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RNI/DELENG/2019/1343884

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From The Editor's

Desk



Dear Readers,

As India completed 75 years of Independence last week, there is a feeling of positivity and merry in the air. The suppressed desire in people of not having travelled in the last 2 years has given the much needed impetus to the tourism sector. Long weekends are just an excuse for people to escape to a nearby place and hotels and airlines are basking in the view of this burgeoning traffic. As for international travel, destinations that do not have long visa wait are fast gaining prominence on the tourists' map and Indian outbound is growing by leaps and bounds.

Global tourism is roaring back to life despite Covid travel headaches and the effects of the war in Ukraine. International tourist arrivals worldwide have more than doubled, up 130 per cent in January 2022 as compared to the same period last year, according to the latest UN World Tourism Organization figures. Travellers are regaining confidence, and short haul destinations are becoming popular. Worldwide, there have been 18 million additional visitors, the UNWTO said, "equivalent to the total increase recorded over the whole of 2021".

Keeping this momentum high, we have brought forth for you an interesting mix of articles in the TAAI Special Issue of BOTT. Yes TAAI 66th Convention is finally happening aboard Spectrum of the Seas and we couldn't be more excited to be a part of it! Conventions and events are the biggest assurance that all is well in the travel world. So do read our TAAI Special Issue and browse through our articles on Penang, Singapore, visa free destinations, essentials for a cruise trip and more! We also bring to you a glimpse of wedding venues in Dubai and Jaipur.

So friends, read all this along with our regular articles, interviews and more in our August / September TAAI Special Issue of BOTT Magazine and do share your feedback with us at priyanka@bottindia.com

Priyanka Saxena Ray

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ITC Hotels unveils its 12th property in Gujarat – ITC Narmada

ITC Hotels has announced the inauguration of its premium luxury hotel – the ITC Narmada in India's first UNESCO World Heritage City of Ahmedabad. Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the iconic property situated at the heart of the city. ITC Narmada is Gujarat's first LEED Platinum certified hotel and is ITC Hotel's 15th Luxury Collection Hotel in India. ITC Narmada is ITC Hotels 12th property in the state of Gujarat. Conveniently located in the business district of the city, this 291 keys, 19-storey, 70 metre grand structure – is an architectural marvel towering over Ahmedabad's skyline with its fine indigenous grandeur and contemporary design. The hotel celebrates the spirit of Gujarat and the unique fervour of its people through its premium offerings; rooms that offer luxury of space, 5 signature culinary brands, convention spaces and Kaya Kalp – The Spa.



Sri Lanka to issue longer visas to tourists



Sri Lanka's Tourism Ministry has decided to issue longer visas for tourists arriving in the country in order to revive the crisis-hit tourism industry following the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, a senior official from the ministry said Monday. The official told Xinhua that following a proposal submitted to the cabinet last week, the tourism ministry would soon permit tourist visas for up to 180 days for those who apply via Electronic Travel Authorization from the existing 30 days, whilst allowing single entry visa travellers to stay up to 270 days. Multiple entry visas could also be extended for a year.

Indian visitors to Dubai more than double to 858,000 in Jan-Jun 2022

The number of Indian visitors to Dubai rose more than twofold to 8.58 lakh during January-June 2022 compared to the year-ago period, according to the Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET). In the first half of 2021, over 4.09 lakh people from India visited Dubai, the DET data showed. Overall, Dubai attracted 71.2 lakh international overnight visitors between January and June 2022, recording close to three-fold growth in visitors compared to 25.2 lakh tourists in the same period in 2021.





OM VILAS BENARES

offers perfect amalgamation of Indian cultural ethos in modern set-up

ADVERTORIAL



The evolving traveller is on a lookout for immersive experiences and wants to enjoy a holiday, which is not clichéd. In such a scenario, Om Vilas Benares, with its series of curated fantasies offers guests personal exploration, spontaneous discoveries, and invigorating engagement.

Om Vilas have redefined luxury and vacation aboard its unique lodges in Benares. Om Vilas is equipped with exquisite tents having an ease of accommodation that lies beyond comparison. The lavish space has been created with an aim to help guests relax and unwind their body. The Tents have been furnished with a canopied king size bed, a large writing desk and chic armchairs. The captivating rooms features a heavenly bath experience and teak wood floors. The tents are well-equipped with all the modern-day facilities that a guest seeks.

Outside the tents, the garden has been framed by a majestic view and refreshing light. Imagine waking up to birds chirping or the sweet ringing of cowbells, away from the cacophony of everyday life, with fresh aroma of the Indian soil soothing your soul. Om Vilas Benares invited you to be part of this overwhelming experience and also indulge in its in-home activities. The resort has over 50 traditional village activities in which the guests can participate. Its campus includes leisure pools, rain dance, barbeque, restaurant, nature walks, Gazebo, and India's rawness. It gives your family the freedom to reach out, feel the grass, do activities with their own bare hands, and participate in India's rich cultural heritage in historical ways. Om Vilas is a destination for the crème de la crème of tourists who seek plush hotel stays along with unforgettable stories and experiences. It awaits those who have been numbed by the lofty marble lobbies and plush bathrooms of modern hotels. **Visit us at www.omvilas.com**

Enjoy culinary extravaganza at Shree Shivay Thali Dining



Shree Shivay Thali Dining is not just an ordinary restaurant. It is the only place in Benares that reflects the Indian Food culture by offering guests an experience of the traditional way of dining in India, which has been there in Indian Families for ages. In Shree Shivay, the hotel uses Kansa metal to serve the food, which is prepared without using onion or garlic. Kansa, which is the best metal replete with anti-bacterial elements, is also considered to be a very healthy metal to cook and consume food. We provide more than **20 dishes in the Thali**, which includes Welcome **drinks, FARSAAN (Snacks), Main Course, and Dessert**. Over the years, Western Dining has become very famous in India due to which our traditional food culture, i.e., serving in Thali had taken a backseat. However, here at Shree Shivay, we offer **Unlimited Vegetarian Thali** to our Guests every day. Shree Shivay has been recently awarded the most Hygienic Restaurant in Varanasi by FSSAI Ministry of Food and Health, Government of India.

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Sharjah Tourism Development Authority launches 'Holiday Homes Project'

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) in cooperation with several government and private agencies and institutions in the emirate has launched a regulatory framework – the Sharjah Tourism's 'Holiday Homes Project' – which aims to offer an official framework of facilitation and control to Sharjah residents who wish to rent out places they own as holiday homes to tourists and visitors. According to the terms and standards approved by SCTDA as stipulated by the Holiday Homes Project, the residential units can be rented out on a rotational basis, regularly.



Qatar Tourism launches Qatar Specialist Programme



Qatar Tourism has launched a new, interactive online training course – Qatar Specialist Programme – designed to enhance its global travel trade partners' knowledge of Qatar's diverse product offering and provide a recognised qualification for its global travel trade partners. The programme, which uses the latest technologies in digital learning, replaces the current Tawash programme and supports Qatar's mission to become a leader in Service Excellence. Available in 11 languages, the Qatar Specialist Programme equips trade partners with the relevant knowledge and tools to promote and sell Qatar internationally more effectively. Comprising several modules, each focusing on a particular aspect of Qatar's tourism offering, the programme allows participants flexibility, letting them complete each module at their own pace, supported by an intuitive, engaging educational tool.

Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approves setting up of tourism board

The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet gave its approval for setting up an eco-tourism development board to fully utilise the tourism potential of the state. The board will be headed by the state chief minister with ministers of 10 departments as its members, Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh told newsmen here. The need for the board was being felt for long and a decision to set it up was taken at the meeting presided over by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, he said. The minister said the board will help the state attract domestic and international tourists.



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Uttarakhand to expand 46 ropeway initiatives throughout the state

The Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has given a go-ahead to expand 46 ropeway initiatives beneath the Parvatmala scheme to spice up tourism around the state. “The hill state of Uttarakhand understands the importance of ropeway which is considered as the most eco-friendly mode of transport; hence we have decided to develop 46 ropeway projects across the state which will also provide a boost to tourism,” he stated at the assembly of the Uttarakhand Tourism Construction Board held in Dehradun recently. The tourism minister directed the officers to discover the potential of the funicular railway machine in puts place there is not any chance of putting in place a ropeway venture. Funicular railway or incline railway is a machine this is really useful for pulling trains up steep grades with a cable the place the metal wheels can be utilized to steer the teach alongside the tracks without traction.



Lords Hotels and Resorts strengthens presence in Rajasthan

Lords Hotels and Resorts brings you its new True Value offering in Sumerpur destination with Lords Eco Inn, a boutique under construction property located opposite to the Post Office in Jawai Bandh Road, Sumerpur, Distt. Pali. Rajasthan. This city centric property is easily accessible from other prominent city attractions and corporate addresses; and is just 7kms from Jawai Bandh Railway Station and 160kms from Udaipur Airport. Lords Eco Inn will be a boutique property.

Pullman New Delhi Aerocity launches first ever digital business campaign

Pullman New Delhi Aerocity launched its first ever digital campaign “We Will Mind Your Business” with top influencers from across India in April 2022. The campaign is focused on positioning Pullman Aerocity as the ultimate destination for business travellers through a series of Instagram videos by influencers such as Abhinav Mathur, Suhavini Singh and Aman Vohra! Aimed at showcasing specific needs of business travellers and how Pullman covers every unique need, the hotel came up with scripted video and visual content to showcase what the property had to offer.



"Madhya Pradesh Tourism has won two national awards for promoting fairs and festivals of Madhya Pradesh and also for its well-maintained hotels at the 8th edition of International Tourism Conclave and Travel Awards at Chandigarh. With these awards, we will set high national standards in the field of hospitality and services. Being honoured with these awards in the presence of senior officials of tourism boards, tour operators, destination management companies (DMCs), stakeholders excites us to do even better."

-Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary,
Tourism, Madhya Pradesh Tourism



"After more than two years, it heartens us to welcome again Indian travellers to Singapore in good numbers and see them enjoy both familiar favourites and our new, reimagined experiences. Pune continues to be an important source city in terms of tourist arrivals to Singapore. With this roadshow, we aim to continue the growth momentum by communicating the message to our audience that Singapore is open, and by welcoming back travellers for memorable holidays. We were happy to reconnect with our partner-friends in Pune and invite their clients to come, enjoy in Singapore."

-G B Srithar, Regional Director, India,
Middle East, South Asia & Africa, Singapore Tourism Board



"Thailand recorded over 300,000 Indian arrivals between January to July 2022, ranking India in top 5 tourism markets for Thailand. I am looking forward to working closely with trade partners and media in this region to make sure Thailand remains one of the top overseas destinations in the Indian market. We are aiming that the numbers will hit 500,000 by the end of the year."

-Isada Saovaros,
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand Mumbai Office



"It has been heartwarming to see the Indian travel fraternity respond positively to and welcome the unique adventures, immersive experiences and only-in-South-Africa activities that we showcased via the More & More campaign. We are excited to launch this deal driven campaign in India and are confident that consumers and corporates will see immense value in these deals, as they continue to curate their South African adventures. This ticket price of INR 38,148 establishes South Africa as an affordable long-haul destination for Indian travellers. This rate is also available to the Indian travel trade on the Air Seychelles website."

-Neliswa Nkani,
Hub Head – Middle East, India and South East Asia,
South African Tourism



"FAM trips are a great way for the media to familiarise themselves with a country by exploring the connectivity of a leading low-cost airline and then further promoting it among their client base. We as a representation in India work closely with the media community to boost relationships and increase visitor arrivals from India. During the trip, the media representatives explored the areas of Azerbaijan through Lahij Village, Highland Park, Flame Towers, Old Town Caravanserai, Sheki Palace, and Coppersmith Experience."

-Komal Seth, Founder and Director, Linkin Reps



"Azerbaijan is currently seeing an increase in the number of travellers from India. With daily flights between Baku and New Delhi, the number of arrivals from the country is expected to grow further. Right before the pandemic, India was among the top 10 countries we received travellers from. Since the opening of international borders between the countries, India is once again placed at the top of this list. Azerbaijan is ready to welcome Indian travellers to enjoy picturesque places surrounded breathtaking nature, rich gastronomy, great venues and services for MICE events as well as weddings."

