

# BOTT

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# 2022

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

*Dear Friends,*

Here's wishing you all a very Healthy and Happy New Year. 2021 has ended and what a year it was! If we thought 2020 was tough, the year gone by proved us wrong. While business in many verticals did pick up pace, tourism remained subdued in the doubtful shadows of inbound as well as outbound travel. Against announcement, scheduled international flights did not open and the season that was supposed to take the curve up – the Christmas and New Year celebrations – were damped in many parts of the country, thanks to a new scare.

2022 is going to be a tough year my friends. Incomes have gone down and reserves have run up dry. It will take a while before vacancies open up again or before people start undertaking leisure travel again. The numerous rules, regulations and guidelines of each state within India and countries abroad has made travel a tiresome activity. And yet, WE – people like YOU and ME, who are an integral part of the travel chain and who would like nothing better but to see the good golden days of 2019 to return can only be hopeful – hopeful that the virus will only grow weak with time and that travel will resume again.

Our first issue of the year is a testament of our hope as we spoke to representatives of countries across the globe to know how important India as a travel market is for them and what are they doing to prepare for the better times. A string of Outbound Interviews, exhaustive coverage of the IATO Convention and news from across the globe along with vision statements of our Association heads will keep you informed and updated on the latest in the industry. We look forward to your feedback on our BOTT January 2022 Issue.

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

priyanka@bottindia.com



**Business of Travel Trade (BOTT)  
gets awarded as the  
BEST TRAVEL MEDIA – DIGITAL  
at the 36th IATO  
Annual Convention in  
Gandhinagar, Gujarat**

**BOTT**  
Business of Travel Trade  
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"The Ministry of Tourism is undertaking a series of activities for encouraging citizens to travel within the country including Northern India. The Ministry is regularly organising tourism promotional events, road shows, fam trips, students study tours, workshops, quiz programmes, social media promotions etc. under the banner of Dekho Apna Desh, Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat (EBSB) and Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav."

**-Shri G. Kishan Reddy,**  
Minister of Tourism, Government of India



"We understand the importance of Digital outreach and positioning Brand India. We used the opportunity of Covid to rethink and recalibrate ourselves and now have a strategy in place to revamp our digital platform looking at content services and outreach. Also, it is time that India has a travel show of its own, just like other countries do. We are working towards developing the same."

**-Mr. Rakesh Verma,**  
Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism,  
Government of India



"I was overwhelmed at the warm welcome received at the IATO Convention in Gandhinagar. Interacting with tourism stakeholders and listening to their views and suggestions helps us plan the future of tourism better. We at MoT are in the process of soon launching the 'India Safe' Campaign, which will highlight the vaccinated state of our country and send the message that it is absolutely safe to travel to India. We are looking at a grand global launch of the campaign across various media platforms."

**-Mrs. Rupinder Brar,**  
ADG, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India



"I am always a big advocate of tourism and feel strongly that being labour intensive industry it has a great potential for Poverty Eradication and Economic Development, not only in our country, but worldwide. Friends, I can assure you that till the last day of my life, I will continue to leave no stone unturned to make India, realise its true potential of the greatest tourist destination in the world and through this we will be able to create millions of jobs eradicate poverty and make India the country of dreams."

**-Dr. Subhash Goyal,**  
Chairman, STIC Travels and Air Charters Group



"As Radisson Hotel Group gears up for their first yet-to-be-launched bold and vibrant, Radisson RED in Chandigarh Mohali, I am filled with an incredible sense of excitement and responsibility to lead the team at our first RED in the country. The fundamentals of the hospitality trade are the same across the globe, but RED will cut through for being heard, seen, felt and experienced. I feel honoured to unleash the first RED in our country."

**-Mr. Kshitij Jawa,**  
General Manager, Radisson RED

### Fortune Hotels signs two new hotels in Katra and Amritsar

Fortune Hotels, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ITC Ltd announced the signing of two individual operating agreements for hotels in Katra (Jammu & Kashmir) and Amritsar (Punjab), thereby strengthening its growth strategy in key pilgrim locations and adding over 100 new rooms to its existing inventory. Fortune Park The Atrium, Katra, a 58-room spacious hotel with a glass pyramid-shaped atrium roof, is poised to open in the summer of 2022 with refreshed contemporary interiors, modern facilities and impeccable services that promise to offer homelike comfort to leisure traveller looking to explore this popular tourist destination. The property is owned by M/s Swastik Resort. Fortune Inn Heritage Walk, Amritsar, is a 50-room boutique hotel conveniently located in close proximity to Jallianwala Bagh and is currently undergoing a refurbishment programme.



### Tree of Life adds two new properties at Dared, Gujarat and Amer, Jaipur

Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels, a collection of resorts and lodges centred around serenity and sanctity, has added two brand new resorts located in Darbargadh, Dared, Gujarat and Chhota Mahal, Amer, Jaipur. Striking the perfect balance between the rawness of nature and the comfort of luxury, Tree of Life has a wide collection of properties located pan India. Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels is a collection of luxury getaway experiences to provide an escape from the daily hustle and bustle of life. With the ideal environment to reconnect with nature and one's inner self, Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels is the ultimate rejuvenation destination that seamlessly blends into the uniqueness and richness of its location.



### Kochi to host 11th edition of Kerala Travel Mart in March 2022

Kerala Travel Mart (KTM), the country's largest congregation of tourism industry, will be holding its eleventh edition in Kochi in March 2022, giving an impetus to the efforts to revive the pandemic-hit tourism sector by attracting visitors from across the world. The event will be inaugurated at Grand Hyatt at Bolgatty, Kochi on March 24, 2022, while the following three days' proceedings will be held at Sagara and Samudrika Convention Centre in Willingdon Island, Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Rias told a press conference here on Tuesday. As the ensuing edition of KTM is coming on the heels of the launch of the Caravan Tourism project by the State Government, the event will have caravan tourism and adventure tourism as the main themes, even as the internationally-acclaimed responsible tourism will also receive prominent attention.







## PM Modi inaugurates Kashi Vishwanath corridor

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the first phase of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham, a project which is spread over five lakh square feet and connects the temple premises to the River Ganga besides providing several facilities to devotees. PM Modi said the whole new complex of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham is not just a grand building, but a symbol of the “Sanatan culture” of India, our spiritual soul and India’s antiquity and traditions. The temple area here, which was only 3000 square feet, has now spread to about five lakh square feet. Now 50,000-75,000 devotees can come to the temple premises, he said. He said “new history” was being created and “we are fortunate to have witnessed it.”

## ‘Shri Ramayan Yatra’ becomes world's first train to get vegetarian certification

In order to encourage vegetarian friendly railway services, the Sattvik Council of India in association with Bureau Veritas (global audit partner) provided ‘vegetarian certification’ to ‘Shri Ramayan Yatra’ yesterday at Safdarjung railway station, New Delhi. ‘Shri Ramayana Yatra’ theme based pilgrimage tour by Dekho Apna Desh Deluxe AC Tourist train become the first vegetarian friendly train. The statement said the vegetarian-friendly railway services are particularly dedicated to observant vegetarians and vegans travelling to holy destinations in the Indian Railways. The train, which will cover various religious places across the country, got the vegetarian certification from the Sattvik Council of India, a non-profit organisation that has been established to promote the certification of vegetarian food.



## Caesars Palace Dubai appoints One Rep Global as India representative

One Rep Global is delighted to announce its collaboration with the iconic Caesars Palace Dubai as their India representation partner. Caesars Palace Dubai recognises the importance of the Indian market and is excited to welcome travellers, business professionals, family and friends for the ultimate luxury experience. The UAE has become and continues to grow a key destination for Indian tourists given the growth of the Indian economy and its attractive demographics, namely a young population and rising middle class. As cited by GlobalData, UAE recognises that Indian tourists will be some of the most desirable travellers given India’s growing economy, young population and rising middle class. Caesars Palace Dubai recognises the importance of the Indian market and is excited to welcome travellers, business professionals, family and friends for a luxurious experience.



### Thailand increases “Blue Zone” destinations to 26, eases COVID-19 curbs

‘Blue Zone’ destinations from within 17 to 26 provinces and seeing more COVID-19 curbs being eased nationwide. This means nearly all businesses and activities in the Blue Zone destinations can continue to open with “New Normal” operations. These include all shopping venues, convenience stores, markets, cinemas and theatres, sports venues, hair salons and barbershops, massage and spa shops, beauty and aesthetic clinics, and tattoo shops. Restaurants and eateries can also resume normal opening hours. Meetings, events, and fairs can be also held normally with no limitation on the number of attendees. However, all types of entertainment venues, including pubs, bars, and karaoke shops nationwide are to remain closed.



### Marriott Bonvoy ends the year with a gratitude campaign

Marriott Bonvoy, Marriott International’s portfolio of 30 hotel brands and award-winning travel program, launches #TravelMakesUsThankful, a gratitude campaign encouraging everyone to savor the good moments, whether big or small, that came out of 2021. Coinciding with the year-end festive season traditionally regarded as a time to take stock and reflect on the year, #TravelMakesUsThankful urges travellers, guests, associates, and netizens alike to express what they’re thankful for – whether through messages of gratitude shared over social media, or through a ‘gratitude dance’ with the aid of a specially-launched Instagram filter and animated dance partner.



### Parvada Bungalows launches Parvada Rural Stays, Uttarakhand

Village Parvada is positioning itself as a rural stay experience, with currently 1 homestay in each of the 4 categories (Luxury/Gold/Silver and Bronze). Parvada Bungalows (luxury) boutique cottages are nestled into the verdant fields and orchards and are built in traditional-style to weather the different seasons. Parvada Bungalows, which opened its doors in 2018, has worked with the villagers from 2020, to set up Parvada Rural Stays. Kaaphal Homestay (Gold) is located on the edge of the forest and is home to the local village head. Chandra’s Homestay (Silver) is a short but exhilarating walk uphill. She is a fabulous cook and keeps a very clean homestay. Lucky Homestay (Bronze) is hosted by the very charming lady of the house Deepu.





