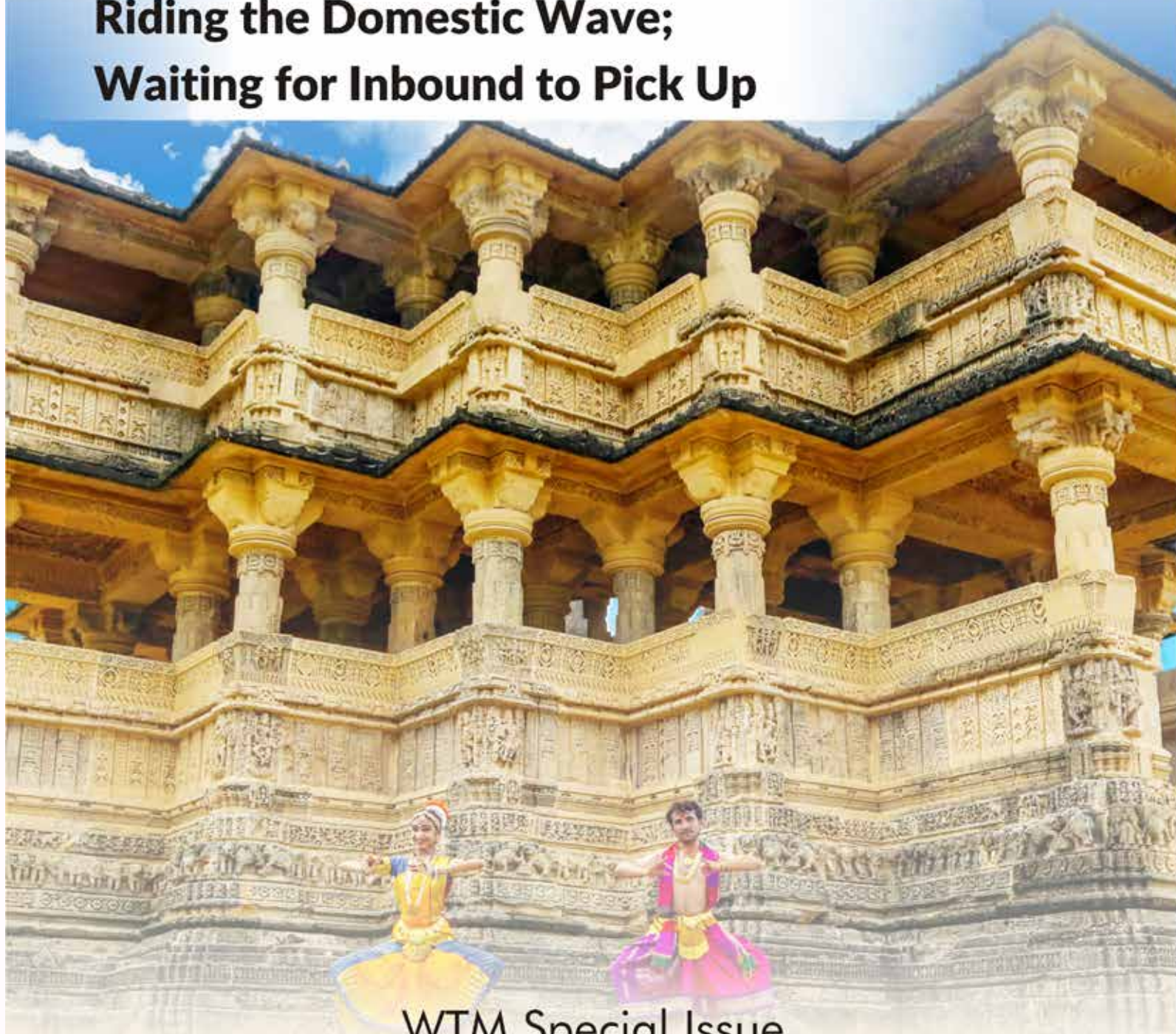


# india Tourism

**Riding the Domestic Wave;  
Waiting for Inbound to Pick Up**



WTM Special Issue





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- Avail Export Incentives formulated under Foreign Trade Policy to be announced soon.
- Become eligible for schemes under Ministry of MSME.



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From The Editor's

# Desk



Dear Readers

I have been bringing out 'WTM Special' Issues for close to 20 years now and every year, the excitement and enthusiasm of attending the show only gets better – the last two years being an exception. This year, the enthusiasm is back as the Indian travel trade fraternity gets ready to attend the show, albeit high air ticket prices and visa delays. Many have taken booths while few others are visiting to network, mingle and once again kick-start their business in the Europe market.

World Travel Market London is the leading global event for the travel industry to meet industry professionals and conduct business deals. The mart this year is being attended by 51,000 visitors who are looking for newer and innovative destinations. This includes 9,000 key decision makers with direct purchasing power attending the event as qualified Buyers' Club members.

If you are at the show, do grab a copy of our Special Issue titled "Namaste World", which has been put together with an aim to send out the message that India, with a majority of its population double-dose vaccinated, is ready to welcome the Inbound Tourists once again. Our Incredible country, in the last two years, has added more tourist attractions, opened newer hotels, launched fresh airline routes and bolstered its infrastructure – rail, road, airports and more.

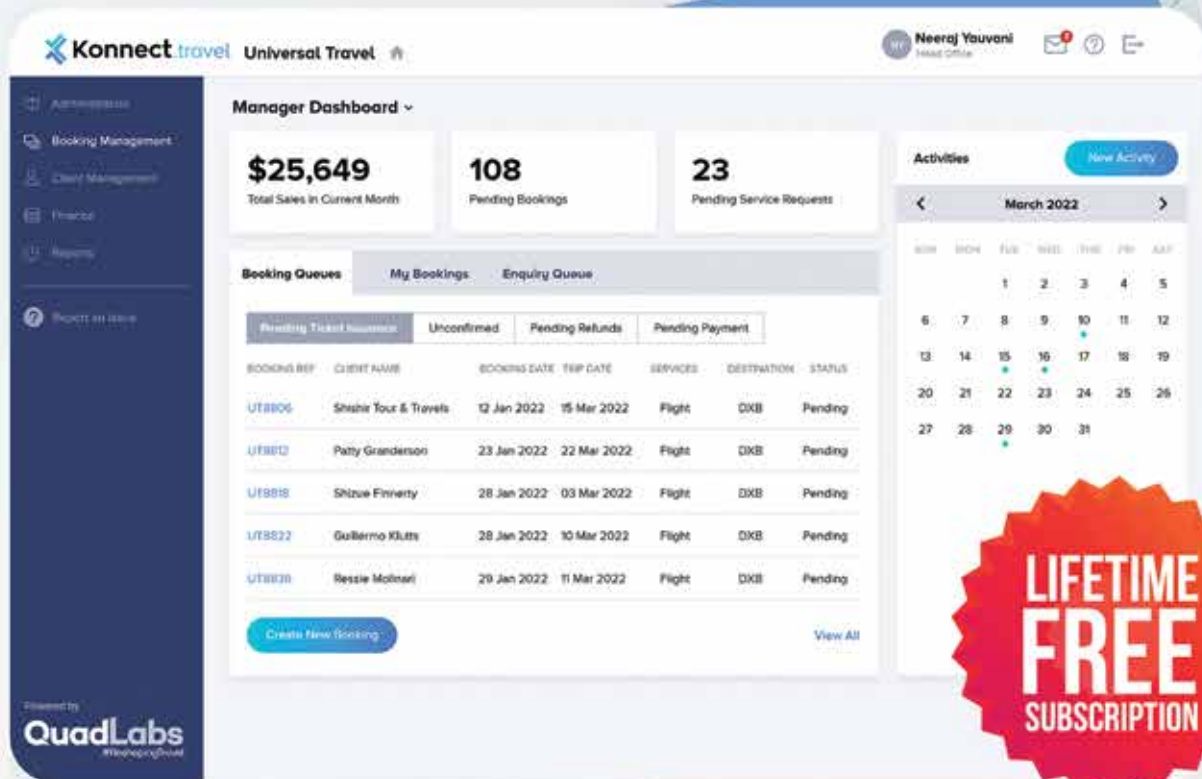
While talking about Inbound Tourism, we have also tried to acknowledge the fact that Domestic Tourism has emerged as the sleeping giant during the pandemic that not only helped the tourism industry stay afloat but also continues to be a major contributor to business for hotels. Be it leisure, weddings or MICE – domestic market has taken over and it will now be impossible for anyone to ignore it anymore. And as inbound tourism limps its way to recovery, one can only be hopeful of a more robust and more enthusiastic WTM next year!

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

Priyanka Saxena Ray



# HAVE AN INTEGRATED PLATFORM TO COLLABORATE BETWEEN YOUR TEAMS



The screenshot shows the 'Manager Dashboard' for 'Universal Travel'. It features a sidebar with navigation links: Administration, Booking Management, Client Management, Finance, Reports, and Support & Help. The main content area includes three summary cards: '\$25,649 Total Sales in Current Month', '108 Pending Bookings', and '23 Pending Service Requests'. Below these are tabs for 'Booking Queues', 'My Bookings', and 'Enquiry Queue'. The 'Booking Queues' tab is active, showing a table with columns: Booking Ref, Client Name, Booking Date, Trip Date, Services, Destination, and Status. The table lists five bookings, all with a 'Pending' status. A 'Create New Booking' button is at the bottom left, and a 'View All' link is at the bottom right. On the right side of the dashboard, there is an 'Activities' section with a 'New Activity' button and a calendar for March 2022. A red starburst graphic with the text 'LIFETIME FREE SUBSCRIPTION' is overlaid on the bottom right of the dashboard screenshot.

Booking Ref	Client Name	Booking Date	Trip Date	Services	Destination	Status
UT8806	Shashir Tour & Travels	12 Jan 2022	15 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8802	Patty Granderson	23 Jan 2022	22 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8818	Shiraz Finnelly	28 Jan 2022	03 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8822	Guillermo Klutts	28 Jan 2022	10 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8838	Ressie Molinari	29 Jan 2022	11 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending

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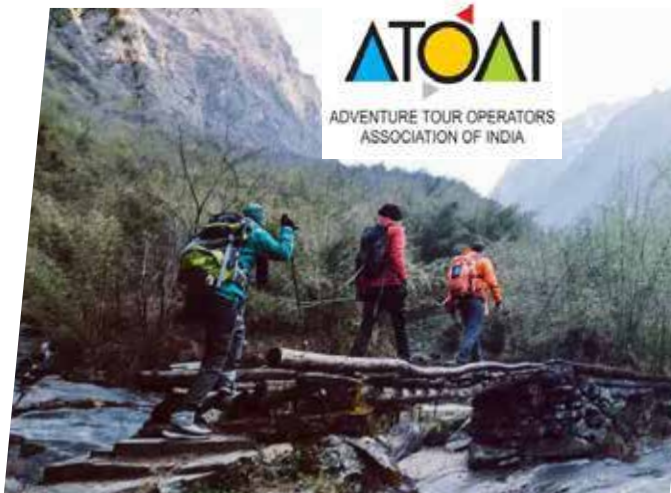
## ICPB Governing Board members elected unopposed to continue 2022-24 term

The XXXV ICPB AGM was held on October 28, 2022, at the Hotel Samrat, New Delhi.

The association also distributed the Annual Report and Balance Sheet for FY 2021-22 during the XXXV AGM and discussed the opening of ICPB Membership for new categories/segments. Amaresh Tiwari, Girish Kwatra, and Madan Kak were elected unopposed to continue their terms as Vice-Chairman, Hony. Secretary, and Hony. Treasurer, respectively.



## ATOAI announces the formation of five regional chapters



ATOAI aims to create awareness about and enable safe adventure, help create a pool of trained resources, grow the network of members, facilitate business and generally, help advance adventure tourism in India to the next level. It is therefore ATOAI announces the formation of the ATOAI Chapter in the Five Regions - Western & Central Region, Southern Region, Eastern Region, North Eastern Region and Northern Region. The association believe that this will be a great opportunity to bring together the adventure tourism fraternity in these 5 regions. The Chapters at the industry level will work on creating an authentic database of all adventure tour operators in their region, push for ATOAI safety guidelines, encourage ATOAI membership and assist in organising the ATOAI EDU CAMPS.

## Sartha Global Marketing will now represent Visit Tri-Valley in India

Visit Tri-Valley, the official destination marketing organization for the cities of Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin, and the town of Danville in the Alameda and Contra Costa counties in California announced the appointment of Sartha Global Marketing as their representative office in India. Sartha Global Marketing has been tasked with setting up a robust travel trade and public relations program, creating greater inspiration for the destination amongst potential Indian leisure travellers. Located approximately 35 miles from San Francisco (approx. 45 mins drive from SFO), Tri-Valley comprises of classic California downtowns and an expansive wine country boasting of 55 wineries with tasting rooms and is one of the oldest wine regions in the country.





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## ‘The Global Rep’ to now represent the Punarnava Resort, Uttarakhand

The Global Rep' has been appointed as the Exclusive Representative for Punarnava Resort, located in between Dehradun & Mussoorie. It is one of the best wellness and luxury resorts on the foothills of Mussoorie in Uttarakhand. The resort is spread in 63 acres and offers 110 Luxury rooms, Cottages, Suites and Villas. The wellness packages are designed very carefully following the principles of 5 Elements and is called the Panchtatva. The resort is also famous for Luxury Destination weddings having been a venue for numerous rich, famous and celebrity weddings.



## Ranveer Singh holidays with his fans from India on Yas Island Abu Dhabi



Global icon, Bollywood superstar and Yas Island's ambassador, Ranveer Singh, spent three days at the Island with around 300 travellers from India, who were winners of the Yas Island and MakeMyTrip's Fly Me to Yas campaign. The guests visited its award-winning theme parks and attractions including Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, Yas Mall and Yas Bay Waterfront. Ranveer was seen spending quality time with his fans and enjoying the destination's thrilling rides at Yas Island attractions; Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, in addition to hosting a gala dinner at Warner Bros. World.

## Mannat Visas opens new vertical office in Perth, Australia

In an endeavour to expand its global footprint, Mannat Visas has recently opened its new office in Perth, Australia. The company held a small ceremony at its New Delhi office to announce the news of the expansion. Mr. Balli Singh – Honorable Member, Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council and Justice Of Peace – Perth Australia, graced the occasion with his presence at our New Delhi Office. Also present at the occasion – Mr. Prateek Singh Janu – Deputy Convenor West Delhi BJP. Speaking on the occasion – Mr. Manmeet Singh Arora – Founder & CEO, elaborated that this will further help in strengthening our local reach and grab more customers. Mr. Randhir Singh (Ron) – Business Head – Australia, said that while the Indian market is our number 1 source market but our local presence in Australia will further help us expand in other source markets in future







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## FIRST OPINION



"We are excited to initiate the creation of a single Air India Group low-cost carrier. This – acquisition of AirAsia India is a key step in the rationalisation and transformation of the Group, and we will be working closely with the management teams and staff throughout the process. We also look forward to the many new opportunities a stronger AI Group low-cost carrier will bring for customers and staff alike."

**-Campbell Wilson,**  
**CEO & MD, Air India**



"Amadeus is leading the global travel industry with cutting edge innovation, offering a host of automated products, solutions and services that help travel agents unlock new market potential, enhance efficiency, step up performance and maximize revenue. We are committed to rebuilding travel! These roadshows are an opportunity to rekindle the connect with our existing travel partners, help them design better journeys with ease and efficiency and foster new connections to join us on this exciting journey!"

**-Rakesh Bansal,**  
**CEO, Amadeus Indian Subcontinent**



"We are delighted to have the opportunity to promote Tri-Valley as their marketing arm in India. The destination is a great addition to all Northern California itineraries, located in close proximity to San Francisco, with a range of wonderful attractions for Indian visitors."