-Florian Sengtschmid, Chief Executive Officer,
Azerbaijan Tourism Board



'The welfare of my members is of paramount importance to me': **Jyoti Mayal**

The first women President of one of the largest travel trade associations in India, **Mrs Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI** saw some really tough times during her Presidential tenure. The pandemic broke the backbone of the tourism industry, travel went for a toss, restrictions were put in plenty, conventions and shows were announced and cancelled, but like the dynamite that she is – the Iron Lady of Tourism took it all in her stride and went ahead and announced one of the most unique conventions of all times – a Cruising Convention. With a team that has stood with her tall and strong, here's a look at some of the landmark achievements of TAAI in last few years and what Mrs. Mayal has to say about them.



Priyanka Saxena Ray

From writing persistent letters to the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Civil Aviation to discussing important issues relevant to the travel trade, TAAI under the leadership of its President left no stone unturned in last 2 years to seek relief and measures for the benefit of its members and travel industry at large.

The association was successful in easing travel restrictions and gained numerous victories such as reduction in GST slab, easing of travel restrictions and removal of TCS. The ever optimistic, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, talking about the resilience of the travel trade in facing difficult times and overcoming challenges said, "Times today are much different than what they were in the pre-Covid times and as travel service providers we have to learn to adopt the new protocols and procedures. Consumers today want to have all the information about their journey – from end-to-end. They want to know which aircraft they would be flying, which airport they would be transiting and hotel's 'COVID' cleanliness processes. Travellers want to make careful decisions to minimise the risk and exposures for themselves and their families. Search engines are used to supply more information to enable filtering and selections. When people feel safe, they will travel more and will start to embrace travel in a more conscious way, seeking out smaller brands, hotels and experiences that reconnect us with nature and minimise our footprint."

The president further feels that short stays and weekend trips will be huge travel trend in 2022. "With international travel limited as of now, travel locally, will be more frequent. Packing up the car with a flexible itinerary is a great way to explore our amazing country. While it's difficult to predict exactly what tourism will look like in the future, we can expect that travellers will have a greater desire to seek out less crowded attractions and destinations, as well as nature-based experiences," she adds.

Mrs. Mayal has always firmly believed that travel restrictions are the main barrier standing in the way of the recovery of international tourism, along with slow virus containment and low consumer confidence. "The lack of coordinated response among countries to ensure harmonised protocols and coordinated restrictions, as well as the deteriorating economic environment are the main obstacles in the path to recovery. The traveller today is looking for safe-cation, sustainable tourism and proper and correct information on health and medical assistance, and most importantly an environment of staying connected," she adds.

Going along the lines of our possible collaboration with regional counterparts, TAAI is putting its best efforts to help revive the sector and therefore, giving special impetus to growth of MICE, Aviation, and Weddings.

Further, what needs special mention here is the consistent efforts of our Indian Aviation industry, which is not just growing rapidly but has also reached the pre-Covid levels. The Ministry of Civil Aviation is doing a wonderful job with the development of new airports, the extension of airstrips to accommodate large aeroplanes and the constructive implementation of the schemes such as UDAN. With such strategic initiatives, the sector will be a game-changer for the travel industry in the new future. Similarly, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has also taken a few steps in the recent past like tourism infrastructure development, launch of e-visas, efforts to enhance the visibility of brand Incredible India in the overseas market etc., which would go a long way to boost overall tourism scenario of the country.

Having said that, "I strongly believe a lot more needs to be desired from both the ministries which we as an association will continue to work upon to support our members and the industry. According to a RedSeer report, India's travel market will cross \$ 125 billion by FY 27. It is high time to accord Industry Status to the tourism sector."

Some Key Issues addressed by TAAI

- In a letter addressed to the Hon'ble Minister of Finance, Government of India; TAAI submitted the frustration of its members and industry and conveyed that they were looking at the government to do away with taxes and extend support to the industry. 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.
- TAAI Office Bearers and the Airline Council had a very positive meeting on 7th June 2022 with senior officials of AirIndia, Mr. Nipun Aggarwal, CCO, Mr. Melwin D'Silva ED Commercial and Mr. Rajender Nath GM Marketing. The main agenda of the meeting was to push to open all Flight inventories for authorised IATA agents, which was immediately actioned by Air India, especially the CANADA inventory has been reactivated effective 14th June (today) on the GDS.
- In a virtual meeting with Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing director, SpiceJet, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) raised its concerns and discussed the ambiguity around the airline's future and that of the Indian aviation sector, SpiceJet's plan for 2022, launch of new flights and destinations and details on airline's logistics arm SpiceXpress apart from issues faced by association members.
- TAAI strongly advocated for 'One India One Tourism' approach inclusive of 'One Tax Structure'
- TAAI's efforts finally yielded fruitful results when the Government announced waving off the home quarantine for international passengers. TAAI communicated with the Ministry of Health keeping the External Affairs, Home, and Tourism in the loop to consider waiving off the quarantine request.
- TAAI in October 2021 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (ABTO) to promote Buddhist Tourism in India.
- TAAI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) to promote and enhance Bilateral Tourism. The MoU specifically focuses on promoting mutual interests and tourist arrivals through collaboration and a cooperative approach on a reciprocal basis in the years to come.

TAAI 66th Cruising Convention *Namaste India!*



"The response to the convention has been overwhelming since it was announced. This limited edition convention will be a mix of fun and education wherein we will deliberate on critical issues during Knowledge Sessions in the first half of the day and explore and enjoy the ship offerings during the rest of the day. Together, we will explore ways of boosting Regional Tourism, which I strongly believe is the way forward. We need to build on the strengths of our neighbouring countries. The theme of TAAI 66th Cruising Convention is – Namaste India! wherein we will explore the opportunity to develop cruising in India and make it into a huge hub."

- Ms. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI



"TAAI's 66th Cruising Convention has created an excitement amongst the trade, as members are looking forward to an opportunity to interact, deliberate and find ways of growing and boosting their business of cruising on the high seas. India, with its 7000 km of coastline and rivers is a major attraction for International Cruise companies and our government must explore opportunities in boosting tourism along the Indian shores. Amidst many others, the TAAI Cruising Convention will be touching upon this very topic of creating cruising opportunities in India and its surrounding countries, thereby enabling growth of inbound tourism and more."

- Mr. Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI



"Royal Caribbean International's latest ship – the 'Spectrum of the Seas' will be the dazzling host of the 66th TAAI Cruising Convention from August 22 – 25, 2022. Showing solidarity to our members who would be participating at the cruise convention, TAAI is offering a complimentary comprehensive Insurance Cover for all the delegates, which will take care of any unforeseen challenges and we are confident that this Cruising Convention will raise the bar for association conventions in India."

- Mr. Lokesh Bettaiah, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI



"The Travel trade fraternity of India is expected to join the convention to learn; network; explore; connect to situations and people beyond their existing relationships. We at TAAI are looking forward to having an active participation that will gift all travel trade professionals with memories that they will be delighted to cherish for all times to come. Our intent behind organizing a cruise convention is that the 2500+ well-established travel agents of TAAI, to support inbound tourism, are very much keen to introduce a similar cruising experience in India for travellers, and therefore we are of the firm belief that this would be a stepping stone towards expanding cruising here."

-Mr. Shreeram Patel, Hon. National Treasurer, TAAI

The Ultimate Guide to packing for your *First Cruise Holiday*

"Dance with the waves, move with the sea.
Let the rhythm of the water set you free."

Shreya Shimpi

Are you all excited to embark on your first cruise holiday?

As exhilarating as the idea may be, it can also be a bit stressful planning what to carry or what to avoid on your water voyage especially, if you are a first-timer. With brilliant blue clouds above and azure waters around you, a cruise holiday is an experience of a lifetime. However, if you come to know that you have forgotten something essential in the middle of an ocean it is bound to cause a dent in your otherwise happy holiday. But don't worry, we have got you covered!

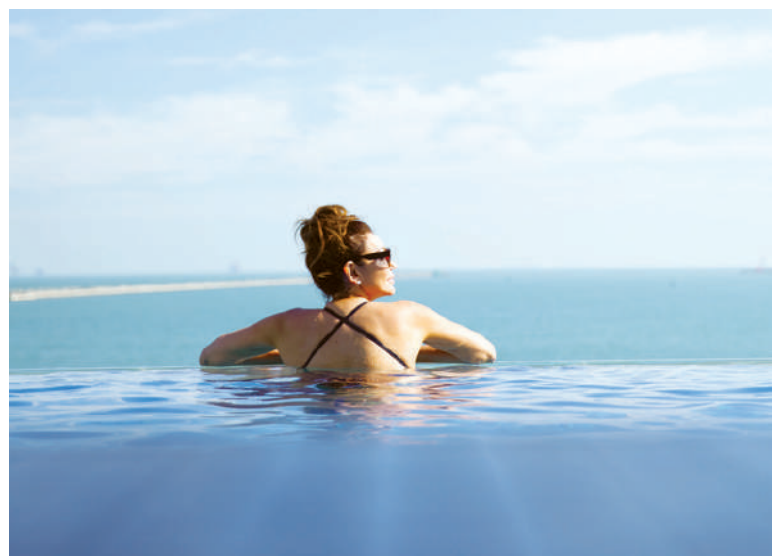
We shall walk you through our A to Z guide about things you need to know before you start packing for your much-awaited holiday.

It is advisable to read and research a bit to have a general idea about what to expect when on a cruise and plan accordingly. The ship cabins are not as big as hotel rooms and have their limitations. Also, it is good to know the weather conditions, activities on board, excursions etc.

We have broadly categorised all this into 15 categories which shall serve as a helpful guide to you.

CLOTHES

You need to plan a 'Capsule Wardrobe' when on a cruise. This includes mix and match outfits which can be easily transitioned from day to night depending on the event. It should have a couple of blue



and black denims or trousers, along with a few neutral coloured and printed tops. Women can pack a few flowy dresses and a cocktail gown.

Some upscale cruises require you to follow a certain dress code on board so you need to pack accordingly so that you don't feel underdressed. Your attire would depend on the weather and destination, so it's better to research that.

Some cruise ships have a strict dress code for dinners at some restaurants. They also host themed parties such as 'The Pirates Night' or a 'Disney night' which can be checked on the cruise website. After all, you would want to pose against the idyllic backdrops wearing those amazing outfits.



Activewear: If you are a fitness freak and plan to work out, you need to pack your active wear including socks and sports shoes.

Jackets, Shawls: We would advise you to carry a jacket, as it may get windy at times. The Air Conditioning is on full blast so you may carry a light shawl or a sweater. If you are headed for an Alaska cruise, it is better to dress up in layers to keep up with the freezing temperatures.

GADGETS

It is good to carry a universal travel adapter so that you don't need to go scouting for one on board. Check that you have carried all your phone, camera, tablet and Kindle chargers since you may not get the specific chargers on a cruise ship. The last thing you would want is standing in front of a picturesque location with no charge on your cell phone. A USB charging block is of great use. You may avoid power strips as they are prohibited on the cruise. Nowadays luggage bags have an in-built USB charging port which can be of great use to charge your devices. You can carry a kindle or a portable speaker if you wish to relax in the oceanfront lounge.

MEDICATIONS

It is extremely important to carry all your medications (along with their prescriptions if possible) while travelling on a cruise. Very few medicines are available in pharmacies on board and those too are available at exorbitant costs. You can pack a few antacids, painkillers, band-aids, burnol cream, sanitary napkins etc. Sea-sickness is common when on a cruise. Sea bands are available as a safe and drug-free alternative. They have to be stuck behind the ear.

DOCUMENTS

We suggest you carry a separate file which has a copy of all your essential documents. It is very important to carry your ID proof which is needed for verification before you board the cruise. A copy of your passport and travel insurance is necessary. You should keep a hard copy of an emergency contact list in your wallet or cabin luggage in

case you lose your phone or someone has to make a call on your behalf in case of an emergency. One more important document is your Covid Vaccination Certificate which is mandatory post-pandemic.

ORGANISERS

One fun fact about cabin walls is that they are magnetic. You could carry magnetic hooks with you to hang your coats or blazers. You can carry behind-the-door wall organisers which are great to keep all your accessories and toiletries in one place and can be hung behind the bathroom door.

Gadget organisers are a great way to organise all your electronic gadgets, wires and chargers in one place.

Packing cubes are a smart way of organising all your clothes. You can keep your tops and denim separate. You can also reserve one for used clothes unless you plan to give it for laundry.

