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- Detailed and insightful interviews with Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER G. Kishan Reddy and Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia

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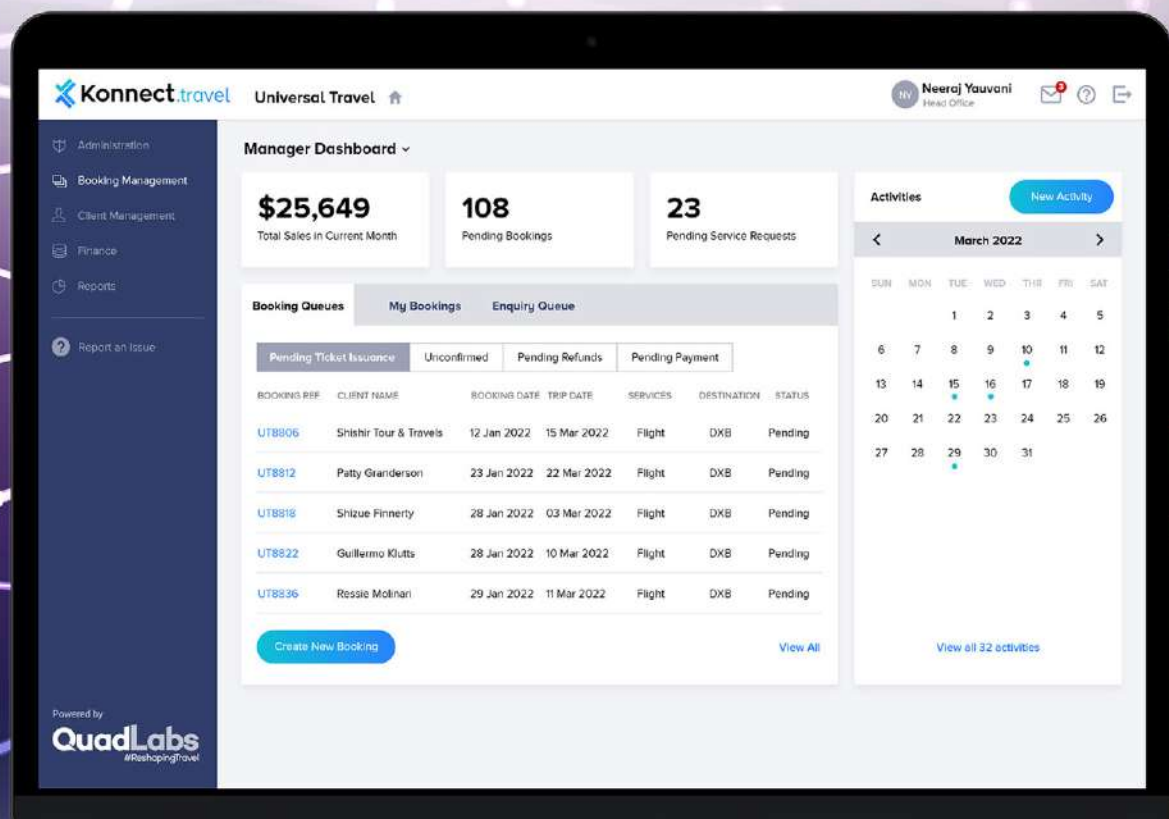
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From The Editor's *Desk*

Chalo! India



Dear Readers,

Just as the smell of a freshly printed book or a dry patch of rain when it absorbs rain, invigorates the mind and refreshes the senses, similar are the emotions of a tourism professional when he visits a physical trade event after a hiatus of 2 years. March 2020, when the cancellation of ITB Berlin just mere days before the actual event created ripples in the industry to May 2022 when the industry is once again to physically attend the ATM 2022, it has indeed been an extremely challenging two years, which one would not like to think about.

So we carrying with us, (yes we are going to ATM!), along with our BOTT ATM Special Issue, an air of positivity and hope to tell the world that yes, India is ready to welcome the world and that Indians are ready to travel again! The honourable PM's request to the Indian diaspora in Denmark, urging Indians to bring 5 foreign tourists with them on their next visit to India has triggered a wave of reassurance in the minds of the travel fraternity – tourism after all is a major contributor to the GDP of the economy and its time everyone takes us seriously.

So friends, let the normalcy regain and let there be travel once again. Let the planes fly high and families get together. Let there be laughter, holiday, vacation, business trips, weddings, exhibitions, roadshows, cruise journeys and more. Let us tell the world that India today stands highly vaccinated and geared to welcome tourists from all corners of the world. It is time to get India back on every traveller's bucket list as they get together and say – Chalo! India....

We hope you enjoy reading our ATM Special Issue. Do share your feedback, praise, observations, suggestions and criticism with us at priyanka@bottindia.com

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"We have brought a new helicopter policy which has reduced the extra cost of operation, and in Assam, we will establish two new heliports in Geleki and Nagaon in the next two years. On the Guwahati River front, we will establish Umrangso water aerodrome in the coming years. Prior to 2014, we had 74 airports in India but in 7 years, we have established 66 new airports taking the total to 140 airports in the country. In Assam, we had 4 airports in Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Silchar but today we have established 3 new airports in Lilabari, Tezpur and Rupsi."

-Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India



"Around five years ago, a routine balloon service was introduced but this time, in a first, we have launched a hot air balloon service to attract tourists and local visitors. Each balloon can accommodate four passengers at a time besides its captain. However, there are certain safety measures which are mandatory. Kashmir has seen a massive surge in tourist arrivals, which is the highest in the past 10 years. This added attraction will boost the numbers further."

-Mr. G N Itoo, Director, Kashmir Tourism



"Ras Al Khaimah is an Emirate blessed with the best of natural beauty and is popular for leisure tourists, MICE travellers and those looking to hold memorable iconic weddings. Our plan this year is to get back to pre-pandemic levels. We are looking at receiving 1.1 million tourists. For India, we are looking to get back to 2019 numbers by receiving 60,000 to 65,000 tourists from here."

-Mr. Iyad Rasbey, Executive Director, Destination Tourism Development & MICE, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority



"There is so much to explore in Malaysia after two years, especially with the newly opened outdoor theme park, Genting SkyWorld, the refurbished Sunway Resort in Kuala Lumpur, and a magnificent new attraction, the Merdeka 118, the world's second tallest building. I am sure these new attractions along with our beautiful beaches, exhilarating mountains and jungles with a plethora of activities will make your trip a memorable one."

-Mr. Manoharan Periasamy, Senior Director, International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa)



"I am pleased to note that we ended 2021-22 on a high note, given our first quarterly profit in many years. The passenger demand remained strong, and revenues continued to recover from the setbacks of the pandemic during the quarter. Our annual expenditure remained within expectations. I am thankful to all our valued employees for contributing towards this achievement."

-Mr. Ashok Pathirage, Chairman, SriLankan Airlines



"In recent times, travel has become the second-most-desired activity among people, behind dining; and it is slowly but steadily taking its right course with a travel demand to domestic destinations. Lords Inn is a stylish property equipped with all the contemporary features to provide a comfortable stay at affordable rates. We look forward to offer Lord's exhilarating hospitality to both business and leisure travellers."

-Mr. Pushpendra Bansal, COO, Lords Hotels and Resorts



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‘Our focus is to develop and promote niche tourism offerings’: **G. Kishan Reddy**



We are promoting India as holistic destination showcasing its various tourism destinations, sites, circuits as well as tourism products to attract both domestic and international tourists says the Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER

G. Kishan Reddy



Rai Umraopati Ray

Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER G. Kishan Reddy is a busy man these days with the celebrations of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav going on in full swing. The country is currently celebrating 75 years of its independence, her glorious history, people, culture and achievements during the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav and DoNER ministry is highlighting the beauty of the north-eastern region. “It is a proud moment for all of us. The Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav: North East Festival being celebrated across all the eight north-eastern states with the spirit of Hum Kisi Se Kam Nahi. Similar events, on varied themes, are being held in various capital cities of the eight northeast states under the ongoing festival,” said the Tourism Minister on the side-lines of the inauguration of the Badminton tournament of the North East Regional Sports Week.

“The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned 10 projects under the Heritage Circuit theme of the Swadesh Darshan scheme which includes the project

‘Development of Tezpur – Majuli – Sibsagar’ sanctioned for Rs. 90.98 cr. under the Heritage circuit theme in the State of Assam,” he further informed.

The Ministry of Tourism has proactively taken a number of initiatives in the past few months with G. Kishan Reddy leading the bandwagon. For instance, the Centre is taking up development of facilities at Ramappa Temple, a UNESCO world heritage site, by granting 50 crore rupees under PRASAD Scheme. “The Central Government has already provided three crore 70 lakh rupees for improving visitors facilities at Ramappa Temple after it got UNESCO recognition,” informed the minister stating that Warangal has been announced as Heritage city and the government is giving priority to developing the city.