**-Sheema Vohra,**  
**Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing**



"Keeping the timeless culinary tradition – cake mixing and Grape Stomping Event alive, we are grateful to have this wonderful opportunity to build on this and create our own traditions with all you well-wishers present here today at our first cake mixing get together. It's a delight to welcome you all here and look forward to hosting many more exciting, memorable, and mindful events that celebrate culture, cuisines, and community."

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



"We are pleased to launch the new exclusive Bhopal-Udaipur route, which will strengthen the regional accessibility between both the states. The flights between Bhopal and Udaipur are under the UDAN scheme. The direct connection will between the capital of Mewar Kingdom and India's one of the greenest cities will cater both business and leisure travellers and prove to be a bridge between the two regions. We will strive to stay true to our promise of affordable fares, on-time performance, courteous and hassle-free service across our wide network."

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





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# *In light of growing Domestic Tourism,* how important is Inbound business?

The uncertainties in life have a strange way of shaping our future. Sometimes, what we think is for our benefit does not turn out in our favour and vice versa. In the recent past, unprecedented events, such as Covid or previous financial turmoil have been the junctures that allowed Indian tourism to reinvent itself. The last three years brought to light the immense potential that domestic tourism holds, not just in India but also globally. Travellers are ready to spend lavishly, provided they are offered services at par. They are ready to move around using any mode of transport, if the right infrastructure is available. While, the government is doing its best, in the construction and expansion of roads, highways, airports, helipads, etc., the private stakeholders, tourism professionals in the travel trade are geared to take tourism to new heights based on various new verticals and not be dependent on Inbound Tourism alone.

In an attempt to understand the changing dynamics of tourism and the current existing relationship between domestic and inbound tourism, BOTT spoke to trade associations heads and leading travel professionals to understand how they have evolved to meet the transformed tourism scenario and here is what they had to say –

**Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray**

## **'Go beyond Inbound Tourism & create opportunities in other streams of tourism'**

**Jyoti Mayal**

**President, TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India)**

**D**uring Covid, we saw the entire shift of travel was towards domestic tourism. Post-Covid, India's drive should have been towards inbound but somehow, we have lost out on this year's season as there have been challenges on e-visas and secondly, we have not marketed our country to promote tourism. Today the traveller looking for encouragement and constant handholding on the updation of policies of travel, hygiene, safety and promotion of sustainable tourism. Thus, I would say yes, in some ways we as a resilient industry have to make ourselves go beyond inbound tourism and create opportunities for ourselves and invest in other streams of tourism.



The entire travel trade and tourism industry is expected to be back on track by the end of 2023. There are multiple factors supporting the statement. COVID-related restrictions have been removed in almost all parts of the globe. However, people have been advised to take precautions and follow protocols. Travellers' confidence is high and improving. But the challenge is the backlog. A rigorous joint exercise is required at the G to G level to bring the businesses back on track, especially for tourism. As President of TAAI & as an industry leader, we have been vocal in terms of providing our best possible support to any such initiative. We need countries to open their minds and attitude to give visas for tourism. The go-slow attitude needs to end & politics & tourism should not be interlinked. As President TAAI, and Vice Chairperson FAITH, we have been continuously sending recommendations for strong effective marketing on all platforms of electronic, print and social media. We need to invest in roadshows and B2B meetings. We need to make India an attractive destination by showcasing it as a sustainable destination with an effective emphasis on hygiene and safety. I truly believe India is the best country to promote tourism with its diverse landscape, heritage, culture, cuisines and much more. The Government needs to join hands with TAAI and other stakeholders to effectively promote India as a PPP model. It is Now or Never. This is the right time for us to reinvent, restructure & reconstruct our tourism.

MICE, Inbound, and Outbound are moving at their own pace. I believe that it will take a little more time in the MICE business to come back in totality as handling large gatherings is not an issue because companies



and their employees are experienced enough. However, handling a situation, especially one related to health, is a little more difficult. Also, all of us have now become accustomed to the hybrid way of working, and therefore a lot of MICE events will have to follow the model for a while. I can't put a specific deadline on it but am quite positive that by the mid of 2023, MICE will be back on track with larger numbers.

As TAAI President I need to reiterate a few things on behalf of my members. TAAI continues to work towards achieving industry status from all states for the entire sector, ease of business with the adoption of correct policies for the growth of the business, protection of travel agents' monies from defaulting airlines, insurance for travellers, support in technology and marketing for our members and most importantly periodical meetings milestone driven to achieve all this.

I am pleased to share that, apart from all this, we are also working on the WITT initiative. Women-centric events are lined up for next year whereby our objective is to make them self-dependent by providing the right training, mentoring and guidance to be able to earn a robust livelihood for themselves and their families. As Chairperson of THSC, we are also going beyond women & investing a lot in Skills as a sector council. I feel a huge sense of satisfaction that we are delivering our best and have been able to skill the youth, support the industry to the utmost & will continue to do so.

**'We expect that by 2023-24, we will go back to the 2019 figures'**

**Rajiv Mehra**  
**President, IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators)**

Inbound traffic is still the key source of Foreign Exchange earnings and key revenue source for the stakeholders of tourism. However, post pandemic we see the Wedding Segment come up along with Domestic Travel. Infact, both augur well for Inbound as if Indians can travel within India then it justifiably projects India as a safe and secure destination across the world.

Around 35% of my business is still being driven by the Inbound traffic.

However, going forward, we are very hopeful for the revival of Inbound with measures addressed by the policy makers and our inputs to them. We expect that by 2023-24 we will go back to the 2019 figures provided there is no further Covid wave.

Events are fast picking up in the form of weddings. Other facets of MICE are making a slow progress. A complete recovery is very hard to predict as still a lot of meetings are online as corporates aim to reduce cost post Covid. 2024 will be a year of rebound for many tourism segments.

The theme for our 37th Annual Convention is "INBOUND TOURISM – What Lies Ahead". The aim is to focus on the THEME and seek viable



inputs from the Ministry of Tourism, participating states and key players in the private sector comprise leading tour operators and hotel chains. With the inaugural address by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, a strong band of 700 plus tour operators at the convention deliberating and participating at the key business and State Presentations, a session on Uttar Pradesh, culminating in the post-convention tours at the strategic tourist sites of Uttar Pradesh catering to onsite marketing of the destinations of Uttar Pradesh, the city of Lucknow and the state of Uttar Pradesh would definitely experience a boost in tourism with the convention. The industry is looking up to business leaving Covid behind and at the IATO Convention the setting is apt with the theme of the convention.

**'It is hard to run a business in Inbound when we have no destination support'**

**Rajeev Kohli, CIS, CITP, DMCP**  
**Joint Managing Director Creative Travel**

Domestic Indian business has always been a mainstay of the Indian hospitality industry. It just wasn't as sexy and high profile as inbound was. The pandemic gave the hotels to use supply and demand reasons as an excuse to aggressively up their rates for the domestic traveller. Where the international traveller used to be high vale, that has been displaced by simple price manipulation making Indians pay more than they ever have.



Hotel rates have soared in India, but that is a phenomenon world over. We are in a phase of temporary imbalance, where not all planes are flying and hotels are full with pent up demand for leisure and MICE. I predict 6-8 months before we see normalcy return. It has to. That is a fundamental of economics, and every student of eco knows that. The lucrative wedding business will find its footing back to moving overseas as was the patter of the past. After all, the global NTOs are not spending big bucks for nothing to get the big fat weddings back. Visa issues will ease off and our travellers will wander the world again. So, for my hotel friends who expect the upwards trends to be indefinite, not going to happen. It just defies logic and patterns of the Indian traveller. Take a look at the Maldives, the apple of everyone's eyes of the past two years. They have seen a dramatic softening of their market.

I feel, revival is the wrong approach. Survival comes first. Achieving profitability needs to be the single driver. Much easier for smaller companies with low overheads and harder for the medium to larger players who have deeper investments in quality manpower and infrastructure. If anyone in India is targeting 2019 as their benchmark for this year, good luck. I know all my DMC friends in Europe and the



Americas have already cross 2019 figures. We in India have tremendous administrative issues that are choking us from achieving even a decent base. Two or our top three Western markets cannot use our e-visa system. We have zero marketing and advertising. There is a strong lack of interest for India in most source markets. It is hard to run a business in Inbound when we have no destination support. It will take us 2-4 years to get back to the 2019 levels.

## 'Domestic Tourism will always be the biggest driver of tourism in India'

**Rajat Sawhney**

Sr. Vice President, ADTOI  
(Association of Domestic Tour Operators in India)

The focus of tourism in India for last many years has primarily been on the Inbound segment and not much importance was ever given to other forms of tourism.

Domestic Tourism has been like a SLEEPING GIANT, which has slowly yet steadily evolved and grown at a phenomenal pace in the last 15 years. This giant suddenly woke up during the pandemic. Amidst visa and travel restrictions (Inbound and Outbound) and became a catalyst for the growth of Domestic Tourism, which came into prominence and unleashed its full potential. Indians have evolved and matured as travellers in the last ten years and started to value Domestic Tourism and embarked on journeys to the lesser known and hidden gems of India.

Domestic Tourism will always be the biggest driver of tourism in India. Indian Tourism growth story will never be complete without Domestic Tourism in its forefront.

In terms of revival and going back to the 2019 numbers, I think it is a matter of time before we do. I feel that by the Winter of 2023, we will see major recovery and by 2024 we will go back to the 2019 figures. The recovery of MICE business has been slow. In the events and conventions sector, I feel 15 to 20% business has returned. The main area of concern here has been the steep hike in air fares (both domestic and international), which has been a discouraging factor for big MICE movements. I feel that by April 2023 onwards, airfares should stabilise and give a boost to the MICE groups.

Lastly, I would like to add that the Destination Weddings in India have been a surprise winner. During and post pandemic, this has been a fast-moving segment. Destination weddings fares (both domestic and international) have contributed nearly 30% to our company business during and post pandemic. I personally feel that the travel professionals must focus on destination weddings in times to come as this segment is here to stay and grow at a phenomenal pace.



## 'There are guesstimates that Inbound arrivals to India will cross 25mn by 2030'

**Tejbir Singh Anand**

Founding Board of Director & Vice Chairman "FAITH"  
Sr Vice President, ATOAI  
(Adventure Tour Operators Association of India)

India is a very large, vast and diverse country. Even the Indians have not seen India completely. The domestic tourism market is a different model where mostly the duration of the holiday ranges from 2 to 5 nights, whereas the inbound segment movement usually ranges around 10 days to 3 weeks. The first to kickstart post pandemic was obviously the domestic market in every country, which took the tourism industry by a pleasant huge surprise and called it "Revenge Tourism".

The last 3 quarters have seen stupendous demand for quick getaways within the country by the domestic market and all hotels in the tourist destinations have been witnessing completely sell out. Not only have they done tremendously well but even their rates have drastically gone up by almost 200% in some cases, which is concerning as a separate subject especially for the inbound market, making India an expensive proposition for the luxury segment. The revival of the hotels in the leisure segment has been spectacular and similarly for the aviation industry. The transportation segment is also not doing bad either as we see rise in events, conferences and meetings kick starting. The tour operators are also flooded with queries however the conversions could be better. New infrastructure has also come up in the form of new hotels, good roads, fresh airports and latest trains.

We are a well-balanced company where we had different verticals looking after inbound tourism, domestic tourism, MICE and investments in developing activity centres, campsites and resorts. Most of our inbound traffic comes from Europe and specifically from the UK market. However, at present our inbound business is perhaps at just 15% of what we used to do.

Going forward, I am very optimistic and looking forward to the revival of inbound tourism in India. It might take some time to go back to the figures of 2019 however it will be an organic growth for sure. Three major factors which will help in the revival are (1) realistic and cost-effective air fares (2) ease of getting a visa for coming into India and (3) clear information and dissemination of information on the new protocols and guidelines. These will be the deciding factors as to how soon we can not only bounce back to the 2019 figures but perhaps surpass them. Post COVID, there is a surging demand to visit India being an exotic destination. India as a destination is unparalleled and has always retained the impression in the global traveller of being a mystical, vibrant and super diverse destination. I am very optimistic and already we are seeing inbound groups slowly starting to trickle in. Historically India inbound arrival figures hover around 10 million travellers per annum and post COVID with the surge in demand, there are guesstimates that the figures will cross 25 million travellers by 2030 itself. I think by October 2023, we should be able to reach the same levels as pre pandemic.





Recovery of MICE segment has been slow. Conferences are still a laggard but the trickle has already started. Events have also picked up as there is no fear of COVID anymore in India. There is definitely a solid traction happening in the MICE business and we look forward to hosting a number of groups in the very near future.

## 'Foreigners want to explore the new and developed India with improved infrastructure'

**Jay Bhatia**

Vice President, TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India)

Tourism in India is dependent on Inbound tourism. However, post pandemic Domestic Tourism within India has grown multi-fold. With the improvement in infrastructure and new hotels and different varieties of accommodation options available, Domestic Tourism has seen an exponential growth. The Indian Travel and Tourism saw a huge increase and shall continue to see growth in the domestic arena too.

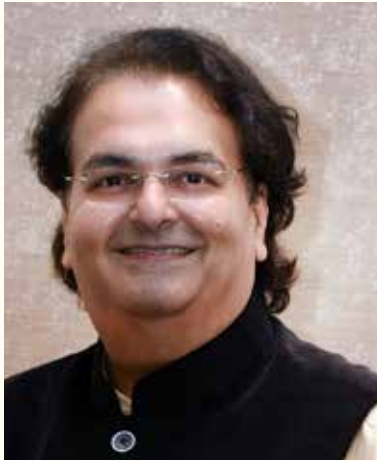
In my organisation, pre-pandemic, around 75-80% of our business was inbound tourism related. Now, over the past one year around 35% of the business has been inbound. This is also due to the challenges being faced on issuance of visas/ visa on arrival as well as restricted flight operations from and to India.

I am extremely confident regarding the revival of Inbound Tourism and soon we will be touching the 2019 figures. Inbound Tourism to India shall touch a new high!

Foreigners want to explore not only the new India, in terms of infrastructure and development but also want to explore Indian history, culture and heritage. Homestays, Village and Rural Tourism, Agri Tourism along with Wellness Tourism shall certainly see an exponential growth in tier2/tier3 cities of India.

With the Indian Aviation space as well as the Railways growing and trying to connect upto the last mile, inbound is certainly the next big thing in Indian Travel and Tourism.

MICE sector currently is stagnated. One of the major reasons is the visas and the taxes. The Indian Government has still not liberated visas for travellers from many countries. Obtaining an Indian visa has become a challenge for major European travellers. Especially the British. Visa on arrival too has not seen any new developments or increase in the numbers due to restrictions imposed and processing times of the e-visas. Further even for Domestic MICE the challenges are of GST input credits for interstate for hotels and accommodations, which cannot be claimed as setoffs, to which the organisers of MICE events have to take the brunt of an average of 18% on the billing/budgets. Various representations



have been submitted by TAAI as well as by FAITH to the Government of India, but in vain.

## 'Through physical trade events, meetings & roadshows we have to tell that India is ready'

**Ravi Gosain**

Vice President, IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators)

Each segment of tourism whether Inbound, Domestic or MICE has its own characteristics and their individual share in the overall tourism industry depends on its demand, favourable environment and price competitiveness. All these were growing steadily pre pandemic but during the pandemic when borders were closed, flights were grounded it was just impossible for inbound traffic, that time Domestic tourism and intra region MICE flourished and took front seat. However once borders opened for tourists, covid conditions were lifted or eased by most of the countries, cross border tourism is slowly picking up again.



