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Uttar Pradesh

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-Mahatma Gandhi-

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From The Editor's *Desk*



Dear Readers

After a successful WTM (yes it was a bit slow in the India zone), which was buzzing with meetings, walk-ins, activities happening everywhere, it wouldn't be wrong to say that the pandemic is officially over and that there is a renewed energy in the air to travel and see the world. As we bid farewell to this year by getting together for the 37th IATO Annual Convention in Lucknow, there is hope hanging in the air for seeing a much better inbound tourism graph in 2023.

The tourism sector in India is growing fast and gearing up to meet the emerging trends post-pandemic. Therefore, to encourage our inbound travel and particularly in the background of our Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav and the G20 presidency of India, Ministry of Tourism has decided to celebrate the upcoming year as Visit India 2023. We will work with our partners, travel and trade industry, state tourism boards, and key stakeholders to invite people to visit India from across the world. The focus is to boost Inbound Travel to India, to highlight varied tourism offerings of our country and showcase them to the global tourism industry stakeholders. India is sharing its priorities for the tourism sector, which include focusing on promoting sustainable tourism, digitalization of the tourism sector, and development of tourism MSMEs and skills. India is a land of culture, heritage and spirituality with every state having its own unique tourism offerings to the world. India's G-20 Presidency from December 2022 to November 2023 will help India's tourism sector to highlight the country's tourism offerings and share our tourism success stories on a global stage.

With a plethora of positive thoughts tucked under our belt, BOTT reached out to a wide spectrum of tourism industry professionals to take their views on how and when the Inbound Tourism will go back to what it was in the pre-pandemic times. As everyone pins their hopes on 2023, BOTT December issue is glad to bring you some exclusive interviews of Tamil Nadu Tourism Minister, UP Tourism Principal Secretary, Maharashtra Tourism Principal Secretary, Joint Secretary MoT, Rajasthan Director Tourism and around 30 IATO Members along with few leading hoteliers to understand how inbound tourism will fare in times to come...

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

Priyanka Saxena Ray

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GNTB launches ‘Season’s Greetings from Germany’ campaign for festive season

The German National Tourist Board (GNTB) launched its "Season's Greetings from Germany" online campaign a few days ago. In addition to Christmas markets in smaller and larger cities, the focus is on typical German traditions and winter activities in the countryside. Petra Hedorfer, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) said, "For many years, German cities and regions have been in high demand. This is underlined by the latest results of the Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI) 2022: 'Historic Buildings', 'Vibrant Cities', 'Contemporary Culture' and 'Cultural Heritage' are particularly influential in shaping our image among potential travellers Germany. Season's Greetings from Germany' promotes itself to International to travellers and our neighbouring countries with authentic experiences, also in rural areas. In line with our strategic orientation, we have presented the various Christmas offers on the campaign website, above all from a sustainability perspective."



Hyatt announces the opening of Hyatt Regency Trivandrum

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has announced the opening of Hyatt Regency Trivandrum in Kerala. The hotel is the third Hyatt property in the State of Kerala following the opening of Grand Hyatt Kochi and Hyatt Regency Thrissur, and the sixteenth Hyatt Regency hotel in the country. Spread across 2.2 acres, Hyatt Regency Trivandrum is in the cultural hub of the city-located at the southwestern tip of India.



Fortune Hotels expands its footprint in Uttar Pradesh

Fortune Hotels, announces the signing of a new property in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. Furthering the national footprint, this new property will be Fortune's fourth hotel in UP. Fortune Park Aligarh, set to open in the winter of 2023, is strategically located on the Grand Trunk Road just off the RTO office and well connected with the upcoming Noida International Airport via Aligarh – Palwal Road offering easy access to the university town.



IndiGo will operate 168 weekly flights at New Goa International Airport

IndiGo announces 12 daily and a total of 168 weekly new flights to and from the soon to-be inaugurated New Goa International Airport (Mopa, North Goa) effective from January 05, 2023. This will be IndiGo's largest ever new station launch and will immediately connect New Goa International Airport to 8 cities across India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Goa's second international airport at Mopa in North Goa on December 11, 2022, and the airport will begin operations from January 05, 2023.



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India's G20 Presidency begins on a positive note

The 1st Sherpa Meeting of India's G20 Presidency took place in the historic city of Udaipur, Rajasthan

> BOTT DESK

The 1st Sherpa Meeting of India's G20 Presidency commenced this month, in Udaipur Rajasthan. A series of briefings and interactions with the media and a side event on Transforming Lives at the Midpoint of the 2030 Agenda: Accelerating Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in an Era of Cascading and Multiple Crises were organised. The day also witnessed the arrival of Sherpas and delegations of various G20 nations and heads of invited International Organisations at Udaipur. Various Rajasthani cultural activities were

carried out to welcome the delegates and showcase to them the tradition of Indian hospitality and performing arts.

The four-day gathering (04-07 December 2022) of the Sherpas of G20 Members, invited countries and International Organizations has set the stage for the important conversation on some of the most pressing issues of our time, including technological transformation, green development and LiFE, spotlighting women-led development, accelerating implementation of the SDGs, and facilitating inclusive and resilient growth.

A magnificent display of India's rich cultural heritage Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa

“The beautiful city of Udaipur in Rajasthan became host to the first Sherpa Meeting under the #G20India Presidency. The meeting at Udaipur was not only fruitful and productive, but the unique cultural experience of Rajasthan which we brought in made it also truly mesmerizing.

G20 guests were given a warm welcome on their arrival in the magical city of Udaipur. On Day 1, we had a side event on Accelerating Achievement of SDGs in an Era of Cascading & Multiple Crises which was attended by Sherpas and G20 delegates. After this, delegates witnessed Jal Sanjhi - paintings where the canvas is not paper or cloth but water. They were truly mesmerized.

At the networking reception and dinner, delegates witnessed and exhilarating special dinner performance - Desert Music Symphony was curated with 13 instruments, intrinsic to Rajasthani folk music led by Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, Gazi Khan Barna with maestros of Langa & Manganiya communities

Also interacted with Sherpas of all the Emerging Market Economies (EME) where we discussed issues of mutual interest, inclusive, resilient & accelerated growth and advancement of the Global South. This was followed by a productive discussion with the Sherpas G20 Troika comprising India, Brazil & Indonesia.

On day 2, the Sherpas Meeting began with a session on Technological Transformation with the working groups on Digital Economy, Health and Education. We had positive and constructive discussions with enthusiastic participation from all G20 Sherpas, heads of International Organizations and special invitees. Sherpas also benefited from a presentation made by the Secretary of DEA on India's Finance track priorities.

We also showcased Rajasthan's ancient art practise of Bandhani tying. The term 'Bandhani' is derived from the word 'Bandhan' that also means bond — an apt description for the trust & consensus-building work that we will be undertaking during our Presidency. This was followed by a spectacular cultural show "Colors of Rajasthan" at Jagmandir. Guests were left awestruck. As we celebrate the year of millets, delicacies at the dinner included millet Upma, millet pizza and much more.



Day 3 of the Sherpa's meeting kicked off with the session on Accelerated, Inclusive and Resilient Growth, with constructive discussions covering the agriculture, trade and investment, employment and anti corruption working groups. This was followed by frank & thought provoking discussions on contemporary challenges facing the world, relating to food and energy security which have impacted lives of people all over the world. The meeting concluded with a session on Women led Development. There was wide consensus that Women's role needs a paradigm shift from being the recipients of the fruits of development to actively taking part in leading action towards global growth and sustainability.

After this, delegates visited Shilpgram in Rajasthan where they witnessed the arts and crafts of Rajasthan. It was a proud moment to see delegates making digital payments at the shops. It was testimony to India's Digital payments system - the very best in the world.

Finally, a magnificent display of India's classical & folk dances organised by the Rajasthan Government and delegates were spellbound. It was a surreal experience. It was India's soft power at its best.

On Day 4, delegates went for a tour of Kumbalgarh Fort, a UNESCO world heritage site and their visit and will take back fond memories of the first Sherpa meeting as well as the unique cultural experience which we blended into the entire program.”



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"We are extremely pleased to add more capacity between India and Europe during this holiday season, given the high demand for international travel. These flights will cater to travellers exploring Italy and UK, with one stop connections to Milan, Manchester, Birmingham, Rome, and Venice via Istanbul. These new routes will not only strengthen international connectivity but also enhance affordability for travel to Europe. We will continue to strive to stay true to our promise of affordable fares, on-time performance, courteous and hassle-free service."

-Vinay Malhotra,
Head of Global Sales, IndiGo



"Our focus on building the brand footprint in tier 2/3/4 markets continues as we forge another new partnership to enter Aligarh, the heartland of Uttar Pradesh. The state has always been a strong growth market for us and is poised to develop even more speedily in the next few years. Aligarh will be our fourth property here and we thank the owners for recognizing the Fortune Advantage and showing their trust in us."

Samir MC,
Managing Director, Fortune Hotels



"Launching the new brand identity of Al Rafisah Dam aligns with our strategy of enhancing Sharjah's position as a premier tourist destination, reaffirming SCTDA's vision to reinforce the emirate's distinctive status on the global tourism map. The unique characteristics of safety, natural and cultural sustainability of Sharjah's destinations that offer comprehensive touristic experiences is elevating the emirate's appeal and attractiveness to visitors and tourists alike."

-HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa,
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development
Authority (SCTDA)



"Sarovar Hotels is very happy to tie up with Amrapali Institute of Hotel Management. We look forward to providing the right platforms to the students in terms of mentorship and industry exposure. We are keen to be partners with Amrapali IHM in terms of giving inputs for the course curriculum and development programs at the Institute. We are looking forward to the students taking advantage of this platform and honing their skills to become successful hospitality professionals."

-Jatin Khanna,
Chief Executive Officer, Sarovar Hotels



"The annual run is an opportunity for Marriott International associates, along with family and guests to come together and make a move, this year in all possible ways, in the direction of a more diverse and accommodative future which holds space for individuals from across the spectrum. The idea is to make the event larger and cohesive each year by taking participants closer to our TakeCare philosophies by adding new facets and elements to the annual run."

-Ranju Alex ,
Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International



Tamil Nadu: Where Stories Never End

The Tourism Destination Development Scheme has been framed to promote and develop tourism destinations all across the state says **M. Mathiventhan, Minister for Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu** in exclusive chat with BOTT

Rai Umraopati Ray

What are your plans to develop and upgrade tourism infrastructure in Tamil Nadu?

Under the visionary leadership of our honourable chief minister, Tamil Nadu has come up with an innovative scheme, The Tourism Destination Development Scheme, which has been framed to promote and develop tourism destinations all across the state which includes, adventure sites, and eco-tourism sites. The plan is to develop 10-15 locations every year into better tourist places with grants from the state government with good tourist facilities, new activities and attractions. This would serve two purposes as it will give jobs to the local people and secondly generate revenue for the tourism department in the long term. This is a big scheme, a milestone when it comes to development of tourism in Tamil Nadu.

Does the department follow any theme in selecting the destination for development for instance to promote religious tourism?

Presently, we are now following any theme to select the destination under the scheme. Religious tourism has always been important for us and Tamil Nadu stands very tall in this segment. We are concentrating on all the possible verticals like adventure destinations, eco-camping sites, caravan tourism and the likes. The plan is to improve infrastructure in about 300+ tourism sites. Kolli Hills, Yelagiri, Jawadhu Hills are being developed and there are plans to introduce activities in dam states like Chittar, Gundar and Kamarajar Sagar.

Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) is in the process of identifying trekking routes along which tourists can be safely taken during their visit. We are looking at operating cable-cars to hill stations. Destinations such as Udhagamandalam, Kodaikkanal, Megamalai and Kanniyakumar will be developed for rural and plantation tourism. Our vision is to make a tourist destination of every district, generate more employment and regulate all activities in the sector by framing guidelines. I also want to make Tamil Nadu a more tourist-friendly State.

Post Covid, domestic tourism has come up in a big way, how is Tamil



Nadu catering to this segment getting more tourists to visit the state?

We are developing tourism infrastructure in the state at a fast pace. TTDC has taken a number of initiatives to promote tourism like meeting with relevant stakeholders, advertising our lesser explored tourist destinations, enchanting hill stations, marvellous temple towns and hospitality services on various travel platforms to inform travellers. We also welcome public-private partnerships (PPP). We are also planning to promote cruise tourism. Eco camping sites will also be set up in the forest and hilly areas. Fortunately for us, there has been a good demand among the Indian travellers and footfalls are expected to increase in the coming months

Is rebranding in the pipeline?

Yes, we have a new slogan, Where Stories Never End so that is the tagline of Tamil Nadu Tourism. Tourists coming to our state will have lots and lots of interesting and unique experiences and stories to tell, which will never end. So be it religious destinations, long stretches of exquisite beaches, range of mountains like Nilgiris, Velliangiri Mountains, Perumal Peak and culturally rich temple towns, there are varied kinds of landscapes in Tamil Nadu and there is something for all types of travellers.



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Visit India 2023 to showcase India Tourism on global stage

India is a land of culture, heritage and spirituality with every state having its own unique tourism offerings to the world. Our focus is now to make India as a 365-days destination through Visit India 2023 campaign says **Rakesh Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India**

Rai Umraopati Ray

A lot of experts say that India has missed the bus post-pandemic to showcase its tourism offerings to the global travellers while other countries have launched spectacular campaigns?

We are also going to launch our campaign sometime in January next year. We have finalised our plans and strategy for promotions. The National Tourism Board is part of the strategy and for implementing the marketing and promotional campaigns. It will cover different channels and the focus will be on country specific strategies and on digital platform. We are launching Visit India 2023 initiative soon, which will position and strengthen India's position as a 360-days destination.

Can you please elaborate on the Visit India 2023 initiative?

The tourism sector in India is growing fast and gearing up to meet the emerging trends post-pandemic. Therefore to encourage our inbound travel and particularly in the background of our Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav and the G20 presidency of India, Ministry of Tourism has decided to celebrate the upcoming year as Visit India 2023. We will work with our partners, travel and trade industry, state tourism boards, and key stakeholders to invite people to visit India from across the world. The focus is on the inbound travel to India, to highlight varied tourism offerings of our country and showcase them to the global tourism industry stakeholders. India is sharing its priorities for the tourism sector, which include focusing on promoting sustainable tourism, digitalization of the tourism sector, and development of tourism MSMEs and skills. India is a land of culture, heritage and spirituality with every state having its own unique tourism offerings to the world. India's G-20 Presidency from December 2022 to November 2023 will help India's tourism sector to highlight the country's tourism offerings and share our tourism success stories on a global stage.

Will Indian embassies, offices and missions be involved in this initiative? What will be the key focus?

Yes, as part of our new strategy for marketing and promotions, missions abroad have a very key role in making Visit India 2023 a successful campaign.

As said earlier, our focus is now to make India as a 365-days destination and our offerings are multifarious and we would like to highlight the multiple offerings of our country. India is a huge country and we have all kinds of tourism products and experiences.

Domestic tourism has come up in a big way but there are challenges of infrastructure, safety of women travellers, lack of facilities etc., how is Ministry of Tourism tackling this?

