

FOR THE TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL

TravelBizMonitor

VOL 15 | ISSUE 08 | PAGES 24

JANUARY, 2022 PRICE: ₹40

www.travelbizmonitor.com

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disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in



Awe-inspiring Abu Dhabi

The capital of the UAE is the hub of all things amazing

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Abu Dhabi is ready to welcome local and international tourists to the emirate for the 2022 tourism season. With year-round sunshine, an exhilarating events calendar and endless iconic entertainment and cultural attractions, Abu Dhabi remains at the top of the list of desirable global destinations. Following the international entry guidelines, Abu Dhabi is open to fully vaccinated travellers (and unvaccinated travellers from Green List countries) to visit the destination free of quarantine measures. As part of its global strategy, Abu Dhabi is calling on travellers from around the world to visit the emirate to connect with friends and family, fulfil their love of travel and create new memories in a destination where every possibility awaits them.

Abu Dhabi abounds with a fascinating range of landscapes, offering experiences for every kind of traveller, whether they seek nature, adventure, sun and sea, or arts and culture. In Abu Dhabi, visitors will find a destination where respect for the past informs the present and shapes the future.

It is a diverse emirate with desert landscapes, oases, mountain heights, pristine beaches, warm, clear waters, desert islands, an ancient heritage city and a modern cosmopolitan capital city. Lose yourself in historic buildings, thrilling headline attractions, engaging tours and a packed calendar of headline events covering the arts, culture, sports, concerts and trade shows.

Be awed by the culture at the majestic Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, explore breathtaking natural landscapes at Jubail Mangrove Park, delve into the history at the city's oldest standing structure Qasr Al Hosn. That's not all! Indulge, relax and spoil yourself in Abu Dhabi's landmark hotel Emirates Palace and soak up the sun at Soul Beach, an idyllic stretch of natural white sand beach overlooking the

turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf.

Abu Dhabi is highly regarded as a safe destination and has been titled as the safest city in the world for five consecutive years by crowd-sourced global database Numbeo. In addition, the UAE was ranked the safest country in the world for women by a global Georgetown University study this year.

Abu Dhabi has a long and rich cultural history and is a thriving tourism destination that attracted 11.35 million visitors in 2019, with this anticipated to increase to over 23 million by 2030.



Abu Dhabi has invested more than \$8 billion in the cultural and creative industries. It is home to world-leading cultural offerings such as Louvre Abu Dhabi and Abrahamic House (due to open in February 2022) and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, which is due to open in 2025. It has also been the backdrop to many movies including Hollywood blockbusters such as Star Wars and Dune.

Some interesting facts about Abu Dhabi:

- Abu Dhabi is home to people from over **200 countries**.
- Abu Dhabi is a fascinating archipelago made up of over **200 islands**.
- Abu Dhabi is home to **14 adventure, amusement and theme parks**, including Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi and Yas Waterworld

Abu Dhabi

- The world's fastest roller coaster is at **Ferrari World Abu Dhabi** with a maximum speed of **240 km per hour**
- Abu Dhabi is home to **The National Aquarium**, the largest and the most awe-inspiring aquarium in the Middle East. Located at Al Qana, it spans across **9,000 sqm** with more than 200 sharks and rays, representing 25 different species.
- Abu Dhabi is home to **Etihad Arena**, the largest state-of-the-art indoor entertainment venue in the Middle East.
- The iconic **Louvre Abu Dhabi** features a dome that weighs around 7,500 tons which is about the same as the Eiffel Tower in Paris.
- The luxurious **Emirates Palace** hotel features 114 domes, 1,002 chandeliers and 7,000 doors.
- The **Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque** is one the world's largest mosques and has the world's largest hand-knotted carpet spanning 5,700 square meters.
- An 8,000-year-old and the **world's oldest natural pearl** was discovered at Abu Dhabi's Marawah Island, further proving the significance of pearling in the region's economic and cultural history.
- Over **24,000 events** took place in 2019, including Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship, Abu Dhabi Classics, Abu Dhabi Culinary Season, Abu Dhabi Art and a whole host of festivals and concerts attracting international talent from across the globe.

So, whether you're looking for a blissful escape by the sea or are seeking the comfort of home in another country, there is something for everyone in Abu Dhabi. ♦

Image credit: Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi

OneAbove in association with Villa Hotels & Resorts hosted “Maldivian Night” in Mumbai

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Mumbai based OneAbove, a leading Destination Management Company in association with Villa Hotels & Resorts hosted “Maldivian Night” in Mumbai on December 17. Around 130 select trade partners from Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur and Delhi attended the event.

It was a triumph evening for the industry trade partners as they got to experience Maldivian Hospitality with live band and one -of a kind “Recognition Awards”.

The awards were presented in the most unique way through categories like ‘Avengers Award’, ‘Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham Award’, ‘Armour Award’, ‘Powerpuff Girls Award’ and ‘Northern Lights Award’.

Speaking about the Awards, Rahim Aslam, Founder & Consultant, OneAbove, expressed his sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in the event. He added “In just three years, OneAbove as a company has become one of the leading DMCs in India and the credit goes to all our partners who believed in us and trusted in our team. This evening is for all our trade partners to celebrate their contribution and make invisible efforts more visible - be it for our team or for our partners”. Further he went on to announce



One Above will be launching their online portal in few months.

Fathimath Ifasha, Manager - Sales & Marketing, Villa Hotels & Resorts also attended the event and expressed her gratitude towards OneAbove and all the trade partners for their continued support.

One Above DMC, closely work with the B2B market are proficient and have local expertise, huge bed bank, owned vehicles, in-house professional guides and fully-trained staff who make sure that the every business is carried out effectually. ♦

Skål International Mumbai South-732 sends message of optimism with its Christmas event

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Skål International Mumbai South (SIMS 732) organised its Christmas Party at ITC Grand Central, Parel, Mumbai, on December 17th. The event was attended by Skålleagues from the club, along with their spouses, and

COO, Saffron Synergies Pvt. Ltd.; and Rajiv Duggal, International Advisor, Zanzibar Tourism Promotion Centre (ZTPC)

Sk. K. Thomas, Secretary, SIMS 732, said, “It has been a tough year for many of us, personally as well as professionally. But it's time say Goodbye to the old, and welcome

great time with our loved ones.”

The evening was a splendid affair, with the best of food, wine and desserts. The Christmas-special menu and desserts brought alive the feel and flavours of this beautiful season! Sk. Kuldeep Bharti, President, SIMS 732 (and VP, Operations, ITC Hotels and Welcomhotel Group); Sk. Bhagwan Balani, Director, Young Skål, SIMS 732 and General Manager, ITC Grand Central; and the Group's team came together to curate this wonderful menu and making it a special and memorable event.