In order to augment the infrastructure development, the Ministry has sanctioned three projects during 2021-22 for a total amount of Rs 112.25 crore, with the objective of integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations, under the PRASHAD Scheme. The thrust of the Ministry has been to provide basic amenities at many more



religious places so that pilgrims are benefited. The Ministry has also recently revamped its Swadesh Darshan Scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0. Under the revamped Scheme, destination and tourist centric approach is envisaged in order to develop responsible and sustainable destinations.

Last month, Reddy launched the Utsav Portal, which aims to showcase all the events, festivals and Live Darshans across India to promote different regions of the country as popular tourist destinations worldwide. The immersive experience-based content is provisioned on the portal under various categories like Art & Culture, Spiritual, Music, Seasonal, Culinary, Dance, Sports & Adventure, Harvest and Expo & Exhibitions.

Not only this, the Ministry has identified 15 theme-based circuits for development, spanning the entire country, which include the Buddhist Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Desert Circuit, Eco Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Krishna Circuit, North-East Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Sufi Circuit, Tirthankar

Circuit, Tribal Circuit and Wildlife Circuit. In addition, a total of 68 destinations/sites have also been identified in 30 States/UTs for development under the PRASHAD Scheme.

“Our focus is to develop and promote niche offerings like medical tourism, golf tourism, cruise, adventure, MICE, eco-tourism, film tourism, sustainable tourism, rural tourism and the likes. We are promoting India as holistic destination showcasing its various tourism destinations, sites, circuits as well as tourism products to attract both domestic and international tourists for realising the potential of tourist places in the country,” informed Reddy

Apart from its tourism initiatives, the Ministry is also implementing a skill training programme for tourism service providers under the Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP) Scheme to enhance the employability of the candidates. This training includes fresh candidates, candidates for re-skilling and upskilling who are already working in the hospitality sector. This training programme is on pan-India level including the tier-II cities.



Sky's the limit for Indian Aviation: **Jyotiraditya M. Scindia**

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is working towards making its airports carbon-neutral in future says Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia

Rai Umraopati Ray

FATHOM THIS:

- India's daily domestic air passenger traffic crossed the 4 lakh mark in mid-April
- More than 1 lakh 79 thousand flights have flown under UDAN scheme
- 415 UDAN routes connect 66 underserved/unserved airports, including heliports and water aerodromes, and over 92 lakh people have benefited from it.
- More than 350 new city pairs are scheduled to be connected under the scheme, with 200 already connected and are widely spread geographically providing connectivity across the length and breadth of the country
- AAI equips 14 airports with ambulift facility to help flyers with reduced mobility in boarding aircraft

These are some of the major achievements of the Ministry of Civil Aviation in the recent past and no doubt Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia is enthusiastic, fired up and feels that the time is ripe for Indian aviation to take centre stage. According to him, the number of fliers will touch 100 million this year. "I'm looking at a number close to closing this year at about 100 million, up from about 50 million in COVID years. And I see us reaching almost about 400 million by 2030. So, that's the potential we are looking at," said the Minister at a recent event.

"The way Indian civil aviation has bounced back post COVID19 with all protocols in place shows its resilience & determination. With a robust and holistic plan for the future, we are sure, we will set new milestones in the air, soon," he added.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is working towards making its airports carbon-neutral in future. Carbon neutrality currently represents the highest level of carbon management performance under Airport Carbon Accreditation. In order to reach it, airports need to reduce CO2 emissions from those sources under their control as much as possible and compensate for the remaining residual emissions with investment in high-quality carbon offsets.

"Yes, India is working towards making its airports carbon neutral in the near future so as to emerge as a responsible player in the international civil aviation industry. Civil aviation as a sector globally only composes hardly 2 per cent of global CO2 emissions. But nevertheless, we need to act responsibly as a sector and therefore, within civil aviation, we're looking at sustainable aviation fuel as a substitute for ATF. It has also been decided that by 2024 end, about 96 airports of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) would operate on 100 per cent renewable energy. Also in the works is a carbon mapping exercise for airports and building a green plan



going forward," informed Scindia.

Not long ago, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Govt. of Himachal Pradesh signed MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) for development of a Green Field Airport in Nagchala, Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh.

"We are developing new aviation infrastructure as well as upgrading existing facilities in Himachal Pradesh whether it is development of a new green field airport in Mandi or acquisition of additional land for extension of runways at existing airports. With this, we are committed to develop civil aviation as a harbinger of economic development for the region," said Scindia. There are three airports i.e. Shimla, Kullu, and Kangra and 5 heliports i.e. Kangnihar, Shimla, Rampur, Baddi, and SASE (Manali) in Himachal Pradesh are being developed which would give a massive boost to the tourism industry of the state once completed.

In addition, Airports Authority of India (AAI) has undertaken the expansion work of Trichy Airport which includes Construction of a New Integrated Passenger Terminal Building, a new Apron, Air Traffic Control (ATC) Tower, and upgradation of Air side facilities to cater the growing passenger traffic and reduce congestion during peak hours at the airport. AAI has also equipped its 14 airports across the country with ambulifts in a bid to help air passengers with reduced mobility in boarding an aircraft. Ambulifts that are 'made-in-India' have been deployed at these airports as they do not have aerobridge facilities.

To further boost air connectivity of the Northeast region with the rest of India, the Civil Aviation Ministry has approved the "Providing air connectivity and Aviation infrastructure in North Eastern Region" scheme. Under this scheme, the first flight of Made in India HAL Dornier Do-228 was inaugurated from Dibrugarh in Assam to Pasighat in the state of Arunachal Pradesh on 12 April 2022. Apart from this, the first Flying Training Organization (FTO) for the North Eastern Region was also inaugurated at Lilabari in the state of Assam.



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Rupinder Brar: 'India is ready to welcome you all-Chalo! India'

The Ministry of Tourism, in the last two years, has become an extension of tourism fraternity and not just a Government body we seek help from. This is primarily because of its dedicated, humble and hardworking bureaucrats who are always ready to lend us a patient hearing. At the forefront we have Ms. Rupinder Brar, ADG, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, who with her radiant smile, beautiful voice and ever encouraging words of wisdom is always assuring of finding a solution to your problem. Read excerpts from her latest chat with BOTT-

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Incredible India participating at ATM 2022

The Ministry of Tourism is looking forward to a very aggressive presence at the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai this year. We have a pavilion coming up and many creatives and movies aimed at creating a positive image of a resurgent and vibrant India. Post Covid we want to create a message that we are a country safe to travel once again with vaccinations done and also all our destinations are ready. Infact, not only destinations that were there pre 2019 or pre Covid, but many more have now been added because of the amount of flights and connectivity that has increased and also the number of homestays and Air BNB units that have come about in the last couple of years. It's an exciting time to be in India is a message that we want to carry with us to the ATM this year. We would also be hosting a Press Conference at the ATM this year.

New Promotional Campaign by MoT

Yes a new promotional campaign will be launched very soon. We are just waiting for some final touches and probably ATM will be a good place for us to also have a clear understanding as to which is the right time to launch that campaign. In India, as you are aware, given various factors, Inbound numbers start picking up from late September or early October so while we have started interacting with the foreign DMOs through the virtual road shows also a lot of things happening through the missions abroad but the official campaign per se in terms of the advertisement will probably happen soon into the next month perhaps.

Attending physical roadshows

Yes, the Ministry of Tourism has started attending physical events and ATM is the first and we will be looking into doing many more and participating in physical spaces with far more aggression. However, one needs to remember that a little more tactical positioning is required because post Covid people have altered their choices and it is going to be a little more tentative plan as we are looking at it. However,



fortunately for us, the domestic tourism is galloping and that's another message which we all will carry into all the participations that will happen that the country is so good to travel right now that the domestic tourist is simply all over the country – be it the large city or the smaller cities or the lesser known places. So that's going to be a strong message and yes participation in these events is going to be a norm rather an exception.

MOT's own Roadshows coming back

They are all going to come back definitely but may be a little altered by the fact that post Covid world is looking at different kind of products positioning and messaging but yes the fact that it's a high contact industry and we need to be meeting people on ground and physically connecting with them is definitely high priority for us

Words of Wisdom

The time is just right to invite Inbound tourists as just recently our honourable Prime Minister in Denmark, reaching out to Indian diaspora urged them to bring five of their foreign friends to India on their next visit giving it the new theme Chalo India and I think Chalo India is going to be our Mantra also as we go out of India in the weeks and months to come.



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'Travel and Hospitality Industry is stronger and better prepared to fight for a brighter future': **Ankush Nijhawan**

Extremely humble in his behaviour and forthright in his replies, the 'Golden Man' of Tourism Industry, who has taken his business to new heights, is today, reigning supreme in the tourism industry. He is a 'Man with a Plan' who strongly believes that there is no short cut to hard work and who has empowered his team to take independent decisions in the interest of the company. Witty, Stylish, Suave, but most importantly humble and aspirational – here's a candid conversation with **Mr. Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder, tbo.com.**



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Priyanka Saxena Ray

Surviving the Pandemic

Firstly, our main instinct when the pandemic broke was to preserve our cash and now in hindsight I think it was something which has really paid up. We took some stringent measures in the company and all of us had to obviously take some cuts across the board, which, personally, was very painful for me. However, I think we were the first ones to even roll it back when the market opened up and I am glad to say that there were no layoffs.