In Erco Travels, we have more than 95% of inbound traffic throughout the years and there is no change post pandemic but yes, we don't have similar volumes. We are now bridging all broken links and actively promoting our services and products in the overseas market. Pandemic was a nightmare but we lived on hope and I personally have a strong belief that Inbound will bounce back, we are glad that we will operate 25-30% of inbound business from 2019 levels in the current financial year. It will take some time to reach 2019 figures and if we are fortunate and do not get any other adverse situation, we will cross the pre pandemic levels in FY 2023-24.

MICE is another segment which was affected badly due to absence of physical events but now it is coming back strongly. If you call any of the good city centre 5\* hotels it's very difficult to get a space for MICE events, which shows the surging demand and positive recovery.

I strongly recommend the need of promoting physical trade events, meetings and roadshows to show the world that India is ready to receive tourists because the confidence was lost during covid and people worldwide are still apprehensive about safety and hygiene in India, especially keeping its population in mind. So, we must go out and meet our overseas partners, locals and tell them about our preparedness and situation post pandemic. This will give foreigners trust and confidence to visit India again for both leisure and MICE. I travelled to IFTM in Paris and it was really great to meet our partners from France and Switzerland. Post this trip we have seen marginal growth in business, so now I will look forward to participating in WTM, London and confident to generate interest for India.







# Ayurveda: The science of body and spirit

Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra are all parts of the ancient life-disciplines that have been practiced in India for centuries. They find mention in the scriptures of the Vedas and Upanishads. Ayurveda is the science of life with a purpose to help an individual achieve longevity, rejuvenation and self-realisation. Ayurveda is an ancient art of healing that has been in practice in India for more than 5,000 years. Read on to know more on Ayurveda...

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

**A**yurveda is often considered and regarded as the medical side of Yoga, which is highly effective in dealing with chronic illnesses, weakening effects of chemotherapy and metabolic problems. Ayurveda in India has grown by many folds over the years and has a number of Ayurvedic rejuvenation centres throughout the country, many of which can be found in leading hotels and resorts. While these Ayurvedic rejuvenation centres offer relaxation through massages and beauty treatments, Ayurvedic hospitals offer treatments to various chronic and severe illnesses.

Ayurveda in India uses a pranic system of healing, which aims at correcting the doshas in a body by balancing its life energy. The treatment involves different types of massages depending on the ailment; application of herbal oils and liquids on the body; typical massage techniques such as *uzhichil* and *pizhichil*; covering the body with herbs, leaves; and different types of herbal powders.

The advantage of Ayurveda is that it uses natural elements for treatment purposes and the solutions provided are tailor-made to specifically address an individual's problem. Like homeopathy, Ayurvedic treatment requires time to take effect. The treatment course usually stretches to at least two weeks before the effects can be seen.

In its broader sense, Ayurveda has always demanded to prepare mankind for the realisation of the full potential of its self through a psychosomatic integration. A complete health care is what Ayurveda prescribes for the ultimate self-realisation. The Rig Veda also mentions organ transplants and herbal remedies called *Soma* with properties of elixir.

During 3,000 to 2,000 BC Atharvaveda one of the four Vedas was authored, of which Ayurveda is an Upaveda (subsection). Though, Ayurveda had been practiced all along, it was during this period that Ayurveda in India, was codified from the oral tradition to book form, as an independent science. Atharvaveda enlists eight branches of Ayurveda namely - *Kayachikitsa* (Internal Medicine), *Shalakya Tantra* (surgery and treatment of head and neck, Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology), *Shalya Tantra* (Surgery), *Agada Tantra* (Toxicology), *Bhuta Vidya* (Psychiatry), *Kaumarabhritya* (Pediatrics), *Rasayana* (science of rejuvenation or anti-aging), and *Vajikarana* (the science of fertility).

The most fascinating aspect of Ayurveda is, it uses almost all the methods of healing like lifestyle regimen, yoga, aroma, meditation, gems, amulets, herbs, diet, *jyotishi* (astrology), colour and surgery etc. in treating patients.

According to Ayurveda everybody is made up of five elements, namely – *Prithvi* or earth, *Jal* or water, *Tejas* or fire, *Vayu* or air and *Akash* or space. The structural aspect of the body is made up of these five elements, but the functional aspect of the body is governed by three biological humors. Ether and air combine to form what is known in Ayurveda as the *Vata dosha*. *Vata* governs the principle of movement and therefore can be seen as the force which directs nerve impulses, circulation, respiration, and elimination. Fire and water combine to form the *Pitta dosha*. The *Pitta dosha* governs the process of transformation or metabolism. The digestion of food in our body is an example of *Pitta* function. *Pitta* is also responsible for metabolism in the organ and tissue systems as well as cellular metabolism. Finally, the water and earth combine to form the *Kapha dosha*.





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There are seven body types: mono-types (vata, pitta or kapha predominant), dual types (vata-pitta, pitta-kapha or, kapha-vata), and equal types, (vata, pitta and kapha in equal proportions). Every individual has a unique combination of these three doshas. To understand the uniqueness of every individual is the very basis of Ayurveda. Ayurveda classifies human temperaments into three basic qualities: satvic, rajasic and tamasic. Satvic qualities imply purity and clarity of perception which are responsible for goodness and happiness. Rajas is responsible for all movements, and activities. It leads to the life of sensual enjoyment, pleasure and pain, effort and restlessness. Tamas is darkness, inertia, heaviness and materialistic attitudes. There is a constant interplay of these three gunas (qualities) in the individual consciousness, but the relative predominance of either satva, rajas, or tamas is responsible for individual psychological constitution.

According to Ayurveda, health is a state of balance between the body, mind and consciousness. Within the body, Ayurveda recognizes the three doshas (bodily humors) vata, pitta and kapha; seven dhatus (tissues), blood, plasma, fat, muscle, bone, nerve, and reproductive; three malas (wastes), feces, urine and sweat; and agni, the energy of metabolism. Disease is a condition of disharmony in any of these factors. The root cause of imbalance, or disease, is an aggravation of dosha, vata-pitta-kapha.

Ayurveda is the system of medicine incorporating centuries of wisdom in it. The emphasis here is on ways to promote health rather than just treat disease. The beauty of the system is that every individual is unique rather than being just another case of particular disease. It is one of the few systems of medicine taking mental, emotional and spiritual well being into account. All the suggestions and remedies prescribed in Ayurveda are completely in conjunction with nature.

## Ayurveda Treatments

### PIZHICHIL

A cloth is dipped in lukewarm medicated oil, and then squeezed over the body for 45 - 60 minutes. This is followed by a gentle body massage. The oils are prescribed depending on the specific ailment. This is a process traditionally followed once a year, aimed at keeping the body fit and healthy and preventing premature ageing. It is also recommended for papaplegia, hemiplegia and general weakness.

### PATRASWEDAM

Little cloth bundles made of specially selected herbs are dipped in warm oil and rubbed over the whole body. Recommended for certain types of muscular and nervous ailments the duration of the treatment varies from 3 to 7 days.

### MEDICATED STEAM BATH

The patient is exposed to a steam bath with medicinal herbs steamed in boiling water. This treatment is most suited for obesity, and to rid the body of harmful toxic substances. It has also been found to help certain kinds of skin problems.

### UDWARTHANAM

The body is massaged with various medicated powders. This is a procedure that primarily melts away subcutaneous fat and obesity - related problems from the body. It also helps in blood circulation.

### SHIRODHARA

In this treatment, the patient lies on the back and medicated oil is poured continuously on the forehead from an eastern vessel. This is an extremely beneficial treatment in cases of disorders such as migraines, headaches and insomnia.

### PUNNAGATHI KIZHI

Small muslin cloth bags containing special fresh herbs are kept warm by constantly dipping in hot medicated oil simmered in a pan. These are then rubbed onto the body for 60 minutes.

### NJAVARAKIZHI

Small cotton bags are filled with a particular kind of cooked rice, which is dipped in warm milk with medicated decoction and rubbed on to the body. This is very effective in cases of weak muscles, weakness and rheumatism. The duration varies from 7 to 14 days.

### UZHICHIL (general body massage)

This therapy is useful for general fitness and well being of the entire body. It helps in toning up the muscle tissues, alleviates stiffness of joints, promotes better blood circulation and stimulates the nervous system.

### FOOT MASSAGE

The masseur uses his feet to massage the body and this therapy is excellent for general fitness also. This massage is for conditions of obesity or inflammation of muscles resulting from a fall etc., where extra pressure has to be applied.

### NSYAM

This process of treatment is done via the nasal canal. Medicated oils of certain herbs are dipped into the nose to expel all the doshas which cause head-related problems. Sometimes, mere inhalation can work wonders. It is ideal for sinusitis, problems concerned with dental care, ear, nose and eye ailments, facial paralysis and migraine.

### TAKRADHARA

The procedure is the same as that of Shirodhara. In this treatment medicated buttermilk is poured on the forehead continuously. It cools the system and is good for eye-ear-nose related complaints.

### KULATHA SWEDHAM

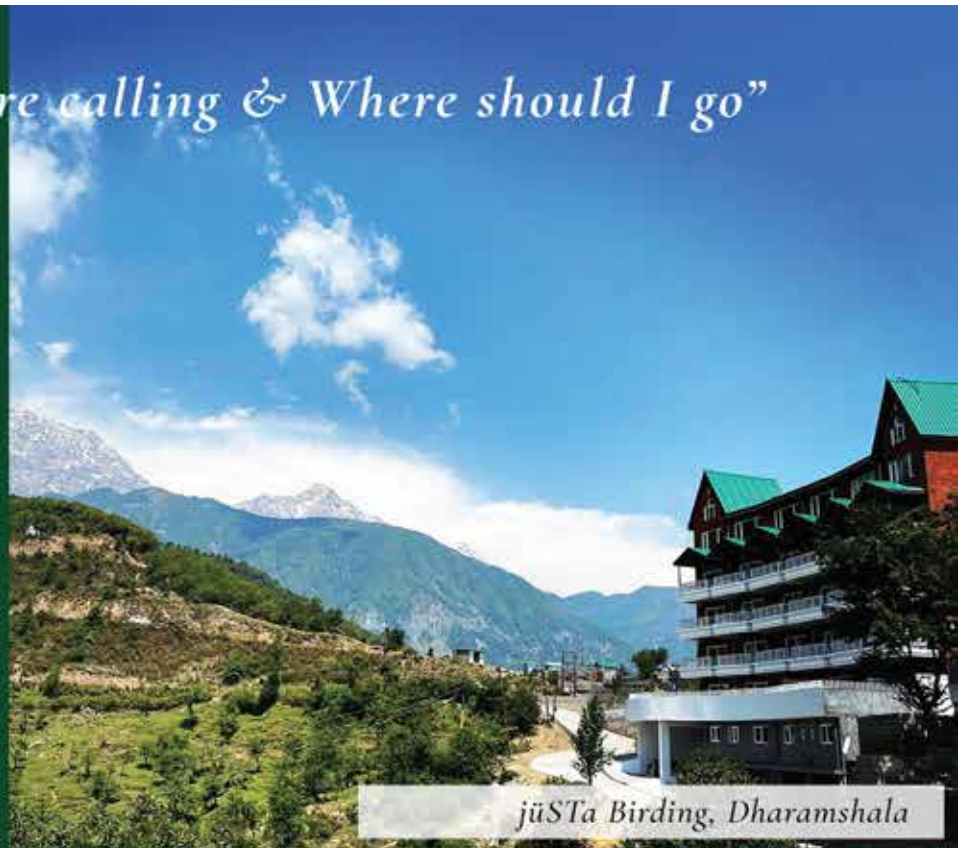
Small bags containing various herbal powders are heated to a constant temperature in a dry pan. These bags are then rubbed longer on the affected parts of the body than the rest of the body, though the whole body is massaged as well.



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# Indian Hospitality Industry

## Floating strong on Domestic Tourism & MICE traffic

In the new world – the post pandemic era wherein we all live today, we are witnessing an evolved traveller, who looking for a meaningful experience. The dynamics and ethos of travel has somewhat changed and the hospitality industry has and continues to observe this progression first hand. From adopting masks and sanitisers and making it a part of their everyday operation to staycation, niche weddings, preference for in-room dining and dependency on the domestic travellers as against an inbound traveller from before, the hotels industry in India has come a long way in the last couple of years.

In our endeavour to understand their operational and business preferences better, BOTT reached out to a wide spectrum of hospitality professionals – small, medium and big and asked their opinion on – the shift in their dependency on domestic market from inbound market, their views on the revival of inbound tourism – back to the 2019 figures and the resurgence of MICE travel. Here's a look at what these veterans had to say –

**Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray**

### 'India will continue to grow on the domestic leisure business through 2023'

**-Mr. Abinash Manghani**  
CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels

There has been a definite shift in tourism from Inbound to domestic. We've all witnessed India Tourism survive the pandemic on Domestic Leisure business. We expect this to continue through 2023. The two-way revelation where people living within the country discovered the potential of India's travel offerings and the tourism industry realized the modern domestic travellers' appetite for experiential luxuries has been a game-changer. Earlier domestic was merely 20-30% and post pandemic it is 100% as inbound has not started. Most preferred are hill destinations.

Inbound travel has started showing signs of recovery. However, these businesses are booked for the future. For this financial year, we are expecting a conservative 10% of Inbound business at Inbound specific locations.

As per the current scenario, we should reach 50%-60% of 2019 levels by the winter season of 2023.

MICE has started recovering through this year mainly driven by Indian businesses. MNCs have yet to open up travel and physical meetings. In India, the MSME sector has created a support base for corporate business in hotels.



As we see it, India will continue to grow on the domestic leisure business through 2023 due to disturbances in the global scenario. MSME and large Indian corporates will continue to drive corporate business and thereby there will be an uptick in the ADR to a level of 5-10%.

### 'India's growth trajectory looks promising and hospitality and MICE will reap its benefits'

**-Mr. Shrikant Wakharkar**  
General Manager, Hyatt Regency Delhi  
Area Vice President – Hyatt Hotels (North)

With the ebbing away of the pandemic and lifting up of the travel restrictions, there has been a boom in the leisure and domestic tourism. There was an unfelt demand that we witnessed during these periods. However, after the pandemic more or less ended in Jan-Feb this year, we continued to see massive green shoots in domestic tourism, especially leisure tourism. Destinations such as Jaipur, Goa etc., saw an upward surge in their room rates as well as occupancy rates.

This served as a huge incentive for the entire ecosystem and encouraged everyone to believe that we do not have to rely only on in-bound traffic. In terms of our transient business, the inbound traffic is about to commence. Whatever inbound traffic we are getting till now has been largely domestic and from Southeast Asia and Middle Eastern markets. It is at a very minimalist level at the moment, however, by the first quarter



of 2023, we are expecting a surge in the inbound leisure traffic. We will also be looking into penetrating the American and European markets in this period.

Our inbound tourism has begun reviving from this month, but it is only by September 2023 that we will have the right amount of influx of inbound tourism. We have already started getting businesses but there will be a major jump in inbound tourism related statistics by the beginning of the fourth quarter in the upcoming year.

There has been a fair amount of demand in MICE business, especially this year, owing to the end of the pandemic in India in the early months. At the time, many countries were still facing pandemic-related problems like lockdowns, travel restrictions, lesser air connectivity and visa restrictions. Because of this reason, organisations and individuals started looking inwards. During this period, many corporates, which usually hold conventions, annual summits, and conferences overseas, chose hotels in India to host their events. This turned out to be very advantageous for the domestic MICE segment.

If you look at convention-related tourism, we may have to wait till 2024 to get back to pre-pandemic levels because these events usually have long planning period of 18-24 months. The international convention space will definitely pick up now. Meanwhile, the weddings sector continues to thrive.