## TBO.com files draft papers to raise Rs. 2,100 crore via IPO



The IPO consists of a fresh issue of Rs. 900 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 1,200 crore by its existing shareholders and promoters. The proceeds from the fresh issue will be used for the company's growth, strengthening of its platform by adding new buyers and suppliers, for strategic acquisitions and investments towards inorganic growth. Axis Capital,

Credit Suisse Securities India, Jefferies India, and JM Financials are the book running lead managers to the issue. TBO is a global travel technology company focused on providing a range of travel services to its buyers (travel agents, TMCs, Super Apps and tour operators) across the world. The company have also constituted a stellar board of independent directors.

## ATOAI announces the formation of ATOAI Chapter for Tamil Nadu

ATOAI is delighted to inform about the formation of the Tamil Nādu ATOAI Chapter, which will be a great opportunity to bring together the adventure tourism fraternity in Tamil Nādu. Mr. Sriharan Balan, Deputy Managing Director, Madura Travel Service (P) Ltd & Group, Tamil Nadu will assume charge as the ATOAI Chapter Chairman for Tamil Nadu. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nādu intends to finalise adventure tourism guidelines for the state, and commence classification of adventure tour operators. This is a welcome step and ATOAI will support Mr. Balan in overseeing these efforts as part of the proposed committee for adventure tourism.



ADVENTURE TOUR OPERATORS  
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

## Tata Group plans to merge AirAsia India into AI Express

With plans to merge AirAsia India into Air India Express – a low-cost carrier operating on the short haul routes international routes - the Tata Group may soon be operating in the low-cost space in international and domestic skies. "The plan on the table is to operate the existing AirAsia India fleet in the domestic skies and also provide domestic connections to the current Air India Express' international network," a person aware of the group's plans told a leading national daily. "The plan also is to keep both Airbus and Boeing fleet running." While AI Express operates a fleet of Boeing 737s, AirAsia India operates a fleet of Airbus 320s.





## The 36th IATO Annual Convention helped pave a 'Road to Recovery' for the tourism sector

Priyanka Saxena Ray

The 36th IATO Annual Convention was a benchmark for the travel fraternity in many ways. Not only did it set the tone for the revival of industry by bringing together great minds for some innovative and insightful business sessions, but also ensured that the people who have stayed caged inside all these months had some gleeful entertainment during the evenings. Here's a report on all that transpired during the 3 days of a landmark convention.

IATO conventions for the last four decades have been the high point of travel trade sector in India. They are always well-attended with a program designed to match the prevailing situation supplemented with gala evenings and fun sessions. The 36th Annual IATO Convention, which took place after a gap of 2 years, was no different. The theme for the Convention this year was 'Brand India: Road to Recovery', which is something we all needed in the light of Covid aftermath. The highlight of the convention this year were the Business Sessions, which were few in number and had an interesting mix of speakers comprising industry professionals who have never before participated in the IATO Convention. With registered delegates crossing the mark of 600, it was indeed a jolly event that enthused people with hope for a brighter future.

### THE INAUGURATION

The convention was scheduled at The Leela Gandhinagar, Gujarat – a property that has just opened a few months back. With an impressive ballroom, the inauguration of the IATO Convention started well in time as delegates marked timely





presence to listen to the honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Bhupendra Patel, who declared the convention open along with Mr. G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, Director General Tourism, Govt. of India and Mr. Hareet Shukla, Secretary Tourism, Govt. of Gujarat. Mr. Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travels was conferred with the prestigious IATO Hall of Fame Award, which is considered to be the highest honour in tourism. Mr. Subhash Goyal not only holds the honour of being the longest serving President of IATO but is also responsible for some landmark achievements, spearheaded by him during his tenure at IATO. His tireless dedication towards strengthening inbound tourism and positioning India's image in the world as a popular tourist destination needs special mention. Along with him, Mr. Mahendra Singh Vaghela aka Mike Vaghela, Managing Director, Vaghela Hospitalities and former IATO Gujarat Chapter Chairman, also received the Hall of Fame Award from the honourable CM.

## BUSINESS SESSIONS – DAY 2

One good thing that has come out of Covid is that it has united people with similar woes – as has been the case in tourism. With a string of insightful and interesting business sessions organised by IATO, the 2 days of the convention saw some fruitful discussions taking place across the dais. The first session on based on the theme of the convention – Brand India: The Road to Recovery for Revival of Business moderated by Mr. Pronab Sarkar, Immediate Past President, IATO who presented an interesting array of views of the government as well as the private sector. Mr. Rajeev Kohli, Jt. MD, Creative Travels presented an interesting 8-points plan that the government can undertake to give the much needed impetus to the tourism sector. Ms. Shilpa Gupta IAS, Additional Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, spoke from heart about the various captivating aspects of the heart of India – Madhya Pradesh. The second and perhaps the most interesting Business Session of the Convention was the one on 'Hotels in the New Normal'. With an impressive display of star panellists comprising Mr. Nakul Anand, ED, ITC Hotels; Mr. Puneet





Chhatwal, MD&CEO, The Indian Hotels Company; Mr. Anurag Bhatnagar, COO The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts and Mr. Ajay Bakaya, MD, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts – Mr. Homa Mistry, CEO, Trail Blazer took the prize for being the most interesting, interactive and witty moderator. He kept the audience engaged with the 'bhakt-bhagwan' theory and compelled the hoteliers to commit to coming out with special rates for the IATO member tour operators and travel agents. The session on Connectivity: New Frontiers was moderated by Mr. Ashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH and had an invigorating panel that had representation from Railways, Roadways, Airways and River Tourism. Involving Government representatives to answer some tough questions, Mr. Pronab Sarkar brilliantly hosted a session on SEIS: New Policy under FTP 2021 – 2026. This interactive session allowed members from the audience to clarify their doubts with the esteemed panellists present on the dais. The day concluded on a responsible note as Ms. Anjuna Dhir steered a session on Responsible Tourism interacting with Mr. Rakesh Mathur, President, RTSOI, Mr. Anirudh Chaoji, Hony. Treasurer, RTSOI and Mr. Michael Dominic, CEO, CGH Earth and Shri Anil Kumar M. Solanki, Addl Chief Secretary, Forests and Environment, Government of Gujarat.

## BUSINESS SESSIONS – DAY 3

Keeping in times with the challenging times, the day three of the IATO Convention started with what was regarded as the most relevant topic in the prevailing times – Automation and Digital Marketing, moderated by none other than the VP IATO Mr. Ravi Gosain. Both Prof. Seema Gupta, Ex Professor of Digital Marketing, IIM Bangalore and Mr. Hemant Mediratta, Chief Advisor, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts presented some insightful aspects of Digital marketing and benefits of making presence felt online. Mr. Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, MoT as one of the esteemed panellists, disclosed the various initiatives that the Ministry of Tourism is undertaking to become digitally active and web friendly. The following session on Preparedness under New Normal brought to light the views of Mrs. Rupinder Brar, Addl. Director General,







Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and Mr. Praveen Chander Kumar, Sr. VP – S&M, The Indian Hotels Company and Mr. Harish Mathur, EC Member, IATO on how India can tap into its domestic travel potential during the time of the prevailing crisis. An interesting chat on Dekho Apna Desh by Ms. Brar showcased how people not just in India but also globally discovered many unseen, unheard aspects of our country through this series of webinars. Lastly, the Valedictory Session, which was missed out by all the chief guests enlisted, saw the IATO EC come together and thank the industry for their robust participation at the convention during these challenging times.

## IATO RUN

This year's IATO Run was great fun and all participants enjoyed morning cold breeze in almost zero pollution environment with AQI level below 50. Flag off was done by Ms. Bhavina Hasmukhbhai Patel, silver medallist in table tennis in 2020 Tokyo Summer Paralympics. She was also felicitated by IATO during the inaugural function. The run saw good participation from people of all age groups.

## STATE PRESENTATIONS

There were various state presentations done during the three days of the convention. These included presentations by Uttar Pradesh Tourism, Gujarat Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism, Kerala Tourism, Punjab Tourism, Rajasthan Tourism, Odisha Tourism, Uttarakhand Tourism, Madhya Pradesh Tourism and Karnataka Tourism.

## THE ENTERTAINMENT

On all the three days, the association had good evening entertain programmes with singers, such as, Abhijeet Sawant, Jimmy Felix and Urvashi Arora performing and singing for the audience. The members truly enjoyed it along with the Karaoke singing competition. On the last day of the Convention, Mr. Ashish Vidyarthi, famous Bollywood actor and motivational speaker was the speaker in the motivational session, who inspired the members that we need to stand strong during these crisis and look for the future opportunities.









# ‘MoT needs to equip the Tour Operators with right Weapons to revive’: **Rajeev Kohli**

## BOTT DESK

An organisation in many ways is like an army battalion. There is a leader, The General or CEO. There are commandants such Brigadiers and Captains or Managers, and there are the Soldiers, the troops or the mass of stakeholders. In our case the tourism industry, we have a Tourism Minister as a General, the Secretary of Tourism and his officers as the Commandants and they have us, the frontline tour operators, travel agents, guides and others as the troops.

No war can be won if the troops are not equipped with the right weapons. No battle is worth fighting if the troops are demoralised. No plan will work unless everyone is on the same page. At the recent IATO annual convention, I was on a panel on reviving tourism, and I made a few suggestions. Some maybe simplistic, but sometimes the solutions lies in simplicity.

## 8 suggestions for the Ministry of Tourism to consider

### Number 1 – Be authentic

The Ministry must recognize that the Indian inbound tourism industry has been severely damaged, and in many parts irreversibly. They should directly acknowledge to the troops what the reality is and listen to us express our pain. A key part of grief management is talking. Two-way communication & sharing. Barring a handful of association leaders, the industry has heard nothing nor has been given an opportunity to talk. Leadership is about being present. It is about engaging with your people. Call a town hall. Spend a day to start the healing process.