Secondly, I think communication with the team is critical and that is something we followed diligently. I used to speak to my team on a weekly basis and stay connected at all times. I could understand their emotions and addressed their unanswered questions. The goal was not just to communicate but also comfort the team regularly and assure them that the worst will be over soon. Infact, during Covid, many of our staff or their families were caught up in the storm and we stood strong with them to ensure they were taken care of and their issues

Motivating the Team

For us there was no lockdown – we simply followed the government laws. We did whatever was permissible. May 23, 2020 was the first day when we opened our office during the first wave and then kept coming till the government asked us not to. But the attitude was always to be at work because I believe decision making is quicker when people are sitting across the table from each other. Your motivation levels are higher, your emotions can be seen and so much more. Most importantly, coming to office keeps your mind away from a lot of negativity. We paid back refunds on time and I'm very proud to say (which you can check from the industry too) on helping our partners face the stress during the pandemic. Our suppliers, our clients – be it the airlines or hotels or the travel partners across the world, everyone was happy to see how we operated during the most challenging times. We operated 24/7 – emails, phones, virtual meetings – my team was out there! Everybody was responding because I always told my team, don't run away from this problem, and let's face the same with a brave and positive attitude. But sooner or later the crisis will settle down, which has happened. And I think today with the all the strenuous effort we did in the Covid times is really helping us to build our business back over the last one year.

Diversifying

While I am happy that life is back to normal, the pandemic also taught us a lot, starting with not putting all our eggs in one basket – therefore our cargo business was born. We also started with our Zam Zam business, which is the business serving the Umrah pilgrimage and is head quartered out of Saudi. We further strengthened our European products with Rail Europe, etc. We hired a little more than 110 people during Covid, which was surprising for a lot of people, but we wanted to do it because we were getting some great talent, which was available as companies were doing layoffs. We acquired Gemini Travels in the peak of the 2nd wave in June



2021. So as a team I think we stood very tall and did things differently

Evolving Travel Trends

Initially TBO and many other travel companies never really focused on domestic hotel business as much, but Covid taught us how important this sector is and it is now part of our revenue and will continue to stay relevant. India has tasted the amazing part of travelling within India, especially Rajasthan, the hills in Uttarakhand, Goa, Kerala, Kashmir, Dharamshala, Manali, Coorg became some popular sought after. Even the monolithic Statue of Unity became very popular. The other good thing that happened to domestic market in India is the Cordelia Cruises. I am very proud to say that India has seen a local cruise line, which the middle class, who had aspirations to travel on a cruise, will be fulfilled. And who knows that this could be a start for India becoming a very large cruise hub for this part of the world

Post Pandemic scenario

Honestly, I think there's a lot of happiness at the moment. Everybody across the industry is very busy. There are plenty of possibilities and positivity in the air. Everybody's back to their fullest work regime. And I think most of people who I speak to are in very good spirits right mind frame now. Omicron was absolutely mild and hopefully no wave should come now in the summer. The summer season looks very promising after almost two years.

There is a revenge travel now – that includes both international and domestic last minute bookings for summer holidays. The challenges are different now not in terms Covid the Ukraine war has forced oil prices to go up. People are expecting the fares to come down, but it hasn't happened because of the oil prices. Also, getting visas right now, especially for Europe, etc. is tough as people are either not getting appointments or getting them too late. But I am sure that this lack will soon catch up – it is basically a demand and supply issue which will self-resolve, given some time.

When will be go back to the figures of 2019?

I think domestic is almost there. The numbers of domestic travellers released in April 2022 is very encouraging. This number will only grow further. It's just that the complete airline inventory still has to normalise and should be by July 1, 2022, whatever little vacuum is left will also fill-up. We will make up for what we've lost, domestic for sure, international, even if we get there by 80%, I think that's a good news as industry. What I have also heard in the recent time is that even the business travel within domestic has started to come back with large companies. So sooner or later the international business will also come back.

I think the worst is over and it's behind us. We all waited for two years to pass by and though some little bumps might happen, I think we are back on track and probably much stronger as an industry and I always say 2023 will probably one of the best years industry has seen in the last many years.

Kerala is ready to welcome its guests back with new products & world-class experiences

Kerala – God's own Country has been a favourite for both – inbound and domestic travellers, who are equally important to the state's tourism figures. Now on the path of revival, the destination expects to reach the 2019 arrival figures (Domestic - 1,83,84,233; and International - 11,89,771), by the end of this FY 2022 - 23. All of Kerala Tourism's activities, initiatives and focus henceforth would be to quickly regain lost ground at the earliest.

Shri. V R Krishna Teja IAS, Director, Dept. of Tourism, Kerala, shares more in an exclusive chat with BOTT.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

Today, in the New Normal era, how is the flow of tourist traffic to your state? Are you witnessing more domestic tourists or inbound tourists?

Yes, Kerala is now seeing an increased influx of tourists, both domestic and inbound guests. The pandemic affected all tourism destinations across the globe and Kerala too has had its share of difficulties.

In the last two years, when there was a lull in the spread of infection, Kerala had attracted a lot of tourists from other states, whenever domestic travel restrictions were eased. Local tourists from inside the state had also been travelling to shake off the lockdown induced fatigue and boredom.

This increase in tourist numbers has been achieved primarily due to the joint initiatives of the State Tourism department and the travel trade in Kerala. A total vaccination drive for tourism stakeholders in tourist destinations in Kerala was undertaken, starting from Vythiri in Wayanad district as early as July 2021. And then the Department of Tourism, with the active support of the travel trade, ensured that incoming guests were completely protected by enabling their stay in a bio-bubble kind of atmosphere, where the guests would be serviced only by fully vaccinated service providers starting from taxi drivers at the airport.

Such pragmatic measures were showcased in the 360 degree marketing communications

campaigns that Kerala Tourism ran during that period, and helped in building confidence among guests planning their vacations. This was also helped by Kerala's intrinsic strengths – of beautiful locales that remain pristine and uncrowded.

However, these initiatives are not enough for Kerala Tourism to retrieve lost ground and scale new heights. Innovative products and new experiences have been rolled out and we at Kerala Tourism have put together a holistic marketing plan showcasing these to reach out to potential travellers in India as well as across the globe.

With the complete lifting of all restrictions and the restoration of full schedules of domestic and international airlines, Kerala Tourism is looking forward to increased footfalls, both domestic and international. Kerala is ready to welcome its guests back with riveting new products and out of this world experiences.

How well-equipped, infrastructurally, is your state to host Weddings and Big MICE gatherings?

World-class infrastructure, out-of-this-world settings, a pleasant climate, good connectivity, easy accessibility... Kerala has all that any Wedding & MICE destination would require. With some of India's best conferencing and convention venues like the Grand Hyatt, Cochin, Le Meridien in Kochi and The Raviz in Kovalam makes Kerala an ideal MICE and Weddings destination



Add to that Kerala's excellent accommodation facilities, strong logistic and manpower support give the State an edge over other MICE destinations. There are several hotel and resort chains across the State that offer ample facilities for conducting weddings, meetings and conferences - both big and small. Kerala has a 10000+ room inventory spread across 300+ three star and above hotels and resorts, with around 45 Five Star and Five Star deluxe properties itself. And added strength is Kerala's world renowned Ayurveda resorts and hospitals as well.

Adding to its natural attraction as an ideal Weddings and MICE destination is the excellent connectivity that Kerala provides through its rail and road infrastructure (1500+kms of National Highways, and 4600+ kms of State Highways) and 4 International airports that connect to most of Middle East and South-East Asia and all major cities in India.

What are the new initiatives that have been introduced in your state in the post pandemic era?

Added to our core natural assets are a slew of new products like the Caravan Tourism initiative, Keravan Kerala. Also, the state has hit upon a new strategy of unveiling the whole state before the world. Every little hamlet has some pleasant surprise for visitors, who are keen to explore the unexplored.

Caravan Tourism is an upfront initiative, which has elicited a keen response from the industry within a short span of its launch. This mode of vacation will offer the visitors a customized experience by facilitating their travel through a circuit of their choice in any part of the state. They can stay close to nature, move leisurely in a healthy ambience and enjoy the local flavours in all its diversity before heading back to home with enduring memories.



Over the decades, much of our tourism has centred round a few select locations, such as backwater hubs, hill stations and seafront locales. These destinations continue to be our core strength.

At the same time, we are also making a strategic shift towards extending tourism to the entire Kerala. Local communities and civic institutions are key partners in this endeavour, along with a slew of tourism enterprises. Our globally-acclaimed Responsible Tourism initiative has a central role in this unique initiative.

