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From The Editor's

# Desk



**T**he Big Fat Indian Weddings is an age old saying that just seems to be getting stronger with time. A staggering 1 crore weddings take place in India every year and the wedding industry is growing at 25 – 30% annually. People across the world dream of attending one, and people in the country go to extreme ends to have one! As per reports and analysis, India has 50 crore unmarried people with annual seekers of over 6 crore. Even if 20 percent of it materializes per year, that gives a sustainable market of 1.1-1.3 crore weddings in the country per year. The wedding industry is estimated to grow from its current US\$100 billion to probably become a US\$ 0.5 trillion sector in the next 10 years or so.

But keeping these facts and figures aside, Indian Weddings are all about rituals, traditions, dazzling dresses, mesmerising jewellery, breath-taking décor and scrumptious food... From starry Sangeet Nights to Colourful Haldi mornings, the Weddings Shenanigans are designed to keep the family on foot, while ensuring that they enjoy every minute of it. But planning a wedding is no easy task – and one of the key ingredients required to make this dish a success is the Perfect Venue.

With the craze of Destination Weddings fast catching up, from big lavish 5-stars to small boutique properties – all are finding its takers. Some today are even opting for small Cruise trips to say 'I-Do' and then there are some, who would transport the entire Band Baaja Baraat overseas and have their nuptials in the serene foreign locales. With the growing Bollywood craze and large disposable incomes, the trend of Destination Weddings is indeed a new rage.

Keeping all these factors in mind, BOTT is delighted to bring forth to you its Wedding Special issue, which touches upon various aspects of Weddings. In this issue, we have highlighted why some destination are popular for weddings in India while also highlighting the popular and plush venues in those states catering to the wedding business. We talk how some international destinations are dressing up pretty and attracting the big fat Indian wedding business to their country.

So friends, read all this along with our regular articles, interviews in the **July Issue of BOTT Magazine** and do share your feedback with us at [priyanka@bottindia.com](mailto:priyanka@bottindia.com)

Priyanka Saxena Ray



## IATO expresses gratitude to FM & GST Council

IATO expresses its gratitude to the Finance Minister, GST Council and the Chairman CBIC for favourably considering two of its recommendations- removal of, GST on services provided outside India to foreign tourists if they take combined package of India and neighbouring countries and secondly GST for the ferry service hired for transport of passengers including tourists used as public transport from point to point transport in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, in the GST Council meeting held in Chandigarh.

According to Mr. Rajiv Mehra, President IATO, "We have been recommending to the Ministry of Finance for the last couple of years in our budget recommendations to remove GST on services provided outside India to foreign tourists if they take a combined package of India and outside India. We thank the government for considering our request favourably and giving a clarification that 'Service provided by Indian Tour operator to a foreign resident for a tour partially in India and partially outside India is to be subject to tax proportionate to the tour conducted in India for such foreign tourist subject to conditions that this concession does not exceed half of tour duration'"



## Ras Al Khaimah selected to host 2023 Mini Football World Cup



Sports tourism is gaining momentum in Ras Al Khaimah with the destination named host of the 2023 Minifootball (WMF) World Cup, a mega international football competition held every two years that attracts thousands of spectators and fans from around the globe. Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) won the highly competitive bid to stage the 2023 tournament with the World Minifootball Federation (WMF) selecting the destination over other shortlisted contenders, including Manila and Budapest. Final tournament dates will be announced in the coming weeks.

## German Tourism launches new campaign – Embrace German Nature

Recognising an increased demand for outdoor experiences this summer among visitors from the Indian market, the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) is debuting the brand-new Embrace German Nature campaign that focuses on highlighting sustainable, open-air activities. Germany is home to more than 130 protected natural landscapes, including a plethora of stunning forests, lakes, valleys, and hiking and cycling trails just waiting to be explored. It also boasts three UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites, 16 UNESCO biosphere reserves, 16 national parks, and 106 nature reserves. "Germany's diverse selection of outdoor activities ensures something for everyone, from hiking trails to relaxing spa towns. Our Embrace German Nature campaign will improve access to and information about these opportunities even further, in a sustainable way," said Romit Theophilus, director German National Tourist Office, India (GNTO).





## Renest Hotels & Resorts launches their newest property in Haridwar

**R**enest Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of Renest Haridwar, which is the group's third property in the spiritual tourism sector, others being in Shirdi and Tirupati, and the hospitality chain's tenth hotel in the country. Renest Haridwar is an experiential boutique hotel situated on the Rishikesh Highway. The property is spread over 60,000 square feet of the holy land, situated at the Rishikesh Highway adjoining Sridhar Ashram, Motichur Range in Uttarakhand, India. It is within comfortable driving distance to popular tourist attractions such as the Rajaji National Park, Chilla Tiger Reserve and is also in close proximity to Har ki Pauri and Bharat Mata Mandir.



## Visit Portugal releases first online E-learning module for Indian travel trade



**V**isit Portugal has introduced the comprehensive new e-learning course "Portugal Expert E-learning program." This course will help agents to understand the country in detail. The training is split into multiple modules to offer in-depth knowledge on everything a travel agent would need to market the destination. The modules cover all aspects of the destination, from its culture to its seven distinct regions, along with the specialized modules such as shopping, gastronomy and accommodation. In addition, the training covers the specifics and advantages of MICE and weddings in Portugal. After successfully completing the programme, the agents will be certified as destination experts, and the first few agents will also be qualified for exciting rewards from Visit Portugal. Also, the certified agent will be eligible to be the part of the Expert club, where they will receive news and updates on the location directly from the tourism board.

## One Rep Global appointed India rep for Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa

**O**ne Rep Global is now appointed Indian representative for the newly launched Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa. Led by seasoned hotelier Hemant Mediratta, One Rep Global will lead the sales & marketing representation in India for this experiential resort that marks the debut of Hilton's flagship brand, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, in the Maldives.

"Maldives is amongst the top outbound destinations for luxury travellers from India. The market holds a huge potential for Hilton Maldives Amingiri Resort & Spa, a stunning all-villa property with a range of experiences to please all travellers across age groups. At One Rep Global, we are excited to be exclusively representing the property in India," said Hemant Mediratta, Founder – One Rep Global.





## Akasa Air gets Air Operator Certificate from DGCA

**A**kasa Air, the newest airline in India backed by investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, has received the nod from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to start operations. The airline today informed that it has been granted the Air Operator Certificate (AOC) by the civil aviation regulator in the country. In a statement, the airline said that the grant of the AOC is the final step of a comprehensive and rigorous process laid down by the DGCA and marks the satisfactory completion of all regulatory and compliance requirements for the airline's operational readiness. Akasa Air is planning to launch operations later this month, and the airline has already received delivery of its first Boeing 737 max aircraft last month. The aircraft was used for conducting its first proving flight to secure the DGCA licence. The first proving flights were on the Delhi-Mumbai route.



## LOT Polish Airlines resumes flights to Stuttgart / Germany



**A**fter a pandemic-related interruption, Star Alliance member LOT Polish Airlines has added flights to the German city of Stuttgart to its route network. Since July 1, 2022, the airline serves Stuttgart daily from its global Warsaw hub. LOT Polish Airlines' guests from India will benefit from hassle-free fast and seamless connectivity in Warsaw so that they reach Stuttgart on the same day of their departure from India with a short layover in the Polish capital where immigration into the Schengen area will take place.

## Banyan Tree appoints Tekla Maira as Regional Director of Sales – India

**B**anyan Tree Hotels and Resorts has appointed Tekla Maira as the Regional Director of Sales – India for its five key hotels and resorts in Thailand, namely Banyan Tree Bangkok, Banyan Tree Phuket, Angsana Laguna Phuket, Cassia Phuket and Homm Bliss Southbeach Patong.

"We are pleased to have Tekla, a well-known industry professional joined our team as Regional Director of Sales. Having created successes for different hotel brands in the luxury and premium space, Tekla's expertise and rich experience will see her implementing innovative sales and marketing strategies for our Thailand hotels post-COVID and create greater awareness for the global multi-brand ecosystem of Banyan Tree Group in India," said Benjawan Meksakul, Regional Director of Sales & Marketing – Thailand & Laos of Banyan Tree Group.





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## FIRST OPINION



"We were looking at the government to do away with taxes and extend support to our industry which is yet to revive from the long crises. However, with the increase, travel trade and hospitality will have to face the brunt majorly. Imposing 12% GST on hotels priced below INR 1000 is the biggest jolt to both travel and hospitality industry. Hospitality offered below INR 1000 drives the system and an increase at that level will take employment and business opportunities from many."

**-Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI**



"We are pleased to announce Bahrain as our 25th international and 99th overall destination in the 6E network. These new flights will enhance international connectivity and bolster trade, commerce and tourism between India and Bahrain which is known for its pearl diving and trading tradition. Bahrain will be the first post Covid international addition to the 6E network. We will strive to stay true to our promise of affordable fares, on-time performance, courteous and hassle-free service across wide network, on-board our lean clean flying machines."

**-Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer, IndiGo**



"TAFI and IDFC First Bank have signed an MoU, which is quite unique because we have negotiated an extremely low merchant fee for our members, which is under 0.8% for a domestic credit card. This becomes important because from July 4, a new system of settlement with credit and settlement with IATA kicks in where the financial security that an agent provides to IATA will determine the value of tickets that he or she can issue between settlements and therefore it's anticipated that there will be a certain pressure on cash flows. Thus, credit card usage and its low merchant fee becomes very important and this is another value add that we are providing to our members and we hope that this will encourage more people and more agents to propagate the use of credit cards settlement."

**-Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI**



"TAT is going all out to showcase the wonderful possibilities Thailand offers for the ideal Indian wedding. Destinations like Krabi, Hua Hin, Rayong, Pattaya, Phuket, and Ko Samui are already popular with Indian wedding couples and honeymooners, and this roadshow was a valuable platform from which to help us further grow this segment."

**-Yuthasak Supasorn, TAT Governor**



"Delhi is a global city and a shopping festival as planned by the government, will further the lure of the city. The shopping festival will have a positive impact on tourism in the city, both domestic and inbound. We have witnessed how Dubai Shopping Festival has put Dubai on map of world travellers. Delhi with its shopping malls, open air markets, eateries, cafes and world class hotels has a lot to offer to tourists. Though it might be a little early to give numbers, we definitely see occupancies and room rates spiralling during the period."

**-Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts**



"The Imperial is a true landmark and one of the Grand Dames of the East. I am delighted to especially return to India for this opportunity to spearhead this historic fabric and craft the hotel's future legacy, to provide our guests from India and around the world with an indelible experience."

**-Louis Sailer, Senior Executive Vice President, The Imperial New Delhi**



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# HAVE A 'DILDAAR' WEDDING IN OPULENT DELHI VENUES

Delhi, India's capital territory, is a massive metropolitan that offers the best of everything – history, location, monuments, hotels, food, shopping and perhaps the finest wedding venues in the country. From plush five star ballrooms to sprawling garden venues – the city offers them all. Here's a look at some of the reasons why Delhi is an ideal Wedding destination and some top notch wedding locations in NCR.



**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

## A COSMOPOLITAN HUB

Delhi is a shoppers' paradise and a great place to host a great wedding in an urban setting. This place is meant for all, be it a couple who want to get hitched in an intimate celebration or somebody who is looking for a lavish wedding. Delhi has it all. With so many wonderful venues, this place is an amazing location for your extraordinary stunning wedding, it is the place for you, undoubtedly.

## A COMPLETE PACKAGE!

Delhi being the massive metropolitan city in the country makes for a complete wedding package. With its stunning privately owned luxury farmhouse, amazing stunning garden, distinct and vibrant culture, hills, historical monuments, and amazing food, the place makes for an idyllic and gorgeous wedding. It is also brimming with wedding planners and people ready to arrange everything for your special day. You can even get customized wedding packages according to your choice, preferences, and budget. There are many wedding agencies or planners in Delhi, who can

help you book your wedding venue, arrange hotel accommodation for your wedding guests, take care of catering, décor etc. Also

## BUDGET FRIENDLY

Well, the cost of hosting a destination wedding in Delhi varies based on several aspects and factors. However, Delhi is very welcoming and the place cares for everyone. Hence, it offers wedding packages for almost all the budgets. Whether you are looking for a budget-friendly wedding or a big fat celebration, Delhi has it all. And, if budget is not a constraint for you, then you can even throw a lavish wedding party here in Delhi with as many as possible people you would want to attend your wedding.

## OFFERS PERFECT BREAK FOR WEDDING GUESTS

Whether you have visited Delhi earlier or not, the place has so much to offer and explore. And for the first timers, it is a mesmerizing place to have some wonderful time. Delhi is full of endless opportunities and possibilities to keep your family and friends busy. Vibrant markets, bustling streets, amazing monuments, mesmerizing India Gate, gorgeous revolving restaurant in CP, etc. too much to see in the





city. Needless to say it is the best place for girls and women for great shopping in their budget.

### AMAZING SPOTS FOR STUNNING WEDDING PHOTOS

Your wedding pictures are for lifetime and make the best memories of your wedding. In Delhi, you have opportunities to take photos on a bustling road, at the garden, amidst vibrant market, in some historical monument. In-fact, you can have your pre-wedding shoot planned in Delhi and you will be surprised to see the most stunning pictures of yours.

### DELHI'S POPULAR WEDDING VENUES INCLUDES

#### THE UMRAO, NEW DELHI

The Umrao is a regal and royal wedding venue. The property covers around 6 huge acres of land on the highway. Not only does it have a bunch of banquets to choose from but it also offers spacious rooms and suites for a comfortable stay for the guests.

#### THE LEELA PALACE, CHANAKYAPURI

Living and breathing the best city location, The Leela Palace in Chanakyapuri is known best for its intricate and magnificent architectural beauty apart from the brilliant functions it host. The palace has banquets that cover more than 21,000 sq. feet. They also have a lawn if one wishes to set up the wedding outdoors.

#### HYATT REGENCY

Rated among the top ten luxury hotels of Delhi, Hyatt Regency has rightly earned fame as one of the best wedding venues. This hotel is all feel for a wedding and even pre-wedding functions. They have a capacity to accommodate over 2000 guests at a time in their regency ballroom, oval room and living rooms together. With ballrooms and eminent facilities, comfortable wedding arrangements, scrumptious in-house catering and more, this venue tops all others.

#### TIVOLI GARDEN RESORT

Located on the hustling and lively road of South Delhi in Chattarpur, Tivoli Grand Resort is well-known and loved by the city. With grand spaces and mind-blowing amenities, the resort is perfect for hosting a wedding at. Its multi-purpose party halls and open lawn can accommodate a huge crowd.

#### ITC MAURYA NEW DELHI

Situated in the diplomat area of Central Delhi, the hotel has a vibrant and significant aura in the surroundings. The architect of the hotel is inspired by the great Mughal dynasty while



the amenities and hospitality are updated as per modern needs. This luxury hotel makes to be a great venue option for a wedding or pre-wedding function. It houses spacious ballroom and banquets at the offer of the clients as well as an outdoor lawn for an open-air wedding setting.

#### TAJ PALACE

Taj Palace is best known to host state-of-the-art weddings and special events, the hotel has an array of internal wedding venue options to choose from. With ballrooms ranging in capacity from 40 to over 1000, they have on offer an array of options for you to pick as per the needs.

#### JW MARRIOTT HOTEL NEW DELHI AEROCITY

JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity offers 511 stylish accommodations, personalized service and an ideal location for your stay in India. JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity's event space capacity ranges between 700 to 1400 people which helps you accommodate all your friends and relatives here to celebrate the auspicious occasion with them. The hotel comprises of an ample parking area, valet parking, basic light, electricity and backup, and furniture for your convenience. Their Grand Crystal Ballroom is the largest event



space which can easily seat around 1000 people. Their staff is quite helpful and ensures that everything is well taken care of.

#### LE MERIDIEN, NEW DELHI

The Le Meridien Delhi is an innovative concept that re-interprets the traditional hotel lobby into a social gathering place for creative minds to converse, debate and exchange. With over 20200 square feet of event space devoted to six meeting rooms, two ballrooms, and a boardroom, venues can be transformed into truly unique settings for every occasion from any events to hosting big fat Indian weddings.