Ministry of Tourism is working with all relevant ministries and government agencies which have influence and impact on tourism. We are trying to create synergies in their efforts and the requirements



of the tourism sector. We are hopeful that both the infrastructure and other framework conditions that you call for the growth of tourism will improve and they are drastically improving.

Any special proposal to Ministry of Finance for the upcoming budget 2023?

In terms of pandemic, I think there are enough steps already taken and the hospitality sector was well covered with a focus on tourism. Presently, we are now working on National Tourism Policy and for implementation of the policy, we will go to the other ministries for support including finance ministry.

As chairman of ICPB, what are your plans to boost MICE tourism in India?

We are looking at strategies across tourism offerings and MICE is another segment where India has huge potential. We need to really exploit that potential by coming out with a national strategy and we are working on it. MICE is an important part of National Tourism Policy and we have already worked out a plan for promotion of MICE.



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Facilitating Global Business Opportunities for India's Services Sector

As part of G20 initiative, we will be promoting different segments like Athithi for travel and tourism sector, Sanjeevani for medical value tourism, enTTech for entertainment sector among others at Global Exhibition on Services (GES) says **Dr. Abhay Sinha, Director General, Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC)**

Rai Umraopati Ray

What is the role of SEPC with regard to travel, tourism and hospitality sectors? What are the key focus areas?

Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC), set up by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has been mandated to facilitate global business opportunities for India's services sector. Amongst all the sectors under SEPC, Travel and Tourism is one of the largest and key sectors. Today, India is the 12th largest country in the world when it comes to international tourism. Therefore, the mission is to understand what it would take from the council, the stakeholders, and the ministry to go beyond the growth trajectory of the last decade. The strategy should be about charting the course for this sector for the next 25 years when India will complete 100 years of independence.

Post pandemic, WTM, London was an opportunity for us to register our presence. This time we are having more than 30 travel and tourism companies participating along with SEPC. We have synergised our activities with the Ministry of Tourism and it is quite possible that in future through the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Tourism, we might be having one India pavilion.

How important is MICE as a segment?

MICE is an emerging area and there is a thought process at the top level to focus on this segment. The Ministry of Commerce is trying to explore opportunities for giving MICE an opportunity to grow. Our government is working continuously to improve the infrastructure as MICE depends on it along with focusing on ease of travel by improving varied facilities. Second, how do we create awareness about the MICE facilities in India? For that we are doing a number of activities and events, to get more international events in India.

What are your plans for the G20 Initiative?

SEPC is aligning its export promotion activities with G20 and in the month of March, 2023, we are organising Global Exhibition on Services (GES). We will be inviting people, agencies and companies from all across the world who would be interested in doing business in India. Under this umbrella, we will be promoting different segments like Athithi for travel and tourism sector, Sanjeevani for medical value



tourism, enTTech for entertainment sector and several other segments.

What synergy do you see between the entertainment and travel and tourism sectors?

We need to understand that the entertainment & films and travel & tourism sectors are very much interlinked and related. For instance, initiatives like Shoot in India will drive tourism to these locations which should be marketed well. Coproduction treaties are being signed which will benefit all the aligned sectors. These are being done under Market Access Initiatives.

Anything more you would like to share?

We are promoting India in all the services sectors, positioning India as India First globally. Recently, we had one of the largest participation of Indian contingents at MIPCOM devoted to film making, animation and gaming. On behalf of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, we launched the logo of India as the content hub of the world. More such activities and events are planned. Thus, through your medium, I will request people to identify SEPC as an organisation which can add value to the services they offer to the world. They should look at SEPC for market information, export development, export promotions and with their feedback how do we all collectively enable the business environment.





Uttar Pradesh offers experiential tourism through its natural, spiritual and cultural destinations

The IATO Annual Convention is returning to Uttar Pradesh after a long time and a major credit for that goes to **Mukesh Kumar Meshram IAS, Principal Secretary – Department of Tourism and Culture, Government of Uttar Pradesh**, who has been instrumental in getting it all arranged in a short time. In an exclusive chat with BOTT, he talked about how Uttar Pradesh is undergoing a series of infrastructural boost, which will definitely lift up its tourism and how the numerous hubs in UP are becoming religious and wellness getaways for people who are looking for peace and tranquillity. Read on to know more –

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Road Connectivity in UP

Lucknow is known for its hospitality and the whole Uttar Pradesh is a welcoming state. We have and are also in the process of developing massive infrastructure across the state in a big way starting with expressway connectivity, including Ganga Expressway, Purvanchal Expressway, Agra Expressway, and many other expressways. Additionally, we are also focussing on developing all roads that lead to tourist destinations – we will strengthen these roads, widen these roads, so that there are better connectivity facilities for the tourist.

Improving Air Connectivity and Attracting Buddhist Tourists

Not just road, International Airports are also being developed, such as the International Airport in Ayodhya, which is already under construction and will be ready by 2024 and the new Jewar International Airport will also soon be functional. Kushinagar International Airport is also under construction to attract Buddhist tourists from all over the world. There are about 50 crore Buddhist followers globally and we have 6 major destinations related to Buddha's life and teachings – Sarnath, Kushinagar, Kapilvastu, Shravasti, Sankisa, Kaushambi, thus making us an important Buddhist destination.

UP as a Religious & Wellness hub

Then we have Spiritual Circuit and Religious Circuit available with us, which includes Sufi Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Mahabharat Circuit, Shakti Peeth Circuit, Krishna Brij Circuit. What we need to realise is that post pandemic, people are going through immense stress. Now this could be stress related to work, loss of loved ones, loss of job or sudden health issues. People are very stressed and are seeking solace in an endeavour to improve their mental health. A visit to these religious and wellness circuits will help them rejuvenate their mind, body and soul. The fact that Uttar Pradesh has plenty such religious, spiritual and recreational destinations works to our advantage.

Planning for the future

The real challenge, however, is to hold the large number of tourists who are coming from abroad for a longer period of time. For this we are developing different kind of activities and facilities, such as, light and sound show at many Buddhist places – some places we have already started and other places we are planning to come up soon. We also have to showcase our Eco Tourism sites, like the Vindhya Range, lots of Rock Paintings, we have the oldest fossil park available in Sonbhadra district.

Thus, in a way, it wouldn't be wrong to say that Uttar Pradesh has it all.



From monuments to forts to well-connected roads, improved air connectivity through heliports at Mathura, Agra, hills, mountain ranges, culture, history etc. The only thing that we don't have is a beach! There is also a Cruise being planned up to Varanasi and will be extended up to Prayagraj. It would be a part of our preparedness of next Mahakumbh in 2024.

Branding UP globally

While we do have everything in UP, what we need to work upon is our branding. We have invited bloggers also to come visit and write about us. Through the IATO Convention too we are hoping to be more visible on the tourism map and we will look for similar such avenues where we can highlight the growth and development that is taking place in Uttar Pradesh.

Message for the Travel Trade

My message to the travel trade industry is that efforts should be made to make inbound tourists aware about their strength of showcasing India as a destination which is completely free from Covid due to massive vaccination drive across the country. We need to tell the world that India has developed itself as per the international standards and it is less expensive compared to other nations across the world, thus making it an attractive destination.



Bundelkhand – *The Land of culture and heritage*



Bundelkhand is known among discerning travellers for its colourful culture, rich history, beautiful landscapes, and breath-taking architecture. This land carries a imperial chronicle. Be it heritage, art & crafts, handloom, or culture, it stands out for its uniqueness.

Bundelkhand is known among discerning travellers for its colourful culture, rich history, beautiful landscapes, and breath-taking architecture. Enriched with various Bundela and Chandela tourist attractions like UNESCO World Heritage Site- the temples of Khajuraho, the fort and temples of Orchha, Panna National Park etc.

Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh is one of the chief tourist places that attract travellers. From ancient monuments and museums to the beautiful tourist places nearby, Bundelkhand seems to be the ideal tourist spot.

Here are 5 top places to visit in Bundelkhand

1. Brihaspati Kund: Brihaspati Kund is also known as Niagara Falls of India. It is very famous for its natural beauty. It is in the Panna district which is 37 KM from Panna, 75 KM from Chitrakoot, and 50 KM from Banda.

2. Shabri waterfall: Shabri waterfall is in Chitrakoot. It is one of the most beautiful places in Bundelkhand of Uttar Pradesh. This waterfall falls from the height of 40 feet in three parallel streams passing through the dense forests.

3. Khajuraho: Khajuraho temples are world-famous. Which is famous for its antiquity and artifacts. Which are beautiful, complex, full of awe and wonder. People come from abroad to see the beauty of this place. The temples built by the Chandela dynasty can be classified into three groups: Eastern, Western and Southern.

4. Panna National Park: It is situated between the Panna and the Chhatarpur districts of Bundelkhand. It was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1981. Which has an area of 542 square kilometres, in the year 2011 it was designated for Biosphere Reserve. The Ken River is the main attraction in this park.

5. Chitrakoot Dham: It is in the Chitrakoot district and is mainly famous for its spiritual and natural serenity. It is known for many famous temples mentioned in Hinduism. It has been the Tapo Bhoomi of the great saint Goswami Tulsidas. Lord Rama spent 11 years of his



exile in Chitrakoot Dham. In this place, Bharat had come to meet Ram Ji, whose place is named Bharat Milap.

Bundelkhandi Cuisine:

Bundelkhandi cuisine traces its roots back to the Jain food; Bundelkhandi cuisine has a dominant usage of wheat, rice (both small and big grain), Sorghum, millet, and gram/ split gram.

Significant Dishes of Bundelkhand Cuisine:

Bara –Bara it's made from split black lentil dumplings, soaked in buttermilk, tempered with mustard seeds, and served with crushed sugar.

Bafauri –Steamed flat bread pieces of millet or gram flour. Tossed with sautéed spices and condiments.

Besan Ke Aaloo: A dish that is like dried Rajasthani gatte. Besan ke aloo is made with gram flour (besan) chunks cooked in boiling water then sautéed using spices and condiments.

Ras Ki Kheer –Raas ki kheer is prepared by mixing the extracts of the local mahua flower with milk and millet. No sugar is added to this dish as it has got a sweetness of its own.



Mirzapur

Home to Shaktipeeth, Waterfalls & Wildlife Wonders

Mirzapur is considered as a very important district in terms of tourism. The natural beauty and religious atmosphere here attract the attention of the barbs. Vindhyachal Dham in Mirzapur is one of the main Hindu pilgrimage sites of India. It is one of the most unique places in India where the Holy River Ganges meets with Vindhya Range. This is considered significant in Hindu mythology and has a mention in Vedas. Near Mirzapur founded a religious place Vindhyachal, a Shakti Peeth, is a centre of pilgrimage in Mirzapur District, Uttar Pradesh.

Culture & Heritage: The calm and easy-going Mirzapur has never been known for its lifestyle and culture. This typical small-town of Uttar Pradesh is mostly known for its carpet weaving and brassware industries than for its festivals, food, and remarkable tourist spot. The cultural life of Mirzapur can be coined as “Ganga-Jamuni” culture that is quintessentially rural with specks of urban life making a peek-a-boo. In Mirzapur you can get a taste of pastoral life with folk music, dance and poetry oozing out at every breath. Here, you see a pleasant concoction of two lifestyles – one with dhoti or gamchha (towel) and kurta and other with branded apparels and scents. It is interesting to watch how these two extreme cultural won’t co-exist harmoniously. Mirzapur has its indigenous folk culture. Some of the popular folk genres are Kajali, Biraha, Lachari, Lavani are Belwariya. Biraha is an extremely popular folk genre that is based on romantic or chivalrous tales, stories on goddesses or contemporary issues. Competition between two Biraha parties is a common cultural programme in the area.

Wildlife Galore: Mirzapur is perhaps the only district in Uttar Pradesh that has more vegetation and wildlife than humans. It is also the only region in the state where you can enjoy your breakfast tea amidst lush green mountains and spend a quiet evening exploring colourful migratory birds nestled in the highest branches of mountain trees. But it is not just the mountains of Mirzapur that will lure you. The region is abundant with beautiful cascades, dams, temples, and idyllic villages that are worth touring.

Food in Mirzapur: Mirzapur shares a distinctive north Indian diet. The town having Mughal ancestral root specializes in Awadhi, Mughlai as well as typical cuisines of Uttar Pradesh. Mirzapur, however, is recognized more for its carpet weaving and brassware’s than for its delicacies.

However, like any part of India, residents of Mirzapur also love their food and indulge in making delicious culinary items inherited from their ancestors. The city offers very limited option of good restaurants. There are no high-end plush hotels and restaurants in the city and all you get is street side stalls or medium ranged hotels that serves average

Here's a peek into must-see places in Mirzapur:

- Sita Kund,
- Lal Bhairav Temple,
- Moti Talab,
- Tanda Waterfall,
- Vindham Waterfall,
- Tarakeshwar Mahadev,
- Maha Triangle,
- Shiv Pur,
- Chunar Fort,
- Gurudwara Guru Da Bagh
- Rameshwar



food. The popular vegetarian dishes in the region are dum bhindi, gobi musallam, kadhi chawal, pasanda paneer, baati chokha, chole bhature among others.

Surreal Painted Rock Shelters of Uttar Pradesh



Rock art is the earliest attempt by human beings to depict their natural world symbolically. This art has not only attracted scholars but tourist from all over the world. These rock paintings were made with a purpose of artistic expression of a life existed thousand years ago.

India's first painted rock shelters were discovered in Uttar Pradesh Sohagi Hills, Mirzapur near Varanasi in 1867-68 by A.C.L Carlyle. These were the first rock paintings found anywhere else in the world. Since then, hundreds of painted rock shelters have been marked in the districts of Chandauli, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Prayagraj, Mau Banda and Agra. Sites of rock art in Chandauli, Mirzapur and Sonbhadra districts have lovely waterfalls, lush jungles, fossil forests and rich wildlife.

Rock art in Uttar Pradesh covers wide span in time from circa 7000 B.C. to the early medieval ages. The early rock art depicts mainly hunting scenes besides giving a glimpse of ancient belief, rituals and stories portraying other normal activities such as dancing. They are simple outline figures filled with colors. The brushwork is sophisticated for its time, and numerous techniques have been used to make these paintings more alive. Kohbar, Lorikayan scenes, auspicious handprints are still a living tradition.

The Rock paintings of Uttar Pradesh are usually portrayed on a smooth surface of small to large sized rock shelters. Some of them are as long as 100 m in length, 5 m in broad and 5-7 m high. Some of the paintings are high up on the walls and ceilings, which indicates that there might have been a rock in between, at the time when these paintings were made. The painted rock shelters are generally located in narrow gorges of waterfalls or hill ranges. They present breathtaking vistas of the surrounding landscapes with its gnarled and twisted trees, boulders, and rocks in fantastic shades of colors and streams flowing through the land.

Some of the rock art, particularly the dance, hunting and battle scenes are noteworthy. Dancing in a row: dancing independently: dancing in a circle may be seen in many rock shelters. Sometimes they are shown dancing with weapons in hand, simple graceful line shows the fluidity of the legs, body, and arms in rhythm of dance. At Kaua Khoh rock shelter (district Sonbhadra) the dance scenes show a high degree of expression and skills. Every dancer is shown in a distinctive dancing pose. They are holding barbed arrows, lances, or harpoons. Paintings showing domestic animals, tree climbing and fruit gathering, honey collection, fishing, rowing, agriculture and other day to day activities provide a glimpse of the life of early people.