**Cost** – tea-coffee over one meeting in Ashok hotel where everyone is invited. Cost, Rs 1500 x 2000 pax. Time - Do this as soon as the pandemic allows.

### Number 2 – Get smart

At least now create a cross sector Crisis Management task force. Bring together a group of stakeholders who have

In the very first Business Session of the recently concluded IATO Convention, **Mr. Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel**, who is best known for always candidly speaking his mind, eloquently chalked out an 8-point action plan for the Ministry of Tourism, which, with limited investment, has the power to revive and get the tourism industry going once again. To emphasise them further, in the hope of Ministry taking a serious look at it, he has yet again jotted them down exclusively for BOTT India.





credible real-life experience to help strategize, create response documents and help guide everyone else when the chips are down. We sometimes act like a real banana-republic where we miss the most basic of things. The troops have no one to look up to. No direction, no common messaging, no wisdom. Everyone is running around with blinders.

**Cost** – Nothing. You simply need to ask 20 qualified industry stakeholders to volunteer their own time and effort. Time - this can be done in under 30 days.

### Number 3 – Talk to those who can make a difference

Our association leaders are all my friends, and I have great affection & respect for them. But they no longer represent the true face of the troops. You have created a cult of ‘Yes Men/ Women’ who filter what they are told, and filter back what they are given. A degree of censorship and secrecy has evolved leaving the troops suspicious, nervous, and divided. The Ministry needs engage stakeholders with serious business interests who drive actual numbers to and within India. Stop filling committees only with elected officials. Merit has to prevail. Cost – Nothing. Time – immediate.

### Number 4 – Stop flogging a dead horse

The Ministry needs to reset all their old systems and policies. Look at the world

afresh. Pretend the Ministry is starting afresh. You most certainly would not start with the old ways of operating. Create a cutting edge competitive and merit-based environment. This is a unique Ministry as it promotes the soul of our nation. So, it should not operate on archaic larger practices of governance. Take an honest look at your schemes. Does even one of them work? MDA is defunct. Marketing support is never given. Promotion is old fashioned. Trade show participation is lacklustre. We cannot expect different results from doing the same thing again and again. Why can't we go back to the drawing board?

**Cost** – time of re-writing the schemes and policies. Time - 6 months or less if we all work together.

### Number 5 – Re-imagine

Retire ‘Incredible India’ and restart afresh. We desperately need a new brand. Incredible India no longer carries the charm or credibility it once had. The negative media coverage from India's second wave tore off our veil and exposed us in ways we cannot accept. The world has changed. Let's start afresh with something that captures the imagination. Using a two decade old set of cliches will not get us anywhere. We should have used the down time to come up with a new vision that is relevant to the new younger traveller.

**Cost** – issue a global tender to get the best minds to pitch for a revitalised

brand identity. Set Rs. 25 crores as budget. We know the ministry can afford it. Time - 6 months

### Number 6 – Be present

Dovetailing into the above few points, we need immediate reputation repair and management. We have become a pariah in many source markets, simply because we did not follow the basic tenants of crisis management and control the narrative. We let the media loose and we will pay for that. We need better, stronger, and consistent publication relations. Otherwise, everything we do will be burning money.

**Cost** – PR costs money. Probably we need a global company and set a budget of five million dollars of this right. Time - 6 months

### Number 7 – Re-tool

The Target Audience has been changing over the years and the pandemic has accelerated that change. All our marketing tools are no longer relevant. We are very old fashioned and stuck to the same old vision of India which is boring and irrelevant. We need to recognise who our competition is, do a deep SWOT analysis, and go from there. We need new collateral, new videos, new images. We need to use new world communication like social media to capture the imagination of the consumer. Let's match what social media demands and be energetic because we need to get eyeballs.

**Cost** – New images – Rs. 2 cr to send 10 budding photographers across India to shoot an exclusive photobank for the industry. Rs. 2 crore to get new collateral designed. Rs. 50 cr for social media activation. Time – Start ASAP and get this done in in 6 months.

### Number 8– Recognise who are the troops

Recognize that Indian tourism's biggest and most faithful Sales Force is our Inbound Tour Operators and DMCs. This is a group of people who spend months of the year traveling around the world selling India. We are knocking on doors, pounding pavements, spending



our own money in national interest. We are fighting, begging and convincing people to sell and promote India. You will not have a stronger sales team than this. And the government will never have the market penetration we do. Yet, we are a most ignored lot. A most unsupported lot. For the next 24 months do a few things.

- a) For the next 2 years give every MoT recognised inbound operator unrestricted air tickets to invite 4 international travel agents per year to India to experience the destination. At an average of Rs 80,000 per ticket (some will be cheaper, some more) x 4 per year x 800 recognized tour operators that is just about Rs. 25 crores a year, and the scheme falls with the passages scheme the ministry currently has. No event we will ever do in India can generate these number of buyers.
- b) For the next 24 months, none of us will have the marketing power we did as we have all run out of money. So, support all inbound agencies with a scaling support system. The current MDA scheme is unfair and penalises those who are more successful in selling India. Open it to all companies. Bigger companies are bigger because they have invested more. We all need some support, no matter how much it is. Look at this as an investment, not an expense.
- c) Create on a war footing a world-class online India Specialist training



program and collateral tool kits (images, media, designs etc.) that we as inbound players can offer our partners. Outsource this in a global tender to get the best in class. Give us tools to excite our customers.

**Cost – Rs. 8 crores**

## What is the cost of my suggestions?

I know some thoughts are simplified, but none of unrealistic or illogical.

I have been very generous with my estimates because I know much of this can be done cheaper if as private sector company has to do them for themselves. These are some things that the Ministry of Tourism can do itself. Sometimes the solutions are just in front of us. We just need to open our eyes & ears and listen. Think differently. Act differently. Be inclusive. Be ready to experiment. Be ready to take risks.







The India Convention Promotion Bureau, like all other associations, faced a challenging year as MICE was one of the first sectors to be affected and today many have become comfortable with the 'virtual' way of doing business. However, **Mr. Amaresh Tiwari, Vice Chairman, ICPB**, differs and feels that the essence of 'meetings and exhibitions' is seeped deep in physical meets and that MICE is already back! Read on to know more...

## 'MICE agents can never go out of business if they learn to innovate': **Amaresh Tiwari**

### BOTT DESK

**T**he past 20 months have been extremely tough as Global tourism has been one of the worst hit during the pandemic. Just like every dark cloud has a silver lining, India's successful vaccination drive achieving 1 million vaccination resulted in a significant drop in the number of Covid cases and WHO has hinted that India might reach the endemic state by March 2022, which is a very good sign. If the Omicron scare does not turn into the third wave, it would be safe to say that the worst of Covid is over.

The recently concluded IATO Convention in Gujarat has also given confidence to the people in MICE that physical events will soon be starting again. The resilience of the industry with government support will trigger the momentum required for MICE in India to gradually move from virtual to physical events.

"These last few years, ICPB has been undertaking a membership drive as a result of which it has received 8 – 10 fresh applications from the industry. Additionally, ICPB Madhya Pradesh State Chapter has now become fully live and a person has been permanently employed on ICPB payrolls in Bhopal. Under the ongoing Global Expo in Dubai, January 12, 2022 has been declared as the MICE Day and ICPB has been assigned the task to handle the MICE day activities at the Dubai Expo. There are a plethora of activities being planned for that day and I invite stakeholders from the MICE industry to be present on the occasion in solidarity. In addition to this, ICPB is also pursuing with the Ministry of Tourism to declare 2023 as the year of MICE with launch

of the national MICE policy. With JIO Convention Centre in Mumbai, Chhatrasal Convention Centre in Khajuraho, Rudraksh Convention Centre in Varanasi, refurbishment of Pragati Maidan and soon to open IICC at Dwarka, New Delhi, going forward, India is definitely going to be positioned strongly in the global MICE map," shared Mr. Tiwari.

Meanwhile, the Association is also in the process of finalising its next CIC (Conventions India Conclave) sometime in the first quarter of 2022. The destination and other details regarding the same will be informed soon. ICPB has been engaged from the start in the process of building the Incredible India Digital Marketplace. The Government of India is creating an incredible India digital marketplace, which is going to be live for 2 years and tender is going to open for the same soon. The Incredible India Digital Marketplace, every fortnight, will focus on one country, such as the USA, France, Germany, Italy etc. It will identify top 20 countries for MICE vis-a-vis leisure tourism and will focus on buyer-seller interaction. All ICPB members will be able to make judicious use of this platform that will help in growth of their business.

"MICE is back. Most of the members are doing events. People are making bookings for the future and business is slowing reviving. What the agent's community has realised in this pandemic is that while the travel tourism bookings can be done online, for MICE, the skilled manpower of someone handling meetings and events is crucial. Thus, MICE dealers will never go out of business if they learn to innovate and specialise in their offerings," concluded Mr. Tiwari.





## ‘In 2022, technology will play a very huge role in reinventing tourism sector’: **Jyoti Mayal**

**BOTT DESK**

**T**he Office Bearers at TAAI, in the last one year, have been in the continuous process of motivating its members and help them sail through this tough time. The virtual platform gave them an opportunity to have many more meetings on a regular basis. From conducting various webinars to organising meetings, updating members on the travel and tourism related issues, interacting with the stake holders, holding various educational programs on tourism and statutory compliances etc. – the association has been busy. Supporting each other and working transparently was very vital and established. The organisation signed various MoU’s, both domestically as well as internationally with the tourism boards to give many more opportunities to its members.

“We have been able to help our members in getting refunds. Airlines to book through GDS. Educating our members, skilling and upskilling and most important our suggestions to the government were shared and adopted on a regular basis. The government has been considering our various inputs pertaining to preparing policies and implementation. Our connect and communication with the MoCA, MoT, Ministry of Finance, Health, Skill, Ministry of Railways & Niti Aayog has been established,” explained Mrs. Mayal.