“Christmas is all about giving and receiving. Keeping this in mind, SIMS 732 organised ‘Secret Santa’, where presents were exchanged between members, and each member went home with a gift in their hand, and a whole lot of love in their heart. Skålleagues at



a number of other guests. Also present at the event were Sk. Sunil V. A., President, Skål International Bombay 144; Sk. Sushil Bhatt, Immediate Past President, Skål International Bombay 144; Sheldon Santwan, Editor and

the new! This Christmas Party is to bring in the Holiday Season and the coming year with renewed spirits, and a prayer that things only get better in 2022. It is the time to be merry, celebrate the Christmas cheer, and have a

SIMS 732 grooved and moved, smiled and jived, and are now geared to welcome the Holiday Season and New Year 2022 with an optimistic heart and spirit,” said the SIMS 732 release.s. ♦

From adventure lovers to backpackers to family and honeymooners, the five-million-year-old Reunion Island is a destination for all. It offers a wide range of sports and leisure activities on land, at sea and in the air through an exceptional diversity of landscapes. Hence emerging as a must-visit destination for Indian travelers.

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Distinctly French, Reunion Island, located in the Indian Ocean. Reunion Island boasts of a unique Creole culture and offers the discerning Indian traveler a gamut of enthralling experiences. There are exciting adventure activities for tourists and there is also a peaceful space for honeymooners. Endowed with beaches, lagoons, waterfalls, spectacular volcanoes and weather that is pleasant for most part of the year, Reunion Island offers the perfect balance of activities and experiences that are sure to find favour with the Indian traveler.

Reunion Island's national air carrier Air Austral operates a direct flight to/from Chennai. The island is also at a 30-minute plane journey from Mauritius.

Its visitors are treated to a plethora of choices be it paragliding, helicopter tours, cultural experiences, visits of the fascinating lava caves, deep-sea diving, surfing, canyoning etc. It is important to mention here that 42 per cent of the island is protected by the UNESCO World Heritage classification. Its "Pitons, cirques and ramparts" were inscribed by UNESCO on the prestigious World Heritage list in 2010 for their exceptional natural relief

Reunion Island Intensely Tropical

and the wealth of biodiversity.

While there is much to see and do on the island, visitors must definitely include the following experiences on their island agenda:

One of the chief attractions of the island is its volcano- the Piton de la Fournaise and its sulphurous slopes, which gives the island its extra edge. The volcano is known to erupt frequently, without posing any threat to the people on the island. Travellers can hike up to the volcano through the lunar, crater-filled landscapes, of the Plaine des Sables, a red-and-ochre desert. The lava from the many volcanic eruptions has paved an impressive landscape between steep cliffs, emerald rainforests and the deep blue of the Indian Ocean. One can also



©Serge Gelabert

explore the black sand beaches in the southern part of the island—a fascinating contrast from the more popular white sand ones.

A must-do activity on the island is paragliding which ensures an adrenaline rush. The sport allows beginners as well as the most experienced paragliders a thrilling experience of a free flight on an island known worldwide, for the practice of paragliding. Reunion Island is listed as an exceptional site for free flight with ideal climatic conditions. From the lagoon to the volcano via the green slopes, the spectacular panorama of Reunion Island seen from the sky is bound to

leave tourists with unforgettable memories!

For those who prefer soft adventure, a helicopter discovery of the island also promises a memorable experience. The discovery of Reunion Island as seen from the sky is intense, magical and extraordinary! Lasting 15 to 45 minutes, these aerial escapades allow visitors to experience effortlessly all the diversity of the island. Through a helicopter ride one is treated to views of magnificent sites such as the Cirques (cCraters) of Cilaos, Mafate and Salazie, the famous Trou de Fer, the Piton de la Fournaise, the coast, the lagoon and spectacular waterfalls.

A subterranean experience awaits the island's visitors with an exciting discovery of the Blue Lava tunnel. The tunnel which is 22,000 years old, is on private land, and only open to small groups of people. Bluish, orange or red rocks, sparkling grey surfaces and stalactites that look like melted chocolate: at every step the light reveals authentic natural wonders.

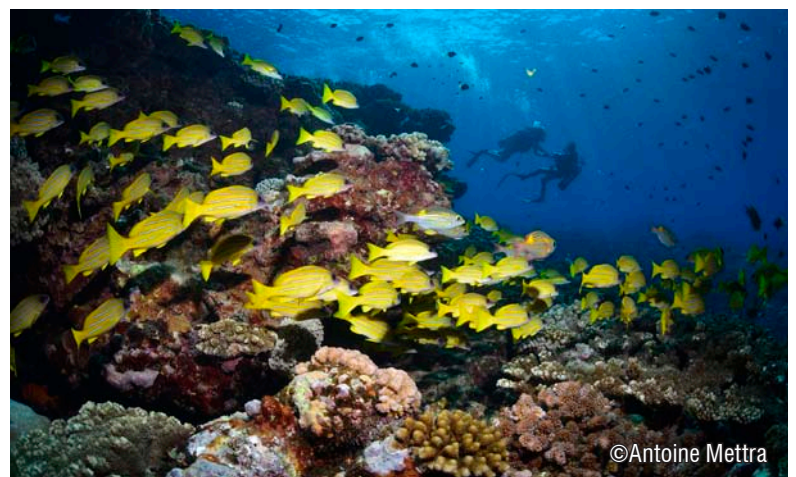
Reunion Island is also home to the real Bourbon Vanilla located in the forest above the hills of Sainte-Rose. On a discovery tour of the vanilla plantation, ideal for a family holiday, visitors will discover secrets of how this 100% natural vanilla is grown and much more!

It seems nature has given everything to Reunion Island and made it a destination one must visit. Take the example of marine life on the island. It has some of the best spots in the world where sighting a school of dolphins or even a couple of massive whales (June to October) is all but guaranteed. One will enjoy an unforgettable experience off the west coast of Reunion Island- swimming with dolphins and Humpback whales.

For more information on Reunion Island, visit: <https://en.reunion.fr/> ♦



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & CEO

Sheldon Santwan

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Prasenjit Chakraborty

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

+91 9819263364

EDITORIAL TEAM

MUMBAI

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR: Disha Shah Ghosh

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

SR.REPORTER: Asmita Mukherjee

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh & Colleen Gantzer, Anurag Yadav,

Hector D'souza & Amala Dantas

MARKETING TEAM

MUMBAI

HEAD - SALES & MARKETING

Ajay Wadode

+91 8087127814

ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

GOA

HEAD - GOA

Harshad R. Bhonsle

+91 8999047490

harshadrhonsle@gmail.com

COORDINATION, SUBSCRIPTION & DATABASE

Gauri Sawant: +91 8369080796

gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in

*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act



Saffron Synergies
Sterling House, 5/7 Sorabji Santuk Lane,
Opp.Dr.Cawasji Hormasji Street, Dhobi Talao, Marine Lines (E),
Mumbai 400 002
Tel: 91-22-6101 1700/ 701 Fax: 91-22-6712 1854

SO DO AN INDORE ON VARANASI

Building infrastructure is good. Maintaining it needs a larger public involvement.