One of the earliest and rarest battle scenes depicted in the Kaua Khoh shelters comprises rows of archers facing and shooting barbed arrows on each other. The depiction of Lorika-episode Kaua Khoh may be placed well before the 14th century BC: therefore, it seems to be the earliest portrayal of this story.

The credit for the same goes to the ancient painters inhabiting the Vindhyan region.

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best wishes for a successful
37th IATO Annual Convention
 at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



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Maharashtra:

The State of Celebrations & Festivals



Every month there will be something to celebrate in Maharashtra depending upon the season. So Maharashtra is going to be truly a tourist's delight, says **Saurabh Vijay, Secretary, Tourism, Government of Maharashtra**

Rai Umraopati Ray

Post pandemic, what are the new initiatives of Maharashtra Tourism?

Post pandemic, we have identified 10 tourist circuits and we are working on developing tourism infrastructure and activities around them. Rather than spreading ourselves thin, we have taken initiatives to improve the tourist facilities around these circuits which have heritage sites and forts. There is a famous quadrilateral which people call Diamond Circuit, it starts from Mumbai, Pune, Nashik and Aurangabad. There are a number of heritage sites in all the four cities and we are developing the facilities around them. A media strategy and plan has been developed to highlight these 10 tourist circuits to travellers nationally and internationally.

Apart from these, we are working on concepts according to the demands of the tourists. From beach shack policy to lodges in forests to water sports adventure and cultural events, we have taken a number of initiatives and planned a calendar of activities. Every month there will be something to celebrate in Maharashtra depending upon the season. Mumbai will very soon have a festival of its own where we will invite people from all over the place. Similarly, we will have a Fort celebration in February. So Maharashtra is going to be truly a tourist's delight.

Are you focusing more on domestic tourism or inbound tourism?

The idea is to invite travellers from across the country and the world to Maharashtra. Like our honourable Prime Minister says that we should travel within India and explore our beautiful country. Even people from the state may not have travelled to the hinterlands of Maharashtra. We are all well connected with history, culture and festivals so we are targeting a lot of domestic travellers. Foreign tourists are more than welcome. We have a range of offerings for kinds of travellers like agro-tourism, eco-tourism and a lot of experiential products that attract new-age travellers.



What are your plans for G20?

We are organising a number of attractive shows which will be a mix of local Maharashtra cultural shows and Bollywood for G20. We are trying to create a very good experience for them. At the same time, we are making some very customised tour packages and we are circulating them through Indian embassies. We have been assured that our embassies abroad would be giving us our full support.

What are the ensuing new trends in the travel and tourism sectors?

See we all have realised now the importance of travelling. The need to refresh ourselves every year. The demand we have seen post covid is tremendous and we believe that this is going to stay as it is becoming our habit to travel. In the next two years, the travel and tourism segment is going to see tremendous growth.

The domestic sector is especially going to boom with Indians travelling within the country. India is such a big country and even if we attract tourists from UP, Bengal, North India and even from South to Maharashtra, we can really turn things around in tourism. Second, the good thing in Maharashtra is people are business friendly. People along with the Konkan areas are working in creating unique HomeStay experiences. In fact, HomeStay as a concept is becoming very popular, which overcomes the shortage of hotels.



Rajasthan

Welcoming tourists with warm and open arms

We will soon have a Rural Tourism policy in place, our Rajasthan Homestay Scheme is there along with Rajasthan Tourism Unit Policy, which is giving a flip to the tourism industry, says **Dr. Rashmi Sharma, Director of Tourism, Rajasthan Tourism**

Rai Umraopati Ray

How has Rajasthan fared in terms of travel and tourism post-pandemic?

The pandemic situation was difficult for everyone and the tourism industry was one of the most affected segments. However, Rajasthan adopted an empathic approach under the leadership of our Chief Minister and supported the industry and the stakeholders. This helped the industry to bounce back to normalcy with greater rigour. We have accorded 'Industry Status' to the tourism sector which has helped the industry to get the benefits and revive at a faster pace.

We will very soon have a Rural Tourism policy in place, our Rajasthan Homestay Scheme is there along with Rajasthan Tourism Unit Policy. We have recently come up with Rajasthan Film Tourism Promotion Policy, which is boosting tourism in a big way. Rajasthan has several beautiful locations for film shootings. Therefore, with the right atmosphere and conducive policies, travel and tourism sectors have fared well, it has generated employment and has given a direct boost to the economy.

Rajasthan has always been seen as an exotic wedding destination, what are your plans to promote it as a MICE destination?

With normalcy returning, the wedding numbers are steadily increasing. We are focussing on promoting the state as a MICE destination. There are a number of good exhibition centres and a few are also coming up. We intend to have a policy platform too to promote new centres and soon we may come up with a new policy.

Is there a shift with a lot of focus on domestic tourism?

With international travel and tourist arrivals coming almost to a halt in the last two years, it was imperative to focus on domestic tourism. Fortunately, Rajasthan has always been very strong in attracting domestic travellers especially from nearby states. Post covid, Indians are travelling a lot, some are terming this as 'revenge tourism'. Though it has a negative connotation, the fact of the matter is Indian travellers have become most sought after and Rajasthan is a preferred destination. At the same time, we are working towards getting the international numbers back on track, that is why we are at WTM, London.

What are your thoughts on Responsible Tourism, which is coming up in a big way post pandemic?

Rajasthan is one of the first few states to focus on 'Responsible Tourism'. We have embraced it as a mission. We aim to reduce the environmental impact of tourism and promote sustainability.

Anything more you would like to share?

Rajasthan has a lot of tourism offerings. The state is rich in terms of history, heritage and culture. It has grandeur. It has rich hospitality, in fact we are known for this. At the same time, we are moving away from the stereotype, to cater to the needs of the young travellers. We have options for adventure tourism, experiential tourism and gastronomy continues to put our state on the map, so this year there is a focus on exceptional authentic experiences too.





37th IATO ANNUAL CONVENTION

will put together a roadmap for boosting **INBOUND TOURISM**

Travel and Tourism is back! Flights are booked to capacity, hotels are full, events are taking place in big numbers and people are travelling like there is no tomorrow! Yet, in all this renewed euphoria, Inbound Tourism is a long way away from what it was in 2019. Though momentum has picked pace in inbound too, it is currently like a slow and steady tutorise, inching its way forward. But the inbound tourism professionals along with officials from Ministry of Tourism are confident that 2023 will be a game-changer year for Inbound tourism. Resonating this emotion, the 37th IATO Annual Convention will highlight the topic – **INBOUND TOURISM: What Lies Ahead!** To understand what the IATO Office Bearers have to say about the revival of Inbound Tourism, BOTT spoke exclusively to the officials and below are their opinions on not just revival of inbound tourism but also what the Ministry of Tourism needs to do to make this revival possible –

-Priyanka Saxena Ray-

Rajiv Mehra, President IATO

“I would like to tell my fellow IATO members that be optimistic, we have left Covid behind. Hygiene, Safety and Security for tourists are our watch words. The policy makers are upbeat and we are armed with our viable suggestions for them to take a look at over one on one meetings in order to boost Inbound Tourism.”

The 37th Annual Convention will see a different set of agenda that will revolve around Tourism and shall address the key facets of the sector in a way that merges with the present requirement for the industry. We have connectivity, investment, hotel and tour operators' synergy, inbound tourism – a session with key policy makers, marketing and promotion, new ideas and state presentations.

At the Convention, there are well thought of segments that have their own USPs. However, if I am to select the top three I would put forward – The Theme Session on Inbound Tourism; The Other Business Sessions along with the presentations of the Host State – Uttar Pradesh and the Presentations by the Participating States addressing the requirements of the stakeholders.

I would like to tell my fellow IATO members that be optimistic, we have left Covid behind. Hygiene, Safety and Security for tourists are our watch words. The policy makers are upbeat and we are armed with our viable suggestions for them to take a look at over one on one meetings. The Ministry of Tourism is proactive and we have requested



them on the strategic issues faced by our valued membership. These includes – the need for physical road shows, FAM for bloggers and foreign tour operators and E-Visa for Canada, Germany and other European Countries and countries which are left out. Opening up of E-Visa to UK has been a major boost.

Regarding revival of inbound tourism, we are optimistic. Business is trickling in, but what is most important is the need for effective marketing and promotion by Ministry of Tourism Government of India and we have highlighted our request in the aforesaid point. We have also requested the State Governments to draft in the presence of tour operators from across the country in their promotional campaign. Coming back to IATO Convention, the year too, we have the entertainment features also in our convention like before but with a different flavour. The usual IATO run, entertainment evenings, motivational speaker and sumptuous luncheon and dinners will also be elaborate and unique.

E M Najeeb, Sr. Vice President, IATO

“I would like to send out a message to my fellow IATO members that India is ready for tourism with unprecedented vaccination drive. Policy makers are gearing up so be positive and touch base with your foreign tour operators.”

The difference in the Convention this year, as compared to the previous ones, will be in the proposed agenda and format of the convention where the basic features will have a divergent flavour in tune with the present scenario

I would like to send out a message to my fellow IATO members that India is ready for tourism with unprecedented vaccination drive. Policy makers are gearing up so be positive and touch base with your foreign tour operators.

We are hopeful that the Ministry of Tourism will help make recovery of Inbound Tourism. Our top 3 demands from them would include – physical marketing and promotion activities; MDA for inbound tour



operators and resumption of E-Visa from Canada and other European Countries. UK E-visas have come as a welcome move.

Going forward, we are very hopeful regarding revival of inbound tourism, provided effective marketing strategies as enumerated above are put in place.

I would also like to share with my IATO members that besides the above, we also take up diverse issues on behalf of our members and table it to the concerned Ministries for remedial action. Sustained follow up is also done.



Ravi Gosain, Vice President & Convention Chairman, IATO

“My fellow IATO members, it is time to hold your fort strongly. We have won the battle already and now we have to rebuild what we lost, so stay calm and be patient. Through our sessions, our members can take away some ideas, confidence and roadmap for the future. Our expert speakers will share their views on rethinking business in changed scenario.”

The IATO annual convention is a marquee event of tourism industry in India. However, the 37th IATO Annual Convention will be a full-scale event post pandemic, so we are expecting good number of delegates, charged with energy and enthusiasm to restart and rethink tourism. As a convention chairman, I am carrying a huge responsibility to meet up delegates' high expectations and I along with our convention committee are putting lots of energy to bring up another great annual convention. This year we have brought up different knowledgeable business sessions with lesser numbers than previous years, so that we can more time for Q & A and networking. We have called few new speakers, so delegates can have a variety to hear new minds.

We are happy to bring back our convention to UP and chosen Lucknow as convention city. UP tourism department was helpful in planning and organising this event here but finding a hotel for putting all delegates in one hotel was challenge because in Lucknow most of the hotels have inventory below 150 rooms. However, we have taken multiple hotels for our delegates, but ferrying them to inaugural site



and venue hotel will be something which our transport committee has to deal diligently during the convention. Due to pandemic last year we had to push our convention to December month instead of our usual time in September. This year also due to some unavoidable circumstances again our convention will be in December, I am sure it will not affect our preparation as well as enthusiasm of participating delegates. But yes, it will be bit cold in early morning for our running and walking participants at IATO Run and for evening entertainment program, which we have to conduct in an open area. We are providing gas heaters for all outside venue and I hope with good numbers and high-octane entertainment delegates will enjoy more than feeling cold. Inbound tourism is gradually picking up after almost two years of no business and in this phase, we have high expectations from MoT to facilitate our industry the desired support. We want them to start overseas promotions both in digital and print media. I have been always vocal that India needs to be visible in front of prospective tourists, so they can be confident and decide India as their next holiday destination. Secondly, for our b2b network roadshows in different source markets are required to rebuild confidence with the foreign partners. Marketing development scheme of MoT is suspended as of now. We want that to be available for the members, so they can plan their sales trips, participation at trade fairs etc.

Rajnish Kaistha, Hony. Secretary, IATO

“Since our industry colleagues have negative zero revenue balance sheet for last two years, government must support the industry (inbound tour operators) by way of giving 50% subsidy on overseas travel exhibitions and road shows. Restoration of MDA is most desired for to get industry going.”

The 37th IATO Convention is happening at a time when tourism is in revival mode, travel is back and people are optimistic about the future. At the Convention this year, we are expecting around 1000 delegates. The inbound tourism fraternity has emerged as most resilient after almost 30 months and we all are now geared to take up the new challenges as way forward under the new normal. I am confident that we would touching the pre covid levels in 2023/24 as we all move together in that direction.

During the pandemic, no help of any kind was extended to our industry and our colleagues for over 30 months. But now, the government must step up and help us by ensuring full participation in overseas trade shows and physical international road shows. And most importantly, there needs to be aggressive overseas positive marketing in respective regions as per the local requirements in digital as well as print media.





Since our industry colleagues have negative zero revenue balance sheet for last two years, government must support the industry (inbound tour operators) by way of giving 50% subsidy on overseas travel exhibitions and road shows. Restoration of MDA is most desired for to get industry going.

Going forward, we are highly optimistic and have fought against all odds because Tourism is in our blood. So, I expect pre covid levels to come for tourism by 2023/24 season. By then most international flights shall be restored, Indian outbound traffic will level up the prices. We work our way forward with this faith.

Sunil Mishra,
Hony. Treasurer, IATO

“One message that I would like to share with all IATO members is to request them to be positive. Policy makers are proactive, UK Visa has been resolved, issues are being addressed at the right ministries by IATO, so worry no more as your business tsunami is round the corner.”

All IATO Conventions are unique in their own way. The host State – Uttar Pradesh, the theme on Inbound, the well – appointed business sessions and the participating states besides the overwhelming response from the members makes this IATO Convention different this year

One message that I would like to share with all IATO members is to request them to be positive. Policy makers are proactive, UK Visa has been resolved, issues are being addressed at the right ministries by IATO, so worry no more as your business tsunami is round the corner.

My three suggestions to the Ministry of Tourism for boosting inbound tourism would be – doing more physical marketing and promotion activities; MDA for inbound tour operators and resuming E-Visa from Canada and other European Countries.

I am very hopeful for the future, provided effective marketing strategies as enumerated above are put in place. By the fall of 2023, if Covid is kept at bay, we would be able to touch the 2019 figures. IATO is for the members, we are striving to meet their requirements by taking up the issue and placing them at the right fora over documentation and one to one meeting.



Sanjay Razdan,
Hony. Joint Secretary, IATO

“The theme of the 37th IATO Convention is "Inbound Tourism - What lies ahead", is a very important subject considering we have had very difficult two years and need to share ideas with all stakeholders and get some important inputs from experts for formulating plans for the future. We expect a large participation this year which should surpass the previous conventions.”