#### JAYPEE VASANT CONTINENTAL

Another wedding venue that is located in the post diplomatic enclave is Jaypee Vasant continental. This hotel is well-known for its in-house dining options and exclusive wedding celebrations. It makes to be a perfect option if you wish your wedding to be hosted by experts and not novices.

In addition to these hotels, there are The ITC Hotel New Delhi, Roseate House Aerocity, New Delhi; Jaypee Vasant Continental, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi; Sheraton Saket, New Delhi; Welcomhotel Dwarka, New Delhi; The LaLiT New Delhi Connaught Place, New Delhi; Novotel Aerocity, New Delhi; The Claridges New Delhi.



# GET MARRIED IN THE LAND OF *Bollywood Celebs*

Destination weddings are the perfect amalgamation of picturesque landscapes, delectable local cuisines and a unique vibe which offers the couple and their family an experience to remember for life and doubles up as a vacation as well. Choosing the perfect destination is often the big question and amongst the various other destinations, we feel Maharashtra makes a great destination for weddings. Here's why...

## Shreya Shimpi

### WHY CHOOSE MAHARASHTRA AS YOUR WEDDING DESTINATION?

Aptly called the 'Gateway of India', Maharashtra boasts of a 720 km long coastline, pristine beaches, the mighty Sahyadris, formidable forts, hill stations with magnificent views, quaint villages and above all the Maximum City of Mumbai with all the glitz and glamour. With an incredible topography like this, Maharashtra is home to some of the finest resorts which offer aesthetic wedding venues, accommodation facilities and a rich culture which reflects in the scrumptious food and outstanding hospitality. This state has its speciality and identity, but it holds the essence of Indianness close to its heart. It ticks all the boxes that you would want for your wedding to be perfect and memorable and closer to culture.

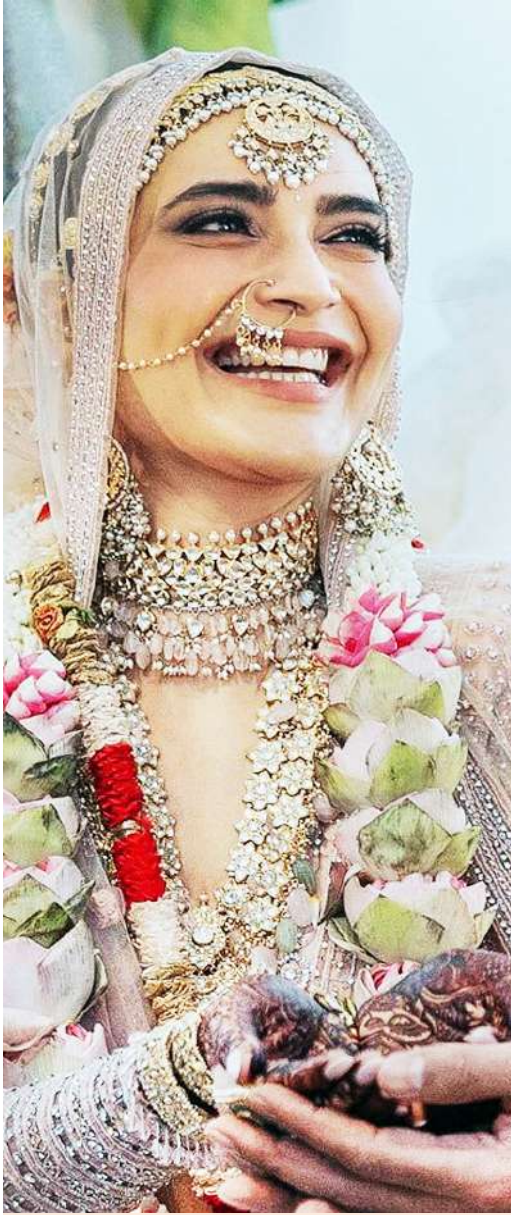
### LIST OF WEDDING VENUES IN MAHARASHTRA

We have curated a list of some of the finest wedding venues across Mumbai, Pune, Konkan, Alibaug, Mahabaleshwar etc. which are unique in their way.

- **Fort Jadhavgad:** A 320-year-old fortress







and the only heritage hotel in Maharashtra which offers a glimpse into the majestic Maratha legacy and its rich cultural heritage, just 22 km away from Pune with mesmerising views of the Sahyadris, that offers a majestic ambience for those who wish to marry in a regal style. Also a great pre-wedding photo-shoot location.

- **Sula Vineyards, Nasik:** A Greek-style amphitheatre set against the backdrop of green velvety vineyards makes it a great wedding venue. You and your partner can even enjoy a grape stomping session at the vineyards.
- Radisson Blu Resort and Spa, Alibaug accessible by jetty from The Gateway of India.
- Radisson Blu Resort and Spa, Karjat: Built in Balinese and Thai architectural style with mesmerising countryside views is ideal for dreamy weddings
- The Retreat Hotel, Madh Island away from the hustle and bustle of Mumbai, is a luxurious resort situated on a quaint beach in Madh.

- Lonavala offers some exquisite venues such as Hotel Lagoon, Fariyas Resort and Della Adventures. If you are planning a monsoon wedding, Lonavala is a treat to the eyes.
- Aamby Valley: A township known for its well-manicured lawns and luxurious accommodations. The Supreme Cottages Hotel and E.A.S.T Deck lakefront avenue are worth checking out if you are planning an intimate wedding.
- In addition to the above, Hotel Ekaant, The Retreat, Lavasa; Blue Ocean Resort and Spa, Ganpatipule; Lotus Eco Beach Resort, Dapoli and Rasmukh Resort, Mahabaleshwar are some other noteworthy venues for Big Fat Indian Weddings.

#### FIVE STAR HOTELS IN MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra has some of the finest five-star hotels which are excellent for hosting weddings. For those who wish to exchange their wedding vows in grandeur and opulence, these properties offer beautiful wedding venues, luxurious accommodation, world-class cuisines and unparalleled hospitality.

- The Taj Mahal Palace, Apollo Bunder, Mumbai
- Trident, Nariman Point
- Oberoi, Nariman Point
- Sahara Star, Vile Parle
- Taj Lands' End, Bandra
- ITC Maratha, Andheri East
- J W Marriott Sahar
- Novotel Mumbai, Juhu Beach
- St. Regis, Lower Parel
- Grand Hyatt, Santacruz
- Renaissance (now Westin) Hotel and Convention Center, Powai
- Le Meridien, Mahabaleshwar

Be it an intimate ceremony or a big fat wedding, these hotels are a great choice for destination weddings and will add a touch of grandiosity to your festivities.

#### LOCAL CUISINE

'Laughter is the brightest in the place where the food is good' Food is an integral part of weddings and when wedding festivities are complimented with.



# FUN AND FROLIC TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT *Weddings in Punjab*

Punjab is one of the most unique states in India for it offers the best of both – luxury as well as homely vibes. Brimming with a historical past, the cities in Punjab have recently become hot spots for big fat Indian weddings, thanks to the constant growing infrastructure. Now with a huge bunch of plush properties and farmhouses, many NRI's, settled abroad, don't run to metro cities for their wedding and instead want to host lavish weddings in Punjab only.



## ► BOTT DESK

The traditional Bhangra, Punjabi poetry, a buzzing film industry and of course the delights of delicious Punjabi cuisine, all come together to make a wedding in Punjab a truly memorable and exhilarating experience. Punjabi weddings and related ceremonies are a strong reflection of the true Punjabi culture and they are renowned for their rich rituals, songs, dances, food and dresses, all of which have evolved over the past centuries. Weddings in Punjab can be arranged anywhere in Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar and more!

Punjab has many exciting things that you would not find or rather experience in any other state. The reasons to choose Punjab as your wedding destination includes –

## ATTRACTIVE SHOPPING IN PUNJAB

The land of Bhangra has many things to offer when it comes to shopping. You can shop the best of the best in Chandigarh, Amritsar, Patiala and Jalandhar. The things you should include in your trousseau includes the beautiful Phulkari embroidered Jutties and also other juttis embellished with pearls, stones, beads and coloured threads. Patiala is a great market even for Phulkaris.

Your wedding attire can also be bought in Punjab with the famous phulkari work done on it. Other designer lehengas are also available. Honii Sandhu, is one of the famous designers of Punjab who has been designing bridal wear for a decade. Sonu Gandhi is another bridal wear



designer who has his stores in Jalandhar and Ludhiana. These designers gives you a stylish look with a touch of traditionalism.

## LIP-SMACKING CUISINE IN PUNJAB

This is the criteria that you have to be least worried if you are doing a wedding in Punjab. The traditional Punjabi dishes are the best taste available here and you can also have myriad of dishes of different cuisines at your wedding including Lebanese, Mexican, Italian or simply anything. Since Punjabis are foodie, there are no dearth of great cooks and





caterers here!

### OUTSTANDING CAR RENTALS FOR YOUR DREAM VIDAAI

Wedding is a time when you want to sit in the best of the cars for your baraat and post wedding celebrations. There are many car rental options in Punjab that have the best in luxury Mercedes-Benz, Porsche Panameras and BMWs. You name it and they have it. So arrive at your wedding in style. You can also rent vintage classic cars and make an entry like a royal prince. The Legends car rental in Mohali provides you with these vintage cars.

### Some of the best Wedding Venues in Punjab are –

- J W Marriott Chandigarh
- Taj Chandigarh
- Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Chandigarh Zirakpur
- Ramada by Wyndham Amritsar
- Taj Swarna Amritsar
- Radisson Blu Hotel MBD Ludhiana
- Holiday Inn Amritsar Ranjit Avenue
- Radisson Blu Hotel Amritsar
- Keys Select by Lemon Tree Hotels, Ludhiana
- Hyatt Regency Ludhiana
- Park Plaza Ludhiana
- Hyatt Regency Amritsar
- Hotel PR Residency





# UTAH: A TREASURE TROVE OF BOUNTIFUL WONDERS AND ADVENTURES



Utah's location at the crossroads of the western United States means travellers enjoy easy access to The Greatest Snow on Earth, the Mighty 5 national parks and everything in between. Utah's landscape is varied, ranging from high-desert plateaus to alpine meadows and snow-covered peaks to bird-filled wetlands. Across all the varied terrain you'll find different national parks and monuments, state parks and cultural and historic activities, not to mention non-stop outdoor recreation.

## THE ICONIC MONUMENT VALLEY

One of the landmark places of the American West and the sacred heart of the Navajo Nation, is the mesmerising Monument Valley. Visitors can explore the 17-mile scenic drive in private vehicles or book a jeep tour to explore the area's backroads and sacred lands with the help of a local guide.

The valley is host to towering sandstone rock formations that have been sculpted over time and soar 400 to 1,000 feet above the valley

floor. Combined with the surrounding mesas, buttes and desert environment, it truly is one of the natural wonders of the world. Stay the night and step out after dark to appreciate the timelessness and wonder of the Milky Way. Stopping to appreciate the rhythms of this ancient, this sacred land has the ability to change your perspective if you take the time to let it.

Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park is located on the Navajo Nation Reservation, along the state line of southeast Utah and northeast





Arizona. The park is a three hour drive from Moab, a little under one hour from Bluff and about five hours from Phoenix. Check ahead for current conditions and entrance fees. The entrance fee is \$10 per person or \$20 per vehicle (up to four people, \$6 per additional person). Children ages 9 and younger can enter for free.

Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park is located on the Navajo Nation Reservation, along the state line of southeast Utah and northeast Arizona. The park is a three hour drive from Moab, a little under one hour from Bluff and about 5 hours from Phoenix. Check ahead for current conditions and entrance fees. The entrance fee is \$10 per person or \$20 per vehicle (up to four people, \$6 per additional person). Children 9 and younger are free.

## Things to do in Monument Valley

### • Guided Jeep Tours

Butte after butte and mesas upon mesas are calling your name. Guided jeep tours of Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park are a great way to take in the iconic landscape. It is just as much fun for kids as adults, and a great morning or afternoon activity for families.

### • Hiking the Wildcat Trail

The Wildcat Trail is a 3.2-mile loop hike (4 miles total, including the return to the trailhead and parking area) into one of the most scenic areas that Monument Valley has to offer. This trail lets hikers feel like they stepped back in time into the Wild West.

### • Mexican Hat

Mexican Hat, one of Utah's strangest rock formations, balances a flattened pancake disk atop a 300-foot-high talus cone. It's a novel route and quick summit for expert desert rock climbers.

### • Monument Valley Area Scenic Drives

A scenic drive around Monument Valley is one of the area's most popular activities, and for good reason. High-clearance vehicles are recommended to navigate the dirt, gravel and red rock road.





# Enjoy a *Beach Wedding* in GOA

If you have always dreamt about exchanging your wedding vows with the mystic ocean as a romantic backdrop, the pleasing sound of waves singing their song, the azure sky as your ceiling and white sand beneath your feet, Goa is your place to be! If you and your significant other are beach aficionados, Goa will provide the perfect idyllic setting for your fairy-tale wedding. Situated between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea it is rightfully known as the 'Pearl of the Orient'.

**Shreya Shimpi**

## WHAT GOA OFFERS?

Despite being one of the smallest states in India, Goa is blessed with sun-kissed, palm-fringed beaches, lush green landscapes, majestic forts, ancient temples and cathedrals, mouth-watering food, felicitous weather, postcard-perfect roads, impressive infrastructure and happy folk. It has a prismatic blend of Hindu, Catholic and Portugal influences which reflects through its culture, history, cuisine and unparalleled hospitality. With great connectivity by air, road and rail Goa has gained popularity as being one of the most sought-after wedding destinations. It doubles up as a vacation for you and your guests and offers an unforgettable experience. If you wish to have an intimate wedding or a big fat one, Goa has something in store for everyone.

## WEDDING VENUES

If you wish to host a wedding in Goa, there are a plethora of options to choose from. There are many moderately-priced venues and exotic luxurious properties which you may choose as per your budget and preference. Here is a list of a few such wedding venues in Goa.

- Longuinhas Beach Resort, South Goa: amazing beachfront, sprawling lawns, magnificent halls with sea-views. It would be a great experience to hear the sea waves as the couple takes the pheras.
- Alila Diwa, Majorda: Offers a great ambience, accommodation and hospitality. It offers three outdoor and two indoor venues customisable as per your requirements.
- Cidade de Goa: Panoramic view of the Vianguinum Beach with seven magnificent venues for various ceremonies that can accommodate 40 to 470 guests.

Additionally, Royal Courtyard (Corlim), Golden Orchid (Mapusa), River Beach Resort (Pernem) etc. are also some great venues which are worth checking out.

## FIVE-STAR PROPERTIES

If you wish to get hitched in grandeur and make the rendezvous



unforgettable, Goa has some magnificent five-star properties.

- The Leela, Cavelossim: When it comes to hospitality, The Leela is a name to reckon with. Top-class facilities, luxurious accommodation, and scrumptious food make this property a popular choice for weddings. The architecture is inspired by the Vijayanagar Palace and exudes a marvellous aesthetic appeal.
- The Lalit Golf and Spa Resort, Palolem: A sprawling property with beautifully landscaped lawns designed by a famous French landscape artist which shall make for an excellent and romantic backdrop for your pre-wedding shoots as well as the other ceremonies
- Taj Vivanta, Candolim: When it comes to Taj, the hospitality, food, ambience and accommodation is unparalleled. Hosting a wedding here will be indeed memorable for you and your guests.
- Grand Hyatt Resort: Known for its splendid architecture, they have a variety of indoor and outdoor venues for you to choose from for your festivities.
- Kenilworth Resort and Spa: A stunning property just 12 minutes away from Dabolim International Airport, which offers the perfect combination of mesmerizing beach views, water sports and a great variety of other activities. A great venue to get hitched in an opulent style.





- Zuri White Sands, Varca: Another great venue for a fairy-tale wedding which you have always dreamt about. This place has a gorgeous beachfront, well-manicured lawn and a great vibe. It can accommodate nearly 200 to 1000 guests.
- Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel, Candolim: A luxurious hotel which provides good accommodation, great cuisines and wonderful hospitality.
- Royal Courtyard Goa, Corlim: If you have a big list of guests to be invited, this can be your wedding venue for sure! They have magnificent gazebos and terrace gardens and can accommodate nearly 1200 to 1800 guests. In addition to these, The Westin, Goa Marriott Resort and Spa, Taj Exotica Resort and Spa, Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia Resort, Radisson Blu Resort, Le Meridien, Holiday Inn Resort and Taj Holiday Village Resort and Spa are a few more splendid five-star properties which you can check out for your big day.