CABIN ENHANCEMENTS

You can carry an inflatable tub for the bathroom in case you are travelling with a baby. A couple of organisers can also come in handy.

CURRENCY

You need to carry some local currency if you wish to buy some souvenirs at ports. It also helps to give gratuities to drivers or waiters. Carry a credit card which does not levy a foreign transaction fee. Visa Card and Master Card are accepted universally.

TRAVEL GEAR

If you are going to go on excursions while on a cruise, you need to carry the appropriate travel gear. Snorkels, hiking equipment, reusable bottles etc. are few things which can be carried.

SUN PROTECTION AND BEACH ESSENTIALS

It is necessary to use good sun protection such as a sun block or sunscreen with the right SPF when you head out to the beach. You can also carry a pair of sunglasses and a beach hat.



Beachwear: If you are planning a Caribbean Cruise, we suggest you carry your swimwear, swimsuit cover-ups, swimming glasses, sun protection etc. You could also make a separate bag with all your beach essentials which include your beach hats, sand carpets, zip locks etc. If you are travelling with kids you can pack some inflatable toys, sand toys etc. which you could donate to a local family if you do not wish to take them back home. A zip lock bag is a great way to keep your cell phone, camera and other valuables protected from water and sand.

LUGGAGE

Once you are on board, it may take some time for your luggage to reach your cabin. We recommend you carry a small duffel bag with a pair of clothes, a water bottle, charger and documents so that you are not left waiting for your luggage to arrive. You can also keep a collapsible bag which can be stored in your main luggage which can come in handy in case you shop or have some extra luggage.

SNACKS AND BEVERAGES

You can carry a few snacks such as chips, granola bars etc. in case you feel hungry. They are also helpful in case you are travelling with kids. You need to go through the cruise policy regarding beverages as it limits the number of aerated drinks or sodas that you can carry. You may carry a bottle of wine or champagne if the cruise permits. Hard liquor however, is prohibited.

HOBBIES

If you are an avid reader, you can unwind with a book and a cup of coffee or use a Kindle. You can carry a notebook to pen down the memoirs of your sojourn. A sketchbook can be carried along with a





few colours if you wish to draw or paint. You can pack some board games if you are accompanied by your kids.

ACCESSORIES

You can repeat your outfits if you mix and match accessories smartly. Stoles, hairbands, sunglasses, and jewellery are some accessories that should be carried. Not to mention, they make you look fabulous in photographs as well.

FOOTWEAR

A comfortable pair of shoes is highly recommended as you need to walk a great deal when on boards. A pair of flip-flops is good if you plan a beach visit. You could pack a pair of formal shoes in case you have a formal evening dinner. Ladies could pack a pair of heels.

MISCELLANEOUS

A digital luggage scale, extra bags or anything that you anticipate would be needed can be carried along.

A cruise holiday is indeed special and if you have everything you need, it would make it even more memorable. We hope this guide helps you pack well and enjoy the trip.



Images were provided by Regent Seven Seas Cruises

The picturesque **Penang** is brimming with attractions

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country in South-east Asia, famous for many things. The destination is best known for its Twin Towers, enchanting wildlife, pristine beaches, world-famous aquatic life and delectable street food. Penang is situated on the north-western coast of Malaysia and is separated into two parts: Penang Island and the Seberang Perai. Here are the top eight attractions that you can visit in Penang.



Shreya Shimpi

Penang Peranakan Mansion

This unique striking green building built in an eclectic style provides interesting insights into the history, customs and opulent lifestyle of the Peranakan culture. It showcases over a thousand artefacts, antiques and collectables. The young girls known as the "Nyonas" made gorgeous beaded slippers and shoes. Many of which are on display here. It recreates the typical home of a rich Baba of the nineteenth century. It was the erstwhile residence of Chung Keng Kuree who was the richest man in Penang in the nineteenth century. It has been recently refurbished after years of neglect. In the late 1990s, a native Peranakan architect Peter Soon took over the mansion and painted it in a striking green shade. He filled it with his collection of over 1000 artefacts and opened it as a museum. The Peranakan Mansion has also been featured in shows like The Amazing Race and 'The Little Nyonya'. The visiting hours are Monday to Saturday 9:30 am to 5 pm.

The Habitat Penang Hill

It provides an enthralling experience of a 130 million-year-old rainforest. It is one of the major attractions which can be accessed from the Ayer Itam using the historic funicular railway. Guided tours are available. They have tarred trails which makes it easy for taking strollers. There are beautiful fountains on either sides. You can also walk along the 230 m Langur Way Canopy walk atop Penang Hill. The views, Canopy Bridge and the walkway make it an unforgettable rainforest experience. This place gives interesting insights into the biodiversity of the flora and fauna. It also creates awareness regarding the conservation of nature among the people who visit. The timings are 9 am to 6 pm. The Habitat Cafe is a good place for refreshments and the souvenir store has great nature-themed merchandise. They

give a lot of importance to sustainability which can be seen through solar-powered lighting with rechargeable batteries or LED light fixtures.

Tropical Spice Garden

An enchanting spice garden interspersed into a natural valley



fronting the straits of Malacca and is situated along the north-eastern coast of Penang Island. Spread over five acres of land, this is a paradise for nature lovers. This garden is home to over five hundred species of herbs, spices and tropical trees showcasing the biodiversity of this region. The nature trails go through the hills, water streams and naturally formed terraces which make it a great hike. Guided tours are available and you can choose between an audio tour and a live tour. We suggest you wear comfortable shoes while visiting this place as the terrain is undulating and uphill. This garden is a treat for nature lovers. You can also unwind at the breezy cafe which overlooks the Straits of Malacca. Premium spice therapy spa products and Malaysian-made gifts are available at the gift shop here.

Adventure Zone

A great family entertainment arena spread over 10,000 sq. feet. A great place to spend your day with family and friends. They have three different categories of drop slides and modular play areas. The drop slides are a huge hit among kids and adults as well. The entire play area is fully air-conditioned and all the equipment is designed adhering to the highest standards of safety. They also have toddler zones, a kids club and a snack counter.

Penang National Park

Situated one and a half hour away from the city of George Town, this park is a treat for nature lovers. They have boat tours and you could also hike through the park. This place offers a great combination of a rainforest and a beach. The forest rangers are friendly and provide you with all the necessary information on the hikes and various species of plants and animals in the park. The beaches are pristine and are relatively less crowded. The hike to the beautiful Turtle Beach is unpaved and steep which opens to the sea. This beach could be accessed through a boat or an hour and a half hour-long hike. As you hike, you will come across some breath-taking and scenic views along the way. Teluk Ailing and Monkey beach are two more beaches in this park that are worth a visit.

Escape Theme Park

A contemporary park nestled in a natural setting, this theme park is unique. As the name suggests, it provides you with an escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. There are plenty of rides and attractions in the park suitable for all age groups, abilities and energy levels. It would be an exhilarating experience for you and your family. There are zip lines, obstacle courses, water slides etc. in a natural environment which makes it entirely different from other theme parks. This park also holds the Guinness Book of World Record for the longest tube slide in the world.

The top of Komtar

Enjoy mesmerising views of Penang Island from an open-air platform that provides you a bird's eye view of the city. The top Komtar Tower is the highest point in George Town. You can enjoy an adventurous walk 249 m above the ground at the window of the main attractions: Penang Rainbow Skywalk and the Observatory Deck. There are several activities which you will enjoy in the largest indoor theme park in Top Komtar. They also have a dome housing over 120 scientific and technological exhibits. There is also a Jurassic Research Centre and a Top Boutique Aquarium.

Kek Lok Si Temple

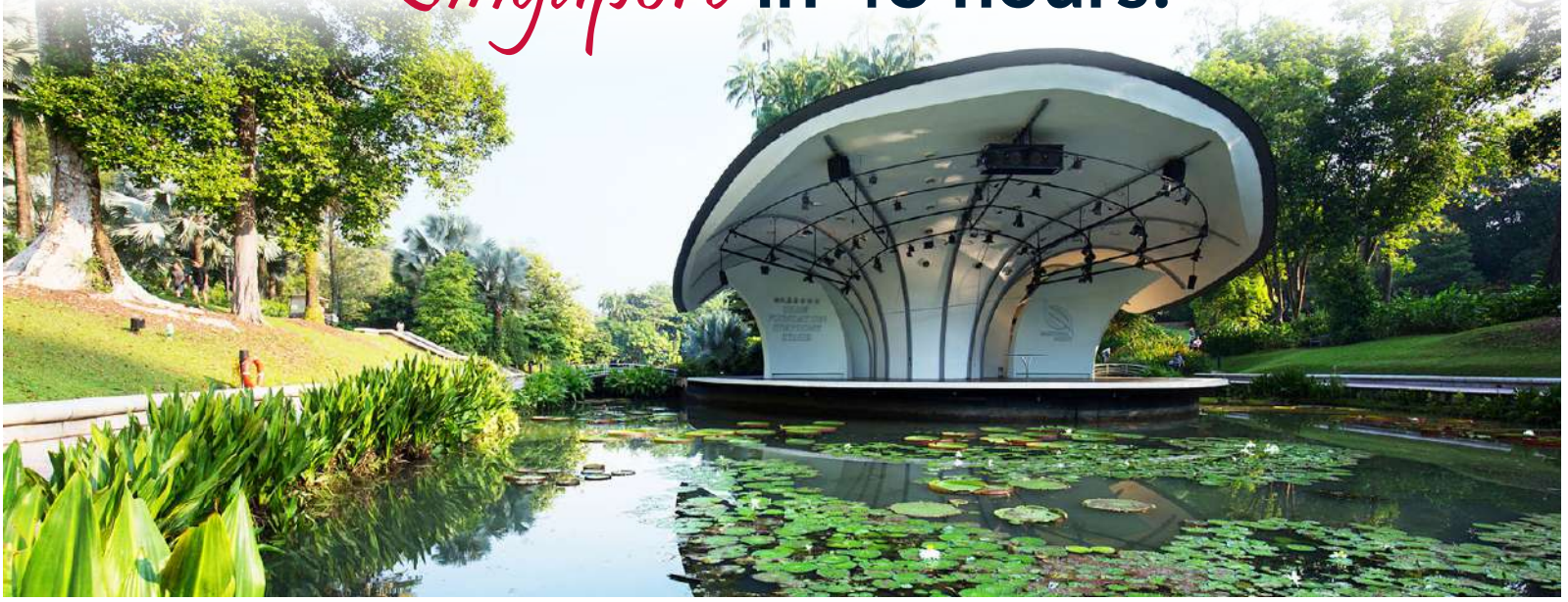
Kek Lok Si Temple is one of the largest and finest Chinese Buddhist



temple complexes in South-east Asia. It is also a pilgrimage site for some Buddhist followers in South-east Asia. There is a small walk followed by a quick lift ride. One can also walk up the temple and enjoy picturesque views along the way. This is also known as 'The Temple of Supreme Bliss'.

The temple complex comprises various monasteries, temples, prayer halls and gardens. The interior and the exterior of the temple are adorned by thousands of magnificent images of the Buddha along with intricate carvings, sculptures and murals. The temple gives insights into Chinese culture and teachings of The Buddha. The activities and treasures in the temple are reflective of the rich cultural heritage. One of the busiest parts of the Kek Lok Si Temple is a 36.5 meter high bronze statue of Kuan Yin (also Guanyin), the Goddess of Mercy. The Kek Lok Si Pagoda is also one of the highlights of this complex.

The 10 must-see places in *Singapore* in 48 hours!



Armed with a rich cultural tapestry, great food and vibrant street life, the Lion City is full of exciting places to explore. From elegant temples to fragrant medicinal shops and grand colonial buildings, Singapore has more than enough captivating places to visit. It's a city-state of shopper's paradise, with luxury brands sold in luxurious malls, you can buy almost everything except chewing gum. Singapore is also known as "Instant Asia" because it offers visitors a quick glimpse of the Asian cultures that immigrants have brought from all parts of the continent. Here is your guide to making the most of your 48 hours in Singapore.

Sapna Vaid

Start your Morning at Singapore Botanic Garden

The Singapore Botanic Gardens is a lush sanctuary in the heart of the city. Nothing opens in Singapore before 11 in the morning. So the best way to make the most of the early hours is to just slip into your walking gear and make your way to the Botanic Gardens which open at 5 every morning to welcome morning joggers, dog-walkers and people practicing their tai-chi moves. Centrally located just 5 minutes away from the downtown Orchard area, this 74 hectare gardens are a popular area for picnickers and tourists alike because of its close proximity to other major attractions, and a nice place for a nice brunch after a morning of activity. With lakes, lawns and gardens for exploring, it's very popular with families on the weekend.

