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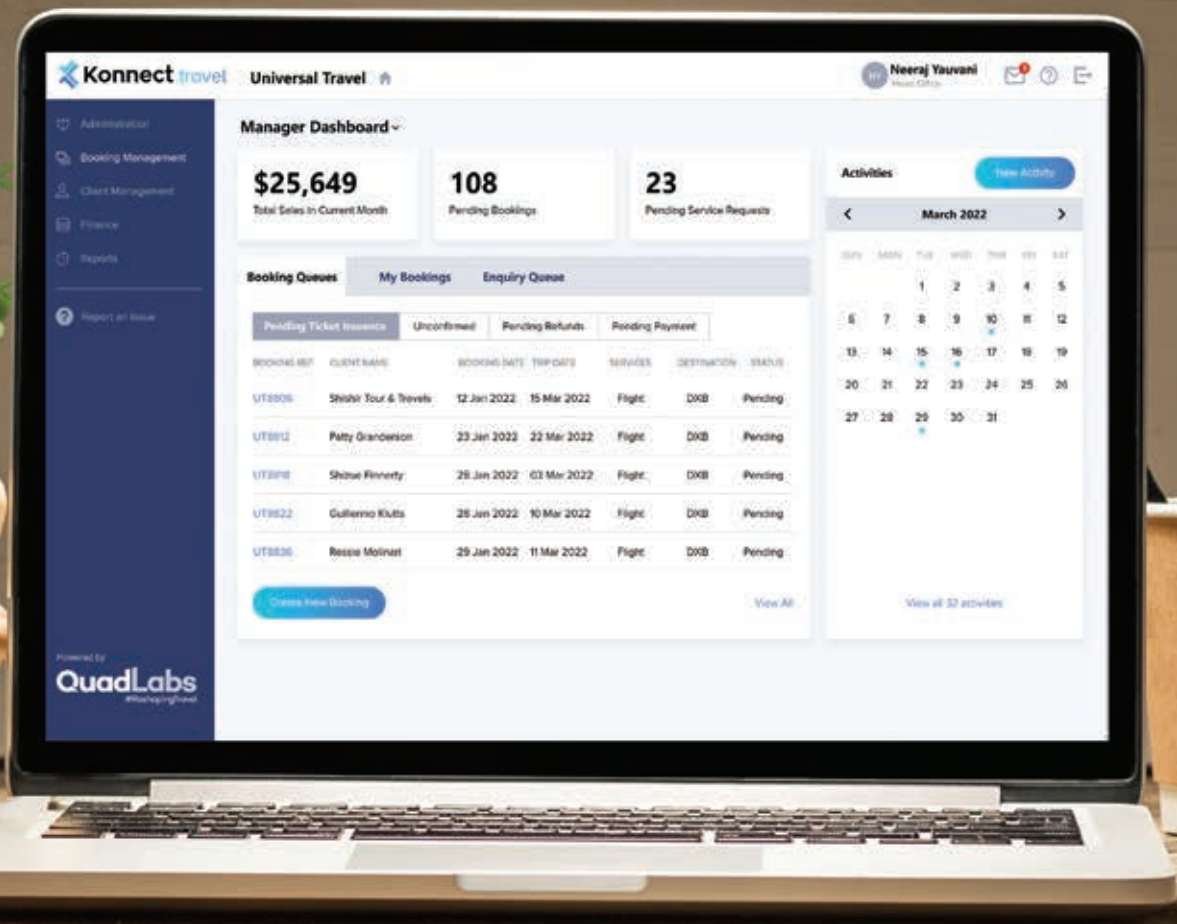
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Ananta Spa & Resort, Pushkar

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Ananta Spa & Resort Pushkar is a blissful getaway in Pushkar, surrounded on all sides by the magnificent Aravalli Hills and lush greenery. For our guests, we have 52 contemporary cottages, 24 sprawling rooms, 12 tents, 3 tent suites, and Ananta Villa spread across 11 acres. We have three sophisticated and magnificent dining options and a banquet hall set in picturesque settings. Ananta Spa & Resorts pampers you with premium amenities such as a well-equipped recreational room, an activity area for children, an outdoor swimming pool, a world-class spa, and a cutting-edge fitness centre, making it one of the best resorts in Pushkar.



The Baagh Ananta Elite, Ranthambore

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The Baagh Ananta Elite is one of Ranthambore's luxury resorts, located on the periphery of the Ranthambore National Park. Visit our resort to experience nature at its purest, with architecture inspired by the rugged wilderness of the place. We have luxurious rooms and cottages, two distinct dining experiences, a luxury pool, a gym, grand gardens, and a banquet hall. The Baagh Ananta Elite, a perfect blend of nature, luxury, and comfort, is the ideal place to explore Ranthambore's exotic wildlife.



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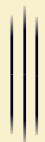
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Government Initiatives

Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region (DONER), recently launched the Visit India Year 2023 initiative and unveiled its logo at New Delhi. **Page-14**



Industry Insight

Travel trade and hospitality professionals share their views on Budget 2023. **Page-16-20**

Events Corner

Travel Boutique Online (TBO) hosted an appreciation event for its Travel Trade partners in Mumbai recently, which was attended by over 1000 travel trade professionals. **Page-22-24**



Associations in Action

NATTA along with Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) had organised a Western Travel Mart (WTM) 2023 for the TAAI Managing Committee and other members in Nepalganj, Nepal. **Page-30-31**



Hospitable Hotels

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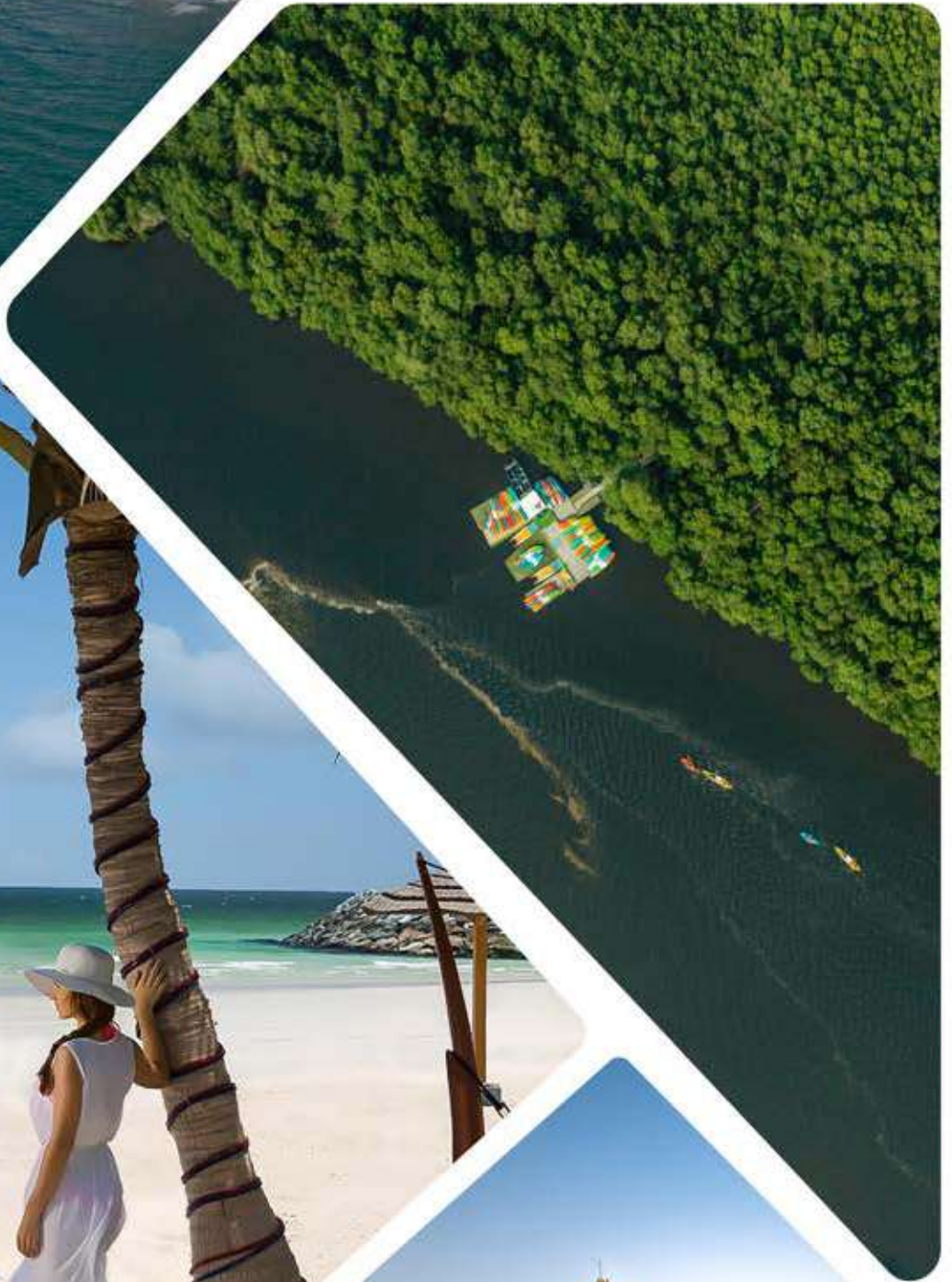
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From The Editor's Desk

Dear Readers

Second month of the year and we have already witnessed a couple of big networking events where the travel and hospitality industry got together to network and explore business opportunities. 2023 certainly looks promising! In fact, if the travel sentiment is to be believed, this is going to be the year of growth and rebound. Businesses claim that not only will they meet the 2019 figures, they will also surpass it and create new records. Well, may it all come true. Amen!



The recently announced Budget 2023 – 24 held some good news for the tourism sector. Not only was Tourism mentioned multiple times during the speech by the honourable Finance Minister, numerous plans were also disclosed to boost the tourism infrastructure of the country. The announcement of 50 additional airports to boost air connectivity, sanction of Rs. 2.40 lakh crore to Railways for development and plan to select 50 tourist destinations through challenge mode to be developed as a whole package for domestic and international tourism were some of the key highlights that will surely boost the tourism infrastructure of our country. Promotion of Border Villages under Vibrant Villages Programme is also a welcome initiative. However, the steep rise in TCS on International Holidays from 5 per cent to 20 per cent is not so-welcome move and has left many from the industry angry and immensely disappointed.

BOTT February SATTE Special Issue brings forth to you a mixed bag of stories that highlights various aspects of our industry. Almost 25 senior industry professionals have shared their feedback on the budget – good or bad; while a handful of senior hospitality professionals tells us how weddings have become an indispensable part of their revenue system post Covid. In addition to this, there are in-depth interviews of a wide spectrum of industry professionals, who met with the BOTT Team at OTM in Mumbai. Read all this and more and don't forget to share your feedback, criticism and praise with us at priyanka@bottindia.com

Happy Reading!

Priyanka Saxena Ray

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India becomes 3rd largest source travel market for Kazakhstan

India has become the third largest source travel market for Kazakhstan, despite a significant drop in arrivals in 2020. Inbound tourism from India is recovering and has shown an increase of three times compared to 2021. Kazakhstan has become a popular and trending destination for Indian tourists, with many visiting cities like Almaty and Astana. Galimzhan Seilov, from the Kazakh Tourism National Company, stated that arrivals from India are growing, and the company is promoting the country with initiatives such as visa-free travel for 14 days and two daily flights from Delhi. The company also hosted the Travel Agents Association of India in Almaty. This year, Kazakhstan Tourism Board will be participating in the SATTE travel exhibition and launching a new campaign in the Indian travel market. Travel industry representatives of India are invited to visit the Kazakhstan stand at the SCO Travel Mart Pavilion. Kazakhstan will be represented by its biggest tour operators, including Tour operator Kompas, Sun and Fun, Skyway, Leela Travel, and the national airline company Air Astana.



Global Destinations unveils new brand identity

Global Destinations has unveiled their new brand identity with the reveal of their new logo. The new brand identity exemplifies the renewed sense of commitment, new energy, and enthusiasm of all its employees, indicative of the company's progression in this new age of travel. The new brand logo is inspired by the belief in a youthful, enthusiastic, and trust-worthy organization. The design is intended to be clean and symmetrical with a simple yet recallable visual representation of two multi-hued swirls depicting the globe, nearly traversing to reflect global travel connections. The colours of the logo illustrate profound metaphors: green represents growth and harmony, while blue reflects a sense of security while showing brand loyalty, reliability and professionalism. Yellow on the other hand represents positivity, energy and youthfulness.



NDRF organises Disaster Management Training Course for ATOAI Adventure Guides

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) in collaboration with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) organized a six-day Disaster Management Course from January 30, 2022 to February 4, 2023 at 8 Battalion, NDRF, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh for adventure guides. The adventure guides from across the country successfully completed the 6-day course on Disaster Management, Search and Rescue, First Aid and CPR, Fire Safety, Water Emergencies, Snake and Animal Bites, Group Exercises / Leadership, communication skills and related topics.





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Karnataka Tourism to host first G20 Energy Transition Working Group Meet in Bengaluru

Karnataka Tourism has laid out the red carpet to international delegates from over 35 countries attending the Bengaluru leg of the G20 Summit Meet. The visit of international delegates to Karnataka reinforces 'Brand Karnataka' and helps to reinforce the 'One State, Many World' tagline of the tourism department. The first G20 Energy Transition Working Group (ETWG) meeting under India's presidency will be held in Bengaluru from 5 – 7 February 2023. The meeting will have over 150 participants including G20 member countries, nine special invitee guest countries - Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Spain.



Goa Tourism launches new Helipad Service and Helpline

Global Destinations has unveiled their new brand identity with the reveal of their new logo. The new brand identity exemplifies the renewed sense of commitment, new energy, and enthusiasm of all its employees, indicative of the company's progression in this new age of travel. The new brand logo is inspired by the belief in a youthful, enthusiastic, and trust-worthy organization. The design is intended to be clean and symmetrical with a simple yet recallable visual representation of two multi-hued swirls depicting the globe, nearly traversing to reflect global travel connections. The colours of the logo illustrate profound metaphors: green represents growth and harmony, while blue reflects a sense of security while showing brand loyalty, reliability and professionalism. Yellow on the other hand represents positivity, energy and youthfulness. The logo accentuates the Global Destinations brand name while adding a pictorial reminder to encourage brand recall.