TAAI with its very effective managing committee and chapter office bearers encouraged vaccination and held various vaccination camps for its members, staff and families. Even in this challenging environment TAAI

was able to hold a Knowledge Conclave in Kevadia, Gujarat and debated on very relevant topics concerning issues related to IATA, Tourism and Education. In addition to all this, TAAI started Women in TAAI & Travel (WITT) and got 500 women to join its mission and vision of empowering woman in tourism and also help them to become entrepreneurs. Most importantly TAAI has been guiding and leading its membership and working towards the betterment of the sector.

Today, the world once again has a new mutant. The virus will continue to evolve till the time it doesn’t weaken and becomes less life taking. We as an industry moving towards 2022, need to work in unity with a calculative, collaborated and coordinated attitude. We need to discuss and set protocols for ourselves keeping in view health safety not only domestically but also internationally.

Going forward we will see fewer advance bookings and travellers looking for easy, no cost cancellation policies. The TAAI President thinks that going forward, travellers will look out for better guidance and correct information of the new norms.

“As President TAAI, Vice Chairperson FAITH, Chairperson THSC, my plans would be to continue looking for opportunities for TAAI members, indulge in more skilling and upskilling, working closely with government bodies and stakeholders to bring effective ease of business, protection of cash and inculcate hope and a positive attitude to revive the travel and tourism industry to all possible levels,” concluded Mrs. Mayal.

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) currently being headed by a dynamic and fearless lady who ensured that the association, despite all odds, had an eventful 2022, made some noteworthy strides in the year gone by. From conducting webinars to holding interactive meetings, a successful event at Kevadia and constantly communicating the agent’s woes to the government, **Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI** has been relentless in her approach and continues to be so in the New Year too.





## OTOAI defers election; is in talks with MoT to regularise outbound travel



Keeping in view the “Rules and Regulations of OTOAI and Societies Act” The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) recently hosted an ‘Extraordinary General Meeting’ at The India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The meet was well-attended by members from the Association and travel trade media. **Mr. Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI**, addressed the gathering by highlighting the crucial matter regarding postponement of elections of the Association for Executive Committee for one year.

### BOTT DESK

The decision regarding postponement of elections was taken due to the Covid 19 Pandemic, which has lasted for the last 18 months and so the term of the present Executive Committee needs an extension to complete the objects for which they were elected. The decision was sanctioned by all the members present at the Meet without any objection / obligation due to the present unavoidable circumstances.

Mr. Shravan Bhalla, General Secretary, OTOAI addressing the Turkey convention matter said, “The Association was in the process of organizing a Convention in Turkey in March 2020 for its members, which got postponed due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. The Present EC is still in talks with the Tourism Board of Turkey to hold the Convention in the year 2022. The date has not been decided yet, the tourism board of Turkey wishes to deal with the present EC to propose the convention for the sake of continuity.” Adding to it, Mr. Munshi, said, “The convention will likely be held in March 2022 in Turkey only if things go well. And if that doesn’t have happen then we all need to understand that things are seriously not going well in the Industry!”

Sharing his thoughts on the tough period gone by, Mr. Himanshu Patil, Vice President, OTOAI said, “For the past several months, we all have been working from home or probably not working at all due to the pandemic situation. Moving on, we are all definitely looking for greater and brighter 2022! We all were gearing up for this year-end season and again omicron came into our lives and the travel euphoria subsided. However, I think Omicron should be the last wave and the virus will end up soon and the whole world will soon start travelling again.”

Concluding the meet, Mr. Munshi shared, “Our focus as an Organisation has always been the Outbound sector and as the tourism industry continues to be not only the most affected industry but also the most neglected one (from the government’s perspective) not much has been done to improve our situation. However, we at OTOAI are in talks with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India to bring in a licensing system, especially for travel companies, which can become the keychain where they will ask us to get the revenue and through this, the tour operators can do the business in a professional level. This will not only lead us to get noticed in the eyes of the government but will also lead to the smooth running of the travel business for which OTOAI is working.”



## TAFI Members call on Civil Aviation Minister & Tourism Secy.

A TAFI delegation led by President Mr. Ajay Prakash called on Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia earlier this week to discuss the current situation and to seek assistance for the revival of the travel and tourism industry. Along with **Mr. Ajay Prakash, Mr. Abbas Moiz, National General Secretary, Mr. Anil Kalsi, Jt. Secy. and Mr. Khushvinder Sarna, Chairman Northern India Chapter** were also present on the occasion.

### BOTT DESK

Speaking after the meeting Mr. Prakash shared his views on the interaction, "It was a very satisfying meeting. We found the dynamic Minister very receptive to our concerns. He has a complete grasp of the business and genuinely sympathised with travel agents and tour operators on the losses suffered over the last 20 odd months. He has taken note of some critical issues and has assured us that he will get back to us shortly. He advised us that he is fully seized of the difficulty faced by agents and travellers alike on account of the suspension of regular scheduled flights and stated the government is closely monitoring the pandemic and will resume normal flights as soon as it is prudent. He directed us to take up some of our issues with the Tourism Ministry and assured us of his support once those matters were flagged to him by the Department of Tourism. Meeting him was a breath of fresh air and we are very optimistic," said Prakash.

The TAFI delegation next met Shri Arvind Singh, Tourism Secretary and also called upon Ms. Rupinder Brar, Addl. DG., Ministry of Tourism,



Government of India. Mr. Arvind Singh said that some of the issues raised by TAFI were already on the radar and had been discussed with the Finance Minister. He also assured the Department's support for the next TAFI Convention which, in a break from past practice, is to be held within the country.

Ms. Rupinder Brar also reiterated what the Secretary had said about certain issues having been discussed with

the FM and that she was optimistic about the future. She also made some suggestions regarding the TAFI Convention and assured the delegation that as a Founding member of FAITH, TAFI was an integral part of the Department's initiatives and activities.

"We have had a series of very productive meetings and we are hopeful that we shall soon see a resolution of some of our long pending issues," concluded Prakash.





# India is one of the most important growth markets for **Thailand**

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

## **Is the Visa on arrival facility now available for Indian travellers?**

Thailand has temporarily cancelled a COVID-19 quarantine waiver for foreign visitors and reinstated its quarantine requirement out of fear that the Omicron variant of the coronavirus will set off new waves of infections.

At the start of November Thailand had reopened to fully vaccinated travellers from more than 60 countries, ending 18 months of border closures that gutted the country's economically vital tourist industry. Under this "test and go" scheme, known officially as Thailand Pass, visitors were required to isolate for a night until they returned a negative COVID-19 test, after which they could travel freely around the country.

## **What are your expectations from the India market amidst gradual reopening?**

India, since always has been an extremely important source market for us. It holds a prominent position in the list of top 5 important markets for Thailand and our expectations, including that of our head office, are always high where India is concerned.

In 2019, India was the fastest and the largest growth market for us wherein we received close to 2 million Indian tourists. This figure marked a 24.85% growth in Indian arrivals as compared to 2018. With all the support from the travel trade fraternity in India and also as a result of our independent surveys, we do hope that India will be one of the fastest growing market for us and we will see good traffic from the destination once things open up and restrictions ease up. Also, according to the report by BOTT Travel Sentiment Tracker, 66% millennial travellers are willing to travel to Thailand as soon as it opens up. 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, 73% millennials would prefer to go to international destinations with fewer Covid cases wherein a majority would like to travel to Thailand. This news was very re-assuring to us.

## **What kind of response TAT is receiving on the sandbox program?**

The response to sandbox program has been good and tourist inflow has gradually picked up under the same. Phuket opened to travel under the sandbox program on July 1 and until October 13, it had received

India, since always has been an extremely important source market for Thailand. It holds a prominent position in the list of top 5 important markets for Thailand and the country has great expectations from India in terms of tourist traffic. In 2019, India was the fastest and the largest growth market for Thailand as it received close to 2 million Indian tourists.

**Mr. Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director TAT, New Delhi** shares more with BOTT India.





46,621 international tourists. While concerns on travel restrictions and complete opening up of the tourist places continues to remain, people are slowly shedding their inhibitions and travelling to Thailand. At TAT, we are very clear about the information we communicate to the media and we believe in complete transparency so I am glad to share that things have started to warm up and with the quarantine restriction going down to 7 days instead of 14, the tourism scenario looks positive for the future.

### **What are the promotional and marketing plans of the authority to attract Indian travellers and keep Thailand as 'top of the mind' destination?**

Our main priority at the moment is to have a direct flight started between the two countries at the earliest possible. We are pushing for connectivity to open and are hopeful that by November, flight operations will start between India and Thailand. We will then go for promotional campaign for which we have started the segmenting our tourism sectors and will be promoting each of them in a planned manner. We would be starting our promotions with the weddings segment as many couples still have Thailand on their mind when it comes to unique customised wedding experience. This will be followed by promoting Golf in Thailand and then others will follow suit,

### **Expected inbound numbers from India once borders open up?**

Once the borders open up and commercial flights start operating between the two countries, we are looking at welcoming good number of tourists from India. From October 2021 – March 2022 we are looking at receiving around 91,000 Indian travellers.

### **What were the inbound numbers like pre-Covid from India?**

India was the high growth market in 2019 with an increase of +24.85% compare to 2018 which Thailand



welcome 1,598,346 tourists from India. This is due to increase of flights capacity, connectivity and frequency as well as waive off Visa on Arrival which make travel to Thailand easy and convenience. Total of 1,995,516 Indian tourists visited Thailand in 2019.

What are their top five countries from where they get tourists and where does

India stand on this list?

Total number of international tourist coming to Thailand in 2019 = 39,797,406

Top five countries are:

- (1) China = 10,994,721
- (2) Malaysia = 4,166,868
- (3) India = 1,995,516
- (4) Korea = 1,887,853
- (5) Japan = 1,806,340





GNTO, India will focus on the recovery strategy for the travel Destination Germany during and after the Corona crisis with the highlight on the current online destination training program with its strategy to spread more widespread awareness on the destination amongst the tour operators across India. The online destination training program will educate the tour operators in India regarding Germany, feels **Mr. Romit Theophilus, Director for India, The German National Tourist Office**, shares more with BOTT.

