensive rose oil which is an ingredient in luxurious perfumes from around the world. Local rose water is also an ingredient in Taif's cuisine. The renovated city centre houses the Taif Central Market where you can browse traditional goods, such as jewellery, oud and healing herbs. A true breath of fresh air.



The Red Sea

The Saudi Red Sea is a natural treasure house of thriving coral reefs and abundant marine life including dolphins, dugongs and sea turtles. Extending 1,700km from the Gulf of Aqaba in the north to the Farasan Islands in the south, the eastern reaches of the Red Sea are a stunning destination for divers, snorkelers and ocean enthusiasts. Whether you want to enjoy a scintillating sunset by the beach, explore the pristine reefs or dive on one of the coast's enigmatic shipwrecks, the Red Sea is a destination like no other in the world. Immerse yourself in unforgettable natural beauty.



‘Demand will surely pick up in Q2 of 2021’: **Pankaj Saxena**

The hospitality industry, which is characteristically considered to be pretty dressed in terms of hygiene will now be required to practice clinical hygiene, believes
Pankaj Saxena, GM, Radisson Blu Mumbai International Airport
shares an insight into the latest trends ruling the hospitality industry in India and the performance of his hotel in post-Covid times. Here's more –

Is your Hotel open for operations? How much occupancy have you experienced since you have taken over?

While the economic downturn one of the biggest long-term challenges is to carefully watch and innovatively act on the dynamic forces of crafting new consumer behaviours, consumption patterns, perceptions, expectations and trends. However, both global and regional travel restrictions have already posed a survival threat to the industry with herculean challenges that need utmost attention. We have the responsibility to contribute in shaping up a new world of hospitality by redefining safety, sustainability and efficiency. We are now seeing entertainment, leisure and tourism with a different lens. Currently, our occupancy is ranging at around 35% Q1 2021.

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

While hospitality trends tend to evolve from time to time, one thing is certain that hotel technology is set to play a superior fragment in virtually all aspects of hospitality from standard operations to marketing systems, fulfilling guest satisfaction index and happiness for sure.

Additionally, experience-driven personalization is also an emerging trend and so as we have our route plan at Radisson Blu Mumbai International Airport. We are an Airport hotel and an emerging choice among all in the sub market.

Has your Hotel (Individual or Chain) come out with a special package to attract more traffic? Did you see any special rush on the New Year?

Building happy stories with guests is critical to enhance the top as well as bottom line of hotel operations, keeping the brand promise to deliver memorable moments. Over the last few weeks, we have seen good occupancies both in rooms as well as dining areas.



Also, staycations with us are at an all-time high peak, for a variety of reasons. We are amongst the largest in the city with 206 uniquely designed rooms, which are as individual as you. Ranging from 345 to 765 Square feet (31 to 71 square meters), the spacious guest rooms and expansive suites offer an enclave of highly personal services. To make your business travel even more convenient, all the rooms have a work station, free Wi-Fi, universal power adapters, and HDMI/USB port connectivity in each room. In addition to thoughtful touches like turndown service and in-room coffee and tea

Hospitable Hotels

facilities, the rooms feature a 49-inch smart LED TV with satellite channels to help you unwind.

So, whether you are staying with us on business or simply taking a break over a relaxed, pampering weekend, you will find the rooms welcoming, relaxing and furnished with every comfort you could wish for.

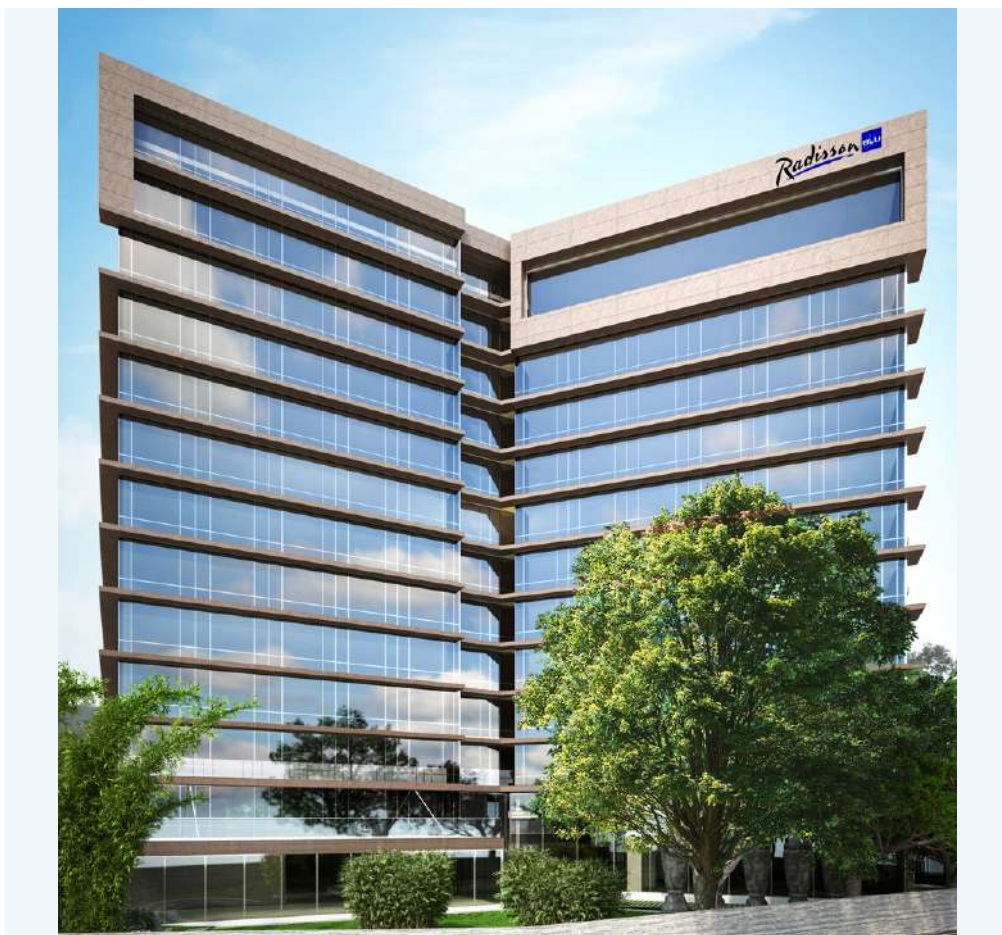
When do you see the Hotel industry in India going back to normalcy? How much time, in your opinion, will things take to settle down?

Managing safety and security risks with meetings is going to be the key in 2021. We ensure 100% compliances to the same as mandatory level of standards. One thing is sure that hotel technology is set to play a superior role in virtually all aspects of hospitality, from standard operations to marketing systems and fulfilling the guest satisfaction index. We also see data or experience-driven personalisation as an emerging trend. The most up-and-coming innovation strategies will be those that cater to the diverse needs and expectations of today's global travellers.

Currently, managing with an increasingly diverse range of clients, we are balancing online and offline experiences that maintain the human touch and build consumer trustworthiness. We are expecting the demand to pick up by Q2 2021. Hopefully, occupancy would be close to or higher than 55% in the next quarter.

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

Being at the helm of centre stage with business locations and located in one of the most exhilarating micro markets in Mumbai suburbs with world leading companies few minutes away, we have started seeing early green signs on Meeting & Events



with Q1 2021 and expect the sector to exponentially grow better by end of Q2 2021. The hotel enjoys great Hyper Connectivity from Airport and through Superb Metro rail connection. Radisson Blu Mumbai International Airport offers choices ranging from spacious guest rooms to plush meetings and events facilities, stimulating environments designed for an ideal meeting of minds. Dedicated premises for exclusive get together with corresponding large pre-function areas is also an added advantage. We also have a 10-step cleaning and safety protocol for meetings & events.

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

The hospitality industry across the globe is more dynamic and fast-paced than ever before – particularly when it comes to dining and events. We at Radisson Blu Mumbai International Airport are motivated by health concerns as well as desire for

delivering authenticity to our global consumers all the while exploring local flavours. The visual presentation of food has taken on a new value through social media. The Blu Brigade is our team of employees dedicated to creating WOW experiences for our guests. By working with planners and reviewing event agendas we are looking at providing a large number of personalised recommendations activities and truly deliver an experience every attendee will adore.