AirAsia India announces operations from the newly launched Terminal 2

AirAsia India would be moving all domestic operations to the newly launched Terminal 2 at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru (BLR Airport) from February 15. Extending its promise of speed, efficiency and innovation from digital touchpoints to airport operations, AirAsia India would be operating from T2 with state-of-the-art facilities and a majority of departures being facilitated via aerobridge. Bengaluru is the home base and largest hub for AirAsia India.



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1st Tourism Working Group Meeting under G20 to start at Rann of Kutch in Gujarat

► BOTT DESK

The breathtaking white sands of Rann of Kutch in Gujarat will witness the congregation of representatives of the Tourism Sector of G20 countries during 7-9 February 2023. The 1st Tourism Working Group Meeting under G20 hosted by the Ministry of Tourism is slated to start tomorrow and more than 100 delegates would attend the meeting, said Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism at Dhordo, which is the venue of the meeting.

The meeting will be graced by Union Minister Parshottam Rupala, Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Minister of Tourism, Culture and DONER, G. Kishan Reddy and Chief Minister of Gujarat, Bhupendra bhai Patel. The participants would be senior delegates from G20 member countries, invitee countries and international organizations.

To celebrate India's G20 Presidency the Ministry of tourism has planned to organize a number of events engaging not only the government level stakeholders but also the travel trade and hospitality sector, the Secretary said. The Ministry would be organizing the first Global Tourism Investors' Summit (GTIS) in April/May 2023 in New Delhi. The objective of GTIS is to attract global investment into the Indian tourism and hospitality sector along with investments in tourism infrastructure, technology, skill development, startups and more.

The G20 CEO Forum alongside the Ministerial Meeting will be held at Goa in June. The event is being organized by World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and WTTC (India initiative). The Ministry of Tourism will also be organizing a MICE Global Conference and event on adventure tourism in May and June respectively in 2023, Singh said. The five priority areas in the tourism sector have been identified during India's G-20 Presidency, which will constitute the key building blocks for accelerating the transition of the tourism sector and will achieve the targets for 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The five priority areas are as follows:

- Green Tourism: Greening of tourism sector for a sustainable, responsible and resilient tourism sector
- Digitalization: Harnessing the power of digitalization to promote competitiveness, inclusion and sustainability in tourism sector
- Skills: Empowering youth with skills for jobs and entrepreneurship in tourism sector
- Tourism MSMEs: Nurturing tourism MSMEs / Startups/ private sector to unleash innovation and dynamism in tourism sector
- Destination Management: Rethinking the strategic management of destinations towards a holistic approach that delivers on the SDGs

The Tourism Secretary also said that two side events focusing on rural tourism and promotion of Archaeological Tourism would be the highlights of the three-day event. Singh said Rural tourism has a high potential to stimulate local economic growth, social change, and inclusive community development. Rural tourism values and safeguards rural villages along with their associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, local values, and activities (agriculture, forestry, livestock and/or fisheries), including their gastronomy.

While talking about the second focus area, Singh said archaeological sites have rich historical and cultural artifacts, which provide insightful discoveries regarding ancient civilizations across the world. Tourism can be used as a vehicle for promoting awareness about archaeological sites, which can lead to better understanding of cultural heritage of a destination and promotion of economic and social development of local communities. Visit India Year 2023 initiative was kicked off on 31st January this year and has grand plans and activities for promoting tourism in India. More than one lakh foreign delegates will visit India this year and they will be able to witness the variety, richness and diversity of India's culture, including monuments and festivals. Hareet Shukla, Tourism Secretary, Gujarat Government and Abhay Kumar, DDG, ICCR, Ministry of External Affairs were also present during the press conference.

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Shri G Kishan Reddy *launches* the Visit India Year 2023 logo

Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region (DONER), Government of India, recently launched the Visit India Year 2023 initiative and unveiled its logo at New Delhi, kicking off the year of grand plans and activities for promoting tourism in India.



> BOTT DESK

On the occasion, the Union Minister said that more than one lakh foreign delegates will visit India this year and they will be showcased entire gamut of India's Culture, including monuments and festivals. He added that each foreign delegate of G20 will be a brand ambassador of India's culture, heritage and tourist destinations. Stating further he said that the Ministry of Tourism is coordinating with Indian missions and other stakeholders to have a conducive environment for foreign visitors this year.

Encouraging the inbound travel and particularly in the backdrop of India's G20 Presidency as well as grand celebrations of India@75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the Ministry of Tourism is celebrating this year as 'Visit India Year 2023'. The focus is on inbound travel to India, to highlight varied tourism offerings of our country and showcase them to the global tourists. The priorities include highlighting the unique tourism offerings of every state by leveraging country's richness in culture, heritage, spirituality, natural beauty and focusing on promoting diverse categories of tourism like sustainable tourism, rural tourism, medical tourism, MICE, and others.

The Ministry is geared to make great strides in improving both the infrastructure and other framework conditions impacting the growth of tourism within the year. To achieve synergies in the Ministry's efforts and requirements of the tourism sector, the Ministry of Tourism is working with all the relevant ministries and government agencies, partners, travel and trade industry, state governments and tourism boards, and key stakeholders which have influence and impact on tourism.

India's G20 presidency presents itself as a fantastic opportunity to highlight the country's tourism offerings on a global stage. The Ministry plans to unlock this global campaign, by starting at home – inspiring citizens into being India's ambassadors with pride-evoking citizen advocacy campaigns across the year in the backdrop of India's G20 presidency leveraging the engagements across the G20 meeting cities.

The 'Incredible India' brand will continue to be leveraged, embellished, and polished to match the renewed expectations of travellers around the world. The plans for the brand to be supported by a best-in-class digital ecosystem are already in action including a reimagined website that will unbox soul-stirring stories across various travel experience categories that show the many hues of India, speaking to all senses with immersive tech-innovations to offer personalized experience for travellers across the world. The brand platform will also see renewed global social media outreach of Incredible India, making the world fall in love with India. To further harness the power of content the Ministry will be launching the signature newsletter that will take India's voice across the globe, regaling the world with India's unheard stories through new unique mouthpiece and leveraging voices that shape opinions in the industry. Getting on-board partnerships and collaborations that become the voices of Incredible India - global influencers, opinion shapers, industry leaders, experts on culture and history etc. all with a special focus on Rural Tourism and Sustainable Tourism with a spotlight on a modern, progressive India and reactivates the MICE segment to a business-ready India.

Giving a visual representation to this grand mission for the year, the Ministry flags the global campaign with the launch of the new Visit India Year 2023 logo, a microcosm of the countless stories India holds – from heritage to gastronomy to our art and our rich wildlife. The logo design is inspired by our belief system of Atithi Devo Bhava, the 'Visit India Year 2023' logo is a thoughtfully-designed visual identity that is shaped like a grand namaste. Namaste holds cultural significance in India as it is not just a quintessential way to greet people but also a noble gesture to welcome them. The 'Visit India Year 2023' logo is an open invitation to the world to come and experience the Incredible India.



Events and *More*



For details contact: gunjan@perfectalliances.in

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Budget 2023

Gives importance to Tourism Development but hike in TCS leaves industry disappointed...

The recently announced Budget 2023 – 24 held some good news for the tourism sector. Not only was Tourism mentioned multiple times during the speech by the honourable FM, numerous plans have been disclosed to boost the tourism infrastructure of the country. However, the steep rise in TCS on International Holidays from 5 per cent to 20 per cent has left many from the industry angry and immensely disappointed. Read on to know how the veterans from the travel trade are reacting to tourism 2023 – 24.

Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray

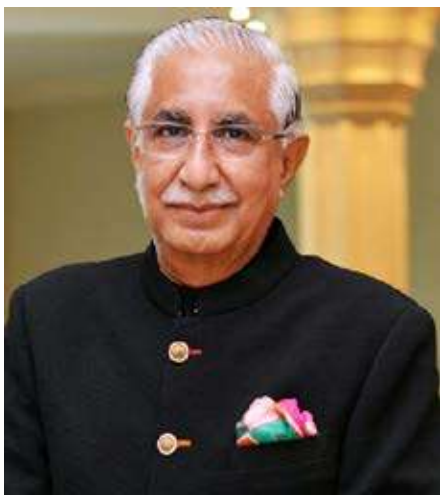
Budget 2023 Major Highlights for Travel & Tourism Sector

- *There's a large potential in Tourism to be tapped. The country offers immense attraction for the Domestic as well as foreign tourists.*
- *The sector holds huge opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship especially for Youth.*
- *Tourism Promotion will be taken up on mission mode with active participation of states, the convergence of Govt programs & PPP mode.*
- *50 additional airports for air connectivity.*
- *2.40 lakh crore assigned to Railways.*
- *50 tourist destinations will be selected through challenge mode to be developed as a whole package for domestic and international tourism.*
- *For foreign remittances for other purposes under LRS and purchase of overseas tour programs, it is proposed to increase the rates of TCS from 5 per cent to 20 per cent.*
- *Tourism infrastructure and amenities to be facilitates in Border Villages under Vibrant Villages Programme.*
- *Sector specific skilling and entrepreneurship development to be dovetailed to achieve objectives of 'Dekho Apna Desh' initiative.*
- *An App to enhance Tourist Experience to be launched*
- *Unity Mall to provide fillip to ODOPs, GI and handicraft products to be set up in states*



“While we are thankful that the FM has touched upon developing tourism on a mission mode along with destination development, yet the Indian tourism, travel & hospitality industry was keenly looking forward to getting the vital infrastructure status, to be treated at par with merchandise exports, to have gotten enhanced support to tourism for global marketing, to have had a directional positive guidance on GST issues for tourism and was looking forward to enhanced tax / financial support mechanisms to tourism MSMEs which are more than 95% of industry entrepreneurs are travel agents, hotels, tour operators, restaurants, tourist transporters and guides among others.”

Nakul Anand, Chairman, FAITH



“I am happy with the Budget because the government has focussed on the tourism sector in a detailed way. With better connectivity in terms of new airports and increased outlay for Railways as well as the new 50 destinations, which will give impetus to both domestic and international tourism, these are positive developments for the India Tourism Story.”

Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder, TBO.com & Director, Nijhawan Group



“Tourism is a priority sector and not an orphan sector anymore. Thanks to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for highlighting the importance of Domestic tourism in the Budget 2023. To develop 50 destinations in challenge mode and as a complete package under 'Dekho Apna Desh' initiative' is a great step. Domestic tourism increases consumption and keeps the cash registers going for hotels and travel products in India inbound tourism brings a lot of foreign exchange. So that should be the priority of the government. and the government has definitely, provided a favourable budget for it. When it comes to TCS being increased from five to 20%, I subscribe fully and support this government in that Vision because we have to look beyond tourism at certain aspects of Indian economy. To reduce financial



deficits. We need to ensure that the foreign exchange remains in India and is not sent out through outbound tourism. When you remit money overseas, you are actually depleting your foreign exchange and thereby increasing our fiscal deficit. So, I fully subscribe to the government that if people desire to have a luxury holiday or an outbound holiday foreign a holiday, paying a small tax on it should not help anyone.”

Naveen Kundu, Managing Director EbixCash
-India, South East Asia & Middle East

“We’re shocked that instead of abolishing it, the government has raised the TCS from five to 20%! (This is quoted as based on the first document as received. We are still taking clarity on the same) For foreign remittances for other purposes under LRS and purchase of overseas tour program, the TCS rates are proposed to go up from 5 per cent to 20 per cent, which is going to be detrimental for our business. Nothing has been done for our request



on ease of doing business be it on TCS abolishment or ITC for Tour Operators on interstate GST credit which is one of the main concerns requiring urgent redressal. Considering the significant foreign exchange of more than \$ 100 billion generated by tourism over the past few years, at least Rs. 5000 crores of global branding budget must be allocated to Indian tourism

We expected some of our demands met with the Union Budget, none of which have unfortunately been adhered to. Some of our major demands included -a Concurrent Status for centre and states to have a synergistic and coordinated approach in tourism planning and execution; Tourism forex earnings to be effectively zero rated for GST; underwriting fund for travel agents and tour operators; an income tax exemption within India to make domestic tourism market main stream part of Indian economy. Unfortunately, the Union Budget 23-24 has not fulfilled any of these demands.”

Jyoti Mayal, President TAAI

“The Union Budget 2023 continues to push connectivity, infrastructure and destination development. We believe this will enhance India as a destination. However, we still request the Government to consider the TCS issues for tour operators and the infrastructure status for hotels urgently. This will release the tourism industry from shackles and allow it to soar as the Hon’ble Finance Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman rightly said in her speech that the tourism sector has the power to generate and increase employment.”

-Dinesh Khanna, Chairman, WTTCII



"A good budget for the macro economy, but nothing for tourism. Introducing a tourist app and shops for handicrafts (which btw already exist in every state for decades) does not affect the business of the stakeholders. She said they will do marketing, which is the mandate of MoT to begin with (which has not been done for a year). There is nothing to improve the ease of doing business as a stakeholder. Nothing which facilitates travel, and credibility of the destination. Nothing to improve our cost competitiveness. Every budget has mentioned new tourism circuits. Every budget has mentioned rail connectivity. Not new. I do appreciate that she mentioned tourism a few times, but if wishes were horses..... We needed help to recover, to fight for our market share, to grow. Didn't happen."

