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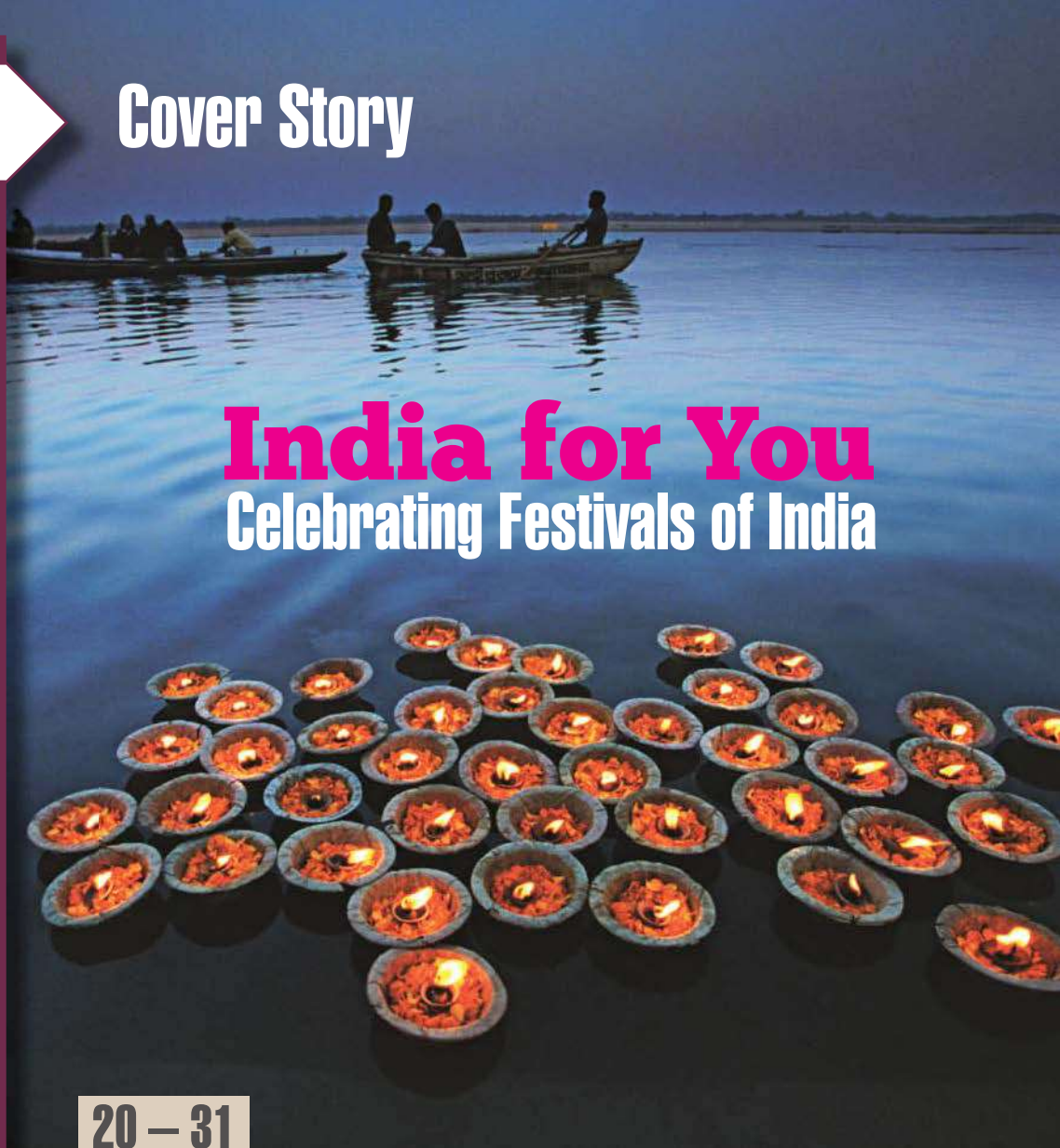
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## India for You Celebrating Festivals of India

20 – 31

India offers a kaleidoscope of celebrations that are as vibrant as they are profound. Each festival, whether it's the riotous colours of Holi or the serene lamps of Diwali, tells a story – of history, of mythology, of shared memories and collective hopes.

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From the

## *Editor's Desk*

Dear Readers,

**A**s the editor of BOTT Magazine, it's my privilege to introduce you to an edition that's close to our hearts – the Festivals of India. This vast and diverse nation, with its tapestry of languages, religions, and traditions, offers a kaleidoscope of celebrations that are as vibrant as they are profound. Each festival, whether it's the riotous colours of Holi or the serene lamps of Diwali, tells a story – of history, of mythology, of shared memories and collective hopes.

In this edition, we've endeavoured to capture the essence of these festivals, not just as events on a calendar, but as living, breathing moments that define the Indian experience. Through our articles, you'll witness the grandeur of the Jagannath Yatra, the devotion of Navratri, and the harvest joys of Pongal. Broadening the concept of "celebration" we have not limited our write-up to religious festivals alone and have also included few celebrations that highlight the cultural and geographical diversity of India.

But more than the festivities, it's the spirit of unity, of a nation coming together despite its myriad differences, that we hope to convey. In a world that often emphasises divisions, India's festivals are a testament to the power of celebration to bridge divides.

Join us on this journey of discovery, and may the spirit of India's festivals light up your world. Alongside this, August was a busy month brimming with trade events and we bring to you a series of Interviews featuring the events.

Happy Reading!

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**  
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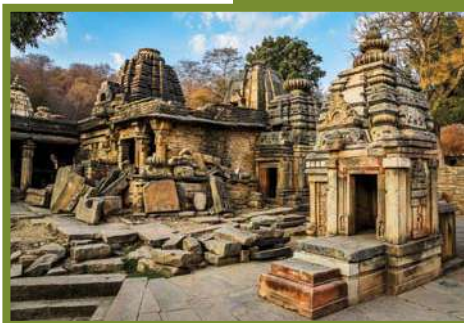
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## New team at TAFI takes over

The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) conducted its national elections for 'THE WAY FORWARD' term 2023-25 on September 02, 2023 in Mumbai. Ajay Prakash was re-elected unopposed as the TAFI President. Anil Kalsi has assumed the position of Vice President, taking over from Kamal R. Jadhvani. Abbas Moiz and Hitank Shah have retained their roles as National General Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. The elected Committee Members for the 2023-25 term include Seeraj Sabharwal, Rai Achal Krishna, Ananda Valoo, Sampat Damani, Anil Punjabi, Paulose Mathew, Sunil Uttam, Jitul Mehta, and Somaskandan.



## MP Tourism to turn tourist destinations in the state women friendly

To ensure employment opportunities for women in the tourism sector, and to improve sustainability, the 'Sankalp: Safe Tourism Campaign' will be launched. It was initially launched as a 15-day campaign from August 10 to 25 and will now be implemented in a phased manner by dividing 50 tourist destinations into 20 clusters. The project has been approved by the Central Ministry of Women and Child Development Department under 'Nirbhaya Scheme' and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is operating it in collaboration with UN Women, Women and Child Development, Urban Development and Housing Department and Police Department.

## Switzerland Tourism felicitates Neeraj Chopra

Neeraj Chopra, India's javelin sports star took home gold at the World Athletics Championship 2023. To felicitate him and to honour his achievements, Switzerland Tourism along with Zurich Tourism, hosted the World Champion at Zunfthaus zur Zimmerleuten with friends, family, and teams from Switzerland Tourism and Zurich Tourism in attendance. Neeraj has been enjoying the adventurous, sporty and scenic outdoors of Switzerland and sharing it with fans and followers.



## Antarctica21 joins forces with BRANDit

Antarctica21, an innovative Chilean Cruise Company has partnered with BRANDit to build awareness for the destination as well as the brand's exclusive small ship experiences in the Indian market and to build lasting trade relations in the country. The synergy between Antarctica21 and BRANDit extends beyond market entry – it encompasses the creation of innovative strategies to cater to the ever-evolving preferences of the Indian outbound travel segment.

## Signum Resort Igatpuri opens its doors in Maharashtra

Signum Hotels & Resorts has announced the official opening of Signum Resort Igatpuri in the heart of Maharashtra. This property marks Signum's second hotel launch in India this year. Furthermore, Signum has launched a resort after a substantial period, marking a significant milestone for the brand. More Signum properties are scheduled to welcome guests in the final quarter of 2023.







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## Air India enters into interline partnership with Bangkok Airways

Air India has entered an interline partnership with Bangkok Airways. The partnership enables Air India guests to take convenient connections via Air India's Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Singapore gateways to and from 10 destinations in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia on Bangkok Airways' route network. The scope of the agreement between the two airlines includes Inter Airline Through Check-In (IATCI) implementation, which enables guests to receive their boarding passes at the first point of departure for all the travel sectors on a single ticket, and have their baggage checked-in through to their final destinations.



## IndiGo reinstates flights between Delhi and Male

IndiGo has announced the reinstatement of direct flights between Delhi and Male to enhance seamless connectivity. These direct flights, scheduled to recommence on November 01, 2023, operating four times a week will significantly boost tourism in both India and the Maldives. The reintroduction of these non-stop flights will further elevate travel convenience for passengers, reflecting a strong resurgence in international travel from India and catering to the rising customer demand. In addition to this development, IndiGo has also unveiled the return of direct flights connecting Hyderabad and the Maldives.

## LOT Polish Airlines launches Global Autumn Promotion

Star Alliance member LOT Polish Airlines is offering attractive fares for trips between October 1, 2023 until February 28, 2024 from Delhi and Mumbai via the airline's global hub Warsaw to over 30 cities in Europe. The booking period of the "India September Sale" starts on September 5 and runs until September 18, 2023. LOT Polish Airlines provides daily nonstop flights from India to Warsaw Chopin Airport (WAW).



## Malaysia Airlines expands connectivity in India

Malaysia Airlines sets forward a new Commercial Elevation journey to expand its footprint to India with the commencement of three new services between Kuala Lumpur (KUL) to Amritsar (ATQ), Thiruvananthapuram (TRV) and Ahmedabad (AMD) effective November 8, November 9 and December 1, 2023 respectively. Malaysia Airlines is pleased to offer introductory fares with all-in return tickets starting from ₹16,899 on Economy Class and from ₹59,099 on Business Class.

## RezLive.com launches NEW User Experience

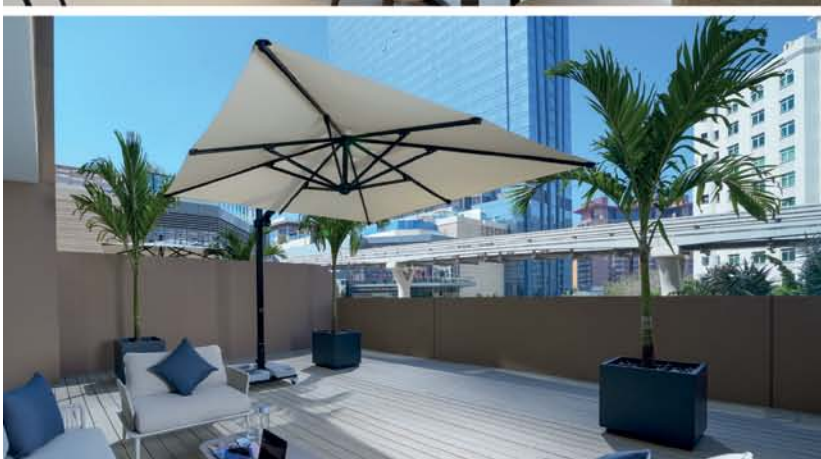
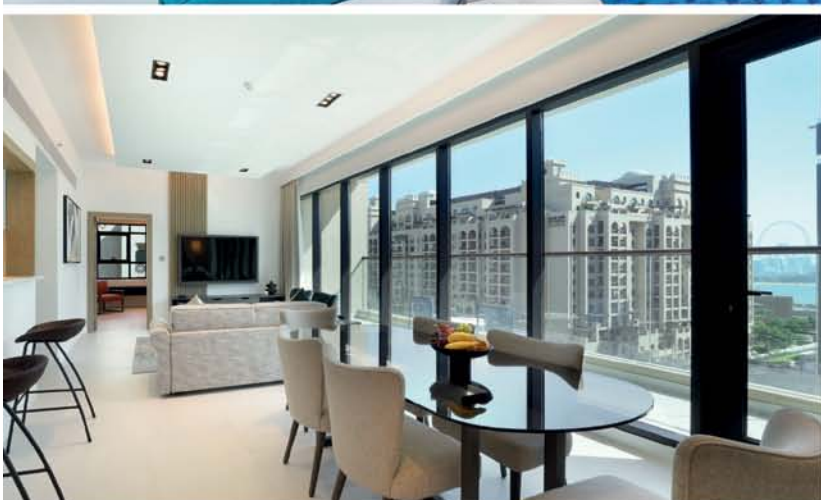
RezLive.com has announced the launch of its new and enhanced version, designed to provide travel agents with a more refreshing and convenient platform for their business needs. The upgraded features and user-friendly interface aim to streamline the booking process, empower travel agents, and elevate the overall booking experience. One of the key enhancements of the new B2B version is its refreshing and intuitive interface. The platform has undergone a complete redesign, featuring a modern and sleek look that captivates users from the moment they log in.