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

Social distancing, face masks will be a part and parcel of our lives in the upcoming months. Ayurveda and Yoga will emerge as the leading wellness retreat for the world. Genuine attention, offering unforgettable experiences, making guests feel welcome with spontaneous surprises and thoughtful gestures would be some of the key elements for sure.

FAITH India Tourism Mart (ITM 2021) holds 'Physical Inauguration' & designs powerful Leadership Conclave

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), the policy federation of all the national associations representing the complete tourism, travel and hospitality industry of India (ADTOI, ATOAI, FHRAI, HAI, IATO, ICPB, IHHA, ITTA, TAAI, TAFI) & cause partner AIRDA in association with Ministry of Tourism and KPMG as its Knowledge Partner recently held its annual India Tourism Mart (ITM). ITM 2021- Virtual hosted a power-packed physical inauguration at the ITC Maurya New Delhi. From Minister Tourism, who joined in virtually, to senior leadership from both the Ministry of Tourism as well as FAITH were present in solidarity, announcing that the tourism fraternity is ready to bounce back in action.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

India Tourism Mart – ITM, which is a buyer seller meet is taking place in a virtual format from 18th – 20th Feb 2021. In his inaugural address, Mr. Subhash Goyal, Chairman – ITM 2021 and Hony. Secretary, FAITH emphasised how the year gone by was the darkest in the history of mankind and tourism was the worst hit where the travel fraternity was literally left hanging from a thread. He urged the industry to come together and consolidate their efforts for the revival of tourism in India. “For us to revive the tourism industry and save millions of jobs, we look forward three key actions

from our policy makers – re-starting of e-tourist visas; reinstatement of scheduled international flights, at least to those countries with which India has air-bubble arrangements, with the necessary precautions on safety to allow willing travellers the opportunity to travel again and modification of policies to help subsidise or reduce the financial burden on the sector.” Reiterating Mr. Goyal’s view point, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India said, “We have already started issuing medical visas and we are planning to soon restart E-Tourist Visas and schedule International flights in a phased

manner. On a reciprocal basis, first with those countries with whom we have an air bubble agreement. The Ministry of health is fully supporting the Ministry of Tourism’s efforts in reviving International tourism to India.”

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Mr. Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Ayog, said that the revival of tourism is integral for India to regain the GDP growth of 9 to 10 per cent sooner than later. He also reiterated that there remains no doubt regarding the recovery of the tourism sector and he is “confident” of its bouncing back. Shri Prahlad Singh Patel, Minister of Tourism, Government of India,



who couldn't be present physically, addressed the gathering and delegates virtually, assuring Government's complete cooperation to the tourism sector and stating the numerous Government policies & initiatives and how they are providing relief and benefit to the tourism sector.

Mr. Nakul Anand, Chairman, FAITH in his address shared all that FAITH has successfully achieved in the past few years. He reiterated how the federation has worked closely with the Central as well as the State Government for the growth of Indian tourism industry. "We have closely worked with Governments on tourism components and various strategic national and international policies, such as E-Visa, GST, Strategy on monuments, PPP policy, Tourism Vision Document, Foreign Trade, Udan policy, Union Budget discussion, economic surveys, cruise tourism policy, I Respect Women badges and more. We are excited to bring to you ITM 2021 – Virtual, which is a great marketplace for Indian tourism to showcase its products and services to the global audience. Additionally, as a new feature this year, domestic buyers too were invited," he emphasised.



Mr. Amaresh Tiwari, Co-Chairman, ITM 2021– Virtual and Vice Chairman, ICPB was applauded by all for not just burning the midnight oil in putting together a great event but also for putting together an extremely insightful and knowledgeable panellists together for the Leadership Conclave. "During these 3 days, there will be 12 Knowledge Sessions with 73 Speakers. At ITM 2021 – Virtual, we have 73 countries participating along with 316 International Buyers, 240 Domestic Buyer and over 1200 delegates joining in virtually," he shared.

Mr. Arvind Singh, Secretary

Tourism, Government of India; Mr. Rakesh Verma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Mrs. Meenakshi Sharma, DG Tourism, Government of India in their respective addresses applauded the efforts of FAITH in organising the event virtually and assured complete cooperation of the government in reviving the tourism sector in India starting with revival of e-visa and international flights soon. Mrs. Rupinder Brar, ADG, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India gave the vote of thanks. The road ahead vision document prepared by FAITH & KPMG was also released on the occasion.

Taking forward its Buyers – Sellers format, the event this year saw participation from 73 countries coupled with 316 International Buyers, 240 Domestic Buyer and over 1200 delegates, who joined in virtually to participate in the mart. One of the key highlights of the ITM this year was the power packed ‘Leadership Conclave’ dotted with 14 Business Sessions and close to 75 Speakers comprising Union Ministers, Secretary Civil Aviation, leading hoteliers, heads of MICE Associations, aviation experts, medical tourism specialists, food connoisseurs, business moguls, industry leaders, opinion makers and many more.

Mr. Girish Kwatra, CEO, Meetings and More, was one of the exhibitors at the ITM-virtual this year and seemed extremely pleased with the way meetings were conducted. “The exhibition was well put together with a good mix of buyers including some MICE buyers as well. Thus we were able to have few MICE meetings also which was beneficial for business,” he shared.

Randhir Gupta, Senior Director of Sales – Leisure and Luxury, India & South Asia too had positive things to say about the ITM this year. “ITM offered a good engagement platform for key stakeholders to interact with international as well as domestic buyers. We had fruitful discussions and there were queries regarding the safety norms being followed and we could also talk about our new openings etc.,” he said.

Speaking candidly to BOTI, a couple of International Buyers said that they are happy to see how India has been successful in curbing the spread of the pandemic and that this has taken the destination a few notches up on many people’s holiday list. They also mentioned that there is a growing interest in people to visit India and that perhaps once the international borders open up, there will definitely be a rush in inbound traffic to the country.

Leadership Conclave

Around 14 Business Session were spanned across three days covering a wide spectrum of topics. These included

1. State of Play & Competitiveness For Indian Tourism - Travel & Hospitality Industry moderated by Mr. Nakul Anand, Chairman, FAITH
2. Vocal for Local – Dekho Apna Desh moderated by Mr. P.P. Khanna, President, ADTOI
3. Indian MICE on Mission Mode moderated by Mr. Amaresh Tiwari, Co-Chairman, ITM 2021 and Vice Chairman, ICPB
4. Healing the World in India – Medical Tourism moderated by Mr. Subhash Goyal, Chairman – ITM 2021 and Hon. Secretary, FAITH
5. India's Natural & Responsible Tourism moderated by Capt. Swadesh Kumar, Immediate Past President, ATOAI
6. India, The New Age Tourism & Aviation Hub of Asia moderated by Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, Vice Chairperson, FAITH and President, TAAI
7. The Untold Story of Indian Culture Heritage moderated by Mr. Randhir Vikram Singh, President, IHHA
8. The Future Competitiveness of Package Tourism in India moderated by Mr. Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO
9. Conventional Hospitality Balancing Stakeholders versus Shareholders Expectations: The CFOs Challenge moderated by Mr. Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH
10. Indian Cuisine The Emerging Balance of Power & Taste moderated by Mr. Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI
11. Way Forward for Travel Intermediaries in the Connected and Contemporary Economy moderated by Mr. Pradip Lulla, Acting President, TAFI
12. River and Sea Cruise – Embracing the New Normal moderated by Mr. Ashwin Madhusudan, Associate Director, KPMG
13. The Joys of Indian Journey Safe and Seamless Travel moderated by Mr. Satish Sehrawat, President, ITTA
14. Next Steps & Strategic Sum Up moderated by Mr. Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH

ICPB: 'A more focussed promotion needed to brand India as a MICE destination'

The year 2020-21 has undoubtedly been a difficult year for the travel industry at large and toughest on the MICE sector in particular. Infact, keeping the 'new normal' in mind, the way meetings and events are conducted is going to change forever. Keeping the same in mind, India Conventions Promotion Bureau (ICPB), in an effort to assist members during these trying times, undertook a numerous steps and even became the industry leaders in holding its annual conclave as a hybrid event.



Mr. Amaresh Tiwari, Vice Chairman, ICPB shares his views on the way forward...

Please share with us 3 Initiatives that were undertaken by the association for the benefit of the members in the last financial year – a year that was exceptionally tough for everyone.