A Cultural walk through Singapore

Little India is a buzzing historic area that shows off the best of Singapore's Indian community, from vibrant culture to incredible shopping. Hinduism in Singapore can be traced as far back as the 7th century, when Singapore was named Temasek, and a prominent trading post of the Srivijayan Empire. The Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, located in the heart of Little India, is dedicated to Kali, a protector goddess and destroyer of evil.





A cacophony of car horns, bicycle bells and vibrant chatter. Little India is one of the most culturally enriched districts of Singapore. As you walk down Serangoon Road and neighboring streets, explore their mix of Hindu and Chinese temples, mosques and churches.

Explore the magic of Chinatown

Explore Chinatown like no other and be enchanted by its historic temples, hip bars and the heritage of Singapore. Gain insights into Singapore's rich, multi-ethnic culture by visiting some of the country's most fascinating places of worship, located in the heart of Chinatown. This age-old precinct is home to myriad different cultures and is the only Chinatown in the world to boast a Buddhist temple, a mosque and a Hindu temple along a single street.

Whether you're a foodie exploring the traditional flavors of a country or a gourmand who loves fusion and experimentation, Chinatown's diverse food offerings are certain to sate your appetite.

Marina Bay Sands

This iconic integrated resort boasts luxury accommodations, upscale shopping and an infinity pool with unparalleled views of the city. Marina Bay Sands is a destination for those who appreciate luxury. An integrated resort notable for transforming Singapore's city skyline, it comprises three 55-storey towers of extravagant hotel rooms and luxury suites with personal butler services.

Shopaholics will rejoice in the rows of luxury retailers at The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands, which houses the largest collection of coveted designer boutiques in Asia. Complementing the retail space are delectable dining options, which includes restaurants by celebrity chefs, fine dining and casual eateries.

The Singapore Flyer

This giant observation wheel offers 360-degree city views, a panorama that stretches to parts of Malaysia and Indonesia on a clear day. A scenic spin on the Singapore Flyer takes you 165 meters above ground, or as high as 42 storeys, as you marvel at the spectacular scenery



below.

More importantly, it is high on thrills for tourists and locals alike. Step into one of the 28 fully air-conditioned glass capsules, and be transported on a 30-minute journey of stunning day and night scenes. Located in the heart of downtown Marina Bay, the Singapore Flyer is Asia's largest giant observation wheel.

The Orchard Road for retail therapy

From bespoke high-street to bargain buys, Orchard Road has something for everyone. Discover a shopping experience that matches every taste. With a wide array of options, visitors can enjoy a bespoke shopping experience tailored to suit any taste and budget. Start your retail journey at Tanglin and wander through the heart of the country's shopping belt towards Dhoby Ghaut, with each district offering a diverse mix of shopping experiences. Experience the vibrant retail spaces at Apple Orchard Road, Malmaison by The Hour Glass, Mandarin Gallery, Design Orchard, Plaza Singapura and The Cathay.

Bars in Dempsey Hills and Holland Village

Whether you're looking for a quiet watering hole to have a conversation or a quiet night out, these bars at Dempsey Hill and Holland Village are bound to fit the bill. These two popular hotspots are known for their laid-back vibes. Alongside fabulous restaurants and eateries, they've got great pubs, bars, breweries and wine houses to boot. Stroll around the two areas and you'll be sure to find something that tickles your fancy. With the diverse range of bars in Holland Village, there's definitely something for everyone. For live music and fantastic Happy Hour deals, there is a happy place for everyone.

Jurong Lake Gardens

Discover a paradise of greenery for families and nature lovers alike at Jurong Lake Gardens. Nestled in the west of Singapore just a five minutes' walk away from Lakeside MRT Station—and a twenty-minute drive from Singapore's city center. Jurong Lake Gardens is a must-visit for nature lovers of all stripes.

As you explore the grounds of this beautiful garden, you'll find yourself surrounded by nature in all its verdant glory. Jurong Lake Gardens is home to thriving plant life, fauna and a whole host of memorable green spaces. Besides being a haven for nature lovers, Jurong Lake Gardens is the ideal retreat for families.

Fun at Sentosa Island

Get your beachwear and sunscreen ready and head to Sentosa's most family-friendly beach, Palawan Beach, for a day of frolicking (or simply lazing) in the sun. If you have a family of adrenaline junkies, head to Universal Studios Singapore for thrilling amusement rides.

Universal Studios Singapore is the first Hollywood movie theme park in Southeast Asia, and features seven movie-themed zones—Madagascar, Hollywood, Far Far Away (Shrek), The Lost World, Ancient Egypt (The Mummy), Sci-Fi City (Transformers) and New York (Sesame Street).

The enticing selection of attractions and rides doesn't just cater to adult thrill-seekers; families with children should check out Far Far Away USS. This park zone is home to a junior rollercoaster ride, a 4D adventure and live animated shows.

If the kids have been tucked into bed after the day's activities, get some well-deserved couple-time at Sentosa's best spas.





Architectural Wonder – Lau Pa Sat

A long-standing landmark in the heart of the Central Business District Lau Pa Sat has been witness to Singapore's ever-changing landscape, from mudflats to metropolis. Lau Pa Sat is truly a melting pot of cultures—here, you can marvel at the building's soaring arches, Victorian columns and delicate architectural details whilst dining on affordable local delicacies such as satay (grilled skewered meat) from any of the stalls along 'satay street' (a designated satay section only open from 7pm onwards), dim sum (bite-sized portions of food served in steamer baskets or small plates) from Bao Luo Wan Xiang, and Filipino classics such as lechon kawali (fried pork belly) from Ang Hapag Kainan.



Indian Aviation sector: *Flying in the right direction!*

The country's civil aviation sector is poised for a phenomenal and healthy growth in terms of passengers, aircrafts and airports in the ensuing future, with the number of air travellers projected to touch 40 crore by 2027

BOTT RESEARCH DESK

Fathom this:

- As per projections, India's aviation industry is expected to witness Rs. 35,000 crore (US\$ 4.99 billion) investment in the next four years.
- Union Ministry of Civil Aviation expects 40 crore travellers through civil aviation in the next four years
- The Indian Government is planning to invest US\$ 1.83 billion for development of airport infrastructure along with aviation navigation services by 2026.
- 220 destinations (airports/heliports/water aerodromes) under UDAN are targeted to be completed by 2026 with 1000 routes to provide air connectivity to unconnected destinations in the country.
- Under UDAN, 954 routes have already been awarded to connect 156 airports.
- The direct employment in the aviation and aeronautical manufacturing sector is expected to increase to around 3,50,000 by 2024.
- India has signed Bilateral Air Service Agreements with 116 countries

Who would have thought that the Indian aviation industry ailing for over a decade and brutally impacted during the current pandemic will come out as a potential sunrise market for the global aviation sector? Today, it is one of the fastest growing aviation markets in the world. In fact if we take into account the recent Airbus forecast, India is the world's fastest-growing air travel market. Experts are pinning their hope on this market to reinvigorate and reenergise the world aviation market. Despite the onslaught of pandemic, India's domestic flights and international flights have surpassed some of the busiest countries in the world.

"The country's civil aviation sector is poised for a phenomenal and healthy growth in terms of passengers, aircrafts and airports, with the number of air travellers projected to touch 40 crore by 2027. Over the last eight years India's Civil Aviation industry has been completely transformed. Under the UDAN scheme, we have 425 routes aiming to go up to 1000 routes, 68 new airports aiming to touch 100 airports. In the next 4 years we are expecting 40 crore travellers through civil aviation in India. That day is not far when along with rail transport and road transport Civil Aviation will become the bulwark of the transportation in India," says Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya M. Scindia.

Whether it is the transformation of Air India now led by Tata and the news of its \$50 billion jet order in the ensuing future or the historic launch of Akasa Air backed by maverick investor Rakesh



Jhunjhunwala or the impressive track record of government's UDAN scheme or the quiet travel revolution in form of full adoption of mobile boarding passes in India, which are completely paperless fully in line with the global standards, there are lot of positive developments as far as Indian skies are concerned. The data released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in New Delhi shows that FDI inflow in India's air transport sector (including air freight) reached US\$ 3.06 billion between April 2000 and June 2021. There is another factor propelling global companies to focus on India as the aviation market here is on the growth trajectory. It is expected to overtake China and the United



States as the world's third-largest air passenger market by 2030, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

“India will take 3rd place after the US, surpassing the UK around 2024. Indonesia is forecast to be a standout performer — climbing from the world's 10th largest aviation market in 2017 to the 4th largest by 2030,” it said. The present trends in air transport suggest passenger numbers could double to 8.2 billion in 2037, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said. The Asia-Pacific region is projected to drive the biggest growth with more than half the total number of new passengers over the next 20 years coming from these markets. The growth is being driven by a combination of continued robust economic growth, improvements in household incomes and favourable population and demographic.

The Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) India, in a report titled India Airline Outlook 2022, has indicated that 2022 is expected to see a surge of 52 per cent in domestic and 60 per cent in international air traffic. The associated airport services like lounge access, dining, spa are likely to grow with the increase in number of air passengers. Estimates based on FICCI data states that in the next 10 years the number of airport lounges in India is expected to grow almost by 100%.

Says Robert Obolhogiani, Executive Vice President, CIS & South Asia, AVIAREPS, “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. 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. There seems to be immense scope of growth that a cooperation between low cost and full service airlines brings to the fore. Fly Dubai, which was a LCC, is now introducing Business Class. Safety has been a priority for all airlines and it has become more so in the post Covid era.”

According to Deloitte India, “The entry of new carriers bodes well for the sector in the medium to long term as it adds more passenger-kilometres capacity to cater to growing demand and also adds a touch

of fresh competition.” No doubt that the Indian aviation sector is in the news for all the right reasons. India represents a major growth for global and local airline companies, her aviation penetration is among the lowest in the world. Thus, it may see the launch of a couple of more airlines in the near future to tap the growing demand along with foreign, and local airlines fighting for a piece of the Indian sky. For instance, Rare Enterprises, in partnership with former CEOs of IndiGo and Jet Airways, plans to start an ultra-low-cost airline to capitalise on the domestic air travel demand.

Avers Vinay Dube, CEO, Akasa Air, “We received our third aircraft in Delhi, which will be put into operation on the Mumbai-Bengaluru sector shortly. We will continue to grow our fleet by adding one new aircraft every two weeks...Akasa Air is a well-capitalised airline with the financial means to induct 72 aircraft over the next five years. In fact, our financial platform is strong enough to allow Akasa to place an aircraft order in the next 18 months that will be significantly larger than our first. In simple terms, our growth is secure.”

“Mr. Jhunjhunwala recognised India's potential as one of the fastest-growing aviation markets in the world with an unparalleled potential and decades of progress ahead of us. He was a true believer in India's potential and saw Akasa Air serving our nation by building the transportation links that will support India's ongoing economic transformation,” he further added.

However this is not to say that there are no challenges in this market which are galore, starting with intense fare wars, high operating costs, rising interest burden and much higher fuel bills in the near future. “In the near term, the balance sheets of Indian carriers will remain stressed until the carriers are able to reduce their debt burden through a combination of improvement in operating performance and / or through equity infusion,” notes ICRA.

But for now, India aviation represents the hope the world aviation market is desperately looking for as the country's passenger traffic is expected to grow at 6.2 percent per annum by 2040, the fastest among major economies and may require 2,210 new aircrafts over the next 20 years, thus propelling the next big growth cycle.

Say no to visa hassles and travel carefree to these *amazing destinations*

Holidays are memories in the making.

Many Indians shy away from traveling internationally because of the hassle involved in getting a visa. However, with the visa on arrival for Indians, all the important paperwork can be completed after reaching the destination country. Simply pay the necessary fees and submit a few documents to get complete access to your dream destination. Here's an ultimate list of countries that offer visas on arrival for Indians.

Sapna Vaid

THAILAND

A must visit country for Indians of all ages. Thailand is a one stop shop destination that caters to all your desires by offering untarnished natural beauty, gorgeous beaches, heaven for shopaholics, natural therapies for self love and exciting night life to party lovers. The weather remains lovely throughout the year, allowing visitors to enjoy whatever activity they have planned during the trip.

