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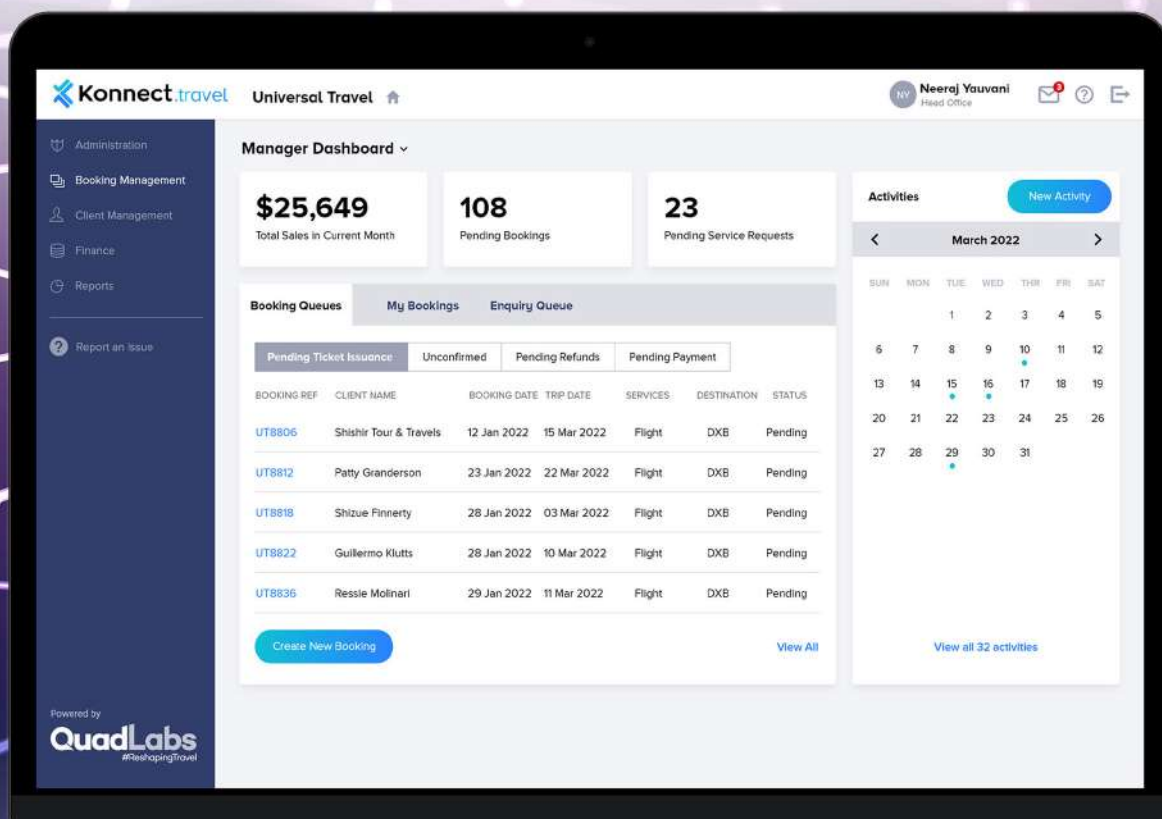
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From The Editor's *Desk*

Indians ready to Travel



Dear Readers,

Just as the smell of a freshly printed book or a dry patch of land 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. From 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 once again physically attended the ATM 2022, it has indeed been an extremely challenging two years, which one would not like to think about.

The recently concluded ATM in Dubai was a refreshing and promising trip. The BOTT ATM Special Issue, which carried with it 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 was well received by one and all. The Incredible India Pavilion at ATM along with booths of various states and private stakeholders witnessed great footfalls and there was undoubtedly a promising buzz in the air of travel resuming 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 it is 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 Indians today stand 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 look forward to meeting you at SATTE and we hope you will enjoy reading our Special Issue that highlights the new trends in travel.

Do share your feedback, praise, observations, suggestions and criticism with us at priyanka@bottindia.com

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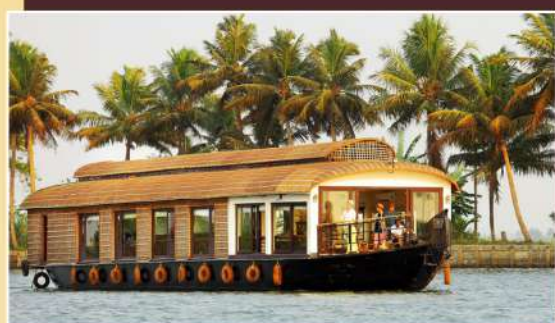
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QuadLabs launches on-cloud Travel CRM & Mid-Back-Office with Lifetime FREE Subscription!!

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 and 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 and its features were recently revealed at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM), which was held in Dubai from May 9 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."

WelcomHeritage Tadoba Vanya Villas Resort & Spa ranked amongst top 25 hotels in India

Clinching a spot in TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice 2022 Top 25 Hotels in India amongst a vast array of boutique hotels and resorts is WelcomHeritage Tadoba Vanya Villas Resort & Spa located near Nagpur, Maharashtra. Based on exceptional traveller reviews for the resort's exquisite property, outstanding dining experiences, personalized hospitality, and experience offerings, TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice is a prestigious recognition that reflects high standards of hospitality and guest experiences. Abinash Manghani, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels reiterates, "In the wonderful landscape of fabulous hotels in the country, to stand among the Top 20 hotels is a validation and an encouragement to WelcomHeritage's ongoing commitment to excellence and best practices. The WelcomHeritage Tadoba Vanya Villas Resort & Spa team is delighted and grateful to our guests for this overwhelmingly positive response."



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HKTB announces revival plan to showcase Hong Kong with new perspectives

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) held its annual Tourism Update event online on (6 May) and announced a revival plan that highlights Hong Kong's vibrant developments and new experiences, aiming to generate a positive ambience and make the city top-of-mind destination for worldwide travellers when travel resumes. With the theme 'Together Towards New Horizons', Tourism Update 2022 attracted 3,200 trade representatives from travel agencies, attractions, hotels, airlines, retailers, restaurants, and meeting and exhibition organisers from Hong Kong, Mainland China, and overseas markets. The HKTB shared insights into the latest tourism trends and its work plan for the coming year. In his opening remarks, HKTB Chairman Dr. Y K Pang highlighted Hong Kong's return to normality. "The fifth wave of the pandemic is subsiding," he said. "Hong Kong's daily life and economic activities are now gradually returning to normal, allowing us to stage large-scale events and prepare to welcome back visitors."



Lily Hotels hosts product update and networking lunch in Chandigarh

Lily Hotels Pvt. Ltd. in association with LINKIN Reps. Pvt. Ltd., recently hosted an exclusive lunch for the travel trade partners in Chandigarh. The resorts operated by Lily Hotels in the Maldives are the pioneering leading All-Inclusive Resort, located in the central Maldives - Lily Beach Resort & Spa at Huvahendhoo, a large island hideaway resort located in northern Maldives with privacy at its core - Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa, and its collection of elevated and curated luxury beach villas with dedicated butler service as a 'resort in a resort concept' - The Signature Collection by Hideaway. The networking event was followed by the product presentation, by Ms. Komal Seth, Founder & Director, LINKIN Reps. The presentation highlighted the key features of luxurious properties. The response of the session was extremely encouraging, and it was heart-warming to witness the enthusiasm for Lily Hotels' products among the Chandigarh trade partners.



Emirates signs Memorandum with South African Tourism to boost visitor arrivals



Emirates and the South African Tourism have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly promote tourism and boost visitor arrivals and inbound traffic to South Africa from key markets across the Emirates network.

The MoU was signed on the side-lines of Arabian Travel Market by Badr Abbas, Emirates' Senior Vice President Commercial Operations for Africa, and The South Africa Tourism's Acting CEO Mr. Themba Khumalo. Also present at the signing ceremony was Adnan Kazim, Emirates Chief Commercial Officer, Minister of Tourism in South Africa, Lindiwe Sisulu and a senior government delegation from the South African Consulate in Dubai, His Excellency Consul General David Magabe and members of the South African Tourism Board.



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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**



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 PRASHAD 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.

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,
Shri G. Kishan Reddy



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.