The Tourism Department will be there as a facilitator and regulator to see that all activities are environmentally and culturally sustainable.

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

From a focus on achieving targets in arrival

numbers, Kerala has pitched itself strongly as a safe and riveting all-season long-stay destination by rolling out novel products like caravan tourism while consolidating its time-tested assets to host domestic and foreign guests all through the year.

From a one-stop location-specific approach, Kerala has firmly marked itself as a destination for extended holidays for all segments of visitors with a bouquet of experiences stacked across the state like homestays, drive holidays, 'Change of Air' based wellness vacations and adventure tourism activities.

The new strategy has considerably boosted the stakeholder confidence in Kerala with the travel and hospitality industry looking forward to a busy year ahead with a steep increase in footfalls. We are confident that 2022 is going to be the year of Kerala Tourism!



Karnataka Tourism to organise 19 city roadshows to draw domestic traffic



Keeping the growth trends in the domestic market in mind, Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka along with Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) shall organise multi-city roadshows from May 2022 to November 2022 to promote the tourism sector of the state.

BOTT DESK

KSTDC has identified 19 cities across the country, which are the key source market for domestic arrivals. Guwahati, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nashik, Pune, Goa, Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Chennai, Vijayawada, Hyderabad & Nagpur are the few select cities for hosting the roadshows.

G. Jagadeesha, Managing Director, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) said, "Karnataka with its diverse range of products is fast emerging as one of the most interesting and productive states for the travel trade, both for leisure and business travel. Domestic Tourism being the backbone of the Tourism economy has a lot of potentials which needs to be tapped. Post-pandemic, these Roadshow activities will be an excellent occasion for our stakeholders to renew contacts with the travel trade across India."

The first leg of these B2B roadshow is being organized in New Delhi, Chandigarh, Jaipur and Lucknow on May 17, May 21, May 23 and May 25 respectively. This exclusive B2B Roadshow will have over 15 stakeholders from Karnataka interacting with more than 100 travel agent's/tour operators of the respective cities.

The Roadshow will have B2B interactions and presentations that will showcase the destination and also open up new avenues in bringing the destination in new light to the travel and trade community. Cultural



performance will be organised to showcase the vibrant art forms that Karnataka is known for. The main objective of Karnataka Tourism is to promote the State as a destination for Leisure, MICE, Adventure, Wildlife and Wedding Destination in the Indian market. KSTDC shall be the nodal agency to conduct the roadshows in various cities of India.

Karnataka is home to a large and exciting portfolio of globally acclaimed tourism products with UNESCO World Heritage Sites, splendid wildlife and resplendent nature, virgin beaches to adorn. The Roadshow series will provide the impetus to the domestic inbound travel and would enhance the marketing efforts of Karnataka Tourism to promote our destinations to the travel-trade.

WITT's first physical Conclave wove interesting tales and created ample sunshine

WITT – Women in TAAI and Tourism, brainchild of Ms. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI was formed in early 2021 with the sole purpose of helping, skilling, motivating and promoting women in the tourism industry. In one of its first ever physical conclave – Mission with a Vision, TAAI WITT brought together a captivating bouquet of women professionals from various walks of life to share their thoughts on 'Weaving Tales' and 'Create your Sunshine'. The event was well attended by not just tourism professionals but also bureaucrats from the MoT and MSME and few women professionals were granted recognition with 'Shakti Awards'.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

Women are an integral part of the tourism industry and often overlooked when it comes to recognition. The main mission behind forming WITT is to strengthen women participation in the tourism sector and address issues related to women welfare in tourism. WITT will act as facilitator to make women equal stakeholders in the nation's development and recognise the noteworthy contribution made by them – with this firm mission and vision in mind, Ms. Mayal laid the ground rules recently at the very first path breaking WITT Conclave that was held at Le Meridien New Delhi with the theme – Mission with a Vision.

Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon Secretary General, TAAI and Ms. Mayal set the tone of the event by welcoming and briefing the panellists along with a hall brimming with women achievers about the vision of WITT and their humble mission to extend its reach. Having broken the glass ceiling herself by becoming one of the first women president of an association, Ms. Mayal emphasised that it is time for women to take charge of their own life and believe that nothing is impossible to achieve. With his Words of Wisdom – Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao, DB Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, sharing examples from the great epics of India – Ramayana and Mahabharata set the tone of the Session – Weaving Tales, assuring women that they are superwomen indeed and should not



considerate themselves inferior to any.

Session on Weaving Tales comprised panellists namely Ms. Rupinder Brar, ADG Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India, Ms. Jahnabi Phookan, Past President FICCI FLO, Ms. Navina Jafa, Cultural Activist & Academician, Ms. Shazia Ilmi, Politician & Journalist, Ms. Aarti Manocha, Wedding Planner Milestones to Memories and offering the men's perspective was Mr. Sanjay Bose, ITC Hotels. This intriguing session, moderated by Ms. Mayal, brought to light some interesting tales of these women professionals – encouraging and motivating the audience.

The next session titled 'Create your own Sunshine' comprised Ms. Nandita Kanchan, Commissioner of Income Tax (Audit), Delhi; Dr. Charu Wali Khanna, Advocate Supreme Court, President NGO SAFMA; Ms. Sonia Bharwani, GM – Learning & OD, VFS Global; Ms. Aditi Malik, Soft Skills Expert, Ms. Parineeta Sethi, Publisher and Chief Editor, Glopal Spa & Peaklife and offering the men's perspective was Mr. Sandeep Dwivedi, COO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient. Moderated by Mr. Jay



Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI, this session touched upon the various means and methods that women can adapt and not be dependent on any other to 'create their sunshine'.

On the occasion, Informa Markets, whose India's travel portfolio comprises SATTE had collaborated with WITT & TAAI for Shakti – Honouring Women Achievers Awards. Shakti is an independent program that honours women entrepreneurs and achievers across various industry verticals. At the WITT Conclave, Shakti honoured enterprising women professionals in tourism

The Orchid Group of Hotels launches 'The Orchid Manali'

After the successful launch of The Orchid Shimla, The Orchid Group of Hotels has further expanded its footprints in Himachal Pradesh with the launch of The Orchid Manali, its second property in the picturesque state. Prominently located at Shuru, Naggar Road the hotel is well-connected to popular tourist attractions namely Solang Valley, Hadimba Temple, Rohtang Pass, and Bhrgu Lake among others. The Orchid Manali offers 47 well-appointed rooms replete with all modern elements. The hotel also features a wide variety of lifestyle activities including a swimming pool, bonfire area, and open deck. The All-Day Dining restaurant, Café Vindhyas can seat up to 70 pax. The hotel also boasts of a banquet hall with a capacity of 250-300 guests that is ideal for social gatherings, private parties, and memorable events.



Noesis successfully facilitates three hotel transactions for Ginger Hotels



NOESIS Capital Advisors has successfully facilitated three hotel transactions in Mumbai, Dehradun, and Agra for GINGER Hotels, an IHCL Brands. NOESIS functioned as an exclusive transaction manager for these transactions from asset identification to contract negotiations and signing. Mumbai Hotel consists of 104 keys strategically located near Bombay Exhibition Centre, Goregaon. This hotel is a part of a mix-use development, scheduled to be operational by June 2022. Dehradun Hotel consists of 72 keys strategically located on Rajpur road. This hotel is going to be a GINGER lean luxe product. Agra Hotel consists of 75 keys strategically located on Fatehabad Road within 10 minutes' drive from the iconic Taj Mahal.

Espire Hospitality Group to launch 'ZANA Udaipur' this year

Espire Hospitality Group has taken a pertinent step to add a luxury boutique resort brand 'ZANA', to the hospitality landscape of India. Just like the name 'ZANA' suggests a rare 'purple lily', the brand will bring a bounty of freshness and exclusivity to the holiday experiences. The first outpost of the brand will be a 30 rooms lakeside resort on the unexplored Udai Sagar Lake, in the romantic city of Udaipur. 'ZANA Udaipur' will be a unique resort with inspiring experiences and nourishing cuisine that will complement its stunning natural setting. With just 30 lake facing guestrooms, the resort will exhibit the true confluence of old world charm and highly personalized and distinctive 'Victorian' service concepts. It will be at a convenient distance from the airport and in close proximity to key attractions of the city.



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QuadLabs launches on-cloud Travel CRM & Mid-Back-Office with Lifetime FREE Subscription!!

QuadLabs Technologies Pvt. Ltd. Launches “Konnect.travel” which is the world’s most affordable and most powerful on-cloud Travel CRM & Mid-Back-Office. Konnect.travel is an on-demand system for travel agents to manage their customer, bookings and financial ledgers. It’s a one-stop solution for all post sales management of bookings, business rules and automation of the business processes. Bookings from multiple sales channels can be managed at one place and processed till the final documentation & reconciliation with suppliers and customers.