- a) Bureau has offered members to renew their membership for the current financial year by paying a token amount of Rs. 10,000.00 plus GST for members under Active category and Rs. 7,500.00 plus GST for members under Allied category. The balance payment payable in the next FY along with renewal fee for the year 2021-22.
- b) A dedicated ICPB team is researching to share data on upcoming international conferences. The business leads and bidding opportunities for international conferences are being shared with members who have re-

newed their memberships.

- c) Organised the 13th Conventions India Conclave as hybrid event at JW Marriott Aerocity from 30-31 October 2020. The 13th CIC was an effort to kick-start the MICE activities complying with all safety protocols like masks, sanitization, social distancing etc. for a safe and enjoyable experience of the participants. The Conclave was a testimony to the industry's ability to adapt and successfully handle hybrid events complying with all safety protocols. Over 1000 participants joined the event to include buyers, ICPB members, stakeholders of the industry, students, media etc.

- d) ICPB organised a series of webinars on relevant topics during the lockdown period to support members and strengthen the MICE industry. The topics covered MICE subjects particularly relevant in the COVID scenario, including Managing your Human Capital, The profit and loss of digital marketing in MICE, Financial management during the COVID crisis and way forward, Reinventing meetings – 'the New normal' etc.

- e) Production of MICE Film – ICPB developed a short film to showcase India's readiness to host conferences, meetings, incentive programs bringing out India's strength as a MICE destination in terms of economy, connectivity, infrastructure, skilled manpower, knowledge hub, technological

advancement, safety of delegates and India's varied tourist attractions.

Please share with us any 2 points on which your association is currently working for the benefit of the association members? Do you feel you will succeed in your endeavour?

ICPB is seeking support of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India on several matters pertaining to the growth of MICE in India, like-

- a) Creation of a MICE Fund/subvention scheme to assist members in bidding for international conferences and for undertaking marketing activities.
- b) For a more focussed promotion, to brand India as a MICE destination under the overall Incredible India branding

3. Were you able to conduct a hybrid / virtual / physical event last year? Do you have any plans for holding it this year as a hybrid / virtual or physical event?

ICPB successfully concluded its two-day flagship event – the 13th Conventions India Conclave (CIC) as a hybrid event on October 30 – 31, 2020. Nearly 90 participants attended physically at the venue, JW Marriott Aerocity New Delhi and over 1000 joined via virtual platform on both days. The 14th Conventions India Conclave is being planned as a physical event with person-to-person networking opportunities for members. ICPB is considering suitable upcoming venues, pan India, as the next host venue.

ADTOI 10th Annual Convention concludes successfully with over 400 physical participation

Officially declaring the start of not just domestic travel but also domestic conventions, the Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) held its 10th Annual Convention in Kevadiya, Gujarat and received an overwhelming response from its peers, the Ministry of Tourism and officials from Gujarat Tourism. The two-day convention is now coming to a close and was a resounding success.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

Much is being said about the downfall of tourism and how it is the worst hit sector – one which will take a long time to recover. Heralding the domestic travel times yet again in India, the dynamic team of ADTOI decided to hold its annual convention – physically in Kevadia, Gujarat and received an extremely warm response and appreciation. The convention saw Tour Operators, both from Gujarat as well as from the rest of India participate in huge numbers. Tourism Secretary along with ADG Tourism, Ministry of Tourism were also present throughout the convention and spoke much in favour of the convention.

“Absolutely a pleasure to be at Kevadia Gujarat. First largest physical event after the pandemic. Creating confidence in industry and travellers. Saw the Statue of Unity which is the world’s tallest statue. And there is so much else for all to come and stay and see. Matter of great pride for modern India to have the statue, which is truly an architectural engineering marvel,” shared Mr. Rupinder Brar, ADG, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.



Mr. Jenu Devan (IAS), MD and Commissioner of Tourism, Gujarat Tourism, Government of India, shared in a media chat, “Today there are 400 Tour Operators in Kevadia,

which is extremely heartening. This is the first such convention happening and is testimony that industry is bouncing back little by little. The time has come for State Governments and Central Government to tie up with each other and tap the travel enthusiasts who wish to travel. What is also important to highlight is that Kevadia, besides the Statue of Unity, has 30 more tourist attractions worth visiting.

Mr. P.P. Khanna, President, ADTOI, who is extremely delighted at being the frontrunner in holding a physical event shared, "We were expecting around 300 delegates but ended up having around 440 delegates and over 30 PIB Media. Almost 20 people from the Ministry of Tourism attended the convention and were showcased the best that Kevadia has to offer. Besides Gujarat, states such as Tamil Nadu, J&K and MoT also actively participated. We are glad to say that ADTOI has opened the gates for the fraternity to hold physical events now and also encourage people to travel."

Amidst the highlights, Mr. Khanna shared that the Ministry of Tourism has identified 19 iconic destinations, which it will promote through Knowledge sessions, Roadshows and Travel Marts in association with ADTOI soon. The aim for this year is to convert the potential outbound travellers into domestic travellers. The ministry has also assured that the MDA qualifying norms will be relaxed to benefit tourism and tour operators. Chetan Gupta, Hony. General Secretary, ADTOI was the Convention Chairman and extremely elated to be at the forefront of one of the landmark conventions, which heralded the era of physical events in the tourism industry. The smooth execution and extremely well-managed schedule of the convention is the testament of the hard work put in by the team members of ADTOI.

In conversation...

"In the last one year, ADTOI has taken up the cause for providing relief measures to stakeholders of the tourism industry specially our members, up to the highest level in the Government directly as well as FAITH. As revival only focused on domestic tourism taken up with Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India to relax guidelines of MDA to benefit our members as well as for granting approval as Domestic Tour Operator, which the Ministry was kind enough to consider. We also organised many webinars with Hoteliers and State Tourism Boards to showcase how our properties/destinations maintained as per the guidelines of WHO/ICMR/Government to have a COVID 19 free environment."



ADTOI, as a gesture of providing some relief to members from the catastrophic effect brought by pandemic COVID 19, offered a 50% discount on the revised subscription fee to all our members, which no other Association did.

The Managing Committee as well as our State Chapter Committees arranged local FAM trips for members to see destinations to build confidence to travel and also to convey to people about the safety of the destinations to visit. Going forward, in association with State Tourism Bodies, we will arrange more such trips for our members."

Mr. P.P. Khanna, President, ADTOI

TAAI: 'We want to educate & create revenue generating opportunities for our members'

The association has been undertaking a whirlwind of activities ever since the new team took over in December 2019. From constant meetings with senior government officials to interaction with Ministers, the dynamic President of TAAI has left no stone unturned in making the plea of its members heard at every possible platform. She has also been successful in bringing about relief in terms of refunds etc. for the members and continues to strive ahead to fight for what's right.



Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) shares her thoughts on the way forward

Please share with us 3 Initiatives that were undertaken by the association for the benefit of the members in the last financial year – a year that was exceptionally tough for everyone.

The 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 book 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. It wouldn't be wrong to say that TAAI, in the last one year, has earned a new respect and standing in the powers of corridors and we are now consulted separately by the government either while drafting policies or taking decisions.

In addition to this, we were successful in opening of VBM & other flight booking on GDS, convincing government to implement RTPCR Testing done at Airports so that borders to open and lastly, we conducted numerous webinars and skill development sessions to stay connected with our members.

Did you give your members any concession in their annual membership fee for the financial year 2020 – 2021? Have you offered any special discount for 2021 – 2022 year?

No, we did not give any concession as our managing committee believed that we need to look after our secretariat staff, which has been tough in a year with no convention and no revenues. However, we will consider the same going forward as we are always standing in solidarity with our membership. We will continue to invest in them and adding value by having knowledge conclaves and imparting skill with no additional cost. We strongly believe that by imparting education, creating opportunities to generate revenue,

teaching them to adopt and adapt to more avenues and creating technology platform we will be able to help our members more than by offering them mere concession on fee.

Please share with us any 2 points on which your association is currently working for the benefit of the association members? Do you feel you will succeed in your endeavour?

There are a bunch of issues, which we are currently working on at the moment, such as, protection of agents from airlines default, have tourism insurance in place, form a stringer effective regulatory body, opening up of international commercial flights and the much awaited – getting Industry Status for the tourism sector. We believe in these causes, we believe we can achieve them and that is why we are investing time in the same.

Annual Conventions are always a highlight of an association? Were you able to conduct a hybrid / virtual / physical event last year? Do you have any plans for holding it this year as a hybrid / virtual or physical event?