## LOCAL CUISINE

Good food sets the mood for a great event and we cannot agree more. This paradise of South Asia is indeed an utopia for food- lovers. Goa has an interesting culinary repertoire as it has been influenced by various cultures. Goa is predominantly known for its delectable seafood. Rice and fish curry are the staple food here. Pomfret, mackerel, sardines, crabs, prawns, and lobsters (in the biggest possible size that you could imagine) cooked in a coconut and aromatic spices are a delight for foodies. Your guests will surely enjoy the local Goan cuisine as well.

## CELEBRITY WEDDINGS

Cricketer Yuvraj Singh tied the knot to Hazel Keech at Hotel Teso Waterfront at Siolem. Former Miss Universe Lara Dutta got hitched to ace tennis player Mahesh Bhupati at Sunset Point, Candolim. Other celebrities who chose Goa for their wedding festivities includes comedian Bharti Singh, Mouni Roy and Sanya Irani.





# 5 reasons to choose *Kerala as your Wedding destination*

Picturesque scenery of back water amidst lush green landscapes, calming symphony of crystal clear beaches, exotic cuisine to tingle your taste buds and traditions full of vibrant art forms to keep you relaxed & entertained throughout the excitement of getting married. Kerala's generous natural beauties, green hills, sparkling backwaters, sun-drenched beaches and unique mix of ancient and contemporary cultures offer a larger than life wedding experience for any couple.



## Sapna Vaid

**K**erala can be one stop shop destination for all wedding ceremonies, starting from Pre-wedding shoot in tranquil backwaters, wedding ceremony to transform your nuptials into a celebration of a lifetime, followed by honeymoon in secluded beach on a private island to celebrate the romance in your own paradise.

**STUNNING WEDDING VENUES:** Kerala offers alluring natural beauty for couples to embark on a new beginning and an auspicious environment to tie the knot in God's own country. September to March is the perfect weather to plan your wedding in Kerala. The yearlong moderate weather of Kerala is apt to enjoy each and every ritual and ceremony to the fullest. Though it's always advisable to pre plan your wedding month keeping in mind the availability of venues and weather accordingly.

- **TAJ BEKAL RESORT AND SPA-** Bekal is an enchanting village in North Kerala with sun kissed beaches crowned with majestic forts and has a history of rich traditional stories from ancient times. The exterior and interiors of the resort are designed in traditional decor that gives the space a very homely feel. Bekal tranquility makes the couple feel stillness of time to capture the most beautiful moment of life.
- **VASUNDHARA SAROVAR PREMIERE** – Kerala's luxury 5 Star Resort set aside the astonishing backwaters of Vayalar near Kumarakom. It's a perfect combination of a small luxurious palace in a calm environment to seal the most beautiful moments of your life.
- **RAMADA RESORT COCHIN-** Brace yourself to explore Kerala's

undeniable charm! Impeccable hospitality and heritage culture. Your entire guest couldn't get enough of local cuisine and tradition.

- **THE ZURI KUMARAKOM KERALA RESORT AND SPA-** A charming contemporary resort set on the bank of Lake Vembanad, The zuri kumarakom is a quaint 5 star resort hidden in coconut trees. Whether you are looking forward to host a backwater theme wedding or a garden venue, The Zuri Kumarakom is undeniably the best choice.
- **THE RAVIZ KOVALAM-** If you've always wanted to have a dreamy beachside wedding, The Raviz Kovalam would be an ideal choice to caress you with an array of idyllic beaches, dotted by coconut trees and punctuated by salty ocean breeze.

**VIBRANT WEDDING DÉCOR:** Welcome your guest with traditional Kerala wedding decors, which mostly consist of flower decoration and colorful rangoli designs. Couples can choose their decoration ideas as per the culture values they follow, be it Christian wedding with white & green theme in surreal backwater or a classic kanjivaram sun gold theme to entice your guest. The rich combination with hints of red is the best way to ace a lavish decor. One can customize this by adding traditional diya's, candles, floral arches, blossoming trees, chandeliers kneeler cushions, and velvet chairs. With waterfalls, mystic mists and cotton candy clouds to complete the package, your wedding will have a spectacular charming aura of happiness.

**TRADITIONS TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED AND ENGAGED:** A destination wedding in Kerala is beyond backwaters and coconut



trees. Usually Kerala weddings are stuffed with lots of essential rituals and ceremonies. Hindu weddings are typically a tranquil affair and there is not much hullabaloo involved in them. Apart from emulated ceremonies, there are some regional extravaganzas and traditional performances like; thiruvathira kali, kathakali and mohiniyattam. One can transform the traditional ceremony to the modern and contemporary ones with flamboyant celebrations. Couples can try to incorporate a live music band, light classical evening or a Bollywood night to render romantic ambience to the celebration. Some of the unconventional ideas to keep up the zest during weddings would be instrumental fusion music; a magic show would be a real treat for the kids at the wedding or performances by family members.

**INDULGE IN AYURVEDIC THERAPY FOR YOUR 'BIG DAY'**- Every couple wants to look best on their 'Big Day'. While in the process of looking best, couples tend to ignore the more important aspect of feeling best. If you're not feeling best and only in a rush to complete the tasks, then the essence of the journey of getting married is lost. Ayurvedic therapies could be a real savior in making you feel rejuvenated. Kerala Ayurvedic treatments combine detoxification and rejuvenation effectively. Once a person is detoxed and cleared of all the toxins and doshas that are harmful for the body, it is but natural to feel rejuvenated and revitalised.

**LIP SMACKING CUISINE** – Food is the heart of every event and weddings are the perfect event to enjoy the scrumptious delicacies. Kerala cuisine has a variety of vegetarian and nonvegetarian dishes simmered in fresh coconut to pleasure your taste sensation. In a wedding, there are three main ingredients, bride, groom and Food. Couples can plan their wedding menu by keeping their native food items along with a treat of authentic Kerala cuisine. In most Kerala weddings, one of the popular attractions is a wedding feast called 'Sadya'. The Sadya is served in a plantain leaf and there is a specific order in which dishes are being served. The side dishes are served first followed by the main dishes. Several things combine well to offer a wonderful experience for the guest and they include uniqueness of delicacies, method in which dishes are served and the untarnished natural beauty of Kerala. It can be said that Kerala wedding feast offers an unforgettable experience for the guests. Taking vows on the sandy shore encircled by greenery, the couples let their inner self run free in the spacious, lush environs to orchestrate a wedding where their loved ones indulged in unhindered fun.





# DREAM WEDDINGS COME TRUE AT **ANANTA HOTELS & RESORTS**



*Weddings are a special time when not only two souls come together in a beautiful union, but also their families. It is a time for happiness and joy that transcends even time and space - everlasting and ever-present. Although the traditions and customs may vary from each party, we help you realize each and every one of those without a hitch! At Ananta Hotels & Resorts, we help you create memories that last for a lifetime. Organize outstanding events and elegant weddings at the exclusive venues of our resorts across Rajasthan. We offer luxurious banqueting facilities that include sprawling lawns, grand ballrooms, and technologically equipped boardrooms. Our event management team takes care of your every need, from catering to layout and decoration, and makes sure that you can enjoy your event without worry! We also have an expert team of chefs, who would create the finest delicacies for your guests, and make sure that your celebrations are seamless and perfect.*





## SPECIAL FEATURE





# Destination Weddings in the most Royal Style

The Grandeur of Rajasthan's palaces and forts entice couples to be princess bride and majestic groom, straight from the fairy-tale. Nothing beats Rajasthan, when it comes to big fat Indian weddings at the most stunning and lavish places with ancient forts, marble palaces, lush gardens, cinematic pavilions, surreal lake view and sand dunes offers celebration of a lifetime. Here's a look at some of its grand venues and palaces.



## Sapna Vaid

From extravagant palaces to secluded resorts, there are so many unique options in Rajasthan to make your destination wedding a lifetime event. Feeling and living the Rajputana lifestyle with all the traditions and customs that Rajasthan withhold for ages, will be bliss. The rich & rooted culture that Rajasthan carries is what makes it the perfect destination for royal wedding.

Planning a destination wedding in Rajasthan has no shortages of grand venues to choose from. The Only problem the couple would face is to narrow down the list of locations that fit into their wedding theme and style perfectly. Rajasthan provides world class solutions

for your dream destination weddings including a romantic awe inspiring venue, flawless event coordination, easily connected with major international airports and a variety of scrumptious delicacies to please your taste sensation. November to February would be the best time to plan a destination wedding in Rajasthan.

## UMAID BHAWAN PALACE, JODHPUR

Umaid Bhawan palace was built by Maharaja Umaid Singh ji, who was also known as "Builder King". The palace was built between 1928 and 1943 with a blend of Rajput and Mughal architecture.

We all have heard about famous celebrity couples tying the knot in Rajasthan, however the most popular amongst them was Nickyanka's wedding (Priyanka Chopra & Nick Jonas). This property managed by the Taj group has become a hot spot for celebrity weddings. This





majestically picturesque Umaid Bhawan Palace that had made their wedding a grandeur. Home of Jodhpur's erstwhile royal family and currently the world's sixth largest private residence, Umaid Bhawan Palace offers the historical blue city, vast dunes, and nearby Mehrangarh Fort, known for its rich heritage yellow sandstone architecture and luxurious amenities. This epic view of Mehrangarh Fort will act great for your wedding photography. Nestled on the lap of the highest hill on Jodhpur, Chittar Hills, this heritage hotel of Rajasthan will make your dream wedding come true.

#### TAJ LAKE PALACE, UDAIPUR

This palace is no less than a paradise, with a stunning view of the Aravalli Hills, this island resort is framed by the beauty of the lakes of Udaipur. Built on the tranquil waters of Udaipur lake Pichola, This iconic Taj lake Palace is the best among all the princely palaces of Rajasthan. For a beautiful intimate wedding, this palace would be a bit expensive but for a royal wedding it will be worth every penny. Lake Palace is where royalty used to reside, and this heritage palace was converted into an exquisite luxury hotel for all those who wish to experience a royal wedding destination. The palace has been beautifully maintained with its rich heritage intact, retaining its original charm and character. This 18th century heritage hotel floating on an island on Lake Pichola gives you a spectacular view of the lakes all day long.

Couples can indulge in a romantic boat dinner along with their loved ones to cherish the moment all their lives. This resort serves a variety of cuisines along with traditional Rajasthani food in a royal style butler service to make you live like Rajputana.

#### MUNDOTA PALACE AND RESORT, JAIPUR

Perched on the foot of Aravalli Hills, this is the best resort for destination weddings in Jaipur amidst sand dunes. This 15th century Palace and resort is a beautiful showcase of Rajput heritage with intricate carvings on the stone pillars, broad courtyards, terraces, charming pavilions and lush gardens. This Palace is surely the ideal wedding destination to have a royal Indian wedding. This hotel has 15 varied venues to host grand wedding ceremonies, events especially mehendi and sangeet. Couples can plan and perform their wedding functions in any of the exotic venues as per their preference. Moreover, this place has a Polo ground accommodating some of the top notch horses in India. So If you're someone who's fond of regal and royal cultural activities and would love to flaunt this off to your international guests, then this place is a must try. Jeep safari is another one of the amenities that they proudly provide to their honourable guests.







### SURYAGARH, JAISALMER

A destination wedding at Suryagarh is the best way to start your married life. Known for its extraordinary comfort and hospitality, this beauty holds the past tradition and culture of Rajasthan like no other. It is in the heart of Jaisalmer, The Thar desert. Couples can opt for either an intimate affair or a grand celebration, this palace and resort is an all-rounder in keeping in mind the modern conveniences. Suryagarh Jaisalmer is a fabulous yellow sandstone property situated along the old silk route. Its warm, inviting exterior is surrounded by stately gardens and courtyards are a classic venue for a regal wedding. Safety of their guests along with hygiene and sanitisation is the top on the priority list of this palace. Couples and their families can enjoy the fun activities like camel ride, dune bashing and archery. Guests can also enjoy an evening with Mehboob Khan and folk music. The palace's traditional architecture was designed to keep cool during the searing heat of summer months. Its 83 lavish guest rooms and suites with modern amenities are the most beautiful settings for a wedding in Jaisalmer. The Courtyard and the two gardens are some of the major assets for holding a grand wedding party.

### SIX SENSES FORT BARWARA

A beautiful 14th century fort sensitively converted to become a Six Senses sanctuary of well-being, the Six Senses Fort Barwara was recently in news for hosting the grand Katrina Kaif – Vicky Kaushal Wedding. Originally owned by a Rajasthani Royal Family, the fort faces the Chauth ka Barwara Mandir temple. The significant conservation effort incorporates two palaces and two temples within the walled fort. The design of Six Senses resort in Rajasthan reinterprets the gracious and regal ambiance of a bygone era dating back 700 years. The historic fort has been sensitively preserved and converted, and enjoys a sensational view of the lake and temple. The landscaping integrates purely endemic plants and water features. There are 48 suites ranging from 753 square feet (70 square meters) to 3,014 square feet (280 square meters). The



East Wing overlooks the countryside and the West Wing offers views to the Barwara village and beyond. Each accommodation is designed in contemporary Rajasthani style, reinterpreting the fort's rich history while subtly incorporating state-of-the-art technology along with handmade mattresses and soft cotton bedding to give guests a luxurious staying experience. In addition to the some outstanding wedding venue options, the hotel also offers its dedicated service in helping arrange your entire wedding.

Rajasthan is undoubtedly the jewel of rich culture, heritage and tradition in India's crown. All four cities Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jaipur and Jaisalmer, are a popular destination for weddings in Rajasthan. The weddings here range from traditional Indian ceremonies to more casual western ones with endless possibilities. Filled with beautiful palaces, forts and Havelis, Rajasthan is without a doubt the best place for a destination wedding in India.



# Rajasthan gets a new luxury address with Nest Jaipur

Set in a serene region, away from the hustle of the city, The Nest Resort, Jaipur is an urban destination in The Pink City. Offering a soothing balance of indoor and outdoor venues, The Nest has become one of the most sought-out locations for destination weddings, corporate getaways and social celebrations. **Mr. Manoj Thapa, General Manager, Nest Jaipur**, shares more details in an exclusive chat with BOTT.



**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

## Association with Nest Jaipur

I joined The Nest Jaipur in January 2022, which is like seven months prior while it was still a pre-opening hotel. Initially, the hotel had to open in early last year but with the pandemic coming and going, it got delayed. However, it was soft opened in July 2021 and have been keeping busy since then, organising few weddings and arranging stays. We were also in the process of standardising all procedures, making SOPs for department, doing a brand orientation, trying to place Nest as a new brand in the luxury segment.

## What makes Nest special?

We are a new baby in the market, but one that has a plan. The owner has a vision in place for Nest, which is why we didn't sign up with any of the brands because most of the brands are international and national brands and we wanted to make our own image in the market. The Nest Jaipur has all the essence of being a luxury brand. We are a 107 key hotels, 99 rooms and eight suites and the hotel is spread over in nine acres of land. The best part is that the hotel is constructed with a lot of love and passion. It is a perfect amalgamation of a very cosmopolitan and ethnic Rajasthan. Each room has a story to tell. So every room has a different architecture. Yes, different architecture! Different paint, different theme, different look and feel. So if you are staying in Nest, even for the 10th time, you would not feel that you're staying in a hotel, where you have already stayed before. All the suites have different themes, for example, we have the Monsoon Suite, Autumn Suite, Winter Suite and every suite tells you a story. Like monsoon suite has the essence of this rain drop. So all the wallpapers which have been installed in suites are customized. It is a unique hotel that offers a different experience each time you stay with us. Also, connectivity to Jaipur is soon going to get stronger. Once the construction of the final



leg of the Delhi-Jaipur highway is complete, we would only be at a distance of 3-hour's drive from Gurugram! The Nest is situated a little outside the city lines, giving people a breather from the town traffic and bringing us closer to Delhi or any other people coming to Jaipur by road.