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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, Shri 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. Kangnidhar, 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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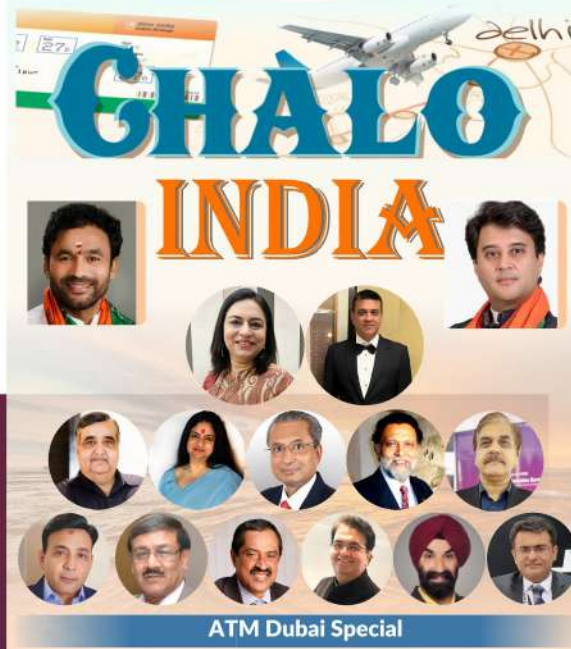
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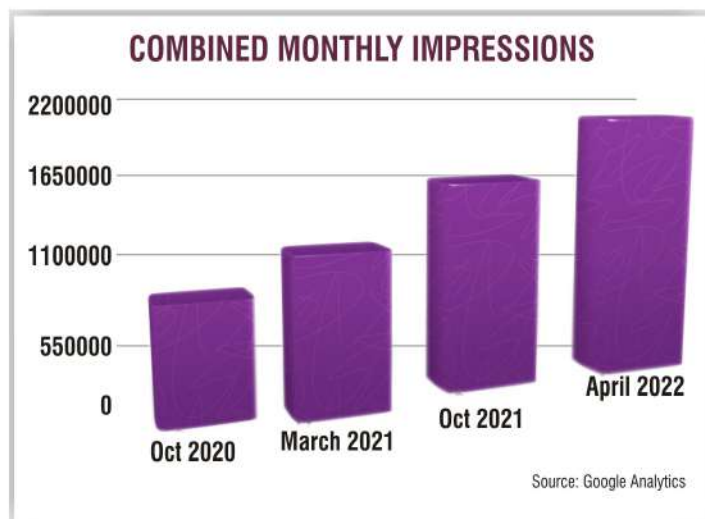
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Rupinder Brar: 'India is ready to welcome you all-Chalo! India'

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 ready to find a solution to your problem. Read on for excerpts from her latest chat with BOTT –

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Incredible India at ATM 2022

The Ministry of Tourism participated at the recently concluded Arabian Travel Mart in Dubai. The pavilion was dotted with many creatives and kept playing video 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 Airbnb units that have come about in the last couple of years. It's an exciting time to be in India is a message that declared loud and clear at ATM this year. The Press Conference at the ATM this year was also a great success.

New Promotional Campaign by MoT

Yes a new promotional campaign will be launched very soon. We are just waiting for some final touches. 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 DMOSs 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 happen soon.

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.



Shinshiva Ayurvedashram

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Dr. V. Franklin A Man With A Vision

Dr V. Franklin, Founder of Shinshiva, hails from a family with a 40-year old tradition in ayurvedic treatment aside from this hereditary background, Dr Franklin is an academically qualified physician, holding a bachelor's degree from the University of Kerala and Post Graduate Diploma in Physical Medicine rehabilitation from the Bombay University.

Dr. Shanthi Franklin

Director and Chief Physician Shinshiva Ayurvedashram, A proud legacy of an Ayurvedic family who holds a degree in Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery from University Kerala, A committed practitioner and researcher in the Ayurvedic system of medicine Having well experienced in the treatments of De-addiction, Stress management, Infertility, Gynecological problems, Diabetes, Arthritis, Cancer Management, Psoriasis etc.

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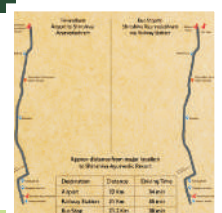
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'Travel and Hospitality Industry is stronger and better prepared to fight for a brighter future': **Ankush Nijhawan**

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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TRAVEL SIMPLIFIED



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 of Covid only but 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!



Madhya Pradesh has everything that a traveller seeks – Adventure, Wildlife, Heritage & MICE

Participating at the recently concluded ATM in Dubai, the Tiger state of India – Madhya Pradesh was one booth that was buzzing with energy and activity.

Determined to win its inbound traffic back in the post Covid era, the destination gained few notches in the last few years in terms of MICE infrastructure and eco-friendly destinations. **Shri**

Sheo Shekhar Shukla,
Principal Secretary,
Tourism & Managing
Director, Madhya Pradesh
Tourism Board, shares
more information about
the destination and its
roadmap to future in an
exclusive chat with BOTT.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

Surviving the Covid

In the last two years, contrary to our expectations, our tourist inflow did not stop. Once the lockdowns were opened in all the three phases there was whole flow of events, tourism. There was a lot of pent up demand for tourism and we had the best ever business done last year. Best ever. What also helped us was the fact that Madhya Pradesh was one of the first states to have completed the first two rounds of vaccination and now we are actively giving booster doses. We also followed liberal policies when it came to people traveling towards the state and apart from some advisories we never had very tough restrictions in place.

Additionally, we also in the meantime, during the Covid period, thought how our travel is going to change course. We could anticipate that Covid has definitely moved the entire tourism and hospitality industry to a slightly different direction and we that post Covid, people will be on a lookout to explore new destinations – undiscovered and less crowded and Madhya Pradesh has plenty of options for both. From kids to grownups to elderly, everybody has something to enjoy in Madhya Pradesh. Secondly, we realised soon enough that short distance journeys are going to be very common and road itineraries are going to be very important and thus, neighbouring states are going to be very important. So we focused our energy on that. Thirdly, post Covid, people wanted to be close to nature – to anything that takes them back to their roots and makes them reflect as well as gives them that entertainment which a traveller looks for while vacationing.

Initiatives underway

We anticipated these trends and worked towards it. In a conscious manner, we promoted rural homestays and triggered the momentum of responsible tourism. We took up a mission in our state towards responsible mission and collaborated with Kerala, which has prior experience in this field.

Another project that we took up is regarding safe travel for women. It is one of its kind project in the country where we have collaborated with Government of India – Ministry of Women and Child Welfare Tourism Ministry and got it funded. We are working on making 50 destinations in the state women friendly through various mechanisms – be it solo women or women travelling in group. We will also skill more than 20,000 women across various sectors of hospitality and so that the presence of women in tourism sector increases and give women traveller more security while travelling through the state.

Growth of MICE

There is a lot that Madhya Pradesh is doing in terms of growth of MICE, especially with the renovation of Minto Hall and opening of the new Convention Centre in Khajuraho. We are promoting Madhya Pradesh as a great destination for MICE because when people go for MICE activities they also love to explore the place. We have a number of good hotels dotted around the state and if we couple that with our wildlife offerings, the attraction is too great. Madhya Pradesh is the perfect hub for adventure, MICE, nature, heritage and a destination that can be visited all year round. Our wildlife treasures and UNESCO heritage sites together make MP an ideal tourist destination.





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Karnataka Tourism encouraging tourists to experience Wellness, Adventure, Heritage, Wildlife & MICE Tourism

Karnataka is a tourist friendly state where people come from all over to visit to bask in its beauty and enjoy its wonders. Participating at the recently concluded

ATM in Dubai,

Shri H T Ratnakar,
Adviser – Tourism and Hospitality, Karnataka
and

Shri Janardhana H.P., Joint Director (P&P), Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka, shared insights into all that the state has been doing for tourism in the last one year and its plans for the future.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

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 state has incentivised tourism and travel through various initiatives and newly implemented policies. “We have given 50% rebate in property tax to all hotels, restaurants, resorts and amusement parks as we understood they were going through a tough time. The government of Karnataka had also implemented deferment of Excise Fee from June – December 2021. Industry status has been granted to the hotels so that they are eligible for the benefits and a fixed amount of Rs. 5000 was given to each tourist guide in the state so as to sustain during the challenging Covid time. Even the road tax was exempted for three months – April, May and June 2021. All these initiatives were taken to help the tourism industry stay afloat during a very challenging 2021.

The state tourism board is encouraging people to travel within the state and it's proud to note that 90% of its citizens are now vaccinated. Heritage and Wildlife is the USP of the state and MICE is also now picking up. “We are motivating people through our tagline – Script your own Adventure and through this we are highlighting the various adventure sites in Karnataka. In

addition to this, we are also promoting Caravan Tourism, Wellness and Yoga Tourism and are strongly positioning Bengaluru as a prominent MICE destination,” he added.

Meanwhile, 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.

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.