# Germany is currently working hard to boost its marketing and prepare for a bright future

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

### What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?

The relaunch of tourism in 2022 is in full swing. It was inevitable that the travel bug would prove stronger than the virus. But it is also clear that the places where safety can be guaranteed, and that are not overcrowded, will be the first to experience a post-pandemic travel boom. And that is the case within Germany.

Our ongoing mission is to maintain the strong image our customers have of Germany as a travel destination, and to provide the expertise, up-to-date market analysis and effective marketing activities that will enable our partners in Germany's tourism industry to make a fresh start. In terms of our strategy jointly with our Headquarters, German National Tourist Board, we are currently working hard to put our marketing on the right track both in response to the crisis and looking further ahead. In light of the current trends, we are also strengthening our collaborations

with tour operators/travel agents. The experiences gathered during the virtual meetings and events are helping us here. Future-focused marketing in a crisis or even a lockdown is targeted not only at sales and revenue figures, but also on securing customer loyalty over the long term and on making the strengths of the brand more visible among Indians. The brand values of Destination Germany including credibility, responsibility and safety are now more important than ever in what has become a much more competitive travel market.

The content of our campaigns for 2022 'German.Local.Culture', 'Embrace Nature' & Feel Good are geared towards the new challenges.

### How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?

The relaunch of tourism in 2022 is in full swing. It was inevitable that the travel bug would prove stronger than the virus. But it is also clear that the places where safety can be guaranteed, and that are not overcrowded, will be





the first to experience a post-pandemic travel boom. Our ongoing mission is to maintain the strong image our customers have of Germany as a travel destination, and to provide the expertise, up-to-date market analysis and effective marketing activities that will enable our partners in Germany's tourism industry to make a fresh start. In terms of our strategy jointly with our Headquarters, German National Tourist Board, we are currently working hard to put our marketing on the right track both in response to the crisis and looking further ahead. In light of the current trends, we are also strengthening our collaborations with tour operators/travel agents. The content of our campaigns for 2022 'German.Local.Culture', 'Embrace Nature' & Feel Good are geared towards the new challenges.

### **How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

For 2022 the figures may go up once flights are restored to normal occupancy. There is a lot of pent up frustration for travel and after speaking to the travel trade we will see this materialize in end 2021 and 2022. We are hopeful that from March 2022 tourism will start witnessing some recovery signs. India will reach its 2019 figures for Germany in 2023 and may even see a growth over the 2019 figures. In 2021 – 15% of 2019; in 2022 – 65% of 2019 and in 2023 – 100 – 105% of 2019. In the coming years India will keep its target for travel to Germany of 2 million overnights by 2030.

### **What, in your opinion, is the USP of Germany, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

With the border opening to Indian visitors ahead of the travel period is vital for the tourism and we anticipate Germany being recognised as a go to travel destination. During the past few months, we have been working closely with our travel partners across the region to ensure Germany remains top of mind once the situation is in control. Germany has a wealth of activities for Indian travellers, from spa and wellness



breaks, and nature trails through forests, to city-based culinary experiences and cultural explorations across multiple regions.

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

GNT0, India will focus on the recovery strategy for the travel Destination Germany during and after the Corona crisis with the highlight on the current online destination training program with its strategy to spread more widespread awareness on the

destination amongst the Tour operators across India. The online destination training program would provide Indian tour operators and travel agents with the in-depth knowledge needed to market the destination authoritatively and persuasively to their clients. The step comes in the light of the current reboot of our tourism where people have expressed a strong intention to travel to Germany. Indians have been longing for a holiday and with India no longer listed as high risk area with some restrictions still exist when travelling.







# Ireland will see great demand among Indian travellers because of its vast open spaces

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

### **What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?**

Due to the pandemic the borders to Ireland were closed until September 2021. The resumption of short stay entry visa processing including India came into effect from September 13, 2021. Ever since the announcement has been made, there have been queries for leisure travel to Ireland. Travellers have also started travelling to Ireland for leisure. We have received interest from Bollywood and MICE groups. In fact, MICE reece trips have started to Ireland.

### **How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?**

We are extremely confident this number will increase given the pent-up demand and the trend of revenge travel. We believe Ireland will see great demand

among Indian travellers. Meanwhile, we are engaging with trade and media to keep the lights on and have a recall value of the destination. All the Covid measures are in place and Irish industry is keen to welcome travellers from India. There are some new attractions and hotels that have opened recently. The newest attraction will be the GOT Studio Tour which will be open to public early next year. As India has huge fan followers of GOT, we believe this tour will grab the interest of travellers.

### **How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

Since the market scenario is so uncertain, a lot depends upon the Covid situation, resumption of flights. With the rapid rate of vaccination across the country, we believe we will reach pre-Covid levels soon. However, all this will also depend upon the global Covid situation and how the global economy shapes. We will conduct in market activities with

Covid has changed the way people perceive travel and also the ways to travel. Traveller, in the post Covid era will prefer green, open and natural spaces. Given the open and vast natural scenic beauty where one can see forty shades of green, the island of Ireland will surely rank the destination as the most preferred destination. **Ms. Beena Menon & Ms. Huzan Fraser Motivala, India Representative, Tourism Ireland** shares details about the destination and what it has in store for the future with BOTT India.





trade and media to promote the island of Ireland as a preferred destination for Indian travellers.

### **What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

Post pandemic we believe self-drive tours will gain momentum. Ireland fits the bill as the destination has amazing self-drive routes. And one of the best ways to experience Ireland is through self-drive. The island of Ireland has amazing self-drive routes – Wild Atlantic Way, the Causeway Coastal Route, Ireland's Ancient East, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. The Wild Atlantic Way is a sensational journey of soaring

cliffs and buzzing towns and cities, of hidden beaches and epic bays. The world's longest, clearly defined coastal driving route stretching across 2,500 kms, so whether you drive it from end-to-end, or dip into it as the mood strikes, it's going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Covid has changed the way people perceive travel and also the ways to travel. Traveller will prefer green, open and natural spaces. Given the open and vast natural scenic beauty where one can see forty shades of green, the island of Ireland will surely rank the destination as the most preferred destination. The emerald isle is the land of myths and legends that captures imaginations. Its breath-taking landscapes, rural idylls to

buzzing urban hubs, amazing festivals, mesmerizing castles and cathedrals. Dublin and Belfast are two must-visit cities on the island of Ireland.

In addition, the soft adventure and experiential activities like moonlight kayaking, island cable car, horse riding on the beach, overnight in a lighthouse, whiskey trail, Irish food trail etc. will attract traveller to Ireland.

The capital cities of Belfast and Dublin are packed with history, culture, exciting events, great food and super shopping.

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

We are delighted to share that the Lonely Planet lists Dublin in top 10 cities to visit in 2022.







# For **France**, its USP has always been its diversity in its touristic offerings

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

### **What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?**

Ever since France announced the opening of its borders to double vaccinated Indian travellers (Covishield) this July, we have seen an encouraging response from Indians wanting to travel to France for their holidays. In addition to our FIT travellers, we've

also had incentive groups of 60 to 200 pax and more travelling to France. In addition, in November, Paris played host to a grand Indian wedding with approximate 700 visitors in attendance. Around four iconic venues in Paris were privatised for these events. The South of France – the French Riviera was also the glamorous venue for the shooting of an episode of the sequel of the popular web-series, “Made in Heaven” which will be released on Amazon Prime in 2022. We are optimistic that this shoot would reinforce France's appeal as a promising locale for destination weddings.



### **How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?**

The outbound travel landscape is constantly evolving and now more so because of the ever-changing global health situation. While we do hope that the influx of Indian tourists to France



The outbound travel landscape is constantly evolving and now more so because of the ever-changing global health situation. France opened its borders to double vaccinated Indian travellers in July 2021 and witnessed an encouraging response in terms of incentive groups and leisure travellers, however, now, with the new variant, the dynamics have altered a bit. **Ms. Sheetal Munshaw, Director – India, Atout France** shares more in an exclusive chat with BOTT India.





sees an increase in 2022, it is difficult to make a prediction about this now.

Keeping in mind, the dynamics of the situation in 2020 and 2021, we adapted our marketing strategies accordingly. From soft activations on social media, trainings and webinars with the travel trade to launching campaigns and conducting online B2B workshops to organising a fam trip for agents to Paris in November 2021 when the conditions were appropriate and tapping into niche segments and engaging with stake holders in the domain to better equip ourselves to cater to the evolving needs and expectations.

### **How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

It is extremely difficult to give any sort of projection on numbers in the future as travel is in a complete state of flux and the global health pandemic and travel restrictions implemented by each country. However it is clear to see that the desire to travel is more than ever before. We are very hopeful that once the situation permits it travel will not only match but surpass past figures and will also evolve and change in terms of trends and aspirations. We have already seen an uptake in demand in winter

and also a strong inclination towards sustainable travel products and offerings as well as more immersive experiences.

### **What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

For France, its USP has always been its diversity in terms of its touristic offerings. Its varied landscape in terms of



ski-resorts, seaside resorts, its quaint villages and urban settings make it a preferred destination of choice for its visitors. In addition, France is a perfect destination for self-drive holidays which is a trend that has strongly emerged in the current post-lockdown landscape. Moreover, France's focus on sustainable tourism and the steps it takes towards responsible travel will add to its appeal as a multi-faceted destination.





# Low Covid cases in **Melbourne** will make Indians feel safe to visit the destination

**BOTT DESK**

**How confident are you of the destination opening up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it attracts tourists?**

Australia is perceived as a safe destination and the way the Australian government has handled the entire pandemic situation is appreciated globally. Low Covid cases in Melbourne will make Indians feel safe to visit the destination.

Once the borders open and flights resume, we believe we will receive great tourists to Melbourne. After 47 years, the launch of direct connections from Delhi to Melbourne by Qantas that started this month reinstates the fact that India is a key market for Melbourne. In addition, the direct connections between India and Australia by Air India will give more flight options to the passengers. Better flight connections will act as a catalyst to boost traffic between the countries. As cricket is the most loved sport in India, the finals of ICC T20 World Cup 2022 which is scheduled to take place at Melbourne Cricket Ground on 13th November 2022 will help to increase traffic from India to Melbourne.