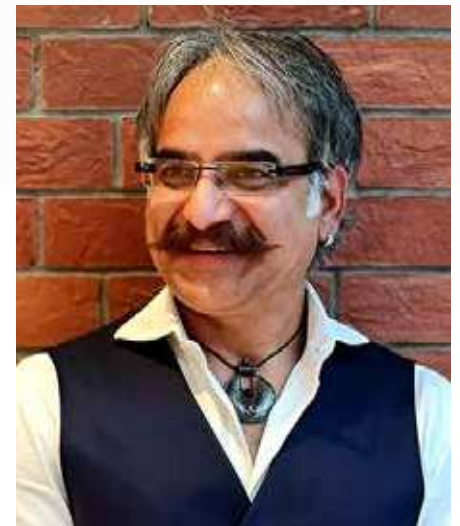
The theme of the 37th IATO Convention is "Inbound Tourism - What lies ahead", is a very important subject considering we have had very difficult two years and need to share ideas with all stakeholders and get some important inputs from experts for formulating plans for the future. There will also be decision makers from the State and Central government and will be a good opportunity to tell them what we want and also to listen to them as well. We expect a large participation this year which should surpass the previous conventions.

Personally, I am optimistic person and wish to tell all our friends – stay positive, worst is over. We will overcome this as most important is that we are still alive and kicking.

The top three areas that the Ministry of Tourism should focus on for boosting Inbound Tourism – to immediately start a strong campaign for India promotion by way of overseas roadshows, print and digital media ads, Fam Trips to India from major source countries, etc. They should restart MDA scheme, which has been withheld, as post pandemic, tour operators truly need financial help. Also restart incentive schemes like SEIS and once again activate the India Tourism marketing offices in major source markets.

I am very positive for the future as we have seen an upward trend and business has been getting better since June, 2022. I am sure the figures and arrival will become better by early 2023 and we hope to reach pre-pandemic levels by end of December, 2023.

We do hope with the cooperation of all stakeholders, success will come soon and we expect better support from hotels. Last but not the least, we must promote Sustainable and Eco-Tourism, which has become very important post pandemic.



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AWARDED BEST LEISURE & MICE RESORT 2018 (INDIA TRAVEL AWARDS-NORTH)



'We need to change our strategy of marketing India from traditional to digital'

Dr. Subhash Goyal, Chairman – STIC Travel & Air Charter Group and Past President, IATO is an institution in himself – a veteran who breathes tourism. His passion and understanding of the subject far supersedes that of a majority of tourism stakeholders put together. Below he shares his views on the revival of Inbound Tourism and the Action Plan needed for the same –

My Suggestions to IATO

- My first suggestion to IATO members would be that whatever your differences are, they should be only till the elections. The present President and the EC of IATO are doing an excellent job and are devoting their lot of precious time, money and resources for the interest of the Inbound Tourism Industry and they need our full support. Therefore, whoever is elected, we all need to unite behind that person because united we stand and divided, we fall.
- The second suggestion to the tour operators is that we are all the true ambassadors of India and we should always ensure that every tourist who comes as a visitor and should go back as a friend.
- The third suggestion I would like to give is that we have a lot of issues, both with the Centre and State governments and we can only solve them if all the trade associations work together as one team.
- The last suggestion I would like to give to the leaders is that whenever you make any representation to the Government, always keep the interest of the smallest tour operator, smallest travel agent, the tourist guide and the tourist taxi & coach drivers in mind. Their interest should always be above our personal or any other individual association's interests then only the tourism industry will grow and we will show our true leadership qualities.



"We need to have a five-year plan for international marketing which should be done without waiting for the release of any budget. International marketing particularly electronic, digital and social media in different languages is the need of the hour without which we cannot achieve our targets."

The top 3 demands from the Ministry of Tourism are:

- We should not suspend e-visa for any of the source market countries of inbound tourism because the damage is irreparable. In 2019, India earned 30 billion US dollars and was one of the largest employment generators. Post-pandemic international tourism is slowly bouncing back but for India to take advantage of it, our e-visa site should be more friendly and we should be able to accept any international credit card on the e-visa website and we should not depend on one bank's gateway, but we should use the services of all important international banks.
- Tourism industry needs to be treated as deemed exporter at par with IT and the exporters of physical goods because we are not only one of the largest foreign exchange earners but are also the largest employment generator in the country.
- We need to have a five-year plan for international marketing which should be done without waiting for the release of any budget. International marketing particularly electronic, digital and social media in different languages is the need of the hour without which we cannot achieve our targets.

Action plan for revival of Inbound Tourism

- If we want to achieve a target of 20 million inbound tourists, then we should have about 40-50 million seats on international flights available coming in and out of India because our outbound travel is

also expected to be more than 25 million. This can only be achieved by having an open sky and not restrictive aviation policy.

- We need to change our strategy of marketing India from the traditional way to digital and use social media marketing. We need to do joint promotions with the industry and country specific promotions by involving the Indian embassy and the local Indian community in various countries.
- We have to relook at our strategy and appoint prominent outbound operators in all the source markets as India tourism experts by having online training programs for them and giving them certificates after they are able to answer some basic tourism facts about India.
- There has to be an involvement of the commercial department of Indian Embassies, the travel and tourism trade, the Chambers of Commerce and the Tourism Associations in all the major countries with which we have an air connectivity to promote India.

Will MICE take time to build up?

India has much to offer too, and right now the MICE sector in India has been pegged at 25,000 crore rupees, with growth 8%. It is poised for robust growth as the government and private individuals are gearing to extend the number of venues in India.

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'With Government's support, revival of Inbound Tourism can be much faster'

Pronab Sarkar, Managing Director, Swagatam Tours Pvt. Ltd. and Immediate Past President, IATO has led the

association from the front many times. Together with his team, they have battled many tough situations and taking cue from those along with his vast years of experience, here are his views on the ways through which Inbound Tourism can go back to what it was and grow further on...

BOTT Desk

After two and half years of hardship due to the pandemic the whole industry is looking toward the start of new business and we have great expectation that after suffering heavy losses we all are looking for revival and beginning of a new era post Covid. All business houses are looking forward to announce that they are open for business and IATO Annual Convention in Lucknow is giving us the opportunity to reconnect with the industry partners – Government, Hotels, Transport and airlines.

A message that I would like to share with my fellow IATO members is that the pandemic has taught us two lessons – one is that unity in the industry is the road to success. All our members were united to fight the hardship and this is one of the main reasons why we were all able to sail through this difficult time and move towards a brighter future. Secondly, extensive use of technology and work from home/remote locations came as a new work culture for many. While people abroad used to follow this way of working, it was never really put to use in India. Covid taught us all to do our businesses from wherever we are and be bound to a physical office.

The Ministry of Tourism has always lent a patient hearing to the tourism sector, there is much that needs to be done in order to revive Inbound Tourism. My top three demands from the Ministry of Tourism includes – They need to immediately start promoting India tourism through its marketing initiatives and promotion in international markets and commence Road Shows that will send out a message to the people abroad that India is fully open to welcome tourists once again. The Ministry needs to urge the government to open E-visa for the remaining source countries including Canada and Middle East countries so that there is better inbound tourist traffic. Lastly, reintroduction of the MDA scheme by the Ministry of Tourism and SEIS by Ministry of Commerce, will help in growth of tourism faster than normal.

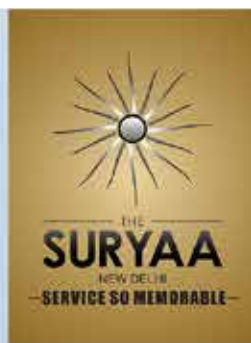
Moving forward, as mentioned earlier, tourism recovery is possible if correct actions are taken. The sooner the support is implemented for



the tourism industry by the government, the faster will be the growth graph, making it possible to achieve the 2019 figures by 2024. In absence of any government support it may take longer than normal. The Indian Government is aiming to become a 5 trillion economy by 2030 and tourism can play an important role in this growth trajectory of the nation.

Meanwhile, us at Swagatam Tours have been participating international shows and exhibitions this year. The main reason to participate at the international shows and exhibitions this year was to announce mainly that we are open for Tourism from all over the world and to reconnect with all our foreign operators to emphasise that we are 100% safe and ready to service their clients visiting India.

Lastly, I would just like to add that it is very important that we should always remain positive, even after all the hardships, as then our results will also be very positive – not only for the business but also for the entire tourism industry. As we all know once tourism is revived, it helps to restore the jobs and new jobs are created for the youth. Ultimately country is benefited economically including earning valuable foreign exchange.



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"The pandemic offered Indians an opportunity to explore their own country"

The pandemic offered Indians an opportunity to explore their own country. There has been an uptick in demand for unexplored destinations – people are seeking ways to combine pilgrimages and spiritual trips with experiencing local food, cultural trails and adventure. In an exclusive with BOTT, **Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Past President FICCI & Member FICCI Tourism Committee, CMD- The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group**, shares her views on the evolving travel trends that are going to dominate the future and the return of GITB post pandemic.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Tourism across the globe is in its revival stage and recovering from pandemic. How, in your opinion, is India fairing on the tourism recovery path?

The travel industry is getting back on its feet and is witnessing a steady recovery. Demand for trips within India is also boosted by delays in securing visas to some overseas destinations and the surging cost of a holiday abroad.

Which vertical of tourism will be the first to recover – Inbound / Outbound / Hospitality / Aviation or MICE?

Aviation was the first to lead the revival of tourism since people started travelling to come back to their workplace and return from their hometowns once the flights started. Slowly it has led to higher consumer confidence resulting in more demand for travel. There are now visible signs of recovery across all segments most notably leisure tourism.

Domestic Tourism emerged as a strong saviour for tourism in pandemic. Will it continue to be so for the Indian tourism sector?

In a country of 1.4 billion people, robust domestic tourism will continue to be a dominant factor in recovery of tourism in the coming years. The pandemic offered Indians an opportunity to explore their own country. There has been an uptick in demand for unexplored destinations – people are seeking ways to combine pilgrimages and spiritual trips with experiencing local food, cultural trails and adventure.

Indian traveller has evolved in the post pandemic era. What are the new trends you are witnessing in the hospitality sector?

The travel industry has embraced new trends such as micro-holidays, staycations and workcations. There is a major shift in travel habits and sentiments as the annual break has



now turned into shorter breaks with people increasingly taking frequent trips in the form of weekend getaways and seasonal holiday breaks.

When do you think India Tourism will go back to its 2019 figures?

As per UNWTO international travel will not recover before 2024. Inbound tourism in India will only be half by 2025 of what it used to be in 2019. While the business has picked up, Indian Tourism will not be back before 2026 to pre-pandemic levels.

Could you identify and enlist the top 3 travel trends that are going to dominate the tourism industry in the near future?

- Bleisure Travel is a growing tourism trend where people extend their business travel to leisure activities. There is also the "digital nomad" community among millennials – where online professionals and freelancers adopt the lifestyle of traveling as they work.
- Tech-Empowered Travel – existing and emerging technologies will be the key in building traveller confidence and increase

their willingness to travel. Tech innovations like Mobile apps, self-service check-in, contactless mobile payments, automated and flexible cancellation policies etc will transform the guest travel experience.

- Sustainable Tourism practices and environmental initiatives is of utmost importance for the resilience of the sector. Travellers are more aware of this today and are making their travel decisions with the environment in mind. Sustainability is not only about the environment. It is also about making a positive impact on cultures, economies, and the people at the destinations that they visit.

How important a role, in your opinion, will GITB play in boosting tourism in the region? How has the response been to the show so far, in terms of exhibitors and participant confirmations?

The Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) is India's leading business networking platform for Inbound Tourism. GITB is organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). GITB receives participation from more than 280 foreign tour operators from all over the world and more than 290 Indian Exhibitors to showcase their products. Over the period of two days more than 11,000 pre-scheduled structured face to face business meetings take place between foreign buyers and Indian sellers. It has been playing a critical role in shaping the Tourism Eco system of the country and will continue to do so. Specially after a two-year lull due to the pandemic, this platform is extremely crucial to ensure that we once again start receiving Foreign Tourists as like before and even more. The 12th edition of GITB is from April 23-25, 2023 at Jaipur, India and as like every edition a lot of interest, enthusiasm and participation from Indian Travel fraternity and their foreign counterparts across the world to meet and network with each other.



'Despite Inbound, we do not anticipate domestic tourism taking a back seat in near future'

As everyone in the tourism and hospitality sector agrees, the pandemic and post pandemic travel was highly reliant on domestic travel, however, hotels are slowly seeing the transition towards foreign inbound coming back and contributing to the business in the last couple of months. Resonating the emotion, **Rajani Nair Deb, Commercial Director – Business Development, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park**, speaks exclusively to BOTT about the trends in travel and business contributors to the hotel.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Hospitality industry, at one point in time, was heavily dependent on Inbound traffic. Has the scenario changed in the post-pandemic scenario?

Yes, post-pandemic the scenario has changed drastically. We are no longer inbound dependent. To cite an example Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park had close to 80% of occupancy generated from domestic travellers. At Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, over 70% of occupancy had been from domestic travellers when we opened in Q1 of 2022.

Will Domestic Tourism take a back seat, now that Inbound is picking pace?

The pandemic and post pandemic travel was highly reliant on domestic travel, however, we are slowly seeing the transition towards foreign inbound being a major contributor in the past 2 months. GOB mix has moved to a 60:40 ratio for domestic to international share as of today for Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park which was at 80:20 in May 2022.

We, however, do not anticipate domestic tourism taking a back seat in the near future since domestic tourism is what helped hotels tide through the post-pandemic recovery; achieving near 2019 occupancy levels. Leisure travel within India has steadily increased and that will continue to grow as people want to travel more frequent than pre-pandemic days. Since businesses have seen the advantage of hosting events with India as against overseas destinations, this will continue.

The Weddings industry helped the hospitality sector stay afloat during the worst of times. How was it at your property?

We opened Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park on May 1, 2022 with a wedding and sold out! The Hilton Hotels at Embassy Manyata offer aspirational experiences for the weddings and social events segment especially because of our unique product, price offerings, and convenient location- under 40 minutes from the airport and key places of interest. So definitely we welcome large-scale wedding events as we have the capacity to host over 1500 pax under one roof over many days.

How hopeful are you for the revival of Inbound Tourism? When do you think we will go back to the 2019 figures?

We have already exceeded 2019 occupancy figures in year one of our complex operations and that has helped keep stakeholder and industry sentiments positive. Overall group business brings a solid 30% base occupancy for our complex consistently. We are recording a consistent increase in foreign inbound business too, primarily in corporate travel space, and anticipate that Q3 of 2023 will see the complete revival of



foreign inbound similar to pre-covid levels.

What is the USP of your hotel, especially with regards to the MICE Sector?

The Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park is a confluence of diverse experiences with two hotels offering multi-price point advantage and an expansive 60,000 square foot convention centre. With 619 rooms, five dining options, 18 event venues, and a retail zone within the premises, we are able to tailor-make personalized event packages to cater from 2 to 2000 persons. We offer the highest twin bed inventory in the country currently and the largest room inventory in Bengaluru.

Further, the complex is run as a model sustainable business operation using clean energy sources such as solar and wind for its energy needs. The hotel also has a zero single-use plastic policy and we manufacture our own line of water bottles.

In your opinion, how has the travel preferences changed / evolved in the post Covid scenario?

It is safe to say travel has been permanently impacted by the pandemic. While essential business domestic travel has completely resumed and individuals want to travel twice as much as pre-covid levels during leisure, hybrid events and technology-enabled platform meetings continue to hold sway.