A full-fledged convention will be something we will do later in the year, on the cards upfront is a 'National Knowledge Conclave' at Kevadiya (Statue of Unity) in Gujarat between March 9 and 12. The event will be the first stem to showcase to Indians and travellers across the globe that India is ready to travel and to receive guests.

OTOAI: 'We stand in all solidarity with our members during the pandemic'

Leaving the challenging times behind along with the pandemic while embracing the year 2021 in hope, the Outbound Tourism Association of India has some really good strategies in pipeline to churn out and make up for the losses during 2020. The association leadership feels that education and skill development are the key elements for the way forward for the members and the association strives to do the same.



Mr. Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI talks about the way forward and the initiatives for the betterment of the association

Please share with us the initiatives that were undertaken by the association for the benefit of the members in the last financial year.

- OTOAI reached out to the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Finance requesting them to make the following relaxations – roll-back of the TCS, not make Pan Card mandatory for foreign remittances for foreign nationals and non-resident Indians, grant relief from GST, allow outbound tour operators to take interest free loans and expansion of working capital.
- OTOAI wrote to the Embassies for issuing Gratis Visas for all unused Visas. This request was especially made keeping in mind the sudden lockdown and visas not being utilised by the travellers.
- Following OTOAI request, Spain

and Slovakia agreed to issue Gratis Visa to Indians in view of Covid-19 pandemic. This news was widely covered across the mainstream media including Times of India, The Hindu, The Mint and many more. OTOAI was able to gain national prominence with the coverage of this news in more than 20+ mainstream newspapers.

- On OTOAI's request, Turkish Missions in India also agreed to issue 'GratisVisa'
- OTOAI wrote to the Minister of Civil Aviation requesting them to re-start commercial international flights from India.
- WTTC 'Safe Travels Stamp' was granted to OTOAI.
- OTOAI wrote to all the NTOs to submit updated SOPs/ Guidelines for the Indian travellers. This was done to ensure that people as well as OTOAI members are well-updated with the ever-changing guidelines and protocols to be followed while undertaking international travel.
- OTOAI hosted a talk show with Dubai Tourism in December 11 clarifying queries regarding quarantine rules and visa issues were answered and explained. It also hosted a webinar on Health and Safety protocols with Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB).

Did you give your members any concession in their annual membership fee for the financial year 2020 – 2021? Have you offered any special discount for 2021 – 2022 year?

Yes we extended 50 per cent concession on membership fee to our members during the pandemic. We as an association stand in solidarity with all our members and will give all the necessary support to them as and when needed.

Please share with us any 2 points on which your association is currently working for the benefit of the association members?

We firmly believe that educating and informing the members in all respects is the key to the future and to grow business. Therefore we are conducting all the necessary sessions and workshops that in turn would build all the required confidence in them. The more updated they are the less stressful they'd be and hence the practical approach.

Annual Conventions are always a highlight of an association? Were you able to conduct a hybrid / virtual / physical event last year? Do you have any plans for holding it this year as a hybrid / virtual or physical event?

We do not have any plans to conduct any virtual convention. As the international borders are closed due to the pandemic we are in talks to finalise the convention destination. Since the convention is conducted overseas everytime, all the quarantine norms have to be given a thought and thus this time consuming process. But later during the year when things get back to normal we shall get this revealed.

TAFI: 'We might hold our Annual Convention in September this year'

The year gone by has been one of the toughest years experienced in the history of mankind. People were seen struggling for survival – of both life as well as job. The travel fraternity, it is believed, was one of the worst hit sectors and it still continues to grapple with the situation arisen by the pandemic. Travel trade association were seen struggling and fighting for the benefit of its members and Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) was no different.



Mr. Pradip Lulla, Acting President, TAFI, shares his views on the way forward...

Please share with us 3 initiatives that were undertaken by the association for the benefit of the members in the last financial year?

From the beginning of the financial year 2020, we experienced unprecedented lockdown of all transportation starting from flights rail, and even roads with restrictive travel. Our travel communities business had bottomed to nearly zero. Our first issues were with international flights not operating and airline personnel operating from home getting refunds processed became a major issue. We communicated with Secretary, Civil Aviation to

find a solution and also had a joint meeting with IATA and Civil Aviation Ministry to get refunds processed at the earliest but unfortunately with airlines also not having revenues it became a blockade. In addition to this, the verdict of the Ministry of Civil Aviation to the airlines to pay refunds for tickets issued during the lockdown was not adequate as we were referring to tickets issued before lockdown for flights cancelled. We then had no option but to approach the Supreme Court in filing two cases – one where we intervened in a case by passenger association and the other our individual case. We have now received a verdict that all the airlines will have to pay refunds to the travel agents in form of cash or credits in their login accounts by March 31, 2021. This has provided a major relief to our members and our travel agents community.

During the lockdown, we also conducted online educational programmes on international and domestic destinations through collaboration with various International Tourist Boards and also conducted domestic tours through the Ministry of Tourism.

We have been working and liaising with various departments of tourism and finance to gain industry status and get the government to stimulate the demand by giving tax incentives and facilitate ease on compliance and

are hopeful they would heed when the borders open out.

Did you give your members any concession in their annual membership fee for the financial year 2020 – 2021? Have you offered any special discount for 2021 – 2022 year?

We have reduced the yearly subscription fees by 25 per cent to all our members spanning the current financial year 2020/21

Please share with us any 2 points on which your association is currently working for the benefit of the association members?

We have been working with numerous insurance companies to work out solutions to mitigate the risk on the loss of money of agents in case of defaults from airlines, and also other financial liabilities arising from agent default in our jbg (joint bank guarantee agreement) and also cybercrimes and would be giving me premium payable to our members

Were you able to conduct a hybrid / virtual / Annual Convention last year? Do you have any plans for holding it this year?

Last year we could not but we are mulling over the concept of holding our annual convention in September 2021 – physical or hybrid is call we will take closer to the date as it will depend on the external factors prevailing at that time.

IATO: 'Treat the tourism industry as a deemed exporter, at par with the IT industry'

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has been much in new this last one year for its consistent efforts in meeting up with various government officials and seeking relief for its members and tourism fraternity in general. While some of the grievances were addressed, others went unheard. However, that has not deterred the association one bit as it continues to strive hard to seek relief for the tourism sector – even amidst elections.



Outgoing President, Mr. Pronab Sarkar gives us an overview on all that is happening on the work front of IATO.

Please share with us 3 initiatives that were undertaken by the association for the benefit of the members in the last financial year?

The three key initiatives by IATO were

- Writ in the Supreme Court for refund by the airlines on the tickets cancelled due to cancellation of Visas and International flights. The judgement offered relief to the stakeholders
- Letters to the State Governments of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan on the refund for cancellation of Wild Life Safaris' due to the pandemic. Refunds have been made and some are in the process.

- Approaching the Government for SEIS benefits to our members. Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Finance, Niti Aayog and Services Export Promotion Council – all have been approached with our request letters detailing the urgent need to give the pending SEIS for 2019-2020 due to the tour operators. We are hopeful on a positive response

Did you give your members any concession in their annual membership fee for the financial year 2020 – 2021? Have you offered any special discount for 2021 – 2022 year?

IATO has outlined that a member who can pay, may please pay and who cannot pay their membership shall continue till 31st March 2021, they can pay by that time. Membership will not be cancelled. The new elected Executive Committee that shall be in place post the IATO election on 6th March 2021 will decide on the Annual Subscription fees for 21-22.

Please share with us any 2 points on which your association is currently working for the benefit of the association members?

- The need for extension of service exports from India scheme (SEIS) for the tourism industry for the next 5 years in the new foreign trade policy 2021-25. With the help of SEIS benefits tour operators are utilising the funds for overseas marketing, promotion and pass on the benefits to foreign tourists by giving

value addition and showcasing India.

- Secondly, as requested finance Ministry for budget proposals, the tour operators suffer from multiple taxation at different levels as they offer multitude of services. IATO has urged the government to either lower the GST charged from the tour operators or allow input tax credit to enable Indian tour operator to pass on the benefits to foreign tour operators/ foreign tourists, this will remove cascading effect of taxes on tour operator's services.
- Treat the tourism industry as a deemed exporter at par with the IT Industry. The tourism sector too earns valuable foreign exchange but is not exempted from IGST even though it provides services to the foreign clients. IATO urges the government to either lower the GST charged from the tour operators or allow input tax credit to enable Indian tour operator to pass on the benefits to foreign tour operators/ foreign tourists, this will remove cascading effect on tour operator's services.