India's growth trajectory looks very promising. Purely on account of that, hospitality and MICE sector will be the first to reap its benefits. We really need to be ready for the big things coming ahead.

### 'Domestic MICE business is healthy and buoyant but Inbound MICE will take time'

**-Mr. Kush Kapoor**

CEO, Roseate Hotels and Resorts

There is no denying the major shift that has happened from inbound to domestic. Due to the immense domestic tourism as well as business and manufacturing hub growing on a month-on-month basis, the Hospitality Industry in India is now thriving with greater contributions from the domestic business activity and domestic travellers. This will continue for a long time, looking at the European economy and how many Asian countries as well are facing economic headwinds. Currently, 15-18 % of our business still comes from Inbound traffic.

Going forward, revival of Inbound Tourism will depend upon many factors, such as, e-visa (our biggest markets, i.e. the UK & Canada, are unable to travel due to Visa restrictions), current war scenario in Europe and declining economies of Europe and many Asian countries. We are hopeful that these challenges will get resolved in the near future and expect to go back to the 2019 figures in another year.

Currently, domestic MICE business is healthy and buoyant. However, Inbound MICE will take time due to visa restrictions as well as the double cost of airfares. These two challenges have also created a positive impact by ensuring that all MICE events are happening within India, thereby leading to and fuelling the growth of domestic hotel business.

We must ensure that domestic tourism keeps moving up by ensuring more airports are commissioned soon, highway infrastructure gets on a speedy path, safety and security of travellers is always given the topmost priority and hotel sector is given an Industry status. The quality of



manpower is a major concern where a complete revamp of the decades-old curriculum is the need of the hour. We need the Ministry of Tourism to have few hoteliers who can, with their expertise, guide the Ministry on the changes required from time to time to ensure that India becomes the Destination of the World.

### 'Pandemic has taught us the importance of domestic segment'

**-Mr. Greesh Bindra**

Vice President Operations

The Suryaa New Delhi

Hospitality industry, at one point in time, was heavily dependent on inbound traffic, but not anymore. Dynamics have changed phenomenally. Domestic segment probably did not catch our attention pre-Covid to that extent. However, pandemic has taught us the importance of domestic segment.

Currently, out of our total business, the overall inbound leisure traffic is just about 25% of the pre-Covid level between April to October 2022. We have always been a leisure friendly hotel doing about 40-45% of the business from Inbound until 2019 (pre-Covid). Currently the segment is performing just about 10% of the total business.

While inbound traffic is increasing, we do not really see much change in this particular segment. Downside in numbers due to visa issues and high air fares continuing Covid-19 overhang. It appears now that Inbound tourism is expected to be back to pre-Covid levels by the last quarter of 2024.

Meanwhile, the recovery of businesses has already started, and the MICE aspect of the business is recovering and doing well. It is faster than leisure travel. Since there was a lull in the MICE movement for the last two years due to Covid-19, most of the corporates with their travel budgets yet to be utilised are looking forward to connecting with their people and their industry. Hence, the demand has shot up rapidly.



### 'There is increase in arrivals from family groups, senior citizens and women professionals'

**-Mr. S.P. Jain**

CMD, Pride Hotels Ltd.

Every sector including travel and hospitality has been hit badly due to the pandemic. However, the government has recently announced a target of 80 new airports by 2025 which in turn will be a major boost to the tourism and hospitality sector as the demand for rooms will increase manifold. The number of new hotel signings too is seeing a significant increase as compared to the previous years. The growth in room supply is





likely to increase to meet the growing demand of the inflow of tourists, primarily in tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

Subsequent to the challenges due to the pandemic in the past two years we, at all our hotels, are now witnessing exponential growth. We have performed much better in 2021-2022 in comparison to 2020-2021. We have almost doubled our turnover. The ADR and occupancy have gone up from 43% to 65% for the current year 2022-2023.

I think it is safe to say that the worst is over. The inbound travel segment is staging a significant revival post-pandemic. While we will have 50 properties by the end of current year, we plan to expand our footprints nationally by doubling our portfolio to 100 hotels by 2030. We are presently treading cautiously on capital expenditure. However, once the market reaches the pre-pandemic level, we will return to expansion mode for our flagship properties.

We foresee a complete MICE recovery happening soon. Pride Hotels Ltd. has a presence in around 45 great locations with 4,400+ rooms, 89+ restaurants, 116+ banquets, and conference halls. We recently launched India Dekho with Pride" an initiative in the direction of promoting India as a safe and viable destination for tourism and MICE. We have seen an uptick in tourism arrivals from family groups, senior citizens, and women professionals.

We at Pride Group of Hotels have taken new initiatives to ensure there's a MICE momentum. Our newly launched locations have ample lawn spaces. The Pride Hotel, Bhopal is well equipped to handle a huge gathering of 10K people. Newly relaunched Pride Amber Vilas Resort and Convention Centre, Jaipur has a capacity to serve more than 25k people at a time with multiple banquets and lawn options. Guests can enjoy a magnificent culinary journey that spans diverse gastronomic experiences and sumptuous cuisines. The idea of an outdoor meeting/gathering is not only the venue but a memorable experience too.

### **'In future, there will be an increased desire to connect authentically with local communities'**

**-Joyjit Chakravorty**

General Manager  
Hilton Garden Inn Saket  
New Delhi



It is a fact that with many not having spent time with family and friends since the onset of the pandemic, reuniting with loved ones, revenge tourism, staycation, daycation and short holiday breaks were the new normal which led to a surge in domestic travel especially the leisure quick easy drive down getaway destinations. This also has been a paradigm shift in the concept of domestic tourism over time with the growing middle-class and its disposable incomes. The pandemic shifted many paradigms, but domestic tourism saw a faster recovery compared to international tourism in the country.

The other factors fuelling the same are the Govt. initiatives, such as, launching of integrated theme-based tourist circuits, enriching the religious tourism experiences, focusing on sustainable and responsible tourism and more.

My favourite point however is related to emotional well-being and I strongly believe that travel helps the mental and emotional well-being more than other forms of self-care. Hence, I expect to see a significant increase in young Indian travellers looking to separate work from

vacation time and in the year to come, there will be an increased desire to connect authentically with local communities, our roots and as travellers they will seek to be more mindful about every holiday they plan.

What gained momentum due to closed international travels has become a way Indians travel now. Domestic travel continues to grow, fuelled by the popularity of sustainable travel as people look to reduce their carbon footprint by visiting closer-to-home destinations. This is possibly the biggest flux that the travel industry has seen since the OTA revolution hit. Today's trends are here to stay for a long time and reshape India's travel industry.

Hilton Garden Inn Saket is located in one of the most prominent locations of south Delhi with minutes away from UNESCO World Heritage site, corporate hubs like the Qutub Institutional area, Okhla Industrial area. Hence, we do get a fair 15-18% of inbound traffic coming for medical tourism, shopping and making us the centre spot to stay for their leisure travel plans.

With a 7% contribution to the GDP, over 40 million jobs towards employment and another contributor for foreign exchange earnings (Stats from 2019), the case is ripe to seek the way forward for inbound. In my opinion we surely need to work towards revival of the inbound tourism by bringing in more interventions on visa reforms, rationalize GST for all participants of tourism, have traveller friendly immigration facilities and more such initiatives.

With the fear of the world may be edging toward a global recession in 2023, the ongoing Ukraine crisis, global inflations and disruption in the worldwide supply management, I don't see our inbound traffic coming back before Q3 of 2024

Going forward, there is the need for more image building and reputation management – to let the world know that our destinations are safe, secure with hygiene & that SOPs are in place coupled with seamless connectivity and the highest vaccinations done. The Ministry of Tourism along with the stakeholders, national and international media to lead the way. Social media vehicles will catalyse the efforts. Bloggers, Influencers and foreign media to be invited on a fully hosted FAM by the Government of India so that their articles & stories catch the interest of the discerning traveller.

### **'We are optimistic but cautious and are primarily relying on domestic travel'**

**-Mr. Amit Rana**

General Manager, Holiday Inn Aerocity, Delhi

There has certainly been an uptick in overall business sentiment. However, as far as the inbound travel is concerned, we are still in the recovery phase which is expected to last longer than desired. The business environment is still under the impact of uncertainty. Frequently changing guidelines and travel advisories, visa restrictions, airline and travel protocols are contributing factors aside from these the ongoing challenges in Europe and certain Asian countries have impacted the global business and leisure travel. Currently, we are optimistic but cautious and are primarily relying on domestic travel which is looking promising as people are taking frequent shorter breaks and daycations.

The recovery of inbound tourism has certainly gathered pace, however, to





forecast if we will be able to measure 2019 figures with accuracy is tough. Currently, we are not merely combating post-pandemic challenges but multi-layered global issues including global economic and geopolitical challenges, ongoing inflation, high energy prices, infrastructure limitations, airport congestions, etc. which are likely to impact travel across the globe. Nevertheless, being cautiously optimistic we hope to see substantial recovery by Q4 2023.

Meanwhile, we have seen a surge in the MICE business and have already experienced a spike in the domestic convention segment. We are looking forward to 2023 as India will play host to large-scale international conventions and major events including the G20 Summit. Another segment, where we are seeing a lot of business and activity is the wedding market.

At the moment, we are extremely happy to be back at our workplace and looking forward to our onward journey with a lot of optimism. The pandemic allowed us to rethink and reset our personal and professional priorities. Our most recent re-launch of our Italian restaurant L Osteria Bella has received an overwhelming response and is just a fine example that a good product and excellent service are the foundation of success in hospitality.

### 'Recovery is not going to be back before October 2023'

**-Sanjeev Bhatia**

General Manager

The Metropolitan Hotel and Spa

It is true that inbound business was the main source of business for big hotels but post pandemic due to lower rates star hotels were able to capture the domestic business. It was domestic tourist/corporate which saved us in last one year due to heavy demands from domestic clients.

As for our hotel, in October this year, we closed around 27% share from the Inbound market.

However, going forward, revival will be slow due to many reasons and the most important is the facility of e-visa. People from around the world are interested to visit India but due to non-availability of e-visa facility they change their decision and choose other destinations. UK, the major source market for India still does not have e-visa facility for India and similarly Malaysia, few Middle East countries, Canada, etc. are still waiting for the restart of e-visa facility for visiting India. The early we will start the early we can increase Inbound Tourism. To reach to 2019 figures, I think it will take another six months.

Post pandemic MICE business has still not restarted and whatever MICE business is still available is for resort hotels and not for business Hotels. I think recovery is not going to be back before October 2023.

### 'MICE business now in 2022 continues as it was pre-pandemic'

**-Noshir A Marfatia**

Senior Vice President - Sales & Marketing

The Fern Hotels & Resorts Concept Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.

After a total freeze in inbound traffic over the past 2 years, it is heartening to see some movements here. Inbound enquiries have started coming in and some groups and series also booked. However,

it will still be another year or so till the full Inbound impact will return to pre-pandemic levels. In the interim, our local Indian domestic traveller rediscovered India, and all resorts and leisure destinations have been filled with local leisure guests all through the year.

If the current pace of enquiries keeps to its upward trajectory, we should be back to 2019 levels by next winter, 2023.

However, MICE business now in 2022 continues as it was pre-pandemic, we have not witnessed

any sharp fall or increase. All trends are looking towards a full recovery and a subsequent boom for the Industry, over the next few years.

### 'We should expect a full recovery of the MICE segment latest by mid-2023'

**Mr. Ashutosh Vaidya**

GM – Sales, Lords Hotels and Resorts

After Pandemic, the trends in the hospitality industry changed, as the international markets were closed people started looking and exploring the domestic markets by which the dependency on inbound markets went down drastically.

With the decline of the pandemic cases and stable governance the travel industry is moving full steam ahead towards the road to recovery. Most businesses seem to have surpassed the 2019 figures. The hospitality industry, which was the most affected has rolled out red carpets to their patrons and are offering deals that cannot be missed out on, be it on food and beverages as well as on its recreational and wellness facilities.

During the pandemic, we have seen many MICE business and conferences closing completely and lots of conferences were done virtually. But, in 2022 we have seen many residential conferences taking place and the leisure groups have started travel activities. These series of activities have been initiated by the travel companies, including wedding functions. Looking at the present MICE scenario we should expect a full recovery of the MICE segment latest by mid-2023. Lords Hotels and Resorts have special offers for the corporate World to conduct business in its well-furnished meeting rooms and conference venues, which are spruced with the best facilities and amenities for the smooth running of the business.

After the pandemic, the virtual world, meaning technology, has taken over the manual interference. A traveller can book a hotel while walking on the road through his mobile. Technology has changed the dynamics of hospitality industry. Today to compete with the OTA platforms, travel trade segments have started their own platforms through which a traveller can book the required room at the hotel. By this the travel agents will be able to retain their clients and will be able to sustain in this technologically savvy world.





Also, the corporate sectors are now turning more towards the live hotel inventory platform on which the employee can book the hotel directly. The future will be technology driven and Lords Hotels and Resorts is all-ready and geared up to offer the best in the world of hospitality with new destinations – Basar, Sikkim, Sumerpur, Siliguri, Rajkot, Gangtok, Kathmandu, Mandi Himachal Pradesh, Dehradun, Jaganathpuri, Vrindavan, Muduba Shimoga, and Shikrapur Pune, amongst many.

### 'We are expecting the inbound demand to grow substantially next year'

**-Mr. Sarbendra Sarkar**

Founder & MD

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

The domestic market has become far more important for the hospitality sector in the country. As COVID-19 restrictions have eased in the past, domestic travel has grown manifolds. Be it weekend demand or the holiday season rush, hotels in the country are recording an overwhelming growth from the domestic markets.

At present, inbound traffic is a small number – only about 8-15 per cent on average depending on the location of our property. However, we are expecting the inbound demand to grow substantially in the inbound season of next year. As I mentioned earlier, the inbound market will pick up in 2023. The recovery, going forward, is going to be slow but gradual. I am hoping the numbers will be back to the pre covid level in 2024.

The MICE market has recovered strongly with corporate incentives and meetings back on track. We as a hospitality chain are already witnessing demand similar to pre-pandemic days. The domestic corporate market is buoyant and verticals like IT, pharmaceutical, and FMCG are on a roll and pushing the demand for MICE in the country.

We as a group are very optimistic about our future growth. In fact, we are working strongly towards having 100 hotels under our portfolio in the next five years. We are one of the fastest-growing hotel chains in the country and will expand our presence across India in the years to follow.



### 'Domestic travel helped Indian hotel companies stay afloat during pandemic'

**-Mr. Rohit Katyal**

National Sales & Marketing Head

Justa Hotels & Resorts

Justa Hotels & Resorts is a small luxury hotel company and pre-pandemic we were more of corporate structure company as compared to leisure segment dependant excluding couple of resorts in Rajasthan. Pre pandemic reliance on in-bound business used to be 60%. As the pandemic had shaken entire world similarly impact on Indian hospitality



industry was unbearable. Fortunately, domestic travel had helped Indian hotel companies during pandemic to stay afloat.

Professionally we felt signs of disruption in early January 2020 and had started re-aligning our model and from corporate cities-based hotel company to Resort hotel company. Predominantly we are still domestic leisure and corporate business dependant company. Through there are some numbers started from In-bound market but are limited at this point.

We are confident that the urge to travel and see world cannot come to standstill forever. Thus, revival is round the corner and we are hopeful October 2023 onwards numbers should get robust.

We have witnessed surge in MICE business in this quarter and are confident next quarter too would be better.

Going forward, we are now more confident and eager to grow in mid-scale luxury hotels and resorts space and are eyeing to cross 30 plus hotels mark by end of 2023. Next quarter is going to be exciting for us as we may announce launch of 2-3 new projects.