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

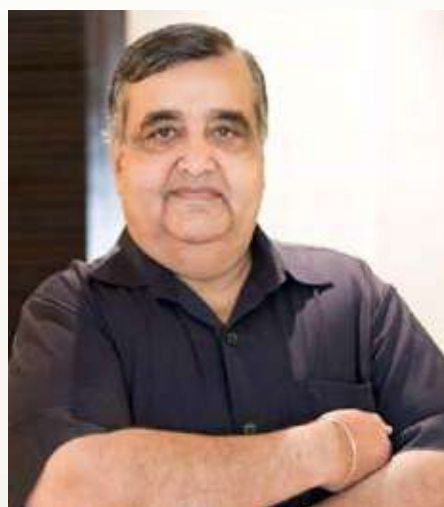


"Increasing the rate of TCS from 5% to 20% is going to push up the cost for the buyer and will make international travel expensive. This will negatively affect the mid-market traveller for sure. As it is we are not seeing the budget and mid-market travellers as yet in large numbers due to the appreciation of dollar and Euro against the rupee. However there are provisions where credit can be collected against tax paid but that will still make this increase a shock for travellers and travel agencies. The TCS on overseas tour programs should have been totally scrapped."

Vasudha Sondhi, Managing Director, Outbound Marketing



"For the first time the Hon'ble Finance Minister has at the start of the budget addressed the importance of tourism in India and recognised its potential for growth in employment generation and it needs to be tapped. In her address, the Hon'ble Finance Minister also mentioned the large potential for tourism, especially youth- to be taken up on mission mode, which is very encouraging. She also mentioned that 50 tourist



destinations will be selected through challenge mode to be developed as a whole package for domestic and international tourism. Some of our members who do Outbound tourism business will have to close their business at Tax Collection at Source (TCS) has been proposed to be increased from 5 % to 20%. This needs to be rolled back immediately. However, none of our demands like, rationalisation of GST on tourism industry, exemption of GST on foreign exchange earnings and refund of tax on shopping under Tax Refund to Tourist (TRT) Scheme on shopping etc. for which there is already a provision in the GST Act, have been considered."

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO

"The Union Budget 2023-24 is a growth-oriented one aimed to help India weather the current global economic challenges. With the FM announcing plans to renew 50 additional airports, helipads, water aero drones, and advanced landing grounds, it will boost regional connectivity. Moreover, the announcement to develop 50 destinations for domestic and international tourists will also help to draw attention to the country's tourism and hospitality sectors. The Finance Minister said that these tourist destinations will be selected through challenge mode. The impetus on Dekho Apna Desh will provide a further boost to the growth of domestic tourism in the country. The FM also highlighted that states will be encouraged to set up a "Unity Mall" in the capital city or most popular tourist destination for the promotion of the 'One District, One product' theme. Such initiatives will also help unleash the potential tapped in the tourism sector."

Sarbendra Sarkar, MD, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts



"While the budget gave due mention to tourism, it's highly disappointing from the Outbound Travel point of view. We had requested the honourable Finance Minister to reduce TCS percentage from 5% and bring it to zero, instead the government has increased the same to 20%, which is going to hamper our business and at the same time there is going to be a huge deficiency in government revenue as people would prefer to either book through foreign tour operators or foreign OTAs to save GST and TCS both. At present also outbound tour operators and the government of India are losing revenue on the same grounds. Very disappointing indeed."

Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI



"The Honorable Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the development of tourist places jointly by public and

private partnerships. This will give a much-needed boost to the domestic tourism segment. The budget specifies that 50 tourist destinations will be selected and developed as a whole package for domestic and international tourism. We welcome this announcement. For domestic tourism “Dekho Apna Desh” has already been promoted very widely now similarly international tourism too will be revived with these initiatives. The tourist infrastructure will also be provided on the border and in North East India which will be highly beneficial for the inflow of tourists. The industry can harness the direct and multiplier effects of tourism in employment generation to the youth of India as the sector creates direct and indirect job opportunities. We believe these implementations will play a pivotal role in overall economic development. This is a good budget for the hospitality and tourism sectors.”

S. P. Jain, Chairman & MD, Pride Hotels Limited



"We are pleased that the travel industry has taken center stage and the National Tourism Policy will enable the tourism sector to significantly contribute towards the government's mission to target an overall GDP contribution of USD 20 trillion by 2047. The flagship scheme, Dekho Apna Desh, focuses on domestic tourism/travel. The scheme is intended to offer financial help to tourists traveling to different parts of India and for which the government has set aside a substantial budget for the implementation of this scheme. The new outlay in the infrastructure sector will tremendously contribute to the development of the country. Announcing the 100 new projects for last mile connectivity will help IntrCity to focus on penetrating deep into Indian states. Last but not the least, by building stronger, more sustainable and resilient tourism industries, will accelerate Indian economic growth, as the country is heading to a bright future."

Manish Rathi, CEO & Co-founder, IntrCity SmartBus



"With the addition of 50 new tourist destinations, 50 airports and a budget allocation of 2.40 lakh crores to Railways, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has reinforced the significance of travel and tourism industry in the country's economic development very evidently. Further, I'm sure that the “Dekho Apna Desh” initiative will definitely boost not just domestic travel, but also entice inbound tourists to explore our rich historic and cultural heritage.”

Dev Karvat, Founder & CEO, Asego



"It's a kind of budget that the industry was anticipating to revive its growth in the post-pandemic era. Hon'ble Finance Minister Sitharaman's convincing statement that the promotion of tourism will be taken up on mission mode on public-private partnership model which has instilled a new lease of life in industry players. Hotel Stocks moved up as Investors cheered the Budget. She emphasised on the scope of huge job creation. Priorities set by her in Union Budget 2023-24 ensure inclusive development of the travel and tourism sector in the country. And all the initiatives, be it the selection of 50 tourist destinations for developing a comprehensive package for domestic and international tourism or establishment of Unity Malls to promote domestic tourism and local businesses or the formation of theme-based tourist circuits and facilitation of rural infrastructure, are expected to propel the sector to newer heights.”

A Krishna Mohan, Managing Director, Southern Travels



"It is a great honour and pride to accept the Union Budget presented by our Honourable Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. It showcases the tourism and hospitality sectors as prime Revenue Generator and allows us to sustain better. This will generate more employment and new avenues in our sector."



**Prem Upadhyay, AVP
Sales & Marketing, Rockland Group of Hotels**

"The Union Budget 2023-2024 presented by the finance minister (Nirmala Sitharaman) highlighted that the Indian economy is on a growth trajectory in spite of the global economic challenges. In her Budget speech, the FM emphasized that the country offers “immense attraction” for both domestic and international tourists. With the government announcing that states will be encouraged to set up a "Unity Mall" in the capital city or most popular tourist destination for the promotion of 'One District, one product' theme, such initiatives will help to unleash the potential vested in the tourism sector. I also expect that the change in tax regime announced in the Union Budget will result in more disposable income

in the hands of middle-class consumers – which I expect ultimately will spur consumption in activities like travel. Regional connectivity will see a boost with the plans to renew 50 additional airports, helipads, water aero drones, and advanced landing grounds.”



Paritosh Ladhani, Joint Managing Director, Sincere Developers, which owns Taj Hotel & Convention Centre Agra

“Honourable FMs push for the tourism sector is a great booster for the Indian hospitality industry. While post pandemic there has been a significant increase in domestic tourism's contribution to luxury hotels, 'Dekho Apna Desh' campaign will further add to the momentum. The government's focus on tourism promotion is evident in their opening up opportunities for joint participation of the states and private players in Government programs via the PPP mode. This will be a major driver for growth to tourism across India. Further, the development of 50 new airports and 50 destinations through challenge mode to develop a consolidated package for both domestic and international tourism also augurs well for India's hospitality industry that has long grappled with infrastructure bottlenecks.”



Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts

“The government's focus on tourism in the budget by giving it a top priority is commendable. The allocation of resources highlights the importance placed on boosting employment through the tourism sector.

The budget demonstrates the government's commitment to the holistic development of the industry. The plan to develop 50 tourist destinations for both domestic and international tourists will revolutionize the tourism industry in India.”



Asif Fazlani, Managing Director, Fazlani Nature's Nest

“The Union Budget 2023, presented by the Indian finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 1st February 2023, has brought a wave of relief to the Indian hospitality sector, which has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has made a significant allocation of funds for the revival of the hospitality industry, which has seen a decline in business due to the pandemic.

The budget announced an allocation of Rs 2,480 crore for the development of the tourism industry, including the hospitality sector. It has also proposed the setting up of a National Technical Textiles Mission, with a target to increase exports of technical textiles to \$30 billion by 2025. This will create job opportunities in the hospitality sector, as technical textiles are widely used in the manufacturing of bed linens, towels, and other hospitality products.

Additionally, the budget has proposed a reduction in the corporate tax rate for new hotels, restaurants, and tourism-related businesses. This move is expected to encourage investment in the hospitality sector and provide a boost to the industry.”



Rajit V. Shetty, Managing Director, Ramee Group of Hotels





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TBO Group hosts Appreciation Event for its travel trade partners in Mumbai

Travel Boutique Online (TBO), India's leading travel distribution platform connecting travel buyers and suppliers for creating memorable experiences for travellers across the globe hosted an appreciation event for its Travel Trade partners in Mumbai recently. The event was marked by a remarkable attendance of over 1000 travel trade professionals.

Shreya Shimpi

A gala event was organised at Hotel Sahara Star in Mumbai by the TBO group and was well attended by over 1000 members such as key tour operators, travel agents, hoteliers, airline industry members, bloggers, media and many others from the travel fraternity. Scrumptious food, ambrosial drinks, upbeat music and stellar entertainment made the party a grand success.

The event started with a welcome note from Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder and Joint Managing Director followed by a succinct presentation highlighting the journey of TBO in the last few years and the successful milestones achieved by it. The TBO success story has been truly remarkable and Mr. Nijhawan expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the support that he has been receiving from all his travel partners. He spoke with conviction about the goals he wishes to achieve in the upcoming year and urged his industry partners to continue their unwavering support. His vision for 2023 is a testimony of his ambitious style of working and thinking not just about his company but also about helping his travel partners achieve remarkable success in their endeavours.

He spoke about how the global travel and tourism industry is growing at an exponential rate and how it is essential to take more efforts to explore this industry and the plethora of opportunities that it has to offer. Post-Covid, new travel trends have ensued and with India having the largest youngest population in the world, it is now under the spotlight as an emerging market for travel. The young generation believes in spending on experiential travel. With 'YOLO' as their mantra, they are keen on exploring off-beat travel destinations, cuisines, cultures and experiences. The youth today wants to enjoy life. More people are travelling to unexplored destinations and budget is no longer a constraint for them as their capacity for spending on travel has increased with increased per capita income and more disposable income. There is easy access to credit financing which provides a 'Pay now buy later' option.

Despite hotels and airlines still being in the stage of revival in 2022, most of the travel partners have had the best season so far. The travel recovery was more than 85 per cent in the world. Airlines and hotels are packed to capacity with millions of passengers travelling across the globe which includes corporates, students, labour, leisure travellers etc. India will have more capacity on the international side than it was before the pandemic. We are so well poised in the travel market in the world that everybody wants a piece of India. The budget which was recently announced is also very much pro-tourism and it presents a great opportunity to us as the government is investing significantly in tourism. 67 countries provide 'Visa on Arrival' to Indian tourists. Vietnam is becoming one of the most sought-after destinations given its easy accessibility, short haul flight and facility for getting a visa on arrival.

He also spoke about India being the largest MICE seller in 2024 for



**Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder,
TBO.com & Director, Nijhawan Group**

the world with corporates and companies doing well. 664 destination weddings happened outside India in 2019, out of which Thailand was the highest taker hosting close to 440 weddings. He urged everyone to explore the MICE and destination weddings segments as that market is going to boom and looks extremely promising. TBO dived into the cruises segment around eighteen months back and it is one of the fastest emerging niches which is picking up pace in the world. There are 780 cruises in the world including river cruises. The new India seeing Cordelia Cruises and the Cruises in Singapore will evolve to explore the cruise market.

Ankush went on to speak about Sports tourism by quoting FIFA as a classic example. India was the number three buyer for FIFA despite not being a footballing nation. 9000 people from India were at Lusail out of the 80,000 people for the final match between France and Argentina. Ten per cent of that audience flew from India to watch the game despite the sky-high ticket prices. He urged everyone to explore the travel market by going beyond the Hotel and Air sector as there is a lot that can be done beyond these two businesses.

Highlighting India's tourism growth graph for future, he highlighted that 100 new airports are to be constructed by 2024 and the expected investment in India is about 90,000 crores and making our country the third largest economy. The connectivity is going to be exceptional in this new emerging India. 160 million passports are there in India, and 10 per cent of people have passports. 26 million people have travelled which is less than twenty per cent of people who have travelled overseas. 130 million people still have aspirations to travel outside India. The first-time traveller will look at assisted travel through travel partners and travel agents.

The enterprising Co-Founder then walked us through the TBO journey

from 2007 to the present. In 2017, TBO achieved the milestone of 10,000 monthly transaction buyers. In 2019, they acquired Island Hopper. 2021 has been a phenomenal year for them with the launch of 'Zamzam' and 'Paxes' and a second acquisition of Gemini Tours. The key highlight of the year was that TBO ranked second in India with RMS of 13.12% as per IATA. Their employee strength increased from 705 to 1575 in 2022 along with them acquiring 'Bookabed'.

The event concluded with an award ceremony in which the travel industry partners were felicitated and awarded trophies and Certificates of Appreciation. It was indeed a memorable evening and the years ahead certainly look promising for the TBO Group.

'I anticipate 2023 to be one of the best years'

"I anticipate a great 2023. I tell people that it will probably be one of the best years one has witnessed in the last ten years," said the dynamic and optimistic **Ankush Nijhawan**, Co-Founder and Managing Director, TBO as he spoke to BOTI in an exclusive chat at the recently concluded OTM held in Mumbai in which he shared some interesting insights and emerging trends in the travel industry. Here are a few excerpts from the interview.

With the revival of tourism, how has 2022 been in terms of business?

2022 was a brilliant year. A lot of people have been very happy, especially about the second half of the year. The demand was immense. Everybody has been smiling whoever I meet across India. We had some jitters in late December when the RT-PCR policy was coming back but as January has ended, it is all coming back and the world has moved on again.

What is your expectation from the year 2023?

I anticipate a great 2023. I tell people that it will probably be one of the best years one has witnessed in the last ten years. A lot of problems will get resolved such as Visas will be a little more accessible. The demand is immense and hopefully, the supply will come back now as the market is opened up again. I think it is going to be a phenomenal year.