Were you able to conduct a hybrid / virtual / Annual Convention last year? Do you have any plans for holding it this year?

Owing to the Pandemic we could not conduct our Annual Convention in 2020. We plan to organise our Annual Convention in September 2021 in Ahmedabad Gujarat. It will be a physical event.

ATOAI: 'The new team will continue to progress the growth of adventure travel in India'

Adventure tourism is a critical aspect of our tourism fraternity and has gained significantly more prominence under the new normal, which has diverted people's preference towards discovering the undiscovered. The fraternity lost a legend last year – Akshay Kumar, who was a veteran in adventure tourism and also Past President ATOAI. But as they say – the show must go on and so with a new team in place, the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India is undertaking a slew of initiatives to help its members make up for the lost business.



Mr. Vishwas Makhija, President, ATOAI shares his thoughts on the way forward...

It's been a long journey for me personally, which started in 1987 at the age of 17, to today, heading this incredible organization which has been so beautifully nurtured by its Members and Founders to its present standing.

The new team at ATOAI has a wealth of experience of the outdoors and industry matters. For the first time, the Executive Committee has a greater participation from outside Delhi than within – 5 out of 7 EC members are from different regions of our country, which thus reflects the growing diversity and reach of our membership. After our team was declared elected on 20th January following a due election process, we immediately got to work the same evening as we conducted our

first Executive Committee meeting followed by two more Office Bearers meeting over the next few days.

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been busy trying to understand things, meeting key responsible Government functionaries such as the MOT and IMF, resolving some basic Admin concerns and getting clarity on our objectives to ensure a productive and forward looking term during our tenure. We are working very closely together to bring in some quick changes in our working and certain functional policies of the Association so it becomes easier to govern, and enables us to involve more of you in the running of the organization. We have set ourselves the following six month goals that we are aiming to achieve with the support of our members of the travel fraternity. We delayed payment of subscription fee for our members to Feb 2021 in an endeavour to help them. Going forward, we are doing an Investor's Meet with FICCI and Uttarakhand Government in Oct-Nov 2021. Details will be shared soon. I was also recently glad to be part of the ITM Physical Inauguration, which saw industry stalwarts come together to boost revival of tourism. I am confident that travel and tourism, which is already picking pace domestically, will soon bloom further and we would all be able to make up for our loss.

In the new leadership role, some

of the key areas that we would be focusing on includes –

- **Increase membership, become more relevant**
- **State adoption of safety guidelines**
- **State chapters, local leadership**
- **Workshops, meetings, convention**
- **Trade Value adds**

To repeat an oft-quoted piece of wisdom, an Association is all about its membership and its members. I would like to reassure you that I, along with the rest of the ATOAI Executive Team, will work together to help each one of you out of this long storm that has shaken our foundations, our business and our way of life.

The year gone by has been an exceptionally tough year for mankind and majorly so for the tourism fraternity. Together, we will build back our businesses, brick by brick, by working together and supporting each other's businesses. The present pan India membership of ATOAI is diverse, offering a wide range of products that we can all cross sell and I urge you all to take a pledge to work with another ATOAI supplier partner going forward. If we can achieve national scale on this, we can build an even stronger community of like-minded Adventurers creating joyful livelihoods around. The new ATOAI team will continue to progress the growth of adventure travel in India by taking forward the association's aims and shaping government policy for this sector.

IATTE: 'Let's stay Tourism Positive and empower each other through IATTE'

The travel industry, in the last one year, was seen undertaking a plethora of initiatives to stay afloat. One of the good things that came out of the pandemic was the formation of IATTE – Indian Association of Travel and Tourism Experts. IATTE is the first Virtual & Digitalised platform / forum that includes all tourism stakeholders including Hoteliers and Tour Operators under one roof. In less than a year, the association has crossed the 1500 mark in membership base and launched multiple State Chapters.



Mr. Naveen Manchanda,
President, IATTE shares his
views on the way forward...

Please share with us 3 Initiatives that were undertaken by the association for the benefit of the members in the last financial year – a year that was exceptionally tough for everyone.

While we undertook a plethora of initiatives, some of the worthy ones included –

- We did more than 40 live Facebook sessions to impart knowledge and to connect members with each other.
- We did a lot of events aimed

at bringing positivity to the tourism industry using hashtag #TourismPositive. We received plenty of support from various tourism associations in India

- We started a program called Know your IATTEAN where we featured many of our members (without any cost) on the various social media networks so that members can know each other better
- We created social media platforms, such as Telegram, Facebook page, Facebook group and WhatsApp for our members allowing them to interact more closely with each other
- We take pride in calling ourselves IATTE Family and the IATTEANS are the soul of this Family

Did you give your members any concession in their annual membership fee for the financial year 2020 – 2021? Have you offered any special discount for 2021 – 2022 year?

We started in 2020 and we kept it 100% Free for 2020 and going forward, we have decided to keep it free up till December 2021 for all B2C agents as well as hoteliers. We feel that we need to support our community during such difficult times.

Please share with us any 2 points on which your association is currently working for the benefit of the association members? Do you feel you will succeed in your endeavour?

- We are opening more state Chapters. On February 24, 4 more state chapters were launched and another four state Chapters will be launched around Holi. We already created a record by launching 10 state chapters simultaneously on 20th January 2021.

- We are launching IATTE ambassador program on February 26, 2021 where we will engage many dynamic people from the industry to help each other under the IATTE philosophy - Empower, Connect and Sustain.

Annual Conventions are always a highlight of an association? Were you able to conduct a hybrid / virtual / physical event last year? Do you have any plans for holding it this year as a hybrid / virtual or physical event?

Yes we are planning lots of activities in the month of April and May. Hopefully there will be a huge convention soon. You will see a lots of physical events coming up with IATTE starting from April in India and going as far as London by the end of 2021.

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

The list of upcoming events and ventures with IATTE is endless. It's not possible to share everything via a small message. Let's stay connected, stay Tourism Positive and empower each other through IATTE.

A Photographic Journey through

By Sarika Gangwal | Fashion and Art Photographer

CITY | **Maheshwar**



CITY | **Goa**



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Sarika Gangwal has been born and brought up in a very small village of Madhya Pradesh. She is the first girl from her village to go out and work. After her short stint in the field of Game Designing, she took photography professionally turning her hobby into a career.

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Thailand

An Oasis of Luxury

After an extremely tough and challenging year, the world is waiting to be pampered again. With vaccination drive in full swing in almost all parts of the world, the coming times brings a lot of hope and promise for all of us. So if you too are looking to spend a "luxurious" time on a holiday, plan a trip to Thailand for the destination is oozing with its luxury offerings. Be it luxury yachts, luxury charters, luxury coaches, luxury wedding options and luxury honeymoon bonanza – Thailand has it all.



Luxury Yachts

From its towering limestone karsts to vast powdery beaches and tranquil turquoise lagoons, a luxury yacht charter in Thailand offers unrivalled island hopping fun. Aboard these luxury Yachts, one not just gets to visit the golden temples of the country but can also explore some of the world's best scuba and snorkelling sites. The majority of superyacht charters focus around the Andaman Sea where there are more than 130 captivating isles within the province of Krabi alone. Phuket is the main destination for luxury yacht charters in Thailand. So go ahead and book a luxury yacht in Thailand for holiday, a business trip, wedding or honeymoon. Booking and facility information regarding some of the luxury yachts can be obtained from these websites - www.silverhawkgroup.com, www.hypeboatclub.com, www.boatlagoonyachting.com, www.royalphuketmarina.com.



Luxury Villas

Thailand is brimming with some of the finest properties, which constitute a wide selection of spectacular private villas suitable for small or large scale weddings and events. These venues offer breathtaking superstar views overlooking the beautiful Phuket and Samui island beaches and ocean. So if you have dreamt of celebrating your wedding at a luxury villa in foreign locales, visit Thailand and experience an intimate experience for you and your guests to relax in your own little paradise. While there are Luxury Villas, Hotels and Resorts dotted all through the country, some of the outstanding ones includes Soneva Kiri Koh Kood, Banyan Tree Phuket, Trisara Phuket, W Koh Samui, Six Senses Yao Noi and Sri Panwa in Phuket.