**How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

It is difficult to predict anything in this unpredictable scenario. However, promotional activities are underway to showcase Melbourne and regional Victoria as a preferred destination post pandemic. We will closely work with trade and media to position Victoria as a safe destination to travel.

Once the airline connectivity and capacity is restored, we believe it will reach pre-Covid level soon. We are

optimistic and confident about the Indian market. According to reports, 1.8 million HVTs are planning to visit Australia. Australia is among the World's Most Liveable Cities for 2021

**What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

Cosmopolitan, elegant and chic, Melbourne has a passionate soul and a welcoming heart that makes every stay a truly memorable experience. Melbourne's open roads and wide-open spaces will make the destination a perfect getaway post pandemic. Post pandemic traveller will prefer self-drive tours. From urban laneways to country roads, high passes and ocean-kissed highways – Melbourne/Victoria has some amazing self-drive routes – Go Beyond Melbourne, Great Southern Touring Route.

From world-class food & wine to natural springs, the coastal villages of the peninsulas to alpine towns, Melbourne is a delight for every traveller. Melbourne and Victoria is a perfect playground for adventurers and wildlife lovers, foodies and road trippers. Dining out in this foodie town is serious - and seriously fun. Melbourne prides itself on its food and the city's dizzying array of dining options is testimony to its culinary reputation. Melbourne is also the coffee capital of Australia. Melbourne also boasts Australia's largest concentration of live music venues performed by local and international bands.

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

Melbourne has been awarded in the top 10 list of the World's Most Liveable Cities in 2021.

While it is difficult to predict anything in this unpredictable scenario, promotional activities are underway to showcase Melbourne and regional Victoria as a preferred destination in the post pandemic era. The destination representatives are working closely with the trade and media to position Victoria as a safe destination to travel. **Ms. Huzan Fraser Motivala and Ms. Beena Menon, India Representatives, Visit Victoria** share more in an exclusive chat with BOTT India.



# Tourism Malaysia New Delhi holds networking dinner with travel trade

In conjunction of the recent travel bubble, Tourism Malaysia New Delhi recently hosted a Networking Session with the travel trade partners at The Imperial, New Delhi. The event was also attended by travel agents, wedding planners and media representatives from the northern and eastern regions of India.

## BOTT DESK

The event was also attended by travel agents, wedding planners and media representatives from the northern and eastern regions of India. The attendees were briefed about Malaysia's tourism development and tourism products, the latest Covid-19 situation as well as the pilot travel bubble and the expected reopening of Malaysian borders in early 2022.

Mr. Sulaiman Suip, Director of Tourism Malaysia New Delhi said, "Malaysia has successfully reached vaccination of more than 97.3% of its adult population against COVID-19, making it one of the highest vaccinated destinations in the Southeast Asian region. In addition, fully-vaccinated individuals have also started receiving their booster shots."

"We are thrilled and excited to welcome back tourists. All our attractions, tour operators, airlines, hotels, and resorts are operating under strict SOPs. Our industry players are offering value-for-money packages while health and hygiene will be of utmost importance as your safety is our priority. Also, the



highlight for 2022 will be the opening of Genting SkyWorlds, the much-anticipated outdoor theme park in Genting Highlands. This is sure to be and take everyone's adventure quotient on a new high," said Mr. Suip.

India remains one of the top market sources for Malaysia and contributed 735,309 international tourist arrivals in 2019. The first two months of 2020 recorded a phenomenal cumulative growth of +29%. However, the spread of the coronavirus pandemic globally led the countries to close their borders and cancel most flights.

In preparation for the reopening of its borders, the Malaysian Government has

selected Langkawi as the pilot holiday destination to receive tourists under the 'Langkawi International Travel Bubble' from 15 November.

Langkawi, an archipelago of 104 islands on the west coast of Malaysia is best known for its picturesque landscape of sprawling beaches and crystal blue waters, dense rainforests as well as pristine waterfalls. Its duty-free shopping, luxurious spa centres, alongside a plethora of activities to indulge in such as riding the cable car, exploring an underwater aquarium, eagle-feeding, and island-hopping are sure to provide an enriching and memorable experience for its visitors.





# Fiji is expecting around 75,000 inbound tourists over the next few months

Priyanka Saxena Ray

### What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?

What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021? On the December 1, 2021, Fiji opened doors to fully vaccinated visitors from Travel Partner countries, for quarantine-free travel. This exciting milestone marked resumption of international tourism to our beautiful islands after almost 20 months of border closures. Ever since it's been exciting times for us here in Fiji. We're excited to see so many people travelling and extending the average stay to over a week. We are expecting some 75,000 inbound tourists to visit Fiji over the next two months.

Though India currently does not feature under our 'travel partner' countries, we are positive and hopeful to soon be able to welcome Indian travellers back to our shores. Having said this, travellers from India keen to visit Fiji may need to wait a little longer due to the continued travel restrictions in place between the two countries. However, they can be confident that Fiji is ready and waiting to welcome them back with open arms, as a safe travel destination, as announced by World Travel and Tourism Council.

### How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?

Investing in public safety protocols to keep all visitors as protected as possible through the Care Fiji Commitment – this has been the most critical element. Tourism Fiji launched the Care Fiji Commitment Programme last year as an operational COVID-safe framework for all tourism operators and service providers.

Our national carrier Fiji Airways is certified with the highest level 5-star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating by the SKYTRAX COVID-19 Airline Safety Accreditation.

Nadi International Airport is the first airport in the South Pacific to be awarded the Airports Council International's (ACI) Airport Health Accreditation for its Travel Safe program and more recently, has just achieved Airports Council International's (ACI) Airport Health Reaccreditation for its COVID-19 health and safety measures. Over 700 businesses are registered under the Care Fiji Commitment Programme, which ensures these properties, operations and services uphold COVID-safety practices that are approved by the World Health

Fiji is exactly the kind of destination people will look to travel to in the new normal. Tourists won't be flocking to cities, instead they will look to get away, spend some time on the beach, in the sun, and to relax and enjoy life again. Tourism Fiji launched the Care Fiji Commitment Programme last year as an operational COVID-safe framework for all tourism operators and service providers. **Mr. Brent Hill, CEO, Tourism Fiji** shares more in what Fiji has to offer in the post Covid scenario and importance of the India market.





Organization and recognized by the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Fiji is also a recipient of the Council's Safe Travels stamp, so both business and leisure travellers can distinguish destinations around the world with health and hygiene global standardized protocols that allow them to experience 'Safe Travels'.

With travel safety being the new luxury in travel and Fiji, being a safe, ready, focussed destination that can handle tourists and ensure they had fun and relaxed as well as keeping them as safe as possible, we are very confident to not only be able to open up to Indian travellers, but to travellers all across the globe and have many visit Fiji soon.

### **How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

India has a strong cultural and political connect with Fiji, as nearly 40 % of Fijians are of Indian descent. Thus, India holds much promise as an emerging market for Fiji in the coming future. The Indian outbound travel segment has grown leaps and bounds and during the pre-COVID times, the number of Indians travelling was on the rise globally. We are sure to see an increasing propensity of travel to Fiji from India given the sheer market size and the rising standard of living of the young population who have the inclination to spend and who are likely to travel when borders re-open.

With the vaccination drive in full scale in India we are hopeful for travel restrictions to be lifted and opening up of our borders for Indian travellers in the near future. Indian visitors stay a short time in Fiji; on average for 4-5 days per trip in 2019 and we now intend to work towards increasing the stay period and make Fiji a stand-alone destination for Indians.

### **What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

Fiji is exactly the kind of destination people will look to travel to in the new



normal. Tourists won't be flocking to cities, instead they will look to get away, spend some time on the beach, in the sun, and to relax and enjoy life again. We have many incredible properties with open spaces, uncrowded and amazing experiences around them, staffed by the friendliest people in the world. With a heavily vaccinated local population, easy, convenient, and safe ways of getting around, I am confident Fiji would definitely attract tourists globally.

There are amazing holiday packages offered by our operators and it's great to see from bookings that the average length of stay has increased from five to nine nights. Bookings have taken off and exceeded even our own highest expectations! It's all just so exciting at the moment.

From airlines to accommodation and adventures, there's been a lot of investment in upgrading and expanding services and that's also a cause for optimism – there is more product to come online, and there are more markets also that are due to open up. 2022 is looking great! Lots to look forward to.

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

Supplementing the opening of our borders to fully vaccinated travellers from partner countries, for quarantine-free travel, Tourism Fiji recently launched our new campaign 'Open for Happiness' featuring Australian actress Rebel Wilson. Bringing the concept of 'Open for Happiness' to life, the campaign sees the actress escape the hustle and bustle of Hollywood life to glamorously wash up on Fiji's pristine shores. Welcomed with a friendly Bula (Fijian for hello), she then embarks on an adventure to experience all that the idyllic islands have to offer.

It was an absolute pleasure working with someone so talented, and who truly embraced everything Fiji is about – from our natural beauty, to our people and our local musicians, producers and talent. Fiji is truly 'Open for Happiness', and this was such a special campaign for us to make, in Fiji. We are thrilled to once again finally be able to welcome our visitors back from around the globe to the shores of Fiji – it has been a long time coming.





As the world struggled in the Covid aftermath to come up with new guidelines and protocols to make travel accessible, Sri Lanka was perhaps one of the first countries to come up with easy travel norms for the Indian traveller. For this reason alone, the destination saw good tourist flow from India in the second half of 2021 and is hopeful for a brighter 2022 and onwards. **Ms. Komal Seth, Director, LINKIN Reps**, shares more about the destination's plans for future and the love for Maldives of Indian travellers in an exclusive chat with BOTT India.