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Uttarakhand welcomes all with open arms



Uttarakhand has been attracting an average of 35 million visitors each year. And, by 2030 we plan to increase it to 70 million visitors every season says **Shri Dilip Jawalkar, Secretary, Tourism & CEO, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board**



Tête-à-Tête with Shri Satpal Maharaj, Cabinet Minister of Tourism, PWD and Panchayati Raj, Government Of Uttarakhand

We have taken a lot of initiatives for sustainable development in Uttarakhand and have introduced it in the Panchayati Raj system to tourism activities. Our Char Dham Yatra is receiving tremendous response this year and may break all records. About 5 lakhs people have already registered but we are keeping a close watch on the numbers so that it is within the permissible limit.

We want to diversify and present an array of options for our tourists. We have developed Shaiv Circuit, Vaishnav Circuit, Navgraha Circuit, Panch Kedar Circuit, Panch Badri Circuit among others. We have just announced a new circuit, Nath Circuit, which will be dedicated to Guru Shri Gorakshnath who spent a few years in Uttarakhand meditating in different caves located in the state. We will link it to Gorakshnath Math of Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, the peeth of Shri Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. This is going to be a big attraction.

In addition, we are also building all weather roads so that the accessibility increases throughout the year. We are increasing our train network and most importantly, we are working on building a world class international airport at Haridwar. We have initiated schemes to encourage reverse migration, to welcome local people back to the state by offering job opportunities.



Rai Umraopati 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?

Certainly after a decline in Covid 19, we are expecting a record increase in footfall. Already more than seven lakh fifty-thousand pilgrims have registered themselves for the Char Dham Yatra that has just commenced on May 3, 2022.

A control room has also been set up in Dehradun which is providing all relevant information to the pilgrims. Toll free and helpline numbers have also been released for the purpose. The control rooms are providing pilgrims and tourists all relevant information regarding Char Dham Yatra whether it is registration, weather, routes and others. More than four hundred calls are being received by the control room on a daily basis. Many manning the control room are also well versed in other languages so that queries coming from South and other linguistics states get properly addressed.

Will this figure change in the coming times and shift more towards inbound traffic from domestic? What is more important to you – Inbound tourists or Domestic travelers?

For us both Domestic and Inbound tourists are important. Of course, a majority of tourists that come to Uttarakhand are domestic and that is certainly due to the attraction of Char Dham pilgrimage attached to the state. But the foreign

tourists too come to Uttarakhand for leisure and wellness tourism. The pristine environs of the hill predominant Uttarakhand do attract foreign tourists. We have places like Valley of flowers, Corbett tiger reserve, Yoga capital Rishikesh that attracts a lot of inbound tourists.

New eco-tourism destinations are being identified, which is expected to attract the foreign tourists in big numbers in the days to come. New Tehri in the Garhwal region is being developed as Lake City. Similarly, the Yoga capital Rishikesh is being developed as a wellness city. We are also developing eco-spiritual zones taking into account the large number of tourists from abroad that come to the state for spiritual enhancement.

How well equipped, infra-structurally is your state to host weddings and big MICE gatherings?

Yes, Uttarakhand has many places that are fast developing as wedding destinations. Triyuginarayan in Rudraprayag district is known to host high profile weddings. It is said that Lord Shiva married Goddess Parvati at Triyuginarayan and thus many in the elite wanted to get married at this place making it the most sought after wedding destination.

Lake city Nainital, Queen of hills Mussoorie, Rishikesh and Corbett are fast developing as most sought after wedding destinations. Several branded hotels have come up in the state, which is a positive sign. Big chains of hotels like Hyatt, Taj and Marriott have come up in the state and many more are in the pipeline. These hotels can be the venue of big weddings.

Uttarakhand is also becoming most favoured destinations for film shooting also. In 2019, Uttarakhand was accorded Most Film Friendly State Award. After inception of 2013, film policy, a total of 600 films and serials have been shot in Uttarakhand. In the year 2021-22, shooting of as many 194 films took place in the state.

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

In the post pandemic era, after the introduction of the work from home concept in corporate houses, many companies prefer Uttarakhand for offering a sojourn to their employees' along with the work and scenic locations that best suits them.

Thus, Home stays are being patronized. Presently there are 3900 homestays being operated in the state. Loans and concessions are being provided to the unemployed youth for setting up of the homestays. Pandit Deendayal Scheme is in implementation in Uttarakhand for promotion of homestays

Adventure and New eco tourism destinations are being developed. Water rafting and paragliding are being promoted. Bhimtal, Kota Bagh, Munsiyari, Maldevta and Bageshwar are some of the key sites of paragliding in the state. Uttarakhand has a lot of water bodies like Ganga, Yamuna and Kosi. White water rafting, Kayaking and rappelling like activities are being undertaken in these water bodies.

What is your target tourist figure for 2022-23 ?

Uttarakhand has been attracting an average of 35 million visitors each year. And, by 2030 we plan to increase it to 70 million visitors every season. And for this, we are strengthening our tourism infrastructure and also upgrading connectivity. Certainly we are expecting a record footfall in 2022-23.

Before the start of the pandemic, in 2019, Char Dham witnessed a footfall of around 34,10,035 pilgrims. But as the pandemic spread which led to repeated lockdowns and subsequent fall in number of pilgrims. But while observing all Covid protocols, we are trying to restore the old footfall and we are now expecting a record turnout this time.

The yatra, this year is being conducted taking into account all cautions needed in post covid scenario. Though Covid protocols have been waived off, double vaccination certificates and wearing of masks are being ensured as precautionary measures.

This year, for the first time, a vehicle tracking mechanism has also been introduced. Cameras have been installed at various locations on the Char Dham routes that will keep a track of the vehicular movement.



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

Uttarakhand welcomes all with open arms. We are undertaking all efforts to provide best of hospitality to the pilgrims coming to the state for Char Dham Yatra. Kedarnath restoration and Badrinath re-development plans are all set to facilitate pilgrims in a big way.

I am also pleased to inform you that our works are being recognised not only in Uttarakhand but everywhere in the country. The Union Civil Aviation Ministry felicitated us with a special award for being the most active state in conduct of Heli services in its Global Aviation Summit in Hyderabad. Significantly, the Uttarakhand has also got Most Film Friendly State Award for its efforts in making an conducive environment towards film shooting in the state.

Much emphasis is being laid on developing tourism infrastructure in the state. Amendments to the existing tourism policy 2018 are already underway. Policy that gives further impetus to infrastructure is in the offing. To bring in investment, regular investment interactions

with industry are planned.

Char Dham All Weather Roads Project is already strengthening char dham routes. Similarly, construction works for Rishikesh Karanprayag railway line is taking place speedily. Air connectivity too is being strengthened. Pantnagar airport has become operational. Efforts are also being undertaken towards setting up of an international Airport in Haridwar.

Heli services are being provided in as many as 22 routes which include services to the central Himalayan shrine of Kedarnath. New Ropeways are being developed. Uttarakhand is the first state in the country to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with National Highway Authority of India for developing ropeways in the state. The ropeway to Kedarnath will be the longest ropeway in the world at an altitude of 11,500 ft above sea level. Kaddukhal-Maa Surkanda devi ropeway project has become operational. It is the first ropeway project constructed by Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board.

'The tourism framework has changed for better in India': Abinash Manghani

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Surviving the Covid

I represent WelcomHeritage brand and the last few years were unlike anything ever seen before. While the industry closed down last year, we all witnessed a renewed interest in domestic tourism and most of our hotels received a fair amount of domestic traffic. Hotels domestically received a lot of interest actually except for the inbound oriented destination, namely Kerala and Rajasthan, which would have faced a reduction in business. However, other states, such as Karnataka, Himachal and Uttarakhand, which are naturally hilly and nature oriented destinations, did really well.

Domestic Tourism – The Saviour

Initially, it was the staycation concept that kept the hospitality industry afloat. However, once Covid cases started going down and airlines started operating, people too went back to travelling to health, nature, wellness and even wildlife destinations. I think culture and heritage tourism also got a renewed lease as many people have started visiting destinations that were not very popular earlier. So I think the domestic tourism now has gained momentum and is here to stay. This is the single largest change that has emerged post Covid.

Now that the inbound has opened, but you think hotels are gonna still take Domestic tourism seriously?

I think we have all seen the difference that Domestic Tourism brought about in all countries. All large countries, be it the USA, China, even Europe, thrive majorly on domestic tourism while international tourism is the icing on the cake. That's what I think will happen in India also. The various states across our country too have become very aggressive in their marketing and I think the tourism framework has changed for the better in India and is now more in line with international norms. Going forward, long haul destinations will take a while to recover but the longer and medium to shorter destinations will pick up. So our strategies are changing accordingly. We are finding a lot more interest from regional destinations for MICE as well as weddings and the pace is picking up.