There was quite some hype in the national press about the developments at Varanasi, especially in context of the improvement of space around the ancient temple complex there.

The PM has often emphasised it as a model city development process and plan, for other urban areas to emulate.

Varanasi watchers perceive a significant change in the city's infrastructural evolution. The vast road connectivity, riverside developments and heritage building is evidently much publicised. We are told the city is being modelled to serve as a beacon for other urban centres development. If tourism is the focus, almost any city and site suffers the same fate - utter mismanagement and callous neglect of cleanliness. Unkempt sites and cities have always the bane for tourism and the industry has always bemoaned this fact.

Now there is another model city that can impart more solid lessons on the entire gamut of urban development in the country. The city of Indore stands out as a remarkable island of cleanliness, in a sea of unkempt and inefficient workings of municipal corporations across the country. Earning the 'cleanest city award' five years in a row is no mean achieving. Indore had the same type of officials at the helm, similar business establishments and shops, the same crowded bazaars and same issues as any other city. Today a cursory visit will reveal how a rickshaw driver will upbraid a passenger if they want to toss rubbish in the street. The sense of 'ownership' seen in the city's residents is to be seen to be believed.

How did this come about?

Varanasi has only 231 GPS monitored vehicles and 4700 safai workers. Today, the Indore Municipal Corporation has a fleet of 1,500 vehicles and 11,000 safai workers. But the secret of its success is the cultural shift that has happened with residents taking it as their responsibility to keep the city clean.

How Indore did that should be a text book study for every city to follow. Under force of law, if deemed necessary.

Anurag Yadav
Industry Expert

Anurag Yadav is a travel author and columnist, writing on hospitality and design. An avid traveller, he has published five books and divides his time equally between Delhi and London.

The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.

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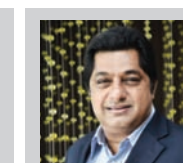
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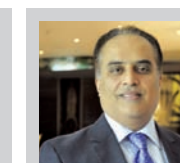
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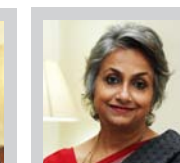
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Genting Cruise Lines



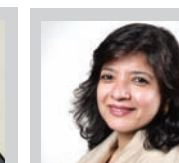
Dhananjay Saliankar
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TAFI Western India Chapter held a meeting in Mumbai; shifts focus on domestic tourism

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

TAFI (Travel Agents Federation of India) Western Region organised a meeting cum networking session on December 22 in Mumbai with a focus on domestic tourism. Venkatesan Dhattareyan, Regional Director, West & Central Region, MoT, GOI, gave a presentation highlighting the potential of domestic tourism before a well attended gathering. He also spoke about different schemes available and their benefits before the members of TAFI and other guests.

Speaking about the event Jitul Mehta, Chairman, Western India Chapter, said that the event is all about promoting domestic tourism. "We as an association are very serious about domestic tourism and therefore got in touch with Dhattareyan who came here and gave a fantastic presentation before our members. Through his presentation our members got an insight about various schemes of the Central Government. Besides this, he also explained how MoT is helping the travel agents during this difficult time who have registered with the MoT," said Mehta.

Through this event TAFI provided a platform between its members and the government. Explained Mehta, "The government has some good schemes for the tourism industry but many of our members are not aware of, hence, through this platform we opened a conversation between our members and the government," pointed out Mehta.

The event was successful as a large number of people attended. "We are very happy with the turn out, more than 100 members had participated in the event," said Mehta. Representatives from six airlines-Air India, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Air Asia, Vistara and GoAir



also attended the event. Similarly, the event also witnessed the presence of representatives from the hospitality industry.

This year, one hundred TAFI members from Mumbai will visit Rann Utsav in Gujarat. "For the first time Gujarat Tourism is sponsoring a study tour for such a large number of people from any association. The Rann Utsav is a premium event and many of us haven't seen it. This event is typically for NRI and popular among inbound tourists. Now, the people of India also want to visit and we will extensively promote it in the domestic segment," revealed Mehta.

Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, while speaking to TravelBiz Monitor on the sideline of the event, said that it is necessary for the members to appreciate the huge potential that exists in domestic tourism. "I do understand that domestic tourism is a difficult market, especially from a price point of view. But we can't disagree with its potential. Number of people travelling domestically is 5 times higher than the combined strength of inbound and outbound

travellers. There exist unique and niche segments in the domestic tourism sector. Our members need to understand that there is a market and it is up to them whether to tap that market or not. As an association, our duty is to show our members the way forward and we are doing exactly the same," pointed out Prakash.

According to Prakash, there are 4000 IATA agents and may be 1,50,000-2,00,000 non-IATA agents and all engaged in the business of tourism. "Unfortunately, there are only 1,100 registered entities with the Ministry of Tourism, GoI. So, MoT has no statistics on what is the scale and scope of the market. Not only that there is no clear guideline how people in the business can avail the opportunities the government is offering to them," lamented Prakash. He also said that the Ministry needs to relax the conditions for accreditation of travel agents and tour operators. "We have already taken up the issue with the government and will continue to push for it," he said. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

36th IATO Convention: Subhash Goyal conferred The 'Hall Of Fame' Award

TBM Staff | Mumbai

IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators) which organised its 36th edition of annual convention in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, conferred 'Hall of Fame' award to industry veterans Dr. Subhash Goyal, Chairman of STIC Travel Group and Mahender Singh Vaghela, popularly known as Mike Vaghela, a tourism industry stalwart from Gujarat and former Chairman, IATO Gujarat Chapter.

Speaking to TravelBiz Monitor, Goyal said, "I feel overwhelmed with gratitude for receiving the highest honour of the Tourism Industry, the IATO's 'Hall of Fame'. I am

indebted to all the past & present Presidents, Office Bearers and EC members who decided to confer this honour on me." Goyal also said that he will continue to do work for the industry. "My gratitude & assurance to the Tourism Industry that till my last breath, I will leave no stone unturned to make India realize its true potential as the world's greatest tourist destination thereby creating millions of jobs and also eradicating poverty through



DR. SUBHASH GOYAL
Chairman,
STIC Travel Group

Tourism," he said.