## Occupancies

At the moment, we are doing about 35% to 40%. But by the end of this year, we are targeting an occupancy of 65%. And going forward, we'll see the flow and the influx which is coming from outside. Inbound is not open as yet. Inbound going to open from September, so we will see from September to March just to watch the traffic. And then we will project the next year.

## Expansion plans

The owners of the property are not hoteliers and have a strong expansion plan in place. However, post Covid, they want to understand the hospitality market first before making their move. They want to explore and seek the correct opportunity to be at the right place at the right



time. Currently, they have a land banks in Goa, Jaipur and few other places and their plan is to make another five hotel in ten years' time, which is a very optimistic thought. So even if you come back with three more hotels, I think that would be a great growth trajectory.

## Next new hotel

Our immediate next hotel would be in Goa, in 2023. So currently, we are testing the market at this point in time and in March 2023 we will decide whether we will go for a luxury destination resort or we would go for a more a business hotel. We would also look at doing a mix of corporate as well as luxury resort. We don't want to brand ourselves under one segment hotel. It would be more corporate and wedding destination hotel. Our Jaipur hotel too is along the same lines. We have a lot of corporate foot prints coming into the hotel. The fact that we are situated next to the Mahindra World City plays a major role.

So going forward, we would be more of a MICE and a wedding destination hotel than of FIT.



# Domestic Tourism

## *has always been important*

With 6 Guinness World Records for philanthropy under his belt, **Prince of Udaipur, Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar** has his 'Heart' in the right place. As one of the prominent faces of tourism in Rajasthan, he believes that domestic tourism is going to grow big and will always be an important segment for one and all.

**Rai Umraopati Ray**

**Post pandemic, what are your thoughts as far as travel, tourism, hospitality and other allied sectors are concerned?**

Firstly, we definitely hope, feel, keep our fingers crossed and pray that everything bounces back to its optimal levels. We all know and realise that the amount of suffering hotels, airlines, all segments of travel and tourism have gone through. Hopefully, things are looking better and the fact that such niche conferences (GDEC 2022) are taking place and people are coming in such large numbers is in itself a great step. The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Every adversity gives birth to something new, something different. We all hope that this will lead to new trends, a new wave of collaborations and partnerships.

One thing, which we all have understood is the interdependence of various other industries is exceptionally critical and important. There is nothing that can run in isolation. For instance, our travel and tourism industry is heavily dependent upon the aviation sector. Thus, it is time for all of us to come together, support each other and take our industry to new heights.

**The concept of Destination Wedding has evolved a lot. With so many varieties and destinations available, how do you see Rajasthan faring as an exotic wedding destination?**

At the end of the day, the more places, the more venues, the more spaces come up, it kind of concretises your own standing that much more. It works in our favour. The more places we have, there will be more comparability of all aspects. For instance, whoever realised or whoever thought in the wildest of dreams that Lake Como of Italy will ever be compared to the lakes in Udaipur. But it is happening now. It is no more







about just cities or places, people talk about in a very fluid form without geographical boundaries. I don't see it as a disadvantage. The pie is increasing and so will the revenue.

Add to this, it also takes care of the complacency part of things. So people cannot get lazy, complacent or overconfident if they want to be at the top of their game. It is a great leveller in that sense. At the end, it is about choices of the people and we should respect that.

**As one of the prominent leaders representing tourism and hospitality sectors in Rajasthan, how important is domestic tourism in the present scenario?**

As far as domestic tourism is concerned, we owe it to our country and countrymen. The number of people who have visited Rajasthan from Gujarat is phenomenal. The amount of people who have flocked in from neighbouring states is absolutely amazing. For the longest time, the domestic market has been huge in terms of people coming from all across the country and supporting the people of Rajasthan. We see a lot of visitors from places like Kolkata and cities of Gujarat. A lot of them have their roots in Rajasthan and they are in huge numbers. They come back to celebrate occasions and festivals which gives a lot of momentum to the local economy.

In the last couple of years, with international travel cut off, a lot of domestic travellers came to Rajasthan. Not only to our State but people went to new destinations all over the country. People explored India like never before. Fortunately, Udaipur is aptly located, a 55-minutes flight from Delhi and Mumbai and an 8-hour drive from both metro cities so we saw a lot of people coming in for short holidays and in very good numbers. Thus the domestic market is very important, it has always been important and it will be important in the future. Travellers from abroad are most welcome. It is nice to have a bit of a variety, a bit of a mix but when your own fellow countrymen travel, you share your own culture,

heritage and tradition with them, that is a different set of joy.

**What are your plans for HRH Group of Hotels? Any new property expected this fiscal?**

There is a lot of reworking of strategies at this point in time. Yes, we have been looking at a lot of spaces. In terms of new properties, we are concentrating on fixing the ones we have at this point in time. Constant up gradation of heritage property is no less than opening a new one. These heritage properties require a lot of hard work, effort, sweat, blood and money. So presently, we are focusing on this and as the market opens up and business starts, we shall look at new opportunities.

**As a celebrated philanthropist, what have been your key focus areas? Any new social drive or campaign?**

The Covid-19 pandemic has been hard on every Indian household in terms of managing health, finances and livelihood. I wanted to make sure that we take care of the immediate people in our community by focussing on their food requirements and by providing them clothes. While people may end up talking about my 6 Guinness World Records in the last 4 years, I am happy to share that on an everyday basis, there is constantly something happening either with local communities, on animal welfare or upkeep of heritage buildings.

**Anything more you would like to share?**

Yes, it would be great if we could sensitise or inspire people to experience and explore local places, culture, traditions and communities. The general spirit should be to go out and explore places within 100-kms distance. Sometimes, there are some phenomenal places to discover and it gives a boost to the local tourism.



# It is time to make tourism a priority sector in India: Naveen Kundu



EbixCash is probably the only company of its-kind in Asia as we cover every aspect of the landscape of travel from online, to offline, to inbound, to outbound, to domestic, to cruises, to MICE, to corporate travel, to visa, almost everything, says **Naveen Kundu, Managing Director, EbixCash**

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

**If you could just take me through the growth of your company in the last few years?**

EbixCash is a consortium of companies which acquired 26 companies, invested upwards of \$750 million in India between 2017 to 2019 and centralised virtually everything at the core and created what you see now. Though we do four large businesses but you can see the functionalities of finance, insurance, fintech, B2C, travel all put together under EbixCash which was profitable from day one and has continued to be profitable and has consistently kept growing.

For instance, take our Payments business, in which we do gift cards, inward remittances, outward remittances etc. In inward remittances, we are the market leaders in India because we are in exclusive tie-up with Money Gram and we control about 80 to 90 per cent share of Western Union and about 70 per cent share of Ria Money Transfer. In Foreign Exchange vertical, we are the largest in the country. We are at 26 airports in India.

Coming to travel, the idea was to be in the entire landscape of travel so we bought Via.com, Mercury, Leisure Corporation, Sastiticket, and several more with the objective to have both strong online and offline presence. So we are probably the only company of its kind in Asia as we cover every aspect of the landscape of travel from online, to offline, to inbound, to outbound, to domestic, to cruises, to MICE, to corporate travel, to visa, everything. We do it all. We are the largest in Indonesia and the Philippines. We have a very strong presence in Singapore, Dubai, Malaysia and most parts of this region.

**So would it be wrong to say that you are the leader of Indian tourism at the moment?**

That's probably a statement I will not make. But yes, we are growing very fast. If you

understand our business model, there isn't a company in Asia which is doing every aspect of business as we do. We may not be very large in the B2C business because we don't believe in burning money. We are an investment driven company.

**A lot changed in the last two years. How did you sustain those two years?**

So the first and foremost thing was to save my people, save my company. We did that and we knew that the Pandemic was going to get over sooner or later. Right? It may take longer than usual, but it'll get over. So all we have to do is stay focused, stay committed and navigate the company through the tough times. And that's what leadership is. We did that and we are now back into the business. For instance, Corporate business is back. MICE is back. Leisure is back. As we speak, we have about 6000 people around the world traveling with us. In this quarter we will probably close 100 crores of miles. Equally, we may close corporate travel to that level.

**And what about Leisure Travel?**

Leisure was always happening. Whenever there would be a wave, leisure would go down. But leisure would bounce back.

**Which aspect of travel (inbound or outbound) is going to bounce back faster?**

Every sector is going to come back strongly. In fact, it's already back. If I tell you we have already started receiving passengers just from countries like Spain and UK and even from America. We've already started sending people out for holidays. Domestic tourism was always there. So according to me everything is back. Yeah, but we still don't know how Covid behaves. And if the way it is going presently, it's going to be an unprecedented growth of tourism over the next few years. People would not have seen the growth that tourism is going to come in between 2022 to 2025. These years will become

the new benchmark of travel.

**What will be the impact of external factors like the Russia-Ukraine war, apprehensions about the next Covid wave etc?**

Look, there's always an impact. But I don't see it's not going to play on the people's travel sentiments. As we know, a lot of work has been done on Covid, we have about nine vaccines, we have good protocols, the medical fraternity largely knows what to do and people have realised that the world has to coexist with the virus. The positive part is hospitalisation and death rates have gone down and a lot of research is still going on.

The second part is the Ukraine war. War is a loss to everybody, but more so to the two countries which are involved. But it is not going to affect the overall travelling sentiments. Yes there is an impact on costs because airfares have gone up, US dollar is up, oil rates are high but these are periodic occurrences and all this will soon settle down.

**List your Wishlist that you want the government to do to make the growth trajectory even better**

First, the government should make tourism a priority sector. Two, bring down ATF taxes and ATF rates which are the air turbine fuel taxes. Bring down GST, bring down taxation on tourism business that directly impacts the passenger. Third, offer a rebate on a corporate tax rate to travel companies so that they can spend more money on their business development.

When tourism happens, the economy flourishes because there's more consumption. As it is, the industry has gone through a tough phase in the last 2 years. I am really surprised that the government has not made it a priority sector as yet. We can understand their reservations about outbound tourism because money is going out. But for domestic and inbound tourism, they should take effective steps to boost it. It is time to make tourism a priority sector in India.





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# Thailand

## *smiles at Inclusive Travel*

Post pandemic, tourism is being pegged as the key engine supporting Thailand's economic recovery and the Land of Smiles is all geared up to tap newer travel trends such as the rise of conscious travellers, responsible tourism, greater flexibility around travel, longer stays, wedding tourism and the likes



### Rai Umraopati Ray

Thailand, formerly Siam till 1939 is blessed with varied ecosystems — from the lush Mangroves and exotic beaches of the Andaman and resilient coasts along the southern peninsula to central plains and hilly forested areas in the North to broad plateau towards the Northeast. Literally placed in the centre of mainland Southeast Asia, this constitutional monarchy is no stranger to tourism. In fact, according to WordData information, Thailand recorded a total of 40 million tourists in 2019, ranking 5th in the world in absolute terms. Post pandemic, tourism is being pegged as the key engine supporting Thailand's economic recovery.



The Economic Intelligence Center (EIC) has upgraded its forecast for foreign tourist arrivals in 2022 to 7.4 million, up from 5.7 million

### AMAZING NEW CHAPTERS

The Land of Smiles is not only ready to greet visitors but making sure that vaccinated and non-vaccinated travellers can make their way into the country simply and with a minimum of fuss. It is tapping into the newer travel trends like the rise of conscious travellers, greater flexibility around travel, longer stays, wedding tourism and similar niche concepts under the theme 'Visit Thailand Year 2022, Amazing New Chapters'.

Siripakorn Cheawsamoot, Deputy Governor for Marketing and Communications, Tourism

Authority of Thailand (TAT) says, "Thailand is open and ready to welcome tourists from around the world. Despite the long break the pandemic brought us, we have continued working and over these two years there have been many changes and adjustments in the tourism industry globally and in Thailand. With the Visit Thailand Year 2022-2023, we would like to open our home country to present some of the kingdom's many fascinating tourism experiences and hope all travellers will not miss out."

NFT – or Nature to keep, Food to explore, and 'Thainess' to discover – are the main highlighted products in the "Amazing New Chapters" initiative with the focus to highlight the abundance of tourism products and



services on offer in Thailand, as well as its cultural diversity and richness.

Adds Sukanya Sirikanjanakul, Executive Director, TAT ASEAN, South Asia and South Pacific, “By easing flexibility and increasing accessibility, tourists will be able to come in freely. India is one of Thailand’s top visitor source markets. TAT is going all out to showcase the wonderful possibilities Thailand offers for the ideal Indian weddings. Destinations like Krabi, Hua Hin, Rayong, Pattaya, Phuket, and Ko Samui are already popular with Indian wedding couples and honeymooners. We would like to be the preferred destination for Indian travellers and are quite focussed to growing the lucrative Indian wedding and honeymoon market to Thailand.”

## LET’S ‘THAI’ THE KNOT

In 2019, a total of 1,995,516 Indians travelled to the kingdom generating tourism income of 86,372.01 million Baht representing a 24.85% rise in arrivals and 27.45% rise in income. As one of the growing niche trends — Indian couples opt for Thailand as their wedding venue because of the perfect setting for a truly romantic rendezvous, the country offers. Before the pandemic, according to one estimate, about 350 to 400 couples went to Thailand for their weddings with guest figures ranging between 200 to 500 people per wedding. The beauty of the destination is such that there’s something for everyone, making it the perfect place to host either big fat Indian weddings or close-knit family celebrations. The beachside resorts of Pattaya, Hua Hin, Phuket, Khao Lak, Pattaya, Krabi and Rayong are excellent wedding venues with unmatched ‘Thai’ hospitality coupled with curated menus, dreamy backdrops, especially curated excursions, bespoke functions that all add up to glamorous dreamy marriage celebrations. Along with the beach destinations, Chiang Mai and Bangkok are equally popular for being an all encompassing wedding haven. No doubt, couples are spoilt for choices in Thailand from tranquil islands, peaceful riverside, dramatic hilly landscape to even the plantations that make for a wonderful backdrop to a picture-perfect wedding.

“Amazing Thailand is very well known as a dream wedding destination and has always been the most popular destination for the grand Indian wedding and other celebrations such as milestone birthdays, anniversaries and family reunions. Thailand can fulfil every needs of an Indian wedding from the customs, the space needed, lavish set up, expansive decor, dancers, celebrity entertainers, floral arrangements, ice sculptures and culinary experience to arranging horses, elephants, henna artists, makeup artists as well as priests (traditional pandits). All this combined with reasonable pricing options



and Thai hospitality makes Thailand the ideal location,” informs Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director TAT New Delhi Office.

Avers Priyanka Ghosh, Director of Sales and Marketing at InterContinental Phuket Resort, “The local Thai culture, music, dance and cuisine makes your celebrations so much more special. The big fat Indian wedding thrives on colour, light, love and laughter – and Thai culture mingles with it perfectly to create

one vibrant celebration to remember. The traditional Indian wedding services are easily available here, including a pandit, mehendi artists, make-up artists and even a horse or elephant for the wedding. You can even gift your guests with beautiful Thai crafts like handmade jewellery, artificial flowers, soaps, textiles and home decor items. World-class resorts like ours can be booked at good rates in Thailand, giving you the best of luxury and hospitality without breaking the bank.”



# Remarkable Ras Al Khaimah delivers unforgettable Weddings



Ras Al Khaimah is one of the most diverse and naturally beautiful destinations in the region offering an alluring array of romantic experiences for couples looking for host weddings or celebrate their honeymoon. The nature Emirate has something for everyone, from couples who like to get adventurous through kayaking, ziplining, camping under the stars and water sports, to those that are looking to trawl through local souks and delve into the rich culture at one of kind attractions such as the Suwaidi Pearls Farm.

In terms of unique wedding venues, RAK's cultural and mountain venues are increasing in popularity and stand out as exclusive and unique spaces in the region. The historical sites Dhayah Fort and Jazirah Al Hamra, included on UNESCO's tentative list of Global Heritage Sites, and expansive open spaces atop the region's highest mountain, Jebel Jais are among our coveted wedding locations featuring awe-inspiring romantic backdrops of nature and wildlife.

Ras Al Khaimah, with its natural topography, world-class hospitality brands and seamless infrastructure, is one of the most sought-after destinations perfectly suited for unique weddings and honeymoon escapes. From beach venues at some of the Emirate's world-class hotels and resorts such as Waldorf Astoria, Al Hamra International Exhibition & Conference Center, Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort and the latest to open, Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island, offering a venue on the stunning Arabian coast beside idyllic blue waters and white sands. Unique desert venues include The Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Wadi Desert, Sonara Camp Al Wadi and the Bedouin Oasis Camp – couples can capitalise on the Emirate's diverse topography to celebrate the wedding of their dreams.