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# G20 Summit

## Declaration adopts the Goa Roadmap on Tourism

*The Goa Roadmap is built around the five priority areas of the Tourism: Green Tourism, Digitalization, Skills, Tourism micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and Destination Management*

By BOTT Desk



In a big win for India, the New Delhi Declaration was adopted during the G20 Summit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the adoption and said it was made possible after cooperation from all. The Goa Roadmap for Tourism is part of the Declaration which includes key features and the geopolitical aspects of the declaration that focuses on 4 Ps: Planet, People, Peace and Prosperity.

As part of point B, Accelerating Progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Declaration mentions the role of tourism in achieving SDGs. It says, "Highlight the crucial role of tourism and culture as a means for sustainable socioeconomic development and economic prosperity, and take note of the Goa Roadmap for Tourism as one of the vehicles for achieving the SDGs." "I have received good news. Due to the hard work of our team, consensus has been built on New Delhi #G20 Leaders' Summit Declaration. My proposal is to adopt this leadership declaration. I announce to adopt this declaration. On this occasion, I congratulate my Sherpa, ministers, who worked hard for it and made it possible..." said PM Narendra Modi.

UNWTO, as the knowledge partner of India's G20 Presidency,

had developed the Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Roadmap is built around the five priority areas of the Tourism Working Group under India's G20 Presidency: 1. Green Tourism; 2. Digitalization; 3. Skills; 4. Tourism micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and; 5. Destination Management.

The Roadmap was developed by UNWTO with the G20 Tourism Working Group and includes for each of the areas a set of objectives and recommended actions, highlighting the interconnection between the different priorities and their distinct contributions to the SDGs. It also

includes a set of case studies illustrating how these priorities are being advanced among the G20 countries.

India's #G20 Presidency has been the most ambitious in the history of G-20. 73 outcomes (lines of effort) and 39 annexed documents (presidency documents, not including Working Group outcome documents). With 112 outcomes and presidency documents, we have more than doubled the substantive work from previous presidencies. 2x-5x number of outcomes and annexed documents as compared to previous presidencies. The Indian Presidency of the G20 has been the most ambitious and action-oriented in all of #G20 Presidencies. ■

### Ministry of Tourism launches a Wedding Tourism Campaign

- Building upon the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's "Developing Tourism in Mission Mode," the Ministry of Tourism has unveiled an ambitious campaign aimed at showcasing India as a premier wedding destination on the global stage. This campaign seeks to explore avenues of great potential, for scaling tourism in India to new heights.
- The campaign seeks to expand India's wedding industry, by enticing couples from around the world to embark on a remarkable journey to celebrate their special day in India.
- Launching the special campaign, Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Culture, Tourism and DoNER, says, "Today marks the beginning of a remarkable journey. A mission to position India as the epitome of wedding destinations worldwide. With the launch of this campaign, I invite couples from around the world to explore the enchanting dream wedding destinations across our incredible nation."



# FMITC 2023:

## Goa welcomes tourism luminaries in international conclave

*The pristine beaches and rich culture of Goa served as the perfect backdrop to kick off FMITC 2023 - the International Tourism Conclave. Fairview Media's meticulously organised event started on a resoundingly positive note, echoing themes of sustainable tourism and India's pivotal role in the future of global travel.*

BOTT Desk



A roster of esteemed speakers graced the inaugural session, heralding the future while embracing sustainable practices. Among the notables were Mr. Rituparna Baruah of ATDC Ltd., Mr. P P Khanna from ADTOI, the charismatic Mr. Martin Joseph Thygodath of IATO's Goa chapter, Mr. Debajit Borah of TOAA, and other industry stalwarts. Their insights set the tone for the sessions that followed, promising enlightening debates and discussions.

The state tourism department of Assam (ATDC) showcased the region's untapped potential. Their presentation made a compelling case for Assam as a coveted destination for discerning travellers, emphasising its tourist-friendly policies and untouched attractions.

An engaging panel titled 'Future of Travel & Tourism: What Lies Ahead' dived into domestic nuances. Eminent personalities like Mr. Khanna, Mr.

Thygodath, Mr. Borah, and others painted a vivid picture of the evolving domestic travel landscape.

The theme session, helmed by Mr. P P Khanna, delved into the realms of Beach, Hinterland & Eco Tourism. The discussions were further enriched by contributions from Mr. Sainath Dharwatka, Mr. Thygodath, Mr. Shah, and Mr. Sanjay Kaw from Philoxenia Ecotel Pvt. Ltd.

Digital strides in the sector were the highlight of the Tech Session. Moderated by Ms. S Mohini Ratna, the session underscored the acceleration of digitalisation, innovation, and cutting-edge technological advancements, with insights from tech mavens like Mr. Vadaga, Mr. Mehta, and Mr. Sahu.

Hospitality's resurgence post-pandemic was the focus of the next segment. Distinguished speakers such as Mr. Kumar Padmapani Bora, Mr.

Thygodath, Ms. Radhika Viegas, and K. RAJESH KUMAR tackled evolving trends and the road to recovery in tourism, hospitality, and accommodation.

Further discussions dived deep into the shifts in civil aviation demands, the challenges they face, and the nuances of airline retailing. The topic of outbound tourism, emphasising the incentive policies of international tourism boards, also generated significant interest.

The grand conclave was brought to a close by Mr. Ashok Mohapatra, Director Marketing of FMPL, who offered recognition to the participants. His heartfelt vote of thanks resonated with gratitude and anticipation for the future chapters of this esteemed gathering.

As delegates exited, the promise of India's potential in the global tourism tapestry was palpable. The baton has been passed, with all eyes on the horizon and the journey ahead. ■

# Punjab to host its first Tourism Summit and Travel Mart in Mohali

*Overwhelmed with the huge response it has managed from trade partners from four key cities, the Punjab Government said that the inaugural Punjab Tourism Summit and Travel Mart, scheduled to take place from September 11 to 13 in Mohali, Punjab, would be a grand affair that would catapult the state to the centre stage of Indian tourism.*

Pallavi Sharma



latest initiatives around development of water and adventure parks aim to attract a larger audience to the state. Simultaneously, the development of picturesque farm stays and cottages in rural areas rich with scenic beauty will offer a charming respite."

Ms. Mann said that the Punjab Travel Mart will serve as a platform to attract forward-thinking tourism professionals from across the nation and beyond. Foreign and domestic tour operators, DMCS, DMOs, travel trade media, travel influencers, hotel operators, B&B and farm stay owners, tourism boards, and more are expected to participate.

Acknowledging the efforts of the government, Ms. Rakhee Gupta Bhandari, IAS Principal Secretary Tourism and Cultural Affairs, emphasised the significance of two key initiatives -wellness and women in tourism. Leveraging Punjab's serene surroundings and rich cultural heritage, these two initiatives will attract wellness seekers and empower women in the tourism industry. Ms. Bhandari said, "Punjab's aspiration to become a wellness hub aligns seamlessly with its cultural heritage. Additionally, empowering women in tourism promises socio-economic growth. By fostering women's participation and offering training and financial support, we aim to catalyse positive change." ■

In an endeavour to create awareness about the upcoming Tourism Summit and Mart, the Punjab Government recently hosted four-city roadshows in Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

The roadshows highlighted the government's tourism promotion plan for its landmark event from September 11-13, which aims to put the spotlight on the state's abundant heritage, traditions, art forms and customs while positioning Punjab as a prime tourist destination. During the four-city roadshows the Department of Tourism showcased a series of strategic initiatives dedicated to fostering tourism growth and enriching the state's cultural landscape.

Bringing down the curtains on the successful road show, Ms. Anmol Gagan Mann, Punjab's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, emphasized the government's strong commitment to boost the state's tourism with the inaugural Punjab Tourism Summit and Travel Mart will be a milestone event.

She stated, "We have received overwhelming support from trade

partners and tourism bodies during our four-city roadshow for the inaugural Punjab Tourism Summit and Travel Mart. We are sure that the event in September would be a runaway success. Under the leadership of our Hon. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, the Punjab Government is dedicated to enhancing tourism, creating opportunities for both inbound and domestic visitors. Our initiatives aim to elevate the state's reputation with business-friendly policies and captivating tourist attractions."

Mann provided insights into the thriving business environment, summarizing special incentives in tourism and hospitality, while highlighting recent investment successes. She also highlighted Punjab Government's endeavour towards positioning the state as the top destination for medical tourism in India.

"Medical tourism and cutting-edge dental facilities are set to flourish in Jalandhar, with a special emphasis on NRI dental tourism. The state's existing vibrant dental tourism landscape is already well recognised across the diaspora. Our



# Aurangabad ready to roll out the red carpet for 38th IATO Convention

*Preparations are on in full swing for the upcoming 38th IATO Convention in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (Aurangabad) from September 29 – October 1, 2023. At a recent luncheon meet hosted by IATO at Hyatt Regency New Delhi, details were shared regarding the same while encouraging members to register in good numbers for the Convention.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



The 38<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention will highlight the theme – Inbound Tourism and Emerging Sustainable Trends and will take place at WelcomHotel by ITC Hotels Rama International. Rajnish Kaistha, Senior Vice President, IATO will be the Chairman of the Convention along with Sanjay Razdan, Hony. Secretary and Jitendra Kejriwal, Chairman, IATO Maharashtra Chapter as the Co-Chairmen. Jaswant Singh, IATO member from Aurangabad will be the Convention Coordinator.

During the recently concluded luncheon meet, Sanjay Razdan gave an overview of the IATO activities of the past month – from bringing down the TCS to 2.5% to reaching out to various authorities to help solve member queries.

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO said, “Our mandate at IATO is to promote Tier II and Tier III cities, as we feel they hold immense tourism potential. Aurangabad at one point in time used to attract many

tourists but somehow lost its charm in the last few years. With the 38<sup>th</sup> IATO Annual Convention, our aim is to revive Inbound Tourism to Aurangabad. For 2024 also, we have also finalised yet another Tier II city for the Convention, which we cannot disclose now. I, along with my IATO team, are working hard to make this Convention a success.”

“We are working hard to make this Convention a success and have curated some special Business Sessions, which the members will find meaningful and useful. Through our special line of speakers, our members will get knowledge on reshaping their business and doing well in it. We have also curated fabulous post tours that will help members get an insight into what all the destination has to offer,” shared Ravi Gosain, Vice President, IATO.