Goyal was elected President of the IATO for 14 long years, and has been a member of the IATO Executive Committee for 25 years. When he took over the President, the total membership of IATO was only about 300 and by the time he left as President, it was over 1500. He believes his biggest achievement as IATO President was to get the E-Tourist Visa policy announced and implemented. ♦

Caesars Palace Dubai appoints One Rep Global as its India representative

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Caesars Palace Dubai appointed One Rep Global as its India market representative. The UAE has become and continues to grow a key destination for Indian tourists given the growth of the Indian economy and its attractive demographics, namely a young population and rising middle class. Caesars Palace Dubai recognises the importance of the Indian market and is eager to welcome travellers, business professionals, family and friends for the luxury experience.

Located in the heart of the Bluewaters community, Caesars Palace Dubai is an immersive, luxury lifestyle resort. Offering a curated selection of unconventional, unforgettable experiences for all ages, the hotel is renowned for its contemporary, Roman-esque inspired design and uninterrupted views of the Arabian Gulf and Dubai's skyline.

Speaking on this partnership, Paula Tannous, Commercial Director, Caesars Palace Dubai, said, "We are very excited to be working with One Rep Global, as a company driven by an experienced team of



passionate professionals and seasoned luxury hoteliers. Together we will develop business opportunities and awareness of Caesars Palace Dubai across the Indian Market and those guests seeking a tailored and unique stays in Dubai."

Adding to this, Hemant Mediratta, Founder, One Rep Global, said, "We are absolutely delighted at this partnership with the iconic Caesars Palace Dubai that needs no introduction. The Indian luxury traveller

is constantly seeking newer products and experiences – whether its cultural, culinary, wellness or just spending time with their loved ones. Caesars Palace Dubai is the perfect fit for all this and more. Not just for FITs, the hotel has a separate block of rooms designed for experiential destination weddings, MICE or Social Events. We have full faith in the resilience of the Indian market and our travel trade fraternity to support and accelerate demand for this beautiful jewel in Dubai." ♦

Thailand plans to charge foreign tourists an entry fee of USD 9

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Thailand plans to start collecting a 300 baht (USD 9) entry fee from foreign holidaymakers as the tourism-reliant nation predicts a recovery for the pandemic-hobbled travel industry once the current Covid wave eases.

The fee will help fund the development of local tourist attractions and an insurance program for visitors, government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana, said in a statement. The levy will be added to air ticket prices from April, while the method of collections from entry by land has yet to be determined, he said.



The plan for entry fee comes as the Southeast Asian nation attempts to chart the course for its tourism sector after the pandemic. The country has been experimenting with various plans to revive its travel industry with limited success. While Thailand was forced to suspend quarantine-free visas to curb the spread of omicron, it added more tourist destinations this week to the so-called Phuket Sandbox program to keep the industry afloat.

While the entry fee has been in discussions for a long time, its implementation was delayed by Covid, said Suthipong Phuenphiphop, a vice president of the Tourism Council of Thailand. The levy is similar to charges on tourists in many other countries, and the benefits that will come from the initiative will be huge compared to the nominal fee, he said. (Source HT). ♦

India emerges as largest source market for Sri Lanka Tourism

TBM Staff | Mumbai

India topped Sri Lanka's tourist arrivals in December and the entire year, according to data published by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA).

For most part of 2020 beginning April, Sri Lanka shut its borders fearing import of COVID-19 cases into the island nation, which was then making global headlines for managing the pandemic well.

It was only in December 2020 that the country had gradually opened up to recover from the severe economic impact of the pandemic that had hit its tourism sector — third largest foreign exchange earner. However, 2021 saw a gradual increase in tourists, picking up in the latter part of the year.

For December, Sri Lanka recorded 89,506 tourist arrivals, of whom 23,566 or 26.3 % were from India, data showed, signalling that India had regained its spot as the largest source market in its tourism sector. From January 2021 to December 2021, 56,268 tourists — about 42 % of the visitors — arrived in Colombo from India, again the highest number from a country recorded last year, following Russia, the U.K. and Germany. ♦

It is good to be good!

A case for socially mindful tourism

By **Dr Nimit Chowdhary**, Professor of Tourism,
Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Jamia Millia Islamia

A server at a party offers you a drink, and he has one coke and two lemonade left with him. If you pick up a coke, the next person will have no choice but to take a lemonade. However, if you choose to be nice, you will pick up a lemonade so that the other person still has choices. This is being socially mindful. It is all about being mindful of others. It is about being concerned for others in the present moment and considering one's

decision's impact on others and their needs. It is about considering the abstract existence of others and their choices.

Leaving behind 2021, as we step into 2022, we realise that the world has gotten all the more conscious. People, including tourists, are realising the importance of being good to who matters- the host community in this case. The host community is a crucial element of the locale visited by tourists and has a far-reaching implication for tourism there in general. The visitors want to learn how the society that hosts them functions in general and how they (the visitors) impact it. There is growing consciousness of reciprocal acts of empathy, kindness, and cooperation. This awareness, we mentioned earlier, is social mindfulness.

All this while, we have focused more on goods and services being designed and delivered to visitors. Moreover, we have also spoken of aggregate impacts. However, now is the time to talk about the social mindfulness of guests during visitations. A mindful tourist, more specifically a socially mindful tourist, will be well received. Such kindness will allow them greater access to the community and its resources, leading to more significant learning and internalisation of the place- we may call this visitor experience. Experiences, in turn, are mental, spiritual and physiological outcomes resulting from on-site recreational engagements in a community's context.

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through three dimensions- paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment. This unfolding of experience thus requires that the visitor makes sense of things around the self in real-time. Therefore, they must, without obstructing or disturbing the local equilibrium, effortlessly slide into it.

Another way to understand mindfulness is to contrast it with mindlessness. Mindlessness is conducting oneself as per routine without the application of consciousness resulting in an automatic response to a situation. Constraining oneself to mundane rules and regulations without questioning is another example of mindlessness. Context governs behaviour, but mindset governs how the

context is interpreted. For instance, visitors frequently come from culturally diverse backgrounds. A visitor who is less aware of their surroundings will not make an effort to reconsider how this new context should be interpreted.