Indian Hospitality Industry

Enjoying Domestic business while hopeful for better Inbound

In the new world – the dynamics and ethos of travel have changed manifold. From travel preferences to duration of stay, nothing is what it used to be in the pre-pandemic world.

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 few hospitality professionals to understand what drives their business today and how hopeful they are for the revival of inbound tourism.

Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray

Nikhil Sharma

Regional Director for Eurasia
Wyndham Hotels and Resorts EMEA

“At Wyndham, 47% across the region have already recovered to above 2019 RevPAR and we look forward to seeing this continue to rise as inbound tourism gains momentum.”

The hospitality industry has shown incredible resilience over the last couple of years, and this has been reflected in the demand for both leisure and business travel. Following the initial easing of travel restrictions, we saw a large uptick in staycations and domestic travel, with this trend continuing an upward trajectory. International travel is gradually resuming with a strong demand reflected in a recent survey done by STR, which highlighted that 47% of those surveyed were as likely to travel internationally post covid as they were prior to the pandemic and 39% more likely than before. These insights show that there is a demand for this type of inbound traffic and we at Wyndham look forward to continuing to see the demand bounce back.

I feel very confident in the revival of inbound tourism as the last year has shown that there is still a strong demand from these types of travellers, and in accordance with the STR findings previously mentioned. At Wyndham, 47% across the region have already recovered to above 2019 RevPAR and we look forward to seeing this continue to rise as inbound tourism gains momentum.

At Wyndham we have seen a surge in MICE business as large corporate companies return to their offices and as in-person events continue to

bounce back. It's difficult to say when we will see a full recovery, but we feel confident in the increased demand we are currently seeing.

Ashwni Kumar Goela

Area General Manager Delhi NCR
Radisson Hotel Group South Asia
and General Manager, Radisson Blu Plaza
Delhi Airport

“MICE has recently started recovery from 2022 October onwards. I foresee a complete MICE recovery happening by mid-2023 especially since India is now hosting the G20 Presidency.”

Post pandemic has seen a major change in the way the domestic segment has been travelling we see more of the advent of the middle class travelling more often and cities tier B and tier C cities have seen a revival of the travel that was not happening pre-pandemic. We also see that the inbound traffic that we were all dependant on at one point of time is not that much relevant for all locations however, having said that this is going to be import segment for us as we move forward.

I think inbound tourism, once the flight and the visas are sorted, is a very important sector for us wherein that's bound to come back to us. I see a revival of the 2019 figures not before 2024 end.

MICE has recently started recovery from 2022 October onwards. I foresee a complete MICE recovery happening by mid-2023 especially since India is now hosting the G20 Presidency. Hence, I see lot much MICE happening starting January 2023 onwards for the whole of next year.





Amulya Kakkar

General Manager, Clarks Shiraz Agra

“As for complete recovery of Inbound and business going back to what it was pre pandemic, I don’t foresee that happening before September – October 2023.”

Agra, since always, has been a popular inbound destination. But all that changed during the pandemic when the flights were grounded across the world. People started travelling domestically and business graph shifted from inbound to domestic. Also, during the pandemic, the weddings market saw a shift from the banquet to hotels. Hotel staff was vaccinated, proper sanitation and hygiene was being followed and the guests’ numbers had come down – all these factors made hotels a conducive venue for weddings. Infact, many hotels were able to survive during the pandemic due to the weddings market.



This year, June onwards, inbound tourists have started to come in as India opened visa up for few countries. However, the inbound volume is much less as compared to what it was and the share of business at our hotels is still 78% domestic and 22% inbound. As for complete recovery of Inbound and business going back to what it was pre pandemic, I don’t foresee that happening before September – October 2023 as many economies internationally are also struggling for sustenance.

Yes, MICE has started. We just recently had a big conference in Agra and almost all hotels were booked. Exhibitions too have started to take place. In my opinion, the recovery of MICE segment will be faster than that of inbound.

Post pandemic, the staycation concept is still going strong. Also, people’s preference for star-hotels has increased in comparison to budget hotels. They don’t mind paying a little extra but prefer to stay in a star category hotel.

Jai Chugh

General Manager

DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square

“After the pandemic ended in Feb this year, we continued to see growth increase in domestic tourism, especially leisure tourism and this will continue for a while looking at the current global scenario.”

Hospitality industry, at one point in time, was heavily dependent on Inbound business, however, the last two years brought to light the immense potential that domestic tourism holds, not just in India but globally as well. After the pandemic, which ended in Jan-Feb this year, we continued to see growth increase in domestic tourism,

especially leisure tourism and this will continue for a while looking at the current global scenario.

The revival of Inbound Tourism seems slow owing to ongoing challenges such as visa restrictions, high airfares, global recession, global economic and geopolitical conflicts among others. Our major Inbound source markets such as UK, Europe, Gulf and Korea still does not have e-visa facility for India. These factors are impacting the travel across the globe and hence, I don’t see Inbound traffic coming back to 2019 figures before Q4 of 2024.

There has been a spike in domestic MICE business since the beginning of 2022 and the growth has been just about 55% over 2019 in this segment. However, we are seeing 2023 with an optimistic approach when India will play a host to large scale international events such as G20 Summit. This will open gates of recovery for Inbound MICE.



Suvarna Mani Pradhan

Head – Travel Industry Sales, ITC Hotels

“Sustainability, Safety and Technology are going to be the key differentiators going forward. While MICE is witnessing not just a revival but a surge, retention of big-ticket destination wedding is going to be key.”

The hospitality industry has been dependent on multiple segments and Inbound Tourism has always been integral. During the pandemic, the lowest hanging fruit and the least tapped was the Domestic market. With campaigns like Dekho Apna Desh and Udan schemes, these have provided a thrust to the untapped market. This was one segment of business where the true potential had not been realised.

While the Inbound tourism had taken a backseat during the pandemic, 2022 has surely seen a silver lining. 2023 is the year where we are looking at revival of international arrivals to 2019 level. According to data, we are already close to 50% revival as on August 22 versus 2019 levels, and the season has just kickstarted. Air seat capacity and hotel occupancies are a true reflection of travel revival. We are bracing ourselves for a buoyant year across all segments.

With world class convention venues, large format hotels which offer state of art facilities, we still have a huge potential to scale up on MICE as MICE is on the rise globally.





MICE and Weddings have aided in survival as well as revival of the industry. Not only have they revived, they have bounced back with a vengeance. Corporates are moving back from hybrid model to physical models. Sustainability, Safety and Technology are going to be the key differentiators going forward. While MICE is witnessing not just a revival but a surge, retention of big-ticket destination wedding is going to be key.

this year 2023. With E-Visas being open for UK and government making sincere efforts in easing the travel complications, I feel that Jan-March 2023 will witness a good inbound performance. Overall, 2023-24 will be a good year for Tourism.

Meanwhile, MICE has certainly crossed the 2019 figures and has outperformed not only in domestic destinations but overseas destinations too and I feel this segment will remain super active in 2023 too.

Digvijay Diwakar

Director, Diverse Hotels Marketing Pvt. Ltd.

“I feel 2023 will be great year for India being a host country of G20 meet, which will eventually help us grow the inbound tourism segment.”

Domestic was a trend emerging as a new segments pre pandemic also, be it a leisure /family travellers or mice, which I feel got positive boost after pandemic. Today luckily our country is witnessing massive domestic movement like entire Western part of globe see as intra-Europe travel, which help their economy big time. Also, we are witnessing lot of weddings and MICE which otherwise was not happening in India (pre-pandemic)



Inbound is a great segment and definitely has lot of potential, which is struggling at the moment largely because of poor marketing of India as brand in overseas markets, or If I say poor monitoring of marketing efforts. I feel 2023 will be great year for India being a host country of G20 meet, which will eventually help us grow the inbound tourism segment. Hopefully Government will also put their efforts (monitored and intelligent efforts) in marketing India as a brand (tourist destination)

Gagan Katyal

Head of Sales & Marketing
Ananta Hotels & Resorts

“In today’s time, inbound leisure has already started for the country and full recovery should take two years in my estimate.”

There is no doubt that the hospitality industry, at one point in time, was heavily dependent on the inbound traffic. However, post pandemic the country has seen immense growth in the domestic traveller segment. This has actually changed the business mix. Though I still feel that Inbound leisure will remain an important segment, but yes, now there is a good mix of travellers for hotels and resorts too.



In today’s time, inbound leisure has already started for the country and full recovery should take two years in my estimate.

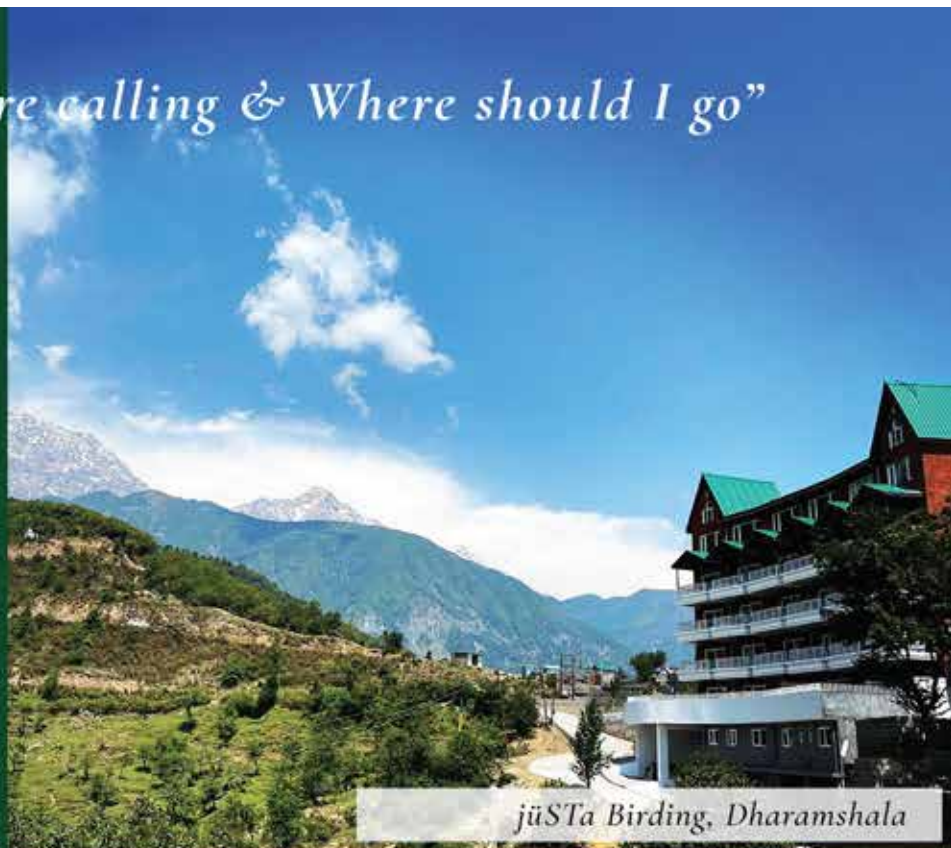
As for MICE, I think domestic MICE has returned to its normal size, it’s the International MICE which is yet to start. It is difficult to say by when the international MICE will recover fully but if I have to give a number, I think another two years before it reaches pre-pandemic levels.



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IATO EC Members seek aggressive marketing from MoT & reopening of India Tourism Offices

Organising IATO Annual Conventions is not an easy task. They are huge events that offers a platform to numerous people from the travel trade to meet and network – do business talks and also have a gala time. The industry people look forward to meet their industry colleagues in a new place each year amidst knowledge sessions and leadership talks. The zealous team working behind putting this convention together, the IATO Executive Committee members took time out of their busy schedules and spoke to BOTT, sharing their thoughts on growth and revival of inbound tourism in India. Read below to know what each of them had to say –

-Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray-

Harish Mathur

IATO Executive Committee Member

Day by day, people are opening up to new opportunities throughout the world and here in India we are prepared to welcome tourists, satisfying all the hygienic and sanitary needs, demand for which has gradually increased amongst the travellers' post pandemic. Amidst covid vaccination and treatment, tourists prefer to stay and visit clean and safe places irrespective of the money spent there. The priorities are now changed to spending more money during travel to ensure 100% safety and security from viruses and infections. Henceforth, we should grab this opportunity on a positive note as understandably more money spent during travel will increase the demand, and ultimately benefit our family of tour operators.

In a recent report it was estimated that India will witness 13.34 million inbound tourists by 2024, marking an increase of around 22% as compared to the pre-pandemic year 2019. The report also forecast that tourists travelling to India will increase year-on-year between 2022 and 2024, starting with 4.1 million in 2022, doubling in 2023 to 8.5 million and reaching 13.34 million in 2024. In support of this report, I will say that India is a spectacular destination, for both business and tourism. I would request the Ministry of Tourism to organise and promote India through a variety of information spread during conclaves and events in order to educate people about the prestigious history and culture of India. Also, many foreigners do not know much about India in depth, so these events will not only spread information and educate people, but also ignite a spark in them to visit India. Brand INDIA should be advertised more and more as a safe and sound destination, which is only possible if we work together as a whole.



Deepak Bhatnagar

IATO Executive Committee Member

Tourism post pandemic to India is very slow mainly due to very high international air fare. Our current Visa policy is also not helping us to push business. Also, there is no marketing at all for destination India where else other destinations have taken lead in marketing their destinations. Today, the preference of a traveller has changed. They are looking for good value of money. Most tourists are looking for more hygienic and cleaner destinations/hotels etc and the tour operators need to keep this in mind.

We at IATO have been in constant touch with not only the Ministry of Tourism but also with the Ministry of Home, External Affairs, Civil Aviation etc. and pressing upon on them to make travel to India easy. Though our government had opened the Visas (including E-Visa except few countries) in November 2021 and also opened the skies for international airlines sometime in March 2022, what should have also followed was extensive marketing of destination India in various source markets. Moving forward, it is critical to have the e-visas open for UK and Canada immediately as both of these markets are key source markets for India.

Recently, lot of our partners across Europe, especially from Spain and Germany, faced E-Visa issues, which was taken up with the respective Ministries.

We have been pushing the Ministry of Tourism to participate in all major international tourism fairs and we are thankful to them that finally they have participated in WTM. London and would be participating in FITUR, Spain & ITB Germany.

We have also taken up the matter to increase international flights so



that once they are running at full capacity, a more balanced airfare may come into play. Key issue for us is to get back to same numbers for India what we are doing pre-pandemic at the earliest and then start growing the numbers.

Manoj Kumar Matta

IATO Executive Committee Member

The entire tourism scenario has changed post pandemic. It has become difficult to find skilled man power in our industry, especially those with 2-5 years of experience because most of them have chosen an alternate career, same is the case with quality vehicles etc. Now tourists are looking at short haul destination and are more interested in experiential travel. They are willing to traverse the off-beaten destinations. Also, post Covid as refunds of tourists got stuck with hotels, airlines and OTAs, realising the strength and “personal touch” by off-line tour operators, tourists are now coming back to us. Now a days, young travellers are using ‘Social Media’, particularly Instagram to decide their next holiday and hence entire marketing and advertising game has changed.