The return of Weddings and MICE

During COVID a lot of our resorts across remote destinations became favourite for weddings because the number of rooms were defined. You could not go beyond 100 guests and this is where our hotels in small and distant locations worked in. The whole thing is driven

due to the need of the consumer to have an event in safe locale. So those destinations that provide safety while travelling and have quality services, cuisine, food, products are bound to succeed – just like many of our hotels did.

However, eventually, I think Covid protocols will become less and less stringent. In fact, in many states, the basic restrictions are also no longer needed. And now, since travel has become a government mandated activity, the authorities are not going to force any Covid protocols that are not really required. And that's where tourism is growing back.

Back to 2019 figures?

As far as I know, in the last few months, the volumes have already gone up and crossed the 2019 levels! But, rates have not reached there for hotels located in business locations while rates have doubled for hotels in leisure locations. So the leisure domestic segment is in a sweet spot. Some mainstream hotel business of large city hotels has reached back in terms of occupancy, but it's still not there in terms of ARR, which is why rates are low right now but even that will increase going forward.

Managing Staff – pre and post Covid

One issue that I saw with a lot of hotel chains was that some of them had to let go of some of their staff while some of it went off voluntarily as they were unable to sustain with pay cuts etc. Now with tourism momentum coming back and everyone travelling, there will surely be an HR crunch. But in the meantime, I think automation has taken over in a big way in the last two years, so many properties will not go back to the same level of staffing. However, the competition for employees is increasing and I think this will have a good impact on salaries and benefits. The hotel industry traditionally has not been seen as very good paymasters, which is why talent has been leaving this industry. I think all this will change now. So if you want quality staff, you have to pay people good salary.

Expansion Plans

We opened six hotels last year and we are planning to maintain a similar growth tempo this year because, as I said, the investment climate and the travel climate has shifted towards nature, wellness and leisure destination near cities and there's a lot of investment happening in that area. So you can be rest assured that you will be seeing a lot of new hotels in the years to come, which will be of a much better quality than they were earlier. And that's good for all the destinations.



As business across the world struggled to sustain during Covid, the hospitality sector quickly adapted to the changing demands and adjusted well to the needs of Staycations, limited occupancies and smaller weddings and events. A hospitality veteran, **Mr. Abinash Manghani, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels**, spoke exclusively to BOTT on how the WelcomHeritage properties in undiscovered locales did well during Covid, on opening six hotels across India in 2021 and expansion plans going forward.

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'Time is running out': Rajeev Kohli

I recognise that I am a 'no-body' in the scheme of things. I don't hold any privileged EC positions in the royalty of our associations. I've noticed that some aversion has even crept in for brutal honesty. Doesn't bother me. At the slightest.

But I will be damned if I sit silent at what I will say is the genocide of the inbound industry in India. There is blood on our hands - on Mr. Modi's, on Mrs. Sitaraman's, on Tourism Minister Reddy's, and the leaders of our associations. Each has contributed to us arriving at a stage where India has opened for international travel, yet we have no visible plan and a complete paralysis of voice, action and plans.

But the biggest perpetrators of this systematic eradication of our industry are the stakeholders. To sit quietly, to just watch and to accept their sad fate is an acceptance of all that has gone wrong.

The suggestions I have back in January were simple, logical and very actionable. I'm not claiming that I am spreading the gospel thoughts. But I am stating that by now, middle of May 2022, India should have had a revival and resurgence strategy out in the hands of the private sector. We should have had a global brand strategy in action. We should all be singing from the same sheet.

We have nothing

We have a government that is unable to participate in necessary international trade shows because the Finance Ministry is too busy playing God. We have a tourism ministry with its singular focus on domestic Travel, and we have a nodal association far too comfortable with the status quo.

We have an India that is perceived to be Covid ridden and untouchable. Everywhere my fellow operators have gone to sell India, it's the same story. There is no interest. It is one thing that the government does not want to do reputation management and repair, but none of our associations have any clue either. FAITH, IATO, TAAI and so on have taken no actions to create a private sector plan that with combined resources we can proudly go out and tell the world that India is ready to welcome you back.

In my last piece, written for BOTT January Issue I wrote about the private sector being soldiers of the Ministry of Tourism. That does not change. They have our support. But they need to show leadership. Right now the private sector has no idea what to do next.



What do we in the private sector say to the international audience? What is our messaging strategy? What is the message? People ask "what's new, what's changed?" We have no answer. How are we battling the desire for Indian hotels to increase prices against all global cues? What is Incredible India 2.0? Where did that go? Where is my new destination video? Where is the money to fuel the marketing that the private sector needs to fuel growth.

The government does not seem to understand that to gain market share in October 2022, we should have started our marketing back in March – April. People plan Travel in advance. We are not a last minute destination.

Yes, Indian tourism will recover. Yes, we will see an increase in inbound arrivals. But it's going to be slow and not the spurt we desperately need. If you want the change, get up and do something about it. No one else seems to care.

Happy to get feedback and thoughts on this issue.
at rajeevcohli@creative.travel

The writer is Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel

'Let us learn to 'Collaborate' instead of 'Competing' with each other: Nagsri Sashidhar

The last two years have been the worst for almost all of us world over. Each one of us has been affected to varying degrees. If one were to talk about travel, well it has always been a known fact that Travel is always the first to go down and the last to bounce back in the eye of a storm. We have seen several bad phases in the past but nothing quite like this where the outbound has been shut completely for nearly 2 years and the world had just stopped. Understandably the impact has been catastrophic and has pushed several companies to shut down, thereby rendering a number of people jobless. It's not just the primary company that has been affected but the several other service providers that are in the supply chain.

India for sure is an aspirational destination for many. However there is a lot in India that still needs to be marketed and showcased correctly to the outside world. People are ready to travel and we need to cash in on that. We need to make our country top of mind recall. Barring just a few states I personally don't see much happening with the other states. I think it's time we get our act together and push a common agenda forward – one that projects India as a safe and diverse country to come to.

Last two years, since there was no option available for outbound travel, every single Indian was forced into travelling within India. I personally think this was a blessing because we Indians realised just how diverse and beautiful our country is. Something they would not have bothered to find out under normal times. Be it a short trip or a long one, a beach / mountain / snow / adventure / culture / culinary / experiences / wildlife and the list goes on. I think we as a country can confidently tick all of these boxes.

Having said this, people are now aware that options for long weekends or a short trip out is available in India and hence even if the outbound numbers go up, there will be a constant flow of clients travelling domestically too. These are exciting times and what will shine are those that have the right experience and the ability to weave the magic.

Covid has brought about an evolution of sorts, there definitely is a section where we see a substantial shift in the travel pattern. In fact overall we see more importance being given to safety and hygiene. In fact we also see that many who can afford a Business Class ticket over Economy are also opting for the same. Clients today want to travel to lesser crowded places, lesser known, opting for self-drive, smaller boutique properties over the real large inventory hotels, open spaces, nature etc.

What is emerging as the hero is the fact that people are ready to explore, they are looking for immersive experiences more than just ticking off the box in terms of what they are seeing. The spend capacity has gone up. People have realised that one is so uncertain of the future that the idea to enjoy a holiday is NOW. If you are thinking about it, just go for it. The concept of Bucket list / backburner has kind of changed.

The refreshing thing that has emerged is the fact that there are several gems that were always overshadowed by the bigger cities or attractions and however hard they tried it was a challenge for them. The time is now right for them to outshine and create a buzz as the market is ready for them. I look at that as a huge opportunity and again, I believe that it is those who really invent and innovate their experience line are the ones who lead from the front.



India has been proven to be the fastest growing Outbound Market and was touted to reach 50 million tourists by 2020, should Covid not have struck. While Covid till put a halt to our growth, we should be back on track soon and achieve more than this quite certainly.

I keep telling all that the eyes can see what the mind knows. It is important to train our minds and the eyes of our clients to see things differently. We need to make that change, we need to make a noise and talk about how we can bring about sustainability, protecting our earth, working together with our communities, getting all the stakeholders together and working towards one common goal. We have been given another chance, a blank board – let us not get it wrong this time around. Let's learn to COLLABORATE with each other instead of COMPETING.

The Writer is the Chief Happiness Officer at NAGSRI

Curating **unforgettable experiences** & memories in breath-taking locales



Furaveri Maldives is nothing short of heaven on earth that offers an ideal getaway for families, couples, senior citizens and people from all walks of life to bask in its serene beauty while enjoying its luxury offerings. A tropical 23-hectare natural and un-reclaimed island situated in the exotic Raa Atoll, Furaveri Maldives offers plenty of options in accommodation, cuisine, wellness, underwater activities, adventure and more!

Mr. Ali Shiyad, Senior Sales and Marketing Manager, Furaveri Maldives shares more.