What are the new strategies which you have planned?

We want to do our best. We will continue to add more products through the platform which will enable our partners across the world to further get more inventories and more content which will help them serve their customers better. It is a very competitive world and the guy who has the content through the platform is the person who will be the winner and that is something that we will continue to focus on.

Have you seen a change in the traveller's patterns before and after the pandemic?

Everybody wants to travel. There is no particular generation now that will not travel. As you go the younger generation, they want to do adventure and some funky things. The older generation wants to go to the typical destination like London, Paris etc. I think that India is in a beautiful spot and the demographics of the country are extremely powerful. As a young country, there is a lot of what is happening and all the segments are here to stay.



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One of our largest initiatives this year would be 'Escorted Tours': K.D. Singh

"Escorted Tours" has three goals that we are considering. To start, implement a hassle free guided tour to elevate quality to an entirely new level. The second is to make the price extremely competitive, and the third and most crucial step is to provide value enhancements, according to K.D. Singh, founder and president of TravelBullz.

By Rai Umraopati Ray



Is 2023 going to be the year of travel & tourism with record numbers?

Yes, I do believe we will surpass the figures from 2019, which most industry experts use as a standard. This may differ from nation to nation and location to location. But these figures will be greater if we look at Asia. Right now, the projection is promising. Destinations are welcoming. To entice and market their locations to Indian consumers, they are making every effort possible. India is highly regarded by all nations, travel agencies, and tourist locations as a supply market. To capture market share, a sizable number of DMCs, hotels, and NTOs are entering India. India is being watched by the entire world, and it is the prime location in terms of the global market.

Though there were few bright spots in Budget 2023-24 but the increase in TCS rate was a dampener for the industry, how do you think this is going to impact companies like yours?

Certainly a bit of a downer is the rise in TCS rate. While this may not have a significant impact on short-haul locations, it will present a significant issue for long-haul destinations and premium tourism. This will also push consumers to use OTAs and other

alternative payment methods, which is counterproductive, to make cash payments. Travel agencies will find this to be a challenging time, especially those who specialize in long-haul and upscale travel.

An intermediary for tax collection cannot be a travel agent. Long-term, the government would see a loss of revenue, including GST. Customers will choose overseas OTAs that are exempt from Indian tax laws. Since this is a major shock to the industry, we hope that it is reversed as soon as possible.

What are the new travel trends you see amongst Indian travellers?

There are two distinct trends that are present. People are increasingly willing to travel, try new things, and spend money. They are embarking on luxurious experiential vacations. This transformation is occurring even in our bulk market, which is extremely intriguing. Huge sums of money are being spent by people on travel and experiencing vacations. All destinations have experienced an increase in average ADRs (average daily rates) and overnight stays. Indian travellers are changing, seeking out better products, experiences, and services, and are willing to spend more for them.

TravelBullz is one of the largest DMCs of Thailand, how has the tourist numbers from India so far been and what are your expectations for this year?

I'd like to thank Thailand's Tourism Authority for their excellent work during the pandemic. They stayed in touch with the travel industry and kept us and the customers informed so they were never out of sight or mind. When the restrictions were lifted, Thailand

saw an increase in tourism. The same can be said for Singapore, which received favorable results. Around 1 million tourists visited Thailand last year.

However, following the launch of RTPCR testing by the Government of India in January this year, there was a significant downturn in the first three weeks of the month. It had a significant impact on the momentum that had begun. There was no significant increase in cases in either country, and this should be lifted soon. Aside from that, the projections appear to be very promising. If everything goes as planned, Thailand will undoubtedly attract 1.8 or 1.9 million tourists this year.

What are your company's new plans or initiatives this year?

This year, we're focusing on providing the best in class ground services for tourists in Thailand, Singapore, the Maldives, and India. We have launched India as a destination, and our new brochure, which will cover these four destinations, will be unveiled at SATTE.

One of our most significant initiatives this year is our 'Escorted Tours,' which we recently launched in Pattaya, Bangkok, Krabi, and Phuket. We are moving away from the SIC (Seat-In-Coach) or sharing basis, which used to be a major issue in customer expectations. So, in our 'Escorted Tours,' anyone who lands at the airport will have access to guided tours across the state. Because it is a regular departure, agents do not need to coordinate as much. We have pre-blocked inventory,

which ensures that rooms are confirmed. There are over 20 hotels in each city that participate in this program, so there are plenty of options ranging from budget to luxury. We will extend this initiative to Singapore as well, so we will be focusing heavily on service quality. Our goal is to eliminate SIC completely so that our quality in Asia matches that of the rest of the world. Our 'Escorted Tours' are suitable for all types of travellers, including families, small groups, special interest groups, couples, FITs, and so on. This is most likely the first time a company in Asia has launched something like this. This is something that only a few companies in Europe do.

With 'Escorted Tours,' we're aiming for three things. First,

the 'zero complaint' tour will take quality to a whole new level. Second, despite being a coach tour, the price is very competitive, so customers benefit from economies of scale.

The third and most important aspect is value addition; for example, at Coral Island, we are providing a chai and samosa experience. A very unique and exclusive service for our Indian guests. Most importantly, agents can compete on price points with OTAs (online travel agencies). It's similar to an FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) product in that not much is required; simply identify a package and book it. As a result, there is a significant differentiation toward assured quality.

Anything more you would like to share?

We have about six dedicated teams working on improving the customer experience on our website. We will soon have over a million properties, which means that agents will be able to book not only Thailand, Singapore, Maldives, or India, but also anywhere in the world.

Furthermore, we will be focusing heavily on India in the coming quarter, with packages and booking options for the Golden Quadrilateral, Uttarakhand, Kerala, and Kashmir. The remaining destinations will follow in the second and third quarters.

TravelBullz's primary goal is to assist travel agents in competing with OTAs, and all initiatives are geared toward that end. We currently have over a thousand hotels in India that are contracted directly and have live inventory for booking. We are very pleased to announce that we have exceeded 3 crores of GMV (gross merchandise volume) on our domestic products in the last two months. Last year, 2022, was fantastic, with a topline of 94 crores. In the calendar year 2022, we received over 44000 bookings.



One Above

Looking forward to good *business travel* in 2023



Rahim Aslam, Founder and Consultant, One Above – a substantial driving force behind the emerging brand name in the tourism industry called 'One Above'. It is a globally renowned DMC Company which is known for its expertise in catering to its B2B partners. 'One Above' handles various verticals such as social events, business and MICE tourism, specialised tours for corporates etc. efficiently and seamlessly.

With a rich experience in the tourism industry, Rahim Aslam who is known as a people's person has an undying passion which reflects in his vision to excel. He spoke to BOTT in an exclusive chat at the recently held OTM in Mumbai and shared his inputs on the revival and evolving trends of the tourism industry.

Shreya Shimpi

Tell us something about 'One Above'.

'One Above' is a global Destination Management Company. We are not representatives, travel agents or tour operators but purely a Destination Management Company situated in thirty countries. We own and operate these companies. We have an inbound license, staff, our own transport and in-house guides and we have been in this destination management business for the last two decades. We specialise in Global DMCs. Around 22,000 agents deal with us across the globe.

Has there been any shift in the travelling trends after the pandemic?

After the pandemic, the trend has shifted towards secured travel. People want to have secure travel. They want to have informative travel. Before travelling to any country, they want to have information about the Do's and Don'ts of the country. They want to know about which places to visit and where not to visit and what are the rules and regulations. They also want to have information about security in terms of medical facilities, natural and man-made disasters so there has been a lot of change in that. Earlier there was careless travel but now it is more about secured travel.

How does 2023 look like from the business point of view?

2022 was excellent. We covered almost seventy per cent of the lost business. When I talk about this seventy per cent, it is the overall business but when I talk about one, two or three destinations where we have our offices, we have touched almost 200 per cent plus. Maldives is number one which is doing phenomenally well. There is South Africa and Dubai among the few other destinations which are doing phenomenally well. In 2023, seeing all the destinations are now open with Hong Kong and China being the last destinations to open, we are looking forward to good business travel for 2023.



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NATTA & NTB host TAAI Managing Committee Members in Nepal



NATTA along with Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) had organised a Western Travel Mart (WTM) 2023 for the TAAI Managing Committee and other members. The two-day B2B event in Nepalganj, Nepal was aimed at exploring new opportunities between the two countries and saw participation from local tourism and hospitality stakeholders. **Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI** along with all Regional and Chapter Office Bearers of the Association, Managing Committee Members and select media were present for the event and offered a taste of Nepalese hospitality. Also present on the occasion was Nepalganj Member Parliament Dhawal Shamsheer Rana. Members were also shown the Bardia National Park in Nepal.

"I strongly believe we should strengthen bi-lateral relationships and develop regional tourism. India has border countries with huge potential, which we need to invest into and develop to boost tourism. We are thankful to NATTA & NTB for hosting us and we are keen to develop tourism bond between the two countries."



ASSOCIATIONS IN ACTION



Jazeera Airways marks five years of operations in India



Jazeera Airways recently celebrated five years of operations in India and the success of its Thiruvananthapuram route. The series of events in Kerala included a luncheon with local trade partners and media in Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi. Crowning the celebrations, Jazeera Airways held an agents awards evening in Kochi to recognize top performing travel trade partners and appreciate their support through the years.

In the last five years, Jazeera Airways has expanded from one route to Hyderabad starting in 2017, to eight major cities in the India, including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Kochi and Mumbai. The airline offers passengers from these Indian cities, a direct corridor to Kuwait and other countries in the GCC at competitive prices. The Thiruvananthapuram route was launched in October last year, with two flights operated from Kuwait weekly.

Romana Parvi, Regional Manager – South Asia for Jazeera Airways explained: “At Jazeera Airways, India factors high on our list of top destinations, both for inbound and outbound travel. We are always keen to serve destinations that provide better connectivity for our passengers at reasonable fares. We currently serve eight major cities in India with two in Kerala. As always, we will continue to scope out opportunities in India to cater to the high demand from both expats and business travellers in Kuwait and the extended region.”

Jazeera Airways operates commercial and cargo flights out of its Jazeera Terminal T5 at Kuwait International Airport. The airline flies to over 55 popular destinations across the Middle East, Central and South Asia, Africa and Europe comprising high-demand business, leisure, religious and weekend destinations.



SriLankan Airlines launches new holiday packages; hosts event in Mumbai

A multi-city destination presentation event with the theme 'Dil Full of Sri Lanka' concluded in Mumbai after a successful run in Delhi and Jaipur. Sri Lanka is the perfect amalgamation of picturesque landscapes, national parks, mesmerising beaches, adventure and ambrosial food. In a BOTT exclusive, **Richard Nuttall, Chief Executive Officer, Sri Lankan Airlines** shared his views on how important India is as a market for tourism and also spoke about the various steps being undertaken to revive tourism.



Shreya Shimpi

Sri Lankan Airlines hosted an event in Mumbai to unveil the new holiday packages to around fifty members which included industry stalwarts, key tour operators, travel partners and the media. With tourism bouncing back and after the economic crisis, Sri Lanka is all set to welcome its tourists. Sri Lankan Airlines along with Sri Lankan Holidays has come up with a variety of delightful holiday packages suitable for all budget ranges.

How has Sri Lanka fared as a tourist destination in the last year?

Business has been not as good as we hoped but a lot better than we could have hoped. Around December 2021 and January 2022 we started to come out of Covid and tourism started to come back to Sri Lanka. We had really good results for 2-3 months. Our financial year is April to March and so we were optimistic about the year April to March this year. Then Putin waded into Ukraine and the price of fuel doubled; so fuel went into being twenty-five per cent of our costs, fifty per cent of our costs in two or three months which also happened with a lot of airlines. The country started to run out of dollars. It was very difficult. After that it picked up a little bit and then we had the political problems. We had a regime change. While it was never ever unsafe to visit Sri Lanka, the media sensationalised everything so we get all the travel advisories and in May-June, the tourism stops. After this, fuel was an issue in the country. We have had people working 24-hour shifts because we couldn't get them to and from the airport fast enough. The country ran out of fuel completely in July and August and that was aviation fuel. I don't know if any other national airline has run without fuel in some country. We managed to keep pretty much the full schedule going with lots of technical stops in India. Since then, things have settled down a bit. However, airfares are crazy as everyone is a bit constrained at the moment. Everybody wants to go see friends, family and is trying to get back after Covid so we have been kept going really by the Sri Lankan diaspora and Indians haven't been coming as much

to Sri Lanka itself but a lot still use it to connect to go and do their other business or see families. So that has really kept us going. The load factors at the moment in the last 2-3 months were 82, 83, 84 per cent and we still might break even for the year. We will probably have our best result for the last 10-12 years and that depends on what is going on in the country that's quite positive.

What is your vision for the year 2023?

In 2023, we are just trying to stabilise things, and get a few more aircraft in the sky. We are flying pretty much everywhere but with rigid schedules so we need to get some more flights going. We need to gradually start catching up with some of the payments to suppliers and to do that it requires us to generate our cash. We got to be very mindful of where we fly. It is a sort of slow process where we talk about government restructuring, working to find a solution for debt and possible privatisation but those things will take time. We have to concentrate on what we can control on a day-to-day basis. I still feel that the constraint that the world has got will continue for another year to eighteen months. There are a lot of supply-chain issues which makes it hard for us to get engines, makes it hard to get new aircraft that they want so that is a challenge for everybody. So, things will remain constrained. We would hope to start seeing more and more tourism coming back. China is opening up so this year we have broken even. The goal next year is to start from the beginning to generate some more cash and then, we can build the base. Looking forward to two or three years, I think we need to be doing double the flying that we are doing now.

How important is India to you as a market?

India is a very important market for tourism because culturally we are quite similar. All the feedback we get is that many Indians like travelling with us because they get treated and looked after much better than they do on other airlines. People who fly with us keep coming back just as people who come to Sri Lanka keep coming back.