Social mindfulness requires that visitors see what the local community may want and act according to it. It is, therefore, a two-step process. If visitors do not notice the option of being socially mindful, they are unlikely to act socially mindful beyond chance. However, if a visitor is not consciously socially mindful, they may end up being socially hostile, which is the obverse to social mindfulness. For example, China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) has taken note of a string of complaints of mindless behaviour of their citizens. Not mindful of Hong Kongers, who were unhappy when Chinese mothers allowed their children to urinate in public and confronted the locals who objected. In another instance, while the key attraction is the peaceful monastic life, Chinese onlookers created ruckus in Mahagandhayon monastery in Mandalay Region in Myanmar to find a good place for taking pictures of the monks. At the same time, monks' routine in a serene environment was the key attraction. They disturbed it all just for a good pic. In all, social mindfulness or social hostility among visitors resides in the many small decisions visitors have to make in many of their social interactions with the local community during the trip- like choosing which drink to pick in our opening vignette.

An international project at Leiden University, The Netherlands, comprising 65 researchers and 31 countries, listed Japanese as most socially mindful, followed by Austrians and Mexicans. Unfortunately, we Indians were among the least socially mindful people.

It is high time that visitors make a conscious decision to remain conscious of the impact of their visitations on the host society. As I often say, it is always good to be good! ♦

'The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.'



Dr Nimit Chowdhary is Professor of Tourism with the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has more than 27 years of the academic experience of which he has been a full professor for 14 years in India, China, and Mexico. A recipient of many academic awards and recognitions, he has authored 13 books and more than 140 academic papers. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country



'Kenya Tourism Board is very keen to channelise their efforts and investments in the India market'

India is one of the most promising markets for KTB and the growth figures have been substantially on the rise. In the coming years, KTB is concentrating on establishing Kenya as a COVID-safe country and promoting it as a destination which has something in store for every visitor says

Neeti Bhatia,
Director, Intrepid Marketing and Communications and spokesperson for KTB in India,
in a conversation with **Prasenjit Chakraborty.**

Q The tourism industry is under tremendous pressure since the onset of the Coronavirus. How optimistic are you about inbound tourism to Kenya 2022?

It has indeed been an extremely challenging phase for the travel industry globally owing to the widespread pandemic. However, Kenya has been one of the first few countries welcoming tourists, including Indians since October 2020. Although there was a brief ban from May-September 2021, the remaining months witnessed slow but steady footfall from the source markets. Kenya has recorded a 40.8% growth in tourism numbers with 663,036 visitors in the period (January-October, 2021) compared to same period last year of 470,971 arrivals wherein India was fourth highest with 31,644 (4.8%) arrivals.

The above figures show the appetite and interest among travellers to visit Kenya that has continued to put in place Covid-19 protocols to enhance confidence among travellers. We are positive about having a lucrative season once the Omicron threat is put under control and it is safe to travel again.

Q Kenya Tourism is focusing on promoting its signature experience portfolio, the coastal regions and other experiences beyond just Masai Mara. What have you done so far in this direction and how is the

response?

We have directed our efforts in the past year towards promoting Kenya's varied attractions and experiences, especially the coastal regions including Mombasa, Diani and Malindi; and to introduce the Magical Kenya Signature Experiences portfolio in the Indian market. The endorsements were executed through sustained marketing, communication and sales activities including a month-long digital and social media ad campaigns, brand awareness campaigns on radio for key source cities in India and a robust media association with Zee Digital for a holistic and creative outreach

to India's business and traveller segment. Additionally, KTB conducted webinars in every quarter focussing on regions, the latest COVID protocols and also to launch Magical Kenya Travel Specialist Programme to encourage travel agents to increase their destination know-how on a consolidated platform designed in a modular format.

The team in India has received multiple enquiries and agents have shown enthusiasm for ongoing and future conversions. Kenya has also received visibility amongst consumer platforms including recognition on media channels, award shows and social media content.

Q Instilling confidence in travellers is the most challenging task at this point of time. What strategies Kenya Tourism has taken in this regard?

As we understand, health and safety has been the integral factors determining travel plans and KTB has been undertaking and ensuring the same to instil trust amongst future visitors. In addition to vaccinating and educating all hospitality frontline staff and encouraging them to practice COVID-safe behaviour, KTB works very closely with the Ministry of Health to maintain all health and safety protocols and make travel seamless for everybody. Moreover, Kenya has an added advantage of

vast airy landscape that provide experiences that are intimate and away from crowd thus providing a safe space with ample social distancing to guarantee safety. The country has the infrastructure for frequent RT-PCR testing, isolation and advanced healthcare centres to provide health assurance to anybody who tests positive, but the primary approach is 'Prevention is better than cure'.

Q Since India has now emerged as one of the key source markets for Kenya Tourism, what are your strategies for the India market? What will be your target audience (Family, Mice) from the India market in 2022 and beyond?

India is one of the most promising markets for KTB and the growth figures have been substantially on the rise. In the coming years, KTB is concentrating on establishing Kenya as a COVID-safe country and promoting it as a destination which has something in store for every visitor. The focus will be to exhibit Kenya's wide array of products ranging from adventure to game drives to luxury/leisure and other unique experiences and newly emerging regions. While the primary target will continue to be families, couples and millennials, MICE is also a pivotal segment owing to Nairobi and Mombasa's readiness to welcome Indian corporates to experience the best of both worlds – business and leisure.

Q What kind of investment can we expect from Kenya Tourism in the Indian market in the coming years?

Kenya Tourism Board is very keen to channelise their efforts and investments in the India market since India is amongst the top five source markets for Kenya. We aim to focus on strengthening Kenya's position in the travel trade as well as create an on-going buzz in the consumer segment. The emphasis will be to strengthen sales efforts through expanding presence in core target markets in India through trainings and participation in trade exhibitions in addition to brand awareness campaigns in the evolving consumer space through digital channels. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

Millennials are budget conscious with greater preference for accommodation and transportation options, says report

TBM Staff | Hyderabad

Noesis - hotel investment advisory firm presents a report on Millennials- How they influence the Travel and Hospitality industry. The report reveals the evolution of the hospitality and travel industry with regards to millennials.

Globally, millennials roughly account for 23% of the world population. While in India, millennials are around 34% which is 440 million of the country's population. Due to steady advancement in their professional careers, higher disposable income, and flexible work hours, they have more spending power. Hence they hold great potential for the travel and hospitality industry. Millennials alone have contributed 200 billion dollars on travel alone in the U.S in 2019 and this number has been growing over the years.

As per the findings on average, millennials in China & Singapore take 4 vacations within a year for a duration of 4 days. While the millennials in India and Indonesia would take only 2 vacations for a duration of 5 days. Most of the millennials use OTA's to book or plan their vacation but there is a difference here as well. The millennials in China are more brand conscious as compared to millennials from India, Indonesia, and Singapore who travel more for an experience. One thing in common among all of them is they look for value for money.