Best time to visit: November to April - This is the best period to visit Thailand as the weather remains pleasant and dry this time of the year.

Visa requirement for Indians - Visa on arrival

Duration - Upto 15 days

Visa Cost - 2,000 Baht (Approx. Rs. 4600) per traveller

INDONESIA

Bali, Indonesia is a favourite honeymoon destination amongst newly married Indians. Enjoy the untouched beaches, mountains, lakes, and many more pleasing destinations as well as the magnificent city skylines throughout the country. Indonesia is a huge nation with hundreds of cultures derived from local regions, making it one of the most diverse countries in the world. Explore the unique culture and heritage of each region in Indonesia! Besides the enchanting seas and beaches, one can also relish the local delicacies or experience the wildlife here.

Best time to visit: May to September - The climate of Indonesia is almost entirely tropical. This is the dry season when the temperatures are pleasant, and the weather stays sunny.

Visa requirement for Indians - Visa exempted for Indian citizens

Duration - 30 days

Visa cost - Free

MALDIVES

As Indians we know that Maldives is surely Bollywood celebrities'



favourite holiday destinations. However, anyone from India can enjoy the clean and captivating beaches for perfect romantic outings. Maldives offers the world's best underwater adventures sports like scuba diving and snorkeling. Maldives is renowned as an island nation, blessed abundantly with magnificent underwater sceneries and diverse marine life.

Best time to visit: November to April - This is the ideal time to visit Maldives as the temperatures remain pleasant and the skies clear. The Northeast monsoon from November to April is generally sunny.

Visa requirement for Indians - Visa on arrival for Indian citizens

Duration - Up to 30 days

Visa cost - Free



BHUTAN

Bhutan is a country of rolling hills and charming culture always exudes the charm that cannot be missed. Delightful people, dense forest, gigantic mountains and exclusive cuisine, always give a delightful experience. This landlocked Himalayan country is home to several swift rivers that offer many heart-thumping activities to adventure seekers. The world's tallest unclimbed peak, the Gangkhar Puensum is standing at a height of 24,836 feet.

Best time to visit: December to February – Winter season in Bhutan offers the perfect opportunity for tourists to explore the country in all its beauty. June to August – Summer season is ideal for visitors to see the magnificent Himalayas from close proximity. However, rainfall can lead to landslides and closure of roads.

Visa requirement for Indians- Visa-free country for Indian nationals.

Duration - Up to 6 months or 180 days.

Visa cost - Free

MALAYSIA

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi religious country in Southeast Asia and one of the wealthiest and most developed countries. The lively energy is palpable in several destinations rejuvenating travellers from across the world.

Best time to visit: March to May - During this period, Malaysia remains mostly dry and cool, perfect time to visit cities. September to November - At this time, the temperatures are not as warm as in the summers. Therefore, travellers can easily visit the beaches and museums of the country at this time.

Visa requirement for Indians - Malaysia offers e-visa to Indian passport holders.

Duration - Valid for up to 30 days.



Visa cost - The visa costs 50 RM (approximately Rs. 870) per person.

NEPAL

Nepal is a heaven for adventure sports like mountaineering, paragliding, rafting, hiking, trekking, jungle adventure tours and much more. Nepal shares a close proximity with India, due to which it is the most favourite international destination for Indians. Apart from gorgeous cliffs and plateaus, Indian travellers can indulge in rich culture and heritage temples like pashupatinath.

Best time to visit: October to December - This is the time when the skies remain clear and the weather dry, making it the best time to travel to the nation



Visa requirement for Indians - Visa on arrival for Indians

Duration - Up to 150 days

Visa cost - Free

FIJI

Fiji is a perfect destination for romantic getaway and adventure packed escape. Fiji is a pacific island nation with 333 islands, white sand beaches and year-round tropical warmth. Engage in a range of water sports, while exploring the natural beauty all around you. The mouth-watering delicacies are just another reason to visit the nation with your family members. Fiji's clusters of heavenly islands is located in the middle of the south pacific, just east of Australia and North New Zealand.

Best time to visit: May to November – Mild temperatures, along with the dry conditions, make this period the perfect time to wash the winter chills from your bones.

Visa requirement for Indians - Visa on arrival for Indians

Duration - Up to 4 months

Visa cost - Single-entry visas cost around Rs. 6500

VIETNAM

Vietnam is a country bursting with energy and forward motion. There are countless ways to immerse yourself in the fabric of Vietnamese life, like cooking, handicrafts, temple tours, musical performances and museum visits. Vietnam's diverse landscapes and rich culture make it a fascinating destination for any traveller. With lush forests, clear lakes and rice fields all around, your journey through Vietnam would be completely unlike any other trip you have been on.

Best time to visit: February to April - This period is the spring season in Vietnam. Travelers can enjoy comfortable weather at this time.

September to November - The autumn season is also another brilliant time to enjoy the scenic beauty in Vietnam, without encountering too much rain or storm.

Visa requirement for Indians - Visa on arrival and e-visa

Duration - Up to 30 days

Visa cost - The service fee is around Rs. 850, while the stamp fee accounts for around Rs. 1780 per person

SEYCHELLES

Seychelles is a paradise for travellers consisting of 115 coral and granite



islands. It is home to some of the rarest wildlife species in the world, apart from impressive coast and beaches. Adventure seekers no need to seek adventure here as Seychelles offers a range of water activities.

Best time to visit: April to October - The weather remains cool and dry between April and October, which is ideal for tourists.

Visa requirement for Indians - No visa necessary. But a permit is required for travel

Duration - Permit allowed for a maximum of 3 months

Visa cost - Free

MAURITIUS

A popular travel destination amongst Indian tourists, Mauritius is yet another jewel in the Indian Ocean. The presence of world-class resorts and outstanding beaches make it an ideal spot for honeymooners. With underwater activities like scuba diving and swimming with dolphins, this place attracts numerous adventure seekers.

What makes Mauritius different is that it has so much to offer beyond the beach. Whether it's skydiving out of a plane, hiking through the mountains and National Parks or soaking up the culture, this is truly a destination with something for everyone.

Best time to visit: May to October- The weather in Mauritius remains dry, cool, and sunny which is the perfect time for tourism.

Visa requirement for Indians - On arrival for Indians

Duration - Max 60 days

Visa Cost - Free



Kazakhstan

The land of wanderers is home to many hidden wonders



Being an avid traveller and learner, I have always found peace when travelling. You gain so much from getting to know different cultures and imbibing something and leaving a little piece of you everywhere you go. Travelling just teaches so much about the potential of human connection. Travelling to Kazakhstan has been an exceptional experience.

Dr. Himanshu Talwar

The locals are extremely warm and welcoming. Though, English is not as widely spoken. You will find English-speaking people as you move towards the cities. But I would suggest you go beyond the city of Almaty, which not many people have the courage to, since most of the scenic places are far away from the city and it becomes quite a task to travel to far off places when you don't have a car as most of the places are only connected by road.

Kazakhstan has great geographical diversity, making it a unique travel destination. From snow-capped mountains to beautiful deserts, ancient scenic structures to bustling modern cities, the country has you all covered. The country experiences long, hot summers and cold winters, making it favourable to visit during the summer months of April and May when it is not too cold. Unless you're somebody who loves skiing and could manage to survive in sub-zero temperatures, you would be pleased to visit during the winter season as well.

The former capital Almaty is often where the tourists start from. The city has spectacular natural diversity and a number of tourist attractions. Also called the Rome of Kazakhstan, the city is easily accessible and well connected and one can easily get there by train, bus or air. There are a number of museums in the city dedicated to art, history, and archaeology and one can easily find something of their interest. I visited the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan which is the largest in the city. It is focused on the history of Kazakhstan exploring different aspects like archaeology, anthropology and ethnography. There are artefacts ranging from the olden times to artefacts that have relevance in the modern day. The museum very well preserves the cultural heritage of the country and allows for a dynamic understanding of the rich history.

When in Almaty, how can one not visit the big Almaty Lake? Surrounded by hills from all sides, it has breath-taking views to offer. It is a natural reservoir and a major source of drinking water for the city. It is, however, a little away from the hustle-bustle of the city which makes it even more tranquil.

My next destination was the Medeu Skating Rink which is the highest skating rink in the world. It is a popular tourist attraction even in summers as it is said that the skating rink is turned into a sports arena where volleyball, football and other games are played. It is an exciting place for children and adults alike.

During my last day in Almaty, I decided to visit the recreational centre at Koke-Tobe Hill. It is one of the major landmarks of the city because of its high altitude. The view from the cable car was astonishing. Once I got there, I enjoyed the fast coaster ride at the amusement park and had lunch at one of the restaurants there. Lastly, had a good walk around the place and got back to relax and prepare for the next day which was going to be equally thrilling.

I was going to travel to Nur-Sultan, the capital city. But I decided to take a halt at Shymkent as I had heard that it is less crowded than most of the cities and people often come here to relax and get lost in nature as it is one of the most untouched beauties of the country. There are many parks and monuments at Shymkent. People who enjoy the outdoors will find it a pleasurable experience going around the open parks and shopping at the most popular markets. The grandeur of the Independence Park is unique in itself. It was built to commemorate the 20th Independence Day. It has 137 steel pillars representing 137 nationalities that reside in the country. I was also planning to go to Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve which is the oldest nature reserve in Central Asia. It is named after river Aksu and the mountain chain Zhabagly. I dropped on that plan as it was quite far from Shymkent and I had to catch the flight to Nur Sultan from Turkistan the next day. However, it is fascinating to know how it is home to so many rare species of flora and fauna. It also houses snow leopard, Himalayan bear and other endangered species of animals.

After a 2-hour long car ride from Shymkent, I reached Turkistan. I decided to go around the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, which is a declared UNESCO world heritage site. It is one of the most prominent monuments that were built during the Timurid period. It is still one of the most well-preserved and largest structures in the city. It was dedicated

to the famous Sufi mystic, Ahmad Yasawi and served as a model for later buildings constructed during Timur's reign.

With not much time left in hand, I flew for Nur Sultan from Turkistan and arrived in about 3 hours. Nur-Sultan is home to high-rise futuristic buildings, the parliament house and other government buildings. I was tempted to visit Baiterek as it is a popular tourist attraction here. It is symbolic of a new phase in the life of the Kazakhs. It was built as a symbol of the proclamation of the city as the capital of the country. If you go inside the observation tower, you will get to experience the beauty of the city through the golden glass dome. It is located on Nurjol Boulevard, which is a long pedestrian zone in the centre of the city. The passage has exquisite gardens and singing fountains which leads up to the Khan Shatyr entertainment centre, the largest shopping centre in the city.

There are also a lot of wonderful eateries to try out. Though most of the Kazakh dishes are centred around meat, you will find vegetarian alternatives if you ask for it. The Kazakhs were traditionally pastoral nomads and that reflects in their cuisine which focuses on dairy products and meat to keep them warm. They had portable homes called yurt as their lifestyle demanded them to migrate during winters in search of pasture for their livestock. Kazakhstan, as the name suggests has always been a home to wanderers. Other than the indigenous Kazakhs, the country is also home to Russians, Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Ukrainians and Tatars who add to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country.

What I realised by the end of my journey was that Kazakhstan has a lot to offer. The landscape is incredible and untouched. The local people are warm and accepting of other cultures. Moreover, it is a perfect offbeat travel destination for avid travellers and adventurers. Ancient mausoleums and structures make it a fascinating place. While it's easy to go around between the cities, it is quite difficult a task to travel to remote places. So, you must have a car or, if you do not, you may have to rely on hitchhiking. Nonetheless, the people are friendly, and the country is rather safe for solo travellers.

I look forward to making more fruitful visits to the country.



Seychelles is ideal for tourists of all tastes and all budgets

The outbound from India has grown by leaps and bounds in the last quarter and many believe that it already crossed the pre-Covid levels. Visiting India for the first time to talk about the destination, Ms. Bernadette Willemin, Director-General for Destination Marketing, Tourism Seychelles highlighted how the country is determined to achieve pre-pandemic visitor numbers from the India market and has implemented key marketing strategies to accomplish this goal. She was accompanied by Ms. Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO and Co-Founder, BRANDit (India Representative for Tourism Seychelles).