Luxury Coaches

When you think about travelling in group one often comes up with images of mini-vans or regular busses, but not in Thailand. In Thailand you can travel aboard one of the numerous luxury coaches and be truly pampered. There are many 32 or 40 seater luxury busses with innovative facilities on board to create the best possible journey. The chauffeurs are handpicked and has many years of experience who will ensure you sail, not just within the city but also travel from one city to another in complete luxury and comfort. All seats are provided with cold drinking water and cold wet napkin (even some snacks depending upon the organiser). The microphone and state-of-the-art addressing system for the group leader are also available. Maximum safety is ensured by individual safety belt, fire extinguisher, and easy-to-access emergency exit.



Luxury Honeymoon

Honeymoon is a very special time in a couple's life and one must surely spend it in complete luxury.

Thailand is a hub for luxury resorts, hotels and ultra-luxury honeymoon options. The beach destinations in Thailand offer some truly great luxury options to pamper your senses. While on your honeymoon, enjoy an outdoor cinema in the jungle overlooking a lagoon (with beds and popcorn!), a tree top dining pod, an observatory, and a villa with its very own slide straight into a private pool – the options are many!

Luxury Michelin food experience

If you are a fan of Michelin culinary, then Bangkok is the place you should definitely visit. Everyone knows that Thailand is a foodie paradise of Southeast Asia with a great diversity of intense spices and distinctive flavours. But, in addition to some amazing street vendors as well as traditional shop house eateries, Michelin food is one of the main highlights in Bangkok, where boasts most of the Michelin-starred restaurants and street vendors in Thailand. Besides Bangkok, there are some world-class Michelin-starred restaurants available in Phuket and Chiang Mai also, information regarding which can be best obtained in the Michelin Guidebook.



Make 'Adventure' a part of your life: **Tejbir**

The last one year has redefined many things in our life – the way we eat, we work and we travel, all activities have undertaken a new meaning following the 'new normal'. The pandemic has taught people to adapt to changing times and also look for alternate avenues of entertainment and fun. Travel too has been completely redefined. People today are looking for immersive experiences in quiet and serene locales, which are not crowded. In this new post Covid-era, the demand for Adventure Tourism has increased as the sector has immense potential to cater to a variety of tastes and preferences.



Tejbir Singh Anand

The deadly pandemic that arose in 2020 took the world by storm. While all the sectors were majorly hit, the travel and tourism was the first one to suffer and would be the last to

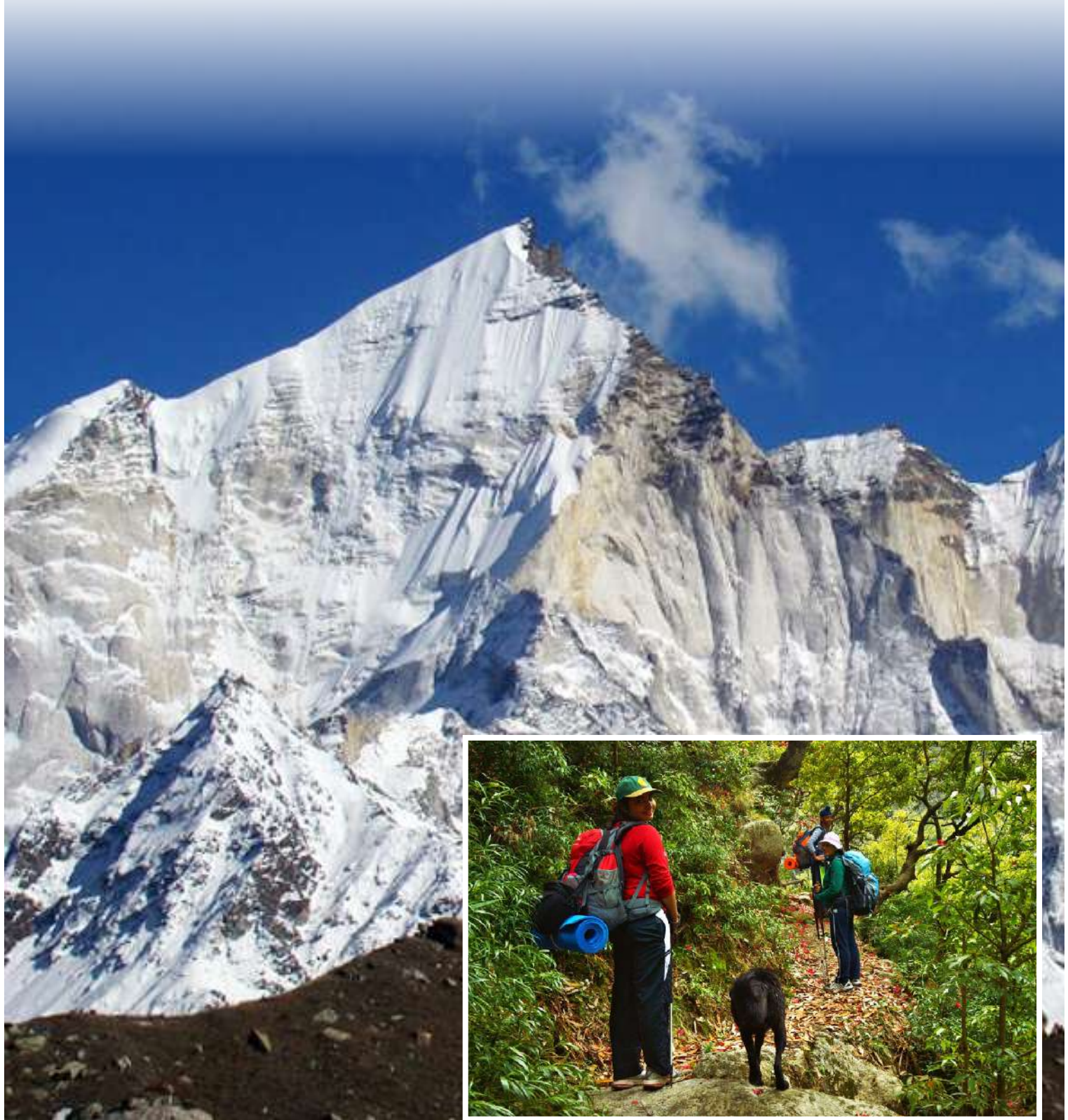
recover as it continues to struggle for sustenance. People are scared and shying away from travelling to distant far flung destinations. This is where an adventure break comes to your rescue. If the idea of snuggling amidst the mountains appeal to you but you get wary with hygienic conditions of the camp sites, go for Glamping! Yes Glamping is your middle path that offers you luxury while camping in the wilderness. Hospitality and tourism are different sides of the same coin, but with the pandemic taking front seat, glamping, aka, 'Glamorous Camping' has garnered a great deal of importance over a period of time. One such destination to quench your thirst for adventure in these times is Camp Wild Dhauj at Aravali Valley, Faridabad. The luxury camping spot is one of a kind place that comes with all things adventurous such as Rock Climbing, Rappelling, Tyrolean Traverse, Trekking, Hiking to hidden

lakes, Zorbing, Cycling, Flying fox, River crossing, Raft Building, and a low rope obstacle Course.

Prominent among corporates and institutions, the Camp Wild Dhauj is an absolute adventure hub as their unique location amidst the world's oldest mountain range gives them the edge to be envied. With the ambience so expressive, you are sure to feel the adventurer within you bursting with excitement!

With the vaccination drive underway, things are likely to settle down at a much rapid pace now. The modern way of camping i.e. glamping by means of accommodation and facilities offers much more luxury than those associated with traditional camping. So my friends, if you too are seeking a short sojourn, away from the cacophony of life or away from the pandemic talks, the best course of action would be to go to a place that is less crowded and more protected.





Plan an adventure trip and your life will be altered forever. Take a 'glamping break' and experience the adrenaline rush of an adventurous break amidst safe, clean and luxury camping ambience.

Let me conclude by stating the obvious - Adventure Tourism is resilient, supports local economies, attracts high value customers and encourages sustainable practices. However, adventure tourism remains a relatively small market in India as compared to the West. It is a space that needs to be looked upon in, in more depth as it not only contributes to the overall growth of the industry but ensures that the ecology, mountains and the forests are safe. The global adventure tourism market was valued at \$ 586.3 billion in 2018, and is projected to reach \$1,626.7 billion in 2026, registering a

CAGR of 13.3% from 2019 to 2026. The development of the travel & tourism sector fosters the growth for adventure tourism market demand. Cycling is one such adventure activity that gained essential significance in the Covid era. People have realised the importance of resources and cycling adheres to all sustainability aspects and a lot new cyclists have taken it up not just as a hobby but as part of their lifestyle. Thus, adventure is not just hiking, trekking, surfing, mountaineering but can also be enjoyed in simple eco-friendly activities that will change your life forever.