Konnect.Travel has an inbuilt CRM (customer relationship management) for client management, inquiry management and supplier management. It offers booking management for managing booking queues, importing PNR, and all after-sales activities. It has a full-fledged financial system to automate accounting and reconciliations. Konnect.Travel & its features will be revealed during the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) to be held in Dubai from 9th May onwards. Travel Agencies can visit www.Konnect.Travel and register themselves for a lifetime Free subscription. QuadLabs is inviting all travel agencies globally to be a part of the change and maximize the use of technology in their operations.

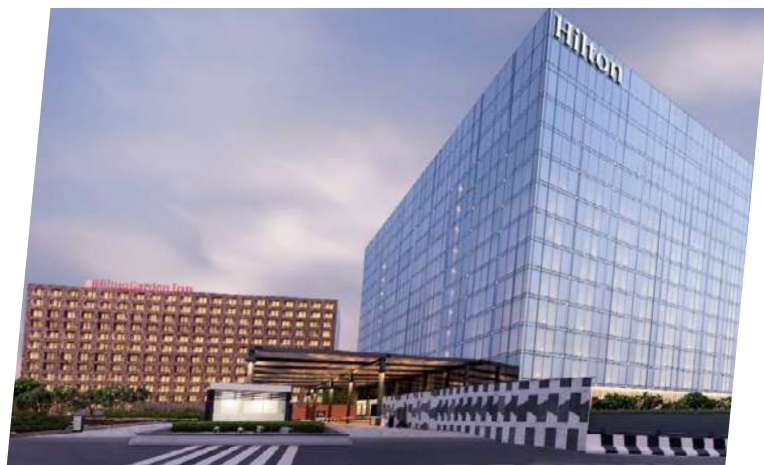


Pride Group of Hotels signs 'Pride Biznotel Aurangabad'

Pride Group of Hotels has announced the signing of 'Pride Biznotel Aurangabad'. Conveniently located adjacent to Aurangabad airport, the hotel is easily accessible to prominent tourist destinations Ajanta & Ellora Caves, Panchakki, and Bibi-ka-Maqbara, Daulatabad fort among others. Pride Biznotel brand is a moderately priced, upscale, full-service hotel that meets the discerning needs of a business, adventure and leisure traveller. Announcing the signing, Atul Upadhyay, Vice President, Pride Group of Hotels said, “We are extremely delighted to expand our footprints in Aurangabad, the tourism capital of Maharashtra.”



Hilton Hotel and Convention Centre debuts at Bengaluru’s largest hospitality complex



Hilton recently announced the opening of Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park and the Hilton Convention Centre at Embassy Manyata Business Park, Bengaluru. Hilton’s 266-key flagship-branded hotel and connecting conference facilities are part of the 619-key dual-branded hotel complex, which includes the 353-key Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park launched earlier this year. The three premises form the Hilton Hotels Embassy Manyata complex, owned by Embassy REIT and managed by Hilton. The Hilton Hotels Embassy Manyata is one of the largest hotel complexes in South India, and amongst the biggest in the country.



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Growing Inbound Tourism

*Let the World know that India is ready
to Welcome Tourists once again...*

Without going into details of what our travel fraternity had to bear in the last two years, it is best to state that the worst is over. While new variants, new vaccination and renewed protocols are in place, it is reassuring to see that travel has resumed – bet it for work or for pleasure. International borders have opened up and India along with its travel champions are ready to welcome the world and showcase its myriad hues. To understand the scenario better and to get an idea into where the tourism industry and its stakeholders stand today,

In our endeavour to better understand the mood of Inbound Travel in the current scenario, BOTT spoke to few industry leaders from the travel trade and trade associations and asked their opinion on **4 key issues** –

- Are they optimistic regarding the flow of inbound tourist traffic to India?
- How long, in their opinion, will it take for the inbound numbers to go back to what they were in the pre pandemic era?
- Any 2 initiatives that the Government needs to undertake, which will help boost inbound tourist numbers to India?
- The five top cities in India that get the maximum Inbound traffic and why?

-Here is what they each had to say –

COMPILED BY
PRIYANKA SAXENA RAY



MR. RAJIV MEHRA,
President,
Indian Association of Tour
Operators (IATO)

Yes, we are optimistic but the most important factor is that the airfares are still exorbitantly high thus making package formulations expensive. We have apprised the concerned authorities about the same. Besides the air fares, the hotel rates have also shot up at tourist destinations on account of Domestic rush and this also poses an obstacle. However, we are confident that these teething issues will subside and tourism in India will flourish with initiatives by the Government of India.

While queries for Inbound travel has started, I personally presume that the latter half of 2024 would provide the prospect to reach at a Pre-Pandemic level, 70% of the Pre Pandemic level by 2023, provided we do not face any further damaging Covid scare or any other such calamity.

While, popular inbound destinations in India vary from one source market to another, some common favourites includes Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Mumbai and Bengaluru.

What the Government can do?

- Government should ease the Visa Process and ensure there is no delay in Visa Processing time
- Free tourist visa deadline should be extended till March 2024 and there should not be limit of 5 lakh free tourists visa
- Tax on Aviation Turbine Fuel needs to be reduced and it should go under the ambit of GST
- The marketing and PR activity needs to augmented at a high pace
- We need to tell the world though our 7 Indiatourism offices overseas and 20 appointed missions abroad that India with over 187 Crore vaccinated, all SOPs in place and no quarantine seamless travel is ready to receive international traveller

The optimistic attitude shown by all major airlines from across the globe towards the Indian market itself is a testament to the potential and growth of inbound traffic to India. Majorly there are a few reasons, firstly because the Indian diaspora settled abroad, which has been a major contributor for many decades is looking forward to reconnecting, secondly, the tourism potential, which includes Ayush, Religious, Spiritual, MICE, Medical, etc. are a huge attraction and the most important is that India as a country is nearly fully vaccinated, giving confidence to the traveller.

As the President of the Travel Agents Association of India, I strongly believe that we will rebound back much quicker than anticipated. We are today aware of the virus, we are vaccinated & we are learning to live with it and most importantly we are frustrated being locked behind four walls. Humans are social animals and thus we expect business travellers, family and friends' reunions, tourism for niche, luxury, adventure, conferencing, all reviving sooner than later. Our country is right now the centre of attraction in terms of tourism and business both. The economy is reviving fast, GDP growth is doing fairly well, infrastructure is improving and the sentiments towards business are positive in India, which I believe are the deciding factors in terms of reaching the pre-pandemic era.



MS. JYOTI MAYAL,
President,
Travel Agents Association
of India (TAAI)

What the Government can do?

- Firstly uniform protocols and guidelines should be drafted, applied, and strongly implemented across the country along with effective marketing, which I am sure will be a game-changer for Indian tourism.
- Secondly, tourism should be included in the concurrent list of the constitution so that the sector may avail of attached benefits such as long-term loans on lower interest, working capital availability with minimum documentation, and much-sorted policymaking exclusively for tourism.



MR. PRONAB SARKAR,
Past President, Indian
Association of Tour
Operators (IATO)

There is no doubt that inbound tourist traffic shall increase with the increased number of International regular flights. The air fare should come down with the number of increased carrying capacity, as tourists cannot afford higher fare for tourism purposes. We presume that after the summer months, number of tourist's arrival shall improve and we expect good number of foreign tourist's arrival to our country.

The growth of inbound tourist numbers shall increase gradually, it will take a little longer to reach the pre pandemic era as at present the War in Ukraine is a major challenge. The present war is the concern point which has impacted the economy of many European and Asian countries. Therefore, I do not see a major come back soon but once the war is over it may be faster and hope the situation shall improve to return pre pandemic numbers 2 to 3 years if all economic situation comes back to normal and world political situation is conducive.

There are a few factors for the selection of picking up the tourist's destination. First of all the most known cities due to the World heritage and famous monuments, secondly, famous Scenic beauty and relaxed atmosphere, thirdly, best tourists facilities and accommodation with easy accessibility, fourthly, most focused destination due to Religious, cultural, social, rejuvenation and medical importance, fifthly, special attractions for entertainment and shopping. Post pandemic most people are looking for less crowded locations and more hygienic conditions for safe holidays.

What the Government can do?

- I can suggest most important initiative by the Government is to launch the International Marketing and Promotion, participation in International tourism exhibitions, organising road shows in source and emerging markets, electronic and social media campaign, invite foreign tour organisers/operators on familiarisation tour to India and let the world know that India is open for tourism. Also, expose that India is a safe country to travel
- Second initiative is to incentivise the tour operators for bringing in tourists from abroad under Champion Sector initiative. Both the initiative shall give a boost to help increase the inbound numbers.

We are indeed grateful to the Government of India for opening up the skies. Business queries are just beginning to flow in but the high awareness fare is a dampening factor. It makes our offering to our counterparts costlier and uncompetitive. High domestic demand has escalated the all-round costs at leisure destinations. The trade is optimistic after two years of ZERO Business and we shall overcome. Going forward, it will take a while for inbound numbers to go back to what they were in the pre pandemic era. I personally feel that it will be September 2024 by the time we reach the pre pandemic level.