With a median age of 28.4 in India, Millennials have already become the primary breadwinners in their homes and would account for 75% of the workforce by 2030. Here the hospitality industry has a major task for the next couple of years to adapt and change to this ever-demanding generation where there is no single solution.

Millennials are tech-savvy, they are well connected and use many Internet of things (IoT) in their daily lives. They are likely to spend less time in their rooms as compared to the previous generation. Therefore designing the room, using optimum utilization of space is of utmost

importance. Apart from that they also work remotely and need a place to work. From the dining point of view, they extensively use online platforms such as Trip Advisor and Zomato for reviews. These reviews help them decide what to eat and where to eat, it can be a takeaway or a good dining experience. Adventure sports, nature trails, local experiences, and recreational activities are on their to-do list.

The white paper also states how the hospitality industry is adapting itself to accommodate the millennial segment. Some of the well-known brands have already started

operating specifically targeting Millennials. Moxy is a millennial hotel by Marriott, similarly, Tru is developed by Hilton, 25hrs by Accor, and Indigo hotel by IHG. There are many more hotels such as Mama Shelter, Motel One and Citizen M which all are designed to attract fellow millennials.

Millennials are budget conscious with greater preference for accommodation and transportation options. Most of them are likely to opt for a packaged tour and to start their travel planning without a clear destination in mind. TravelBiz Monitor presents some key highlights of the report. ♦

Distinctive characteristics of millennial travellers by asian countries

		CHINA	INDIA	INDONESIA	SINGAPORE
Travel habits	Frequency of travel <i>Trips per year</i>	4.0	2.0	2.0	4.0
	Length of stay <i>Nights per trip</i>	4.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
	Travel behaviour	Travel as a means to indulge and take a break from city life	Travel to famous destinations Travel as a status symbol	Impulse travel often triggered by cheap promotions	Seek novel travel experiences Strongest reservations about packaged tours
Budget and spending	Per trip spend <i>USD</i>	3,505	2,823	1,040	1,389
	Yearly travel spend <i>USD per annum</i>	14,020	5,647	2,080	5,555
	Spending pattern	Budget is secondary factor of consideration; spend 2x more than average AMT	Will spend for enjoyment of trip Food is the largest bucket of spending	Most budget conscious and often influences choices made	Deal seeking behaviour to ensure they get the most out of every dollar
Research and planning		Reliant on local OTAs for booking Make thorough comparison via multiple sources, mostly attributed to the lack of good quality sources	Hesitant to plan on their own Travel agents are often utilised for cheap, customised travel packages	Value convenience and often engaged with travel agencies Highly reliant on word of mouth Reservations about online or mobile purchases	Invest a lot of time in planning elaborate itineraries Savvy and sophisticated use of multiple sources
		Brand conscious, especially for 4-star and above hotels, but are less loyal to any particular brand Ctrip.com is the most trusted brand of OTA	Opt for hotel chains or brands with presence in India - familiarity	Demonstrate brand loyalty towards AirAsia Less concerned with hotel brands	Little or no brand loyalty for both airline and hotel Decision is usually swayed by deals or promotions
Association to brands					

TravelBiz Monitor hosts Korea Premium Travel Consultant (KPTC) webinar series, focusing on Luxury, MICE and Educational travel to Korea

TBM Staff | Hyderabad

The first, second and third editions of the Korea Premium Travel Consultant (KPTC) webinars were organised by Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) in association with TravelBiz Monitor, as the Knowledge & Technology partner on November 23, November 30 and December 14, respectively. The webinar series were focused on Korean Luxury Travel discussed about traditional stay in Korea, Korea's MICE travel and educational travel to South Korea.

Y.G. Choi, Director KTO New Delhi explained, "The idea behind 'Korea Premium Travel Consultants' is to identify and create a group of travel agents in India who are highly training in South Korea destination and are the most enthusiastic about promotion South Korea travel products to their customers."

"In 2021, we wanted to create a group of up-to 50 such travel agents from all over India and provide them with specialized destination training and create an exclusive line of communication for them with KTO for future communication, assistance and support," he added.

Through this webinar series, KTO wanted to assist and train a select group of travel agents across India and certify them as Korea premium travel consultants for the year 2021-22. From more than 500 applications, KTO selected 45 travel trade partners to be Korea premium travel consultants.

Speaking about the special programme Choi said, "We received very good response to

our KPTC webinar series and are very pleased to have associated with Travel Biz Monitor for this project which helped us get a pan-India reach while launching the program. Upon launch more than 500 travel agents from pan-India expressed their interest for the program and joined the initial webinar. More than 100 of them participated in the 'Make Your Own South Korea Itinerary Challenge' and after a careful scrutiny of all the applications we were able to identify and award 'Korea Premium Consultant' certification to 45 participants.

These 45 participants will be an exclusive list of 'Korea Premium Consultants' for year 2021 and 2022 and will have a dedicated line of training and activities with KTO throughout the year."

To carry out the entire exercise, KTO had collaborated with TravelBiz Monitor as their Knowledge and Technology partner. A large number of trade partners from different parts of the country participated in the webinar. Explaining the collaboration Choi added, "We believe that Travel Biz Monitor with its pan-India reach with outbound travel agents and its media viewership in the whole of travel industry in India, was a perfect partner for us to launch this program



Y.G. Choi
Director, KTO, New Delhi

in India. We are satisfied with this association in 2021 and would like to extend this partnership for this project for the coming year as well."

While briefing about their future plans Choi informed, "In 2022, we will come out with other themed activities both online and offline to keep our Korea Premium Consultants engaged throughout the year."

While speaking about travelling to South Korea,

the host of the webinar informed that South Korea hasn't yet started quarantine free travel for Indian travellers, but in the coming months by March 2022, South Korea might open its doors to India.

The first webinar spoke about traditional stay in South Korea for FIT travellers from India and informed that if travellers want to explore staying options in South Korea then it should be the traditional way. The traditional houses in Korea are known as Hanok. KTO is offering premium Hanok in Gurume, Hwangnamguan, Namwonyechon, Rakkojae Seoul, Chi Woon Jung, Gyeong Won Jae Ambassador Incheon, Young San Jae, and Korea Palace for a different kind of experience for the Indian travellers. He also suggested hotels and resorts which are perfect for post-Covid travel for FIT and exclusive travel for luxury travellers, such as South Cape, Phoenix Island, Seamarq, Paradise City, Art Villas, Podo Hotel, Four Seasons Seoul, Ananti Cove, Signiel Seoul, Rail Cruise Hairang among others.