Priyanka Saxena Ray



The Seychelles Islands has carved a niche for itself over the years and shares a prime association with India. Tourism Seychelles is determined to achieve pre-pandemic visitor numbers from the India market and has implemented key marketing strategies to accomplish this goal. Towards this, Tourism Seychelles aims to pursue collaborations and joint promotions in both the travel trade and consumer segments in 2022-2023. The long-term strategy will focus on increasing consumer interest in and awareness of the Seychelles Islands, with a strong emphasis on the uniqueness of what the destination has to offer.

Sharing her thoughts with the travel trade media, Ms. Willemin said, “While UK, France, Germany and Italy are our usual top markets, India is a country we are banking on to increase business. We would normally get around 15,000 tourists a year from India and this number went down to mere 2000 during the Covid times. Our first and foremost target is to bring these numbers to pre-Covid times and then increase them further. I am here in India to synergise with the members of the travel trade in Delhi and Mumbai and up the tourist graph.”

Sharing thoughts on the latest social media campaign wherein celebs are used to popularise a destination, she said, “We have had politicians as well as high profile celebrities come and stay with us and during their stay, we ensure they have exclusivity and privacy. If they want to be incognito, we give them the perfect setting to be so. Seychelles is a niche destination and while we are happy to increase the numbers, we also keep our eyes on the sustainability metre. We wouldn't want to do anything that will upset the natural geographical balance of our



country. We are small – we are beautiful – and we promise exclusivity.”

Seychelles strongly promotes the one island one resort concept and wants to be known as a destination that caters to travellers of all tastes and budgets. They are also open to joint ventures and cross branding and wishes to be known as a destination ideal for weddings, honeymoon and adventure. “Tourism is a major pillar of our economy. Currently, we are targeting 500,000 global tourists, but for us, tourism is not just about numbers but yields also. We don't want to miss the opportunity to indulge and invite the Indian traveller to explore nature tourism,” concludes Ms. Willemin.

The destination, which is currently accessible from Mumbai in India, is also keen on enhancing connectivity between the countries and believes that once the numbers increase, the connectivity will surely follow.

A successful Phuket Road Show to India was aimed at positioning island as a preferred destination

The Phuket Tourist Association with cooperation of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) organized the “Amazing New Chapter: Phuket Road Show to India 2022” in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore on 2nd, 4th and 5th August, 2022 respectively. There were 40 hospitality, travel and tourism companies (sellers) from Phuket that attended the event, to reconnect and build new connections with the Indian travel agents.

BOTT DESK

The event was supported by Phuket Provincial Administration Organization with airlines partners including GoFirst, Thai Smile Airways and AirAsia joining the event. The welcome remarks at the Delhi event were given by H.E. Ms. Pattarat Hongtong, Ambassador of Thailand to India. Her Excellency said, “Phuket is always the top destination in Thailand for most Indian visitors with stunning views of beautiful beaches, white sand and crystal clear blue sea, a perfect place for weddings, parties and family gatherings. The road show is another event that helps to strengthen stronger ties between the two countries, to become strategic partners at all levels, as this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Thailand and India.”

“Indian market was a very high potential market for Phuket before the pandemic. The good news is that from May this year, India has been our number one market to Phuket,” highlighted Mr. Anuparph Vachvanichsanong, Deputy Chief Executive, Phuket Provincial Administration Organization.

Speaking at the Road Show in Mumbai, Mr. Tanes Petsuwan, Deputy Governor for International Market (Asia and South Pacific), Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) emphasised to all the outbound travel trade in India that “Once again, Thailand is now open without any restrictions. Travelling to Thailand is now as easy as the pre-COVID times with the same Visa on Arrivals facilities and process. For flights between India and Thailand as of now, there are 188 flights a week operating across India to Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi and Don Muang) and Phuket.”

From January 1 to July 31, 2022, Thailand welcomed more than 3 million travellers to the country. As such, India has also had a share of 10 per cent of the overall number, which is more than 300,000 Indians that have visited Thailand and out of this number nearly 90,000 Indian tourists have travelled to Phuket.

The Phuket road shows are being organized at the right time to prepare and boost the destination for the upcoming high season in India that is during and after Diwali.



Germany sees a rise of 214% in Indian tourists in the first few months of 2022



With tourism industry making a stark recovery post the pandemic, German National Tourist Office, India has observed an y-o-y increase of 214% in its business. In its annual conference, GNTO, India shared the travel trend analysis (globally and for the Indian market). The Press conference showcased India as an important market for inbound travel to Germany with genuine hospitality to inspire potential Indian visitors to Germany.

Pallavi Sharma

Germany is topping the charts amongst the best travel destinations in Europe for Indian travellers for its scope culture and attraction. As per the Nation Brands Index, Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index SM 2021, Germany ranks No. 1 on the Nation Brands Index for fifth time in a row. From cultural centres to architecture, innovative Gastronomy to insider's tips and new favourite places in such close proximity, Germany offers the best travel experience. Recognising an increased demand for experiences this season among visitors from the Indian market, the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) is debuting the brand-new campaign showcasing Nature and cultural tourism in all its facets that focuses on highlighting sustainable tourism attractions and open-air activities.

The campaign German.Local.Culture. and Embrace German Nature conveys precisely this peaceful coexistence of generations, traditions and different cultural influences. With the launch of the campaign, GNTB is reflecting authentic, local experiences in urban destinations with the integration of rural areas and their sustainable tourism offers and natural attractions. With countless travel events, the campaign also aims to promote Germany as a destination for culturally interested travelers, families and active vacationers in the Indian market. The campaigns for Indian market are a part of the global campaign to promote Culturally Rich, Naturally Beautiful, Germany.



Specific to Indian travellers, Germany accounted for 9% of European trips of Indians. 55% of Indian tourists visit Germany for leisure while 38% travel for business. Talking about Germany as a preferred travel destination for Indian travellers, Romit Theophilus, director German National Tourist Office, India (GNTO) said, "Eight hours gate-to-gate and with multiple daily flight routes from India to cities such as Frankfurt, Munich, Stuttgart, Germany has long been favoured by the Indian traveller. An increase in travellers is expected this festive period in light of the relaxation of COVID-19 requirements. All travellers can now visit regardless of vaccination status and without the need for a negative test."

"Having nature and culture as two of the prominent drivers is exciting given the abundance of relevant offerings that we have to offer", added Romit. "From meandering lakes and breath-taking mountains to traditional craftsmanship and Bavarian fare – Germany is the ideal place for explorers searching for an easily accessible destination with plenty to see and do."

Some of the incredible naturalistic elements of Germany that await Indian visitors include the 66 Lakes Trail hike, which incorporates streams and rivers and runs past the Sanssouci Palace in the spa town of Potsdam, and the incredible landscapes that can be found at Hiddensee, a stunning car-free island with sandy beaches and salt marshes.

Visitors looking to soak up culture around the country can also revel in the campaign's four touch points: Green, Craft, Flair, and Taste. Taste includes some of Leipzig's most popular delicacies, Green features the jaw-dropping wildlife in Munsterland, Flair sees creativity such as the inspirational Tegel Art Park in Berlin, and Craft includes the well-known cuckoo clocks of the Black Forest.



Events and *More*



For details contact: gunjan@perfectalliances.in

9811054095

Epitome of culinary excellence, **ITC Bukhara**, *delighting dignitaries with Indian Tandoori cuisine*

In today's day and age, it is tough to find someone who has remained loyal to a brand for four decades and stayed attached to a restaurant for over three decades. But then again, it is not just a regular eatery but perhaps one of the most renowned restaurants of India, which has enjoyed the honour of serving the politicians, celebrities, foreign dignitaries, head of states and anyone important who visits the capital. Chef J. P. Singh, Executive Chef, Bukhara, ITC Maurya New Delhi is a veteran who took us down the memory lane on how Bukhara, over the years, has retained its position at the top.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Bukhara is the ultimate name in Indian Tandoori cuisine and the restaurant, from its inception in 1978, has retained its crown of being the leading diner in India. While its contemporary moved on with time, Bukhara preserved its essence by remaining etched in time – the menu at the restaurant has not changed since it was launched! So imagine eating in a restaurant that has been serving the same set of dishes for last 44 years and still running houseful on all days – be it a weekend or weekday. There are 'generations' that swear that the taste of the quintessential Dal Bukhara and Sikandari Raan has not changed over the years and credit for all this goes to the extremely humble and grounded Chef J P Singh and his team.

Chef J. P. Singh of ITC Maurya has had the privilege of delighting visiting dignitaries from all over the world with his prowess in Indian Cuisine and literally having them eat out of his hands! An expert in Indian Cuisine, Chef J.P as he is called lovingly, honed his skills from the Institute of Hotel Management, Delhi and further enhanced this knowledge in his chosen specialization from Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition, Mumbai.

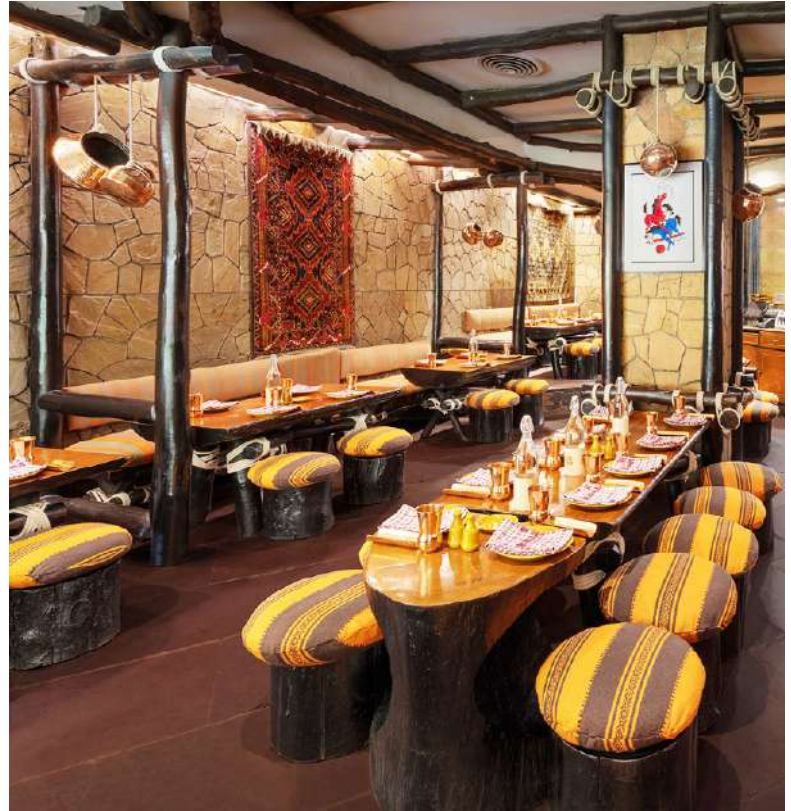
He joined the ITC – Welcomgroup in 1981 as a Demi Chef De Partie. And held several key positions before heading the kitchen at Bukhara, ITC Maurya in 1991.

Chef J.P. has widely travelled across the globe promoting and educating people on the popular Bukhara cuisine in countries like New Zealand, Belgium, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Colombia, Ecuador, U.S.A., Costa Rica, Venezuela and Panama.

"Every creation at ITC Bukhara is a masterpiece. Not just the menu,



our quality and consistency has also not changed in last 40 plus years. My learning at ITC has been primarily by being completely hands-on on the job. In earlier days of my job, I used to come by 7 am and be at the hotel until midnight. Even today, after all these years, I love to be in the kitchen and work alongside my team as I strongly believe that the greatest training that you can impart to them is by showing them how it is done," believes the Chef.



Remembering how the world closed during the pandemic, Chef JP recalls the tough time everyone faced and was extremely thankful for the support that ITC as an organisation extended to their staff and their families in need. As for evolving trends, well there can be takeaways and new menus at other restaurants, but at Bukhara ITC, even the seats remain the same! You may be a high profile personality, but the restaurant is very particular about what it serves and does not allow dishes from other restaurants to be served at its tables.