Aishwarya Srivastava

How important is the Indian market for Furaveri Maldives?

Indian market is crucial to the Maldives tourism industry. Recently it has emerged as one of the top source markets for the Maldives surpassing traditional markets such as German, Russian, British and Italian. India market is huge and it is behind our backyard with less than an hour flight from major cities.

What percentage of your clientele comes from India? Are you undertaking any initiatives to increase this figure?

Recent figure shows tourists from Indian market contributes 23% which equates over 44,000 visitors during the month of February 2022. To win a fair share of the Indian market, we have selected one the best representative companies in India, Linkin Reps, based in Delhi. We are already seeing the result and looks promising.

What special/unique/reassuring offering can an Indian customer find at the Furaveri Maldives?

Our Indian clients love dining experiences and quite often we receive comments on specific dishes such Jain or vegan. Our food production team is ready, our chefs will meet and greet our Indian guests when they arrive to the restaurant to dine and personally note down individual dietary requirements and special dishes if they would like to experience.

We have a dedicated Indian theme night specialised for Indian cuisine too.

Maldives is generally perceived as a Honeymoon Destination. How would you like to position your product in India? For couples? For families? Or both?

Furaveri Maldives is unique. It is naturally one of the beautiful resorts in the Maldives and resort was designed to offer luxury, privacy and space. At Furaveri Maldives, we cater for honeymooners, families and incentives too.

Many people treat the Maldives as a weekend getaway... How many nights do you suggest one should ideally spend in the Maldives and what activities do Furaveri Maldives offer to keep the guest engaged?

Our Indian clients often spent 4 night in split accommodations mostly beach villas followed by water villas. There are arrays of accommodations they can experience with just additional night or two. We have many leisure activities available, be it a night fishing, sunset cruise, dolphin watch, turtle snorkelling, water sports and dining. Maldives is a destination for rustic and laidback relaxation and to experience full spectrum of our services, while 4 nights is sufficient, 5-7 nights is recommended.

Are you coming out with any Summer Special Package?

We already have special dedicated summer packages issued for our Indian clients, which are available through our wholesalers and retailers. Alternatively they can visit our

home page too, www.furaveri.com and directly book their accommodation and services at very special rate.

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

We are preparing for the season. We are set to develop add 19 more pools to the existing new beach villas to meet escalating demand and will enhance existing water villas by adding free standing oversized jaccuzzi to the private deck which would elevate guests experience. A Mediterranean restaurant is scheduled open before winter season begins and additional two more restaurants – Lebanese and Seafood will be available for dine around before end 2022. These new developments will elevate your holiday experience while enjoying their stay with us.



‘People are looking forward to their vacations after a gap of two years’: Riaz Munshi

In the post Covid era, there is a huge pent up demand for international travel as people who have stayed indoors for last two years really wish to undertake a dream holiday this year. With the international skies open and countries across the globe relaxing their travel norms, time is right for outbound travel from India to pick up pace. Mr. Riaz Munshi, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) shares his opinion of outbound travel in the post pandemic era.

Tourism Industry is a huge source of employment, which was badly hit not just in India, but also globally. Tourism sector in India provides employment to 8 – 10% of the total population and is one of the leading sectors for an engine of economic growth. In FY20, tourism sector in India accounted for 39 million jobs, which was 8.0% of the total employment in the country. By 2029, it is expected to account for about 53 million jobs. As per figures compiled by Statista, a research agency, the total direct and indirect employment generated by travel and tourism sector in India was 12.38%. Further according to India Brand Equity Foundation, Indian tourism industry is set to rise @6.2% a year by 2029 reaching the economic size of Rs. 35 trillion (US Dollar 688 billion). The sector will provide employment equivalent to 9.2% of the total. Therefore, you can well understand the importance of this sector and vitality of its growth.

A major vertical of Tourism is “Outbound Tours” – a sector that has contributed immensely in creation of Airport Infrastructure in our country, making India a lucrative market for the global aviation industry. Further, the outbound tourism is inherently linked to revenue generating inbound tours. Foreign remittances earned is used for running foreign tourism boards’ offices, whose total expenses come close to Rs. 500 crores. In our business, i.e. the business of Outbound Travel, competition is huge, margins are very thin and there are lots of uncertainties (which can be seen from the global impact of the scare of Coronavirus leading to large scale cancellations of bookings).

India is one of the most sought after markets for Outbound travel. With our millennials geared for international travel, we are a very lucrative market for many countries across the globe who wish to attract Indian outbound travellers. The resumption of international scheduled flights in March this year, which were discontinued for last two years, has already given momentum to international travel as many travel agents across the country are receiving queries and request to travel. Europe, USA, South Asia are the markets that are already warming up to receiving good number of Indian travellers in the coming months, not to mentioned the emerging markets, which have recently gained traction in India. There is a huge pent up demand for international travel as countries across the globe have relaxed their travel norms – masks are no longer compulsory, RTPCR tests are no longer a mandate – more and more people are willing to undertake international travel.

A couple of deterrents that are stopping the growth of outbound market is firstly the job redundancy that has reduced the staff at consulates and made gaining Visa a tedious process. There are not



enough staff to handle visas at the consulates, which is leading to never ending delays in the visa process of some countries. The other issue we are facing in India is the high cost of tickets, which is making international travel acutely expensive. This is mainly because of the demand and supply disorder. There is an urgent need to correct this imbalance so that India Outbound can grow unhindered.

There is no denying that the emotion to travel is strong and going forward, many countries will be relaxing their norms even further and becoming more accommodating to inbound travellers. There is a strong and steady rise in demand for global travel. Countries are lifting Covid restrictions and are preparing to welcome tourists. People are looking forward to their vacations after a gap of two years. There is a lot of excitement among the travellers, especially the young travellers and family vacationers. So fingers crossed, we are hopeful for a good Summer travel season.

Rove Hotels : A Dubai hotel chain charming guests with its fresh vibe

With a buzzing booth and positive vibe doing rounds, the vibrant hospitality chain – Rove Hotels was gaining much popularity at the recently concluded ATM in Dubai. In an exclusive chat with BOTT, **Mr. Paul Bridger, Chief Operating Officer, Rove Hotels** shares more details about the hotels.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

When was the first Rove that opened in Dubai?

Rove has just turned six. The first Rove Hotel opened on May 4, 2016, Rove downtown, situated directly opposite to Burj Khalifa, Dubai Mall. It's a buzzing hotel that is very popular with the guests.

How many Rove currently do you have?

We have nine Rove Hotels in Dubai, offering just over 3500 Rove Rooms across the city.

So what is the positioning of the hotel today?

Affordable lifestyle! We don't get too hung up on star rating. So technically, we're a Free-star brand. Star ratings mean very different things in different countries and different locations. For example, like I'm from London, some of the five star hotels in central London have smaller rooms than Rove and yet call themselves five-star. So we don't get too hung up on star ratings. While we do have a star rating currently, but that may change in the future. Given the choice, we wouldn't have a star rating because travel trends keep changing. Earlier, star ratings used to be very important when people valued size of real estate and certain facilities. Now we all know that you can have an amazing stay in a very small room with great facilities in the hotel.

What percentage of your traffic comes from India?

India is our third biggest market after the UAE and Saudi. However, it's slightly lower at the moment. I think recently Russia has moved up the ranking.

With nine hotels under your belt, how did you sustain the last two years, which were tough years for the hospitality sector?

I am glad to share that all of our hotels were profitable throughout the pandemic. Every one of our hotels made a profit throughout the pandemic. We kept over 60% of the rooms open regardless of the time and as a group, we've had hotels running occupancies up to over 90%, even when the city was facing Covid restrictions.

Is it difficult for a brand like Rove to sustain in Dubai market, which is known for larger than



life hotels? So in the midst of all that, how do you position yourself? How are you different? Or better?

So we try to give people everything they need for a great stay without all the frills. There's so much to do in Dubai now that people, when they come, want to get out and not stay restricted indoors. They don't necessarily want to be staying in a hotel and have dinner every night in that hotel or only use that hotel's facility. So we tried to provide really clean, comfortable rooms, great WiFi, super service from our team, an interesting environment and it has worked brilliantly. All our hotel's unique design and interiors are connected to that local community that you're in. So if you're staying in City Walk, there's a real music scene in that hotel. Why? Because you have an arena across the road – the CocaCola arena.

Thus, we try to provide you a bit of a different experience for a good value with great service. And you'll find if you go online, many of our hotels are higher rated in terms of guest feedback



than many of the famous bigger five star hotels that you may have heard of. So the guests enjoy it.

With nine hotels already under your belt, any expansion plans on the card?