In India, the cities for Buddhist Tourism, Heritage, Leisure, Adventure, MICE, Wellness – all have a different clientele and cater to good touristy traffic in various seasons. However, in general, Delhi Agra Jaipur – the Golden Triangle; the state of Kerala for leisure, Ayurveda, wellness and eco-tourism and Mumbai for MICE are busy destinations all through the year.

What the Government can do?

- The Government should facilitate Visa Processing. Delay is a concern
- The jump in international airfares is an issue. It has been due to the increase in energy prices globally on the back of supply concerns following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and post-Covid return in demand. All airlines have to operate at maximum strength with all aircraft engaged. Also, fuel prices have to decline for airfares to come down
- Reputation Management is the key and the Government has to take the lead role



MR. E. M. NAJEEB,
Sr. Vice President, Indian
Association of Tour
Operators (IATO)

With the commencement of commercial flights from March 27, the industry that was waiting patiently for this to happen is very much optimistic and all who are in the inbound business will be putting their whole energy into it to create a boom to the segment. That will give additional leverage to their business which they had lost years ago.

Bringing inbound traffic to the country is a time consuming process due to several factors. It will pick up gradually considering the prevailing infection rate both at country of origin and India. While no one can say precisely how long will it take for inbound tourism to get back to pre-pandemic era, but it will be a long wait of 4-5 years or maybe even earlier provided all is well and there is conducive climate to travel internationally.

In India, disembarking at Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, to visit places in and around as per the itinerary and destinations like Agra, Jaipur are mostly visited places by foreigners. Apart from usually visited destinations, states might have prepared fresher tourist friendly destinations which may not kick start immediately unless the states have already created market and has already been extensively publicised abroad.

We sincerely hope to get over from the sickness the industry had suffered for the last two years.



MR. P.P. KHANNA,
President, Association of
Domestic Tour Operators
of India (ADTOI)

What the Government can do?

- Government should think of rationalizing the GST on various services provided in the tourism industry which will bring down the cost of the trip to some extent and provide attraction to visit
- Visa relaxation is also on key area that will help in boosting Inbound tourism

Post COVID, there is a surging demand for India to visit as an exotic destination. India as a destination is unparalleled and has always retained the impression in the global traveller of being a mystical, vibrant and super diverse destination. I am very optimistic and already we are seeing inbound groups slowly starting to trickle in. I expect the resilient source markets of the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and Germany to kick-start the trend.

Arrivals in January, 2022 were at 200,000+ with a positive growth rate of 140.0% as compared to January, 2021. And the 5 source countries that contributed towards the arrivals were USA (27.76%), UK (10.03%), Canada (6.97%), Australia (6.44%), Sri Lanka (4.64%). Historically India inbound arrival figures hover around 10 million travellers per annum and post COVID with the surge in demand, there are guesstimates that the figures will cross 25 million travellers by 2030 itself. I think by October 2023, we should be able to reach the same levels as pre pandemic.

Repeated consistent efforts by few states in India have made them a global home brand and I personally feel that while the vanilla flavours will still draw the most tourists, there will be a surge in few new cities that will come up prominently on tourism map. There will include – Udaipur, Jaipur, Khajuraho, Goa, Kerala, Pondicherry, Varanasi, Rishikesh and Ladakh.

What the Government can do?

We appreciate the initiatives by the government for the foreign tourists, by graciously coming out with 5,00,000 free visas, reinstating the long term visas and The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has revealed plans to promote unknown tourist spots and lesser-known facets of popular tourist destinations in the country. What more can help –

- A uniform policy engaging with all States common travel restrictions to boost inbound travel while following Covid-related protocols could be a good idea. This would be part of a new national Tourism Policy focusing on promoting sustainable and responsible travel.
- Accordingly, conducting massive vaccination drives in tourist hotspots throughout the country, where travel and hospitality staffers are being treated as frontline workers will be well appreciated instilling confidence in the travel industry and the source markets.



MR. TEJBIR SINGH ANAND.
Past President,
ATOAI



MR. AJAY PRAKASH,
President,
Travel Agents Federation
of India (TAFI)

The enquiries for inbound travel have already started coming in and while we might not reach pre-Covid numbers in the upcoming season, the signs are very positive and we are looking forward to a revival of inbound tourists. What is a deterrent, however, are the exceptionally high airfares. Hopefully fares will be rationalised as airlines augment capacity to pre-pandemic levels.

Going forward, I expect we will not only achieve but also surpass the pre pandemic numbers in the 2023-24 incoming season.

While cities will always attract large numbers, the very nature of tourism has undergone a transformation and there is no doubt that the travellers have changed, too. Mass tourism will slowly see a decline as travellers look for more personalised and meaningful unique experiences. India has so much to offer beyond the cities and we should make a conscious effort to disperse tourists into the lesser known but incredibly beautiful destinations. This will not only provide a whole new set of experiences but will also lead to a more wide based and equitable distribution of tourism related revenues.

What the Government can do?

- Continue the free visa scheme and extend it at least until 2023-24
- Rethink, Revitalise and Re-engineer overseas publicity campaigns

The signs are all there and it is indeed time for Incredible India to become more Incredible and let the world know that India is ready to welcome tourists for business and pleasure both. Given the size of our country, there is no doubt that only repeat travellers would be able to explore India over multiple trips. Therefore, tour operators who are promoting inbound tourism needs to ensure that every trip must be made eventful and full of warmth showcasing the true essence of Atithi Devo Bhava, from the time one lands in India engaging services of a porter at the airport to the car driver, every accommodation that one stays, every restaurant or hotel, sightseeing locations, guides, economic interactions, banks, all modes of transportation, visiting sites and locations of sightseeing and activities etc.

Indian tourism has globally unique cultural phenomena. Between all states collaboratively and centre we must ensure that Indian MICE has the unique advantage of being bundled with the natural and cultural assets of India.

In the global international congress associations rankings our goal will be to take India's rank to the top 10 in the world from 28 where we were pre Covid. We will also request central and state governments to aim to benchmark the MICE infrastructure of our Indian cities to the top global mice cities. Pre Covid, we had 1 city in the top 100 rank. Our goal must be to be having 3 Indian cities in the top 100 in the medium term post Covid and 6 – 10 cities in top 100 in the medium to long term.

What the Government can do?

- MICE India Brand - a sub-brand to the main brand Incredible India needs to be aggressively marketed worldwide
- To target global congress, conventions and conferences, and social events we need to create a global MICE bidding fund with a corpus for ₹500 crores to enable our entrepreneurs undertake techno economic bids for events which have a bid cycle of 2 years plus
- We need to create city convention bureaus in each of our main cities
- Industry Status should be given to MICE Infrastructure by states
- Institutional Support should be extended by the government for the MICE Events



MR. AMARESH TIWARI,
Vice Chairman, India
Convention Promotion
Bureau (ICPB)

For past 2 years, inbound trade players were waiting eagerly for easing out Covid conditions and opening up of skies, borders and simplified travel requirements. And we were delighted to hear the announcement for allowing international commercial flights from March 27, 2022 onwards, this gave us much needed boost to restart our businesses. Optimism grow when we see the possibilities and In my opinion this was the major road block after resuming e-tourist visa for India and we saw enquiries pouring in from all over the world. Although Russian-Ukraine conflict is confusing tourist to plan freely to book their holidays to India but I hope as we move forward we will see some enthusiasm for international travel. In any case I don't see any major growth in inbound traffic to India before 3rd quarter of 2023 and we hope to see the levels of pre pandemic era only in 2024, if we don't face any new challenge at world level.

Off lately we have observed that foreign tourists are requesting trip with lesser travel and looking for less crowded places. But I think that major tourist cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Agra and Jaipur will still have the major share of tourists as usual because of its importance either the entry points or for places of historical importance but I think tourists now will prefer to stay at smaller places or boutique hotels rather than the bigger ones. Secondly, think now our states has to refresh their product ranges and promote lesser known places along with their most sought-after destinations.

MR. RAVI GOSAIN,
Vice President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO)



Certainly, India Inbound is the most underrated tourism market and with the global economic crisis post pandemic, the travellers seek their money's worth to travel to India. Being a diverse nation for tourism from beaches to hill stations, from rivers to snow peaks, from adventure to pilgrimage and with the history/culture that beholds in the lap of our country, India Inbound will boom for atleast next 5 years.

In my understanding by the mid of 2023 Indian Inbound number will increase by over 25-30% to the pre-pandemic era. Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Agra and Kerala (state as a whole) get the maximum inbound traffic presently, since they are on the global map.

Mumbai being the financial capital, Delhi the Country's capital, Jaipur has showcased Royalty of India, Agra with its Taj Mahal, being the most visited monument and Kerala, since it has been marketed as "Gods Own Country" over decades to the overseas market.