The past few years have seen couples looking for more personal and intimate wedding experiences, choosing secluded and unique locations over traditional event venues. Ras Al Khaimah – owing to its vast space and diverse attractions – offers just that with wedding venues atop the Jebel Jais Mountain range paired with catering from 1484 by Puro, the UAE's highest restaurant. As the highest mountain in the region towering over Ras Al Khaimah at a height of 1,934 metres, the peaks and crags of the surrounding mountains provide a stunning backdrop to their ceremonies.

Dhaya Fort and Jazirah Al Hamra are also increasing in popularity as wedding venues off the back of people opting for unique spaces to host their nuptials. Dhaya Fort, the UAE's only hilltop fort still in existence, has



immense local historical significance encompassing lush palm gardens and views of the Arabian Sea. While the historic Jazirah Al Hamra is the last-surviving pearl diving and seafaring town of its kind in the Arabian Gulf, taking couples a step back in time.

Combined with an extensive hospitality offering and close proximity to Europe, Asia and Africa, Ras Al Khaimah is perfectly placed to host all types of weddings and celebrations, cementing its reputation as a destination wedding hub. Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) will also host the 11th Edition of the Exotic Wedding Planning Conference (EWPC), taking place at Al Hamra Conference Centre from March 1 – 3, 2023. The three-day event will bring together top-class wedding planners, hospitality vendors, tourism boards, travel experts and wedding suppliers from around the world in a single, comprehensive platform for event organisers.



# Plan a memorable wedding in Blessed Bahrain



Bahrain is a wedding destination, where chic and fairy-tale dream weddings come true. When it comes to creating memorable and magical weddings, our destination exceeds all expectations. When it comes to dreamy weddings, Bahrain has it all, be it the perfect wedding backdrop — a pristine beach, an urban cityscape or the desert. With its close proximity to India and direct flight options the destination has become a very popular go to location for grand Indian Weddings.

Getting married in Bahrain is like home away from home where you can have a grand traditional wedding with Indian cuisine, in an exotic location.

Bahrain as a destination is fully open to international travellers. Furthermore, all the Covid-19 travel restrictions to Bahrain have also been removed there is no longer a requirement to quarantine, or conduct a PCR test upon arrival. When it comes to the number of guests that can be invited for a wedding in Bahrain, there is no crowd restriction.

## TOP HOTELS IN BAHRAIN

- **Four Seasons Bahrain** – A 5 star property, well known for grand weddings and celebrations. Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay offers a sense of privacy, exclusivity and grandeur.
- **Sofitel Bahrain:** The hotel has a spectacular beach-front setting and five-star amenities. There are exciting dining options and nightlife available, from award-winning seafood and Arabian specialties to belly dancing and live music.
- **The Ritz-Carlton Hotel:** The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain presents an exceptional location for guests to cherish the memory of their lifetime and say 'I do'. Nestled on the coast of Manama, with breath-taking views of both the city and the sparkling waters of the Gulf, the luxury resort features a selection of romantic venues and exceptional catering services.
- **Wyndham Grand:** The Wyndham Grand Manama, located seven kilometres from the Bahrain International Airport, is situated in the iconic United Tower at the heart of the Bahrain Bay area. It has spacious 42 – 158 sq. m rooms and suites.
- **Lagoon Beach Luxury Resort and Spa:** A perfect place to celebrate your dream wedding reception and a haven to spend a remarkable honeymoon.

## UNIQUE VENUES TO HOST WEDDINGS IN BAHRAIN

- **Khaimah Fayroz Tent:** Newlyweds who wish to celebrate their wonderful wedding reception can do so in Khaimah Fayroz Tent overlooking the breathtakingly beautiful turquoise blue sea. The venue can hold up to 200 guests in comfort.
- **Al Noor Tent:** Elite resort and spa is pleased to present you a wide selection of exclusive banquet packages with our specially designed offers and luxuriously unique banqueting venues, as well a professional banqueting team to take care of all your meetings and memorable events. The best destination for weddings, rehearsal dinners, engagement parties, bachelor parties, baby showers, wedding anniversaries, confirmations, birthdays, all types of parties, take-out catering.
- **Bahrain International Circuit:** BIC is also a favourite venue for hosting a range of off-track events. Exclusive lounges, hospitality suites and function rooms make a perfect location for product launches, client receptions, business conferences and large-scale outdoor events. Social events such as weddings, music concerts and charity occasions are also hosted.
- **Royal Golf Club:** The Royal Golf Club, located just 20 to 30 minutes' drive from Manama and from the Saudi-Bahrain causeway, is a unique venue in Bahrain with its spectacular views of rolling fairways and sparkling lakes. The Royal Golf Club's combination of unique venues, unrivalled customer service and specialised events and catering personnel will guarantee a day of unforgettable memories for the happy couple and all of their guests.

**Bahrain is a destination where TWO becomes ONE!**





# Make promises for a lifetime at *Marvellous Malaysia*



Malaysia, located in the heart of Southeast Asia, has a rich history and culture. It is a cultural melting pot brought in from the colonial era from the East, West, and South. These foreign cultures have been accepted by the locals, who have incorporated them into their own culture. So, when Indians plan their wedding in Malaysia, their rich cultural heritage can be an exciting element that can be incorporated as part of the wedding ceremony, such as Cultural performances, Lion dance, and Malay wedding rituals, among other things.

Malaysia can accommodate any type of wedding with its numerous golf courses, islands, beaches, and hills. You can get whatever you want in Malaysia. Malaysians are friendly and eager to help you in any way they can. There is no language barrier in Malaysia because English is widely spoken. Beach weddings are popular among Indians, so Langkawi is an ideal location for them. As the island is duty-free, alcoholic beverages are much cheaper than on the mainland. A beer can is less expensive than a bottle of mineral water. Simultaneously, the room rates are reasonable, and the rooms have the best views of the ocean.

In the past, Indian weddings have taken place at the Westin Langkawi. Many Indian weddings have already taken place at Avani Gold Coast, Sunway Resort in Selangor, and Lexis Hibiscus Port Dickson. These resorts offer a cinematic view and make weddings an unforgettable event.

Hotels and resorts in Kuala Lumpur and Penang are well-equipped to handle Indian weddings because they understand the needs and psychology of Indian families. The Taaras Beach & Spa Resort, Redang Island has a professional team that has what it takes to provide you with a truly unique and memorable celebration, whether it is to commemorate an exchange of vows or the renewal of commitment. The team takes care of all essential arrangements and needs leading up to creating the perfect dream wedding, relieving you of the stress and burden of wedding planning.

Kota Kinabalu is also a high-end destination for Indian weddings.





Weddings are made magical by white sandy beaches, crystal clear water, awe-inspiring scenic views, and floral decorations. In fact, resorts with chefs of Indian origin, such as Shangri La Rasa Ria and Nexus Karambunai, can prepare authentic Indian cuisine. Desaru Coast, a 17km long white sandy beach, golf courses, and good connectivity from Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, and Singapore, is one potential destination for Indian weddings. Premium hotels and resorts such as the Westin, Hardrock, Anantara, and One and Only Resort are ideal locations for taking ritual vows.

As we all know, food plays an important role in Indian weddings, and it is critical to serve delicious authentic Indian food to the guests. The majority of Malaysian hotels and resorts employ Indian chefs to prepare Indian cuisine. Indian spices are, in fact, widely available in Malaysia. Some Indian families are very particular about food and wish to bring their own chefs to prepare Indian cuisine. In such cases, Malaysian hotels are willing to allow chefs to use their kitchens and are happy to assist them. Indians make up a sizable proportion of Malaysia's population. As a result, Malaysians are well aware of and enjoy North and South Indian cuisine. Every street corner in the city has an Indian restaurant.

Malaysia has many wedding themes to choose from, such as city weddings, resort weddings, beach weddings, hillside weddings, and so on. There are exotic islands with Malaysian landscapes for small ceremonies that guests will remember forever. Malaysia also has over 200 golf courses and cool highlands wedding themes available. Malaysia has an abundance of themes and can add a new twist to an Indian wedding. With the addition of professional vendors, organising an Indian destination wedding in Malaysia is not difficult, providing comfort and convenience to the bride and groom's families.

Malaysia has a cultural mix of Malay, Indian, Chinese, and indigenous people that can provide the ideal setting for an Indian wedding with an Asian flair. There are numerous houses of worship, such as temples, churches, and gurudwaras, that can be used to perform the holy rituals associated with an Indian wedding.





# Iconic Istanbul

*decks up for world-class Weddings*



As millennial couples continue to set the trend of tying the knot in exotic European locales, Istanbul-based destination weddings are becoming extremely popular. With its variety of scenic beauty, historic landmarks, opulent waterfront palaces, a vast array of luxury hotels, and legendary hospitality, Istanbul shines as a mesmerising setting for any Indian wedding, be it an intimate gathering or celebration befitting royalty.

Istanbul has flourished in one of the most advantageous locations on Earth, and as the only city spreading its wings over two continents. The Bosphorus, the 30-km waterway that divides the city into its European and Asian halves, brings a surprising sense of peace to this bustling metropolis. Istanbul's temperate climate, mouth-watering food, rich artistic heritage, and buzzing nightlife easily place this iconic city on any traveller's bucket list. So, why not hit two targets with one arrow and combine your "big fat Indian wedding" with lasting memories in the cultural capital of Türkiye?

## **Istanbul: Combining the best of two worlds**

Istanbul's location between the East and the West makes it an optimal destination where relatives and friends from all continents can access direct international flights effortlessly. Istanbul-based airlines also serve more than 60 Indian cities with regular direct and connecting flights. Arranging a private chartered flight for your wedding clan may be a wiser choice than individual bookings, as Turkish Airlines offers exclusive chartered flights for 250-300 guests,

including extended family, friends, and even your henna artist and photographer.

Istanbul's spellbinding, luxury hotels are well-equipped to provide all the intricate details required for such distinctive nuptials. Istanbul's distinguished properties amaze with their exquisite architecture and state-of-the-art facilities offering indoor and outdoor spaces that include glittering ballrooms, inviting pools, rejuvenating spa centres, and pristine lawns and gardens able to host from 200 and 2,000 wedding guests. Many of these facilities have in-house wedding specialists who can arrange any custom decor you desire with exquisite fabrics, romantic accessories and flowers, and any special pre-ceremonies – however extravagant they might be.

## **Find the perfect setting for your dream wedding**

Staging your wedding in a palace hotel along the Bosphorus can provide the ultimate backdrop for any wedding set in Istanbul. Some of the former Ottoman summer palaces have



been restored to their former glory as stylish accommodation with contemporary facilities, still retaining their historic character. These waterfront royal residences can be your private oasis for a few days, combining a resort-like ambience with the enveloping tranquillity of the Bosphorus. The green slopes and unmatched sunsets over glittering waters seem worlds away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Alternatively, you might choose a modern, 5-star hotel in a steel-and-glass high-rise with panoramic views of İstanbul's skyline. Such a choice may include the signature restaurants of celebrity chefs, inviting bars, and elegant nightclubs. In addition, the lush ballrooms of these properties can be transformed into a fantasy world of your liking, with the unique and stylish wedding decor of your choice – you can select from a wide spectrum ranging from Alice in Wonderland or the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon to whatever your heart desires! When it comes to wedding decorations, the sky is the limit in İstanbul!





# *Bengaluru Weddings & Events gets a new address @*

## Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park

The Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Embassy Manyata Business Park complex is among South India's largest hotel complexes. It comprises 619 key dual-branded Hilton properties with 353-key at Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru and 266-key at Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park. Around 60,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art Convention Centre offers 18 versatile venues including a pillar-less grand ballroom for 1500 guests. The properties resonate with a powerful blend of contemporary design; offering eclectic lifestyle experiences in 3 signature restaurants and two lounge bars, a large fitness center, a temperature-controlled open pool, and mindful meeting and convention spaces. The Hilton Hotels Embassy Manyata complex is the largest such destination in Bengaluru and has quickly emerged as a leading events destination in North Bengaluru. It is located within close vicinity of key destinations in North and Central Bengaluru and other commercial business districts; with easy accessibility from Kempegowda International Airport. Energy-efficient technology such as in-room motion, air-conditioning, and light sensors feature in every room, while digital key access and smartphone-connected services offer ease of stay for guests on the go. In keeping with its vision of sustainable hospitality, the complex has a compact bottling unit that provides safe drinking water sourced and managed responsibly thus doing away with a large quantity of plastic bottle waste. Through its solar energy plant within the complex, the hotel generates clean energy to run its water heating plant that generates 15K litres of hot water daily. Also, with the introduction of biodegradable recycled plant-based cups and mugs in guest rooms, the hotel has done away with single-use plastics completely.

Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park is also a part of Hilton Honors, the award-winning guest-loyalty program for Hilton's 18 distinct hotel brands. Members who book directly on the hotel's website will have access to instant benefits, including a flexible payment slider that allows members to choose nearly any combination of Points and money to book a stay, an exclusive member discount, free standard Wi-Fi, and the advantage of Hilton Honors mobile app. Members also have access to contactless, personalised technology-driven experiences through the industry-leading Hilton Honors mobile app, where Hilton Honors members can choose their room in advance, check-in and access their room using Digital Key via



### What special does Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park offers when it comes to weddings?

With close to 60,000 square feet of events space – the scale and versatility of its banqueting space at Hilton Convention Centre make it an ideal wedding destination in the city of Bengaluru. Some of its unique strengths to handle social events end to an end includes:

- Regional culinary experts who understand traditional recipes and culinary practices and the ability to personalize menus for both close-knit and large-scale celebrations.
- A dedicated team of in-house wedding specialists who can help ideate, detail, and plan the entire celebration end to end right from logistics and room reservations to entertainment and décor.
- Wide choice of modern guest rooms and suites, including the highest number of flexible twin bedrooms in the city to accommodate large wedding and social groups.
- We have full-fledged capacity to plan and execute small and large-scale social events.
- We welcome and work with wedding management companies and destination event planners to collaborate and create "one-of-a-kind wedding celebrations"





**Manish Garg, General Manager, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy  
Manyata Business Park**

"The wedding industry which witnessed a slow resurgence post-pandemic in 2021 is now back in full glory. The social segment is a key revenue driver for us. "Big Fat Indian Wedding Celebrations" are back in vogue.

Further, the pandemic has taught both consumers and the wedding industry to re-imagine celebrations. The celebrations have become more about personalization, mindful and unique experiences, and high on quality.

Also, Bengaluru offers a wonderful option for destination weddings with its temperate climate and great connectivity to all parts of India and the globe. We have already had the opportunity to host a couple of them during auspicious dates between April and July 2022.

Banquet inquiries and bookings are on the rise for weddings and related social events. We remain positive and are confident of the upcoming demand for the remaining calendar year of 2022. Bengaluru as a destination for

large Indian Weddings – we believe that there has been a gap in this area, and our combination of two Hilton branded hotels and a large Convention Centre at Embassy Manyata Business Park has addressed it."



# India offers some Plush Venues for *Big Fat Indian Weddings*



India, since time immemorial, has been known for its grandeur. The land of Palaces, Gigantic Elephants, Gold, Fireworks and everything opulent that one can possibly think of. Our history is grand, our kings were grand, our festivals are grand and our weddings – absolutely Grand! So taking this splendour into account, India has no dearth of magnificent venues to host the quintessential Big Fat Indian Weddings. Our country is home to some jaw-dropping venues – hotels and resorts brimming with world-class facilities and luxuries. The envy of the world, here's a look at some of the most majestic wedding venues in India...