Yes, we've got nine in Dubai. They're all the same. We don't really have category. They are all upper mid-scale, which means we don't have a five star and a two star.

Going forward, we are planning to move beyond Dubai and open our next hotel in Ras Al Khaimah next summer. Also, we have plans to open hotels across the GCC region and Oman is an obvious choice. Certainly Saudi and Egypt are also our target countries.

Rove is a home-grown Dubai brand. So if they want to make your stay more authentic, come and stay in this Dubai brand hotel, which would be a great experience. It's also a great value for money at a time when prices are not going down. So come and explore our hotels in Dubai – we welcome all our Indian guests.

FAIRMONT MALDIVES SIRRU FEN FUSHI

Offering Something for Everyone...



Located on the Shaviyani Atoll, which boasts one of the country's largest resort lagoons, Fairmont Maldives, Sirru Fen Fushi is more than just your hideaway. Our "secret water island," as dubbed by the locals. The 120 Luxury Villas are a seamless blend of chic, understated Maldivian rustic chic with champagne woods, coral-inspired rugs, and bamboo glass chandeliers. Choose from hideaway Beach Villas set in the magpies, the stunning Water Villas perched over the Indian Ocean, or castaway Tented Jungle Villas.

Island escapes aren't just for grown-ups. At Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi, there's something to suit every kind of family – from picnics on deserted islands and dedicated Kids' Clubs, to snorkelling the coral house reef.

Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi is home to the longest infinity pool in the Maldives that leads you to the Coralarium, the Maldives' first and only coral regeneration project in the form of an underwater art installation by Jason deCaires Taylor.

The on-site Kids' Club and Toddler's Play Garden, open from 9am to 7pm, and catering to travellers aged 3 to 12, provides a wealth of



activities to keep children entertained. Budding artists can create custom-made dreamcatchers, make jewellery and paint coconuts in the resort's art studio - under the watchful eye of

the resident artist - while sport-enthusiasts cycle sandy pathways through the tropical gardens. The resort also houses the Maldives' only dedicated Teen Town, where young adults

can enjoy motorised and non-motorised water sports, kayaking the lagoon and Maldivian cooking classes.

Conservation is paramount at Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi, which strives to educate the next generation of eco-conscious travellers. With an experienced guide in-tow, families can explore the nine kilometre-long coral house reef that surrounds the resort, count Manta Rays at the Manta Ray Cleaning Station, and snorkel the first underwater sculpture museum in the Maldives – the Coralarium – which acts as an artificial reef to protect marine life.

Each accommodation offering has been designed to make the most of its island surroundings and ensure that families' needs are satisfied. Expansive beachfront villas just steps from the Indian Ocean house private tropical gardens, plunge pools and generous living space, while Jungle Tented Villas provide an adventurous alternative in the heart of the island. Built to mirror authentic safari lodgings, the Tented Villas benefit from secluded living spaces, private pools, starlight cinema screenings and glamping BBQ's.

As the sole resort located in the Shaviyani Atoll, the marine life surrounding Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi flourishes undisturbed. Manta Rays, Turtles, Black Tip Reef Sharks and large pods of Bottlenose Dolphins parade the 600-hectare lagoon, which houses a nine-kilometre-long house reef directly accessible from the beach.

The preserved reef surrounding the resort acts as one of the most unique and undiscovered diving destinations in the world. Where other reefs in the region have endured degradation, the vibrant corals bordering Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi play home to a thriving ecosystem, with over 250 species of tropical fish identified.

At Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi, protecting the marine life is paramount. A conservation programme in partnership with the Manta Trust Maldives, is in place to help protect the abundance of Manta Ray that have made the reef their home. A Manta Ray Cleaning Station offers an up-close-and-personal encounter with the rays, as they congregate to have their bodies cleaned by smaller marine life.



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 – be 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?

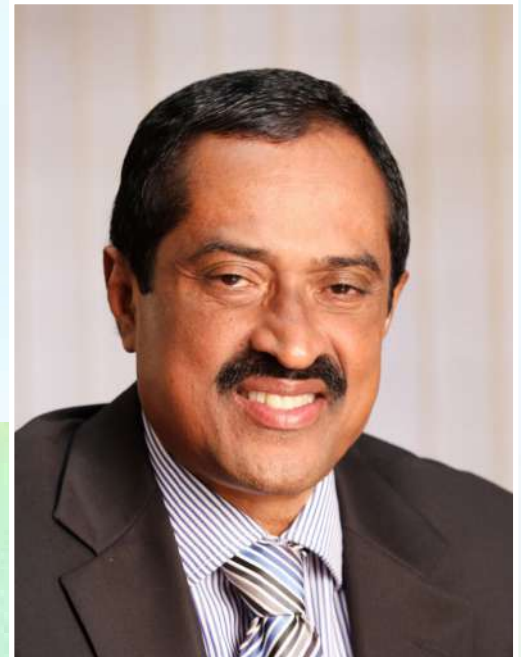
- I can suggest most important initiative by the Government is to launch the International Marketing and Promotion, participation in International tourism exhibitions, organising road shows in source and emerging markets, electronic and social media campaign, invite foreign tour organisers/operators 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.

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



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

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.



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

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

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)



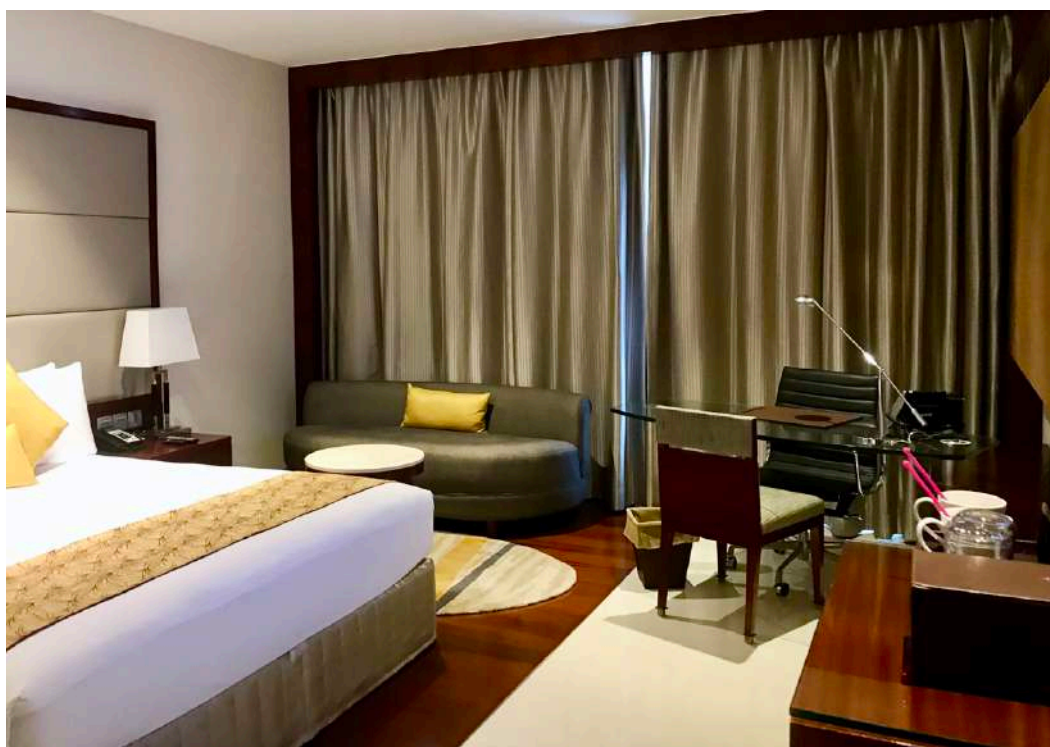
Crowne Plaza Kochi

Catering to Business and Leisure Travellers



Nestled by the banks of Vembanad Lake, Crowne Plaza Kochi is an upscale property and an ideal locale for all your corporate and social events. With a contemporary design combined with unparalleled hospitality and a strategic location, we offer convenience and accessibility making us the preferred choice for both business and leisure travellers. With 269 spacious rooms and suites, flexible meeting spaces and a variety of dining options, our hotel is designed to offer guests an incredible mix of comfort and connectivity.

Named the Best MICE Hotel during India Travel Awards 2018 and Best Culinary Establishment during Kerala Culinary Challenge 2018, Crowne Plaza Kochi is a recipient of many awards and accolades. Our rooftop Fusion Tapas restaurant Skygrill just received the Metro Food Award for best in class Continental Fusion Cuisine 2021.



Located on the National Highway, guests can enjoy easy access to the central business district as well as many tourist attractions including heritage sites, palaces and art cafes.