Bearing goodies and praises of Aurangabad, Jaswant Singh was also part of the luncheon meet who happily

informed how excited the city is to welcome IATO delegates. “We are a small town with immense potential for tourism. We are home to the first Heritage Site of India. IATO, over the years, has been instrumental in boosting tourism to the region of Aurangabad and expectations are high this year too. The delegates will get to experience the cultural side of Aurangabad and also savour some delicacies that are unique to the region. We have rolled out the red carpet for you all and eagerly await your arrival,” said Singh.

Rajnish Kaistha, while giving the thank you address, urged the members to register in good numbers so as to make the Convention a success. The response to the convention is already good and the IATO team is confident of reviving tourism in Aurangabad post the Convention.

Dr. B.N. Patil, IAS, Director Tourism, Maharashtra, Government of India, joined in virtually. ■



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*Holland America Line offers multiple shore excursion options. Whether wine tasting in Burgundy, zip-lining in Costa Rica or photographing penguins in Chile, Holland America Line Shore Excursions help you connect deeply to the people and places you visit. Isha Goyal, CEO, STIC Travel, who has been representing Holland America Line in India for a longtime, shares some interesting insights about the offerings of the cruise.*

## **Being a pioneer operating in Alaska for the past 75 years, how has the market evolved for the Holland America Line in all these years?**

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In recent years, Holland America Line has continued to expand its offerings in Alaska and has made significant investments in the region. Moreover, over the past few years, Holland America Line has introduced several new ships to its Alaskan fleet, including the Eurodam, Nieuw Amsterdam and Koningsdam. These ships offer passengers a wide range of amenities and activities, including fine dining, live entertainment, and shore excursions. Every week Holland America Line has two roundtrip Vancouver sailings; two roundtrip Seattle sailings; one Northbound, Vancouver to Whittier (Anchorage); and one Southbound, Whittier to Vancouver sailings. One of the Seattle sailings goes to Hubbard Glacier, and our Southbound, Whittier to Vancouver sailings visits both the Hubbard Glacier and Glacier Bay

National Park & Preserve. So, Holland America Line provides multiple options for Alaska cruises.

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to Alaska, cruise tours to Denali and the Yukon, and every Alaska cruise tour includes at least one night to experience the Denali National Park from our own McKinley Chalet Resort. Explore the scenic surroundings and search for grizzly bears, moose and more on a Tundra Wilderness Tour, included on all 2- and 3-night stays.


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## **excursions, gourmet options and on-board experiences they offer?**

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In Alaska you can mush a dog team over a glacier and feel the wind in your





face. Or go high into the mountains on the White Pass Railway for breath-taking views.

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### **Which is the most popular cruise and itinerary amongst the cruises they offer?**

Alaska Cruises & Cruise Tours, Northern Europe & Mediterranean are our most popular cruises.

Among the itineraries on these cruises, for Alaska, the 7-Day roundtrip Vancouver sailings on Alaskan Inside Passage is the most popular. This roundtrip Inside Passage cruise from Vancouver delivers spellbinding scenery from narrow fjords to scattered islets and towering peaks. Get close to massive glaciers in Glacier Bay National Park and wait breathlessly for ice to calve off and plunge into the ocean. While on shore you'll find endless thrills and chills. Fish for salmon in Ketchikan, helicopter onto Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau, or ride the rails along the rugged White Pass Summit in Skagway.

In Northern Europe, our most popular, the 7-Day Norwegian Fjords itineraries from Amsterdam, or Rotterdam, or Copenhagen, takes you to Norway's breath-taking fjords, plunging waterfalls and charming villages. Discover Viking history, kayak among exquisite fjords and cool off in Oslo's Ice Bar. Relax on deck below snow-covered peaks as you cruise alongside cascading waterfalls. Hike to the top of Pulpit Rock outside of Stavanger for a stunning view. Or visit the charming ports of call at Ålesund, Flam, Bergen etc.

Our 10 to 12-Day Scandinavia & Baltic Sea cruises delivers romantic scenery and a kaleidoscope of cultures. Experience more with our thoughtfully crafted itineraries and overland tours. From Berlin's monuments to Copenhagen's castles and every shining jewel in-between, our cruises show off the best of Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea.

### **Being the connection between the cruise line and the Indian market, what have your marketing strategies been so far and how do you plan to market the cruise line further?**

In India, Holland America Line is represented by STIC Travel Group. Mr. Sanjay Kapoor, Vice President – Sales and Marketing for STIC Travel Group further adds, "We are a premium cruise line with an impeccable record of sailing for 150 years with more than 500 itineraries and connecting with over 470 ports of call in seven continents. With a current fleet size of eleven mid – size ships we offer exciting cruise holidays to all our guests covering Alaska, Europe, Mediterranean, Caribbean, Asia and South Pacific and many more. Holland America Line is known for its variety of dining options including specialty restaurants, best in live music and casino on board, large and spacious cabins, variety of shore excursions and whole lot of entertainment on board. Our travel partners can also go online on STIC website and do search and book options by themselves. We are also offering API connectivity to our travel partners in India for seamless online booking process. We are thankful to all our travel partners in India for supporting us for more than 2 decades in the Indian market and making Holland America line as the first choice for travellers going on a cruise holiday." ■

# FICCI hosts 5<sup>th</sup> Digital Travel, Hospitality & Innovation Summit

*FICCI recently successfully concluded the 5th edition of Digital Travel, Hospitality & Innovation Summit on August 23, 2023 at FICCI, Federation House, New Delhi. The summit brought together global leaders, upstart innovators from the field of Travel, Hospitality, Technology & Marketing to secure new business opportunities, increase brand awareness and to network with the key stakeholders of the industry.*

## BOTT Desk



Shri M.R. Synrem, Joint Secretary, MoT, Government of India gave the inaugural address and highlighted the importance of India's G20 Presidency said that Indian travel and tourism sector is providing an unparalleled opportunity to highlight India's tourism offerings and success stories on the global stage. "The Tourism Track meetings under the G20 focused on key areas like sustainable development, digitalisation and promotion of inclusive growth," he added.

Addressing 'FICCI's 5th Digital Travel, Hospitality & Innovation Summit 2023', Synrem stated that the Ministry of Tourism is working on key identified priority areas with major focus on digitalization. "The National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI) is one of the initiatives of the ministry towards Atmanirbhar Bharat using technology to empower our businesses. 'NIDHI' is not just a database but poised to become a major gateway to opportunities in the hospitality industry," he said.

Speaking on the initiatives of

the government, Synrem said that the Ministry is developing platforms for personalization and traveller engagement. "Today, digital technology allows us to collect and analyse data to create personalised experience. The Ministry will soon introduce several new initiatives with the existing helpline number '1363' to address safety and security concerns of the travellers. We are working towards digitalization in the travel and tourism industry," he noted.

Synrem further stated that post COVID, India has adopted technology in almost every sector. "Digital technology and innovation have revolutionized the travel and tourism industry and providing numerous benefits and enhancing the overall experience of travellers," he added.

Dipak Deva, Chairperson, FICCI Tourism & Culture Committee & MD, Travel Corporation of India Ltd said that in this dynamic world marked by unprecedented technological advancements, the digital transformation journey is not an option but a necessity. "In this context, the

travel and hospitality industry where the experience is everything, this transformation is especially critical," he emphasised.

Ashish Kumar, Co-Chairperson, FICCI Travel Technology & Digital Committee said, "The travel industry is an extended arm and the largest segment of e-commerce sector. It is important to understand that everyone is now a consumer, not just a customer."

FICCI-Accenture 'Travel Insights Hub' – Collection of cross-industry blogs from experts was released during the event.

The event also hosted a Business Session focussed on 'Make your Travel products discover 10x faster!' In the wake of the pandemic, the travel landscape has undergone a transformative shift, presenting new opportunities and trends for both global and Indian travellers. As we delve into the diverse changes in consumer behaviour, we encounter fascinating concepts like Bleisure and revenge travel. This session was aimed to explore the travel trends and insights witnessed by Google, both globally and in India. ■





## Ashish Vohra

### 'We are receiving great business from MICE, Weddings, Corporate and Travel Trade'

*Onara Hospitality, which is best known for its brand jüSTa Hotels & Resorts, recently ventured into the wellbeing resorts space with Bookmark Resorts. The first Bookmark Resort opened in Manali and they plan to open around 10 more resorts under this brand in the next 2-3 years. The Group is also keen to expand our portfolio in the hills, in Rajasthan and in certain places in South India such as Kerala, the Nilgiri Biosphere and Karnataka. Ashish Vohra, Founder & CEO, Onara Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., shares more in an exclusive chat with BOTT.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray

#### How has the year 2023 been for your brand in terms of occupancy and ARR's?

We witnessed a 21.5% growth in the overall revenues in Q1 of 2023. However, there has been a slowdown in Q2, especially because of the weather conditions in the hills where we have a large inventory. We are hoping that the business will pick up in Q3, which looks very good on paper right now, especially because we are receiving great business from MICE, weddings, corporate and travel trade. August onwards, the European markets, which form a large segment of our client base, also become active and this seems to be the case this year as well.

#### What steps are you taking to firm up your footprint (of jüSTa Hotels & Resorts) in the luxury resorts space in India?

We have worked very hard over the last couple of years to redefine the 'jüSTa' brand and its offerings. We have moved away from the city hotel model for this brand and have instead focused extensively on resorts and retreats. As a result, since October 2020, we have opened 10 luxury resorts and retreats under a revenue sharing model.

We have also emphasised on delivering great experiences to the guests and offering them the best-in-

class modern amenities and personalized service at par with the best luxury hospitality brands in the market.

A lot of effort has been made into brand development as well as strengthening our sales and digital marketing efforts, with a special focus on the B2B market.

#### Have you added any feature / facility / renovation to your property?

Upgradation has been happening at jüSTa Rajputana Resort & Convention Centre in Udaipur and the property has been overhauled in a big way. We have also started investing in renovating the jüSTa Lake Nahargarh Palace in Chittorgarh. We are adding rooms at jüSTa Rasa Retreat & Spa in Rishikesh, jüSTa Sajjangarh Resort & Spa in Udaipur and jüSTa Birding in Dharamshala.

#### Is your hotel brand following any sustainability / eco-friendly measures or adapting any means to give back to the society?

While we are not 100% sustainable, we are taking firm steps towards adopting sustainable and eco-friendly practices at our hotels. We are trying to reduce single use plastic by using natural spring water instead of bottled water at most of our properties. Most of the staff at our hotels are locals, we procure most of the ingredients locally and encourage

our guests to try local cuisines as well as cultural experiences. One of the biggest environment friendly initiative that we have taken recently is the tree plantation drive at our hotels in Rajasthan. During this monsoon season, we are planting over 2,000 trees at five of our properties in Rajasthan.

#### Are you more focussed on the domestic market or Inbound or a mix of both?

The pandemic has taught all of us in the hospitality business the value of domestic clientele and even though inbound travel is back, I don't see us shifting our focus completely to that segment. In fact, MICE, weddings and corporate segments are major revenue generators for us. Going forward, I would like all our three brands – jüSTa, Bookmark Resorts and NUO - to focus equally on both inbound and domestic markets.