It gives me pride to say that IATO has not left any stone unturned in its perusal of boosting tourism. It was due to our persistent efforts that meeting was made possible.

Now going forward, we need to push MoT more aggressively to give free space to government recognised tour operators for 1-2 years in various international travel marts/exhibitions and this needs to be done in a planned manner, well in advance

The PMO has to be convinced that our Diplomats / Ambassadors cannot replace our international MoT offices as their hands are already full. For the industry to revive and bounce back with a bang, MoT’s presence in various source markets is essential because private tour operators have limited resources. Also, GST needs to be rationalised because currently all components of a package tour be it a hotel, flight ticket, transport, restaurant, entrances etc. everything has GST in it and by charging 5% GST as tour operator services, it is tax on tax and against basis principle of GST.

IATO needs to push MoF to resume SEIS at a higher rate or an alternate likewise policy to incentivise tour operators and also revive the MDA. Tourism is here to stay forever and likewise inbound shall also revive sooner or later. However, going back to pre-pandemic figures seem difficult before 2025 because of higher airfares, depreciation of Indian rupee against US\$, Visa delays / E-Visa issues for certain source markets and exorbitant hotel rates etc. Industry stakeholders, especially the hoteliers need to do hand holding of tour operators and honour the contract, while offering rates with validity for a longer period.

State tourism authorities should do hand holding of the tour operators as they are their brand ambassadors. Tour operators should be offered free space in national and international travel marts and states should also be advertised to work exclusively with MoT approved operators. Moreover, we should all promote “India” as a complete state and not as separate states.



Zia Siddiqui

IATO Executive Committee Member

The trade is now opening after a gap of two and half years.

This is the time that we must meet, discuss and sort-out the issues that would be facing by operators. This is the main objective of convention.

To my fellow IATO members I would like to suggest that this is the time the operator must go for digitalisation and automation. They must focus on website optimisation, online marketing in overseas targeted market and write blogs about the guest experience. They must do analytics of all promotions done by them through online or email. In short, they should open a virtual Tour Super Market through their website and then promote it aggressively. I am confident that doing this will bring home some good results. Success in today’s time is dependent on innovation and technology.

My suggestion to the Ministry of Tourism would be to work on the following points – capping the airfare limit; offering 50% discount on all monument entrance and indulge in aggressive online as well as offline promotion of brand India while organising road shows in potential markets and highlighting festivals of India as well. Going by the current wave and keeping the ongoing bookings and figures in mind, I am confident that up to some extent, we shall recover in 2023-24.



Ashok Dhoot

IATO Executive Committee Member

Tourism has been one of the worst affected sectors in this Pandemic. We were the first to be hit and even now, Inbound market is still struggling. In the post pandemic travel scenario, travellers today are more focused on offbeat and unique destinations. I have to be a part of an association that has worked diligently in the last couple of years to bring back tourism in focus. Going forward, I would like IATO Office Bearers to focus on simplifying Visa process as much as possible, ensure participation in international trade shows with stakeholders and give a chance to small trade partners free of cost to promote small destinations.

I am fully confident that Inbound Tourism will revive well by December 2023. In the post pandemic era, we have seen there is a change in inbound booking pattern.

Earlier people would go for their bookings well in advance but now they are getting booking done at the last minute as well.





IATO Chapter Chairmen gear up to witness revival of Inbound Tourism

Travel and tourism is bouncing back to normalcy and trying to achieve the pre-Covid numbers. The travel industry is witnessing a meteoric rise in numbers with packed flights and hotel rooms selling out at a fast pace. Though the last two years have been tough for this industry which was the first one to shut down as soon as the pandemic hit and the last one to re-open. The majority of the population is double-vaccinated and India is once again ready to welcome Inbound Tourism. India has had a major uplift with regards to tourism in these two years with the addition of more flights, the opening of new hotel properties and a wide range of new tourist attractions coupled with an improvised infrastructure. The 37th IATO Annual Convention will put into spotlight the topic – INBOUND TOURISM – What Lies Ahead! BOTT spoke to the Chapter Chairmen across various states in an exclusive chat to understand their views on the changing scenario of travel and tourism.

-Compiled by Shreya Shimpi-

Nasir Shah

Chairman – IATO Jammu & Kashmir Chapter

“Ministry of Tourism must support IATO to take up vast Global Promotional Activities, such as road shows, interactions with media, besides strong participation in all the major trade fairs such as WTM, ITB, FITUR, ATM, BIT MILAN and financial support / MDA to the highest level to the Members of IATO.”

First and foremost, as Chairman of IATO – J&K and the conscious Tour Operator, we infused the confidence of the PAN India Tour Operators as well as the direct clientele that J&K is a completely safe destination with the best COVID Protection protocol and promoted newer destinations such as Gurez, Bangus Valley, Doodhpathri and Aharbal in Kashmir Valley, Kishtwar, Baderwah, Poonch and Rajouri besides Border Tourism in Jammu region. It has been only with the active support of the Tourism Department and the Stakeholders that we saw a record number of around 2.5 million Tourists visiting J&K from January till November end this year including Amarnath Yatris, excluding Vaishnodevi Yatris. Further, as IATO we focussed on quality services and prompt Redressal of service issues if any with the support of the Tourism Dept. As Chairman, I had the privilege to lead the delegation to meet the Hon'ble Home Minister and apprised him, about the Tourism Scenario, improvements as well as shortcomings, As IATO we participated in



all the Tourism Activities held in J&K such as participation in World Tourism Day, World Environment Day. Festivals such as Tulip Festival, Gurez Festival, Apple Festival and Saffron Festivals. In Addition, IATO also held various meetings with Parliamentarians and Central Ministries who visited J&K

Issue that needs priority in my opinion is to ensure the fastest online visa facility across all major countries that send huge numbers of tourists to India.

If the Govt. of India promises huge support to IATO then surely, we will see pre-2019 tourist arrival from October 2023, only if the Govt takes it seriously and offers hand-holding of IATO Members.

Prateek Hira

Chairman, IATO Uttar Pradesh Chapter

“We have been empowering our members with knowledge of destinations and empowering them to expand beyond their bracketed businesses through educational seminars and familiarisation tours.”

The government of Uttar Pradesh has resolved to make tourism one of the pillars of its vision of seeing UP touch USD 1 Trillion within five years and as a part of this, it has gone into an overdrive to make UP the most conducive state for tourism. IATO has been very closely involved in drafting UP's New Tourism Policy 2022 and that is the reason this policy has come





out to be industry-friendly and practically implementable to benefit our members and the tourism industry in general. Our members are delighted that now they are considered the torchbearers of tourism by the state government and their inputs are heard before any tourism project starts taking shape in the state and the state of Uttar Pradesh. No other travel trade body is recognised and respected the way IATO is in the state of Uttar Pradesh and the proof of this is that Uttar Pradesh has come forward to host IATO's 37th Convention in Lucknow.

IATO has become too large a trade body and by far the only trade association that is most respected within India and abroad. I would safely say that the voice of IATO is a voice which is heard and understood by the union and the state governments alike. As the international marketing efforts by the government are declining, in my opinion, IATO can take up an initiative in this direction and empower its members to market their products internationally. This could be done by appointing its PR Agencies in India's traditional inbound markets, conducting road shows under the association banner abroad and participating in all important trade fairs with its mega stand that includes and involves its members, especially the smaller ones who cannot afford marketing costs on their own.

IATO Members command trust and give out a message of assurance thus IATO can now also graduate to be a financial and quality assurance and a Redressal body on the lines of ATOL. Not sure how it will be possible based on its bylaws et al but if we do work out some means to do it, it will be a game changer for the entire inbound industry in the coming times.

Domestic tourism has seen an unprecedented upsurge and has kept the industry afloat, Though unfortunately, the inbound business hasn't picked up that well as yet, and the slow revival is attributed to Indian Visa issues, geo-political reasons and of course the peeping recession in the west but we are hopeful that by September 2023, inbound tourism will revive, though I am personally not seeing the figures touching 2019 levels till 2024 at least subject to recessionary trends and political turmoil easing. As it is, 2019 was not so good that we made it a benchmark year and then All inbound companies need to think afresh like a start-up to perform better and grow from ground zero. This is important as we now have a plethora of new products and the market demands have changed too.

D Gopinathan

Co-Chairman-IATO Tamil Nadu Chapter

"New promotional techniques have to be adopted and tested by IATO with the help of professional agencies."

I am a Co-chairman for Tamilnadu Chapter appointed 6 months ago. On my part, I have contacted all the existing members and got acquainted with them. I introduced and gave the idea in our first meeting about Member – Get – Member program. If we request every member to recommend one member to the association, the strength of the association will be doubled.

In my opinion, this program should be extended to all the chapters. IATO EC should ask the chapters for quarterly performance reports about meetings, speakers brought in, and training sessions conducted. A small team of EC and Office bearers should visit at least once a year for better interaction with the members to improve the inbound tourism ideas.

At the moment, monthly meetings are held only in Delhi. All members do not attend conventions hence there is hardly any dialogue between members and EC.

Inbound tourism will come back by the Winter of 2023. We are already seeing good momentum through NRI arrivals this year for leisure.

IATO should also explore the possibilities of promoting tourism outside the country in new markets without depending solely on government agencies.



Bhuvendra Vikram Singh

Co-chapter chairman IATO Uttar Pradesh Chapter

"I am hopeful for the revival of inbound. 2019 figures depend upon government visa policy, connectivity and airfare to India".

This is to update you regarding IATO's current standing in terms of numbers in Varanasi. Before we started the Co Chapter Varanasi there were only 04 Active Members and now as of date, the number has increased to 12. The total number of members before the start of this Co Chapter Varanasi was 17 and now the number has increased to 30 members. After this financial year, we are expecting the number to be close to 40. The need of the hour, in my opinion, is better cooperation between inter-state members. The country needs joint promotion by members from different areas, if MoT is not helping.



K Ranga Reddy

Chairman IATO Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Chapter

"Tourism is a continuous process of evolving and revolving the tourism products and service providers."

Due to the Pandemic, many service providers lost their jobs, money, places, and interest to continue further. Post-Pandemic, the main challenges are to source trained professional manpower. I, being the chapter chairman, have identified those service providers who are in the business for quite long years, and who are the main pillars for the success of tourism in our states. Our chapter has been super active and undertaken numerous activities –

- Identified the pulse of post-pandemic tourist requirements
- Developed new tourism products viz like experiential tourism
- Took guides on several FAM tours
- Conducted several seminars and educational lectures
- With the ministry of tourism got the guides Rs.1 lakh financial assistance
- Tried to work with reduced guiding fees to boost incoming tourists
- Participated in Govt. initiatives like Yoga, swatch Bharath
- Went around the schools to inculcate the students to go on tours.
- Identified the Hyderabad speciality cuisine providers
- Motivated to participate in every webinar to gain knowledge
- Worked closely with TGFI 'Apna Desh Dekho' series
- Conducted tourism road shows within the cities
- Working closely with GMR airports to bring back the Direct International flight connections to Hyderabad



Going forward, our focus is to prioritise solving the interstate transport problems, permits, and related issues by implementing one India, tax. To revive and extend the E-Visa for many more countries by easing the time taken to obtain the tourist visa. To work with airport authorities to allow vehicles to drop off the guests at the departure gates. To revive the MDA scheme by the ministry of tourism. To initiate more overseas marketing of India Tourism products.

India Tourism is making issues very complicated, not working towards solutions and vigorous campaigns and NO vision by the ministry of tourism to bring back the 2019 figures, hence not expecting any magic figures before 2024. Overseas travellers decide almost 6 months to one year ahead of their travel abroad. Keeping this in mind any positive decisions by the ministry will start the return of tourists from 2024 onwards if other geopolitical issues calm down.

Sunil C. Gupta

Chairman, IATO Northern Region

“The revival has been rather slow and has been contrary to the higher expectations. The term ‘revenge tourism’ has not been validated with arrival figures so far. Now that the winter season of 2022 has not seen a huge revival hence it may take the whole of 2023 for airfares and capacity to rationalize, we can hope to reach 2019 figures only in 2024 now.”

All IATO state chapters in North India have been actively liaising with State Governments including tourism authorities regularly and contributing to the formation of ‘Tourism Policies’. U.P. Government has recently announced a pro-tourism policy offering several benefits to stakeholders. IATO EC has already submitted various memorandums at all levels and has

been in dialogue with ministries of Tourism, Finance, Commerce and Home Affairs. Amongst many, the key demands are for starting an ‘Incredible India Marketing Campaign’ in international media and restarting EVISA for tourists from UK and Canada. Hope is all we have till the Government starts the ‘Incredible India marketing campaign overseas’.



Pandian K

Chairman, IATO Tamil Nadu Chapter

“On behalf of IATO, I suggested that the tourism stakeholders in Tamil Nadu need to be registered in the state to do tourism business, and their businesses need to be streamlined as an organised sector”

I should say we all spent 2021 under COVID shadow. The year 2021 began with the intention of getting back to life before COVID, after a year of the disease. For the tourism industry, fortunately, domestic travel increased as individuals were looking forward to new beginnings as restrictions everywhere were loosened. We also started focusing on domestic tours as inbound and utilised the opportunity. But then there were 2nd and 3rd waves of Covid. Luckily for Indians, time began to heal as instances decreased and vaccination rates increased in India. The shadow of the third wave remained, but we started getting back to life.



In 2022, as IATO Chapter Chairman, we met our members and discussed how we all sustained and what more we could do to sustain better in the coming days. I must say that the rapport between tourism stakeholders and state tourism has started getting better as our suggestions and recommendations to improve state tourism are implemented. For example, as IATO Chairman, I strongly recommended that the state government recognise the tourism stakeholders with tourism awards, as it would boost their morale and motivate them to do more. We had a state tourism award ceremony arranged by the state government on September 27 during World Tourism Day for the first time in the history of Tamil Nadu. Last month, I was one of the members called to a tourism committee meeting, held by the Tourism Commissioner, and the agenda was about the tourism stakeholders’ registration process in the state, and we were asked for suggestions in formulating the rules and regulations thereof. Though I took these initiatives as IATO Chapter Chairman a few years ago, the state of Tamil Nadu will reap the benefits of these initiatives soon.

I feel the transport sector has been completely ignored by all in the



tourism industry. It's high time, IATO EC looks into the transport element carefully as transport (car and driver) is one of the important components of tourism.

Lastly, the IATO EC needs to look into the One India - One Tax issue as it is not being followed by all states of India uniformly. So, transporters who operate vehicles for the tourism industry are finding it too hard to operate the business.

J K Mohanty, MHCIMA

Chairman – IATO Eastern Region & Chairman – Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha

“To boost inbound tourism IATO is working closely with the Government and other associations to address all issues and concerns related to the sector. More aggressive marketing, promotional campaign, road shows for the promotion of inbound tourism and after all more international flight connectivity will help boost inbound tourism.”

As Chairman of IATO Eastern Region, it has been my continuous endeavour to promote the vast tourism potential of Odisha as well as the eastern region by closely interacting with all Chapter Chairmen of the eastern region and following up the critical issues with the concerned Government officials for growth of the tourism.

We are emphasising the new innovative initiatives that Odisha Tourism has started such

as eco retreats, boat riding, yachts, caravans, camping etc. to increase tourist footfalls.