Our spacious and stylish rooms have everything you need for work or play. Guests can choose rooms with views of the enchanting backwaters or the energising cityscape. Guests can also utilise the business centre, 24-hour in-room dining services, spa and salon services. The hotel also features a fitness centre overlooking the azure waters of the infinity pool on the second floor and a larger beautifully landscaped outdoor pool for travellers looking to relax and rejuvenate.

Enjoy a variety of food and drink options throughout the day, from fine dining to lighter meals and specialty dining at our full service, on-site restaurants and lounge. Work or relax at your leisure with convenient in-room dining. Among our outlets we have Aroma, our 24 hour deli, Mosaic, our multi-cuisine buffet restaurant, Connexions, our bar, Skygrill, our rooftop bar and restaurant serving tapas fusion cuisine, and the newly renovated Far East which will serve Japanese and Pan-Asian cuisine.

Crowne Plaza Kochi is the perfect hub for corporate or social events. Our meeting rooms are fully equipped with state-of-the-art audio visual technology and comfortable indoor and outdoor spaces that are available for cocktails, networking events, product launches and



training sessions.

Our pillar less ballroom with high ceilings, is able to hold a group of up to 600 people in a theatre setting. Our Meeting Success Programme provides a dedicated Crowne Meetings point of contact and promises a two-hour response for all enquiries.

Crowne Weddings offers a dedicated team that will cater to your every need when you plan your big day. Leave the planning and

execution of your dream wedding to us and choose to celebrate your new beginning with our signature service and hospitality. Our chefs will ensure that your guests keep talking about the food long after the ceremony has ended and our dedicated staff will take care of the smallest details and customisations as per your request.

Choose Crowne Plaza Kochi for your next stay, event or meeting. Join the Crowne family and experience the beauty of the backwaters with our signature Crowne hospitality!



ATM Dubai 2022 created buzz, generated business & networking opportunities

More than 23,000 visitors attended the 29th edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2022, as industry leaders gathered at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) to share insights into the future of international travel and tourism. “In addition to doubling our visitor numbers year on year, ATM 2022 hosted 1,500 exhibitors and attendees from 150 countries,” commented Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME for Arabian Travel Market. Focusing on the future of international travel and tourism, the show explored the fields of transportation, hospitality, events, attractions and more. Innovation, sustainability and talent were key themes during the four-day event.

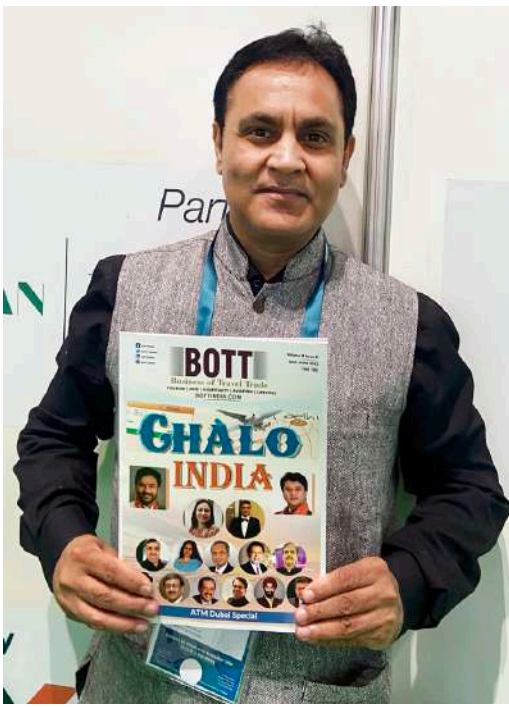
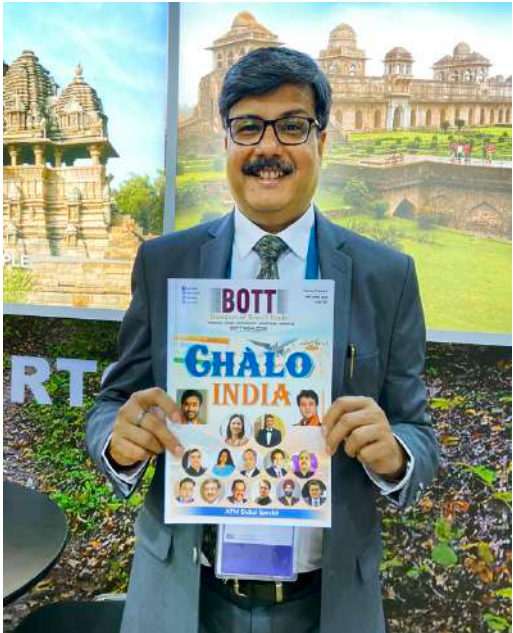
The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India under its “Incredible India” brand line participated at the ATM showcasing India’s rich and diversified tourism potential. The India Pavilion was inaugurated in the august presence of Mr. Satpal Maharaj, Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttarakhand, Ms. Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Dr. Aman Puri H.E. Consul General of India to Dubai, Mr. Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Tourism & MD, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board and Mr. Kitto Zhimomi, Commissioner & Secretary, Government of Nagaland.

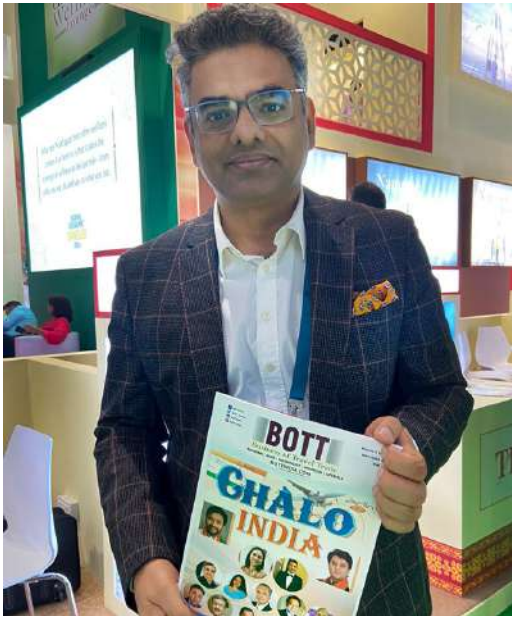
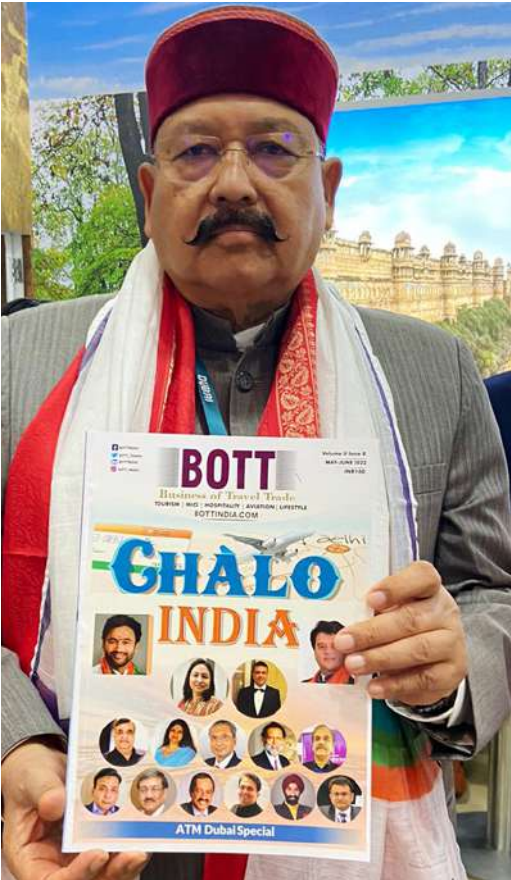
Around 18 Participants from India representing the State Tourism Government of Kerala, Nagaland and Tour Operators, Travel Agents, Hoteliers/Resorts, were present at the India Pavilion showcasing the diverse tourism products and services. Apart from this, the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka also showcased their tourism potential to the visitors at ATM 2022.

The Ministry of Tourism, has constituted an inter-ministerial task force for National Digital Tourism Mission to undertake consultations with the tourism industry and domain experts, define the context, mission, vision, objectives and overall scope of the National Digital Tourism Mission. The efforts are being made by Ministry of Tourism and MeitY to collaboratively explore the possibilities of developing a Unified Tourism Interface, for seamless exchange of information amongst the stakeholders of the tourism ecosystem. Such a Unified Tourism Interface would enable an open and interoperable network for search, discovery, information exchange and digital transactions which can herald the next generation tourism services.

Meanwhile, an equitable recovery strategy in which the whole tourism and travel ecosystem benefits is vital, said HE Dr Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and SMEs & Chairman of Emirates Tourism Council of the UAE. The Ministerial Panel at ATM 2022 Middle East Tourism Summit highlighted the need to embrace a new cognitive system that will redefine travel and tourism investment. It said that Middle East’s travel and tourism sector is expected to generate US\$ 246 billion of revenue in 2022, which is only 8.9% behind pre-pandemic levels.