Tejbir Singh Anand is Managing Director, Holiday Moods Adventure; Founding Member and current Vice Chairman, FAITH and EC Member, ATOAI

Saudi Tourism Authority launches 'Journeys in Arabia'; engages with travel trade in India

Finally joining the tourism bandwagon, destination Saudi is introducing a series of promotional activities across the globe to increase awareness regarding the destination. The Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) has launched 'Journeys in Arabia', an exclusive online event curated especially for travel trade partners around the globe – India being one of them.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Saudi Arabia is a relatively new destination on the global stage. As the authentic home of Arabia, Saudi offers unique, diverse and unparalleled experiences, a land of natural assets, rich culture and heritage and adventure. In an endeavour to interact with the travel trade and media fraternity in India and tell them all that the destination has to offer, the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) hosted an extremely successful virtual event in India. The India 'Journeys in Arabia' webinar brought together local travel trade partners, for an opportunity to hear from thought leaders and experts in the tourism industry.

The session provided insights into the current state of travel, and the opportunities and challenges in

addressing the growing demand and interest in Saudi as a new destination. In his opening address, Fahd Hamidaddin, CEO, Saudi Tourism Authority said, "People today seek inspiration to discover the unknown and in the post Covid era, travellers are choosing to visit safe and lesser crowded places. All these factors make Saudi a perfect option for them. Just like technology has changed the way things operate in all sectors, in tourism too, we need to use technology for progress and growth - to reach out to a larger audience."

The keynote conversation 'Journeys Make People' between Abdullah Al Dakhil, International Communication Manager, Saudi Tourism Authority and Indian Journalist Vir Sanghvi was also an interesting highlight of the event wherein the viewers got an insight

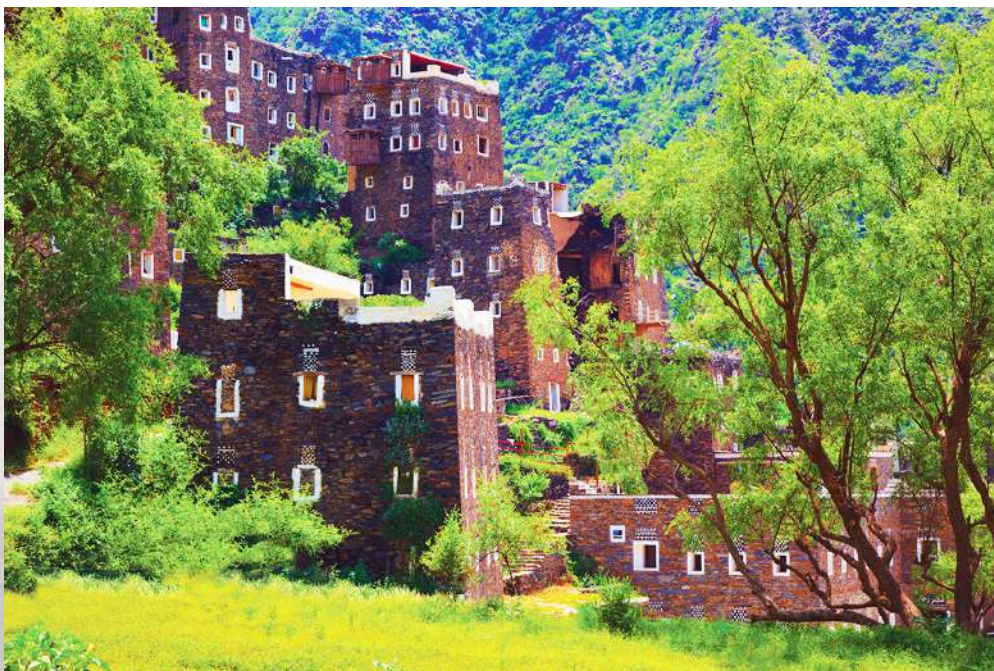


Fahd Hamidaddin

CEO, Saudi Tourism Authority

into the activities that can be tried out in Saudi and the uniqueness of Arabic cuisine. The quintessential 'Biryani' emerged as the common favourite not just in the Indian and Saudi cuisine but also of both speakers!

Following this, an insightful panel discussion was moderated by Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing. The panellists included Haitham Mattar, CCO, Saudi Tourism Authority; Benazir Nazar, CEO, Akbar Travels; Deep Kalra, Founder & Group Executive Chairman, Make My Trip; Madhavan Menon, Chairman & Managing Director, Thomas Cook Group and Rakshit Desai, Managing Director – India, FCM. The core point that emerged out of the discussion was that the millennials today are intrigued when new places come up, especially so close to India. Since Indians are last minute planners,





Some of the key highlights and market insights of the webinar discussion were:

- India has been identified as one of the key source markets, and STA's tourism strategy focuses on promoting experiences related to culture, heritage, nature and adventure in Saudi
- Indians, especially the online consumers and millennials, are late planners and constantly seek new destinations, within close proximity to India for last-minute holiday planning. Shorter-duration packages, direct flights and ease in visa (preferably e-visas) procurement will be game-changers for a new destination like Saudi
- Saudi offers exceptional experiences for diving, adventure sports, and sustainable tourism. The country will also host the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix in 2021. These developments reflect the new travel motivations that Indian leisure travellers actively seek today
- Two key considerations among the Corporate/Leisure market are awareness and attractiveness. While the former can be achieved through communication and information dissemination, via visual and video content on Saudi; attractiveness will come from exquisite on-ground experiences that visitors have while at the destination
- The high-end Umrah market from India is a major captive audience, combining pilgrimage with leisure through post-Umrah leisure packages
- Promoting unique destinations like AlUla for wedding tourism will be a huge draw for Saudi
- Lastly, consumer behavior has seen a drastic shift in a post-Covid world with both MICE and Leisure travel experiencing a heightened ecological sensitivity. Travelers are seeking clear information and assurance related to hygiene and safety.

newer destinations closer to home are always preferred. Saudi, thus have huge potential in India. While there were suggestions to promote and position the destination as a favourable hub for destination weddings, concerns were also raised regarding the "safety" aspect of travellers in general and women travellers in particular.

Saudi offers exceptional experiences for diving, adventure sports, and sustainable tourism. The country will also host the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix in 2021. These developments reflect the new travel motivations that Indian leisure travellers actively seek today and must surely be highlighted to capture the traveller's interest.

Following up on the success of the 'Journeys in Arabia' webinar, STA will also be hosting an immersive virtual roadshow for India on March 2 – 3, 2021, partnering with the most relevant destination, experience and hospitality brands in Saudi to showcase the best of what the Kingdom has to offer.

IATO Elections 2021: 'Team Moving Forward' promises big with focus on revival of tourism

The Moving Forward Team under the guidance of Mr. Rajiv Mehra, Senior Vice President (present) and Presidential candidate recently held a press meet and not only bravely answered some tough media questions but also candidly admitted to not having received a positive outcome to their 110 letters (requests) written to the various Ministries in last 10 months. The hope however, still remains.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

Kick-starting the meet by enlisting achievements of the last 6 years starting with GST reductions, relief for monument entry during monetisation, skill development, resumption of airport entry passes and many more that the team achieved, Mr. Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO enumerated that not only has IATO gained a prominence in the corridors of power but has also come to be recognised as the nodal agency for travel trade whose opinion and feedback is often sought by the decision makers.

Passing the baton now to Mr. Rajiv Mehra, who has been associated with IATO for over two decades and best known as the “silent force” working behind the scenes of every convention / event, team Moving Forward stands united in their vision and mission to revive the down and beaten tourism industry. “Our coming to power is important because whatever we have done or achieved till now in all these years should be maintained. Continuity is the key if we want to accomplish the desired results. Our achievements are numerous and our candidates have knowledge – a collective experience of over 200 years serving the travel community. If anyone can work selflessly towards the revival of tourism sector – it is

this team at IATO,” said the aspiring IATO President.