### 'After two years of downfall, the hotel industry is all set to reboot'

**-Mr. Ajay Kanojia**

General Manager Sayaji Pune

In today's scenario we find inbound and outbound traffic is equally important. As in the hotel industry, filling rooms is essential. But the inbound travel has increased post-pandemic. As per the past still, the market is dependent but the land movement has increased to a much more extent.

Inbound travel has already been at an all-time high. People are travelling a lot for leisure and MICE. The first half of the year has seen a great number of travellers and conferences

happening, which has been stopped for two years. The hotel will do better than in 2019 in figures, as the first half year has been achieving the two-quarter budget.

After two years of downfall due to Covid related restrictions, the hotel industry is all set to reboot, recovering at 70-80 per cent of pre-Covid levels. This recovery is being pushed by leisure bookings and also MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) events. Today, we are at about 75-80 per cent of the pre-Covid levels. The MICE has come up with very good figures. Lunches and conferences, and dealer meets have increased to many numbers. The opening for Half a year of mice has seen good numbers and corporate movements.

Over the last two years, the hotel industry has transformed in line with the changing consumer behaviour, newer technologies, and premium demands. The industry recorded its lowest performance ever during the last two years. While many of these changes were more pandemic-focused, a lot of them changed the way this industry used to work and will work, going forward. Hotels are short-staffed even today and have to manage with limited resources. Cleanliness and hygiene, which are at the core of any hospitality business operations, have become even more stringent and the industry's best practices took on a whole new level. We will become more efficient with the way we are doing our business.



## 'In future, hospitality sector will contribute 6-8 per cent to GDP'

Mr. Mehul Sharma  
Founder & CEO, Signum Hotels & Resorts

Hospitality industry continues to be dependent on inbound travel hence ARR/ REV PAR is stressed but occupancies are moving up gradually. Wedding business has been replaced with conventions, which are smaller in scale but results in high yield. Currently, a mere 2 to 3% of our traffic is still driven by inbound, that too FIT (Frequent Individual Traveller). For complete revival to happen and to go back to the figures of 2019, it will take another 2 years minimum, subject to minimal effect of recession and if war is not further stretched. MICE business is picking up but at a slower rate than expected. At Signum Hotels, we are expecting good earning per share in times to come, followed by good expansion both in India and abroad. Hospitality sector will make significant contribution of 6-8 per cent to GDP in the next 2 years.



## 'The pandemic has driven a paradigm shift towards Health Tourism'

-Mr. Jagdeep Nambiar  
GM Operations  
Fazlani Natures Nest

I believe that post the pandemic it's the domestic tourism that has brought in a much-needed respite to the industry which suffered terribly during the pandemic. Since international borders were closed for many months and people wanted to travel desperately, that did increase the demand in the domestic travel, more so in the niche segment.

This festive season even though with the inbound traffic yet to gain momentum, market outlook for the industry looks extremely positive thanks to the support received from the domestic travellers. With the current trends and efforts being put in by the various stakeholders, I am hopeful that the inbound piece of the pie will make a full recovery around the same time next year for sure. In fact, the numbers will surpass the 2019 figures. Though key factor influencing the same might be air ticket prices, ease of getting Visa's and impact of much-feared recession.

Once the pandemic cloud cleared it has been the MICE that has helped the industry regain its foothold, especially the wedding segment. MICE has rallied the industry's recovery and is back to 80-85% of its pre covid share of business.

The pandemic has driven a paradigm shift towards Health Tourism, there



is a tremendous focus on boosting ones physical and mental wellbeing. The fact that people with co-morbidities, such as high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes are at a higher risk has drawn significant attention to wellness and this presents a great opportunity for key players in the wellness travel business to provide value to consumers and revive the industry.

## 'The year 2022 has seen a sudden surge in MICE business'

-Ms. Bhavna Singh  
Director of Sales at Courtyard by Marriott Mahabaleshwar

There has been a massive shift in the way the industry functioned post-pandemic with changing travel trends. The dependability switched from inbound to domestic in no time across the region due to travel limitations. Mahabaleshwar has not been popular amongst inbound markets hence the traffic is close to zero. The domestic travel industry is recovering fast, partially compensating for losses incurred because of the pandemic. The industry is also benefiting from new trends borne of the pandemic such as micro-holidays and workcations. We believe that Inbound tourism will recover by the end of next year. The year 2022 has seen a sudden surge in MICE business whereas 2019 figures have been crossed. We have witnessed large conventions contributing to these overall numbers.



## 'We have witnessed major MICE movement post covid relaxation'

-Mr. Amitabh Sharma  
General Manager, Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur

In Kolhapur because of our presence on the Mumbai - Bangalore Expressway and Goa being nearby, along with having its own historical and religious significance, we witness the maximum movement of Inbound traffic. Which was there pre pandemic and still the movement is there post pandemic. We have almost 75% to 80% business drive by Inbound traffic. However, honestly speaking, we have not only revived the inbound tourism since the relaxation from the Governments and Authorities for Covid 19, we have experienced surplus tourist traffic on month-on-month financials compared to 2019 in terms of occupancy and revenue. Being the best product in town that offers outstanding rooms and venues both, we have witnessed major MICE movement post covid relaxation. Also, we have received and confirmed requirements for 2023 and 2024 also.





# Premium Road Trip Excursions

## hit an all-time high with Covid ebbing away

The COVID-19 pandemic devastated economies globally and disrupted life in unimaginable ways. The world today may not be the same; however, businesses have revived, and people have started stepping out of their comfort zones to adapt to the 'new normal'. I am delighted that Road Trips were one of the first segments to bounce back as the lockdown eased. Tourism recovery typically began locally, closer to home – a weekend getaway or domestic travel before charting a robust demand for international travel.

We noticed recovery with demand for drive-to-destinations, more so due to the uncertainty travellers experienced with air travel. Tourists felt more confident and in control while taking off in a car and driving for a holiday. Today's travel norm is seeing a massive shift to vacation rentals over hotels and driving rather than flying along with a steep rise in the use of travel insurance and personal travel advisors. Even when borders were closed, domestic road tourism grew with sanitised cars, rooms and contactless check-ins, making it a favourable option for travellers who wanted to be on the move, despite the limitations that existed.

Moreover, as people felt the fragility of existence, road trips became a choice for reasons more than just safety. When the inquisitive traveller explores places on the road, the world opens for him or her. On the road, travellers understand cultural exchange and solidarity for what they stand for.

Travellers re-examine their association with their past and future. The process intensifies and brings outstanding universal values to the fore through interactions with locals.

Post-pandemic, there is a growing demand for quick outings and family trips led to a surge in vacationers taking to homestays and unique experiences. The fascination for offbeat experiences grew stronger after people survived the coronavirus outbreak. Road trips allow travellers to explore destinations with flexibility and comfort decided by their choices. In the past two years, road travel has seen remarkable growth within the Tourism Industry.

We have tremendous experience in cross-border trips, and this segment has also emerged more robust post-pandemic. From a traveller's perspective, road trips between countries bring out the interconnections between people and an opportunity to enjoy a host of experiences. Travellers now prefer experiential and participatory activities that provide an escape from the regular and mundane.

Expectations about a destination influence the tourist's experience during varied travel stages. In post-COVID normalcy, people are adjusting their priorities and social interests. Therefore, it becomes crucial for us to identify tourists' expectations before customising proposed travel itineraries. Tourists' preferences, attitudes and expectations largely dominate the excursion and travel mode choice. The growing demand for self-drive journeys is here to stay, and we are delighted that we have pioneered convoy-style self-driven trips across the world. The ever-increasing acceptance validates our vision.

The role of the travel advisor has evolved to more than a mere transactional agent. Travellers now need more assistance, not less, especially since the preference is to self-drive. It is now an ongoing



relationship to facilitate their short-term and long-term travel goals. Travellers are keen to invest in luxurious niche packages offering a carefree travel experience with accommodation, meals and unforeseen complications of the road journey taken care of. I am delighted to say that with my expert team, Adventures Overland has pioneered cross-border and fly-and-drive excursions. We have successfully organised more than 100 expeditions in 80 countries with over 1000 guests and four seasons of Road to London, a 16,000 km cross-continent expedition covering 18 countries in 51 days. In 2022, we had to alter the route for our Road to London via Iran and Turkey as the earlier trails were still not open for tourism.

All around us, there are encouraging signs of growth in tourism. A 2021 McKinsey survey revealed travelling to be the second-most-desired activity among respondents after dining out. Global tourism experienced a 4% upturn in 2021, compared to 2020 (415 million versus 400 million) as per UNWTO reports. The first 2022 issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer indicated that rising rates of vaccination, combined with easing of travel restrictions due to increased cross-border coordination and protocols, have all helped release pent-up demand.

The emergence of new trends has generated the need for businesses in the travel industry to revolutionise their operations. Travel companies need to focus on revisiting traditional approaches and learn from traveller expectations, which are the basis of the end-to-end journey, from booking to the travel experience and back home.

**-This guest write-up has been penned by Tushar Agarwal, Co-Founder, Adventures Overland**



# *Events* and *More*



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# Playing Golf, India style

**“To find a man's true character, play golf with him...” - P.G. Wodehouse**

## Priyanka Saxena Ray

**Y**es, it is indeed widely believed that to know about a man's true character, play golf with him. There was a time when Golf was considered to be the sport of the rich, an indulgence by the affluent, but not anymore, and maybe that is the reason for the fast mushrooming golfing options in India. Here's a look at some of them.

### DELHI NCR

#### Delhi Golf Course

Founded in 1930's as a municipal golf course, the Delhi Golf Course became member's golf club by 1950's and was redesigned by Peter Thomson in 1976 / 77. Delhi Golf Course has 27 holes – the 18 holes championship holes are known as Lodhi Course and the shorter 9 holes are known as Peacock Course. The Delhi Golf Course has played host to many national and international professional and amateur golf tournaments. It has hosted the maximum Indian Opens. Some of the major events hosted at Delhi Golf Course includes Indian Open, EMMAR MGF, SAIL Open, BILT, Women's Indian Open, All India and many more. Delhi Golf club measures 6600 yards from Men's regular tee and 5900 yards from Ladies tee, the course plays very long and tough from the championship tee 7100yds from Men's tee and 6290 yards from ladies championship tee.

#### Jaypee Greens Golf Club, Noida

The Greg Norman designed Jaypee Greens Golf Club is a lengthy 18 - holes course situated in Greater Noida. At 7,343 yards from the championship tee, it is definitely the longest course in the country and one of the longest in Asia. Nine huge lakes and five small ponds come into play on almost every hole, and the uniquely shaped bunkers are strewn over the course. There are 88 bunkers in all.



#### The Classic Golf Course, Gurgaon

The Classic Golf Course is the first signature designer course in India by Jack Nicklaus. The resort has been built on a 3000-acre expanse, at the foothills of the picturesque Aravalli hills. The golf course is located on the outskirts of Delhi, off the Delhi-Jaipur highway and is about 50 minutes drive from Delhi. The Classic Golf Course is a magnificent facility with two courses – an 18-hole Championship Course, and a 9-hole Canyon Course. The championship course at the Classic plays to 7114 yards from the back tees. The longest hole is the par-5 18th hole that is 580 yards long. The shortest is the par-3 fifth at 170 yards.

### JAMMU AND KASHMIR

#### Royal Springs Golf Course, Srinagar

Royal Springs is an 18-hole championship golf course with panoramic views of Dal Lake and the fir-covered peaks of the Zabarwan Hills—the view of the lake from the tee box of the fifth hole will put any golfer's attention to the test. Those looking for a mid-game break will appreciate the tea shelters conveniently located along the course's sidelines. And if you want to challenge yourself further, head to the Pahalgam Golf Club, which is just two hours away, for an invigorating game in the shadows of the Himalayas.





## UTTAR PRADESH

### Agra Golf Club

The Agra Golf Club is a nine-hole course with some of the holes providing a spectacular view of the Taj Mahal. The tall trees on all the sides offer just a glimpse of the Taj dome from the club house. The putting greens and the fairways are quite rudimentary, but as compensation, you have the magnificent Taj Mahal as a backdrop.

### Lucknow Golf Course

Established in 1950, the Lucknow Golf Club was formerly known as La Martinier Golf Club. Lucknow Golf Club is a part of living colonial history. Spread over 70 acres, it offers 18 holes, par 71 challenging golf course, measures 6391 yards. The course features lush green fairways, large old trees, and two water hazards. The best and the longest hole on the golf course in hole 07 which plays 584 yards from Men's tee. The club has a bar, dining hall, banquet hall, billiard table, and a card room.



## TAMIL NADU

### The Kodaikanal Golf Club

High up in the Palani Hills of Tamil Nadu, at 7,000ft above sea level, Kodaikanal is a town firmly entrenched in British Indian history—which explains the presence of its historic, 116-year-old golf course. Each hole at this 18-hole picturesque cliff top course has a unique character to test your skills (the strong breeze can turn a par-three hole from an easy nine iron to a hard four). It will also test your physical endurance, as you'll have to walk up steep slopes to reach the different holes spread throughout the course.



## UTTARAKHAND

### Ananda in the Himalayas

This wellness retreat's small but stunning six-hole golf course is nestled in the tranquil foothills of the Himalayas, just an hour's drive from both Rishikesh and Haridwar. The par-three course, laid out between forest land and open valley space, promises to be a challenge for even the most seasoned golfer. And with an attached world-class destination spa, you can end the weekend with a romantic massage.

## PUNJAB

### Panchkula Golf Course

This championship 18 holes, par 72 golf course and host of many professional golf tournament. PGC plays 6904 yards from championship tee and 6400 yards from men regular tee and Ladies play with 5864 yards. Panchkula Golf Club is nestled in the Shivalik foothills. The Course sits pretty along the Ghaggar River with a pious view to the Gurudwara Nada Sahib. Panchkula Golf Course has four very challenging 3 par holes which makes the course very challenging.

## MAHARASHTRA

### The Bombay Presidency Golf Club

It's hard to believe this green expanse exists within the cramped city limits

of Mumbai. The Bombay Presidency Golf Course at Chembur is an 18 holes par 70 course, even offering accommodation facilities for members and guests. The rooms overlook the golf course and the restaurants and bar at the club house make for a good weekend getaway, within the city.

## KARNATAKA

### Bangalore Golf Club

With a strong heritage — it was established in 1878 — the Bangalore Golf Club's 18 hole course squeezed into 60 acres doesn't try and make things easy for you. The course architects chose to save the trees located on the property, forcing you to take shots through dense foliage. And like all things British, they're a bit fussy about their dress code.

## GUJARAT

### Cambay Golf & Spa Resort

The Cambay Golf and Spa Resort (Executive Course and Driving Range) is located in Gandhinagar. It's a 9 hole, 1905 yards, Par 29 course. It has an excellent driving range and practice area which is used as a training facility by golfers. The course and range are part of Cambay resort and weekend golf with stay is a very popular option. The fairways & greens are well maintained.



# *Find tranquillity in the hills of* Himachal Pradesh



**Dr. Himanshu Talwar**

**I** still cherish the times spent during my childhood days in the capital city and many other towns of the state of Himachal Pradesh. It is difficult to describe the beauty of the state in words.

Situated in the Himalayan range, Himachal Pradesh is a Northern Indian state which is home to scenic mountain towns of Shimla, McLeodganj, Manali, Dalhousie etc. Breathtaking views of the mountains and valley, delectable food, and adventure sports make it the perfect destination for a vacation. The state has a rich sense of vintage British-era architecture along with Tibetan influence. It attracts tourists from around the globe every year all owing to the state's rich culture reflected in its art, architecture, cuisine, and festivals as well as the tranquil natural beauty of the hills.

Although it's tough to pick up certain spots and

say they are the top tourist-friendly places, every part of the state is just beautiful. However, as this is my first travelogue on the state, I have picked some must-visit destinations for the traveller.