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

## **JEHAN NUMA PALACE HOTEL, BHOPAL**

Elegance in their taste for all things fine and timeless grace in all aspects of hospitality, the Nawabs and Begums of Bhopal have been long known for their sophisticated flair far and wide. Qualities that the regal 19th century residence-turned hotel, the Jehan Numa Palace reflect beautifully. Much like its history, the Palace presents a charming medley of colonial style, princely Indian culture, and an unexpected modern trendiness. With five magnificent, state-of-the-art banquet facilities and stunning indoor as well as outdoor venues including the Queen's lawns, the Jehan Numa Palace makes for a truly memorable celebration of the sacred union. The warm and personalized services are the hallmark of royal Bhopali hospitality; the Jehan Numa team understands the importance of each individual event, the needs and the ideas of the planner, the couple and the families involved. Customization is impeccably accommodated. Food and beverage stand as a major highlight too. Jehan Numa Palace is a highly popular destination for culinary connoisseurs, serving dishes straight from the Royal Kitchens and centuries-old recipes from the Begums' repertoire along with an array of Asian, Western, Indian and popular global fares. The Palace offers 100 rooms and luxurious suites that open into green courtyards or balconies overlooking trees, the swimming pool, or the riding track. Ample guest parking of up to 1000 cars and the Palace Hotel's strategic location makes it this lavish venue a very practical one too.

## **TAJ HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTRE, AGRA**

Taj Hotel & Convention Centre, Agra offers you just the perfect chance to have a perfect, stress-free wedding and make beautiful memories. This luxury hotel in Agra is an ideal destination for weddings. It offers 40,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor banqueting space including a 14,000 sq. ft. pillar-less hall which is one of the largest in North India. All spaces have been designed in such a way that they not just offer the convenience



that you need but also a flawless setting for all functions of the day. The skilled master chefs at Taj Hotel & Convention Centre will treat guests to





a bevy of delicious food, guaranteed to make the function a memorable one. One can choose from a variety of cuisines like Indian regional or global – inspired dishes.

Just one call and everything is planned for you. The expert teams of wedding planning professionals are on hand to ensure every personalised detail is executed beautifully. From reserving the dates, to working on a theme to planning the sequence of events, coordinating for food & beverage arrangements including designing the perfect menu for the occasion and arranging a photographer, leave it all in their able hands. The hotels' experienced and skilled make-up artists and beauticians can also help you look your best on your big day.

#### ITC MAURYA, NEW DELHI

Exclusivity, novelty and quality are the hallmarks that make ITC Maurya the idyllic wedding landmark. Inspired from the grandeur of the Maurya dynasty and the Golden age of India, the hotel offers incredible spaces and infinite possibilities for curating the perfect wedding featuring diverse venues - both indoors and al fresco. The signature cuisine and an expert team adds to the experience. The Nandiya Gardens, the vast outdoor venue, spread over 1771 sq. m is ideal for grand ceremonies. A unique combination of award winning cuisine, an expert team, the famed hospitality and the majestic backdrop of the Hotel facade is sure to make any event a grand success. Additionally, the hotel offers the option of planet-positive Green Banquets, with measures like organic and locally produced food, using daylight as much as possible and more. We have a list of suggestions that will help the party reduce its carbon footprint.

#### RADISSON BLU RESORT DHARAMSHALA

With the trend moving towards destination weddings in India, Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala is perfectly placed for lavish yet intimate family celebrations. Located at the foothills of the scenic Dhauladhar Himalayan range, amidst a wide expanse of pine forest, Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala is spread over 9 acres and offers 120 guests rooms including suites, multiple gourmet dining options, event venues, Spa,



temperature-controlled outdoor infinity pool and health club.

The choice of event venues at Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala includes outdoor and indoor spaces. Each venue promises to add variety to the pre-wedding, wedding and post-wedding celebrations. It constitutes three banquet halls - Mid Off, Mid On and Centurion with capacity between 80 to 100 pax and an outdoor venue, The Banquet Deck, offering unparalleled views of the Kangra Valley and is ideally suited to host mehendi and sangeet during the day and cocktail soirees in the evening for up to 150 pax. The picture-perfect and rather Instagram worthy resort lay a perfect backdrop for mesmerizing wedding celebrations. Food is a backbone to any social event, and at Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala guests are spoilt for choice. On offer is a multi-cuisine menu selection to choose from.

#### COCONUT LAGOON – CGH EARTH, KUMARAKOM

For those who'd like with take their togetherness vows amidst pure and pristine nature, pioneers of responsible and conscious hospitality, CGH Earth's Coconut Lagoon in the Vembanad Lake of Kumarakom offers an earthy, luxurious wedding celebration venue. And it all begins with a dreamy entry into the resort - meandering the narrow canals along lush tropical, on a boat. The 'wow' factor continues once on land, the coconut grove with canals crisscrossing the verdant greens and the lake-





facing front make for a stunning outdoor locale. Following vernacular architectural style of thatched roofs, courtyards and open spaces, Coconut Lagoon further captures the distinctive and delicate ecology of the environment. Their charming bungalows and water facing villas with private pools have been recreated from old Kerala homes using Thachu Shastra, an ancient science of craftsmanship. There's plenty to do to keep guests occupied in between the celebrations, with the resort's butterfly garden, sunset cruises into the Vembanad Lake, birdwatching, relaxing massages at the Ayurveda Spa, property tour that is educational as is fascinating. The resort also offers water-based activities on the backwaters on stand-up paddles and kayaks. While the delectable cuisine is a beautiful tribute to the local food story of native spices, the chefs are seasoned professionals who are happy to personalize meals and feasts as desired.

#### **SAMODE PALACE, JAIPUR**

A few palaces can capture romance as perfectly as Samode Palace. Known for its exclusivity, stunning architecture, ambience, style & hospitality that is uniquely Samode, this Palace hotel has been the venue for many a high profile (both large and intimate) fairy-tale weddings. The series of indoor and outdoor spaces that were once designed for the Royals and their entourage 400 years back today has been perfectly restored to receive guests and offer multiple venue options for a weddings and life celebrations. While the gardens, lounge and dining have been furnished with regal aesthetics to play into the charm, appeal and magic of your special day, the colours and the décor used for the interiors: the blues, reds, tiles, frescos, glimmering chandeliers make for the perfect exotic and elegant camera captures. With an experienced service and operation team the Palace makes for one of the few self-contained venue perfect for wedding ceremonies, evening celebrations, multiple functions, and overnight accommodation.

#### **TAJ FALUKNAMA HYDERABAD**

The magnificent property is a rare blend of Italian and Tudor architecture that holds a place in the list of most luxurious palace



hotels of the world. The hotel caters to your epicurean palate at its remarkable 101-seat dining hall which is one of the largest in the world. Taj Falaknuma Palace is a gem resting in the beautiful palace hotel perched 2000 feet above the city of Hyderabad in Telangana. Constructed by the Nizams in 1984, this ornament in the city of pearls is perfect for hosting a palace wedding. From the moment you arrive at Taj Falaknuma Palace in a horse-drawn carriage, their palace butlers treat you like royalty. Many famous celebrities have tied the knot at this very venue like Rana Daggubati and Miheeka Bajaj, singer Neeti Mohan and Nihar Pandya, actor Nithiin and Shalini to name a few. This enchanting palace hotel in Hyderabad exudes romance and grandeur that take one back to when the Nizam ruled Hyderabad and with the right kind of decor it is sure to make your wedding the perfect fairytale that you have always dreamt of.

#### **JW MARRIOTT MUSSOORIE WALNUT GROVE RESORT & SPA**

"The landscapes of Mussoorie which encouraged the imagination of one of the most popular authors of all times, Ruskin Bond, makes for an ideal backdrop for an inspiring wedding. A popular tourist destination, the town offers an extensive inventory of rooms, of which



115 can be found at the JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa. The hotel has great outdoor venues as well as a grand ballroom that creates a lively ambiance for celebrations that can include up to 350 guests.

#### RAFFLES UDAIPUR

Raffles Udaipur is located on a 21-acre private island in the midst of Udaipur Sagar Lake. Surrounded by hills and with a view of a 400-year old temple, Raffles Udaipur is an oasis that invites you to unwind and discover the city of Udaipur, anew. Ideal for strategic meets, annual performance events, and partner incentives, weddings and more, its five expansive outdoor venues spread across 70,000 sq. ft. are complemented by lush manicured lawns that can be personalised for formal events. For indoor events, the ballroom boasts 12,000 sq. ft. of space, making it the largest indoor and in-demand venue for exceptional events in the city. The Presidential Suite and Oasis suite's offer a plethora of luxuries.

The LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar Need the best destination wedding places in India? It can't get better than the Kashmir Valley. The Lalit Grand Palace, Srinagar offers 113 palace rooms, over 4,000 square feet of banqueting space and a visually overwhelming location. The plush interiors and palatial rooms definitely create an enchanting experience. This erstwhile home to the Maharajas is definitely one of the best picks for your special day.

#### THE ZURI KUMARAKOM, KERALA

The Zuri Kumarakom, located in Kerala is spread across 18 acres of lawn to provide for an outstanding outdoor wedding with luxurious retreats. The location on the bank of Vembanad offers a mind-refreshing serene environment of the water bodies and picturesque shoreline. The outside space of the resort is perfect for a grand wedding, which comprises of a poolside area and an open lawn. The lawn has a capacity of 250 people in seating. You can also choose to celebrate your wedding at the lagoons overlooking the dreamy waters of the lake beneath under beautifully set lights.

#### WELCOMHOTEL KATRA

Located in the heart of the divine city Katra, Welcomhotel by ITC Hotels Katra has 83 well-appointed rooms overlooking the Trikuta Hills home to Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. Welcomhotel Katra has opened new horizons for weddings and MICE in



this holy city of India. The hotel offers an ideal indoor and outdoor space for events, weddings and celebrations with a seamless pillar-less banquet hall of 225 sq. m that can accommodate up to 250 guests opening into a dedicated pre function area and outdoor

gardens. The picturesque and scenic backdrop, complimented with the culinary strengths of ITC Hotels, are an ideal combination to curate memorable experiences during weddings and wedding related events.



# 'Aviareps wants to grow with the growing Indian economy': Robert Obolgogiani

Founded in Germany in 1994 with an extensive office network that spans all six inhabited continents with 67 self-owned offices across 48 countries, the AVIAREPS Group is the world's leading trade, airline and tourism Representation Company with over 100 airlines and more than 150 tourism, hospitality, retail and trade promotion clients in its portfolio. In the capital recently to tap the burgeoning India market, **Robert Obolgogiani, Executive Vice President, CIS & South Asia**, and member international board, AVIAREPS spoke to BOTT.

Rai Umraopati Ray



## What are your India plans?

Our plans for India are extremely ambitious and they are based on one assumption – India is going to grow by leaps and bounds. Infact, it is being predicted that India is going to develop faster than it was growing before Covid and we would like to grow with India. In order to do so, we have taken strategic decisions, such as, restructuring the team and having a new management. We are putting a road map for a long-term growth. We would like to grow not only in tourism management but aviation management too, just like we do in many countries. We are active in 40-45 countries and that makes us big in our field.

## What are the key challenges you are facing in the India market?

India is still thinking where to go in terms of its branding and positioning. Post pandemic, it is a good opportunity for India to project its tourism offerings, culture and diversity to the world in the best possible way. Indian can offer unique experiences to all kinds of travellers seeing the immense tourism potential it has. Given the size and complexities of the country, a company has to evolve continuously with a hands-on approach.

## What are the strengths that Aviareps brings to a collaboration?

Aviareps has been doing this for a long and my association with them spans over two decades. We work with over 100 airlines and more than 150 tourism, hospitality, retail and trade promotion clients, so we are in this deep and we understand the requirements of our clients. For instance, we have been helping Russia to position, brand and spent each dollar in the best way possible. Similarly, we cater to the individual

requirements of each and every organisation that is associated with us and that is our biggest strength.

## What are the new trends in travel and tourism post pandemic?

Post pandemic, travellers have become conscious and think about safety and hygiene first. Travel has become expensive, especially the airfares all cross the world. The number of seats are still far less that it was on offer pre Covid so the prices of tickets are expensive and are going to be same for a while. Millennials are going to dominate the travel and tourism market so all the offerings, products etc. shall be according to their tastes. New concepts, such as, slow tourism, theme-based tourism, more experiential tourism will become stronger in times to come. Covid has brought all the players on the same starting line and everyone will have to put their best foot forward.

## What are the latest trends in Aviation post pandemic?

Post pandemic, just like everything else, business models of airlines are changing. Low cost airlines are creating hybrid models. Full service airlines and low cost airlines are collaborating. It is an interesting time for aviation sector with Air India being taken over by the TATA group. IndiGo and Qatar coming together — a collaboration one could not imagine in pre-Covid times. But there seems to be immense scope of growth that a cooperation between low cost and full service airline brings to the fore. Fly Dubai, which was an LCC is now introducing Business Class. Situation is changing and being modified according to the clients. Safety has been priority for all airlines and it has become more so in the post Covid era.



# 'Our objective is to welcome 80,000 tourists from India to Mauritius': Arvind Bundhun

The Tourism industry is returning back to normalcy as the travel restrictions have started to ease out. People have started travelling and are ticking items off their bucket lists. Mauritius, the sun-kissed jewel of the Indian Ocean was and still remains one of the most sought-after travel destinations. The Director of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, **Mr. Arvind Bundhun** shares some interesting insights in an exclusive chat with BOTT.

**Shreya Shimpi**

## How is Mauritius faring as a tourist destination post-pandemic? How much tourist traffic is received this year?

Before the pandemic, Mauritius used to welcome 1.3 million tourists. Mauritius opened to tourists in October last year and till the end of May this year, we have attained a recovery rate of almost 50 per cent. Despite many markets still being closed, we have reached a certain milestone in terms of numbers. We have already crossed the 500000 barrier. Our objective this calendar year is to welcome one million tourists. Post-pandemic, the tourism span has considerably increased by 35-40%. Tourism in Mauritius is mostly Euro-centric. The average length of stay which used to be around nine nights previously has now increased to twelve to fourteen nights.

## What are the current rules/ regulations about Covid-19?

Mauritius has always been very cautious in terms of reopening. Firstly, our reopening was done based on a very successful vaccination campaign. Secondly, we have eased the Covid-19 protocols gradually. Since July, the Government has reviewed all the protocols. Whether a tourist is vaccinated or not vaccinated, it does not have any implications. You can come to Mauritius, enjoy your stay and then head back. In case you contract Covid during your stay, you need to isolate yourself.

## How important is India as a market for Mauritius in the post-pandemic era?

India is a part of our diversification strategy. What Covid has taught us is to practise inclusive tourism and there is no better way to become inclusive than through diversification. Indian market is key to us. We have had strong diplomatic relations with India since many years. Our forefathers came from India. It is thus very natural that India becomes one of our top priorities. We put a lot of impetus on the marketing in India so that we develop the market. It is a crucial market since many Indians travelled to Mauritius during our lowest season and it is also happens to be a

huge market. The Indian market opened just two months back for us but there has been a consistent increase in the number of tourists. We have almost reached an average recovery of 55 per cent. We are paving our way gradually and are extremely confident about reaching our objective of welcoming 80,000 tourists from India.

There has been a great demand for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) from India. A lot of conglomerates are coming to Mauritius for their MICE activities. The film industry also has been booming in Mauritius. Recently, actor Ranbir Kapoor visited Mauritius for a shoot. A web series too is slated to be shot next week. Mauritius remains a wedding destination also. We look forward to welcoming Indians who are remotely working to Mauritius. This is of great importance to our economy as a whole.

## How is Mauritius competing with destinations such as Maldives and Seychelles, especially in the honeymoon and wedding segments?

The Maldives had never closed. If there was an infection, they would have to close one hotel. But that was not the case with Mauritius given its high density. We had to take all the necessary precautions. Hence destinations which hadn't closed down had an edge over us. We preferred to be very secure because of our population. Also, Mauritius being a diversified economy in which not just tourism but manufacturing and financial sectors were also doing very well. Due to this, we could rely on these factors. In terms of recovery we are doing extremely well because firstly, we have always prioritised sanitary security. The sun shines for everybody, and that has been our philosophy. We are working gradually without putting our population or tourists at stake. We are extremely confident that this calendar year our goal of welcoming one million tourists seems to be highly achievable.

## Is there any new marketing strategy in place to attract tourists to Mauritius?

Our strategy was quite simple and clear. We have worked a lot in collaboration with the private



sector and this has led to our campaign which is known as '#Mauritius Now'. All information related to the security and protocols in Mauritius were online and the attributes of the destination too were highlighted. We had also installed live cameras in the strategic places of Mauritius so that people could venture into the destination LIVE as a part of our digital strategy. We had the privilege of having joint marketing campaigns with our big tour operators. B2B operators generate 80 per cent of our tour bookings and they were heavily supported by their destinations. Also, for small islands like Mauritius accessibility is key. We have worked a lot with airlines as well. Our national airline happens to carry 40 per cent of our tourists.