Destination Rwanda Showcased beautifully at 'Visit Rwanda Evening' in Mumbai

Visit Rwanda recently hosted a Networking Evening in Mumbai where it showcased the highlights of the destination as it is all set to welcome tourists. Rwanda - 'The Land of a Thousand Hills' has a lot to offer such as hilly landscapes, National Parks, adventure activities and rich cultural diversity. It is home to the Big 5 and the endangered mountain gorillas and is a paradise for nature lovers. Rwanda is a hidden gem waiting to be explored. BOTT spoke to two senior officials at the event - **Christian Gatete, Country Manger – India, RwandAir** and **Linda Mutesi, Manager – Tourism Promotion Division, Rwanda Development Board**. Read below to know what they had to say –

Shreya Shimpi

'Visit Rwanda Evening' was successfully held at the magnificent Hotel Sahara Star in Mumbai. The networking evening provided an opportunity for the various members from the travel industry who attended the event to interact with a delegation from Rwanda comprising of Tour Operators, Senior Officers from Rwanda High Commission in New Delhi, Rwanda Development Board and RwandAir.

Christian Gatete, Country Manger – India, RwandAir

Tell us about the flight connectivity to India.

We fly out of Mumbai three times a week on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. We connect India to Africa. We fly to more than 25 destinations in Africa, Europe, Belgium, London to Middle East Qatar-Doha and Dubai. In Asia, it is Mumbai and Guangzhou.

How have been able to achieve the pre-pandemic figures?

Post-Covid we are doing very well connecting flights from Kigali to Mumbai and Mumbai to Guangzhou having a transit here. From selling Kigali- Mumbai, Mumbai – Kigali, Mumbai-Guangzhou and Guangzhou to Mumbai we are the only airline to connect India to China direct flights. Because of Covid, China is just re-opening. We haven't started flying to our pre-Covid destinations but we fly three times out of India. Covid has ended and we are going to resume Guangzhou.

What about the Visa?

As Rwanda is a Commonwealth member just like India, India gets a free visa into Rwanda for thirty days upon the arrival. Upon arrival, you can come with the passports, go to the airport and get the Visa for thirty days free of charge.

Linda Mutesi, Manager – Tourism Promotion Division, Rwanda Development Board

Why should Indian travellers choose Rwanda as a destination for their next vacation?

Rwanda is one of the safest destinations in the world. You can travel at any time in any place here even at night and still be safe. You don't have

to worry about your safety. Secondly, it is easy to get to Rwanda as we are pretty well linked by Air. We have a direct flight from Mumbai to Kigali which flies three times a week so there is no excuse for you to not travel to Rwanda. Thirdly, there is a free Visa upon Arrival for all Commonwealth states as well as the African Union. We are a very open country. There are lots of opportunities for business. There are a lot of things to do and see, ranging from seeing the Big 5, mountain gorillas and primates that are very special because they exist in only three countries in the world. If you are to visit Rwanda, you cannot miss that experience. Mountain gorillas can be seen in only three countries in the world and Rwanda is one of them and it is pretty easy to see them in Rwanda. When you come it is just a two and half hour's drive to where they live and then you trek. Trekking also happens between three to eight hours depending on the kind of trek that you are doing and you can still see the mountain gorillas and come away with an experience of a lifetime. It is something that blows your mind because it is not something that you expect. These are huge animals who are gentle giants and to think of them as formerly critically endangered to endangered, you see all the impact they brought into the country. Not just Gorillas, but generally all our National Parks bring in revenue that supports our communities and has supported the economy of Rwanda which would drive the tourist to Rwanda. We are a very sustainable destination. We think about our future generations when we are preserving. For instance, we have limitations on the number of people that visit certain parts. We have limitations on the number of people visiting a particular gorilla family for instance. Eight people view for one hour and then you come away. Nobody visits that family again and the animals are left in peace. That means a lot for us and future generations. The other reason is diversity. We also have the beach in the western part of Rwanda which is a small beach but very nice. You can kayak there and relax. I usually recommend it as a stopover in between trips.

How important is India to you as a market?

India has been one of the best-performing markets in this region in Asia. Before the pandemic, it was the second market after China. India has been consistently up in numbers. What makes it interesting is that when you go elsewhere such as the UK, and the U.S. you meet Indian agents who are talking about the diaspora who are going to Africa. We will continue to promote the destination through trade fairs, media and FAM trips.

Tourism Malaysia kicks off first road show in India for 2023 with MATTA

Tourism Malaysia kick-started the year with its first roadshow in India, hosting it alongside the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) across five cities from January 30 to February 7, 2023. The roadshow started in the city of Chennai, followed by Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The mission was led by **Mohd Amirul Rizal Abdul Rahim, Senior Deputy Director of International Promotion (Asia & Africa) Tourism Malaysia.**

> BOTT DESK

Mohd Amirul Rizal Abdul Rahim together with the Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents (MATTA) was spearheading the mission which was supported by 30 organisations, comprising one (1) state tourism body, one (1) airline, six (6) hotel/resort operators, twenty (20) travel agents and two (2) product owners. The Malaysian sellers and Indian buyers participated in the business matching session and networking dinner, apart from seminars focusing on leisure and niche tourism markets such as meeting and incentives groups (MICE), wedding, golfing and family fun activities.

India has been one of the top sources market for Malaysia and has contributed 735,309 (+22.5%) arrivals and RM3.6 billion (+33.4%) tourism expenditure in 2019. Apart from its objective to ensure Malaysia remains to stand out on top of the minds among Indians, the roadshow aims to provide a platform for the industry community to steer the tourism sector to greater heights. “The pandemic has been tremendously challenging for us, but ever since the reopening of our international border in April 2022, I am glad to let you know that we have welcomed more than 7 million international tourist arrivals in 2022. Hence, we are optimistic about achieving higher numbers in 2023 where we target to welcome 15.6 million international tourist arrivals with MYR47.6 billion in tourism receipts,” said Dato’ Zainuddin Abdul Wahab, Director General of Tourism Malaysia. He added, “Tourism Malaysia is ramping up its marketing efforts globally, inclu raising Malaysia's profile in the India market. We do hope this market will continue play the important role in getting this number.”

“MATTA has successfully organised many sales missions to India since 2016. Organised mission had created a good working opportunities among our counter and at the same time promotes Malaysia. We believed that with this determination accompanied by an effective promotional message, will improve the cross-promotion connection and create a stronger awareness of the India travel markets,” said Datuk Tan Kok Liang, President, MATTA.

MATTA embarks on this continuous effort as an ideal venue for showcasing and promoting Malaysia's new destinations and our



multi-racial cultures, which contribute to boost tourist arrivals from India while creating more business opportunities for the travel agent members. India remains an important market for Malaysia. In terms of connectivity, there are currently 169 flights per week from India to Malaysia via Malaysia Airlines, Batik Ai (formerly known as Malindo Air), AirAsia, and IndiGo.

Malaysia has also recently launched a new e-VISA – Multiple Entry Visa (MEV) facilities for fly and cruise, wedding, medical treatment and business visitors’ purposes for Indian tourists that comes with a six-month validity, a 30-day length of stay (LOS) and costs only INR 1,000.00. The Visa can be applied online.

ATG Tours

Delivering excellence round the clock through outstanding service

ATG Tours, a certified travel company, is a name to reckon with in the travel industry. With a rich experience of 20 years, they are known for their innovative and specially curated itineraries, which are not outsourced but designed inhouse based on their own tour experiences and well-researched information and knowledge of the destinations. **Farhat Arfin, Vice President-Corporate, ATG Tours** shares more in an exclusive chat with BOTT.

Shreya Shimpi

ATG Tours provide customised travel packages for families, honeymooners, corporate clients, solo as well as group travellers and MICE. They also specialise in Polar and river cruises. Farhat Arfin spoke exclusively to BOTT at the OTM held in Mumbai and expressed her views about the recent trends in travel and the expectations from this year.

Tell us something about ATG Tours

We are a Chicago headquartered company. We started in India about a year back. We have offices in Kenya, Tanzania, Japan, Peru and we are in Andheri, Mumbai. We cater to MICE, FIT, leisure, fixed departures and we do end-to-end solutions. We have our own Visa department and product department and we provide end-to-end solutions for anybody who is into B2B or B2C. Mr Gupta started in the US years back and we have lots of FITs who have been dealing with us for years. They come back to us. Right now, we have a lot of NRIs who have come to India for forty-day tours and they are taking tours back-to-back with us. We are completely service oriented. We give a lot of emphasis to service in terms of the food they want if elderly couples are travelling, we ensure that there is some assistance for them. We have wheelchairs for them. We have guides who can speak different languages as per the requirement. We are very specific with our clientele because they come to us time and again due to the service we provide. So, it is very important to us that we take care of the smallest of their things. We check, especially in India, where there are not too many assisted tours for senior citizens, and we ensure that we provide that. We ensure that we keep our hotels informed, and we talk to the chefs about the meals such as vegetarian options, dairy or nut allergies. We keep them updated and we follow up and ensure that our guests get what they want. So, there is a lot of emphasis on service, personalisation and customisation. We are available 24x7. We work throughout the week. The best part about India is that we have US - based systems here so we make the most out of it. Sometimes the US fares come out to be cheaper if you buy from the US office because we are also a back-office to a U.S. office. We have the fares in our systems here also so we use that to our benefit and our customer's benefit.

Are you able to achieve the 2019 figures post-pandemic?

Post-Covid, the business is just picking up. We are adding staff every day. We are looking for staff that will help us grow. We have a lot of appetite right now. The OTM is also helping us as we have been getting so many queries. We are going for SATTE as well as we are looking ahead to a beautiful and fruitful year ahead for all of us. We have had



too many queries so we are just hoping that we have the right people to sail throughout the year. We are looking forward to 2023 and going forward it is going to pick up.

Does 2023 look promising to you?

Yes. 2023 looks promising for the tourism business. The flights are going full and hotels are going full. We have already got lots of bookings for July and August. In fact, we were struggling to get rooms for the October departure for the Cruises so we are doing quite well this year.

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Pals Hotel and Marketing Solutions

Helping hotels grow their business & reach

Pals Hotel and Marketing Solutions is a perfect solution for Hotels, Resorts, Restaurants to help them grow their existing business revenue and increasing their visibility in the market by collective efforts and experience of our dynamic and multi-talented team. Spearheading the same is the young and dynamic **Pratibha Arora** who has carved a reputation for herself and the company through her hard work, dedication and quality deliverance. Read on to know more about the company and what it offers –

► BOTT DESK

PALS means FRIENDS and as the name suggests, Pals Hotel and Marketing Solutions is a specialised sales and marketing company which work in a friendly manner with the stand-alone properties to help them grow their existing business by more effective marketing techniques & with professional approach. The founder of the company Pratibha Arora has been associated with hotel sales and marketing for more than two decades and has worked with some of the best names in upscale lodging like Taj Group of Hotels, Maharani Group. The Company is supported by a team of young dynamic, passionate professionals who work 24*7 for the growth of the company.

“Our marketing strategies are focused on providing creative solutions to the marketing needs by utilising various effective channels thereby helping their Hotel Partners to grow their existing occupancy and revenue,” shared Pratibha, adding, “We work as an extended arm of the hotel partner as their exclusive Delhi Sales Office to help them increase their revenue and visibility. We help the properties in following by charging just a nominal monthly retainership fees.”

We specialise in –

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- Follow up on the pending payments
- Lead new business development from emerging markets
- To get the hotel included in Brochure programs & itineraries of the FTOs
- Designing Creatives & circulating them through proper channels to increase the visibility of the property to formulating & suggesting new marketing strategies



Hotel Park Ocean, Jaipur



Anuraga Palace, Ranthambore



Bamboo Saa Spa & Resort, Udaipur



Shree Shivay Experiential Dining, Varanasi



Om Vilas Luxury Cottages, Varanasi



Oyster Villa, Mussoorie



The Travancore Heritage, Kovalam



Blue Jelly Luxury House Boat, Alleppey



Vibe Resort, Munnar



Regent Laguna Anjuna Beach, Goa



Le Pondy Beach Resort, Puducherry



Hotel Chandela, Khajuraho

Ananta Hotels and Resorts

Offering a memorable holiday amidst nature with luxury

With properties in India, Ananta Hotels and Resorts epitomises luxury in blissful settings. Making a promise of service excellence delivered by our attentive staff, all our resorts make for excellent choices for your holiday. **Gagan Katyal, Head of Sales & Marketing, Ananta Hotels & Resorts, Jaipur, Rajasthan** shares his thoughts on the return of MICE in India.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

‘Spread across acres of lush greenery, the resorts encompass speciality restaurants to pamper your palate, complemented by a host of wellness and recreation facilities. Guests can simply go and experience peace and tranquillity at Ananta Hotels and Resorts.

The luxury of the resorts is reflected in the ambiance of every guestroom. At Ananta Hotels and Resorts, every effort is made to ensure that you feel pampered. Along with this, the resorts offer numerous on-site facilities to satisfy even the most discerning of guests. The hotel's recreational facilities include a fitness centre, pool, sauna and steam room that are designed for pure escape and relaxation.

“The last year was a buoyant year for us as we were above 75% in occupancy at our resorts. Weddings were a big contributor to these occupancy figure,” he shares, adding, “In my opinion, what is unique about Ananta Hotels and Resorts is the offering of living amidst nature. It is most certainly our USP. We offer a variety of venues for an event. Family activities are a lot to keep the guest engaged. Going forward, in the year 2023, we are going to focus on domestic business and grab adhoc inbound where available. Increase guest experience. It gives me great pleasure to share that we have already crossed the 2019 figures. We have numerous venues across our properties available for all kinds



of events and a strong team of chefs trained in a variety of cuisines and presentations ensure that every event is a success.”



Trulyy India: Carving a unique niche for itself in Indian hospitality



Trulyy India is a privately owned hotel organisation with magnificent properties across various tourist destinations in India such as Udaipur, Jaipur, Kumbhalgarh etc. Experiencing 98% occupancy in its property in Jaisalmer, **Naresh Arora, Founder and CEO, Trulyy India Hotels, Resorts, Camps and Safaris**, talks about the expansion plan and more in an exclusive chat with BOTT.