Apart from the above, in cooperation with Tourism Dept., Govt. of Odisha we are conducting Tourism Conclave highlighting the needs and potential of Odisha Tourism for its growth, inviting various experts in the field of travel and tourism industry, hoteliers, stakeholders, national travel writers and journalists, ministers, decision-makers of the Government and the key recommendations of the conclave are compiled and submitted to the Government for necessary implementation. We are also following up with the government for more domestic as well as international flight connection to Odisha to increase tourist footfall in our state.

Inbound tourism has gone down by 74% after the pandemic but it is now forecasted to rebound in growth. To boost inbound tourism IATO is working closely with the Government and other associations to address all issues and concerns to boost inbound tourism. More aggressive marketing, promotional campaign, road shows for the promotion of inbound tourism and after all more international flight connectivity will boost inbound tourism. The inflow of domestic tourists has picked up post-relaxation of Covid restrictions and on the other hand, the positive sign is that the industry stakeholders have started getting enquiries from overseas tourists for visiting India and bookings have also started coming.



Further, India's participation at WTM is significant to step up the recovery of inbound tourism to pre-pandemic level and we are optimistic inbound tourism will bounce back with much more figures in 2023 in comparison to the figure in 2019.

If Goa is attracting tourists for its beaches, Kerala for its backwater, Rajasthan for its deserts, Madhya Pradesh for its wildlife, Delhi-Jaipur-Agra sector is flourishing because of air connectivity and nearness to Delhi etc, Odisha is the only state which has everything that the rest of India offers. Odisha is filled with art, craft, culture, cuisine, beaches, lakes, mountains, tribes, the richness of the temple architecture, rich heritage tourism, rich Odissi dances, the Tussar silk woven sarees, silver filigree works, rich stone carved statues, sand art exhibitions, the rich eco tourist destinations, Bhitarkarnika, the largest mangrove forest in India. With international air connectivity and more domestic flight connections to tourist places in India Odisha is bound to lead.

Tsering Namgyal

Chairman – IATO Ladakh Chapter

“Nearly 18000+ foreign tourists visited Ladakh this year between June to September which has been very encouraging we didn't expect such numbers, especially after the Covid pandemic. This only shows that Inbound Tourism is bound to bounce back”.

As part of the travel trade community of Ladakh, IATO Ladakh in collaboration with All Ladakh Hotel & Guest House Association (ALHAGHA) has been encouraging hotels /camps /resorts and guest houses in Ladakh to reduce single-use plastic bottles in their properties, particularly not to use mineral water bottles which will hugely reduce plastic garbage in the ecologically sensitive region like Ladakh.

And to this end, many of the hotels have stopped using mineral water bottles in their properties and instead provide filtered water or purified drinking water to their guests. IATO Ladakh has pledged to support all environment-friendly initiatives of ALHAGHA.

IATO should focus on promoting inbound tourism from Far East countries like South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia etc. In Ladakh before Covid19, we have seen an increased number of foreign tourists from these countries. With Europe and America still reeling under economic depression etc, it will be better to look at other emerging markets. IATO should collaborate with the Ministry of Tourism GOI in inviting FAM trips to India from these Far East countries so that outbound tour operators of these countries can see and understand the destination for them. Specific new destinations in our country should be explored and marketed and once identified it should be then promoted with sustained efforts.

E-visa should be increased and Visa on arrival should be extended to more potential emerging markets like the far-east etc. I think by 2024 or 2025 we should be able to see pre-2019 arrivals of foreign tourists.



Manmeet Singh

Chairman, IATO Punjab Chapter

“IATO EC Committee under the dynamic leadership of our president had been persistently trying to get the E Visa open for foreign tourists to easily come to India and feel proud and also thank the government that now the Scheme has again been re-introduced & IATO’S persistent efforts have paid off.”

We at the state level have been conducting many online meetings of hospitality stakeholders not only within India but also with our international colleagues. The Punjab state tourism department has been participating in various Exhibitions, Road shows and Association conventions to strengthen the feeling that we are ready to move out and also welcome tourists to come into Punjab initially from domestic market and consecutively from International Market.

IATO EC Committee under the dynamic leadership of our president had been persistently trying to get the E Visa open for foreign tourists to easily come to India and feel proud and also thank the government that now the Scheme has again been re-introduced & IATO’S persistent efforts have paid off.

I am very positive about the revival of international tourism. Very soon as the international travel procedures will get into the place, we will see a good surge in foreign tourists coming into India. We have witnessed good growth in domestic travel as so-called revenge tourism post Covid-19 period so I am sure of the same happening for international travel too. The only caution is that the travel industry players now need to be more tuned and updated to the changes in mindset and booking mythologies so-called new order of doing reservations by clients.

Debjit Dutta

Chairman – IATO West Bengal Chapter

“I strongly believe that now, after the pandemic, it is time for Incredible India Version 3 to focus on region-specific positioning and marketing campaigns.”

IATO has been always closely working with the state tourism department to ensure sustainable development and promotion of both domestic and inbound tourism in the state. Government of India in April 2022 had constituted six tourism committees and IATO is a part of the six tourism sub-committees initiated by the state government to offer further boosts to this sector. The Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal has also signed an MoU with the Federation



of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) during the Bengal Global Business Summit in Kolkata on April 21, 2022 to initiate a strong industry partnership for the sustainable development of tourism in the state.

Going forward, I think it's high time that IATO should encourage MoT to initiate work on the Incredible India 3.0 campaign. Incredible India is perhaps one of the most successful campaigns ever, the dynamic version of the campaign which was initiated in 2017 was also super effective. But I strongly believe that now, after the pandemic, it is time for Incredible India Version 3 to focus on region-specific positioning and marketing campaigns. The idea is not only to enhance traffic but to evenly distribute the incoming traffic across all four regions of the country comprising both first-time and repeat travellers. There also needs to be some SOP on Sustainable Tourism Practices. Responsible travel is the future in tourism and IATO must come up with a SOP for its members on sustainable tourism practices. Lastly, in my opinion, Inbound will come to its pre-pandemic status in FY 2023-24 and India will certainly experience a drastic 2X increase in its incoming traffic in the FY 24-25 considering the industry understands the change in the new market trends in terms of products and services due to the recent transformation and of course strategic marketing initiative.

**S Mahalingaiah**

Chairman – IATO Karnataka Chapter

“Petition Hon. PM to direct Hon. Civil Aviation Ministry to allow more and more airlines to operate, more airlines with bigger body aircraft to operate to reduce the airfares and also to get more tourists.”

We were few among the few inbound tour operators to exhibited at the WTM 2021 & WTM 2022 along with our State (Karnataka) Apart from participating as exhibitors, we conducted road shows in a few cities in the UK and Europe and created awareness that India is safe to travel. We succeeded in pursuing our government to take part.

This is the big challenge now. IATO should take lead in organising Road shows with MOT and its members. Annual road shows calendars are to be announced and location and venue are to be finalised at least two months in advance. IATO should request



MOT to start selecting 10 to 15 FTOs and host them for FAM and work with State Govt. and Chapters for hospitality. Inbound Tourism looks promising. By October 2024, we are expecting to reach pre-pandemic figures.

Sunil Singh Rana

Chairman – IATO Uttarakhand Chapter

“If we all work smartly, we can revive the same arrivals as 2019 within 2 years or earlier”.

In the last one year, we have strengthened IATO with an increase in the number of members. Together with the UTDB (Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board), we organised guide training in Uttarakhand.

Going forward, IATO should promote regional/ state tour operators to develop new tourism products to offer a variety of products in the international market.

IATO should develop its website as a more interactive

platform for stakeholders and visitors. The website uses digital marketing to market India.



Sejoe Jose

Regional Chapter Head for South India

“I am very optimistic that inbound tourism will boom by 2023. The visa issue is sorted out and hopefully, the flight fares will also start coming down”.

As IATO South India Chapter, my job role was coordinating the work of IATO in each of the chapters in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andaman.

We had done various meetings with the chapter chairman and understood the difficulty faced to revive tourism.

We then met the different tourism ministers and discussed in length how to rectify the problems and help tourism grow in South India.

We also intimated steps to ensure our Chapter Chairman are part of the advisory council with the state tourism boards.

In our opinion, the most important initiative to be taken by IATO EC is to help build infrastructure. After Covid, there is a big shortage of manpower/transport/guides. IATO EC should take up the matter with the government on this matter. To give an example these days taxi permits are not given in Tamil Nadu / Road tax increased between southern states etc. Training program for guides etc.



Namgyal P. Sherpa

Co-Chairman – IATO Sikkim State

“In my opinion, the two initiatives to boost inbound tourism in Sikkim and the neighbouring Darjeeling area is the lifting of the restricted Area Permit to enter Sikkim. And second, to introduce the international flights between Kathmandu and Bagdogra and if possible, with Dhaka (Bangladesh) also.”

We have, through our various associations, approached the state tourism authorities to improve the road condition of both the state and national highways and to have talks with the airlines to have permanent flights to and from Kolkata, Delhi and Guwahati to Pakyong, the only airport in Sikkim.

Since, the Bagdogra airport (IXB) in West Bengal has daily domestic flights from Kolkata, Delhi, Guwahati and Mumbai. But it has international flights from Paro and Bangkok operated by Druk Air of Bhutan. In this regard, we have asked the State Government to take up the matter with the Civil Aviation Ministry to start the flight between Kathmandu (Nepal) and Bagdogra and afterwards with Dhaka (Bangladesh) also. Since the surface immigration check post between India and Nepal which is at Raniganj and Kakarvitta is closed to the lockdowns, the reopening of the same is very necessary, as it is the matter of the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Home Affaire, the government of India needs to be approached. In this regard, I had also written an email to your good office on 29th Oct 2022 seeking your advice.

It may take some time but we are optimistic the number of inbound tourists to India will increase as it has various interests and is quite cheap to travel compared to other countries.





'Immersive travel is simple, engaging, enriching and wholesome': Shalini KJ

Immersive Travel or Experiential Travel as we call it, is a world of slow and immersive travel. It is a form of tourism wherein the travellers focus on experiencing the destination by meaningfully engaging in its history, folklore, local traditions, enjoy home style local food and travelling by local modes of transport. Engaging in such kinds of travel can be amazingly transformative. Read on to know how can one differentiate between classic travel and immersive travel... curated especially by Shalini KJ, Travel Curator @Click2Travel.in (a boutique travel firm)



Shalini KJ

While all kinds of travel are beautiful and enriching, in a classic travel plan you get to view a picture postcard version of a destination whereas, in an engaging travel plan you soak in the vibe, culture, ethos and cuisines of a certain destination. Classic travel works well, if you have a lesser number of days and you want to experience the city swiftly, but if time does permit then immersive is the way to go! We travel to discover – new places and new experiences, isn't that so?

Let us dive into favours of immersive travel. It will open your mind to new ideas, broaden your horizons, may even find a new passion, make new friends around the globe or may I say find your soulmate too!

Why not travel slowly? Stay with a local – doing that will not only enable you to experience hidden gems, but you also get to make some great friends locally, aimlessly meandering on the streets, soaking in the vibe. There's no better way to connect with the culture than by completely participating in it.

Immersive travel is simple, it is as simple as you want it to be. A frivolous walk in a new city can teach you much more than a guided bus tour. You never know what will happen when you allow yourself to be consumed by a new place, but you do know it will be memorable as hell! Slow travel is a vacation for your senses and soul. You are not on a marathon to tick every must-see place on your bucket list activity and city. You are travelling for an experience. An experience which will enrich you... an experience that is meaningful.

Cultural exchange is as simple as chatting up with a cabbie who gives insider information on some amazing places that locals go to, classroom learning of a language is way different from picking sentences from a local, they are the real deal.

One of the easiest ways to explore local stuff is via food. Make a bucket list of dishes to try, visit a local market, or take a cooking lesson! You can consider enrolling in interactive cultural experiences to better understand the creative values of the city in a fun way and also support small local businesses!



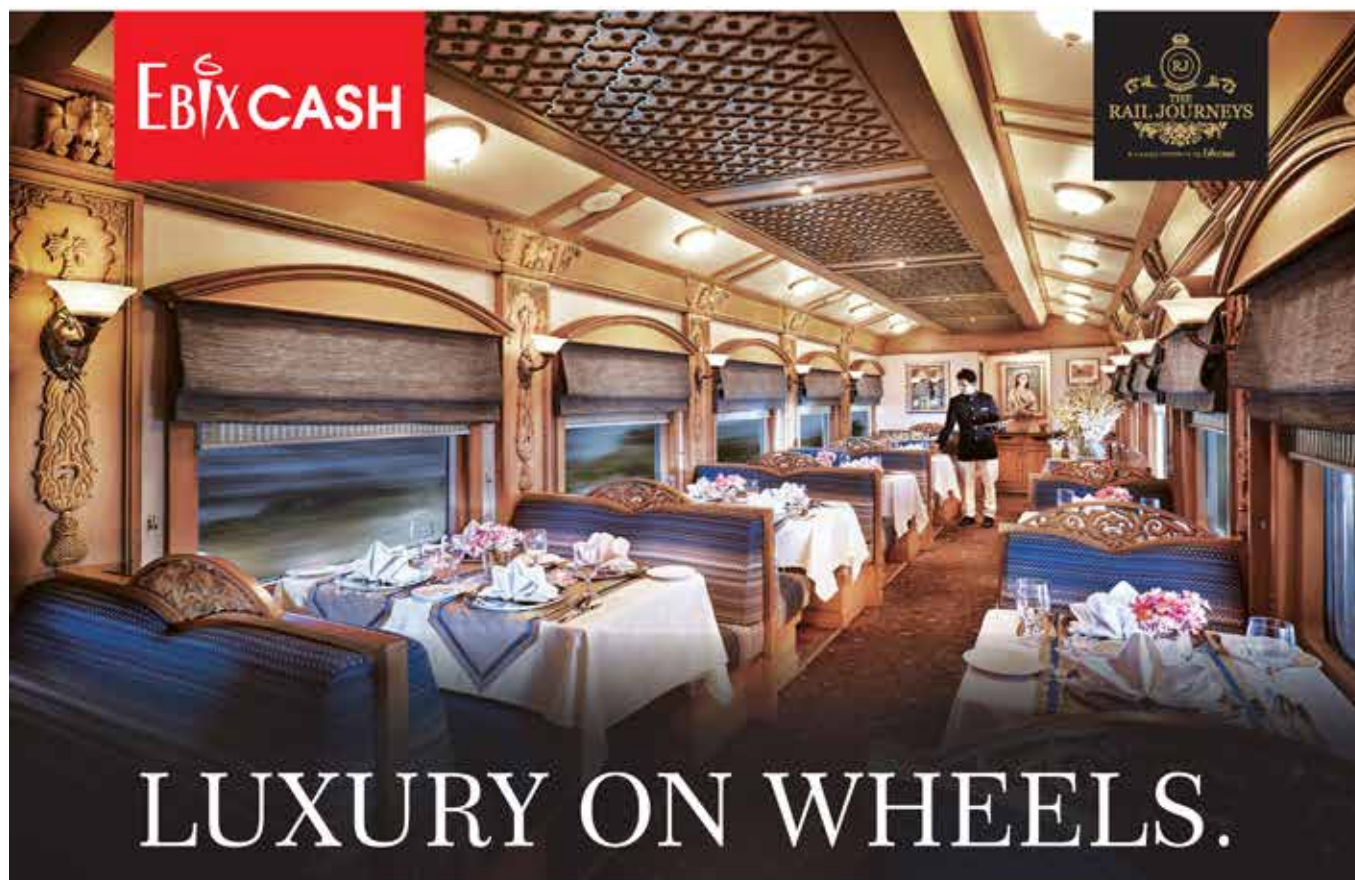
Every destination is home to a huge array of attractive and engaging festivals highlighting niche interests. Festivals are also a great space to connect with locals and bond over shared interests.