Post pandemic, tourists want to certainly look at less crowded locations but also want to explore the unexplored and less visited locations which showcase the real India, its culture, heritage as well as natural beauty. States should come out with tourism circuits be it Instagramable itineraries, Stop as you go itineraries, more road travel and enhancement of highway accommodations. Promotions on local cuisine, music, dance, heritage, handicrafts, cleanliness and sanitation facilities, etc. must be focused primarily.

MR. JAY BHATIA.
Vice President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)



I am definitely very optimistic regarding Inbound Tourism picking up as everywhere you turn, there's positive news regarding travelling and other verticals of travel industry. We are moving ahead on the recovery path for sure. Even as some news may cause worry for some and COVID-19 continues to impact travel rules, new research and reports showcase the rise in traveller's confidence. There is no doubt that we are still a long way from being normal and the full recovery is going to take time. However, it's encouraging to see the growing optimism that surrounds tourism right now. I would say that within the next two years we would be doing better than earlier times if no more virus variants are seen. India is a country bussing with touristy offerings – a great country with huge potential of tourism overall. I think the less crowded places are no more the criteria as corona is about to disappear hopefully. However, the states in India definitely need to reinvent themselves and engage more with Inbound Operators to take their opinion for attracting more inbound tourism into India.

DR. NAVEEN MANCHANDA.
President, Indian Association of Travel and Tourism Experts (IATTE)



Explore the Unexplored in India



India is an exquisite destination brimming with touristic pleasures and Covid gave a unique opportunity to the millennials to explore what their own country had to offer. Moving away from the buzzing city life, there are plenty of beautiful and captivating destinations in India, which act as perfect getaway. Thus, keeping this young travelling population in mind, we have featured unique destinations from across the country ranging from unexplored national parks to exotic beach destinations to scenic hill locations, weekend getaways and much more.

BHIMBETKA, MADHYA PRADESH

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

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

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

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

BRIHADEESWARAR TEMPLE, THANJAVUR, TAMIL NADU

One of the oldest temples in the Group of Chola Temples, the Brihadeeswarar Temple was built in the year 1010 AD – 10 centuries back and is dedicated to Lord Shiva as Nataraja – the King of cosmic dance. While the main temple stands the way it was built, several additions have been made to the complex over the years, which have only added to the beauty and grace of this monolithic structure that is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Over the years, series of wars between the Muslim invaders and the Hindu rulers caused great damage to temple. However, the Hindu dynasties that ruled the land after this phase repaired the temple and added several shrines to the main temple. The significant shrines of Kartikeya (Murugan), Parvati (Amman) and Nandi are from the 16th and 17th century, during the rule of Nayaka era. The Dakshinamurti shrine was added much later.

In their attempt to cover-up the damage, the succeeding rulers did paintings on the walls, which today are a great example of the Chola Paintings on the walls of massive colonnaded prakara, corridor (circumambulatory pathway) around Brihadeeswarar Temple. Another unique things about this temple is that here the gopurams (the gates) are smaller than the main Vimana (temple tower), which is not the case in most of the temples in South India.

The entire Brihadeeswarar Temple is made of granite, which is also a noteworthy thing as in those times, there was no granite-cutting quarry or even sources to get the stone around Thanjavur –atleast not up till 50 km. Just imagine how the task of sourcing the granite from afar and carrying it to the temple site would have been carried out almost 10 centuries back! Thus, this temple must be visited to not just say a prayer but also experience and witness its grandeur and poise.





DALMA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, JHARKHAND

The state of Jharkhand has much to offer in a variety of segments, including the travel and tourism contributions, which can be found in abundance in the region. A popular one amongst them is the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, which is best known for forest tourism and wild elephants – both of which can be found in abundance in the state. Lying in the catchment area of Subarnarekha River and adjoining Purulia District of West Bengal, this wildlife sanctuary is spread over an area of 193.22 sq km.

The forests here at the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary comprises mostly Dry Mixed Deciduous with few Dry Peninsular Sal, the main tree species being Terminalias, Jamun, Dhaura, Kendu, Karam etc. The sanctuary is very much favoured by the Elephants primarily because of availability of water, even during summer. 'Dalma Haathi' or the 'Elephants of Dalma' is a known and quite fearful term in the Jamshedpur-Puruliya region. Other animals in addition to elephants include Leopard, Barking Deer, Mouse Deer, Sloth Bear, Monkey, Giant Squirrel are abundant here.

Established in 1975 and inaugurated by Sanjay Gandhi, the Dalma forest is home to a horde of animals, birds and tree species as well. Overlooking the shimmering Subarnarekha River, the Dalma hills nestle the dense green forests like an offspring. This ambience of the forest and the odd chance of having a glimpse at the wild animals is what makes Dalma so special among those who love to travel around jungles.

For those who wish to experience adventure in its most natural habitat can either take a drive through this Sanctuary or better still can spend a night at the various rest houses and bamboo huts accommodation offered by the Forest Department. Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary offers excellent bird watching experience, exciting in-jungle lodging and spectacular view from atop the Dalma peak which also has a couple of temples you can visit.

GOKARNA, KARNATAKA

If a quaint beach holiday is what you are looking for, away from the bustling crowds and cacophony of city populous, Gokarna – the ancient temple town located in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka is the ideal destination for you. Often rated as the favourite beach destination by many enthused travellers, the peaceful town of Gokarna, which means ‘Cow’s Ear in Sanskrit, is a perfect hideaway, nestled at a safe distance from the maddening city.

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

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

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





HEMIS, JAMMU & KASHMIR

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

Hemis is popular tourist attraction given the number of options that it provides to its visitors. The primary attraction to the region is the Hemis Gompa, which is located 40 km south-east of Leh on the west bank of the Indus River. The Monastery, situated on top of a green hill is surrounded by breathtaking mountains, offering a captivating view with its beauty and serenity. The Hemis monastery was built in 1630 and it belongs to the red sect, Brokpa.

One can also visit the Hemis National Park, which is popularly known as the Snow Leopard capital of India and is home to a variety of other animals such as langurs, wolves, marmots, deers, red foxes etc. The park, in fact, has been identified as a Snow Leopard reserve under a project launched by the Central Government aimed at conserving the species, its prey base and its fragile mountainous home.

Another attraction to the region is its annual festival, which is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava. The festival is held for two days in the months of June-July, enlivening the courtyard of the monastery. The festival of dances, where good triumphs over evil in a colourful pageant, is also the annual 'bazaar' where Ladakhis from remote areas buy and sell wares. Besides its other attractions, Hemis is also popular for activities such as trekking, where one can make the most of the royal, widespread and pristine scenic surroundings.

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Indulge in a world of entertainment with fun activities in Sharjah

Sharjah, the third largest emirate in the UAE, has a well-deserved reputation for being one of the most family-friendly tourist destinations in the region with something exciting for kids and adults alike to discover around every corner. Attractions like Al Montazah, one of the most popular water parks, is a perfect place to enjoy Sharjah weather. There are plenty of indoor attractions for families as well, with museums and nearly every Sharjah mall having a dedicated children's area. Here is our roundup of some of the best activities to indulge in with the entire family in Sharjah.

BOTT DESK

Join in the Outdoor Fun in Sharjah

Sharjah Safari Experience real adventure in the largest safari in the world outside Africa, and enjoy an adventure that takes you to the jungles, here in Sharjah. A rare opportunity for tourists and visitors to observe the endemic wildlife in Africa, native African faunae roam without fences, in an environment similar to their natural habitat. Sharjah Safari is host to more than 120 species of animals, which live in Africa and upto 50,000 animals, ranging from birds, reptiles and mammals; such as lions, elephants, giraffes, black and white rhinoceros, crocodiles, deer, bulls and many other endangered animals.



Al Montazah

A combination of Water Park and amusement park that offers hours of fun for all members of the family, Sharjah's iconic Al Montazah is the venue for a fantastic family day out. It offers go-kart racing, sports facilities, an amusement arcade and an adventure playground as well as exciting water rides and slides and a children's splash park. The surrounding green space provides the perfect parkland for a picnic with views out over Khalid Lagoon, or try out one of the onsite cafes and restaurants.



Al Qasba

Among the most popular places to visit in Sharjah at night, Al Qasba is the complete experience for anyone looking to tour on foot. With pedestrian bridges and a canal-side complex, this destination is sure to inspire fun for everyone.

As a centre for arts, the venue features exhibitions and events at the Maraya Art Centre and the Masrah Al Qasba Theatre. During the holidays, the district is especially abuzz with families and travellers coming to witness special performances at one of the busiest Sharjah tourist places. Parents often pick Al Qasba to unwind at a cafe while their children enjoy the musical fountain, frolic at the kids' fun zone and indoor soft play centre, or choose from the many summer activities for kids. There are also routine abra rides, electric water karts and bikes for hire. Overall, Al Qasba is the ultimate destination for group and family activities in Sharjah.