The webinar also shed light on some famous places in South Korea to try and taste authentic Korean cuisine like Seokparang, Samcheonggak, Baeksa 104, Onjium, Haap, Johnnie Walker House, and Alice. The webinar informed that some restaurants also offer halal and Indian food in South Korea. He suggested that to know more about the traditional culture and art of Korea, one can visit museums, such as the Arario Museums in Space, Museum San, Bonte Museum, Korean Stone Art Museum, Cho Eunsook Art & Lifestyle Gallery etc.

To help travellers experience traditional



Hanyangdoseong Seoul City Wall

liquor making, black ceramic art, traditional dance and many more such curated experiences in Korea, KTO has tied up with local experts to provide some wonderful and customised experiences to Indian travellers. For sightseeing some of the recommended places are Panmunjeom, Hanyangdoseong Seoul City Wall, Gyeongbokgung Palace, Changdeokgung Palace, Seongsu-dong Culture Street, The Naecheon, Teo Home. Along with that, the webinar gave information about various places, where travellers can experience Korean Culture and Korean Wellness.

The second edition of the webinar was focused on 'Korea's MICE Travel'. Welcoming all the selected 'Korea Premium Travel Consultants' for the second part of the webinar, the host said that Korea has plenty of options for MICE organisers such as Coex in Seoul, Kintex in Goyang, Bexco in Busan, Icc Jeju in Jeju, etc. Travellers can enjoy various sports activities, temple stays, cooking classes, farming experiences, visiting museums, and sightseeing along with their business meetings.

The third edition of the webinar focused upon educational tours to South Korea, as the destination offers fun, safe and lots of new experiences for international students/travellers. Some of the points discussed at the webinar were that the country offers the highest quality safe and clean environment, along with a long history and rich cultural heritage, in addition to global and peace



Gyeongbokgung Palace

education. It also offers exchange programs with Korean students which can be a great way to explore the unknown Korean culture for students.

The webinar informed that South Korea boasts of 15 World Cultural Heritage Sites designated by UNESCO, which the travellers can experience. International students also can enjoy and experience dance lessons at the Global K Center.

The country is offering two course packages for students to experience the newest Korean trends and World Cultural Heritage Sites. The basic course offers, Broadcasting Station Tour, Seoul Sky Observatory, World Cultural Heritage Sites, exploring Busan, and Gyeongju. The special course offers Busan / Ulsan Night Markets, Hyundai Motor Factory Tour, Tongdosa Temple Stay, DMZ Tour, Traditional Culture / Art Experience,

Four-season experiences and Pyeongchang Olympic Stadium visit.

The country is also inviting schools across the globe to make a school trip to Korea, as Korea Tourism Organization Group support projects for school trips to Korea and the support system helps to reduce school trip expenses. The eligible participants are groups of elementary, middle, high school, or university students visiting Korea for a school trip or groups of teachers with a minimum of ten people. If the above criteria are fulfilled, one can apply for support through a branch office of the Korea Tourism Organization. Korea Tourism Organization Group provides souvenirs, supports fees related to performance admissions, tourist attractions, and cultural experiences, along with supporting exchanges with Korean schools. ♦

NEWS ROUND UP

SKAL International Bombay (144) sends message of hope with its Christmas celebration

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Every year is fraught with numerous hurdles and challenges thrown in your path and 2021 was no less with its fair share of trials and tribulations. However, SKAL International Bombay (144) would like to take comfort and solace in the fact that it has considerably tempered down and is ending on a high note!

The Christmas event by SKAL International Bombay (144) in Mumbai which was organised in association with Visit Britain provided a perfect platform for networking, a destination workshop thrown in for good measure (Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Destination Workshop) and spreading some much needed holiday cheer!

"With over 140 partners from the Mumbai travel trade, the response was encouraging and

it was heart warming to witness the spirit of camaraderie and friendship among the regular members and many others, who had just come aboard as new members," according to the release.



Besides the presentation by Visit Britain, the event also celebrated the first of its kind online travel auction by SKAL International Bombay (144). Sk. Sunil VA, President, SKAL International Bombay (144) couldn't have put

it across in a more perfect way when he said that, the event strengthened the commitment of giving back to the members and recognising their efforts with this event in particular, showcased the announcing of winners of our

first-ever online auction of travel products which were offered to our members travel products at a 50 % discount. An overwhelming response was received till the last moment, from many members who bid and bagged all the vouchers sponsored by hotels, airlines, cruise liners and sports tourism promoters.

A heartfelt initiative under the SKAL's CSR programme was witnessed, when all the Skalleagues and guests received a beautiful departing Christmas gift hamper sourced from 'Together' which is an organisation supporting autistic children. This was the most fitting way to end the event on a sweet note literally! ♦

Beyond the Horizon- Possible Travel Trends in 2022

By Dilip Modi, Founder, Travel Union

The world as we knew it, has undergone a paradigm shift over the last couple of years. With the onset of the pandemic, the human race has had to unlearn the old ways and adapt to new ones. Nations resorted to strict safety measures to ensure safety of their citizens. Notwithstanding the odd detractors, people generally resorted to stricter safety measures to ensure safety for themselves and their families. Social distancing became the easiest way to ensure safety, and all kinds of in-person social interactions plunged to an all-time

low. From policy levels to personal ones, travels were put on hold.

Before the pandemic, the booming travel and tourism industry contributed to a whopping 10% of the GDP of the world, providing more than 320 million jobs worldwide, with India being one of the top thirty five contributors. India manages to hold a high position in this list not only because of the mainstream international and domestic tourism, but also, the ever increasing contribution from rural travel.

However, there have been problems that have plagued the rural travel

industry since decades. There are no options for rural travel customers to pre-plan their travel. They lack tailored offerings suited to their needs. Cancellations and refunds are cumbersome and customers have to wait for weeks for these to get done.

Rural travel agents have also had their own sets of hurdles to cross. Absence of tech-driven solutions for inventory, competitive prices, and lack of direct aggregation from airlines, railways, hotels, and wholesalers have resulted in a sector that lacks order and organisation, where the small travel businesses do not have multiple options to choose from. This has also meant, that they do not have the necessary information and contacts to ensure a balance between their own profits and the best deals they can offer to customers.

What can the rural travel sector expect in 2022?

Adoption of Digital

While rural travelers give in to their inner wanderlust, or travel for work, their endeavours will be aided by a growing intervention of tech. The union government plans to work with the state governments to ensure development of broadband internet infrastructure to all rural areas that have seen a high concentration of travellers. They also plan to help in building the capacity of various segments such as accommodations

(including Homestays, farm stays etc.), rural travel agents etc. Capacity building will include creating awareness around the benefits of digitalization and providing digital skills to the rural businesses.