# ‘As a tourism powerhouse, India is a key source market for several destinations’: **Lubaina Sheerazi**



**The last two years have been extremely challenging for the Outbound sector. How severely has that affected the representation business in India?**

Yes indeed, I think we have all as an industry faced the effects of the pandemic. However, it taught us the importance of adaptability and being able to be resourceful even within the limitations that were presented. We used technology to further digitise our approaches and streamline our activities. It included connecting with the travel trade by conducting destination training programs, webinars, and online workshops to enhance knowledge about their product and offerings. And with the effects of the pandemic ebbing away and the world opening up to travel again, it has paved the way for offline events and other such activities to stimulate the growth of the industry back up again.

**India is set to be amongst the top outbound markets in the future. In your opinion, how high on priority is India as an inbound market for foreign destinations?**

I believe as a tourism powerhouse, India is a key source market for several destinations given its tremendous potential and therefore cannot be downplayed. We have already started seeing improvement in outbound tourism from India. A surge in destination campaigns specifically tailor-made by tourism boards to entice the discerning Indian traveller is an endorsement of this thought. With the pandemic weighing heavy on everyone's minds the desire to travel has only increased. There is now a shift in approach to the pandemic, as the world starts to accept and adapt. Tour operators and travel agents have their hands full at the moment with enquiries and bookings, especially for the ongoing summer season.

**Can you share details of the destinations you represent currently?**

We pride ourselves in the strong relationships we have built over a period of time within the travel and tourism fraternity. We are currently representing the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Tourism Seychelles, Japan National Tourism Organization, and Qatar Tourism.

I share a longstanding association with some brands. I have been representing the Tourism Authority of Thailand since 2013 till date. Prior to our appointment, the destination was already present in the Indian market for close to a decade. Therefore, the task was to raise awareness of Thailand as a tourism destination, showcasing its unique selling points and attractions to a wider audience in India.

Tourism Seychelles is another country I have worked with since 2013 and continue to do so. With Seychelles, primarily our task has been to elevate its brand presence and create awareness amongst significant agents, travel partners, media, and end consumers, and to also showcase Seychelles as a premium honeymoon destination in the Indian Ocean.

Even with Qatar, we have been promoting the country through various promotional activities, including sales visits, destination training, familiarization trips, MICE seminars, and joint promotions with trade partners. The country is also gearing up to host one of the biggest sporting events in the world - FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, we are thrilled to further promote it to not just football fans but also those that are seeking an experience to remember. We are hoping to position Qatar in a way that brings forth its multi-faceted charm.

Since 2019, we have been promoting Japan as a year-round destination whilst increasing the awareness quotient of the travel trade. Over these last two years, we have been actively keeping the visitors engaged with memories of Japan alive through digitized strategies, newsletters, and campaigns. We are eagerly looking forward to the opening of the border again and have relevant strategies in the pipeline.

**Has Covid made foreign travel more challenging?**

It has definitely brought in its challenges; however, it has allowed us to adapt to a new normal. The broader challenge though has seemed to be borders opening up and facilitating travel. Of course, one has to research and understand what covid related restrictions and policies may or may not be imposed and be relevant for their travels.

Over the years, the world has come to acknowledge that Indian travellers are curious and have an eagerness to explore. With the destinations that have already opened up to travel, they have seen a visible number of Indian travellers, thus validating that in the post pandemic scenario, both domestic as well as international destinations will see growth in tourists from India as the year goes by. **Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO and Co-founder, BRANDit**, shares her thoughts in an exclusive chat with BOTT.

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**



# Bula to Soft Coral Capital of the World

Fiji is a popular honeymoon destination with its 'Adult-only' hotels and resorts. Wedding is no doubt one of the upcoming segments and we would like to focus on it says **KATHY KOYAMAIBOLE, REGIONAL DIRECTOR,** Asia and Pacific, Tourism Fiji



## Rai Umraopati Ray

### What are the new developments at Fiji Tourism? How important is India as a market in the current scenario?

Fiji was opened last December when international travel began. I must acknowledge the hard work that our health professionals did getting in the groundwork to open Fiji for tourism. Tourism Fiji came up with Care Fiji Commitment, a WHO-approved standard of best-practice health and safety measures for travel in a post-COVID world. Since last December, a lot of restrictions have been eased and it's been quite a process and we have done really well opening up to the world. We have been getting good numbers since opening up. As we speak, July is very busy and we are fully booked till September.

India is an important part of our emerging market, our long-haul market. We would like to see steady growth as we saw in pre-covid times with a base of about 6000 passengers. While we understand connectivity is a challenge, which is currently via Hong Kong but we are pushing Singapore. Now we welcome direct flights from Australia to India.

### According to BOTT Travel Sentiments Tracker, there is a decent interest among Indian millennial travellers from tier-2 and 3 cities about Fiji. How do you plan to target them?

In the last 5 years or so we had started reaching out to trade partners in tier-2 and 3 cities gauging the potential of these cities. We held roadshows in non-metro cities along with several other initiatives like webinar, general sales calls, face-to-face meetings with our partners. There is a lot of potential there in tier-2 & 3 cities and we are eager to welcome tourists from these places. Tourism Fiji and our team here has done a good job in revamping our online travel agent training program, relaunching it as Matai 2.0 for agents across the country to become destination specialists.

### Can you please elaborate on the Matai 2.0 program?

After 20 months of border closures, the travel industry has changed, and we felt it was important to update and change our training program to help new agents coming into the industry learn the destination or allow previously registered agents to relearn and get updates on the destination again in a new and refreshed way.

Matai 2.0 is a new program designed to be interactive and easier to use. It is now a tiered format, so travel advisors who learn more through the program's modules and courses can earn better benefits along with expanding their knowledge about Fiji.

Matai 2.0 will regularly expand to feature new courses and modules on different topics, including how travel agents can use social media to connect with clients. Other additions include new fact sheets, maps and product videos. Benefits and rewards of becoming a Fiji specialist range from deals on flights to fam trip invitations and more.

### Are you targeting the wedding segment keeping in mind how the young Indians are choosing foreign destinations for their marriages?

We are definitely known as a popular honeymoon destination. Wedding is no doubt one of the upcoming segments and we would like to focus on it. We also have a big population of Indian origin and so it should not be hard to get things required for Indian weddings. With wedding venues located on the beautiful beaches of Fiji, in the gardens or chapel of your resort or hidden in the tropical hills, there is no doubt that you will be able to find the best wedding location suited to you and your guests, no matter what your budget. Barring connectivity which is a challenge, it can be made attractive if coupled with Australia and New Zealand.

As it is newly weds come to Fiji for a minimum of 6 nights as the country has a bouquet of

offerings from entry level to uber luxurious. We also have excellent boutique properties perfectly suited for young people. There is a unique advantage Fiji offers to honeymoon couples as there are adults-only resorts. So wherever they stay put, they get complete privacy. Fiji is beyond the Sun and sea. We have mountain range accommodations, we also have coastal ones, over the ones and there is a wide range of activities that couples can enjoy.

### What are the niche tourist attractions you wish to highlight?

Fiji is home to some 300 islands and is known for its pristine and white sandy beaches. Many are uninhabited islands with lush green forests and peaks, but most are habited islands with distinctive cultures that are very popular with tourists. Our country is known as the soft coral capital of the world, thanks to its wonderful and diverse marine life. Every Fijian town has its own distinct culture, which visitors may discover on any village trip. Fiji also offers some of the world's best surfing, with thousands of islands and coral reef options, for everyone from beginners to experts. The country offers a diverse range of cuisines.

Post pandemic, we are focussing on sustainable tourism by supporting conservation and community initiatives with the belief that tourism must value culture and environment.

### What are current travelling requirements to Fiji?

With excellent health infrastructure in place, Fiji has removed most Covid restrictions. The two current requirements are that travellers should be fully vaccinated and book a Covid test upon arrival in Fiji within 72 hours. Thus it is highly recommended that travellers take health insurance. We haven't seen many positive covid cases and hopefully these restrictions shall go away in the near future.



# Travstarz Global Group hosts networking dinner and product presentation in Delhi

Travstarz Global Group in association with Vana Nava Water Jungle, Hua Hin, Thailand recently hosted a Networking Dinner and Product Presentation in Delhi on July 7, 2022. The event was supported by Tourism Authority of Thailand with the presence of Khun Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director TAT, Mr. Aso, Marketing Officer and Ms. Pinky Arora.



Travstarz introduced the Vana Nava Water Jungle, Hua Hin, Thailand, Asia's First Water Jungle Park in India with the event which was represented by Khun Tip Arpa Kaewnoi (Fon), the Cluster Senior Sales Manager and Khun Mutjarin Namkhampa (Ning), the Cluster Director of Sales & Marketing. Khun Fon made the presentation of the Water Jungle Park which was followed by a quiz session with free couple passes to the winners. Travstarz also announced the start of full-fledged operations of its various DMC locations especially at Thailand during the event and to mark the occasion, 2 Lucky winners were given complimentary two nights stay couple vouchers at 5-star resorts at Hua Hin. The vouchers were given away to the winners by Mr. Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI and Mr. Neeraj Malhotra, Chairman, TAAI North India.



"Travstarz has been a Purely B2B company in India since 2009 and has always been pioneer in introducing new products and destinations in the Indian Market. Vana Nava Water Jungle, Hua Hin is an amazing new product perfect in all respects for Family Leisure Groups, FITs, MICE and even weddings with a host of activities and meeting spaces designed for the same. We are very pleased and proud that they have chosen to partner with us for the Indian Market based on our past credentials for over a decade now," said Sucheta Nagpal, Director & CEO, Travstarz Global Group.

Khun Fon was very happy in introducing the Water Jungle Park and said, "We are very



pleased to meet so many good travel agents at the event and introduce our park to them. The park has 20+ adventure and leisure activities including a Rope Course and Climbing Wall, Flow Rider, Abyss and Boomerango etc. and boasts of First Virtual Reality Slide in Asia. It also has a beautiful Cave Café to sit and relax with your friends and family over scrumptious food. We also have great venues for MICE groups with fully equipped meeting rooms with provision of meals including Indian, vegetarian and Jain food as well at the park."

"We are very happy to Partner with Travstarz Global Group, who have been the Industry

Leaders in India B2B market for many years and have already worked with many Tourism Boards, Hotels and other Operators in the past. I am sure our Partnership with them will go a long way in bringing much needed exposure to our parks. Both Sucheta and Pankaj have been very hands-on and have personally ensured the success of the event and we are very thankful to them for their support to us," said Khun Ning.

The very well attended event was much appreciated by all present who seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the evening and welcomed the restart of operations at Travstarz Global Group.



# IHN hosts successful maiden edition of IHN Let's Konnect with good participation



Indian Hospitality Network - IHN, recently hosted an exclusive buyer-seller table top trade meet across the travel, tourism and hospitality industries at the Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, East Delhi on June 29, 2022. The successful completion of the day-long event solidified people's belief that - Travel is Back!

## Priyanka Saxena Ray

The event witnessed stellar participation from 40+ leading brands from a wide range of international tourism boards, destination management companies, hospitality groups, airlines, cruise companies and travel experts. The 100+ buyers were also curated across travel consolidators, MICE specialists, luxury sellers, B2B as well as B2C professionals, tour operators, travel organisers and other service oriented brands.

The USP of the show was that the focus was on ensuring one-on-one meetings amongst the participants to create synergies and broaden their business prospects. Each participant was

duly vetted and then invited to attend the show.

There were 1000+ meetings generated not only between sellers and buyers but also amongst the exhibitors - who had gladly sought potential alliances within their respective portfolios.

The event received lot of adulation and praise from one and all for the format, curation, branding and the buyer profiling at the show.

On the occasion, Abhishek Garg, Founder, Indian Hospitality Network - IHN shared his vision, "As we recover from the pandemic to get back into business mode, India has emerged as one of the most interesting and productive countries for the composite travel industry both for leisure and business travel. A combination of factors is responsible for the growth and demand

of travel within India which include impressive, captive numbers, a burgeoning middle class with buying power, youth willing to travel and collectively, people wanting to spend!"

Speaking exclusively to BOTT, Mr. Garg said, "At IHN, the concept is always, how do we make people win. This is our core philosophy. In the last two years we have experimented with different formats and core intent of all formats have been to conduct meaningful meetings as we believe that the most precious commodity of people around us is their time. On those lines we built the IHN Let's Konnect event and we are glad to provide a platform for all our IHN Members Pan India to utilise and make the most of our initiative which has been built around a valid theme - TRAVEL IS BACK!"



# Debut edition of **GDEC** Weddings and Films concludes on a successful note in Delhi

The first edition of **Global Destinations Expo & Conference (GDEC) – Weddings & Films**, which was being held at JW Marriott, Aerocity in New Delhi from July 14 - 16, 2022 concluded successfully. The 3-day B2B event, which witnessed mass turnout of tourism industry professionals and stalwarts from films and weddings industry, was organized by India Advantage Foundation and managed by iCONEX Exhibitions.



**Priyanka Saxena Ray**



Event inauguration was done in the presence of Amaresh Tiwari, Chairman, India Advantage Foundation (IAF) & Global Destination Expo & Conference (GDEC) and important dignitaries including Maharaj Kumar Sahib Lakshyaraj Singh Ji Mewar of Udaipur & Executive Director – HRH Group of Hotels, Udaipur; Mohamad Gulamali Morani, Managing Director, Cineyug Group of Companies; S. Viswanathan, IAS, Managing Director – Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation; Dr. Bharat Pathak – Vice Chairman MGNCRE Hyderabad MHRD, Govt. Of India; and Dr. Nandita Pathak – Founder Director JP Foundation, Udyamita Vidyapeeth.

A premier B2B event, Global Destinations Expo & Conference focuses on the weddings and film production segment and aims to support the Destination marketing and management industry along with the people who make it work i.e. the Global Destination Organizations, Event Planners and Tourism Boards. GDEC is being organized at an opportune time as the industry begins to recover from the unprecedented impact of the pandemic on the Travel and Hospitality sector.

**Amaresh Tiwari, Chairman, India Advantage Foundation (IAF) & Global Destination Expo & Conference (GDEC)** at the inauguration said, “Our vision with GDEC is to bring under one platform the wedding





and film production stakeholders with service providers from travel and hospitality sector to explore business opportunities. We believe these niche tourism segments also need to be brought under the gamut of MICE in order to enjoy the benefits of the industry status.”

He further added, “Our vision is to also position India as an attractive destination for weddings. With over 32mn NRIs residing across the world, we have a large opportunity to explore in this segment.”

**Maharaj Kumar Sahib Lakshyaraj Singh Ji Mewar** of Udaipur & Executive Director – HRH Group of Hotels, Udaipur commented, “The world is becoming smaller yet people are growing distant. While achieving all kinds of professional growth, the pride that one feels to see your country’s name attached to yours is a feeling that cannot be described. I feel people need to work more closely together to ensure India’s image grows globally.”

**Mohamad Gulamali Morani, Managing Director**, Cineyug Group of Companies said, “While the world is beautiful, there are no dearth of breathtaking locations in our very own country. For weddings or for films, India is brimming with scenic destinations and we must work domestically, join hands with hotels in India, and destinations, to promote our country. The Government too needs to ease the permits needed for shooting, which many states have done already.”

**S. Viswanathan, IAS, Managing Director** – Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation said, “Madhya Pradesh offers many scenic locations for destination weddings and film shoots. We are aggressively promoting the state as a tourist destination with a special focus on customized experiences for senior citizens and children.”

**Dr. Nandita Pathak** – Founder Director JP Foundation, Udyamita Vidyapeeth shared, “The government has not just cleared the coastline along River Ganges but is also developing the coastline alongside the Namami Gange in collaboration with ITDC. ITDC is working towards building properties that will enable people to host weddings or events alongside the Ganges shore.”