Shreya Shimpy

“All destinations have done well such as Udaipur and Kumbhalgarh. Jaisalmer has picked up from October onwards there has been a mad rush. We are running with 98% occupancy in Jaisalmer since October,” says Naresh Arora. Trulyy India is a privately owned hotel organisation with magnificent properties across various tourist destinations in India such as Udaipur, Jaipur, Kumbhalgarh etc. They have carved a niche for themselves in the hospitality sector for their unparalleled service and luxurious properties. They have had a remarkable journey so far.

How was the year 2022 in terms of business?

2022 was a good year for us. The domestic market has picked up really well. The Corporate market too has picked up which wasn't the case last year. We have a good chunk of Corporate this year. The most important business which has picked up again this year has been education. We had almost 200 groups which was not expected. These groups were from all parts of India such as Delhi, Gujarat, Mumbai etc. and these education tours are still going on. All destinations have done well such as Udaipur and Kumbhalgarh. Jaisalmer has picked up from October onwards there has been a mad rush. We are running with 98% occupancy in Jaisalmer since October. The same number of rooms we had to refuse this year in Jaisalmer because of the high demand in that region and the same demand will continue till Holi this year.

What about the wedding segment?

We also did a good number of weddings. Jaipur has been a prime property for weddings and we have done about 50 weddings this year. Overall, among our Trulyy India properties, we have done 125 weddings this year.

Which are the most sought-after property for weddings?

The JaiBagh Palace in Jaipur, Amargarh in Udaipur, The Desert Palace in Jaisalmer and UdaiBagh in Udaipur are our most sought-after

properties for weddings. There is also Kumbha Bagh in Kumbhalgarh for destination weddings.

What is your expectation from the year 2023?

For 2023, future bookings for weddings have started coming in and we feel 2023 will be a good year. Two years are really good for Indian tourism and especially for domestic tourism. Inbound has also picked up. We are getting small groups but we are hopeful that by August we will have a regular inbound flow.

Tell us something about your upcoming projects.

We are coming up with a few properties. We have started The Amar Mahal which was launched in September last year and is doing well. It has picked up well in the market. This year in February, we are going to launch two new products, one is in Jawai which is the Leopard Retreat and Shakti Vilas in Udaipur. Both properties will be starting simultaneously by the end of February. In 2023, we are coming up with one more product in Kumbhalgarh and the other in Udaipur. This will be slightly different from our league of properties. All our other properties are heritage resorts but this property will be a resort which will be built in the Greek-Roman style. The name is The Aurelia. It lies on the cliff of the hill and provides a stunning 360-degree view which is different from our regular properties. We are going to start our hotel in Jawai which has 16-room suite cottages and pool view cottages which will be operational from 14th February 2023 which is Valentine's Day. These projects are in the pipeline but we are looking for Himachal again and are exploring a few options there. Goa is still in the pipeline but we have been not able to finalise anything as of now but that is in our roadmap.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

We are participating in all the fairs. We are taking part in SATTE as well. This year onward we shall be going into international marketing as well including WTM.



Mayfair Cruises

Catering to luxury cruise travel segment in India

Mayfair Cruises, which are based in Egypt and are one the best cruises in the world, catering exclusively to the segment of luxury travellers, have now entered the India market. "I am happy to say that there is great potential here though it is also very challenging, but on the good side. There is a lot to learn. I am hoping that it will give us some very good results soon," says **Maggie Petrova, Commercial Director, Mayfair Cruises** as she spoke to BOTT in an exclusive chat.

Shreya Shimpi

Egypt which commonly known as the 'Motherland of the World' and the 'Land of Civilizations' is famous for its rich history, vibrant culture and colossal wealth of knowledge. When one thinks of Egypt, the very first things that come to mind are the splendid and fascinating Egyptian Giza pyramids which are among the Seven Wonders of the World. It is also famous for the Sahara Desert and the majestic Nile River which is the heartland of Egypt. Along with this, Egypt is also known for its beaches, mesmerising coral reefs and delectable food. Egyptians are known for their generosity and hospitality. You can experience a slice of Arabic culture with belly dancing or enjoying a Hookah. Apart from this, Egypt is also known for its river cruises and what can be a better way of exploring Arab's largest country other than a cruise?

Mayfair Cruises are based in Egypt and are one the best cruises in the world which cater exclusively to the segment of luxury travellers. They are one of the finest five-star deluxe Nile cruises in Egypt. They cruise across the majestic Nile River and offer you a chance to explore Egypt which is the cradle of life and known for its first great civilization. Egypt has a rich history and is known for its culture which can be experienced by visiting the Egyptian tombs, temples and ruins. They have Egyptologists on-board during the day and have a plethora of leisure activities during the evening that one can enjoy. Mayfair Cruises offer 3,4,7 night itineraries between Luxor and Aswan. Magnificently designed interiors, luxurious cabins and suites with verandas and balconies, pool, Jacuzzi, lounge bars and the availability of free Wi-Fi in cabins are the various reasons that you can choose to sail with them on your next cruise holiday. Experience the taste of royalty on-board which is just like living a fairy-tale on the Nile.

How did the pandemic affect the business?

2022 was better than what everybody was expecting from the industry. I think this was a phenomenal year for everybody especially, since we were coming out from the deep lock of Covid-19 which continued until 2021. Tourism in Egypt was just on the same wave as everybody. We saw good numbers. On certain days, we had even better numbers than pre-Covid, which was very good.

What are your expectations from the year 2023?

Figures are indicators at the moment for 2023 that are even better. Hopefully, things continue to stabilise by getting better and not worse.

Tell us something about Mayfair Cruises and how did you venture into the Indian market?



Mayfair is pretty new in the India market. We just for the first time, came for a friendly visit in October. Nijhawan Group helped us a lot, so now we are happy to announce that we have signed the representation with them. We will be seen together hand in hand more and more in the future. Mayfair Cruises is a hundred per cent Egyptian-owned company. It caters to hundred per cent to the upper scale and luxury travellers. It is very popular everywhere else like America, and Latin America, specifically in Brazil and Mexico, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. India was in our project pre-Covid and then everything stopped. So, I was happy to be able to pick up from where I started in October and I was given this chance. I am happy to say that there is great potential here, though it is also very challenging on the good side. There is a lot to learn. I am hoping that it will give us some very good results soon.

Weddings business rescues hospitality sector; becomes integral to revenue

The pandemic was tough on everyone as many businesses struggled for survival. The hospitality industry across the globe faced an extremely challenging time but the silver lining of hope during those tough times was the weddings market that kept the business trickling in. With a guest list of 50 or 200, whatever the government norms allowed, people in India kept getting married and hotel industry, thankfully, sailed on this wedding business to keep themselves ashore. Here's an overview of what some hospitality veterans have to say about the contribution of the weddings market to the hotel revenue and how it has become a prominent feature of its revenue structure.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Greesh Bindra,

Vice President, The Suryaa New Delhi



The wedding market witnessed a sudden growth due to the regulations that were in place because of COVID 19 and the relaxations that followed. The segment itself has seen a growth pan India with many hotels that were more stringent in taking on weddings considering it as an integral part of revenue. Our hotel has seen a strong growth year on year with 2022 being one of the best so far in terms of the number and the average price.

Approximately 25% of our total revenue comes from social segment if we consider the total revenue of the hotel. In terms of only banquets it is a little over 60%.

However, lead time has really become a challenge with many pre wedding and post wedding functions getting confirmed 7-10 days in advance instead of the usual 45 days bracket. People have become cautious post pandemic and has led them to reluctantly paying advances of the events due to which we have had to rework our cancellation policies and deposit

policies.

The good news is that the worst seems to be over. The numbers of the first quarter of the Financial Year (April 2022 – June 2022) have been really encouraging and have shown that the industry is recovering with focus now on many new segments with domestic travel being a strong contributor to the overall growth. Going forward, the wedding segment will be an important aspect to focus on with the numbers showing promise in 2023.

Mohammad Shoeb,

Associate Vice President – North India, Pride Hotels

Covid was one of the hardest things the world could ever face. It had indeed made hotels struggle until the wedding functions came as a blessing. As soon as the market revived, the weddings, which were put on hold due to pandemic curbs, started happening. Hence it was very important to capitalise this situation. Most of the



hotels in the Aerocity hosted a lot of weddings and so did we. We indeed did very good business because of these weddings and it was one of the most important segments for our survival during the trying times. As you know the hospitality industry had a tough time and survival became a questionable situation suddenly the aspirations turned out to be desperation and we were taking all kind of business, however wedding business did phenomenally well during the pandemic as well as post pandemic, so yes indeed it has turned out to be a great opportunity for the hotels. Aerocity also has become a great destination for the weddings as in Aerocity we have more than 3500 rooms as well as huge banqueting space. All the hotels have good amount of banqueting hence all the hotels enjoy to cater to this segment. Our hotel is also famous for residential weddings since we have several venues like Chancery, Senate, Pool side, Imperial where pre functions such as Haldi, Mehendi and main function i.e. wedding and reception can be done easily. So I can say it's kind of a one stop solution for all the wedding functions.

Total revenue that we yield from weddings is almost 50% of the event sales budget. So there is no doubt that it's the most attractive and engaging segment for us. We surly rely on weddings and social functions to meet our social/ Event Sales budgets.

I don't think we face any challenge for hosting wedding in our hotel or Aerocity. Aerocity has become a Wedding hub and most of the people prefer to their wedding functions here. We at PPD have halls of different sizes to accommodate the wedding of 50 people to 600 people. Hence we don't face any challenge for the functions. Rather Aerocity has become the hub for the residential as well as destination weddings.

Pride Group of hotels is expanding at a brisk pace. We have almost eight hotels opening in the Northern region. We opened hotels in Haldwani, Rishikesh, Amritsar, Dehardun, Gurgaon, Agra and Jaipur. We have a property coming up in Greater Noida. These all hotels are having space for wedding; special the Pride Amber Villas in Jaipur is built in 23 acres has medium and large size halls. A convention centre is being built for around 25,000 sq. ft. area which will be completed by November or December. The hotel we will be opening somewhere in September with 2 banquet halls and 2 restaurants and 95 rooms. So we have many hotels in pipeline which the group has planned to launch. Pride Group is actually rocking without forgetting that we are Truly India, Traditionally Luxurious, and Purely Pride

Rahul Joshi,

General Manager, Taj Hotel & Convention Centre, Agra

Taj Hotel and Convention Centre is typically tailor made to accommodate weddings and celebrations perennially round the year. Prima facie we boast of the largest hall in the city rather than the vicinity which helps us transact multidimensional functions on any slated day by & large. As also the proximity to Delhi/ NCR along with seamless expressway leads to Agra in a very clinical fashion. Currently with direct connectivity of flights from some key commercial sectors may observe a spike on wedding queries etc.

We are an epic Hotel which stands bullish on the weddings segment where guests come to celebrate any occasion. As also the Taj brand typically acts as an important ingredient to ensure a seamless wedding. The overall revenues from this tangent stand quite bullish and exciting mostly.

Taj Hotel & convention Centre is ideally located close to the epic monument, rather it comes about on the range of walking distance and places on the VIP road of Agra called the Taj East Gate Road. Most of the attractions around the Hotel are also quite close like Agra Fort and Kalakriti which certainly boasts of the signature premium show. The hotel is well equipped to counter any cuisines globally or locally. The USP that dovetails well with the hotel are Infini – The Sky Lounge, our clinical restaurant DEN which exhibits class/ experience. Also the relevant halls



we have are typically the talk of the Industry with context to Events & Conferences etc.

Jai Chugh,

General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square



There is no doubt that with the onset of Covid and most of the business travel coming to a halt, wedding has played an important role in supporting the hotel business. While the larger gatherings were restricted, hotels with smaller banqueting capacity got a boost. We have seen a huge influx of small and intimate weddings. The pockets of relaxation given by the state governments had created some compression in the market which also helped the hotels with rate recovery.

The percentage of our total revenue pre-Covid from weddings was 10-12% which has now reached to 20-22% share.

However, planning a wedding isn't like planning a conference as weddings tend to be an extremely emotional affair. Therefore, planning a wedding comes with its own unique set of roadblocks. First happens to be the 'Budget' and our task is to figure out the best possible options that

work within the couple's budget. Secondly, curating all the ideas, themes, and managing all the vendors while organizing the wedding gets a little difficult sometimes. What makes it execute flawlessly is the Wedding Diaries by Hilton that offers guests getting married a bespoke and an exemplary experience and create everlasting memories of their wedding. Wedding Diaries by Hilton aims to ensure the entire journey of planning to executing all events is in perfect sync with desired expectations of the guest. Hilton has also formed a Wedding Advisory Board consisting of well-reputed wedding planners from across the country to assist guests with contemporary ideas to curate the finest wedding experience. The advisory also serves as a think tank that consistently works with the Hilton team towards innovation in the space.

Sandeep Basu,

Corporate General Manager, Cygnett Park BL, Jaipur

After two years of downfall due to Covid related restrictions, the hotel industry is all set to reboot, recovering at 70-80 per cent of pre-Covid levels. This recovery is being pushed by leisure bookings and also MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) events. The Wedding segment is also bouncing back strongly. We are recording good demand from the wedding segment in Cygnett Park Jaipur.

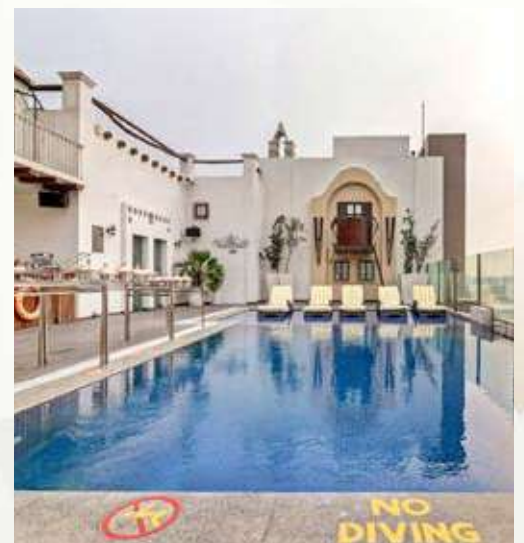
While the recovery in the hotel industry is being driven by leisure booking because of the vengeance travel by people after the third wave, it is also due to an increase in business travels including MICE events. Weddings are back for us to almost 90 per cent of the pre-covid levels. We have recorded about 40-50% growth over last year's wedding season in Jaipur and contributed above 50 per cent of the total hotel revenue.