Immersive travel is challenging. And when we challenge ourselves, we're able to acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses, and as a result, we evolve! Immersive travel also means, being impromptu, or not always knowing which direction to go, how to order a meal due to a language barrier or how to communicate with a cabbie who doesn't speak a common language. We must look within ourselves to find the strength and the courage to face these unfamiliar challenges that would be so simple on home ground.

When we venture out, with an open mind and aren't stressed about getting from one thing to the next and ticking off the lists, it slows things down and allows us to be in the moment and enjoy the present.

When we put aside the mundane tasks of our daily lives, we realise how much we take for granted. By ditching our comfort zone, we experience challenges we usually wouldn't come across at home, that is when we learn and we grow. And when we're surrounded by the beauty and thrill of exploring a foreign place, those challenges are clearly worth it.

You might just get inspired or learn more about yourself! Who knows?



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TAAI hosts Managing Committee Conclave in Almaty with good attendance & fruitful meetings

TAAI has always shared a special relation with Kazakhstan and its recent trip to Almaty, comprising 75 delegates was a testament to the same. Organised in the month of November, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) took its members for a Managing Committee Conclave to Almaty for a brief 3-day meet wherein apart from experiencing the destination, the delegates also interacted with the local tour operators for mutual promotion of the destinations. Here's a report on the same –

Gunjan Sabikhi

Almaty, in Kazakhstan is a beautiful destination that pleasantly surprises you the moment you land there. From the plush interiors and advanced infrastructure to so much natural beauty, the destination is a treasure trove for an avid traveller. TAAI, under the able leadership of its President Ms. Jyoti Mayal recently took a 75-member delegation to Almaty to showcase the destination over a Management Committee Conclave. Sharing her thoughts on the initiative, Mrs. Mayal said, “As President TAAI, my thoughts are always focussed on doing something new and different for my members. I look for ways through which I can increase their knowledge and broaden their product offering. TAAI had signed an MoU with Kazakhstan and Almaty Tourism in 2021 and 2022, and this meet was a step forward in the direction of growing tourist traffic between both the countries.” Adding further she said, “The main objective behind organising this conclave was to introduce our Managing Committee members to their Kazak counterparts for the expansion of tourism businesses, both inbound and outbound. I always feel that one-on-one interactions are a great way of achieving good results. After having interacted virtually for long, it was high time to physically meet and seal the business route.”

Stading strong by her side, Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI, who too was leading the delegation to Almaty said, “At TAAI we are focussed on introducing our members to untapped destinations and new ways through which they can enhance their business and expand their reach. Indian Travellers, today are on the lookout for fresh and unexplored destinations and this recent trip to Almaty made our agent members realise how perfect that destination is for the India market. TAAI committee members from pan India had some fruitful B2B interactions with the Tour Operators, Hoteliers, Activity organisers, Car rental companies, etc in Almaty and going forward, I am sure, there will be steady flow of tourists between the two destinations. In the coming year, roadshows and training programs for members pan India along with Kazakhstan Tourism and their representative DMCs in India shall be organised.”

Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI and Shreeram Patel, Hony. Treasurer, TAAI both were extremely satisfied with the turnout of the Almaty event. Not only were the members pleasantly surprised by all that the destination had to offer, they were also warmed by the B2B meetings that took place with almost 100 local tour operators of Almaty, who were keen to increase the tourist flow between the two countries.

During the two-day event, there was also a Press Conference, which was also attended by local as well as national media who had travelled with the delegation. TAAI was earlier planning to hold its annual Convention



in Almaty, but then went ahead and hosted it in on a cruise. However, the Managing Committee Conclave offered a perfect platform to its members to not just get a peek into the destination but also work upon ways for a two-way tourist flow between the countries.

Kulvinder Kohli, Sr. EC Member, TAAI said, “TAAI has had an understanding with Kazakhstan for the last few years and I think it was very generous of them to host us all. It was a great initiative by TAAI



as we were able to directly interact with the local tour operators and understand the dynamics better. With Visa on Arrival facility and a direct flight between the two countries Delhi – Almaty, I think there is immense potential for tourism growth. The destination is close to India, has a good culture, much to see and ideal for weddings with its large banquets and warm hospitality. I am sure post our visit, the tourist traffic between both the countries will increase manifold.”

Sharing his thoughts on the successful TAAI Conclave in Almaty, Anoop Kanuga, MC Member, TAAI said, “We were very happy with the event turnout as so many of TAAI members got to see the wonderful destination of Almaty. The weather was excellent, food was exceptional and B2B interactions were very productive. I think Kazakhstan as a tourist destination has immense potential but they should also consider starting direct flights from Mumbai. Going via Delhi becomes longer for tourists who are looking for short trips to destinations closer to India. Maybe they can look at having some code-share agreement with LCCs and look at having direct three-times a week flight from Mumbai.”

Dr. P. Murugesan, Chairman – Legal and Grievance Council and MC Member, TAAI, shared, “The trip to Almaty was very well organised comprising 75 people. Our team had fruitful business meetings with people from Kazakhstan Tourism and I am confident that this is the beginning of a lifetime of good tourist business between the two countries. The 3-day trip was focussed on finding ways for mutual promotion – they promoting us and vice versa. Almaty is an untapped tourist destination and there is much to explore and many places of interest for the Indian outbound traveller. Earlier, it was known for its nightclubs only but now it has so much more to offer – infact, it is one of the best destinations of Indian traveller who is on a lookout for something fresh. Hopefully, in future, we would also be hosting our convention there and taking more people along”



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 December 2022.



Know what your stars say about DECEMBER 2022



ARIES (March 21 – April 20)

Your cards show good health this month. Those suffering from ailments, may see them disappear. Many of you will get support/guidance from elders in professional matters. Avoid aggressive behaviour on professional front. The time is right for marital alliance, if looking for one.



Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

Travel overseas for professional reasons is expected. Some of you may be financially benefitted by investments done in the past. Right time to conceive for prospective mothers. Take time off for a holiday with family. Be patient while choosing a life partner.



Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

The month shows positive indicators on health front. You may meet professional mentor who will give you life-changing career advice. This is the time to be careful for financial investment. Evaluate, think, be optimist and then take a decision.



Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

The month shows positive indicators on health front. You may meet professional mentor who will give you life-changing career advice. This is the time to be careful for financial investment. Evaluate, think, be optimist and then take a decision.



Leo (July 23 – August 21)

Take care of your health. Make a schedule of the work, plan out your tasks and manage your professional front well to avoid any confusion later. Avoid any kind of arguments in relationship. Take time off for spending time with family.





Virgo (August 22 – September 23)

Take a resolution to address and solve your health-related concerns. Chances of promotion or new ventures are likely to crop up. Finances will improve. Be cooperative and controlled with partner in a relationship.



Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Be positive and take care of your health. Some of you can expect support from a senior lady on the professional front. Avoid risky investments and control your finances. Lear from the past and move forward with a positive approach.



Capricorn (December 23 – January 20)

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. Your professional goals will be achieved and bond will be stronger with partner.



Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

Try to include Yoga or make exercise a part of your daily routine. The time of favourable for a new job or a new venture. You hard work will bring positive rewards. Finances will be strong. Support from elders will be forthcoming.



Sagittarius (November 23 – December 22)

Take care of health. Chose a career that satisfies you. A new venture will be fruitful. Be careful on the investment front and choose wisely where you put your money. Some of you are likely to meet your future life partner pretty soon.



Aquarius (January 21 – February 19)

Some of you need to make drastic changes to your lifestyle to improve your health. Partnership in business and change in job cold be beneficial. The time is right to make that long pending investment. You will enjoy a positive relationship with your partner.



Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

Chances of a travel overseas for professional reasons is expected. New ideas will see light of the day, but you have to be cautious. This is the right time to conceive for prospective mothers. A vacation will be good for the family.



WTM 2022 witnessed warm response; MoT announced its 'Visit 2023' Campaign

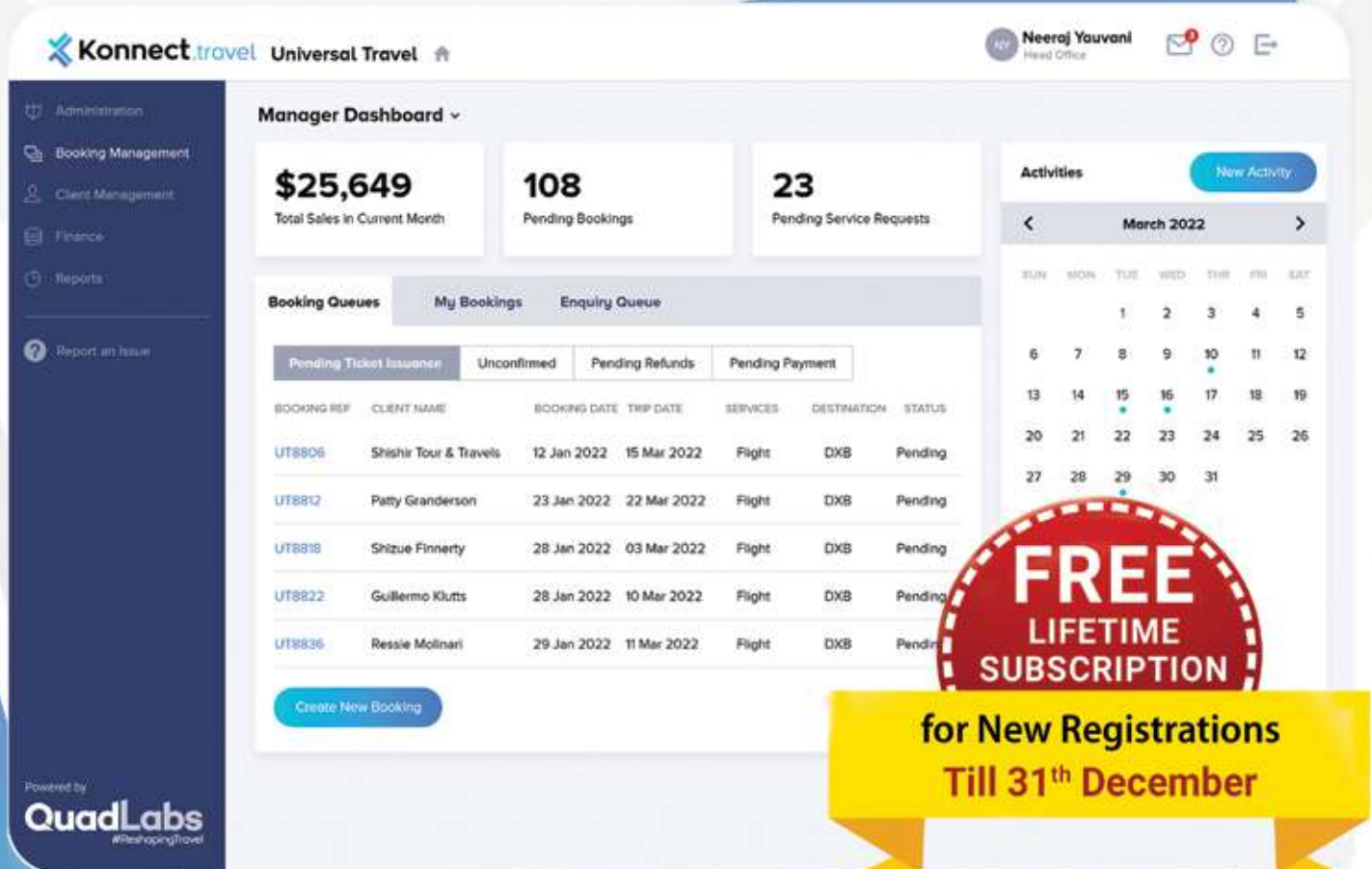
► BOTT DESK

The World Travel Mart 2022 kicked-off to a great start on November 7, 2022 in London. The India pavilion was buzzing with activity as exhibitors had a busy day with great networking opportunities. Amidst them, BOTT – Business of Travel Trade too made its presence felt with its WTM Special Issue. Some of the people whom BOTT interacted with included officials from Ministry of Tourism, Madhya Pradesh Tourism, Rajasthan Tourism, Telangana Tourism, Tamil Nadu Tourism, Karnataka Tourism, Maharashtra Tourism, UP Tourism, Swagatam Travel and Tours, Creative Travels and more. The day 2 of World Travel Mart 2022 kick-started with a Press Conference by Ministry of Tourism comprising Tourism Ministers,

Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Directors and Tourism Industry stakeholders. At the Conference, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India disclosed that it is coming up with a 'Visit 2023' campaign to promote tourism in a big way. Additional Tourism Secretary, Shri Rakesh Verma informed that through the campaign-based programme, the Tourism Department will make the world aware of tourism opportunities and potential in India. The unique campaign will be taken up to promote culture and heritage of the country. It will involve Indian Embassies across the world to promote tourism in a big way and will focus on all segments of tourism sector. With India assuming the G 20 Presidency from December 1, 2022, the 'Visit India 2023' Campaign comes at the right time to promote India and to invite more tourists to the country.



ARE YOU STILL MANAGING CUSTOMERS & BOOKING DETAILS ON SPREAD SHEETS?



The screenshot displays the 'Manager Dashboard' for 'Universal Travel'. It features a sidebar with navigation links: Administration, Booking Management, Client Management, Finance, Reports, and Report an Issue. The main dashboard area includes three summary cards: Total Sales in Current Month (\$25,649), Pending Bookings (108), and Pending Service Requests (23). Below these are tabs for Booking Queues (Pending Ticket Issuance, Unconfirmed, Pending Refunds, Pending Payment), My Bookings, and Enquiry Queue. A table lists bookings with columns for Booking Ref, Client Name, Booking Date, Trip Date, Services, Destination, and Status. A calendar for March 2022 is also visible. A large red and yellow banner at the bottom right reads: 'FREE LIFETIME SUBSCRIPTION for New Registrations Till 31th December'. The footer of the dashboard mentions 'Powered by QuadLabs #ReshapingTravel'.

BOOKING REF	CLIENT NAME	BOOKING DATE	TRIP DATE	SERVICES	DESTINATION	STATUS
UT8806	Shishir Tour & Travels	12 Jan 2022	15 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8812	Patty Granderson	23 Jan 2022	22 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8818	Shizue Finnerty	28 Jan 2022	03 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8822	Guillermo Klutts	28 Jan 2022	10 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending
UT8836	Ressie Molinari	29 Jan 2022	11 Mar 2022	Flight	DXB	Pending

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