**1. SHIMLA** – Previously the Summer capital of British India; Shimla has an old-world charm with beautiful colonial architecture. The infamous Mall Road and the Ridge are pedestrian-friendly lanes flocked with exquisite shops selling local handicrafts, shawls, woollens and jewellery etc., cafes and restaurants. The well-known Kalka-Shimla train route is listed in the UNESCO World Heritage site and offers a picturesque scene of the Himalayan landscape.

The highest point in Shimla is the Jakhu Temple in Jakhoo Hill set amidst a lush green backdrop of the Shivalik. It is an ancient place of worship dedicated to the Hindu god, Hanuman. Jakhu Temple has the world's largest statue of





Hanuman which you can catch a glimpse of from almost all parts of Shimla.

**2. KUFRI-** If you are in Shimla and planning to extend your stay then about 16 km from the capital is a place called Kufri. A popular tourist destination, known for its snow-laden peaks and chilly climate. It has a quite popular Skiing resort, and alongside are some famous places/ peaks such as Mahasu Peak, and Fagu Valley. In addition, Kufri Zoo is another main attraction which is in the same vicinity.

**3. MANALI-** Manali is another favourite hill station of tourists from the Northern plains and Peninsula. The hilly town experiences snowfall during the winters and it is quite popular for offering a wide variety of adventure sports such as paragliding, skiing, horse riding and even trekking. Solang Valley and Rohtang Pass in Manali are the go-to places for such activities. Besides, River Beas provides great rafting options in the nearby town of Kullu.

The Hidimba Temple is a famous pilgrimage site in Manali surrounded by snow-covered hills and beautiful cedar forests. It is a unique shrine built on a rock dedicated to Hidimba Devi.

**4. KASOL-** A village situated along the banks of the river Parvati; Kasol in Himachal is commonly known as the 'Amsterdam of India'. It is famous for its trekking trails which include treks to Kheerganga, Yanker Pass, Sar Pass, and Pin Parbati Pass. Kasol is also famously known for Israeli food, which was popularized by the Hebrew immigrants settled in the hill station.

**5. MCLEODGANJ** - Widely known for its culture, Mcleodganj is a beautiful mix of Tibetan and British influence. It is infamously known around the world for being home to the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama, hence it is also known as Little Lhasa.

Situated near Dharamshala, Mcleod Ganj is a beautiful town home to many religiously significant monasteries such as the Namgyal Monastery and Tsuglagkhang, where the spiritual leader Dalai Lama resides. Besides seeking spirituality, tourists can also enjoy visiting the Dal Lake and opt for the Triund trek.

**6. DALHOUSIE** - Another popular hill station in Himachal Pradesh; Dalhousie is surrounded by misty mountains and pine-clad valleys. It offers majestic views of the snow-capped peaks of the Dhauladhar ranges. Dalhousie has an old-world charm; the Scottish and Victorian-era architecture of churches symbolizes its colonial heritage.

**7. KASAU LI** - Kasauli is a cantonment town flocked with lavish Victorian buildings built in the British colonial era. It is popularly known for being the birthplace of the author, Ruskin Bond. Christ Church, Hanuman Temple (Manki Point) and Sunset Point are some popular tourist attractions in Kasauli.

Even after sharing seven major tourist spots, I feel that I have not even covered twenty-five per cent of the state. I wish to convey my gratitude to Himachal Tourism and the Government for not preserving the heritage but also for making known to the people that the state is "The Land of Gods". I shall surely be contributing more to this soon.





# Amazing Andaman

India's most remote state, the Andaman Islands, situated more than 1000 km off the east coast in the middle of the Bay of Bengal have everything that one could imagine for a perfect vacation. It doesn't matter if you are visiting here with your parents, friends, spouse or kids because there's something in store for everyone.

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**

For administrative purposes, the Andamans are grouped with the Nicobar Islands, 200 km further south, but these remain strictly off-limits to foreigners, as well as Indians with no direct business there. Approximately some 200 islands make up the Andaman group and 19 of them sum up the Nicobar. They are of various different sizes stretching over a range of 755 km. All but the most remotest of these islands are populated in parts by indigenous tribes whose numbers have been slashed by a huge number due to the nineteenth-century European settlement followed by rampant deforestation in more recent history.

Getting to the Andamans from the mainland is no longer a daunting task; with well-connected flights from Kolkata, Chennai, Vishakapatnam and Mumbai you could be at these dreamy islands in matter of a few hours.

Covered by dense deep green tropical forests, the archipelago supports a profusion of wildlife, including some extremely rare species of birds. But for the most, it's the beaches and the pristine reefs around the islands that attract them.

The colourful fish, the kaleidoscopic corals and the crystal-clear waters of the Andaman Sea are perfect for snorkelling and scuba diving. Then of course comes the rich heritage history of the British Raj. At every point throughout the Andamans the stories of the British Raj and the ruins from the Second World War are walk back into history.

The Islands are home to a variety of rare plant and animal species. Nicobari Macaque, Saltwater Crocodile, Imperial Pigeon, Narcondum Hornbil and a wide variety of orchids and plants are found in the Islands. The large biodiversity and the unique eco systems attract naturalists and scientists from across the world.

For the anthropologists the Islands are the only place in the world where Stone Age tribes could still be found in their native habitat.

The point of arrival for boats and planes is the small yet busy capital Port Blair located in South Andaman, which holds almost half the total population.



## SOUTH ANDAMAN

South Andaman is the most heavily populated area of the Andaman Islands – particularly around the capital, Port Blair, which holds almost half of the total population. Also, the point of arrival for boats and planes is the small yet busy capital.

## PORT BLAIR

With an odd combination of refreshingly scenic hills and characterless tin-roofed buildings tumbling towards the sea, Port Blair merits only for a short stay. There's little to see here – just the Cellular Jail and a few small museums. But it also is the point of arrival for the islands and the place with the most facilities so you might just find yourself staying here longer than you would ideally want to.

One of the main tourist attractions, the Cellular Jail talks a lot about the British era in India and its story. The Cellular Jail of Port Blair, Andaman, was constructed as a Panopticon. The panopticon is a circular prison built around a central surveillance station; in this case the prison of Port Blair was built in the form of a seven-spoke wheel. The spokes or prison cells were guarded from three watch towers built within the premises. The three-storied prison had about 696 cells each, separated from the other by brick walls and metal doors. The only outlet was a ventilator about 10 feet above the door. Each spoke and line of cells opened up to the back of the next spoke, disallowing any dialogue or contact between inmates.

Deportation to the Cellular Jail of Andaman, referred to in Hindi as the





Kala Pani ki Saza, was one of the most feared sentences in the times of struggle for Indian independence. Many of those sentenced to the Kala Pani died during their voyage to the island due to the inhuman conditions of transport. The plight of those who landed there was worse. Inmates were subjected to inhuman labour and impossible targets. A trip to the Cellular Jail of Andaman is a great reminder of the pains and struggles which were undertaken by freedom fighters in their endeavour to win back India's lost freedom.

The most famous inmate of the Cellular Jail included Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, better known as Veer Savarkar, a revolutionary. The Cellular Jail or Port Blair, Andaman is now a well-preserved museum and memorial to the inmates and freedom fighters of India. Four of the seven spokes or lines of prison cells have been destroyed. Former inmates and nationalists protested the destruction and raised a demand to preserve the evidences of the immense struggle and sacrifices of our freedom fighters. Visitors may now visit the three remaining rows of cells, the gallows, and the offices. Many photographs and items from colonial India are preserved there. A trip to the Cellular Jail may be saddening to many but it is on immense value and an educational experience for anyone interested in Indian history.

While most of the jail has been retained the way it is, a part of it has been converted to a hospital. It is an absolute marvel of a structure to be visited. Every portion of the jail has a detailed story about the events that took place pre-Independence. To explore the entirety of the jail it takes about 2-3 hours and after that if you can manage to make more time, make it a point to watch the sound and light show held in the evenings – it certainly does make the whole experience so much richer.

#### HAVELOCK ISLAND

Named after Brigadier General Henry Havelock of the Mutiny 1857 fame, this island is famous today for its beautiful Radha Nagar beach.

With a 30-40 minutes' drive from the jetty or the helipad, Radha Nagar beach isn't too far off to experience beautiful white sand and crystal-clear blue waters. As one of the most beautiful beaches in the country, it has a huge tourist turnout.

The island's current population consists of Bengali settlers. Many of these settlers have Bangladeshi origin as these people were given settlement by the Indian government in 1971 war between India and Pakistan.

It is one of the few places that the administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands union territory of India has permitted and encouraged development of tourism with a focus on promoting eco-tourism.

There are two ways to get to Havelock from Port Blair and they are both



very different experiences. You could take a chopper ride with flight duration of 20 minutes and get the feel of some breath-taking aerial views or you could opt for the longer 2-hour ferry ride experiencing the majestic Indian Ocean.

Havelock Island is home to some of the most beautiful virgin beaches in the country. If you want to scuba dive, snorkel or sea walk this is the best place to be. Most of the hotels have their own scuba diving professionals who can walk you through the experience but you can always opt for other operators who might just give you a better deal.

While there, make it a point to stay at the Sea Shell Resort. The luxurious wooden cottages in between tall coconut trees and lush green grass with the access to your very own private beach is certainly worth the experience.

#### Cellular Jail Highlights:

- The Cellular Jail Museum
- Veer Sawarkar Cell
- The Gallows
- The Rooftops
- The Sound & Light Show

#### Port Blair: The British "Safe-Haven"

In 1777, the British Lieutenant Archibald Blair chose the South Andaman harbour now known as Port Blair as the site for a penal colony, although it was not successfully established until 1858, when political activists who had fuelled the Mutiny in 1857 were made to clear the land and build their own prison. Out of 773 prisoners, 292 died, escaped or were hanged in the first two months. Many also lost their lives in attacks by the Andamanese tribes who objected to forest clearance, but by 1864 the number of convicts had grown to three thousand. The prison continued to confine political prisoners until 1945 and still stands as Port Blair's prime "tourist attraction".

Another place worth visiting is Chidya Tapu known for its amazing sunsets; this place can get quite picturesque during the evenings.



# *Al Habtoor City Collection, Dubai showcases its treasures to the travel trade*



## Shreya Shimpi

Known as The City of Dreams, Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection, which consists of three distinctive hotels, Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City, Habtoor Palace Dubai, LXR Hotels and Resorts and V Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton, recently hosted a Meet & Greet event for the members of the travel fraternity in Worli, Mumbai. Showcasing the destination in an immersive video, the collection of three luxurious hotels, perfectly located by the arterial Sheikh Zayed Road and on the backs of Dubai Water Canal, Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection is within the grasp conveniently via land through Sheikh Zayed Road, sea through the exclusive RTA water taxis and air with its own helipad.

**A**l Habtoor City's luxurious attractions were recently showcased to the members of travel trade in an event in Mumbai. The collection of three exquisite luxury hotels, Habtoor Palace Dubai, LXR Hotels and Resorts for a palatial retreat, V Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton for fun and nightlife and Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City for a family-friendly stay was described. It also highlighted with the world-class facilities which they have to offer, the phenomenal gastronomic experiences and the bespoke hospitality.

The event was focussed on showing the myriad and unforgettable experiences that the magnificent city of Al Habtoor has to offer. With the upcoming FIFA, guests can enjoy the World Cup Live along with enjoying the tantalizing flavours and scrumptious meals across the various restaurants in the city such as the Ribs and Brews. Guests can also enjoy personalised relaxing massages at some of the best spas that the city has to offer such as the Silk Spa and feel rejuvenated. This is the ultimate family destination as it has something in store for every age group. Located in the heart of Dubai and in proximity to the airport, this stunning city redefines luxury tourism.

The Winter Garden is a delight for children and will be open from November 1, 2022 to January 1, 2023. It receives a footfall of nearly 3000 to 4000 visitors daily and is a wonderful family-oriented event. There are plenty of food and beverage options to explore. There are also snow pits made especially for kids that they can enjoy. One of the biggest highlights of this garden is the Christmas tree lighting ceremony which takes place in the first week of December and is indeed a spectacle to behold.

The Habtoor Palace Dubai located on the banks of Dubai Water Canal has 234 lavishly appointed guest rooms including 52 opulent suites (a custom-made Bentley Suite and signature Sir Winston Churchill Suite), palatial butler service, seven well-defined restaurants and lounges and the exquisite Silk Spa. With dreamy décor French style symmetric marble gilded staircases, Versailles manicured gardens, which reminisces of a Maison de Maître, in true French neo-classical style, making it the perfect location for luxurious weddings and corporate events. The World Cut Steakhouse – Habtoor Palace Dubai offers an exceptional culinary experience of American steakhouse classics.

Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City offers guests a memorable stay and has 1,004 guestrooms including 142 spacious suites, Elixir Spa, six delicious cuisines to choose from and an activities-filled Kids' Club. Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City's guest rooms come with a majestic view of Burj Khalifa and Sheikh Zayed Road. It is one of the best hotels for families. 'The 44' Sports Pub at Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City has recently opened and has luxurious interiors, a barbeque and Shisha station and a beautiful terrace which offers picturesque views of the city.

V Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton, a lifestyle hotel has 356 guest rooms including 76 suites, check in on the 30th floor with enticing Dubai Canal views. The hotel's signature suites – Sky Villa and Penthouse promise to be the ultimate party destination, with their in-suite cocktail-making station and bar.

The Al Habtoor City Boulevard has Il Pastaio, an Italian restaurant and Gonpachi which is a Japanese restaurant which offers indulgent dining experiences. The Kids' Club is another major attraction for kids and is open daily from 8 am to 8 pm.

# The Red Sea Development Company showcases The Red Sea & AMAALA in India



There has been festivity in the air for a while, and as the year comes to an end, plans are already in the making for the celebrations next year. Well, there is no better time to see a city than that during the carnival time and if Bihar has been on your bucket-list for long, be assured that the city will give you plenty of 'celebratory' options to plan your holidays around it next year. So here's a detailed look at the festive side of the cultural melting pot of India...

## Shreya Shimpi

The event highlighted The Red Sea and AMAALA as the two new destinations which would redefine luxury tourism in the years to come. The presentation showed the various avenues which the Red Sea Development Company has to offer, as well as the geographical diversity of the region such as the deserts, volcanoes, canyons etc. that make it a year-round destination for tourists.

It also highlighted that India as an important market with regards to tourism and why Indians should choose it as a travel destination especially, given its rich culture, myriad offerings such as miles of sweeping deserts, marine life, indulgent culinary experiences, picturesque landscapes and most importantly, given the proximity of India to Saudi Arabia which is just a few hours away. In short, it ticks all the boxes of an exquisite luxury tourism destination. The Red Sea International Airport shall be open for domestic tourism from 2023. From 2024, it shall commence its international operations. It would be a renewable energy-supported airport which shall provide the guests with a seamless experience.

There are more than ninety pristine islands in the Red Sea out of which twenty islands will be developed. Nine islands have been designated as special conservation zones. All the islands which will be developed shall be powered by hundred per cent renewable energy. It aims at being a regenerative destination. It houses the largest nursery in the Middle East which is spread over two million square feet and would be having nearly twenty-five million plants. Another project that was discussed was the mangrove restoration. The Red Sea Development Company aims at making this a smart destination through various features such as wildlife population tracking, smart irrigation techniques, modular offsite construction, Wi-Fi connectivity and smart luggage

management. The Six Senses property will be opening in 2023 and shall offer unique experiences to guests. St. Regis and Ritz Carlton Reserve shall be opening in 2023. The destination boasts of some phenomenal beaches and islands, Shura Island being one of them. The Coral Bloom concept was launched for this unique naturally dolphin-shaped island.