# Vaccinated travellers from India will be warmly welcomed in Sri Lanka & Maldives

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

### **What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?**

India and Sri Lanka have an air bubble agreement due to which a lot of tourist exchange has happened in 2021. Especially after Sri Lanka's decision to accept fully-vaccinated travellers from India without any quarantine. This move has really given a huge push to Indian tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka. SriLankan Airlines also introduced a couple of offers that gave push to the arrivals. Similarly Maldives has emerged as the most sought after and visited destination by Indian travellers with lot of honeymoon and leisure travellers. Both Sri Lanka and Maldives have been busy destinations for tourists

### **How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?**

International travel has become easy, as most countries have scaled up the vaccination process with strict compliance to Covid protocols. Sri Lanka has a couple of measures in place like RTPCR before arrival and one before departing the country. I am

sure that 2022 will witness even more travel happening. But yes, as responsible citizens, we need to be cautious and ensure that people follow COVID appropriate behaviour.

### **How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

The process has already started but it may take up another year or two for numbers to reach pre Covid levels. Every country has its own set of guidelines for travel so this will take a while. Sri Lanka and India already have a lot of tourist movement happening so the numbers will continue to rise if the COVID situation remains in control.

### **What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

The travel time to Sri Lanka is less compared to any other destination. Whether you are a beach person or a hill person or a city person, there is everything. Sri Lanka is accepting Indian tourist with all vaccines including Covaxin. One just needs to be fully vaccinated, with the second shot taken at least 14 days before the trip.





AlUla in Saudi Arabia is relatively new and unexplored destination for the India market. It is perhaps of these very qualities that the destination has immense potential to receive good number of Indian Outbound to the place. With a string of initiatives and festivals lined up, there is much in store in AlUla for a discerning traveller to explore. **Ms. Huzan Fraser Motivala and Ms. Beena Menon**, India Representative, Royal Commission for AlUla, shares more with BOTT.

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

**What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?**

Due to the pandemic Saudi Arabia was not open for Indian travellers until December. Saudi Arabia lifted the travel ban on India on December 1 and has recognised Covishield as an approved Covid vaccine.

**How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?**

The Royal Commission for AlUla opened its India office during the pandemic i.e. September 2020. This reiterates the fact that India is a huge and potential source market for AlUla. AlUla located in the northwest of Saudi Arabia is a new destination for Indian travellers. We are working closely with trade by conducting webinars, trainings, participating in trade shows, joint marketing campaigns, newsletters, sales visits, familiarization visits to showcase AlUla as a key destination for Indian travellers. In addition, our strong digital and social media marketing

India is a huge and potential source market for **AlUla**

activities like celebrity/influencer visit, media familiarisation visits etc. will help to promote AlUla as a preferred destination.

**How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

AlUla opened its borders for tourism during the pandemic. We are starting from ground zero. I am happy to mention that within a year of operations in the Indian market, AlUla has been voted as the Best Heritage Destination at the Travel+Leisure 2021 awards. Having received the accolade in just one year of operations reflect the potential of AlUla. It has also given us the confidence that once the situation reaches normalcy, AlUla will be a preferred destination for Indian travellers. We believe the market is buoyant and AlUla will surely take the place as a key destination in the minds of Indian outbound travellers.

**What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

AlUla is a place of extraordinary human and natural heritage. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has long been a crossroads of ancient civilisations — a place of deep history, but one that is constantly evolving. AlUla is home to a series of fascinating historical and archaeological sites such as ancient Dadan, the capital of the Dadan and Lihyan Kingdoms. Post pandemic traveller will look for new and unique destinations and those

places which are less populated, and AlUla has a population of just 48,000. Also, traveller will look for open spaces and AlUla's vast open spaces provide the perfect backdrop for safe, fun, exploration with adventure activities like zipline, hiking trails, cycling trails, a bike park and horse trails. Far from city lights, vast open spaces in remote desert lands create some of the world's most enviable dark skies, making AlUla an idyllic locale for stargazing. From private suites surrounded by sandstone mountains to luxury villas nestled along stunning rock formations to even more unique chalets, resorts and accommodations, traveller will be intrigued by AlUla's fabulous hotels or resorts.

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

Under the banner of AlUla Moments, AlUla's events calendar has four distinct festivals that will commence on December 21, 2021 and run through to March 30, 2022 against the backdrop of AlUla's many timeless wonders. The Winter at Tantora festival will run from December 1, 2021 to February 12, 2022; AlUla Arts Festival will be held from February 13 – 26, 2022; AlUla Skies will take place from February 27 to March 12, 2022; AlUla Wellness will be held from March 17, 2022 to 27 March 2022. The festivals will offer curated experiences of art, culture, music, nature, wellness, equestrian, gastronomy and astronomy.





They say when the going gets tough, the tough gets going. Keeping the same in mind, destination Mauritius ensured that it remained fresh in the memories of its Indian travellers. Even during the lockdown, the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) continued promoting the destination on digital platforms and social media along with other platforms to stay connected with our target group and sustain the urge amongst the travellers to visit Mauritius. **Mr. Arvind Bundhun, Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion** Authority shares more with BOTT India.

# There is increased optimism and confidence amongst Indian tourists towards **Mauritius**

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

### **What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?**

Mauritius opened its international borders from October 1, 2021. Since then the island has seen Indian tourists, mainly honeymooners and families. However, there were a lot of queries from MICE groups including Weddings, Golfers and production houses of India which could not be realized due to lack of direct connectivity.

### **How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?**

The public health protocols in Mauritius are widely regarded as best-practice, and we have an extremely high vaccination rate, with over 89 per cent of the adult population already vaccinated and now booster doses are also being administered to the vaccinated population. Tourism employees were prioritized for vaccination, which means that visitors are welcomed and serviced exclusively by vaccinated staff. Over the last few months, we observed increased optimism and confidence amongst

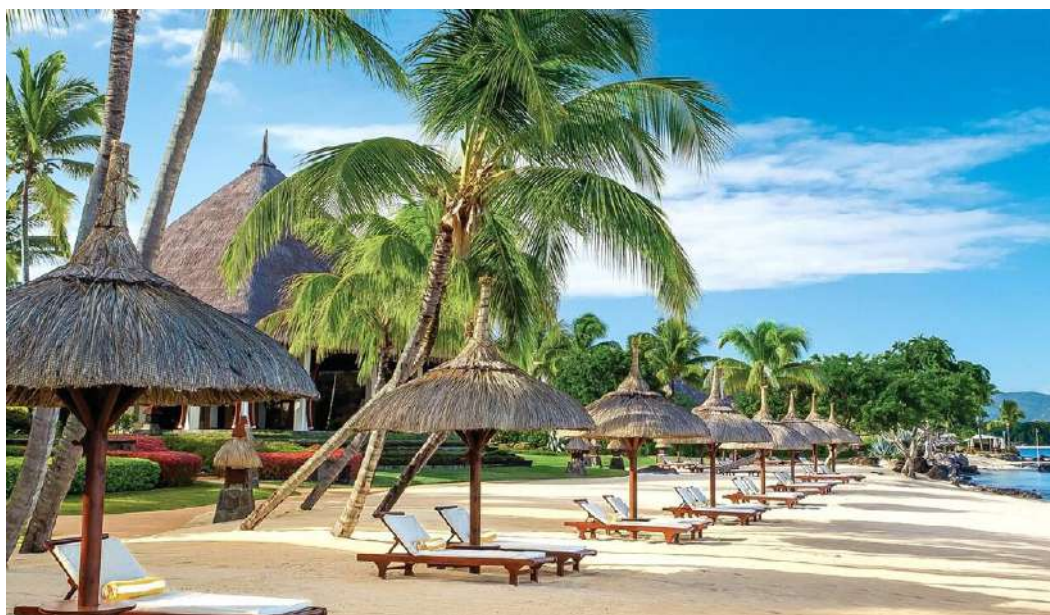
Indian tourists towards our country, so, we are confident that the footfalls from India and other countries will accelerate in 2022.

MTPA continued promoting the destination on digital platforms and social media along with other platforms to stay connected with our target group and sustain the urge amongst the travellers to visit Mauritius.

### **How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

Our stakeholders, along with MTPA believes that tourism can be one of the platforms for overcoming the pandemic, so, we are very optimistic that people will start traveling very soon following all COVID guidelines and protocols. People are now tired of keeping themselves locked within the four walls and not traveling for nearly two years, hence, the graph of travellers visiting Mauritius will rise within a short period of time.

### **What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**







Mauritius is popular for its long stretches of white sandy beaches, turquoise blue and crystal clear sea waters, natural lagoons and an exciting variety of underwater life. Beyond beaches, Mauritius offers lots of thrilling land activities for adventure lovers like skydive, biking, zipping, trekking, paragliding, helicopter and seaplane trips. For food lovers the island offers an impressive array of tantalising dishes and a wide variety of flavoured rum and wine. Mauritius has several natural parks and leisure parks, offering to grasp the wealth of local flora and fauna. Mauritius offers heritage and cultural tours, golfing, wellness, dazzling nightlife, overall an affordable luxury experience. The USP of the destination is that it offers a 360 degrees experience on and beyond the beach, but strictly following all required COVID protocols with a motto to be safe and keep our guests safe.

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

Many properties in Mauritius have undergone refurbishment and are welcoming guests to their refreshed offerings. Here I would like to mention about the two new attractions of Mauritius – the Splash n Fun Leisure Park, which is a thrilling and exclusive water themed park and Odysseo Oceanarium Mauritius, the first oceanarium in Mauritius.







The Monaco Government Tourist and Convention Authority has launched a White Paper on Sustainable Tourism in Monaco. The Monegasque tourism industry is diligently following the environmental policy led by the Prince's Government, and all stakeholders are committed to promoting more sustainable tourism. The Destination and its partners are adopting solutions to ensure that resources are managed in the most efficient way possible. **Mr. Rajeev Nangia, India Director, Monaco Government Tourist Bureau** shares more about the various initiatives being undertaken by the Principality.