#### What kind of traffic do you get at your property?

In terms of revenue, weddings and MICE are holding the pole position. With the picking up of the international travel trade and the foreigners coming back, I think FITs – Indian or foreigner – will hold a large portion of giving you the base to work with. As far as the traffic at our properties is concerned, around 35-40% of our business consists of weddings, MICE and F&B. ■

# Exploring India's Diverse Festival Landscape

*India, often referred to as the "Land of Festivals," offering an array of cultural experiences that are nothing short of spectacular. From the Himalayas in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, every region has its unique festivals that are a feast for the senses. While you may already be familiar with some of the more renowned festivals like Diwali, Holi, Pongal and Navratri, there are several other cultural gems that deserve a spot on your travel itinerary. These are Festivals that don't have any religious affiliation but celebrate the cultural diversity that India enjoys.*





Picture Courtesy: Sagar Shivastava

## Ganesh Chaturthi

Ganesh Chaturthi, also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi, is a festival that celebrates the birth of Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity revered for wisdom and prosperity. For travellers seeking an authentic Indian cultural experience, this festival is a must-see,

particularly in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Goa. The festival kicks off with the installation of intricately crafted Ganesha idols in homes and public pandals (temporary structures). These idols are adorned with flowers, lights, and colourful decorations, creating a visually stunning environment. The air is filled with the rhythmic beats of drums

and the chanting of devotional songs, adding a spiritual dimension to the festivities. For ten days, the community comes together to offer prayers, perform rituals, and participate in cultural events like dance and music performances. The festival culminates in the grand 'Visarjan' ceremony, where the idols are immersed in water amidst much fanfare. Ganesh Chaturthi offers travellers a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in local traditions and witness the collective spirit of devotion and celebration. From the artistry of the idols to the vibrancy of the processions, this festival encapsulates the essence of India's rich cultural tapestry.

## Bihu

The Assamese culture is known to differ itself from the rest of India when it comes to the culture and the festivals. Bihu, the most popular as well as the national festival of Assam, occurs more than once a year with three different festivals being a part of it. Associated with farming, these festivals are namely Rongali Bihu, Kaati Bihu and Magh Bihu. Also known as Bohag Bihu, the festival of Rongali Bihu signifies the beginning of the Assamese New Year that falls around April 15, every year during the spring season. The Rongali Bihu festival begins with giving a bath to the cattle and livestock in nearby ponds by applying a paste of freshly harvested turmeric or black gram. The cows and bulls are later worshipped, thus giving way to the name goru (cow) bihu. The goru bihu is followed by the Manuh (human) Bihu where the people take a bath and get dressed in new clothes. Traditional food called Larus is made using coconut and rice, along with sweet Jolpan and Pitha that have their own charm. The third day marks the Gosai (Gods) Bihu. Statues of Gods are worshipped on this day and asked for blessings. Performances of songs and dance are performed by young boys and girls wearing traditional dhoti, gamosa and saadar mekhela. It is accompanied by an orchestra of dhol, pépa (buffalo hornpipe) and gagana. The Bihu Festival is one festival where people from various communities participate irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, faith or belief.

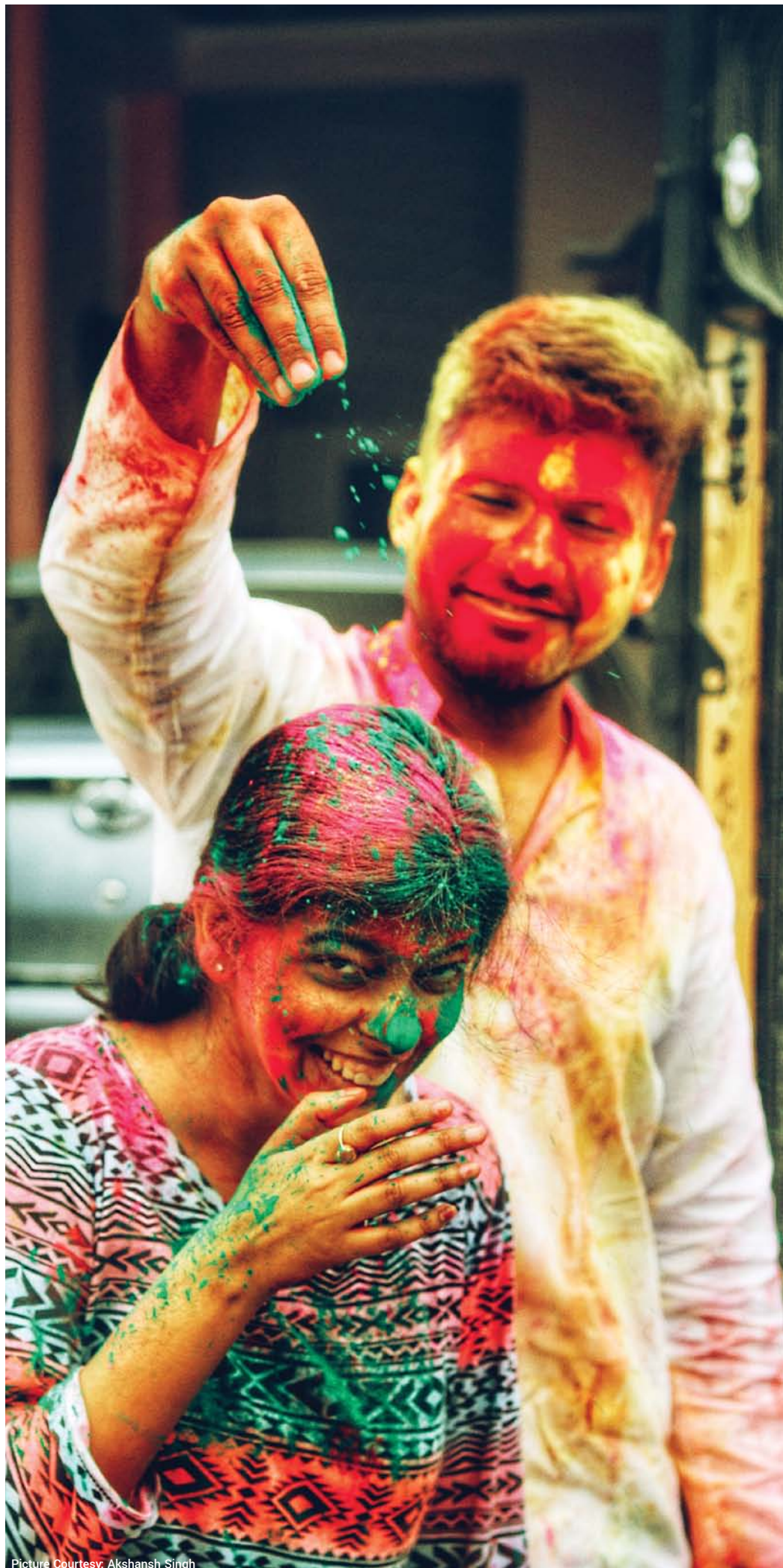


## Lumbini Festival

The three-day long Lumbini Festival is an annual festival organised at Nagarjuna Sagar in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The festival is very popular in the entire state and gives a platform to celebrate the heritage and commemorate the religion of Buddhism in the state. The festival is named after the place Lumbini, which is considered the birthplace of Gautam Buddha who was the preacher and Guru of Buddhism. The Lumbini festival organised by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation not only boosts tourism in the state, but also looks after the celebration, activities, events and other arrangements as thousands of tourists as well as pilgrims gather here during the festival. The festival marks the importance of Buddhism as a religion in Andhra Pradesh, as 2000 years ago Buddhism was the only religion practised in the state. The Lumbini festival throws light on the rich culture and heritage of Buddhism.

## Holi

Colours splashing everywhere, people spraying water with water guns and throwing water balloons on each other commemorate the festival of Holi. Popularly observed as the festival of colours, this festival has been shaped by different countries in their own way. However, in India it first begins with burning the Holi bonfire a day before the water Holi, which symbolises the killing of Holika. Mythological stories reveal that the sister of Hiranyakashyapu, Holika was burnt alive on this day hence the name 'Holika Dahan'. The festival also marks the beginning of the summer season and the end of winters. It also celebrates Radha's eternal love for Lord Krishna. The festival of Holi is known by different names in different parts of the country. In Bihar it is called Phagwa, Dol Purnima in Bengal and Punjab recognises it by the name of Holi Mohalla. However, the most glorious of all is the Holi of Mathura that lasts for 16 days and is predominantly played with flowers. With Holi comes the



Picture Courtesy: Akshansh Singh





preparation of sweets and delicacies, where Ghujia is the most relished of all. Bhaang is also an important aspect of food preparations. It is believed that Holi is the day when one gets rid of past errors and ends conflicts. On this day, people pay the debts that have been long waiting to end. It is the beginning of the spring season and for many it is also the beginning of a new year.

## Janmashtami

Janmashtami, the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna, is a festival that captivates the heart of India and offers an unforgettable experience for travellers. Celebrated with immense fervour and devotion, this festival is a spectacle of colour, music, and spirituality that takes place mainly in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. The epicentre of the celebration is Mathura, the birthplace of Krishna, and Vrindavan, where he spent his childhood. Here, temples are adorned with flowers and lights, and the air is filled with the melodious tunes of devotional songs. For travellers, the highlight is the re-

enactment of episodes from Krishna's life, including the famous "Raas Leela," a dance drama that is both enchanting and spiritually uplifting. Markets come alive with stalls selling intricate idols of Krishna, colourful clothes, and delicious sweets like 'laddus' and 'pedas,' which are considered the Lord's favourites. The atmosphere is electric, with devotees fasting and staying awake until midnight, the moment when Krishna is believed to have been born. Janmashtami provides travellers with a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in Indian culture and spirituality. The festival is not just a religious event but a celebration of life itself, making it a must-see for anyone visiting India during this time.

## Pongal


Pongal, a four-day festival celebrated predominantly in the southern states of India, is a jubilant tribute to nature and its bounties. Occurring in mid-January, Pongal is a must-visit event for travellers keen on experiencing the rich agricultural heritage of South India. The festival marks the end of winter and

welcomes the harvest season, filling the air with a sense of gratitude and joy. The festivities kick off with the cleaning and decorating of homes, followed by the ritualistic boiling of the first rice of the season in new clay pots. This act, performed outdoors, is a symbolic offering to the Sun God for a prosperous harvest. The rice dish, also called 'Pongal,' is then shared among family and friends. Vibrant rangoli designs adorn courtyards, and traditional folk dances and music performances elevate the celebratory mood. Farmers pay homage to their cattle, the unsung heroes of agriculture, in a ceremony known as 'Mattu Pongal.' For travellers, Pongal offers an unparalleled glimpse into the agrarian lifestyle and cultural ethos of South India. The festival is not just a celebration but an experience that encapsulates the spirit of unity, gratitude, and the timeless traditions of a land deeply connected to its soil.

## Teej

Women wearing colourful lahariya saree and bangles, along with a bindi on





their forehead, vermilion, dark henna on their hands, and ghevar (sweet) together symbolise the festival of Teej. These things are sent as gifts (Sinjara) to married women by their parents. One of the most widely celebrated festivals of Rajasthan, the festival of Teej is dotted with swings, traditional songs and dancing. This day marks the coming together of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva. It is also believed that it took Goddess Parvati 108 births on earth before she was accepted as his wife. Due to these reasons, the festival is considered auspicious for attaining blessing of marital bliss. The most important aspect of this festival is that women fast during the day without drinking or eating anything. At night, they eat the food prepared by the men. Swings decorated with flowers play an important part during the festival as the women wear green clothes and swing while singing traditional Teej songs. The festival is also considered as the beginning of the monsoon season and thus Teej also gets its name as the “Saawan festival” and “Hariyali Teej”. Due to a number of fairs, the festival of Teej also attracts a large number of tourists. Although the exact date of the festival keeps changing, it is precisely celebrated on the third day of the bright half of the North Indian Lunar month of Shraavana.