Talking more about Bukhara, the Chef says, “Many people perceive Bukhara to be overtly expensive, but that is not the case. Our portion size is big and we encourage people in groups or families to come and eat so that they are able to do justice to our servings. My ‘Dal’ never comes off the fire and we have not changed its recipe in all these years. The taste continues to be what it was 40 years back. We don’t change or experiment with the ingredients that we use at Bukhara, which is why perhaps we are overflowing with people, not just on weekends but on weekdays too. Abiding by the ITC’s Responsible Luxury mantra, we source our ingredients from the locally and easily available resources and always use good quality, unpolished and pesticide free ingredients. I, along with my entire work hard to please all our guests and keep the Bukhara name up always.”

Highly skilled and knowledgeable, Chef JP has a very soft and pleasant demeanour that appeals to his guests—from VVIP’s to the regular Bukhara lovers. Chef JP is a journalist’s delight given his media savvy nature. He is fond of music and reading when not cooking or experimenting with Indian food. Chef JP’s favourite food is one cooked by his wife!



Lindt Home of Chocolate offers tourists a peek into the world of chocolate-making



Priyanka Saxena Ray

Can you please share with us some background on the origin of Lindt Home of Chocolate? When was it opened?

The Lindt Chocolate Competence Foundation aims to strengthen Switzerland's position as a business hub for chocolate as a long-term goal to further consolidate Swiss chocolate-making expertise, and promote sustainable innovation. This also means that the industry-relevant training of specialists as well as support for young professionals is also important to the Foundation. Among other projects, new chocolate production and process technologies are being researched in cooperation with universities and academic institutions. The Foundation's main project is the Lindt Home of Chocolate. The chocolate museum serves as an interactive information platform for the public and focuses on all aspects related to chocolate. More than 100 million Swiss Francs have been invested in the one-of-a-kind Chocolate Competence Centre located on the factory premises of Lindt and Sprüngli at Schokoladenplatz 1 in Kilchberg, Zurich. The Lindt Home of Chocolate was museum was inaugurated in September 2020, and this milestone in the history of Swiss chocolates has become a reality. More than 350,000 chocolate enthusiasts from Switzerland and all over the world are visiting the museum every year.

What are the unique features of the Lindt Home of Chocolate? How much time is considered sufficient to see everything that the Museum has to offer?

- Chocolate tour
- An exciting tour through the world of chocolate divided into 6 parts

The word "Swiss" has always been synonymous with the dreamy world of chocolates and treats, and what other better reason to travel to Switzerland than to visit the chocolate capital of the world, the Lindt Home of Chocolate!

The much-awaited Lindt Home of Chocolate opened its doors to chocolate lovers and those eager for knowledge on September 13, 2020, making the world, another chocolate-themed attraction richer. The museum is located just 10 minutes south of Zurich, in Kilchberg. Since its inception, the modern three-story attraction, has become a tourist magnet. **Kai Spehr, Managing Director** of the Lindt Chocolate Competence Foundation shares more about the museum in an exclusive chat with BOTT.

- Cocoa Cultivation – we take guests on our plantation
- Chocolate history – how did chocolate become so popular
- The Swiss pioneers – why is Swiss chocolate so famous
- Chocolate production – how is chocolate produced
- Chocolate heaven – chocolate tasting
- Pilot plant – what can be done in terms of innovation

Let me explain this in more detail –

PILOT PLANT

After more than five years of planning and preparation, the highly complex research facility was successfully brought into operation at the beginning of 2020. The facility combines maximum flexibility and functionality with highest quality implementation and is available to chocolate producers and research institutes as well as universities. For the visitors, however, the highlight is the impressive open-view production-taking place in the so-called moulding line. Here, the making of a filled chocolate square can be followed step by step.

CHOCOLATE COURSES

In our Chocateria guests can see what it is like to be a real Lindt Master Chocolatier and they have the chance to make their own chocolate creations. We offer two types of courses and specific event courses such as Christmas workshops or for Valentine's Day.

CHOCOLATE FOUNTAIN

The chocolate fountain is unique and the largest free-standing chocolate fountain in the world (over 9 m high). There are 1'400 litres of chocolate flowing in a closed circuit. The fountain has 94 meters of piping connecting to a tank in the

basement, where the chocolate mass is stirred and heated before being pumped back up into the fountain. The chocolate fountain at the LHOC is the most photographed object

Shop- With 500 sq. m the largest Lindt Shop in the world.

Lindt Café- The first Lindt Café in Switzerland offers sweet and savoury delights.

How many Indians do you get in a year visiting the Lindt Home of Chocolate? What is your strategy to increase this number?

The number of Indian travellers has increased and is expected to rise even more. We work closely with Indian journalists and influencers to increase our visibility in India.

Summer is the peak season for India Outbound, do you have any special Summer Offerings planned for the visitors?

We recommend combining a visit to the museum with a scenic boat tour from Zurich. In addition, the Lindt Café offers delicious ice cream and milk shakes to cool down the guests.

With the craze of social media, are there any hotspots to click some nice pics in and around the Lindt Home of Chocolate?

Yes, all around the museum we have several selfie spots, which can be seen by a mark on the floor. We highly recommend taking a picture in front of the chocolate fountain and in front of the building. In addition, in the room "Chocolate Heaven" we have two camera spots where guests can have their picture taken.

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

We recommend that guests book their tickets online in advance, as they sell out quite quickly.

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Dubai emerges *as a hot favourite for destination wedding*



Weddings is no small feat in India. It is the most memorable day not just in the life of a bride and groom but also their parents' who go to extreme lengths to plan an extraordinary wedding for their loved ones. One popular trend that has gained prominence in the last few years is the concept of destination weddings and under it, Dubai has emerged as a hot favourite. Plush hotels, lavish resorts, opulent interiors, warm hospitality, great food and extremely cooperative government has made Dubai a popular wedding destination for Indian couples.

BOTT DESK

Rapidly growing in popularity as a hub for destination weddings for young Indians, the UAE offers many exotic locations where one can get married in style. A destination wedding in Dubai is definitely on top of the list when it comes to planning a wedding under Arabian skies. Here's a look at some great venues for hosting the big fat Indian wedding in Dubai –

ATLANTIS THE PALM

Have you ever imagined having your wedding ceremony on a private beach, or hosting your reception under the sea? Atlantis The Palm is amongst the best Dubai wedding venues that can fulfil your fantasies. Here, you can choose from opulent ballrooms, spectacular outdoor venues, and iconic settings to exchange your vows. Known as Dubai's finest and most sought-after wedding destination, it offers menus created by world-class chefs, modern guest accommodations, a host of luxurious extras, and a team of dedicated wedding specialists. It takes care of every detail so that you can enjoy the most important day of your life.

Location: Palm Jumeirah, Dubai

Capacity: 2,000 guests

JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS HOTEL

Dream weddings don't just happen; they're meticulously planned. The JW Marriott Marquis Hotel in Dubai can turn your dream into reality with its team of experts who can take the stress out of putting it all together. You can choose their largest wedding hall, the Dubai



Ballroom, which can accommodate up to 1,000 guests. Or, host a sophisticated al fresco wedding reception on their expansive pool deck. Their on-site culinary team can create a mouth-watering menu specifically for your event. You can count on the hotel planners to help you plan every detail of your big day, from start to finish.

Location: Sheik Zayed Road, Business Bay, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Capacity: 1000 guests

BURJ AL ARAB JUMEIRAH

Fancy having a wedding ceremony on a helipad? Some glamorous clicks, and a special toast? Burj Al Arab Jumeirah is one of the fanciest hotels in Dubai. Experience luxury at its best, as it will

leave no stone unturned to get you the wedding of your dream. It is managed by the Jumeirah Group, the same one that manages the next hotel. A grand wedding here will not only be a treasured memory for you and your partner, but for your family and all the guests too.

Location: Jumeirah St – Dubai – United Arab Emirates

Capacity: 1000 guests

ARMANI/PAVILION AT THE ARMANI HOTEL

The quintessential location for a glamorous cocktail reception, Armani/Pavillion is nestled in the midst of the luxurious hotel's lush gardens- at the foot of the Burj Khalifa and facing the Dubai Fountain. You can have pre-wedding functions and an intimate wedding of about 600 people at the Armani Pavilion and then head to Armani Privé for an after-party! The great part is that you spend about a minimum of 500 Dirhams per person, but it includes everything, and the USP is that everything is personalised, and currently personally selected by Giorgio Armani!

ST. REGIS AL HABTOOR POLO CLUB RESORT

One of the prettiest hotel properties in Dubai, the The St. Regis Dubai Polo Resort offers 800sqm of elegantly appointed banquet spaces exquisitely designed with Andalusian elements and a refined choice of indoor and outdoor venues paired with a dedicated team of professionals that flawlessly orchestrate every detail of your special day. You can even choose to have an equestrian-themed wedding or function, as the resort can host a wedding up to 5000 people! They also offer loads of complimentary wedding services and an option to customise them too!

ONE&ONLY ROYAL MIRAGE RESORT

A favourite amongst many, one glimpse of this resort, and you will fall in love with it too. One&Only Royal Mirage Resort has a number of venues for small gatherings. So, if you are looking for venues for small weddings in Dubai, this name is sure to pop up! The resort has a beachfront, ballrooms, halls and more, but the small courtyards are perfect for a small, budget ceremony. Ornate with vines, plants, and trees, all abloom, nothing much is required to decorate the place! It is one of the best wedding venues in Dubai. So, this is one of the best places for those who are planning an affordable outdoor wedding venues in Dubai.

Location: Al Sufouh Rd – Dubai – United Arab Emirates

Seating Capacity: 300 guests

THE RITZ-CARLTON

Considered to be one of the affordable wedding venues in Dubai, The Ritz-Carlton is one of the best wedding venues in Dubai and has great value for money. What is even more impressive is that the beach facing awning, the blooming landscape, the lush lawns and the traditional decor give an elegant setting for any type of wedding. Their services are impeccable, as they make sure they take of all your requirements including your budget!

Location: Dubai, 26525 United Arab Emirates

Seating Capacity: 800-1000 guests

FAIRMONT THE PALM

One of the top outdoor wedding venues in Dubai, Fairmont The Palm offers a striking setting with the majestic Dubai skyline creating an exquisite city backdrop, the bright skies and the reflections in the Dubai marina are only some of the most notable features of this destination. Perfect for a small gathering of 150, the Sea View Garden's design is as though it was inspired by a fairy tale. The Palm Courtyard



and the Palm Ballroom are also some other great alternatives here. When searching for small wedding venues in Dubai, this is the perfect pick for a destination wedding in Dubai.

Location: Palm Jumeirah, Dubai

Seating Capacity: 350-500 guests

RAFFLES

When looking for the greatest Indian wedding venues in Dubai, then this is the hotel you should count in order to make your special day extraordinary and wonderful. There are many factors that make this place perfect for celebrating an Indian wedding destination wedding in Dubai. All the crucial customs and traditions like Mehendi, pheras, sangeet, etc. can be easily arranged at this place. You can even get your menu customized as by your preference as well as your guests' requirements.

Location: Wafi – Sheikh Rashid Rd, Dubai

Seating Capacity: 100 to 350 guests

Get married Royal Style in opulent Jaipur hotels and resorts



If you are enamoured by the idea of exchanging your wedding vows in majestic style, then Land of the Maharajas, Jaipur is your place to be. The Pink City with its splendid forts, magnificent palaces, delectable cuisines and Rajput hospitality will add to the grandeur of your wedding. It will surely be a royal experience for you and your guests and will indeed be a memorable rendezvous. Resplendent in its regal glory, Jaipur is a melange of spell-binding architecture, art and ambience which is culturally vibrant. We have curated a list of the ten best hotels in Jaipur which you can choose for your big day!

Shreya Shimpi

RAMBAGH PALACE

Experience Rajput hospitality at its finest at this erstwhile residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur. If you wish to have an ostentatious backdrop for your wedding, this venue is the perfect amalgamation of royalty and sophistication. They have 78 rooms of which 45 are hotel rooms, 33 are grand suites further categorised as Presidential, Royal and Historical. These rooms are replete with majestic four-poster beds and rich silk upholstery showcasing Rajasthani art in the most beautiful ways.

The indoor and outdoor exquisite banquet facilities such as the 'Chandra Mahal' and 'Maharani Mahal' have a capacity of 40-50 and 120-450 people respectively. There is also a Sabha Niwas. The Oriental Terrace has a modern decor and a capacity of 50-70. The Panghat Lawn, Mughal Lawn and Sunken Lawn can accommodate around 350 to 800 people. There are other outdoor venues too such as the Naksha Garden and the Oriental Garden which are magnificent with picturesque landscapes.