A one of its kind industry event, GDEC offered the much-needed platform for tourism boards and hospitality brands to connect with key wedding planners and film production houses to explore business opportunities. A series of panel discussions and informative workshops with industry experts spread over the three days of the event to discuss changing trends affecting wedding business and film shoots along with strategies for organizations and destinations to tap the potential of these segments kept the attendees busy.

The GDEC featured panel discussions, addresses and knowledge-sharing sessions on various subjects by renowned names in the industry. To name a few: Maharaj Kumar Sahib Lakshyaraj Singh Ji Mewar of Udaipur and Executive Director, HRH Group of Hotels (Udaipur); Rituraj Khanna, Director – Q Events, Brian Worley, Creative Director and Owner – B. Worley Productions; Angela Proffitt, CEO GSD creative, USA; Monica Balli, Founder Lime SRL, Italy; Martin Emmanuel – Managing Director, Razzmatazz Ventures; Neha Mehrotra – Founder and Director at Foreign Wedding Planners; Devika Sakhuja -Devika Sakhuja Designs; Rajiv Kapoor – General Manager – Fairmont Jaipur; and Mohamad Gulamali Morani – Managing Director, Cineyug Group of Companies amongst others.

Day 1 of the event saw a line-up of expert panel discussions on subjects ranging from Indian and International wedding industry collaboration; Technology Integration in the Wedding Industry; Upcoming trends in Décor & Wedding planning and the Changing Trends of Indian Wedding. Day 2 and 3 comprised one-on-one hosted buyer meetings alongside a number of engaging workshops and training led by seasoned professionals from the domestic as well as global wedding industry. Panel discussions covered some important subjects ranging from the Power of Business Networking to Challenges and New Opportunities in the Wedding business post-pandemic, and the changing game of the Indian gourmet business.

The inaugural event saw participation from over 50+ exhibitors and 200+ hosted buyers from India and overseas.



# Travel fraternity shares positive emotion on boom in tourism @ SATTE 2022

SATTE 2022 was one of the first physical event that witnessed phenomenal footfalls in the post pandemic era, reassuring the travel trade that everything will soon go back to normal. The show recorded more than 120 per cent growth over the previous edition despite a very challenging national and international travel landscape. The 29th edition was a massive statement on India and the South Asia region's potential for domestic, regional and global tourism.

For the domestic tourism in India, exhibitors from every corner of India, from Kashmir to Kerala and India's western most states of Gujarat and Rajasthan to the country's North East, were in attendance. Internationally, some 300 international suppliers and 25 countries were in attendance from every single continent. Networking with the travel trade at the show, BOTT spoke exclusively to few tourism game changers and here is what they had to say about the return of travel!



**DESLAV GOSPODINOV**

Group Director of Sales and Marketing  
Lily Hotels Pvt. Ltd.

## Priyanka Saxena Ray

The resorts operated by Lily Hotels in the Maldives are the pioneering leading All-Inclusive Resort, located in 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.

Lily Beach Resort Maldives was basically built in 2009, but we have recently refurbished it partially in 2019 and the product is very much still in line with the trend. We were the first to introduce the hideaway property on one hand and on the other hand, is resort, which offers a lot of privacy. Now we have introduced a new concept, which is the signature collection by hideaway. So these are nine exclusive villas on the same ground, same property, but much high end, serving purposes of service, exclusivity and customized experience. And we have three and four bedroom villas. All of them are land villas, and all of them have 24/7

dedicated butler service.

From my perspective, both resorts cater equally well for families and for honeymoon. However, due to the size of hideaway and the privacy that it offers, we see much more demand from honeymooners. But in general, we have the facilities and all the services of segments. And both segments - family as well as honeymooners, they don't clash. There is enough space and enough facilities for each.

Out of our total clientele, approximately 10% for both segments come from India. One of our focus going forward is to increase this number. We have recently confirmed the representation with LinkIN Reps and that is one of our first step in this direction. We are confident that numbers from India will grow in the future. That's our prediction. And this is also the reason for us having more focus on this market. In our endeavour to do so, we have adapted the product to the requirements of the Indian market and it seems that we have been quite successful. We have Indian dishes, we have Indian chefs, we have Indian stuff, we have Indian TV programs and we are keen on attracting more Indian clientele. We have set certain targets, which though would vary over



the years, but in general we feel, keeping somewhere between 15 to 20%, we feel is healthy enough.

Well, the good news is that, of course, Little Beach is all inclusive, so you have almost everything covered. We have three excursions per stay out of four options, whether it is Local Island, whether it is a turtle experience, or we have sunset cruise – the guest can choose as per their choice. We do have other excursions like whale shark and also customise

the excursions as per your request. So as for marketing, our strategy is quite diverse. We use different distribution channels. Of course, bread and butter for us have always been the tour operators but we do have online strategies which, as you can see, have been growing for the past ten years. And we believe that they will grow in the future. But in any case, we are keeping the high balance between the different segments, so we try to work with all those segments.

**L**os Angeles set up its office in India in August 2019 and went on to conduct a series of programs, collaborating with brands, doing marketing trade campaign and more. Just as the momentum started picking up, the pandemic struck in March 2020. However, we did not allow it to slow us down and kept ourselves busy all during the pandemic. We did webinars and many virtual events and ensured that Los Angeles was kept alive in everyone's memory. We also redid our branding – new logo and new tagline – Start Your Come Back!

Now that things have opened up, there is a huge surge in demand. Contrary to belief that long haul will take time to pick up, Indians are already travelling to Los Angeles. Rising visa demand is a testament of the same. We had a record number of 62,000 plus student visas granted in 2021 so that automatically goes to show there is a lot of VFR because the parents who have not got the visas would want to go now. Also, there is almost two and half years of visa backlog who are all potential visitors so there will definitely be a huge surge in travellers. Therefore, we need to use this time to first create awareness on the destination, tell them about Los Angeles, so that when they are ready to travel, when they have their visas, they know that Los Angeles should be part of their travel plans.

The advantage with US is that they have a ten year vision and grant a ten year visa, so there is always a possibility that people will do multiple trips. Normally, Indians often have some relative or friend who is in the US, whom they would keep as their base and then do something around the East Coast. California is the hub for IT software where there are a lot of Indians, so people defiantly want to visit their friends so there is a potential segment, which we can tag.

Airlines are just getting back in shape. Vistara just got a permission to fly to the US but I think they're waiting for a right aircraft. However, there are plenty of connections to Los Angeles and we are forever hopeful of having a direct flight sometime in future. Visas too would get better by the last quarter of the year and we are confident of closing the year on a good note.

The US is open and we've taken all the precautions for the safety guidelines. The most important thing for us is the travellers safety, so we are looking at that and we will be checking all the precautions as well, ensuring that it's going to be a safe entry into LA always.



**SEEMA KADAM**

Regional Director – India,  
Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board

**S**ituated on the west coast of the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan is relatively new on the global tourism map. It is an undiscovered country nestled between Russia and Iran. Brimming with natural beauty, adventure and nightlife, there is so much that Azerbaijan has to offer.

Azerbaijan has different regions each having their own attractions and specialties. Baku is the most famous tourist attractions. The travel restrictions have lifted in February and now travel to Azerbaijan is a very straightforward process. You only need your Visa and a Certificate of Vaccination or the Certificate of Recovery from Covid and then Visa is very easy. It basically takes less than five minutes to do it online. So this is a very easy process.

Over the years we have seen that the product that Azerbaijan has to offer perfectly fits what the Indians are looking for, considering that the Azerbaijan has nine out of eleven climatic zones. So basically from high mountains to forests to sea and the desert and the beach, we have everything in the country. Although the south of the country is subtropical, while the luck forests, mountains, ski resorts and so on and so forth to offer. In terms of the culture, there are more than three units popular sites – we have got one in Baku, one in Gobustan and one in Sheki. But at the same time I feel like the cultural and historic ties between India and Azerbaijan also do contribute to the process. While travellers are also looking for a new experience, they are feeling safe and secure and comfortable in the destination.

As for connectivity, right now Azerbaijan has started flying daily but this is the only direct connection. However, India is very well connected to Azerbaijan through GCC Hub, through the Gulf, so through the Jazeera Airlines, by Dubai, Qatar Airways, they're all very well connected to Azerbaijan and also we are working with other airlines to further promote Azerbaijan here in India. Initially when we started promoting Azerbaijan, we focussed on MICE segment but now are also focusing on family groups, leisure travellers, women groups and wedding. We did host an Indian wedding in the



**BAHRUZ ASGAROV**

Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
Azerbaijan Tourism Board



country and the response was amazing. Additionally, Azerbaijan is also a great place for filming, not Bollywood films, but other movies, such as movies in Tamil language etc. have been shot in the country. We had seen a huge potential in filming in Azerbaijan before Covid but we had to stop it all during the pandemic. We are now restarting the process.

Baku, which is the capital city and main hub of tourism arrivals in Azerbaijan, has much to offer to a discerning traveller. However, we have so much more to offer. Outside we have beautiful cultural sites – we have lakes and mountains and plantations and heritage sites. Thus, I would say recommend a minimum three nights, four days stay in Baku to the travellers.

India has been very important for us since the very start. If we look at 2019, we hit the all-time record of 3.2 million visitors overall, out of which 70,000 were from India. This was 60% increase with the previous year, which showed a great prospect for the further development. And we do believe that this trend will continue. During the Pandemic, we did a lot of work with the Indian procreators. There were a lot of webinars happening, there were a lot of product presentations. And we created Azerbaijan 101 platform, where agents from across the globe can learn about the trading product that we are offering – Azerbaijan.



**D**MC reps was actually born a few years ago with the idea of creating a global portfolio. A global portfolio means one DMC in every country in the world. Except in big countries like the USA, where we actually even say one DMC per state or one per region, because we did that with a new concept. The idea, when COVID hit, was to do something else. We went out and we were able to actually sign up 75 destinations. Unfortunately, not all of you 75 destinations are interested in the India market so for India we have 25 destinations. DMC Reps is actually a German company. But we identified that the Indian outbound market will become maybe the strongest in the world, especially since China is almost closed down. India will be number one. Also, Indian travellers, are much more resilient. They don't care much about crises in the world, so therefore, the potential is tremendous.

It is interesting to note that some countries are a little bit afraid of the Indian market. They don't know how to deal with Indian clients because India clients are very particular in terms of food, in terms of feedback, and response time. So, for example, when you send an enquiry to Europe, you can wait a week. It is acceptable. Everyone is patient. But in India, 24 hours is the turnaround time on an enquiry. Also, the aspect of shopping has to be a consideration for Indians. Indian travellers want to look for a good bargain. He will check for several agents. So this puts a little bit of pressure on the DMCs and some DMCs, don't want to cope with that, but then we tell them also very clearly. So if you cannot handle it, then just don't try because I think in order to handle the Indian market, you need to be committed.

The travellers and the way they travel have



**MARC SIEVERT**

Director of the Board of Focus Asia Vietnam –  
Executive Member of the Board of DMC Reps, **DMC Reps**

not really altered but is a little situational at the moment. Like earlier, where there was a huge interest in niche travel, people today just simply want to travel – to get out of their country. Be it a beach or a cooler place, the priority is to travel. However, everything has become very last minute now. This is because of the travel uncertainty that people have witnessed in the past, people don't want to make travel plans months in advance, like they used to. I think it will still take another six to eight months until things start settling down. India is a very strong key market for us. I've been doing business here since 2005, and I love the Indian market. I love Indian food. And I think there's

really big growth here. I think this market has not even begun. This is my feeling here and I think India market is still very fresh. There is huge potential and so we want to stay focused on the market. That's why we have this joint venture here with two dynamic ladies – Ms Vandana Mathur, Director – Marketing and PR Sunrise Presentations and Senior Member Team Sales (India and Sri Lanka), DMC Reps and Nisha Srivastava, Director – Sales, Sunrise Presentations and Head of Team South Asia (India and Sri Lanka), DMC Reps. We are confident of expanding our operations in India and increasing our office strength.





# *Events* and *More*



For details contact: [gunjan@perfectalliances.in](mailto:gunjan@perfectalliances.in)

**9811054095**



# 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 July-Aug 2022*



### **ARIES (March 21 – April 20)**

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



### **Taurus (April 21 – May 21)**

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



### **Gemini (May 22 – June 21)**

Harmony and balance will be there at your work front. Career growth is there in your card. Ideal time to getting into business partnership. Recovery from illness is imminent. Indulgence in spirituality will bring harmony. Likely meeting your prospective partner.



### **Cancer (June 22 – July 22)**

Change in career is possible. Senior colleague or professional will support at work front. Your investments will be rewarded. Balance out your relationships. Take care of your health.



### **Leo (July 23 – August 21)**

To hold the position in your career you need to take a stand. Make smart investments. Make an extra effort to take care of your health. Don't allow a third person to spoil your relationship.





## Virgo (August 22 – September 23)

Search on the job front will be successful. Success in career is possible by putting thoughts into action. Avoid conflicts in your relationship. Recovery from illness is expected.



## Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Change of career is possible for greater success. Open and honest communication is required for a successful relationship. Take care of your health. You will indulge in spirituality.



## Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

Your confidence will lead you towards success in career. Leave your past behind for a new beginning in the relationship. Possibility of buying a new property or car. Be optimistic and start exercising for being healthy.



## Sagittarius (November 23 – December 22)

Be practical in your professional work and maintain a work life balance. Be careful while investing. Make effort to strengthen relationship. Start meditation.



## Capricorn (December 23 – January 20)

Your search for job will be successful. Career success is possible by putting thoughts into action. Recovery from illness is expected. Do a research work before doing any kind of investment. Spend time with family.



## Aquarius (January 21 – February 19)

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.



## Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

You will be busy this week. Spend your money wisely. Respond intelligently to the questions asked by people. 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. Spend some time with your spouse.



# TAFI announces Convention at Kuching in Sarawak, Malaysia from September 20 – 23, 2022

Indian Hospitality Network - IHN, recently hosted an exclusive buyer-seller table top trade meet across the travel, tourism and hospitality industries at the Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, East Delhi on June 29, 2022. The successful completion of the day-long event solidified people's belief that – Travel is Back!

## > BOTT DESK

Elaborating on the theme, President Ajay Prakash said, “As we seek recovery post-COVID, it is vital that the tourism industry does not forget the lessons of the Pandemic. As one of the biggest global industries, the power of tourism to shape the world is phenomenal. It can be a powerful force for doing well, not only for the stake holders but for the entire world. Build Back Better encapsulates the resolve to rebuild tourism in a more responsible and sustainable manner.”

The convention committee is being chaired by Mr. Seeraj Sabharwal and Mr. Jigar Dudakiya is Deputy Chairman. Commenting on the choice of destination, the Convention Chairman Seeraj Singh Sabharwal said, “Sarawak is a relatively unexplored destination for the Indian Traveller. Sarawak is an excellent destination for Family Travel, Honeymooners, MICE, Weddings and the Film industry. TAFI has often organised conventions in Unique and unusual locations to expand the portfolio of Travel Agents & Tour Operators of INDIA.” The Convention package will be inclusive of a 3 Nights Pre or Post Convention tours to beautiful places within Malaysia.

The Deputy Chairman Jigar Dudakiya further commented on



*The most prestigious event returns stronger than ever*



the choice of the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCKK) – “With its state of the art equipment and facilities, BCKK is the first international purpose-built convention centre in Kuching Sarawak, Malaysia. The convention centre can host up to 5000 People with an uninterrupted wi-fi internet services for up to 8000 simultaneous users.

The TAFI Convention is supported by Tourism Malaysia, Sarawak Tourism Board, Business Events Sarawak, Malaysia Airlines, Malindo (now rechristened Batik) and Air Asia.

TAFI, The premier association of Travel Agents in India, organises workshops, seminars and conventions for their members in different parts of the world and India and preference is given to destinations where TAFI members can offer some new options to their clients for leisure travel, MICE or weddings. Each destinations has experience an exponential growth in numbers after TAFI Convention.

The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) with a membership of more than 1400 tour operators and travel agents account for approximately 70% of all outbound travel from India.

“There is palpable excitement among our membership since a Convention is happening after 4 years and TAFI Conventions are always eagerly awaited. We expect an excellent turnout of delegates and Speakers. Sarawak is at the forefront of responsible, sustainable eco-tourism and is the ideal destination to begin our journey to BUILD – BACK – BETTER” concluded President Ajay Prakash.



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