For the retail sector too, a lot has been planned. There will be over forty boutiques, thirty luxury brands and a great number of food and beverage options. The other properties which are in the process of being developed are the Grand Hyatt, InterContinental, Fairmont Red Sea, Edition Hotel, Miraval Red Sea etc. There is something for each kind of traveller, be it adventure, diving or just marvelling at the beautiful landscapes. A tailor-made itinerary can be made as per the preferences of the customer. The event also showcased Amaala as a medical wellness destination which is expected to be ready by 2024. Amaala is a hidden gem and will be home to over twenty-five hotels with 3000 luxury keys. This destination is the perfect amalgamation of luxury, wellness, adventure, marine life, sea, sand and lifestyle. The Red Sea Marine Life Institute will be a dedicated research and education centre. The Yacht Club and Wellness Core are other attractions to look out for. The world's best medical and diagnostic facilities shall be available at Amaala and it shall be a unique experience which combines wellness and leisure.

The Red Sea Project will be one-of-its-kind for the diversity that it offers. Along with planning and developing some of the most state-of-the-art infrastructural facilities, it is also setting new standards in sustainable development by ensuring a zero-carbon footprint, zero waste to landfill and developing only 1% of the 28,000 sq. km area. Every effort is being made to save the natural beauty of the destination while curating world-class experiences. By 2030, they are expecting one million visitors with twenty-two islands being ready and developed along with six inland sites and eight thousand keys.



# The Second Edition of ProWine 2022 concludes successfully with Portugal ranking No. 2 !

ProWine Mumbai successfully concluded its second edition with appreciation from the Wine & Spirit Community in India. Over a thousand brands from across the world covering wines, spirits, craft beverages and allied segments from countries such as Italy, Armenia, Austria, Switzerland, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Mexico, Finland, Germany, and India among others participated in this event. ProWine 2022 received a phenomenal response from trade visitors across all sectors such as chefs, restaurateurs, wholesale importers etc. With the world ranking as No.2, Portugal, with 12 Portuguese Wineries, is indeed a Wine Tourism Destination. **H.E. Mr. Carlos Pereira Marques, Portugal Ambassador to India**, shares more.



**Shreya Shimpi**

## How important is India to you as a market?

India is a very important and a huge market. Indian culture is full of contrast and we have very diversified travellers coming to experience these niche sectors like wine tourism. We want more Indian tourists to come to Portugal since we have such a diverse collection of wines. Along with wine tourism, many activities have developed around it such as sports activities. There are also activities reflective of the culture and traditions of the country. We are very targeted towards sustainable tourism and eco-tourism. That is what wine tourism is about and is quite appealing to people nowadays.

## What is the objective of the participation at ProWine?

The objective is to create a larger awareness about Portugal as a tourism destination and in this case as a wine tourism destination. We would also like to promote our wines which are not so well known in India. The wines we offer have a very rich and diversified taste. We have 14 wine regions. We wish to create awareness in the Indian market regarding these wines.

## Wine tourism is still in a developing stage in India so what are your marketing strategies to promote it here?

We have several strategies online and offline. We have a very important site Portuguese 'wine tourism.com' which contains all the relevant information about wine tourism in Portugal. It is a very comprehensive site explaining what are the regions, what you can find in each region etc. so that is a very important tool. We have also recently developed a campaign 'Wine pairs with Portugal' and have been using it in India. Recently, we have also created an e-learning platform on Portugal wine tourism. We are developing several activities with tour operators and travel agents, presentations. We are also planning some FAM trips to Portugal which are very important and participating in events such as these exhibitions. We have twelve top producers in Portugal and some of them quite important because they cover several regions so they have vineyards in different regions of Portugal. So that's our strategy to create a bigger awareness about what Portugal has to offer.

## What is the current level of exports of Portuguese wines to India and how have they grown over the years?

Unfortunately, it is still very low because we still face a lot of barriers and the taxes are also very high. We hope that with the FDA agreements and



negotiations with India, which will hopefully be concluded by next year will help us get more and easier access to the Indian market which is going to be very important for us.

## How was tourism affected by the pandemic and what strategies did you implement to bounce back?

Covid-19 did have a negative impact on our tourism and economy. But we are very happy because we are now recovering and have achieved a full recovery. Regarding wine, our exports increased by nineteen per cent last year which is very impressive. Despite France being an important wine producer, they are our main importers. Our exports to France last year were more than fourteen per cent. With the United States which is also an important producer and with Brazil, the UK, Germany we are very happy with the results.

## In terms of wine tourism, France and Italy have always been on the top. What would be Portugal's competitive edge when it comes to competing with these countries?

Last year Portugal ranked second as a major wine tourism destination in spite of being the fifth producer in Europe. The first being Italy as you know. Still, tourists coming more for wine tourism to Portugal are coming from France, Spain and Germany. This is because of the richness and closeness of the small country like Portugal. In a small country which is thirty-six times smaller than India, there is so much diversity. In a very short amount of time and area, there are plenty of possibilities to pick up which offers a huge advantage. Portuguese are very open and friendly people. We love to receive foreigners. There is also a special relationship between India and Portugal that we all know.

# Ethiopian Airlines

## *hosts partners appreciation night; gets new Regional Director*

Ethiopian Airlines recently hosted a 'Partner Get Together' event in Mumbai to announce the joining of Mrs. Bilen Arefaine as the Regional Director of the Indian Sub-Continent from November 1, 2022 and to also bid farewell to the outgoing Regional Director India **Mrs. Tigist Eshetu**. On the occasion the top passenger and cargo sales agents were awarded certificates of appreciation on behalf of the airlines. **Mrs. Bilen Arefaine** shared the future plans in an exclusive chat with BOTT.



### Shreya Shimpi

Tell us something about the marketing strategies planned for your tenure? Ethiopian Airlines is one of the most established and strategic airlines in the world and especially, in Africa at present. We have been trying to connect Africa to the world which is one of our strategies. It was established in 1946 and it has been serving the world for the last more than seventy-five years. In India, it has been serving for more than fifty years. During all these years, Ethiopian Airlines has established itself as a strategic airline connecting Indians with Africa and the rest of the world. That is because we have the best connection and the best frequencies in Africa and the world. In Africa, we fly to two or three cities in one country. For the Indian market, it is one of the strategic airlines which has a short connection time to reach their destination. The hub Addis Ababa has been serving to connect the passengers as a transit point. It has the best facilities, the best catering system, the best lounges and the best transit experiences which make it easy for travellers to connect to their final destination. Especially during the pandemic, Ethiopian Airlines has proved to be one of the strongest airlines in the world because we never stopped operations. We contributed a lot to the world by transporting PPE materials and essentials.

### How important is India to you as a market with regards to tourism?

We fly to four destinations in India which are Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Madras which says by itself how important is the Indian market to us. We want to add Hyderabad to the list. There are a few other destinations to which we are operating cargo to which we plan to extend our passenger flight operations also.

### Do you have any special plans for the India market?

Now we are flying to four destinations in India and we want to expand that. We want to add more destinations. Also, we want to go back to the pre-Covid times where we used to fly to Mumbai and Delhi as double daily flights. Now we want to re-establish those frequencies that we used to have. We wish to offer more connections to our passengers.

### Why should travellers opt for Ethiopian Airlines as their preferred airline for travel?

The transit point which is Addis Ababa is one of the best hubs with the



best facilities. Also, the connection time to wherever you go from here to the rest of the world and Addis Ababa is at the centre. The services offered by Ethiopian Airlines are one of the best.

### Anything else that you wish to add?

Our motto is "The New Spirit of Africa" so we want Indian tourists to visit Ethiopia because we have such a rich history, culture, amazing national parks etc.

People who wish to explore something different must visit the various tourist attractions that Ethiopia has to offer. In Africa, we fly to the best leisure destinations such as Seychelles, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Kilimanjaro etc. We have all the best packages, especially for Addis Ababa. I urge all Indian travellers to visit Ethiopia.



# Bihar: *Buzzing with festivity and godliness*

There has been festivity in the air for a while, and as the year comes to an end, plans are already in the making for the celebrations next year. Well, there is no better time to see a city than that during the carnival time and if Bihar has been on your bucket-list for long, be assured that the city will give you plenty of 'celebratory' options to plan your holidays around it next year. So here's a detailed look at the festive side of the cultural melting pot of India...



## ► BOTT DESK

India is dotted with festivals all year round and Bihar is one state which has been buzzing with the feel of festivals since time immemorial. Festival is the time to forget all the differences of the past and lead the path of brotherhood, love and peace. Bihar whole heartedly celebrates festivals of various cultures and traditions – here's a look at some of them.

Though Bihar celebrates all the festivals with equal zeal and enthusiasm, festivals such as Holi, Dussehra, Deewali are in absolute league along with Chatth Puja, which is Bihar's prime festival honouring the sun god. People, culture and festivals in Bihar has a strong bearing upon its past. The kingdoms that ruled over Bihar have left a strong impression on the people, culture and festivals of Bihar. Bihar presents a mixture of the cultural traits of the Muslims kings and the Hindu emperors. Read about the festivals and their origins that make Bihar what it is – the festival capital of India.

### WORSHIP THE SETTING SUN DURING 'CHATTH PUJA'

Celebrated six days after Deewali, Chatth Puja is a Hindu festival dedicated to Surya, the Hindu Sun God, and therefore is also known as Surya Shashti. The festival has a unique form in Bihar and the people of the state have immense faith and dedication towards the festival. When one hears about Chatth Puja, Bihar instantly comes to the mind. During this festival, the person observing Chatth, also known as Parvati, observes a fast from dawn to dusk, which concludes with the intake of sweets. This fast is followed by another fast for 36 hours till the final day, when puja starts at the river bank, before sunrise. You can witness thousands of devotees along the riverside during this time. Witnessing







Chatth Puja allows you to witness the devotion in its true sense. Chaath is a festival of prayer and propitiation observed with solemnity. It is an expression of thanks giving and seeking the blessings from the forces of nature, prominent among them being the Sun and river. The belief is that a devotee's desire is always fulfilled during Chaath. Simultaneously an element of fear is alive among the devotees who dread the punishment for any misdeed during Chaath. The state is not just safe this time of the year but is also buzzing with activity.

Four auspicious places for Chatth Puja to experience the festival are – Kalighat (Patna), Deo (Aurangabad), KastaharniGhat (Munger) and KaunharaGhat (Hajipur).

### DO SHRADDHA PUJA AT PITRAPAKSHA MELA

The Pitrapaksha Mela is held in Gaya usually in the month of September. In this fair, people come from all parts of India for the worship of the ancestors as a part of the Shraddha rituals. Gayalis, the descendants of Magga Brahmins who were once devotees of Shiva but later converted to Vaishnavism perform the Sraddha ceremonies or the 'Pind Daan', a mandatory Hindu rite that is believed to bring salvation to the departed soul for the devotees. The Buddha also performed the first 'Pind Daan' here. As many as 48 Vedis or altars are spread over different areas of the town and important sites such as Vishnupad Mandir, Ramshila, Pretshila, Akshay Vat and Baitami. Pilgrims perform the 'Pind Daan' ritual at these places for the departed souls.

### WORSHIPPING THE GODDESS @ DURGA PUJA

Durga Puja is one of the biggest festivals of states of India that is celebrated with great enthusiasm and grandeur. Durga Puja is particularly a significant festival of West Bengal; however people in the state of Odisha, Tripura, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat also celebrate it with great enthusiasm. It is another festival that depicts the triumph of good over bad as it celebrates the victory of goddess Durga over Mahishasura, the Buffalo demon. From Patna Saheb on the eastern end to Sheikhpura at the western outskirts of the city, dozens of pandals, designed after famous national landmarks, open their doors as thousands of eager devotees rushed in to get the first glance of the Devi. Famous artisans from across the nation give the final touch to the idols of Goddess Durga and other Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu religion.

### MADHUSHRAVANI

The festival of Madhushravani is celebrated all over Mithilanchal with much enthusiasm. It is celebrated in the month of Sawan (Hindu calendar). Madhushravani Puja represents the arrival of monsoon season and is usually observed by married women. During this festival, women worship Naga devatas (Serpent Gods), Gauri, Shanti Kalash, Surya, Chandrama, Navagrah, and several Nags such as Nag dampati, Bairasi along with hundred brothers, Chanai, Kusumawati, Pingla, Lili, Gosauni nag with seven sisters and lastly Shasthi or sathi.

During the festival of Madhushrava Tiritiya, newly married girls stay at their parent's home as staying with parents during Shravan or at least



during this festival is considered necessary. Presents (Bhar) are sent from groom's family to bride's family. Traditionally the bride is supposed to eat only things sent from her husband's home. At least five married women accompany the bride while eating.

### ENJOY THE SONEPUR FAIR, STEEPED IN MYTHOLOGY

Sonepur Fair is Asia's major cattle fair which is held in Sonepur town in Bihar. This month-long fair is held on Kartik Purnima, the first full moon after the festival of Diwali in the month of November. In this fair, various domestic and farm animals such as elephants, camels, sheep and birds are bought from the different parts of the country and sold here. Various handicrafts and handlooms are also sold and magic shows, folk dances and skill contests are also held. The fair attracts a large number of foreigners and Indian tourists every year. According to legend, Sonepur was the site of battle between the Gaj (elephant), the lord of the forest and Garh (crocodile), the lord of the waterways. This fair attracts a large number of foreign tourists each year.

### MAKE THE MOST OF MAKAR SANKRANTI MELA

Considered as the most special festival in India, Makar Sankranti is celebrated by the masses in Bihar every year. The day traditionally marks the harvest festival, which mostly falls on January 14, every year. It is the only Hindu festival which falls on the same day every year. Famous Makar Sankranti mela is another festival unique to Rajgir in the month of Paus, corresponding to mid-January. Devotees make flower offerings to the deities of the temples at Hot springs and bathe in the holy water. Another historic place associated with fifteen day long Makar Sankranti mela is the Mandar hills in Banka district. Puranic legends accounts for a great deluge which witnessed the creation of an Asura that threatened the gods. Vishnu cut off the Asura's head and piled up the body under the weight of the Mandar hill. The famous panchjanya – the sankh (couch shell) used in the Mahabharat war is believed to have been found here on the hills. Traces, akin to serpent coil can be seen around the hill and it is believed that the snake god offered himself to be used as a rope for churning the ocean to obtain the amrit (nectar).



# Coorg: *The Switzerland of India*



If you too, like me, are tired of following the same mundane everyday routine of beating the traffic and reaching office, long hours and monotonous evenings, it is time to head to the hills and there is no better option down south than Coorg! It is serene and happening at the same time, not to forget breathtakingly beautiful... No wonder it is called the Switzerland of India.

**Arushi Bajaj**

To escape the week long chaos and to kill the monotony of travelling to the northern hills, Coorg is the ultimate holiday destination for the weekend getaway. We as city dwellers everyday witness the urgency to reach our offices due to the choked roads; but life in Coorg is laid back and serene. One of the prominent hill stations of Southern India, Coorg is the most accessible hill station, which is breathtakingly beautiful. Gone are the days when people used to travel to Manali, Simla, Nainital and again for lack of better choices – options today are plenty! What makes Coorg different from the above mentioned is the contemplative ambience.

Vacationers travelling to Coorg will not be disappointed as the place is a perfect amalgamation of adventure, breathtaking sceneries, weather that remains pleasant throughout the year, a paradise for honeymooners – the list is endless. Dense forests, scenic waterfalls, agriculture that upholds the economy, verdant coffee plantations, aroma of spices are some of the attractions that will bring your senses to life! The charm of the nature will sway you along.