ITC RAJPUTANA

A great blend of majestic and modern architecture, this heritage

property in Jaipur can be a wonderful choice for your dream wedding. Give your guests a glimpse of the Royal Era by hosting them at this bespoke property. They have a total of 218 rooms and suites which can easily accommodate over 400 guests. The rooms are subdivided into various categories such as the Executive Club, Rajputana Chambers and Rajputana Royale. The Suites are grouped into two categories which are the Thikana Suite and the Presidential Suite. Both these suites are a paragon of luxury and grandeur. The marble floorings, 'jaali' work and delicate artefacts are exemplary. They have a pillar less Ballroom which can be divided into three sections. Suryawanshi Mahal and Hawa Mahal can hold up to 400-450 guests. Intimate gatherings of up to 80 people can be hosted at the Resident Lounge with a pool view.

THE OBEROI RAJVILAS

Majestic, magnificent, and heavenly are just a few adjectives which describe this property in the Pink City. Travel back into time, into an era gone by experiencing the grandeur this hotel offers. They have around 54 Deluxe rooms and 14 luxury tents which will provide a never-before experience for your guests. The luxury tents can accommodate two people and are surrounded by dainty gardens. The Royal tents can accommodate four people and have four-poster



beds as well. The Kohinoor Villa is worth checking out for it is like a private oasis with a luxury pool, dining area and a master bedroom. There is a 32-acre of outdoor event space with perfectly manicured lawns and mesmerising landscapes. The views are heavenly and the catering services have some scrumptious dishes on their menu. The conference room can be used for pre-wedding festivities for up to 80 people. There is ample parking space and the best of infrastructure.

THE LEELA PALACE

If you and your fiancé dream of feeling like a king and queen on your big day, do check out The Leela Palace. This jaw-dropping property overlooking the Aravallis is everything royal. There are 200 sleep rooms, 74 Palace rooms, 16 Palace Suites, 22 Grand Villas with Terrace, 23 Royal Villas with Courtyard, 41 Royal Villas with Plunge Pools, 1 Royal Suite and 1 Maharaja Suite. Experience the true taste of luxury and immerse yourself in a rich and royal extravagance. The rooms have walk-in closets, private patios, personal butlers and a lot more. This hotel offers a one-of-a-kind experience and a lifetime of memories. They have one indoor banquet hall which accommodates 150 to 800 guests along with two indoor venues with a capacity of 50. The Kanishka Bagh and Sundarban Lawns are the two splendid outdoor venues which can accommodate up to 1600 and 300 guests respectively.

THE HILTON

One of the leading hotels in Jaipur which specialises in weddings is The Hilton. Offering panoramic vistas of the scenic Aravallis and the amazing skyline of the city, they have a total of 179 rooms.

These have been further divided into categories such as the King Guestroom, Twin Guest Room and luxurious suites such as the King Bedroom Suite offering a stunning view of the mountain ranges. The rooms have some of the most modern amenities such as a personal bar, 24-hour Wi-Fi access, shower stalls, tub baths and soothing interiors.

They have 862 sq. m of total event space with six meeting rooms. The capacities range from 35 to 500. The food is a gastronomical delight which offers some lip-smacking Rajasthani delicacies and continental cuisine along with a special Chef's Choice menu. Delve into a realm of luxury, indulgence and extravagance as you enjoy a test of royalty at this property.

THE LALIT

One of the bespoke luxury five-star hotels, the LaLiT group of hotels has carved a niche for themselves for their world-class hospitality, great cuisines and services. The Lalit Jaipur has a total of 231 rooms and suites. The rooms are categorised into Deluxe, Super-Deluxe and Premium based on the facilities they offer. The suites are luxurious and are sub-divided into Executive, Luxury and the premium LaLiT Legacy Suite. Elegant decor, wooden floorings, marble decor and rich silk upholstery are some of the hallmarks of this property which set it a class apart.

The Crystal Ballroom offers uninterrupted views which can be split into two halls and open into the lawns. These are great for hosting the Sangeet ceremony and reception. The Central Courtyard which is a central stage surrounded by water on all four sides and is a great venue for an engagement ceremony or a musical night.

THE RAJ PALACE

A small yet luxurious hotel with a great aesthetic appeal. It offers the right blend of culture, and tradition and yet exudes a modern and sophisticated ambience. There are a total of 50 rooms. The rooms are further divided into Heritage, Historical, Premier and Prestige. The rooms showcase artistic brilliance through the private museums in each room with some magnificent artefacts. The suites are the Maharaja's Pavilion and the Shahi Mahal. The Maharaja Pavilion is a piece of art with four floors connected by an elevator. The rooms are ornately designed with gold-leaf painted walls and Studio work. Soulful yet regal, this is one venue to consider if you wish to hold an intimate yet grand wedding.

They have various indoor and outdoor venues such as the Mehfil Mahal (indoor) and the Charbagh, Shahi Bagh and the Maharani Bagh (outdoor) which can accommodate guests ranging from 200 to 700 and almost 1200 floating.



FAIRMONT

If you are planning a wedding destination in Jaipur, one property which deserves your attention is Hotel Fairmont. It has a total of 245 guest rooms and 7 Imperial Suites which are spacious and luxurious accommodations. There are also Fairmont Gold rooms which offer one king bed or two twin beds. The Fairmont Signature room is furnished with upscale upholstery and fine woodwork. All the rooms offer great views of the city or the garden.

The old-world charm with a mix of all the modern facilities makes this a great choice for your fairy-tale wedding. The Grand Ballroom is beautifully designed in majestic style with huge crystal chandeliers. The banquet halls have a capacity of 250 to 1000 guests and the lawns can accommodate about 650 to 1500 guests. They also offer a great mix of classic and contemporary cuisines. A resplendent property which offers you an experience for a lifetime.



TRIDENT

Situated opposite the mesmerizing Jal Mahal, this property is the epitome of luxury and opulence. The name speaks for itself and needs no introduction. They have a total of 130 rooms and 2 Suites. They are all well-furnished with all the modern facilities such as Air-Conditioning, personalised bar, Wi-Fi etc. The artistic work, decor and artefacts offer a glimpse into the Royal Era gone by. There are Deluxe Garden View Rooms and the Deluxe Lake View Rooms which offer splendid views of the garden and the picturesque Mansagar Lake respectively. The two Suites are beautifully furnished, spacious and luxurious. They have a dedicated team for events. The hall can have a seating arrangement for 100 guests or 200 floating. The magnificent lawns are great with a capacity of 500 seating and 1200 floating. The Poolside is a great venue for the Mehendi ceremony and has a capacity of 50 to 70.



JAIPUR MARRIOTT HOTEL

The Marriott Hotel offers the perfect amalgamation of opulence and sophistication. They have a total of 374 rooms including a King Suite which are spacious and luxurious and come with an array of modern amenities such as well-designed bathrooms, high-speed internet access, comfortable beds etc. The architecture reflects the rich cultural heritage and opulence.

The Topaz, Diamond and Coral halls offer a capacity of 30 to 50 guests. The Sapphire Hall and the Ballroom can accommodate a capacity ranging from 1220 to 200 and 500-750 respectively. The Jade Garden has a capacity of a minimum of 450 to a maximum of



650. Indulge yourself and your guests into a royal feast. They offer a team of event planners as well as bespoke cuisines which shall make your D-Day a flawless and memorable experience to cherish over the years. If you wish to have a royal start to your 'happily-ever-after, this property is worth exploring



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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 **Aug-Sept 2022**



ARIES (March 21 – April 20)

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



Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

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



Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

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



Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

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



Leo (July 23 – August 21)

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



Virgo (August 22 - September 23)

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



Libra (September 24 - October 23)

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



Scorpio (October 24 - November 22)

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



Sagittarius (November 23 - December 22)

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



Capricorn (December 23 - January 20)

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



Aquarius (January 21 - February 19)

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



Pisces (February 20 - March 20)

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

ATOAI announces first Himalayan Mountaineering & Adventure Tourism Meet

ATOAI is happy to announce the first Himalayan Mountaineering and Adventure Tourism Meet to be held in New Delhi from January 31 – February 2, 2023.



Capt. Swadesh Kumar



Vaibhav Kala



Vinayak Koul

BOTT DESK

According to Capt. Swadesh Kumar, the Founding President of ATOAI who now heads the Climbing Expeditions Promotion Committee, the Himalayan Mountaineering meet was started in the 1970's with an objective to promote climbing expeditions in the country. This initiative was taken by Air India and the adventure tour operators at that time. Air India initiated it with the support of MOT with Indian Mountaineering Foundation actively involved. The meet was opened to international and national mountaineers.

"There is a dire need to aggressively promote the Indian Himalayas. Over the past century Mountaineering as an activity has been the birthing bed of other adventure sports like trekking, rafting, skiing and camping to name a few," said Capt. Kumar.

Vaibhav Kala, the officiating president of ATOAI says that states like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh & Sikkim etc. are already on the world map for mountaineering in India. However, the Northeast has vast potential, many destinations are still unexplored, especially for outdoor and adventure activities. Arunachal has, for example, the unexplored Gorichen (6,858m) and Kangto (7,060m) peaks. These can be promoted with world-class safety measures and guidelines in place.

Vinayak Koul, the honorary secretary of ATOAI is upbeat about reviving the meet, he says,

"We at ATOAI would like to revive the Indian Himalayan Mountaineering Meet which first started in the 70's as an initiative by Air India, MOT, IMF and a handful of Adventure Tour Operators to promote climbing expeditions in India. We hope to see the industry benefiting from this event and the exposure it will get in the national and international markets.

The mountaineering and climbing experts feels sad to see the international mountaineering community selecting other countries like Nepal, Bhutan, China and Pakistan over India. "We would like to bring in some of the top mountaineers from across the globe, international journalists covering adventure tourism and national players on the same platform in India in order to showcase our expertise and potential," says Capt. Kumar.

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEET

The main objective of the Mountaineering Meet 2022 is to showcase the year round potential of the Indian Himalaya.

EVENT SCHEDULE

It would be a three days event with 250-300 national delegates which will include famous Indian Mountaineers who have contributed immensely to the growth of adventure tourism in this country.

ATOAI also plans to invite 100 International delegates including adventure travel journalists, photographers, Mountaineers through their partners and alpine clubs, however it will be open to mountaineering, tour operators, equipment manufacturers and all others who have interest

in the adventure tourism from around the world as delegates.

RIGHT TIME TO HOLD THE MOUNTAINEERING MEET

Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, impacting economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities on all continents. All parts of its vast value-chain have been affected.

As countries gradually lift travel restrictions and tourism slowly restarts in many parts of the world, it is the right time to promote Indian adventure tourism to the rest of the world.

ADVENTURE TOURISM AND ITS POTENTIAL

"Adventure tourism is what tourism should be today and definitely what tourism will be tomorrow"- UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

Adventure travel is a \$683 billion industry globally showing a 21 per cent Compound Annual Growth rate since 2012. Given our huge potential vis-a-vis adventure and sustainable tourism, we can easily double our inbound figures, presently at 10 million tourists (UNWTO) in the next three years (post-Covid) through adventure tourism alone.

Tourism supports one in 10 jobs and provides livelihoods for many millions more in both developing and developed economies. As a matter of fact, Adventure Tourism is one of the backbones of the tourism industry as this segment reaches to the remotest of places in India and provides livelihood to locals through its various activities.

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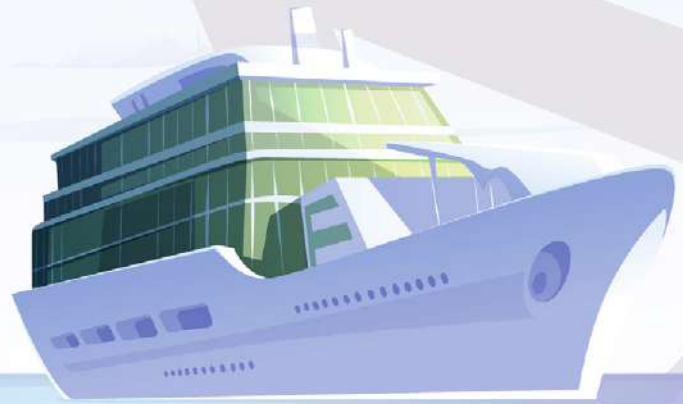
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