Tourism Malaysia hosts 6-city roadshows post pandemic, receives excellent response

Malaysia finally lifted sanctions on its border from April 1, 2022, marking the end of travelling restrictions into the country. Leveraging this new development, Tourism Malaysia today hosted its first roadshow in New Delhi on April 18, 2022, followed by five others in other cities across the country. Each roadshow received incredible response and people are ready to travel to Malaysia.



The roadshow kicked off in the city of Delhi and was followed by Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Chennai. The mission is headed by Mr. Manoharan Periasamy, Senior Director of the International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa) together with Malaysia's tourism fraternity which consists of three (3) Malaysia-based airlines, 22 travel agents, four (4) hoteliers, and four (4) product owners.

India remains and has been one of the top market sources for Malaysia and has contributed 735,309 arrivals (+22%) in 2019. Apart from its objective to instill confidence among Indians to feel safe to visit Malaysia once again, the roadshow aims to provide a platform for the industry community to bounce back and steer the tourism sector back to its former glory, if not better. "This is the right time to be back in India, and planning for this roadshow is very opportune. The resumption of scheduled international flights from India coincides with the reopening of Malaysia's international borders," said Mr. Manoharan.

"We are thrilled and enthusiastic to welcome Indian travellers back on exciting, new value-driven and action-packed itineraries to witness the best and latest of what Malaysia has to offer. There is so much to explore 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," he added.

Since the reopening of its borders, India is on the top four arrivals to Malaysia. Malaysia has opened its shores for quarantine-free travel on 1st April 2022 to welcome fully-vaccinated international travellers. The entry procedure requires an RT-PCR test two days before departure and travellers must undergo professionally administered RTK-Ag within 24 hours upon arrival in Malaysia. Currently,



Malaysia e-VISA can be applied online and more than 14,000 seats are offered weekly between India and Malaysia through Malaysia Airlines, Malindo Air, AirAsia, IndiGo, and Air India Express.

WITT Celebrated Women Empowerment with Grandeur: **TAAI**

The newest initiative of TAAI, Women in TAAI and Tourism (WITT) organised its first conclave in New Delhi to celebrate Women's Empowerment. The event's success can be gauged by the fact that more than 200 TAAI & WITT members along with extensive media were present during the deliberations. Initiated in 2021 by the dynamic president of TAAI, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, WITT is an integral part of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI).

BOTT DESK

Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon Secretary General, delivering the introductory remarks and setting the tone of the conclave, apprised the attendees of the contribution of women in various sectors; be it politics, leadership, decision making on various fronts, education, healthcare, etc.

Taking the Conclave forward, Jyoti Mayal, President introduced the Office Bearers and Managing Committee members present at the august gathering. In her welcome address, Mayal introduced the idea, formation, and process involved in setting up WITT, which was well received and appreciated by the attendees. She shared a three-step approach to Entrepreneurship, Employment, & Leadership based on which women are contributing to the world. Mayal also referred to the statistics issued by various organisations WTTC, ILO, UNWTO etc wherein the contribution of women has been recorded.

WITT achieved its core objective which is to involve "Woman in Tourism" to join hands to empower the women of India, when Shri G Kamala Rao, Director General, Ministry of Tourism praised and appreciated the efforts made in his keynote speech. He went on to highlight the importance of women in Indian culture and quoted various verses from ancient Sanskrit texts wherein the importance of women has been demarcated.

Mr Praveen Kumar, Former – Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) profoundly thanked WITT for organising such a conclave. In his remarks, he agreed to the fact that women's contribution in travel trade must be highlighted, and focus should be on turning the unorganised contribution organised so that women get their due share of recognition and growth. Mr Kumar also communicated that he would take up with the MSDE the sensitivity of having more women centric programs initiated and floated to extend support to the community.

The first session, Weaving Tales, moderated by Jyoti Mayal have had the presence of esteemed panellists Rupinder Brar, ADG, Ministry of



Tourism; Navina Jafa, Cultural Activist; Shazia Iimi, Politician & Journalist; Jahnabi Phookan, Past President, FICCI Flo; Sanjay Bose, ITC's

Planner. The deliberations & tales were around mentoring safety, security, hygiene, and also issues and challenges which are usually faced by women. Comprehensive capacity



building programmes at various levels & empowered women to lead was also deliberated.

The second session, Create your Sunshine, had esteemed panellists Sandeep Dwivedi, COO Interglobe; Nandita Kanchan, Commissioner of Income Tax (Delhi); Charu Wali Khanna, Advocate; Parineeta Sethi, Publisher; Sonia Bharwani, VFS; Aditi Malik, Soft Skills Expert. Moderating the session Jay Bhatia sought inputs from everyone on various issues related to taxation, legal, skills required, and the contribution of women in various sectors & how they today were empowered with skills to create their sunshine.

SATTE team that partnered with WITT unveiled the Shakti Awards logo at the conclave. And, felicitated various women leaders; Leading from the front - Rupinder Barar, ADG Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India; Chef Manisha Bhasin, Sr. Executive Chief at ITC Hotels for the outstanding contribution in Hospitality; Navina Jafa, Cultural Activist, Dancer & Academician for the outstanding contribution in promoting Heritage Tourism; Arshdeep Anand, Board of Director at Holiday Moods Adventures Groups of Companies for promoting Adventure Tourism; Jahnabi Phookan, Founder of Jungle Travels India for the outstanding contribution in the Holistic promotion of tourism in NE India; and, The Leader of Future - Kanika Tekaiwal, Founder of JetSetGo India.

To conclude, Shreeram Patel, Hon Treasurer delivered a Vote of Thanks with a special mention of VFS Global, SATTE, Indigo, Government of India - Incredible India, Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) for supporting the cause & making the conclave a success.

Managing Committee members Shri Anoop Kanuga, Dr P Murugesan, Shri Ramasamy Venkatachalam, Shri Kulvinder Singh Kohli were an integral part of the conclave along with past President Balbir Mayal, whose empowerment for President Jyoti Mayal was appreciated.



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.

The Buzz of Business Travel is on the road again



**Alok K Singh, Co-founder and CEO,
Travomint**

Leisure or relaxation travel has long been back and is now expected to bring out a groundbreaking record this summer. International boundaries are open as nations around the world are dropping Covid restrictions and protocols.

After more than two years, the business activities across all the industries have jumpstarted. The international flights began their operations in March 2022, business travel is on the rise since then. People working in companies like KPMG, Deloitte, Mercedes-Benz, PepsiCo, SNVA ventures, and Careerera confirmed a surge in business travel.

The buzz of business travel is on the road again and this time it is three times more compared with March 2022. The pace of both domestic

and international work-related travel is going up, as organizations, employees and stakeholders prefer in-person meetings and events for better results. Work-related travel is a lucrative part of any airline's bottom line. People fly more for business travel as compared to leisure travel, the working class usually ends up sitting in the premium class or first-class seating.

Reasons behind business travel:

Networking

A face-to-face interaction involving a handshake is still the best way to interact with people- much better than virtual meetings or responding to dozens of texts and emails. In-person meetings help us get to know someone better.

Samples and Examples

New and existing investors need to see samples or examples of work before investing in any business. Either the investors or the company staff travels to get the sample check done.

Maintaining Relations

It is essential for any business to interact with their stakeholders, like meeting clients or suppliers and taking them for a meal or a drink as a way of showing your gratitude. Such gestures show that their worth is far above anything else.

Keeping an eye on conditions

Sometimes it is very important to keep a check on the working conditions of your suppliers. For example, someone having edibles made want to see if the process is being carried out hygienically, the conditions of the workers are good, or the fabric used for manufacturing garments is of good quality or not. Such conditions can never be assessed properly through a flat-screen.

Branch Visit

A company may have several branches at different locations and it's pivotal to visit them to know about their operations. This results in more work-related trips, some to check the working model, some for approving plots or land, and some for meeting the staff.

Meeting/seminars/events

There is no denial of the fact that in-person meetings have no replacement whatsoever as it adds a distinctive element to professional connections and creates a long-lasting impact. Seminars and other events are also becoming a great reason for business travel as they let employees communicate and share information, build teamwork and improve performance.

Bleisure Travel

It involves travel that combines both leisure and business elements. These trips motivate employees as they are being sent together for team-building-weekending- that involves travel for both work and leisure purposes. Sometimes even the business trips are extended for leisure purposes. Research shows that this trend is growing and millennials are the generation that is taking more such trips.

The writer is Co-founder and CEO, Travomint

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