## Hemis Festival

The birth of Guru Padmasambhava is celebrated as the Hemis Festival in Ladakh. Celebrated in the courtyard of Hemis Gompa, which is known as the largest Buddhist monastery






in Ladakh, the Hemis Festival is regarded as the most famous Monastic festival, celebrated in Ladakh. The festival is a two-day celebration that falls on the 10th day of the Tibetan Lunar month. It is considered that Guru Padmasambhava is a representative reincarnate of Buddha. Every year, the Hemis festival attracts a large number of Tibetans as well as tourists who come to watch and celebrate the festival as they watch the Lamas called Chamms perform masked dance and sacred plays. The performances are accompanied by cymbals, drums and long horns. Every 12 years, the festival takes an auspicious direction when the Tibetan year of the Monkey is celebrated. During this time, the two-storey high "Thanka" or a religious icon painted or embroidered on cloth depicting Padmasambhava is displayed. Lamas can be seen dressed in colourful brocades and masked attire while they perform the dance where the underlying theme is good defeating evil, i.e., Gods defeating the Demons. The different Mudras performed as a part of this dance symbolise the various aspects of the dance drama. Some other performers wear masks representing different divinities of religious or historical importance. Local people become a part of the festival by wearing their finest traditional apparel for the occasion.

## Thrissur Pooram

Thrissur Pooram is considered as the most colourful of all temple festivals in Kerala. Thrissur/Thrissivaperoor Pooram is frequently also referred to as "the pooram of all poorams". It is celebrated every year on Pooram – the day when the moon rises with the Pooram star in the Malayalam Calendar month of Medam. The Vadakkumnathan temple situated on the famous kinkadu maidhanam which is a hillock right in the centre of city, serves as the venue for the festival. People believe that the Gods and Goddesses of the neighbouring temples descend from heaven to be a part of the celebrations in this temple. These Gods and Goddesses visit the temple premises sitting atop giant and unusually decorated elephants along with grand ensembles of Chenda melam and pancha vadyam. Around 50 elephants wearing Netti pattam (decorative golden headdress), beautiful bells and ornaments, impressive Kolam with umbrellas perched atop, beautify the festival. The festival is 36 hours of unbroken pooram while serving as a place of major tourist attraction. The Thiruvampadi and Paramakkavu temples or Dewasoms are the major points of attraction of the festival. These two temples





compete with each other in display of spectacular fireworks. The festival signifies the coming together of different communities to promote communal harmony. The Muslim community provides the craftsmanship of the Pandals, while the material for the umbrellas called Kudamatton is offered by the members of the church. Thrissur Pooram was started in 1798 by Raja Rama Varma the Maharaja of Cochin from 1790–1805.


## **The Beach Festival, Puri**

Whilst taking a stroll at the Puri Beach, Swargadwara at Puri, one might come across huge sculptures made out of sand, performances of Malkhamb and the popular boat / yacht races known as Regatta. All these activities together mark the celebrations of the popular Puri Beach Festival in Puri, Orissa. Beginning in the month of November each year, the beach festival usually lasts for a duration of five days, showcasing a variety of events such as exhibitions, cultural programmes, fashion shows and even delicious cuisine. The Puri Beach Festival aims at bringing forward the various identities of the state of Orissa along with displaying the crafts and cultures of the other states. It celebrates the radiant and grand spirit of the state of Orissa. Major attractions include classical and folk dances, especially the Odissi, Lepcha or Lambadi dance performances. A spectrum of various kinds of entertainment along with activities, such as beach volleyball and DJ dance parties are something that cannot be missed. The festival is conducted by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha and is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha (Orissa), Development Commissioner of Handicrafts and the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre, Calcutta. The beach is transformed into a colourful venue of extravagant performances of dance, music and lovely handicrafts and has something to offer to every age group. It is a much-awaited event which over the years has managed to capture the attention of both national and international tourists.

## **Dussehra, Kota**

What better way can there be to witness the win of good over evil, of light over darkness than at the celebration of the festival of Dussehra in Kota. A riot of colours, this festival imbibes the spirit of good among the people and celebrates





the victory of Lord Rama over the evil Raavan. Celebrated with gusto and energy, Dussehra is held in the Hindu month of Ashvin, which is usually in September or October. The people enjoy the excellent theatrical performances and enactments from the Ramayana. Although celebrated all over the country, The Kota Dussehra Mela is unique as it is much more than just the win of good over evil. Well-decorated shops, cultural performances and traditionally clad locals are the things to look out for; right from the time you enter the fair. It is the most important event in the cultural calendar of the city as the history of this Dussehra fair goes back to 1723 AD. More than 75 feet tall effigies of the demons Raavan, Kumbhakarana and Meghnad are burnt on Dussehra day to symbolize the victory of good over evil. Usually, these effigies are filled with crackers. A young child dressed as Lord Ram is made to shoot an arrow of fire at Ravana and the huge figure is burnt. Rich in courtly splendour and archaic traditions, the Dussehra festival here is marked by a glittering procession that attracts thousands from the surrounding villages and brings together communities looking to celebrate greatness.

## Dev Deepavali, Varanasi

Dev Deepavali, which is celebrated every year on Kartik Pournima, falls 15 days after Diwali, and is more like an extended celebration of the biggest festival of India! It is celebrated in Varanasi, which for most travellers is nothing less than a dream destination. The traditional ceremony is an elaborate affair starting with offering prayers to Lord Ganesha, followed by the deepdaan or offering the diyas (earthen lamps) at each and every ghat while the priests chant vedic mantras in the background. It is magnificent and a sight to behold leaving the visitors spellbound! This is the day when people celebrate Tulsi vivah which signifies the birthday of Matsya or the fish avatar of Lord Vishnu and that of Vrinda – the representation of the tulsi plant. Also, the Ganga Aarti, performed on the evening of Dev Deepavali is the most elaborately performed one throughout the year! Picture this - devotees taking a holy dip in the river Ganges, a ritual that is believed to help wash off the sins, alongside the ghats with continuous chants and prayers being offered in the backdrop, with beautiful diyas floating in the water





Picture Courtesy: Udayaditya Barua

and sparkling fireworks decorating the sky! The actual sight is divine and is sure to leave a lasting imprint in everyone's minds. Don't miss out on visiting this spiritual, peaceful city of lights during the festival of Dev Deepavali and take in the elements of culture, tradition, spirituality and inner peace!

## Khajuraho Festival of Dances

Khajuraho Dance Festival is organised by the Madhya Pradesh government to promote the cultural heritage of the land and traditional dances of India. The festival is held at the famous temples of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh, that speak of archaeological excellence, in the backdrop of stunning architecture striking the perfect balance with intricate sculpture. Classical dancers from all over India and world-over participate in the week-long festival at Khajuraho, in the backdrop of marvellously illuminated Khajuraho shrines. A variety of classical dances, such as Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri and Mohiniattam, are performed at the festival and attract tourists from around the world. The festival celebrates the heritage of India and is one of the most important cultural events in the state of Madhya Pradesh. As a result, the

festival has earned global recognition for itself from different renowned dance schools across the world. Providing an opportunity for international display of local talent and art, the festival witnesses tourists from abroad, giving it the culturally extravagant hue that makes it one of a kind.

## Diwali

Diwali, often referred to as the "Festival of Lights," is one of India's most iconic and widely celebrated festivals. For travellers seeking to experience the quintessence of Indian culture, Diwali is a spectacle not to be missed. Predominantly observed in October or November, the festival is a symphony of light, colour, and spirituality that captivates the senses. The celebration begins with the cleaning and decorating of homes, transforming them into luminous sanctuaries. As dusk falls, the horizon is set ablaze with countless diyas (oil lamps), candles, and fairy lights, symbolising the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. Fireworks illuminate the night sky, adding to the visual extravaganza. Families gather to perform rituals, exchange gifts, and share festive meals. Temples and public spaces are adorned with intricate rangoli (coloured sand art), and markets bustle with shoppers seeking sweets, garments,

and decorations. For travellers, Diwali offers a unique lens into India's rich tapestry of traditions and beliefs. The festival is not just a feast for the eyes but also a journey into the spiritual and cultural heart of India. Come, be a part of this radiant celebration and take-home memories that will last a lifetime.

## Onam

Onam, the most celebrated festival in the southern Indian state of Kerala, is a vibrant cultural extravaganza that beckons travellers from around the globe. Rooted in mythology, the festival commemorates the homecoming of the benevolent King Mahabali, whose reign is considered a golden era in Kerala's history. For ten days, the state transforms into a canvas of colours, music, and dance. The festivities kick off with the creation of intricate flower carpets, known as "Pookalam," which adorn the front yards of homes. The visual spectacle continues with the grand Snake Boat Races, where teams row traditional wooden boats in perfect harmony, creating a mesmerising scene on the backwaters. But the pièce de résistance is the Onasadya, a lavish feast that is nothing short of a culinary symphony. Served on banana leaves, the meal comprises over 13 to 15 traditional dishes, each a unique blend of flavours







and textures. The festival culminates in a series of cultural performances, including the majestic tiger dances and elaborate Kathakali shows, which showcase the rich artistic heritage of Kerala. For world travellers, Onam offers a unique window into the soul of Kerala, making it a must-experience event on any cultural itinerary.

## Jagannath Yatra: Puri's Grand Cultural Spectacle

To the uninitiated traveler, the Jagannath Yatra in Puri might appear as a mere procession. However, delve a little deeper, and one discovers a cultural extravaganza that has been celebrated for centuries, drawing millions to the coastal town of Puri, Odisha. This annual event, also known as the Rath Yatra or Chariot Festival, is a magnificent display of devotion, art, and tradition.

At the heart of the festival are the towering chariots, intricately crafted and brightly painted, each dedicated to one of the three deities: Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra, and sister Subhadra. These chariots, pulled by thousands of devotees, make their way through the bustling streets of Puri, in a journey from the Jagannath Temple to the Gundicha Temple. The sight of the massive wooden chariots, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of drums, cymbals, and the echoing chants, offers an experience that's both overwhelming and mesmerising.

For travellers, the Yatra is not just a religious event but a deep dive into India's rich tapestry of rituals, dances, and songs. The streets come alive with vendors selling traditional crafts, food stalls offering local delicacies, and performances that showcase the region's artistic heritage.

However, what truly sets the Jagannath Yatra apart is the palpable sense of community. It's a time when barriers dissolve, and everyone, irrespective of their background, comes together in shared reverence and joy. For those seeking an authentic cultural experience, the Jagannath Yatra offers a glimpse into the soul of India – vibrant, diverse, and deeply spiritual.

## Navratri

Navratri, meaning 'Nine Nights,' is one of India's most vibrant and significant festivals, celebrated with great enthusiasm across the country. For travellers seeking a deep dive into Indian culture, Navratri offers an unparalleled experience of spirituality, music, and dance. The festival is dedicated to Goddess Durga and her nine avatars, each representing a distinct power and grace. Temples are elaborately decorated, and the air is filled with the aroma of incense and flowers. Devotees engage in fasting and night-long vigils, but it's the 'Garba' and 'Dandiya' dances that steal the show. Men and women, dressed in colourful traditional attire, dance in circles to the rhythm of live music, creating a mesmerising spectacle. In states like Gujarat and West Bengal, grand pandals (temporary structures) are erected, housing intricate idols of the Goddess. These become hubs of cultural activities, offering travellers a chance to witness local art forms and taste regional delicacies. Navratri is not just a festival; it's a celebration of India's diverse traditions and beliefs. For travellers, it's an opportunity to participate in a communal expression of faith and joy, making it a must-experience event on any Indian itinerary.







## The Desert Festival of Jaisalmer

Embark on a magical journey to the heart of Rajasthan for the annual Desert Festival, a three-day cultural spectacle held every February in the iconic Golden Fortress of Jaisalmer. Witness the golden hues of the Thar Desert come alive with vibrant cultural events, thrilling camel races, and unique turban-tying competitions. The festival is a kaleidoscope of Rajasthan's rich traditions, featuring performances by folk artists, local acrobats known as Kalabaz or Nats, and even snake charmers. The highlight? The longest moustache competition, where you, the visitor, get to be the judge! Don't

miss the mesmerising performances by the famed Gair and fire dancers, and partake in the excitement of camel polo and camel dances. Organised by the Rajasthan State Tourism Corporation, this festival is a global attraction that promises not just entertainment but also a unique shopping experience centred around local heritage and customs.