Al Majaz Waterfront

As the ultimate destination for family attractions in Sharjah, this waterside destination features mini golf, a splash park, a mini-train and several attractions made for children. In addition to being one of the popular places to go with the family, there are activities here for all types of travellers. Al Majaz Waterfront is the perfect place for dinner with a host of restaurants to choose from and dhow cruise boats sailing by.



Perfect 'edutainment' destination

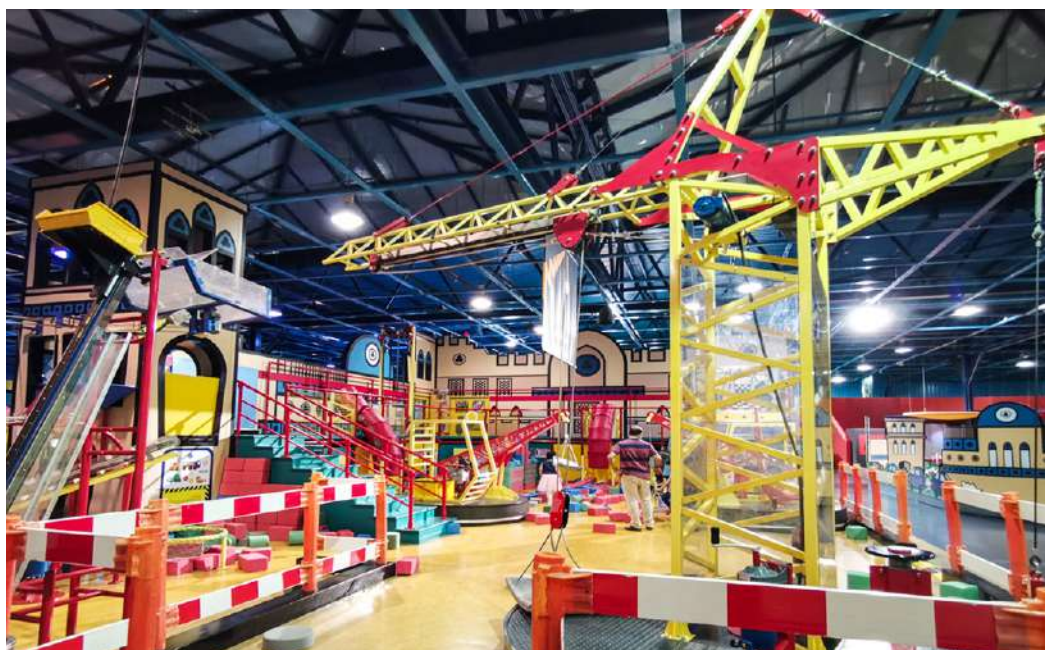
Al Noor Island

On the northern shores of Khalid Lagoon is Al Noor Island – a beautifully landscaped garden that is home to more than 85 plant species and dotted with modern sculptures. The island's centrepiece is the Butterfly House, where you can see over 500 exotic butterflies from all over the world. There is also a playground for the kids and the Literature Pavilion, which offers a tranquil, cosy setting to relax or read. At night, brilliantly coloured light installations provide a completely different view of the island. Visit the Butterfly House in the morning to catch a glimpse of new butterflies emerging from their cocoons.



Sharjah Discovery Centre

Sharjah Discovery Centre offers a great family day out and children of all ages, including toddlers, can explore the many themed areas and experiment and interact with exhibits modelled on daily life. Scenarios such as a supermarket, airport and TV studio enable the youngsters to discover the world around them while teaching them about the biological, physical and technological worlds in a practical way. Other activities include water games, storytelling and a climbing wall. One of the most popular museums in the region, Sharjah Science Museum's more than 50 interactive exhibits and demonstrations encompass subjects as diverse as aerodynamics, cryogenics, electricity and colour – and all in a fun, informative way. There is also a planetarium and children's area where kids under five and their parents can learn together and perform scientific experiments.



Sharjah Classic Cars Museum

This collection of more than 100 classic cars includes many models from Sharjah's ruler, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi's personal collection. The vintage vehicles date back to at least 1979, with highlights including a 1915 Dodge. Exhibiting rare models, luxury brands and military machines, the museum is categorised according to major historical developments in the automotive industry and includes interactive experiments and educational experiences for visitors of all ages.



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.



Know what your stars say about 2022



ARIES (March 21 – April 20)

Your hard work will pay dividends. If looking for job change or own venture, this is the time. Your investment decision will be good. You may offer support to needy. Take care of yourself and spend quality time with family.



Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

Take out time for yourself and pamper yourself. Good time to switch a job if you are looking at one. Choose it intelligently. Strengthening of relationship with loved ones is on cards.



Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

Be optimistic in this phase. Take a break and do your research, as you have to work hard to make things happen. Mind and heart are at conflict. Learn to control the emotions. Right time for a marital alliance.



Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

You will enjoy, good health and vitality. New job/promotion/project is expected. Travel overseas for business expansion is expected. Be cautious with your decisions and spend quality time with family.



Leo (July 23 – August 21)

Recovery from illness, if any, will be quick. Travelling is on cards. You will be rewarded for your hard work. Financially rewarding time. A major change is coming your way for the good. Enjoy your time with family. Meeting with life partner is expected.



Virgo (August 22 – September 23)

A professionally satisfying time. Good time to invest. Taking stress will adversely affect your health. Support from senior or colleagues will come your way. Challenging, busy and hectic schedules. Keep calm and hold back yourself in your relationship.



Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Follow a healthy routine. Include Yoga & walk in your regime. Travel for work is expected. New venture is imminent but be cautious and avoid risky investments. Think positively and identify the right opportunity for yourself. Appreciate and give time to your partner.



Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

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.



Sagittarius (November 23 – December 22)

Positive change will happen in your health profile. New job/promotion/new business is expected. Time to invest, but after a research. Celebration time and spending quality time with family is expected.



Capricorn (December 23 – January 20)

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.



Aquarius (January 21 – February 19)

Don't be lethargic. Be positive. Take your lessons from past mistake and take your stand. Success is very near. Communication is the key. Spend time with your partner.



Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

Avoid stress and take care of your health. Be positive. Your talent and ambition will make you stand high in status and career. Time for new ideas, beginnings and proposals. Make smart investments. Good news expected from legal matters. Singles may meet their future partners.

India will soon introduce a special Ayush visa category: PM Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Global Ayush Investment & Innovation Summit 2022 at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The three-day Ayush Global Summit witnessed dialogue with entrepreneurs, industry, start-ups and other stakeholders to encourage them to increase investment for innovation in Ayush as the sector continues to showcase colossal room for growth.



BOTT DESK

The inaugural session for the Global Ayush Investment & Innovation Summit 2022 witnessed the presence of the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Shri Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Union Minister for AYUSH Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Bhupendra Patel, Dr. Munjpara Mahendra Kalubhai, Minister of State and ambassadors, foreign dignitaries, investors, industry experts and other important stakeholders.

In his inaugural speech Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi said, “We are already witnessing unprecedented growth in the production of Ayush medicines, supplements and cosmetics. In 2014, where the Ayush sector was less than \$3 billion, today it has increased to more than \$18 billion. An unprecedented efforts has been made in the past years to promote the export of Ayush products.”

Many new initiatives in Ayush sector was announced by the Prime Minister, first being a special Ayush mark for Ayush products. This will give people all over the world the confidence of quality Ayush products. Government will develop a network of Ayush parks to encourage the promotion, research and manufacturing of Ayush products across the country. A new category named ‘Ayush Aahar’ was announced which will greatly facilitate the producers of herbal nutritional supplements.

Further, another major initiative for foreign nationals who want to

come to India to take advantage of Ayush therapy was announced. India will soon introduce a special Ayush visa category. Describing the current age, the era of unicorns, the Prime Minister informed that in the year 2022 itself, so far 14 start-ups from India have joined the Unicorn Club. “I am sure unicorns will emerge from our Ayush start-ups very soon”, he stated.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced the launch of Ayush Export Promotion Council and four Ayush ICT initiatives which includes Ayush Information Hub, AyuSoft, Ayush Next and Ayush GIS. Prime Minister also released a comic book named ‘Professor Ayushman’, which describes how Ayush systems and products helped in fighting not only COVID-19 but other diseases also.

On this occasion, the Prime Minister distributed awards to the winners of ‘Ayush Start-up Challenge’ organised by All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) in association with Start-up India. The inaugural session also included signing of 5 Memorandum of Understanding among global institutions and governments. Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth (RAV) MoU with Argentina, Tripartite MoU between All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) and Brazil on the establishment of academic collaboration in Ayurveda. MoU between All Indian Institute of Ayurveda and University Health Network, Toronto (UHN), Canada, MoU for the establishment of the Ayurveda Chair at Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL), Mexico and MoU between NIA, Jaipur and Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC) on cooperation in the field of Ayurveda and other Traditional System of medicine.



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