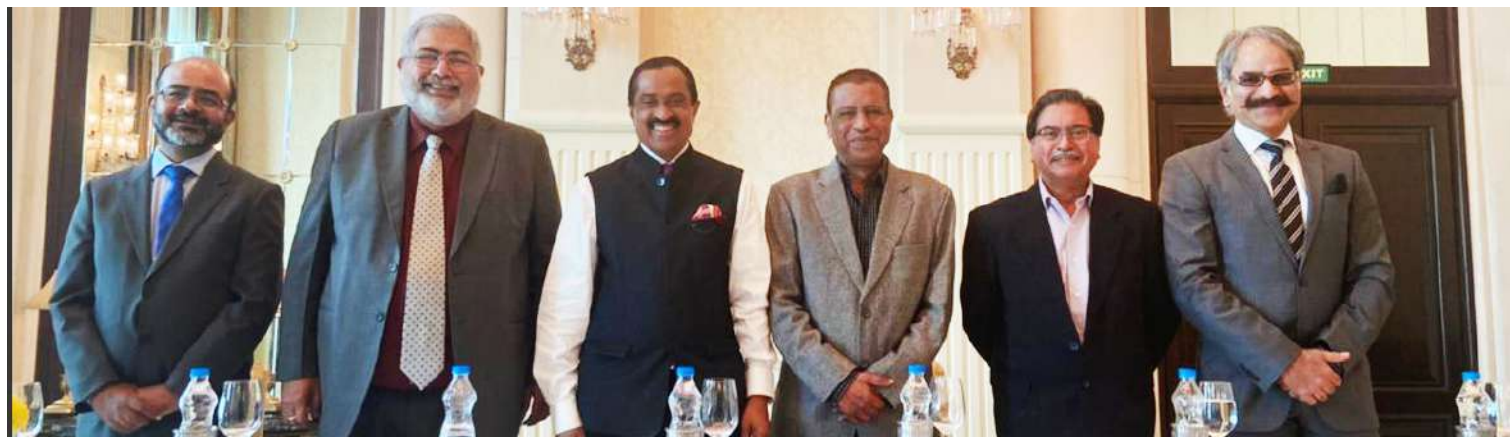
Returning to the IATO EC after a gap, Sarab Jit Singh, who is contesting for the post of Sr. Vice President, IATO brings a fresh perspective yet experienced perspective to the team. “While we wait for the government assistance, we must do our homework and focus on revival of tourism. When we come to the power, we will have to rework the strategy and works towards strengthening the national presence of IATO through granting more power to our state chapters,” he said.

Mr. Ravi Gosain, who is presently the Hony. Treasurer is contesting for the post of Vice President and is perhaps the youngest member of Team Moving Forward. Age notwithstanding, Ravi comes with a vast professional experience and enjoys a decade old affiliation with IATO. “If elected, in my new role, I propose to bring something extra to the table starting with increasing the membership base. Also, in my professional capacity, I have been diligently working towards promoting India in overseas market and this is what I am aiming to strengthen in my new role at IATO,” he shared.

Besides this, Mr. Rajnish Kaistha is contesting for the post of Hony. Secretary; Mr. Raj Bajaj for Hony. Joint Secretary and Mr. Viney Tyagi is contesting for the post of Hony. Treasurer.

IATO Elections 2021: 'Team for Change' appeals for dignified conduct and transparency

After four consecutive years, IATO is all set to elect its new presidential candidate and team in the forthcoming elections. With the sole idea of bringing the 'change' to the association, IATO as an association strives to make it a more relevant trade body, thereby aspiring to help its members when needed. In an exclusive press meet, members of 'Team for Change' candidly talked about their agenda, which is focused on "bringing about the much needed change in the functioning of the association." Read on to know more.



Arushi Bajaj

Gearing up for the IATO elections, campaigning for which is in full swing, Mr. Rajesh Mudgill, the Hony. Secretary, IATO, who is once again contesting for the post of Hony. Secretary said, "Leaving a tough 2020 behind along with the set of challenges it gave, it is now time for the trade to look up in hope towards the offerings of 2021. Though the business might not bounce back even for the next 6-8 months but the revival is still on the cards and tourism would get back on rails like never before. In the meantime, we have to prepare ourselves accordingly." Keeping in mind the dignified conduct and decorum, Mr. Lally Matthews for President, said, "We are going to make sure that we do not involve in any sort of character assassination. The whole idea is to create a healthy environment and ensuring just and fair electoral proceedings. The pandemic, for sure made our lives miserable but Ministry of Tourism has done a phenomenal job by introducing one of a kind campaign such as 'Dekho Apna Desh' and like my team members, I too feel that the revival of the industry is what our focus should be for the future."

Commenting on the occasion, Mr. E.M. Najeeb, Senior Vice President, IATO said, "It is time to ensure that participants come forward in huge numbers and to share their suggestions / feedback that in turn would make the entire election process transparent. My main motive is to ensure that no one in tourism goes out of job. Tourism

has to work closely in partnership with the government for the overall growth of the sector. The focus is on creating IATO's brand image like that of Incredible India campaign."

Elaborating on the 'change', Mr. Lally Matthews mentions, "My priority at the moment is small and medium operators who have an immense potential to turn the industry around. As far as the growth is concerned, I believe, new leaders come with new ideas. We also have plans in place for skill development programs that will take the scenario to next level." When questioned on the major changes he would bring to the association he said, "Waiving of annual fees and subsidizing convention cost for the year 2021 shall be enforced and even if inbound business does not gain momentum will consider waiver even for 2022. We will also try through MoT for soft loans for members at low interest rates. And last but not the least, we guarantee the amendment of constitution to make it more inclusive and transparent by the end of 2021."

"IATO - Team for change would work tirelessly for its members in full capacity as a lot needs to be done for the betterment of the association. IATO needs to alter its traditional approach of functioning by looking for international collaborations and tie-ups with outbound associations. The need of the hour is to increase the membership base by building good synergy." Mr. Rajesh Mudgill concluded.

Tourism Minister inaugurates Mega Homestay Development & Training Workshop

Union Minister of State for Culture & Tourism (Independent Charge) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel inaugurated the three day Incredible India Mega Homestay Development and Training Workshop in Darjeeling on February 22, 2021.



TEAM BOTT

The Ministry of Tourism's Indiatourism Kolkata, Regional Office (East) had organised this workshop from February 22 – 24, 2021 in association with Eastern Himalayas Travel and Tour Operator Association (Resource Partner) and IIAS School of Management (Knowledge Partner) to enrich the hospitality skill of Homestay owners to ensure a better experience for the tourists.

The concept of Homestay is getting popular in Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of Northern part of West Bengal. The involvement of local community is more than ever in this Homestay Tourism at one of the most favoured Hill Stations for Domestic and Inbound Tourists. However, most

of these homestays lack professional training of Hospitality etc. which would impact the destination in the long run.

A total of 450 Homestay owners would be trained in the aforesaid Mega Workshop where IIAS School of Management (Knowledge Partner) would train them free of cost in different spheres of Hospitality (i.e. Behavioural Skill, Marketing and Sales Skills, Destination Promotion Skills etc.). The Workshop would start every day at 10 AM and continue upto 3 PM. Post Workshop an interaction between Tour Operators/ Travel Agents (Appx. 40 Operators) in form of B2B was organised. The aim of this robust hospitality training workshop is to upgrade the hospitality skills of local community

stakeholders by capacity building. This initiative is directed towards the rural development through tourism and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage of local communities.

Prior to this, the honourable Minister of Tourism, Government of India, who couldn't be present physically at the India Tourism Mart (ITM) 2021 physical inauguration function held at ITC Maurya New Delhi, addressed the gathering and delegates virtually, assuring Government's complete cooperation to the tourism sector for the revival and survival. In his address, he talked about the numerous Government policies and initiatives and detailed on how they are providing relief and benefit to the tourism sector.

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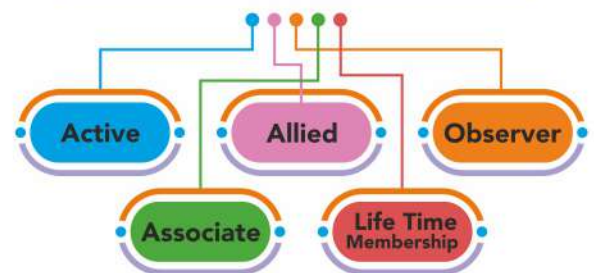
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India Convention Promotion Bureau, sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is the marketing arm of the Ministry to promote India as an attractive MICE destination. The Governing body of ICPB is chaired by the Joint Secretary, ministry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



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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