## Konark Dance & Music Festival

Immerse yourself in the artistic splendour of the Konark Dance and Music Festival, a five-day event that takes place every year from February 19-23. Founded in 1986 by Padmashree Guru Gangadhar Pradhan,

the festival is set against the stunning backdrop of the Sun Temple in Konark, Odisha. The festival aims to foster international cultural harmony by showcasing a diverse range of performances, including classical dances like Odissi, Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, and Mohiniattam, among others. The festival is not just a celebration but a mission to preserve and promote India's rich cultural heritage. So, pack your bags and prepare for an unforgettable journey through India's incredible cultural festivals. Each offers a unique lens through which to understand and appreciate the rich tapestry that makes up this diverse land. Come, be a part of these extraordinary celebrations! ■





*Revel in*

# **New Orleans'** *Vibrant Events*



New Orleans, renowned for its vibrant culture and eclectic spirit, offers a variety of captivating experiences. From annual traditions that celebrate diversity and heritage to enthralling music extravaganzas, the city's upcoming events promise an unforgettable journey. Located in Louisiana, New Orleans' international airport offers convenient flight connections from major cities in the United States, making it a must-visit destination during your upcoming travel to the US. Imbibe the spirit of New Orleans through the year as it comes alive with a medley of experiences that celebrate culture, tradition, diversity, sports, music, and culinary delights.

## **Halloween, October 2023**

Halloween in New Orleans draws thousands to the French Quarter neighborhood for devilish fun while vampires, zombies, ghosts, goblins, and everything else parade up and down Frenchmen Street displaying the city's legendary wit and creativity in their carefully crafted costumes. Start your Halloween adventure with one of the many haunted tours through the French Quarter or some



other spooky part of the city. And then, of course, there are the world-famous cemeteries where the dearly departed are buried in tombs aboveground. Hundreds of stories abound in which the ghosts of these “Cities of the Dead” make their presence known. All Hallows’ Eve in New Orleans is an experience to remember for both the living – and the undead.

### **Mardi Gras, Tuesday, February 13, 2024**

Mardi Gras originated in New Orleans when the explorer Iberville first set foot here in 1699. Since then, Mardi Gras balls have become a tradition of the season to represent members of society. From the past to the present, Mardi Gras is full of traditions. Mardi Gras means Fat Tuesday in French, representing the Carnival celebration season. Every year, Mardi Gras season begins on Twelfth Night, which is January 6. Twelfth Night represents the Christian holy day of the Epiphany. The season, which represents a time of celebration before Christian Lent, lasts until Fat Tuesday. Fat Tuesday, or Mardi Gras Day, is February 13, 2024. Between January 6 and February 13, enjoy parades, king cake, community celebrations, and more.

### **French Quarter Festival, April 11-14, 2024**

French Quarter Festival (FQF) is a one-weekend annual celebration of New Orleans’ and Louisiana’s local music and cuisine in one of the city’s most historic neighbourhoods – the Vieux Carre, or the French Quarter. After 40 years, French Quarter Fest has become a favourite for locals and visitors alike. Over 20 stages take over the French Quarter throughout the three-day weekend, starting early in the day and going on through the night. Festival goers will hear jazz, Latin, R&B, zydeco, New Orleans funk, swing, and rock throughout the Quarter.

### **New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, April 26 - May 5, 2024**

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, more commonly referred to as Jazz Fest, is an annual festival celebrating the music, art, culture, and heritage of New Orleans. With 13 stages of soul-stirring music—jazz, gospel, Cajun, zydeco, blues, R&B, rock, funk, African, Latin, Caribbean, folk, and much more—the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is a singular celebration. Over the years, it has worked its way into the hearts of locals and visitors alike. Jazz Fest is slated to return from April 26-28 and May 2-5, 2024. The festival has always blended a wide mix of internationally renowned artists from Louisiana and the rest of the world.

### **New Orleans Pride, June 2024**

Every year in early June, New Orleans Pride takes place in the French Quarter and celebrates the LGBTQ+ community in the Crescent City and beyond. New Orleans has won accolades such as “Most Welcoming City” from GayCities, and Pride is a perfect event to experience the welcoming nature of New Orleanians. New Orleans Pride usually includes parties throughout the French Quarter, special events at bars on Bourbon Street and beyond, burlesque shows, dining events, and more. ■

**For more information, visit us at [NewOrleans.com](https://www.neworleans.com)**





# Tourism Authority of Thailand organises Amazing Thailand Luxury Roadshow

*To promote Thailand as a perfect luxury holiday destination, Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi office organized the Amazing Thailand Luxury Roadshow in New Delhi, which was well-attended by industry stalwarts and media. Ms. Pattarat Hongtong, Ambassador of Thailand to India was also present on the occasion.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



Addressing the gathering present on the Thailand Roadshow, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of Indian visitors towards the tourism and economic recoveries of Thailand after the COVID-19 pandemic. With almost 1 million Indian visitors travelling to Thailand in 2022, India has become the second largest market source for the country. In the first seven

months of 2023, the number of Indian tourists visiting Thailand has reached more than 9 lakhs.

Sharing her thoughts on the same, Ms Siriges – A – Nong Trirattanasongpol, Director – TAT New Delhi expressed, “From January – December 2022 we received close to 1 million tourists from India but this year, in the first eight months – January to mid-August, we

have already received 960,000 tourists from India and are hopeful of closing the year with more than 1.5 million Indian tourists. With this figure, we would be at 80% of our 2019 numbers and by 2024 we are targeting to take this number to 2 million.”

Going forward there are various segments that the TAT is looking at starting with re-visitors to families, millennials, lady travellers and also senior citizens. Weddings will continue to be an important segment but the focus next year will be more in sustainability, especially with regards to weddings. As Thailand is a popular luxury wedding destination, TAT along with Thai hotels will be introducing a special campaign called “Celebrations with Care” focusing on sustainable and eco-friendly activities like zero food wastage, converting food into manure and feeding the underprivileged local people. This will, however, in no way ask the Indian weddings to reduce the scale of their celebrations but hotels will have to find better and efficient ways to manage the waste.

Thailand is currently focussed on positioning itself as a high value product and if numbers are to be believed, the strategy is surely working in their favour. It is currently focussing on promoting the famous 5-Fs – Food, Fashion, Fight, Films and Festivals. “When we talk about food in Thailand, we just not mean Thai Food but also quality Indian Food that one gets in various restaurants – it is simply outstanding. Along with this, there are also other international cuisines available. Next, everyone loves





to shop in Thailand – especially in the malls. But there are also many young Thai designers, who are making great outfits that I am sure Indians would love. Many Indian films are also shot in Thailand – Dono being one of them. However, I would also like to promote the tourists to follow the popular film location and shoot their own film – be superstars themselves! This year we are celebrating ‘Diwali in Bangkok’ to welcome Indians to come to Thailand and partake in the celebrations. Lastly, Thai Boxing is becoming immensely

popular with Indians and we want to promote it as part of regular exercising,” she added.

While there are no official figures but post pandemic, the pattern of Indians holidaying has changed. They now like to stay for a longer duration (sometimes even more than 10 days) and spending more on luxury hotels.

Concluding the interview, Siriges-A-Nong said “From the luxury hotel brands to world class spa resorts, from high end shopping to Michelin restaurants, Thailand has a lot to offer

for the discerning travellers looking to pamper themselves with only the best and most exclusive holiday experiences. The beautiful beach destinations and world class resorts along with the warm Thai hospitality and top level of service makes Amazing Thailand the ideal luxury holiday destination. We look forward to welcoming more high-end Indian travellers to the land of smiles.”

The networking event started with a B-B session where Indian travel agents got an opportunity to meet and network with 13 sellers of luxury products and services in Thailand. This was followed by a destination presentation that focused on new properties in Thailand that are perfectly suited for high-end Indian travellers.

The event had a great turnout of about 60 buyers from luxury travel companies based in Delhi NCR region. ■



# Korea Culture and Tourism Festival 2023

## showcases immersive cultural experiences

*The Korea Culture and Tourism Festival 2023 successfully concluded on a high note with immersive cultural experiences, enchanting performances, and mouth-watering Korean cuisine at Ambience Mall, Gurugram. Hosted by the Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO), the festival showcased a vibrant celebration of the deep-rooted connection between India and Korea. Moreover, KTO also hosted a Travel Mart event on August 25 at The Andaz Aerocity, New Delhi.*

BOTT Desk



**T**he Korea Tourism Festival kicked off with an enchanting gala night, celebrating cultural connections and vibrant experiences. This festive event not only strengthened cultural bonds but also marked 50 years of harmonious diplomacy between Korea and India. The event saw the presence of Mr. Younggeun Lee, Executive Director of Korea Tourism Organization and Roshan M. Thomas, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, underlining the importance of this cross-cultural collaboration.

In a testament to the lasting cultural

connection between the two nations, Indian Television Actress, Model, and Influencer, Anushka Sen, has been named the Honorary Ambassador of Korea Tourism from India.

While addressing the conference, Mr. Myongkil Yun, Regional Director – India & SAARC, Korea Tourism Organization, said, “As we look ahead, the Korea Tourism Festival serves as a testament to the enduring cultural connections between our nations. This event symbolizes the deep-rooted ties that bind us and opens doors for even more vibrant cultural exchanges. As part of Visit Korea Year,

we eagerly anticipate strengthening these connections and welcoming travellers to explore the enchanting offerings of Korea.”

Aligned with KTO’s ambitious initiative, Visit Korea Year 2023-24, the festival’s success underscores Korea’s rising popularity among Indian travellers. KTO data reveals that Indian visitors to Korea had surpassed 49,580 by June 2023, with projections reaching an impressive 120,000 by December 2023. These figures solidify Korea’s appeal to Indian travellers.

Moreover, KTO hosted a Travel Mart event on August 25 at The Andaz Aerocity New Delhi, featuring participants like JeollaNamdo Tourism Organization, Gwangju City, nine destination management companies, Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, Bioface, and Amorepacific. These participants actively engaged, creating a platform to explore various aspects of Korean travel and lifestyle.

Meanwhile, the festival at the Ambience Mall, Gurugram kicked off with awe-inspiring K-Performances, featuring breath-taking B Boying performances by ONEWAY CREW that left the audience in awe. Adding to the excitement, the stage came alive with a unique fusion of Indian dance and K-Pop songs, seamlessly blending the rhythmic beats of Indian dance with the infectious energy of K-Pop.

The Bioface and Innisfree K-Beauty stalls were a hit, introducing festivalgoers to the secrets of flawless Korean beauty. ■



# Visit Finland successfully concludes its annual India Workshop 2023

*Visit Finland successfully concluded its annual workshop in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and New Delhi. The workshop was aimed at promoting outbound tourism from India to Finland. With the participation of 17 suppliers from Finland, which is the biggest delegation ever in India from tourism sector of Finland, the event showcased a range of offerings from the country.*

**BOTT Desk**



The workshop was also very well attended by a large but exclusive group of representatives of the vibrant Indian travel industry.

Dr. Tito Gronow, Minister, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Finland, New Delhi shared that Finland is looking forward to having Indians with open arms. He also shared that political and commercial relations between India and Finland are very good and very stable. Indians have grown this year to become the largest group of visa applicants followed by Russia and China. Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has invested in visa services and since January 2023, Indian visa applications are handled in Finland after the applicants have submitted their applications to our external partner organization VFS. This makes it possible to handle even much

larger number of visa applications in the future. He also added that Finland's collaboration with Indian tourism will show the power of travel in fostering understanding, appreciation, and friendship across borders

Paivi Hobbs, Area Manager, Asia for Visit Finland shared that Finland is a land of pristine landscapes, northern lights, lakes, archipelago and a rich cultural heritage that offers an unparalleled experience for travellers seeking something truly unique. "We are recovering in area of Tourism, majorly because the flight capacity in general from across the world is less. It will take sometime to go back to the 2019 figures, which was a record year in terms of tourism for Finland. We had received around 7 million tourists that year," she said, adding, "As compared to

other markets, India is recovering faster than the other Asian markets. We are actively present in four markets in Asia – India, China, Japan and Korea and out of these, we are seeing maximum tourist footfall from India. It is an important market for us."