Coorg is an affluent hill station with Madikeri as the region's centre point – the transportation hub for getting around. One of the most visited tourist places in Karnataka; Coorg gives the travel enthusiasts numerous picturesque spots to make the most of their trip. To start with, Coorg is a land with many temples that are dedicated to the supreme power Lord Shiva. Bhagandeshwara Temple is a crucial tourist destination,



renowned for the convergence of three rivers Kanike, Cauvery and Sujyothi. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and reflects the Kerala style of architecture. The other one is Omkareshwara Temple that reflects a blend of Gothic and Islamic styles. It is a popular religious destination of Coorg that draws a lot of tourists.

A spectacular landscape of Coorg has an eminent sunset point i.e. Raja's Seat. The kings of the Coorg used to enjoy the glorious sunsets and therefore it got the name as it was the favourite recreational place for the kings. This sunset point stuns the nature lovers as it stands inside a splendid garden of seasonal flowers and musical fountains. Toy train is one more attraction that takes the adults and children around the park to enjoy view of the mountains as well as the Raja's seat from a distance. One can relish this place both in the mornings and evenings which offer wonderful sight to watch.

The charming water falls in Coorg provide a calm and relaxing feel.





The beauty of these falls never fades away. Nisargadhama Falls is an idyllic destination with many rivers located around it. It is located on the Nisargadhama Island and is a perfect location for picnic with the tiny tots. One has a lot of options after coming to this place like the mini zoo, take a boat ride or spend the night at the tree house facilities with restaurant. Abbey Falls is another exotic water fall that is located between coffee and cardamom plantations that give a fresh aroma to the area. It is known for the leeches found in water. Considered one of the finest waterfalls with white foamy water flowing in the serene location, Abbey falls is an ideal location to spend a peaceful evening.

Enhancing the charisma, historical Madekri Fort is one more landmark of Coorg. It was built as a mud structure in the 17th century by the then King Muddu Raja. However, the fort went under tremendous changes when Tipu Sultan captured the fort. The fort is an example of sheer splendor that houses among other structures – a temple, an Anglican Church, a prison and a museum. The modifications were made by the British rulers, removal of temples and reconstructing churches signifies the dominance of the British people over the fort.

A fabulous monsoon is a gift from nature to Coorg. Good rains nourish the various streams and rivers here, which swell after this time. There is a white water river i.e. Barapole River in Southern Coorg, making it an ideal destination for those seeking the thrill of river rafting. One of the best trekking experiences of the country is around Coorg – or it wouldn't be wrong to call it a trekker's paradise. Kumara Parvatha trek, trek to Nishani Motte Hills, Brahmagiri Trek, Tadiandamol Trek, Pushpagiri Trek, etc. are some of the absolutely thrilling experiences not to be missed. This scenic hill station in the Western Ghats allures a large number of visitors for its adventurous streak.

An irresistible combination of adventure and fun is a promise best fulfilled by the Dubare Elephant Camp. It is a great option for wildlife experiences. The giants of the jungles interact with each other and with their human handlers. The elephant camp here is bizarre and delivers a live experience rather than just to read it in books and online. The visitors coming here not only observe and learn but also participate in various activities involving Elephants like scrub bath, anointment on their forehead, tusks and other aspects of elephant grooming. If you are an elephant lover, Dubare Elephant Camp is a must experience with



these enchanting creatures.

Coorg, the Switzerland of India enjoys pleasant weather conditions throughout the year. This place gives evergreen memories to its visitors. The aroma of cardamom and spices along with coffee and pepper are typical in taste. Coorg is famous for producing the tastiest honey and fragrant sandalwood. India, with proud, nicknamed Coorg as Kashmir of South as it is blessed with bounty of forests and mountains. Often being called as Mother Nature's extraordinary place, it is indeed a paradise on earth with great scenery, abundant green valleys, misty woods, racing rivers and enchanting waterfalls.



# 'This is the only Bungy to be recognised by Ministry of Tourism': Niharika Nigam



If you are an adventure enthusiast and looking forward to having a rush of adrenaline through safe but exciting adventure sports, Jumpin Heights is your go to place for sure. It is run by Ex-Army Officers across two locations – Goa and Rishikesh. Niharika Nigam, Director – Business Development shares her thoughts in an exclusive chat with BOTT.

## Shreya Shimpi

### Tell us something about Jumpin Heights?

We started this venture in 2010 and this is India's first extreme adventure destination. It is India's highest Bungy with a jump height of 83 metres. We have the most extreme Giant Swing which is a concept adapted from the Canyon Swing in New Zealand. It is a jump from a height higher than the Qutub Minar. We also have Asia's Longest Flying Fox with a Jump Platform 120 m high and 1 km in length.

### What sets Jumpin Heights apart?

We have operated over 1 lakh jumps without any mishaps which speak volumes about our safety standards. These are among the highest numbers in the world. We follow the Australian and New Zealand Standards of Safety. Our Jump masters are trained by experts from New Zealand. Also, it is owned and run by Ex-Army Officials. Also, this is the only Bungy to be recognised by the Ministry of Tourism.

### Could you throw light on the safety measures that you follow?

We follow the safety standards of Australia and New Zealand. We use the double harness safety system which is the highest standard of safety and is used globally. We consider adventure as a serious business and don't dilute it as entertainment or leisure. Our adventure seekers must qualify for certain parameters. The age limit is between 12 to 45 years. The weight limit is 40 kgs to 110 kgs. We operate with a highly experienced crew and have the best equipment and procedures in place. A list of medical issues has been issued and guests having any of those are advised not to go ahead with any of these adventure activities. We have a doctor on-call and an ambulance ready. All our staff is trained in basic First Aid by the Red Cross. Safety drills and rescue operations are also conducted from time to time. Our brand communication is 'Safety first'.



### What was the idea behind starting this venture?

We pioneered this sport which was barely existent in the market. People usually prefer doing such sports abroad. The idea was to provide an adventure experience in India following the highest standards of safety. This was started by my father who is himself an ex-army official and we believe that people no longer need to go out of India for seeking such adventures. We throw spotlight over the landscapes. As you do Bungy jumping you can enjoy beautiful panoramic views too.

### What are the approximate charges?

At Jumpin Heights, Goa the charges are Rs 4,850 which includes a video as well. At our Rishikesh location, the charges are Rs 3,700 but no video is included in it.

### Can you tell us something about Jumpin Heights, Goa?

We started it in 2019 in association with Goa Tourism. It is Goa's only fixed platform Bungy over the picturesque Mayem Lake. It is a once in a lifetime experience and we also provide you with a HD video of your jump.



# BOTT

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Weddings

Picture by Ptaufiqphotography



# Palatial grand wedding venues in India, perfect to tie the knot



While almost all our relations are pre-decided, even before our birth, one of the most important of them – the relationship with a life partner is one that is selected and finalized by us. It can be self-arranged or family arranged but it is only made possible by the consent of two individual adults. So, when these two individuals come together with their families to celebrate this momentous occasion, it surely has to be grand! And what better place than India to actualize this grandness... Here's a look at some of the grand Palace-like venues in India to host the Big Fat Weddings!!

**Sapna Vaid**

## **Lalitha Mahal Palace - Mysore**

Lalitha Mahal is one of India's most ideal wedding destinations as it offers an authentic royal experience. This heritage hotel is situated on a ridge that offers a panoramic view of the gentle slopes and curving valley. The building features a two-storey composition of twin ionic columns, extensive porch on the ground floor, spherical domes with lanterns and the central dome which dominates the elevation. The hotel has a large banquet hall that is done with incredible architecture and can accommodate 230 guests in Theatre Style. A pool side lawn offers accommodation to about 200 people whereas the royal terrace can hold a small and close gathering of 24 people. Lalitha Mahal stands as a gleaming white palace with a spectacular Italianate Palazzo, double columned and domed and set in sprawling terraced and manicured gardens.

## **TAJ FALAKNUMA PALACE - HYDERABAD**

Falaknuma' means 'Like the sky' or 'Mirror of the sky' – and it is little wonder that the stately Taj Falaknuma Palace in Hyderabad continues to be a magnet for illustrious families who choose it as a wedding venue.



Situated 2,000 feet above the historic city of Hyderabad, the hotel exudes the class and refinement of the erstwhile Nizams with its blend of Italian and Tudor architecture. Its 60 beautifully restored rooms, stunning Reception Room and 22 spacious halls ensure there are ample venues for myriad wedding events. One of the highlights of this regal property is its immense collection of Venetian chandeliers which is said to be the largest in the world. Bollywood Star Salman Khan's baby sister Arpita Khan's grand wedding was hosted at The Falaknuma Palace.



### UMAID BHAWAN PALACE - JODHPUR

The Umaid Bhawan Palace is adorned with plush courtyards, rippling fountains and flowerbeds. The palace was designed by renowned Edwardian architect Henry Lanchester, with a blend of eastern and western architectural influences. The ballroom, Marwar Hall, can accommodate up to 250 guests for cocktails and dinner. The open-sky Museum Courtyard is perfect for a small gathering of 75 to 100 guests. The lush Baradari Lawns, with rows of flaming torches is said to be a fairytale setting for a large reception. Many celebrity weddings have been held here, one of the most talked about was Priyanka Chopra with American pop singer, Nick Jonas in December 2018. With its exquisite exterior and interior, specialized theme restaurants and liveried staff, it is one of the best wedding venues in the world.



### JAI MAHAL - JAIPUR

Built in 1745, the Jai Mahal Palace set amidst 18 acres of Mughal Gardens is a classy and memorable Indo-Saracenic architecture. Owned and managed by TAJ Group of hotels is now a luxury five-star Hotel with 94 rooms and six suites equipped with modern-day comforts and unbeatable views of the city and palace gardens. Explore the palace history and its landscaped gardens and plan a fairy tale wedding with up to 2,500 guests at the Palace Lawns. Its Colonial-style interiors offer a range of traditional yet modern rooms featuring a private balcony, a large window, a double size bed, and luxurious bathrooms. The place is an utter heaven for comfort-seekers and art-lovers who can enjoy the luxury of the hotel while taking pleasure in the classic Indian-style decor.



### PARK HYATT - GOA

Get hitched in Goa's Park Hyatt where all your wedding fantasies can come true. The lush 'Seaside Lawns', delightful landscapes of 'The Forest', the graceful 'Boathouse', and the tastefully-done indoor venues 'Salcete', 'Colva and Loutolin', Park Hyatt Goa exudes grandeur and luxury at every turn at your wedding. Expect a romantic sunset ceremony overlooking Arossim Beach, followed by a gala dinner dance reception in the Salcete Ballroom. The guests get to enjoy cocktail shindig, rehearsal dinner can also be planned at Park Hyatt. The hotel ensures superb cuisine, brilliant floral arrangements, and fabulous live entertainment. Park Hyatt offers flexible indoor and outdoor function spaces at its immaculate gardens, private beachfront and lush lawns. Its royal Salcete is a 4,030-sq-ft wood-paneled ballroom that can accommodate about 500 guests.



### ROYAL ORCHID FORT RESORT - MUSSOORIE

The Royal Orchid Fort Resort, Mussoorie is located in a prime location in the midst of lush green and picturesque surroundings of Queen of Hills, Mussoorie. The hotel has a tradition of understanding aristocratic luxury better, which is why they ensure that the weddings and the joyous festivities are carried with elegance and precision. The rooms are categorized in Deluxe Room, Executive Room, Premium without Terrace, Premium with terrace, Duplex, One Bedroom Suites, and Two Bedroom Suites. The USP of this hotel is its mastery over meticulous details starting from the drapery, flowers or mehendi function, from flying in a three-piece exclusive band to fixing the turban of the five-year-old sarbala, from helping design the wedding card to ensuring that grandma's fifty-year-old recipe of ladoos made for the wedding – the Resort does everything just like a pro!



### THE LEELA - KOVALAM

The Leela Hotel is one of the finest resorts in the Kovalam beach region. The resort sits on a cliff, offering pleasant panoramic views of the Kovalam beach and the Arabian Sea. Spread over 44 acres, this resort has around 183 rooms, which offer a bewitching sea view and garden view. For a traditional wedding, the hotel offers a convention center, which by the way is the largest in Kerala and can accommodate up to 900 guests. The guests get to enjoy the picturesque backdrop of a blue sea along

with excellent services and facilities. 'The Terrace' and 'The Cafe at the Club', 24 hours buffet restaurants offering outdoor, indoor and poolside seating as well. This 5-star resort with a wide range of restaurants and lounges is also known for offering traditional Ayurvedic treatment.



# 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 November 2022.



## Know what your stars say about NOV-DEC 2022



### **ARIES (March 21 – April 20)**

Be careful on health front. Take cautious decision on professional front. Avoid any risky investment. Avoid any conflict with anyone. Take time off for spending time with family. Include Yoga and meditation in your daily routine.



### **Taurus (April 21 – May 21)**

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



### **Gemini (May 22 – June 21)**

A professionally satisfying time. Good time to invest. Support from senior or colleagues will come your way. Follow a healthy routine. Include Yoga and walk in your regime. Relationship with partner will strengthen further.



### **Cancer (June 22 – July 22)**

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



### **Leo (July 23 – August 21)**

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.





## **Virgo (August 22 – September 23)**

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



## **Libra (September 24 – October 23)**

Take precautions while travelling this week. Do not undertake dangerous assignments. Avoid dwelling on any negative thoughts. Do not rush to decisions with respect to partnerships and business. Chances of promotion are eminent. You will need to change behaviour to maintain happiness and prosperity in personal relationships. Have to be extra careful in matters related to finance.



## **Capricorn (December 23 – January 20)**

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.



## **Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)**

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



## **Sagittarius (November 23 – December 22)**

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.



## **Aquarius (January 21 – February 19)**

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



## **Pisces (February 20 – March 20)**

You will be busy this week. Spend your money wisely. Respond intelligently to the questions asked by people. Be optimistic in this phase. Take a break and do your research, as you have to work hard to make things happen. Mind and heart are at conflict. Learn to control the emotions. Spend some time with your spouse.



# Cleartrip renews its distribution agreement with ITQ to strengthen & expand partnership

Recently, at the ITQ Office in Gurugram, Cleartrip CEO signed an agreement with Travelport's distributor for India, InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ), for the use of Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform. The agreement was signed between **Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Operating Officer, ITQ; Mark Meehan, Global Vice President and Managing Director for Global Operators at Travelport and Ayyappan Rajagopal, CEO at Cleartrip.**



## > BOTT DESK

With its industry-first offerings such as 'CT Flexmax, CT Flex, and CT Upgrade', Cleartrip has a clear vision to disrupt the OTA market and is one of the country's fastest growing online travel agencies. Under the agreement, Cleartrip will make use of Travelport's avant-garde platform to provide enhanced services to its larger customer base. ITQ, which is the official distributor of Travelport in India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan, will ensure Cleartrip gets access to its massive travel content featuring real time access to nearly 400 airlines.

"As travel recuperates around the world, it is an exciting time to form new associations. Cleartrip is a celebrated name in the industry and we are delighted to have partnered with them. We hope for a strong and mutually beneficial association," said Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Operating Officer, ITQ.

"This partnership with Cleartrip will provide us with new and exciting opportunities to work closely on their strategic business expansion," said Mark Meehan, Global Vice President and Managing Director for Global Operators at Travelport, "I am delighted to see our shared vision for modern travel retailing continue to bring a wealth of cutting-edge advantages for both our customers and our industry, thus enabling us to further transform the travel ecosystem."

Speaking on the partnership, Ayyappan Rajagopal, CEO at Cleartrip, said, "With a busy travel period ahead of us, we are excited to partner with InterGlobe Technology Quotient for the use of their advanced solutions to provide enhanced services to its customer base. This is a key strategic partnership for us that will help us gain competitive advantage and offer a superior value proposition, and also play a significant role in the exponential growth journey Cleartrip has embarked on."







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