Weddings have become the most intimate affairs during these times, and people are taking every precaution under the umbrella to ensure the safety of themselves and their guests.



The challenges we faced firstly the government regulations which are changing frequently but still we at Cygnett Hotels kept the safety measures in place starting from sanitising counters to social distancing. Secondly, due to the restrictions in the number of people, many of our Guests refrained from hosting large gatherings and hence we faced revenue loss.

We have created a new product, "Wedding Bells by Cygnett" in order to cater to this segment specifically. We will offer end-to-end solutions for the vast requirements of a wedding group under the Wedding Bells by Cygnett portfolio.



MICE business in India is bouncing back very strongly

The pandemic was not easy on anyone and while it is tough to ascertain who was the worst hit in the Covid storm, there is no doubt that tourism was definitely in the frontline. Another sector, which is a branch of tourism that got affected badly was the MICE segment. It was affected so badly that many confirmed that MICE would be one of the last segments of tourism that will revive. However, that has not been the case. In the opinion of many, MICE has bounced back and infact doing well than the pre-Covid levels. Mohammad Ali, Senior Director of Sales – Meetings & Events (India & South Asia), Accor Hotels, shares his thoughts on the revival of MICE.

Gunjan Sabikhi

How severely, in your opinion, was the MICE sector affected during the pandemic?

All industries including tourism experienced a brutal impact due to the pandemic and the MICE sector was one of the hardest hit. Almost all the MICE events during 2020 were either cancelled /postponed due to Unprecedented lockdowns, travel restrictions, cancellation of all business meetings and limitation on social meetings causing a major damage to the MICE stakeholders.

When everything went virtual, many believed that even in the post Covid era, people would continue to have virtual meetings as its easier and convenient. Do you agree?

Virtual Meetings were the need of the hour and there is no doubt platform like Zoom, MS Team and Google meet gained immersed traction during the pandemic but over the period of time engagement and attendance of participants in virtual events started declining. Companies have resumed face to face meetings with social distancing and other health and safety norms as soon as restriction were eased, thanks to our historic vaccination drive and various health and sanitation programs adopted by hotels and venues.

Technology for virtual meeting has been with us since many years and it will remain one of the options for meetings. On the other hand Hybrid Meetings are a solution to the futuristic need, given the option extended to the participants to be a part of an event either in person or virtually. At Accor we introduced Hybrid Meeting Solution ALL Connect and our more than 90% of hotels globally are ALL Connect complaint.

Has the MICE segment, in India and also internationally, bounced back to its 2019 figures?

MICE business in India is bouncing back very strongly. In 2022 in spite of losing first quarter due to omicron threat MICE segment has outperform in 2022 and it will continue in 2023. There is huge pent-up demand due to massive backlog of product launches and business conferences that had been pending or were happening on virtual mode since last three years.

International destinations, such as, Dubai, Singapore have performed quite well, while other destinations too are on the recovery mode. Every destination faced its own challenges in terms opening borders, health and safety protocols and vaccination status. Visa has been a challenge for many countries for large groups.

Do you feel there is any change in the way Events and Exhibitions are being held in the post Covid era?

The worst pandemic days are behind us but certainly it has brought few



new measures to conduct event. Excellent hygiene and safety standards are now given paramount importance. The event window has shrunk drastically and clients want a flexibility in terms of cancellation and postponement policy. They are also mindful in selecting destinations based on medical facility in the destination, vaccination status and health protocols etc

MICE is a big contributor to the tourism sector, do you agree? What are your thoughts on this?

The MICE industry is the fastest growing tourism sector. According to Business Intelligence Insights "Global MICE Market is expected to grow from USD 821.6 billion in 2021 to USD 2465.6 billion by 2030, at a CAGR of 20.10% during the forecast period 2022-2030. MICE generates foreign exchange, increases trade and investments, provides employment, boosts local economies, and promotes destinations. It's one of the most profitable sectors, and the industry is known to spend large amounts on their on-site budgets. MICE travellers generates 30% higher revenue than average visitors.

Thanks to **G-20 Presidency**, India can expect more interest in the **MICE business** this year

The pandemic redefined the norms of life and business for all of us. From the mode of education to the way businesses should be conducted, everything changed. Learning to make the most of the tough times, technology came to our aide and helped many in easing the way of doing things. In businesses too, many new ways of conducting meetings turned up and some of them have stayed, even as the pandemic has receded. Tilotma Sharma, Founder, Ur Travel Stories, shares with BOTT her thoughts on how MICE is performing in the new normal era.

Gunjan Sabikhi

How severely, in your opinion, was the MICE sector affected during the pandemic?

The damage was definitely big under the conditions of harsh travel restrictions and closed borders. The MICE industry faced a sharp reduction of demand. According to a report by the ICCA, the total number of MICE events held in 2020 was 8,409, which is a decrease of 36.55% as compared to 2019. So, one can imagine the extent of damage.

When everything went virtual, many believed that even in the post Covid era, people would find having virtual meetings easier and convenient. Do you agree?

It is fair to say that the vast majority of businesses and employees were oblivious to the benefits of virtual meetings until it was thrust upon them by necessity and virtually overnight! However, despite the many benefits that virtual meetings bring to table, people still want to meet people and have a human connection. There is absolutely no substitute for that. While few corporates may have adopted the hybrid way of conducting their meetings but everyone's favorite still remains the traditional way of conducting conferences by physical presence of their employees.

Has the MICE segment, in India and also internationally, bounced back to its 2019 figures?

MICE segment, locally and globally has seen a sharp upward graph. Ranging from Spain Convention Bureau's barometer to The American Express study, experts agree that the MICE segment is at a turning point. Interestingly India seems to have defied all predictions and surmises and the MICE segment in the country is surging back quickly. It is in fact performing better than the pre-covid era in certain aspects and areas. Posing a stark contrast to the rest of Asia, with G-20 presidency, India can expect more attention and interest in the MICE business this year. Most companies are now gathering their teams together for various activities such as team building, strategic planning, and R&R events, which were on halt for the past two years.

Do you feel there is any change in the way Events and Exhibitions are being held in the post Covid era?

The evolution of hybrid events was one important change that gained traction post covid, with the crunch in budgets and restrictions in travel, a lot of focus was given to the business of small regional markets and the trend still continues. Not many people thought that a series of regional events has the potential to appeal to a large segment of people. Acceleration to contactless will be one feature which will definitely carry forward into the future. Technology enables planners to provide delegates



with touch screens, event apps, sensor beacons and facial recognition and redefine the way MICE is done now.

MICE is a big contributor to the tourism sector, do you agree? What are your thoughts on this?

MICE have emerged as a new phenomenon to aid the thriving Tourism Industry of emerging Tourism Destinations. India is one such country. The global MICE industry is estimated to reach \$1,337.4 billion by 2028, registering a CAGR of 21.3% from 2021 to 2028. Today, hotels and major tourist resorts are becoming a center for attraction for meetings, gatherings, planning, conferences and other activities. With more investments of leading tourism agencies and coordination of Indian companies, the MICE sector is fast expanding MICE and growing at a rate of nearly 20% per year.

It is a matter of demand and supply that will rule the future of MICE

While the travel sector is currently brimming with events, shows and exhibitions with people claiming MICE to be back to 2019 figure, there are some who disagree. **Tanuja Pandey, Founder Director Miceonline**, feels that visa issues, restrictions in international travel and high prices by hotels in India are some of the strong factors that are forcing people to postpone their events to a later date. There is still some time before MICE can achieve complete recovery not just in India but also globally. Read on to know more.

Gunjan Sabikhi

How severely, in your opinion, was the MICE sector affected during the pandemic?

MICE was the most affected sector during the pandemic, and even after travel opened up – the corporates were still wary of travelling outside India. While domestic MICE movements increased, the international sector was still facing the aftermath, and the rush for visas, increasing airfares etc. did not help much. It's only in the last few months that corporate MICE has picked up.

When everything went virtual, many believed that even in the post Covid era, people would find having virtual meetings easier and convenient. Do you agree?

While virtual conferences became the need of the hour, nothing can replace the motivation that travel brings. Travel is the greatest motivator. People got tired of virtual and digital zoom calls and webinars. Yes, it did help corporates cut down on costs, but in reality, virtual cannot replace the fun and anticipation of going on an Incentive trip, conferences and actual events. Physical meetings are very important and critical for the growth of any organization and also individual.

Has the MICE segment, in India and also internationally, bounced back to its 2019 figures?

While many are of this opinion yes – I disagree. Corporates have cut down on their travel spends for international travel due to rising airfares and long waits for Visas. Domestic is booming, but lately, even in India, since many hotels have increased the tariffs, we saw quite a few corporates shelving or postponing their events in last two months. But yes, the numbers are growing and we hope that the trend continues. It is basically a matter of demand and supply that will rule the future of MICE not just in India but also globally.

Do you feel there is any change in the way Events and Exhibitions are being held in the post Covid era?

Hybrid, as I mentioned earlier, is the way forward. In the new normal, digitalisation and technology is trending. Even at Miceonline, we have a mixed format where pre event is online and actual event is physical – and technology gives a wider reach for marketing, visibility and procurement. So, Hybrid is definitely the new MICE trend. Some knowledge conferences and exhibitions can go virtual and have wider reach, but largely incentives and events will follow the physical format.

MICE is a big contributor to the tourism sector, do you agree? What are your thoughts on this?

Of course. There is no doubt about this. Incentives and MICE come



out of the marketing and HR budgets of corporates and organisation. If business has to grow – these two segments will always be the need of the hour. Hotels and tourism sector looks forward to MICE revenues as it is a growth driver. It generates revenues for multiple sectors in bulk, and across all areas in hotels. Companies look for newer venues each time, so that helps to promote new destinations and opens up newer markets. According to me, it is MICE segment that makes a new destination trend for an individual traveller and other travel segments too.

If I am part of a MICE group and like a particular destination, venue or a hotel, I will go back with my family and friends and start recommending it. That's how the visibility increases. So yes I believe MICE is the biggest contributor to tourism sector and not just in terms of revenue generation but opportunity and job creation as well.

OTM Mumbai witnessed 1250+ Exhibitors & 30,000 pre-qualified Buyers

Bringing the industry together to network and explore business opportunities, the OTM Mumbai recently concluded on a successful note. Held at the Jio World Convention Centre from February 2 – 4, the event witnessed participation from 1250+ exhibitors from 50 countries and 30 states.

> BOTT DESK

Key dignitaries present at the inaugural ceremony of OTM Mumbai included H.E. Dr. Saud Mohammed Al-Sati, Ambassador, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia; Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Tourism Minister, Maldives; H.E. Ibrahim Shaheeb, High Commissioner of Maldives; Florian Sengtschmid, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board; Meshaal Qureshi, Trade Markets Director- India & Subcontinent, Saudi Tourism Authority; Philip Dickinson, VP International Markets, Qatar Tourism; Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Sanjiv Agarwal, Chairman & CEO of Fairfest Media Ltd. The OTM in Mumbai showcased over 1250+ exhibitors from 50 countries and 30 Indian States/UTs who met 30,000+ pre-qualified buyers including 1000+ VIP & hosted buyers from all over India.

According to the global airlines' association IATA, India is a key aviation market for the Asia Pacific region as well as the rest of the world and is expected to see robust air travel demand. Outbound trips count from India is estimated to touch 29 mn by 2025 and cross the \$24 bn mark by 2024. As for the domestic tourism market, India received 677.63 million domestic tourist visits in 2021, an increase of 11.05% from 610.22 million in 2020, as per reports. By 2029, the Indian tourism sector is likely to grow at 6.7% each year to reach INR 35 trillion and thus account for 9.6% of the country's GDP.

Speaking at the inauguration Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Tourism Minister, Maldives said, "India is a very important market for Maldives tourism and India has been the top market for Maldives for the last three years, from 2020 to 2022. We are hoping that India will continue to be the top market this year as well. We have good connectivity with India with over 50 flights operating every week. Maldives is already famous as a destination thanks to Bollywood, with celebrities holidaying regularly and sending memorable pictures of their vacation. Maldives has a lot to offer for all kinds of budgets; we have the ultra-luxury products as well as the budget destinations with over 116 islands to choose from. Am inviting everyone from India to experience Maldives."

Addressing the OTM audience Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) said, "India is expected to grow to a 5 trillion economy under the vision of honourable Prime Minister, giving a huge boost to every industry. Tourism is the most vibrant ever evolving sector and all about connect. It drives infrastructure, economic growth and generates 10-11% employment in India and nearly the same globally. Tourism's fiscal earnings will contribute \$ 512 billion to India's GDP by 2028, 53 million jobs by 2029, \$56 billion in foreign exchange earnings and 30.5 million foreign arrivals by 2030. And not only that, but outbound trips from India will also bypass 42 billion by 2030. Therefore,



tourism needs to evolve, restructure, and reinvent continuously. Relevant industry platforms like OTM will support and make this industry grow in big heights."

"OTM's 'booster' edition held in Sep '22 at the newly opened JWCC for the first time was hailed as the top travel trade show in the country, based on a survey conducted just after the show. This annual edition is three times in size and likely to break all previous records in terms of size and quality of travel shows in all of Asia and the Pacific region. OTM's rise to the leading position in travel trade shows in the entire Asia and the Pacific regions is a testimony of all this. Opening of this world-class venue – the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai is another major factor that has helped the show achieve this milestone," said Sanjiv Agarwal, Chairman & CEO of Fairfest Media Ltd. (organisers of OTM).

Tourism Boards and suppliers from Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Bangkok, Cambodia, Fiji, Israel, Kenya, Korea, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Qatar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and private players from many countries have all set up pavilions at OTM.