Sara Sodhi Juneja, Country Head – India and Gulf for Visit Finland shared that Finland offers a unique blend of modernity and tradition. The Indo-Finnish partnership holds immense potential to create memorable journeys and generate excellent business opportunities. As travel agents, your role goes beyond just booking flights and accommodations. You are the architects of dreams, the facilitators of memories, and the gateway to new horizons. She further shared that the magic of Finland is related to happiness. ■



# ‘Explore Qatar’ workshop held for ETAA North India Members

*Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) in exclusive association with Qatar Tourism recently held a knowledge session in an endeavour to educate and inform its members about the new offerings that Qatar has to offer. The knowledge session was organised at The Claridges New Delhi.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



**H**eld in a joint association between ETAA & Qatar Tourism, the focus of the workshop was to highlight all that Qatar as a destination has to offer, special attractions available, best fares that the travel agents can quote and addressing any visa concerns that there may be. The presentation was given by Dheera Majumder, Key Account Manager – Tourism Marketing and Promotion Sector, Qatar Tourism, who highlighted all the various aspects of the destination in detail and also addressed all the agent’s queries. There was also a presentation on Qatar Airlines – the official airlines of the country, which was conducted by Kshtiz bhaga and Harsh Kumar.

Present on the occasion were Saurabh Tuteja, Chairman – North India, ETAA; Punit Bhasin, Vice Chairman; Deepika Khanna, General Secretary and Praveen Ghai and Gaurav Arora, Joint



Secretaries, ETAA NI along with other members from ETAA NI and media.

“Qatar is a fairly new destination for the Indian market and we see huge potential for India – it is very close to India so proximity is one aspect. Connectivity is great, especially now with IndiGo also flying to it. Most important aspect is the Visa on Arrival and it is also a great destination for weddings. Thus, we have kept this knowledge session for our members – to empower them in their knowledge of Qatar so that they are able to sell it better. We have invited our members who are focussed on MICE and Outbound and are glad to see around 45-50 of our members

today. We might plan to take this to other cities in India and will also explore hosting more knowledge workshops for newer destinations for India market.” said Saurabh Tuteja.

He further went on to explain how the core focus of ETAA as an association is towards these similar knowledge building sessions and less on the cocktails and dinner. Advocating the same, Deepika Khanna too reiterated that the mandate at ETAA North India chapter is to boost the knowledge and work skills of the travel agents who are its members in an endeavour to empower them more for doing better business. ■



# Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority

## hosts three-city roadshow in India

*The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) hosted a Roadshow in Mumbai on August 21, 2023 which was well attended by key members of travel trade and the media. Arvind Bundhun, Director of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) along with his delegation of 24 tour operators from Mauritius led the roadshow across three cities, namely, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Chennai. The aim was to project Mauritius as a 'Beyond the Beach' destination for all segments of travellers.*

Shreya Shimpi

Addressing the media, Arvind Bundhun said, "Mauritius has reopened its borders after almost two years and it has welcomed almost one million tourists over the last calendar year. This year we have an objective of attaining the pre-pandemic figures of around 1.3 million tourists. India is one of the key markets for Mauritius. Almost seventy per cent of the tourists visiting Mauritius are from Europe but they believe that Indian market has an enormous potential. Recently, Air Mauritius has added two additional flights from Delhi and is flying five times a week from Mumbai. We have the pleasure of welcoming Vistara who is servicing the island five times a week. We feel that Mauritius should be one of the preferred destinations for Indians as it is just five hours away and no visa is required. Sixty per cent of our population comes from India and the diplomatic relations, culture and traditions that have transcended from India to Mauritius are still very significant. Our recent campaign 'Feel the Island Energy' is all about the immersive experiences that Mauritius has to offer to its tourists."

Elaborating on plans for the Indian market, Arvind Bundhun said, "The strong mutual partnership which forged between the Indian travel trade and that of Mauritian travel partners for years, is clearly visible. With excellent airlift from both Air Mauritius and Vistara, Mumbai, Delhi and other key cities within India are more accessible than ever. India is a



great source Market for Mauritius, and we are very optimistic for the future. We are putting lots of impetus on the Indian market, our topmost priority. Our future objectives will require 'permanent bonds' between both partners, and we will ensure that Mauritius as a high-end destination meets the aspirational demand of the Indian travellers."

He further shared, "We are promoting Mauritius as a 'Beyond Beach' destination. We really have to distinguish Mauritius from its competitors. Where Mauritius stands out is that we have built our reputation on legendary hospitality. Nowadays everyone is talking about sustainable measures and eco-tourism, Mauritius can tick all these boxes. In Mauritius, the population emerges from four different continents which has brought certain richness in gastronomy, culture, tradition and religion."

Sunil Mathapati, Country Manager, MTPA India added, "We are delighted to execute the three-city Roadshow with MTPA, and our partners from Mauritius have added immense support for the event. Over 450 Indian B2B partners are

expected to attend the Roadshow across the three cities. This Roadshow marks not just a celebration of a beautiful destination, but also a celebration of human resilience during the pandemic and its swift emergence of recovery positioning itself as a destination for all seasons and traveller segments."

Neeti Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, AllKnown Marketers said, "This is the first time MTPA has come to India after a gap of three years now post-Covid. It is really exciting for us as we have Vistara flying for us from Mumbai which is an added inventory. After this we are planning to go to Chennai and then Ahmedabad where we are planning to cover more than 450 agents in this week. Our endeavour is to change the perception of Mauritius being only a beach destination. We are planning to amplify our digital marketing efforts and to showcase Mauritius as a luxury destination. We plan to target various market segments through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. We shall also be interacting with people as they post about Mauritius across various platforms." ■





# Western Australia's

## events calendar gets a boost with 'EverNow'

*The Cook Government recently announced a new homegrown event that will further bolster the State's events calendar and support jobs and the local economy – EverNow. EverNow is a free festival to celebrate Western Australia's (WA) unique nature and Indigenous culture Event will run from October 4 – 9, 2023 and include three key elements – Song Circle, Fire Gardens and Boorna Waanginy.*

### BOTT Desk

The Cook Government has announced a new homegrown event that will further bolster the state's events calendar and support jobs and the local economy. The event known as 'EverNow' has been developed by Perth Festival and will be held across a number of iconic locations to celebrate Western Australia's Indigenous culture and heritage.

'Evernow' will welcome mass audiences to a series of unique free events at the Supreme Court Gardens, Perth's Government House Gardens and Kings Park. The multi-sensory festival draws inspiration from WA's rich biodiversity, creativity and our First Nation's people enduring connection to

the land.

Kings Park will be home to the bold reimagining of Boorna Waanginy: The Trees Speak which attracted 300,000 people when it opened Perth Festival in 2017 and 2019. Boorna Waanginy: The Trees Speak will transform Kings Park with a display of light, sound and projections – telling the stories of Noongar culture and the beauty and biodiversity of Australia's South West.

The Supreme Court Gardens will play host to Song Circle, a live performance and celebration of Noongar song and dance set in a future-focused immersive wonderland.

The doors to Government House Gardens will also be opened to the

public as it is transformed into Fire Gardens, a dreamscape of leaping flames, shadow and wonder. The event will be free to attend but will require a ticket to gain entry.

The three events will be open at different times across the six-day festival including:

- **Song Circle:** Supreme Court Gardens 4-8 October 2023
- **Fire Gardens:** Government House Gardens 5-8 October 2023
- **Boorna Waanginy, The Trees Speak:** Kings Park 6-9 October 2023

'EverNow' will run for an initial two years, with the intention for the event to become an annual staple on the State's major events calendar. ■



# TBO & Saudi Tourism

## host networking session for women leaders from travel trade

*In a one of its kind initiatives, TBO, in collaboration with Saudi Tourism, recently hosted an interactive hi-tea for Women Leaders in the travel trade. The event featured detailed discussions on how Saudi is a women friendly tourism destination, while obviously also being a fabulous tourist attraction for families in general.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



In a unique and one of its kind events, some 20 leading women travel trade professionals gathered at the TBO Office to be part of an enlightening and interactive afternoon that highlighted how Saudi is a great destination for women travellers. The event was led by TBO Academy and focussed on breaking many stereotypes around women travelling to Saudi. TBO Academy, which presents itself as a one-stop solution, offering free, online courses tailored to the travel industry, is led by a woman leader herself, who along with her team has been promoting Saudi across India.

As many of us are aware, Saudi as a country has plenty to offer – from Ladies Night out options to exclusive Ladies Beach spots – there is a lot that women can do in the country. Through a series of interviews with women staying and working in Saudi and videos that showed women living in Saudi and enjoying a free life, the women travel

trade professionals at the TBO office were offered an insight into the kind of holidays they can package for their clients.

Saudi, besides being host to popular shopping venues, also has many options for women travellers, such as hiking tours, bike tours, luxury spas, entertainment and yoga activities. Any woman (or man), over the age of 21, can travel alone in Saudi and there are no restrictions to do so. There is no restrictions for women wearing an abaya. It is one of the safest countries in the world for women travellers. A lot of local women can also be seen employed in various customer engaging profiles, sending across a clear message that Saudi is a safe place for women to work.

Women in Saudi can also be seen driving cabs and enjoying an absolutely restrictions' free life. An adventure enthusiast from Saudi shared her first-hand experience of driving through the

country on a motorbike for a period of 10 days – covering 2000 kms and rated it as one of the best experiences of her life. Not only was it absolutely safe to do so, the people along her journey were also extremely encouraging and supportive of her activity.

Meanwhile, as an emerging leisure destination, Saudi is especially focused on preserving and enhancing the rich cultural heritage and natural beauty that makes it a must-visit destination for seasoned international travellers. Saudi has been named the 12<sup>th</sup> safest country in the world in 2023 with a safety index of 75.4, according to Numbeo. Madinah has been declared as the world's safest city for solo women travellers by InsureMyTrip. Saudi is the 12<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world with around 2,500 km of coastline. Domestic travel is very easy in Saudi, with a network of local airports and three airlines running daily services around the country. ■





# Hotelzify: Helping hotels, homestays and resorts increase business through online bookings

*Hotelzify, a self-serve website development and booking management platform for hotels, recently raised its seed investment. The funding round was led by TBO, which made its second investment in 2023. Hotelzify helps hotels, homestays, and resorts to make their own website and accept guest bookings and payments. Anirudh Ganesh, Founder CEO, Hotelzify shares more in an exclusive chat with BOTT.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



## Could you share more about the unique features or services that Hotelzify offers that differentiate it from other platforms in the market?

Our singular focus is on getting you direct bookings. A website while critical is only a part of this process. You need to have the right set of photos which our AI bot can assess and tell you whether it is optimised, you need a super-fast website which works well on all devices and you need to have a variety of payment options. Our tool provides all of this and you can setup your custom website in just under an hour. Apart from this, keeping the custom business requirements of a property basis the season, let us say you have a lot of business but want to just reduce commissions, you can then get bookings at as low as 7.5% with our Google Hotel partnership where we have been rated 'Excellent' since inception.

Let us say you want more bookings, then you can run Google Hotel Ads directly from the Hotelzify app and pay only once you get a booking. Hotel Ads have historically been used only by big OTAs, but with Hotelzify, a hotelier or property owner can do it directly. In terms of technology, our website also received a score of 96 for performance while even big OTAs in this space have a score of about 75. This performance optimises for SEO which means more clicks while our superior performance improves a guest's booking experience and hence increases your conversion rate. Apart from this as Google My Business partners as well, we can continuously sync your Google profile with your best photos, amenities and promotions to increase your listing rank on Google.