# Monaco Tourism relaunches its communication campaign – 'Monaco FOR YOU. At last!'



**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

### What kind of tourist traffic has your destination seen from India in 2021?

As we are fully aware that year 2020 and 2021 have been the most challenging years for travel and tourism industry across the globe. Indian market has been aspiring to travel and have travelled as soon as they had a window to travel. However, for long haul destination like Monaco, it was very limited to HNI's and very high-end travellers from India.

### How confident are you of this number going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?

Year 2022 seems to be likely less disruptive and hopefully witness the revival of Outbound travel. As at the beginning of the year, the world is once again facing the challenge of a new variant. However, the hope does exist as one of the biggest event in the region continues to gain popularity and receiving visitors from across the globe with 190 countries' participation. Whereas Monaco is concerned, we are

committed to providing sustainable and healthcare measures to ensure safety. Some of the steps undertaken by the Principality of Monaco in providing safe travel are:

- A health pass is required to enter the Principality, one can obtain the health pass by providing digital or paper evidence of: Full vaccination, a negative RT-PCR or antigen test dated within the last 24 hours and proof of identity.
- Wearing a mask in public places is mandatory.
- The Principality also has the 'Monaco Safe' label, which certifies that an establishment has complied with all of the essential health and safety criteria laid down by the Monegasque Government to combat the spread of the Covid-19 virus, and protect the health and well-being of residents, workers, customers and visitors.

### How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?

Our efforts will be to enhance the visitor's arrival figures into Monaco as soon as possible from India. However,





there are various factors that needs to be considered like restarting of commercial flights from India, the Covid situation and the corporate initiative to restart the business and MICE activities. Once the things reinstate, India market will pick up fast as people are longing to travel again.

## What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?

According to the predicted travel trends for 2022, sustainability, environment conservation and hygiene measures are in demand. The Monaco Government Tourist and Convention Authority has launched a White Paper on Sustainable Tourism in Monaco. The Monegasque tourism industry is diligently following the environmental policy led by the Prince's Government, and all stakeholders are committed to promoting more sustainable tourism. The Destination and its partners are adopting solutions to ensure that resources are managed in the most efficient way possible.

On the other hand, the Principality has laid various preventative health measures such as the Monaco Health Pass, Monaco Safe Label and other



precautions like wearing a mask in public places, practicing social distancing, etc.

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

The Monaco Tourist and Convention Authority has relaunched its communication campaign with a slogan which is definitely evolving: "Monaco FOR YOU. At last!" With the re-launch of this campaign, the Monaco Tourist and Convention Authority communicates that it's time for tourism recovery. The campaign represents diversity of what Monaco has to offer tourists, focusing on themes including

wellbeing, fine dining, culture, family, romance, sport, responsible tourism, gambling and casinos, weekend escapes, and shopping.

More motivated than ever to lay the groundwork for the industry's future, the Monaco Convention Bureau, a catalyst for the Principality's MICE offering, has launched a new communication campaign with the slogan #REEVENT. Far more than a call to reinvent the business events sector, #REEVENT is a rallying cry and an invitation to industry professionals to come back and organise events in the Principality of Monaco.





The Israel Ministry of Tourism (IMOT) recently conducted its first roadshow in 2021 across three Indian cities to enhance commercial ties with the Indian travel trade fraternity that focused on outbound MICE travel. From playing the gracious host to the prestigious Miss Universe pageant to rolling out initiatives to boost the number of Indian arrivals, there is much that Israel is doing at the moment. **Mr. Sammy Yahia, Director of Israel Ministry of Tourism - Israel & Philippines**, shares more in an exclusive chat with BOTT India.

# Tourism to **Israel** has steadily grown and travellers from India will find much to do in the country

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

## **Could you tell us something more about the recent roadshows?**

The roadshows were held in the cities of Chennai on December 6, Bengaluru on December 7, and Kolkata on December 9, 2021. The events commenced with a destination presentation which focused on key developments, tourism infrastructure in Israel as well as opening of new hotels and tourist attractions. Following the presentation was an interactive session between the Israel Tourism team and the travel partners, which concluded with light snacks. The Israeli delegation was led by me along with Judah Samuel, Director of Marketing, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India.

## **What was your response to the roadshow?**

The last two years have been extremely challenging for everyone, especially the tourism industry. With a restricted number of flights and constant changes

in travel policies, many Indian travellers chose domestic travels similar to Israel. With borders opening for international travel, we are delighted to host our first roadshow since 2019. The aim was to have a concerted group of about 30 attendees in each city, with a focus on reviving interest in Israel as a destination, especially with the MICE segment. The presentation highlighted the upgrades that have been made to the tourism infrastructure in Israel, as well as new and exciting initiatives that have been implemented. It was heart-warming to meet our partners in each city and I am glad to see the enthusiastic response from the travel trade in marketing Israel to their corporate client.

## **How confident are you of the tourist numbers going up in 2022? Have you taken any measures to ensure that it does?**

I am optimistic that the situation will get better next year so I expect there will be demand for Israel. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the tourism team





has been working hard to maintain our relationships in the market with all our partners and stakeholders by hosting webinars and virtual meetups, participating in fairs and hosting roadshows. Earlier this year, we participated in ITB India where we interacted with over 30 tourism stakeholders, including travel agents, operators, corporate representatives, and journalists. Since then, IGTO India (Israel Govt. Tourist Office) has participated in the MILT Conference hosted in Mumbai and Delhi, hosted a 3-city roadshow and has focused on promoting niche segments like sustainable tourism and education tourism.

Most recently, the resort city of Eilat, located on the southern tip of Israel, played host to the 70th Miss Universe Competition where Miss India won the prestigious crown for 2021.

### **How long will it be before Outbound from India to the destination you represent will reach pre-Covid levels?**

We are optimistic that outbound tourism from the Indian subcontinent will continue to increase in the upcoming year, which has been evident with the increase in Indian tourists visiting short-haul destinations. However, I do believe it will take at least another year before outbound tourism levels equate to pre-pandemic travel. While the world is still trying to understand the full impact of COVID-19, and countries are being cautious with completely opening borders to tourism, travellers have also become more selective about the destinations they will travel to and experience.

### **What, in your opinion, is the USP of the destination you represent, especially in light of post-Covid travel preferences?**

With regard to the pandemic, one of the most unique things about Israel is that we were one of the first countries to discontinue the requirement for masks and the country has mostly returned to normal, though international travel is closely monitored.

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

Israel offers a plethora of things to do and see to cater to the discerning traveller. Tourism to Israel has steadily grown with 2019 seeing a record of 4.5 million international tourists as the nation houses a number of UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the

Old City of Jerusalem, Old City of Acre and Masada (Dead Sea region). From the historical city of Jerusalem to the beach city of Tel Aviv; the lowest point on earth – Dead Sea, to the marvellous underwater marine life of Red Sea in Eilat and the World UNESCO Heritage sites all across the country, experience the dynamic Israel.





# ASTRO SPEAK

Tarot Card Reading is the art and science which helps understand the present status and the future course. It helps to apply course correction, if required. Tarot card can be used for shaping Career, Health, Finance, Business, Relationship, marriage, match-making etc. *Ms. Richa Srivastava, a renowned Tarot Card reader* conducts exclusive Tarot reading under her banner - *Tathaastu*. Here are her predictions for the New Year 2022.

**Tathaastu**



## Know what your stars say about 2022



### **ARIES (March 21 – April 20)**

Consistent perseverance will help you in coming out of adverse situations. Keep making persistent effort as success is guaranteed. Take out time for exercise and meditation. Don't neglect your health. Be co-operative and controlled with partner in a relationship.



### **Taurus (April 21 – May 21)**

Taking stress will adversely affect your health. Take rest from your busy schedule. Incorporate meditation as a part of daily routine. Re-evaluate your actions at work place and make necessary changes as required. Challenging, busy and hectic schedules. Keep calm and hold back yourself in your relationship.



### **Gemini (May 22 – June 21)**

Remove anxiety. Be positive and look on the brighter side. Conflicts at career front will be resolved through honest conversations. Plan to manage your finances. Goal will be achieved and bond will be stronger with partner.



### **Cancer (June 22 – July 22)**

Be careful on health front. Take cautious decision on professional front. Avoid any risky investment. Avoid any conflict with anyone. Take time off for spending time with family. Include Yoga and meditation in your daily don't allow a third person to spoil your relationship.



### **Leo (July 23 – August 21)**

Please take care of your lifestyle. Focus & success/promotion is assured. You may start a new business. Make a determined and sincere effort in your work. Collaboration will help you achieve your goal. Relationship with partner will strengthen further.





## Virgo (August 22 – September 23)

Time to move forward with positive attitude. Quick healing from illness is expected. Maintain focus with concerted efforts. Search for the new job will take some more time. Spend time with family.



## Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Consistent perseverance will help you in coming out of adverse situations. Keep making persistent effort as success is guaranteed. Take out time for exercise and meditation. Don't neglect your health. Avoid using harsh words in relationship.



## Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

Take rest from your busy schedule. Incorporate meditation as a part of daily routine. Re-evaluate your actions at workplace and make necessary changes as required. Keep patience and have faith. Spiritual indulgence is beneficial.



## Sagittarius (November 23 – December 22)

Focus on your goal. Put your idea into action now. In case you have had health issues, it's time to focus on healing. Take time off to go to your favourite place to spend time with family and children.



## Capricorn (December 23 – January 20)

Take rest from your busy schedule. Incorporate meditation as a part of daily routine. Change is inevitable and good times are coming ahead. Keep patience and have faith. Rejuvenate yourself from the tiredness.



## Aquarius (January 21 – February 19)

Introspect, don't take any decision now. Clarity will come slowly Help from an expert expected in profession. Plan your finances carefully and don't discuss with unwanted people. Time to be socially active and engaged. Those looking for marital alliance this is the time. Spiritual indulgence is beneficial.



## Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

Remove anxiety. Be positive and look on the brighter side. Conflicts at career front will be resolved through honest conversations. Plan to manage your finances. Goal will be achieved and bond will be stronger with partner.





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absolute fun, where you reinvent yourself,  
is happening right next door in Sri Lanka.