Sustainable Tourism is the need of the hour

Sameer Baktoo

Ecotourism is a postulation of sustainable development, which is a process of socio-economic changes that meet the needs of the present without endangering the well-being of future. It is basically a small-scale, low-impact form of travel that seeks to preserve the natural world by ensuring that biodiversity, ecosystems and local communities remain protected and unspoiled.

The negative environmental impacts of conventional tourism are substantial. It includes the depletion of local natural resources as well as increases the pollution and waste management issues. Erection of concrete structures at hill stations puts enormous stress on local land use, and can lead to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss, and moreover puts pressure on endangered flora and fauna of the area. These effects can gradually destroy the environmental resources on which tourism itself depends.

We need to develop a sustainable approach towards our tourist destinations especially the health resorts. Any activity conducted or development done in these health resorts should be conducted, keeping in mind their long-term implications on its ecosystem. The authorities should promote luxurious eco-friendly glamping and resorts over raising concrete hotels in hill stations, use of plastic should be totally banned in tourist zones, promotion of local

cultures and activities should be given emphasis. If we lose our precious jewels (lake, rivers glaciers, and meadows) they cannot be bought back even after spending enormous money and resources. The changes that would occur due to non-sustainable approach towards nature would be inevitable and irreversible. We really need to undertake collective efforts in promoting ecotourism globally over conventional tourism. It is indeed the need of the hour.

Quoting the magical lines of the Kashmiri sufi saint, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din - 'An Posh Teli Yeli Wan Posh' (Translation: Food will thrive only, till the woods survive).

(This guest write-up has been written by Sameer Baktoo, Convenor of the Eco- Tourism Society Kashmir)



Narmada Holidays

Curating specialised and memorable holidays for families

Narmada Holidays, a leisure travel company, is known for delivering quality leisure holidays since 2005. Over the years, they have designed and executed numerous itineraries of different flavours across India and the world. The company especially takes pride in its strength of execution and superior service. Meera Rajaram, Partner and Leisure Travel Specialist, Narmada Holidays LLP, shares more information and update about the company with us



► BOTT DESK

How was the 2022 for your business? Did your company witness the revival graph?

Year 2022 was an encouraging year. The company did witness revival in the most encouraging manner. Going forward we are confident that by March 2023, we will reach the Pre Covid business levels.

Surviving Covid was tough for everyone. As a company, what were the coping mechanisms used by you to handle the situation?

Yes, there is no doubt that the pandemic was an extremely tough year for the entire world and for the travel fraternity. We were all struggling for survival. Since no one was travelling or taking a holiday or going for work trips, we had plenty of time to catch up with clients and industry partners. We also ensured to check about the wellbeing of all our associates, partners and clients. It was a continuous process of motivating ourselves and hoping for better times.

Additionally, we everyone else, we too attended webinars daily to keep ourselves updated on what is happening in the industry and that helped us a lot to reconnect with the people and gave us enough information to pass on to our clients.

This phase also taught us a lot about Wellness as a product offering to clients. We learned a lot about this field and were thus able to promote Wellness retreats further on.

In terms of business, when do you see your company's business figures going back to what they were in 2019?

Things have been going well so far and hopefully, by next month, i.e. March 2023, we will see the business figures going back to the pre Covid levels.

What are your expectations from 2023? Do you feel that the fear of new variants will stall the growth this year?

I don't think there is any fear of the new variant now. The country

is well-vaccinated, so are people across the globe and even if a new variant will come, we will all have to deal with it. The world cannot afford to go into another lockdown. The Vaccination process has been great in our country and throughout the world so hopefully the worst is behind us. I strongly feel that 2023 will be a great year for new travel learnings and experiences.

How have the travel trends changed in the post Covid scenario?

Post Covid Scenario, people are willing to travel and want to take multiple trips, which they have missed for the last two years. They are willing to spend and happy to stay at new and better accommodations and boutique style properties, not just the regular chains. There is also good demand for luxury. There has been a noticeable increase in the holiday budgets of people and the agents today have a larger and more important role to play than before. Travellers are looking for agents to plan and execute unique itineraries for the travellers. More clients are coming back to the agents and this is good for our industry overall.

What is the success mantra at your company?

Our clients majorly consist of families with high net-worth, thus we are continuously learning and acquiring information about new destinations and experiences which we can offer to them. It's very important have better product knowledge to earn the confidence of our client and to retain them.

Latest product knowledge, personal touch and prompt responses is key for our success. An Agent's role is not limited to just planning itineraries. We virtually travel with our clients and handhold them in case of any issues cropping up during the journey, no matter which part of the world they are in. We are very grateful to the numerous families who have given us the opportunity to organise their vacations and we sincerely look forward to planning more and more vacations in times to come.



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ASTRO SPEAK

Tarot Card Reading is the art and science which helps understand the present status and the future course. It helps to apply course correction, if required. Tarot card can be used for shaping Career, Health, Finance, Business, Relationship, marriage, match-making etc. **Ms. Richa Srivastava, a renowned Tarot Card reader** conducts exclusive Tarot reading under her banner – Tathaastu. Here are her predictions for February 2023.



Know what your stars say about February 2023



ARIES: You're energised in February, Aries! This month, you're the master networker, spending a lot of time connecting with old colleagues and possibly even new friends. You could even host a small gathering at your home—but do so after the intense full moon on February 5 to avoid unnecessary drama! To say the least, Valentine's Day could be interesting. You'll want to go out to celebrate. Unfortunately, if you decide to upset your date too much, you may end up creating some awkward moments. Concentrate on the positive and everything will be fine!



Taurus : Taurus will have income from a variety of sources at the start of the month, but there will be an excess of expenditure over income. You might spend more money out of your own pocket on items related to your comfort. Profitability from the purchase and sale of land and buildings will increase during this period. You will be unable to obtain the desired cooperation from juniors and seniors at your workplace during the second week of the month. As a result, your mind may remain sad. The budget may go awry in the second week of the month due to unexpected large expenses.



Gemini : During the Venus-Mars conjunction on February 4, Gemini, drama may come knocking. Take caution, especially when it comes to interactions at work. In terms of work, a harmonious connection between Venus and Neptune could bode well for your reputation. Make a point of sitting down on February 15 to consider your long-term career goals. The universe will undoubtedly hear your roar on this day! Do you believe you require additional training or study to achieve your objectives? The days between February 17 and February 22 are ideal for trying something new. Learning will play an important role in your future.



Cancer : Cancer will have to walk with a lot of patience. The budget may be thrown off by some large expenses at the beginning of the month. At the same time, you may experience some ups and downs in business during this time. It would be appropriate for you to move forward by clearing things if you work in collaboration. Check thoroughly before investing in any scheme to avoid financial loss. Employed people will need to keep up with the times rather than making decisions based on their emotions. It will be beneficial to walk alongside your seniors as well as your juniors.



Leo : Leo, February is not the month to go it alone. The stars are asking you to connect with others this month. Your sector of one-on-one partnerships is being highlighted in particular. This energy can be channelled by forming a partnership with a business partner, working with a coach, or strengthening a romantic relationship. The 16th of February is a good day to sign a contract or make a commitment. When it comes to love, Leo, the stars are also aligned in your favour. If you're single, make plans to celebrate love and friendship on Valentine's Day.



Virgo : The month for Virgo will increase wealth and respect, as well as strengthen relationships. You will breathe a sigh of relief at the start of the month when a long-standing family dispute is resolved. There will be benefits from the ancestral property, as well as new sources of income. Efforts to achieve a specific goal will be fruitful. Best friends in both work and personal life will provide unwavering support. The scope of your work may expand as you advance in your career. Love relationships will be intense, and you will enjoy spending time with your love partner. Take care of your health because there is a chance that an old disease will resurface.



Libra : Libra, it appears that you've been thinking about making some changes to your home's furniture and design. Make your move before February 10 while Mercury, the mastermind, is still in your home sector, assisting you in making good and quick decisions. The best news about this month is that it provides the ideal balance of work and play! Venus in Pisces will assist you in remaining focused and productive at work, as well as bringing you three intriguing dates to make bold moves or assert yourself. Mark the dates February 8, 14, and 15 on your calendar as your lucky days.



Capricorn : Capricorn, this month will present some difficulties in your life. There may be an additional burden of work in the workplace at the start of the month. During this time, you will have to put in extra hard work and effort to achieve your goal because both your seniors and juniors will lend a helping hand when the time comes. In such a case, do not be afraid of overcoming obstacles to success in your work, but rather confront them squarely. Particularly by the third week of the month, things will start to look up for you. Take no risks in the hope of making large profits in business.



Scorpio : The Scorpio zodiac will experience ups and downs throughout the month. You will notice that your life's vehicle will sometimes gallop down the track and other times derail. There are signs of an increase in unnecessary expenses beginning at the beginning of the month. It would be appropriate for you to manage your money and walk in this situation. Juniors must walk alongside seniors to achieve success in the workplace; otherwise, they may face serious problems. If you run a business with a partner, keep cleaning the money-related issues in the mirror; otherwise, it can become a major source of contention.



Sagittarius : Sagittarius, you're one of the most social signs in the zodiac, but home is where your heart will be for the next month. Both Venus and the Sun will ask you to devote much of your attention to family, and you may entertain or host guests. Perhaps you've been working on a deep cleaning project to make room for the new year. This month's new moon, which occurs on February 19, will assist you in making changes, so make plans around this date. Your changes will be positive and long-lasting. When Venus enters Aries on February 20, your focus may shift to fun, leisure, and pleasure.



Aquarius : While the month begins on an intense note due to the full moon on February 5, the rest of the month appears promising. This full moon is not the time to dig your heels in, Aquarius; rather, it is the time to negotiate, seek balance, and embrace change. If you've been working hard toward a goal, it may finally come to fruition around February 16, when the Sun and Saturn kiss in your sign. Because this connection brings long-term energy, be aware that whatever you agree to or sign now will be active for a long time. Venus in Pisces until February 19 may indicate a raise or unexpected funds in your bank account.



Pisces: The beginning of the month will bring some work-related challenges and family problems to Pisceans. You will, however, be able to overcome it with caution and patience. There will be heavy workload at work during the first week of the month. You will face some difficulties as a result of your transfer to an undesirable location or any new responsibilities. However, in the midst of all of this, you will be able to find a solution to any major problem related to the ruling government with the assistance of an influential person. Your luck will be on your side in the middle of the month. During this time, new sources of income will emerge.

FIRST OPINION



"With the significant network and fleet expansion and sustained growth over the last few months, 2022 has been a phenomenal year for Vistara, in terms of our operational and financial performance. I would like to thank all of our customers for their consistent support and affection that makes us stronger each day and inspire us to work even harder to daylight them. Each member of Vistara family is incredibly proud of our collective achievements in an extremely challenging business environment. We are now aiming for a higher goal as we enter the next phase of our growth Journey."

-Vinod Kannan

Chief Executive Officer, Vistara



"We are pleased to announce Nasik as our 77th destination in the 6E network. The new direct connections will enhance accessibility, while promoting trade, tourism, and mobility. Nasik will now be connected to multiple domestic and international destinations through the 6E network. Nasik is well-known for its historical and cultural significance. Therefore, the addition of direct flights in the summer schedule will provide more options for the tourists who wish to visit Nasik. We will continue to uphold our promise of providing a courteous, on-time, hassle-free, and affordable travel experience across a wide network."

Vinay Malhotra ,

Head of Global Sales, IndiGo,



With short booking windows becoming the norm, we wanted to roll out 'Where happiness comes naturally' to capture that demand, and welcome even more visitors back to Fiji in 2023, showing them a side of the country that they may not have experienced. We are a small island nation with a lot of happiness to offer, and this new brand platform showcases the vibrant and diverse cultures and traditions that exist within Fiji."

Brent Hill,

Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Fiji



"India is a very important market for Maldives tourism and India has been the top market for Maldives for the last 3 years, from 2020 to 2022. We are hoping that India will continue to be the top market this year as well. We have good connectivity with India with over 50 flights operating every week. Maldives is already famous as a destination thanks to Bollywood. with celebrities holidaying regularly and sending memorable pictures of their vacation. Maldives has a lot to offer for all kinds of budgets; we have the ultra-luxury products as well as the budget destinations with over 116 islands to choose from. Am inviting everyone from India to experience Maldives."

Dr. Abdulla Mausoom,

Tourism Minister, Maldives



"The Postcard is deeply committed to unveiling beautiful holiday destinations across India and providing the unlimited luxury experience to our guests. At our newest hotel, The Postcard on the Arabian Sea, guests will feel connected to the ocean, the richness of destination and of course to one another."

Kapil Chopra ,

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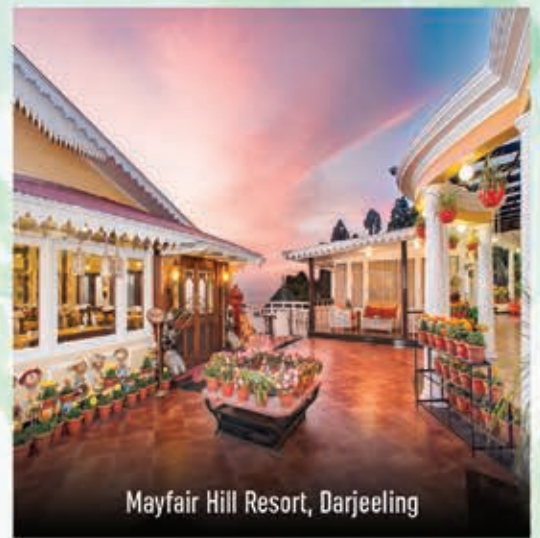
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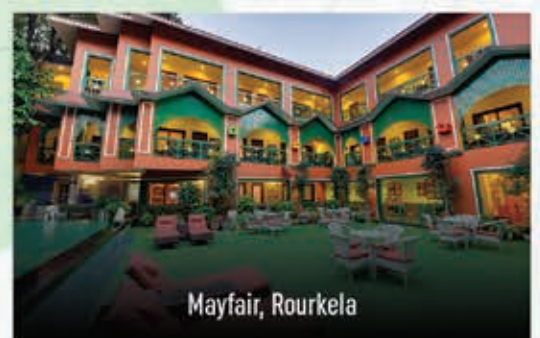
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