**With Hotelzify's recent seed investment, you mentioned plans to scale up technology.**

## Can you delve deeper into what this scale-up looks like?

Our immediate focus now is to optimise our ad engine to enable a better ROAS (Return on Ad Spend) for hoteliers with a ML backed engine which takes real time data to adjust bids dynamically on Google to enable a property to get the best output on Google. We are also actively looking to partner with room sellers to increase distribution for a property as well as software sellers like channel managers, PMS systems to offer our solution to hotels while also providing them an additional GTM source.

## You mentioned utilizing funds to build a Google Hotel Ad engine with AI-based pricing and a customizable marketplace module for hoteliers. Could you elaborate more on these features?

Over 70% of users start their travel search on Google be it search or maps. Listing on top when people search for properties in a particular area becomes critical then. This can be done via property promotion ads available on the Hotel Ads platform which a hotel can sign up for in literally 10 seconds via the Hotelzify app. The Ad engine's main goal is to drive more traffic to your Google profile which again is enhanced by Hotelzify as we are Google My Business partners as well and sync your best photos, amenities and collect reviews to ensure your property is best positioned to ace Google's algorithms. ■



# Evoke Experiences'

## exceptional properties offer memorable experiences

*In the world of travel, there's luxury and then there's Evoke Experiences. This trailblazing company is on a mission to redefine tourism across India, offering an unparalleled blend of meticulously crafted experiences that span a diverse range of genres, from cultural and rural to spiritual, heritage, patriotic, wildlife, eco, and adventure. Bhavik Sheth, COO, Evoke Experiences shares more.*

### BOTT Desk

Evoke Experiences boasts a portfolio of exceptional properties, each catering to different traveller preferences. For those seeking an intersection of natural, cultural, and rural tourism, the company has many offerings.

### Can you provide an overview of Evoke Experiences and what sets it apart in the world of tourism?

Evoke Experiences is a hospitality-centric sub-brand of the century-old Lallooji & Sons. We specialise in creating temporary tent cities that offer luxurious and immersive experiences across various tourism genres, including cultural, rural, spiritual, heritage, patriotic, wildlife, eco, and adventure. What distinguishes us is our commitment to sustainability, support for local artisans, and promotion of responsible tourism while providing comfort and luxury.

### What does the current portfolio of Evoke Experiences comprise in terms of destination offerings?

Evoke Experiences boasts a diverse and captivating portfolio of destinations, each offering its unique blend of

immersive experiences. Our current portfolio includes Rann Utsav Tent City, capturing the essence of the Rann of Kutch; Statue of Unity Tent City, providing a luxurious experience near the iconic Statue of Unity; Niraan - The Tent City in Varanasi, offering spiritual and cultural immersion in Varanasi; Evoke Dholavira, allowing exploration of the ancient Dholavira site; Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival, a unique waterside experience at Gandhi Sagar Dam; and Kuno Forest Retreat, a pristine wilderness escape within the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary.

### How has Evoke Experiences adapted to the changing demands of customers, especially post-COVID-19?

Post-COVID-19, there has been a notable shift in customer demand towards more experiential travel, driven by millennials. Evoke Experiences has responded by offering a diverse range of experiences, including rural and adventure tourism, catering to this evolving demand. We also focus on reaching the right audience, with a marketing strategy that targets metro cities through events and roadshows, ensuring our offerings are accessible to all.

### What is Evoke Experiences'



**Bhavik Sheth,**  
COO, Evoke Experiences

### marketing strategy, and how do you plan to reach a wider audience?

Our marketing strategy involves bundling all our products under the Evoke Experiences brand. Over the next five years, our goal is to reach a broader audience, primarily focusing on metro cities through events and roadshows. We aspire to become synonymous with complete destination experiences, offering a one-stop place for travellers seeking immersive adventures.

### Can you tell us more about the safety measures in place at Evoke Experiences, particularly in your tent city?

Safety is of utmost importance to us. Our tents may not have locks, but they are highly secured. We maintain strict security measures, including more than 800 cameras in our tent city, to ensure the safety and well-being of our guests. ■





*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 the banner - Tathaastu. Here are her predictions for June 2023.*



## March 21 — April 20

With Venus stationing direct on September 3 – expect to find solutions to the problems that have left you feeling lost in love. Jupiter retrograde asks you to open your heart and mind to new ideas. It's time to shine a light on the places you're afraid to confront.



## July 23 — August 21

The libra season will get busy for you, and everyone will want your attention. Take your rightful place in the spotlight and get wild! The full moon in Aries at the end of the month will spark your confidence even more, reminding you that the future is still unwritten.



## November 23 — December 22

You're dressing the part and living it up this month, Sagittarius. The new moon in Virgo on Sept. 14 is here to remind you that you have the power to change your life. Use this energy to inspire others and get them to see things from your perspective. Finally, the full moon in Aries will test your willpower.



## April 21 — May 21

Virgo season tends to send your mind into overdrive. But with things finally cooling off in your life, motivation might be hard to find. Luckily, the new moon in Virgo will help reignite your curiosity. Follow your creative spark where it leads you, and tune out the negative self-talk.



## August 22 — September 23

This month is your chance for expansive enlightenment, Virgo. Mercury will retrograde in your sign until September 15, causing you to revisit old perspectives and rethink your current limitations. It's time to forgive yourself for past mistakes.



## December 23 — January 20

You won't be as productive as you want to be this month, Capricorn. Find a short-term rhythm and routine that works for you, and don't push yourself too hard. The new moon in Virgo on September 14 is one of the luckiest days of the year for you.



## May 22 — June 21

This month is a booked and busy one for you, Gemini. September's full moon in Aries invites you to embrace all of the pleasures and possibilities of the world. Be generous with your time and seek out new connections with old friends. Dinner parties. Trivia night. Book club.



## September 24 — October 23

This month is your victory lap, Libra! With Mars in your sign and your season just around the corner – you're ready to enjoy yourself again. You'll need all the energy you can get once your season starts on September 22. The full moon in Aries at the month's end might make you feel a little flirtatious.



## January 21 — February 19

You've always been a lover of freedom, Aquarius, but this month might turn you into a homebody. You may have a few chances to make meaningful new connections – so try to put yourself out there, especially during the full moon in Aries on September 29.



## June 22 — July 22

The stars are telling you all their secrets this month, Cancer. Libra season will be a great time to unpack all the feelings you've been holding in. Being liked by everyone isn't your priority anymore. And the full moon in Aries is an opportunity to reflect on the lessons of the past.



## October 24 — November 22

You've been proving yourself less and just living life more, Scorpio. Remember, you don't owe everyone an answer. The full moon in Aries on September 29 might stir up some self-doubt. Use the tension to spark a deeper curiosity around your fears and reservations. Don't fear change; embrace it and learn from it.



## February 20 — March 20

Last month's supermoon had your feeling drained. Now, you're starting to wonder if there is a "right way" to chase your dreams. Listen to what's really being said. Finally, the ideas you put into the world during the new moon in Virgo on September 14 will influence your path for the next six months.



# Global Destinations Expo & Conference 2023 concludes with great success

*Global Destinations Expo & Conference (GDEC) 2023 concluded with great success, igniting a new era in the travel and tourism industry. Organized by iCONEX in association with the International Chamber of Media & Entertainment Industry, this year's GDEC took place from July 21 – 23, 2023 at the prestigious India Expo Centre and Mart in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh.*

## BOTT Desk



The event was inaugurated in the presence of esteemed personalities, including Subhash Goyal, Chairman of GDEC & Chairman of STIC Travel; Rituraj Khanna, CEO of Q Events; Rajeev Jain, MD of Rashi Entertainment; Sandeep Marwah, Owner of Marwah Studios & Founder of Noida Film City; Ashok Tyagi, Leading Indian Film Director; Sabbas Joseph, Founder & Director of Wizcraft International Entertainment; Rakhi Kankaria, Founder & Director of Rachnoutsav Events; Arvind Singh, Former Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India; Monica Balli, Event Planner at Tuscan Bites and Abhimanyu Singh, Director of iCONEX Exhibitions.

Themed “Shaping Tomorrow’s Journeys,” GDEC 2023 brought together industry professionals, thought leaders, and enthusiasts from around the world to discuss the challenges, opportunities, and innovations that will define the future of film production, travel, and tourism. As the world continues to recover from the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, GDEC stood as a beacon of hope, unity,



and transformation for the industry.

The event’s highlights included inspirational keynote addresses from distinguished leaders who emphasised the importance of resilience, adaptability, and sustainability in rebuilding the travel sector. Panel discussions led by experts discussed various topics, including responsible tourism practices, digital advancements, post-pandemic travel trends, and inclusive travel initiatives.

The exhibition area showcased a diverse array of destinations, tour operators, hotel chains, technology providers, and start-ups, presenting their innovative offerings and solutions to drive the industry forward.

One of the key aspects of GDEC 2023 was the networking opportunity, providing attendees with opportunities to forge valuable connections, foster collaborations, and establish partnerships that will catalyse positive change within the global travel community.

The event culminated with the highly anticipated GDEC Destination Awards ceremony, where exceptional projects and contributions within the industry were recognized, celebrating excellence and dedication.

Abhimanyu Singh, Director of iCONEX Exhibition, expressed immense pride in the resounding success of GDEC 2023. ■



## #First Opinion



"Green Tourism is a focal area for us. The Ministry has launched the Travel for LiFE program, as part of Mission LiFE initiative conceived by Hon'ble PM. This program aims to instigate large-scale behavioural changes among both tourists and businesses, targeting environmental protection and climate action. The Goa Roadmap, endorsed at a G20 meeting, outlines specific "Travel for LiFE Actions" that the tourists and businesses can adopt. Notably, it marks the first-time sustainable development goals have been explicitly connected to tourism. Furthermore, India has come up with an Online Dashboard specifically for G20 nations, designed to monitor progress and share best practices in five priority areas of sustainable tourism."

**Rakesh Kumar Verma, IAS, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India D**



"One of our strategic priorities at Air India is to offer our guests the choice of flying to more places through our own as well as an augmented global network. We are happy to join hands with Bangkok Airways as part of that effort to provide our guests greater connectivity within Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia."

**Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial & Transformation Office, Air India**



"We are thrilled to introduce direct connectivity between Delhi and Malé – our second route to the exquisite beach destination, in addition to Mumbai-Malé. This new route will enable us to provide our customers with enhanced access to one of the world's most popular holiday destinations while also imparting further momentum to the existing bilateral cooperation between India and the Republic of Maldives. We are certain that our customers will appreciate the choice of flying India's best airline on this new route."

**Vinod Kannan, Chief Executive Officer, Vistara**



"We are pleased to announce the reinstatement of our direct flight services between Delhi and Male, capital of the Republic of Maldives. The initiation of these flights not only re-establishes vital international connections for India but also enhances accessibility while providing customers greater flexibility and convenience. With its stunning islands, mesmerizing beaches, and turquoise waters, Maldives is extremely famous for its exciting water activities. This direct flight service not only enhances accessibility but also fosters economic growth."

**Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales, IndiGo**



"Anticipating a surge in demand post the G20 Summit and a significant increase in business travellers, India's tourism landscape is poised for an exhilarating quarter. Alongside the beauty of post-monsoon landscapes and the vibrancy of festivals, we foresee a dynamic season where business and leisure travel seamlessly converge. This quarter promises a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity, nature and culture, all wrapped in the warm hospitality that defines our nation. Furthermore, with numerous exhibitions, conventions, and international events like the MOTO GP on the calendar, we anticipate an influx of new tourists, ushering in a season of unforgettable memories in India."

**Davinder Juj, General Manager, Eros Hotel, New Delhi**



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