Accessibility

Till date, becoming a travel agent had its own sets of hassles. Problems like long processing time as well as huge investments were barriers that kept people from venturing into this business. However, with the intervention of tech, now people can start their own business of being a travel agent with effectively zero investment. This will open new avenues for income for a lot of aspiring travel agents. In turn, this would mean covering more geographic area, and as a result, more options and choices for rural consumers.

Customisation and Personalisation

Tech driven aggregator platforms can have a huge role to play. They can help rural travel agents to get better control of inventory, help them with listings of different service providers, and facilitate provisions of customized travel solutions to rural clients. Rural travel agents would be able to provide travel solutions at best possible prices, while also ensuring that they get to earn maximum profits. With better engagement and commitment from tech platforms that educate rural travel partners on the use of technology and the digital media, we are also set to witness rural travelers getting introduced to customised solutions based on their unique travel requirements.

After two years of uncertainty and gloom, the travel industry can remain hopeful for a strong recovery in 2022. The rate of recovery is uncertain and it is now up to the tech platforms and travel partners to work in tandem, to ensure a seamless travel experience in the rural sector. With the promised government intervention, rural should witness a boost as travel partners increasingly adopt tech, prosper, and ensure a seamless, end to end solution to the travel requirements of customers. ♦

Dilip Kumar Modi one of India's most successful young entrepreneurs and amongst its foremost digital experts. He is the Chairman and Group CEO of DiGiSPICE Technologies and founder of Travel Union. Dilip is a second generation entrepreneur who has pioneered several new innovations and built a strong portfolio of businesses within the Indian mobility and technology space during his stellar career spanning over two decades. He always believed that technology will be a key enabler for achieving inclusive growth in the world and started several innovative, technology-driven businesses. Today, he is furthering the cause to build a thriving community of travel agents.

'The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.'



Banking on Hope

Just when the deadly second wave of Covid-19 appears to have receded and the travel and tourism industry was showing an early sign of recovery, the advent of new variant Omicron throws a spanner in the process. The good news is, as of now it seems that the variant Omicron is far less virulent than that of the Delta. And the current restrictions imposed by various governments can be seen more as precautionary measures rather than curb. Moreover, people have realised that they have to live with new variants at least for some more time. That is why, travellers are looking forward to their travel plans as they continue to embrace the new normal. If things go in the right direction, it is expected that the situation will considerably improve by March-April. **TravelBiz Monitor** spoke to a cross-section of industry stakeholders to ascertain their views for 2022.



Madhavan Menon, MD, Thomas Cook India Group

We are living in the COVID era and variants are a reality that we need to accept as the new norm.

As leaders we are collectively accountable for the travel and tourism ecosystem and hence while challenges are on par for the course, vital that we focus on the many opportunities in reimagining our business. We are optimistic that with

an early announcement of reopening of India skies to commercial aviation, albeit phased, the new year will bring in revival starting Summer 2022 and then a quicker pace of recovery by the financial year end.



Sheetal Munshaw- Director Atout France India

India has always been a resilient market and the desire to travel has been stronger than ever since the world has opened up its borders. We are of the view that the discerning vaccinated voyager will continue to travel in compliance with rules and restrictions implemented by different countries. And the tourism ecosystem will continue to adapt and facilitate travel.



Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI

I believe difficulties which we are facing currently due to Omicron variant will ebb soon. Hopefully, the year 2022 will be a good year for the travel & tourism industry. The government needs to focus on effective marketing strategy for Incredible India campaign. Besides this, the government must also realise that the pandemic can't be contained by imposing restrictions on business only.

If the ongoing restrictions continue for longer time, it will further jeopardize the tourism sector.



Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI

I am highly optimistic that the situation will considerably improve by March-April and if it is so, the year 2022 will be a very good year for the tourism industry. And if the situation aggravates, then we are doomed. With so many restrictions and no help from the government it will be very difficult to survive.



Vishal Suri, Managing Director, SOTC Travel Limited

The travel industry continues to be in the recovery mode and we are highly optimistic that travel will witness a rebound in 2022 as well. However, the pandemic induced changes, particularly increased flexibility and fluid travel policies will remain a key criterion. Our data and consumer insights reiterate travellers are looking forward to their travel plans as they continue to embrace the new normal.



Cholada Siddhivarn, Director Tourism Authority of Thailand Mumbai

In the past year, each new variant has brought in new lockdown rules across the globe, but then an increase in vaccination drive has got some ease in the restrictions. We must be responsible for ourselves, and others take necessary precautions. Despite the current situation, we all must adapt and move on. 2022 will be yet another year of innovation and concepts the tourism

industry will see. We are hopeful that travel will flourish soon.



Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing

Omicron has been a spoiler and has delayed the recovery for the tourism industry by a couple of months. The good news is that the data is showing - it's a milder virus with lower hospitalization. Going by the trajectory in other destinations and expert predictions, the peak will come fast and so will the decline. Based on our fantastic vaccination numbers and better

preparedness, I feel optimistic about the outlook for 2022, we should witness a revival of global travel and tourism.



Beena Menon and Huzan Fraser Motivala - Joint Partners, Beautiful Planet Destination Management LLP

While the emergence of the Omicron variant has certainly hindered travel plans, our outlook towards 2022 should be cautiously optimistic. Indian consumers have been vaccinated, are ready to travel with precaution and are showing a positive attitude towards outbound travel. Travel agents are continuing to report a rise

in queries and bookings, even for next year. Mindful travelling in keeping with travel restrictions will be the new tourism trend for 2022.



Shikhar Aggarwal, Joint Managing Director, BLS International

From vaccine certificates and vaccine passports to travel bubbles, digital keys, advanced facial recognition software and biometrics for airport check-ins, travel as we know has changed forever. Travellers have started to adopt ways to be safe since majority of the countries have lifted travel ban, rolled out incentive schemes to entice the travellers; it's all up for grab.

The industry overall is at the cusp of growth trajectory with visible rebound as travellers are scouting places to plan their next trip.



Rakshit Desai, MD-India, Flight Centre Travel Group

While international travel has taken a hit for now, we are still seeing demand for summer 2022 and are cautiously optimistic for the rest of the year. While it is too early to fully gauge the impact of Omicron, we're hopeful that high vaccination uptake, better preparedness of the travel industry and pent-up demand will minimize its impact and further aid in recovery.

Corporate travel has also steadily been on the road to recovery in the second half of 2021.



Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head- MEISEA, South African Tourism

As we stand at the brink of another year, we are optimistic about what the future holds for the industry - especially as vaccination rates and consumer confidence surge. We are extremely hopeful as global experts deem that Covid-19 is now an endemic -

which means that it is something we have to live with by exercising adequate caution and integrating safety & hygiene measures into our daily lifestyle. Over the last one and a half the industry has learnt to adapt and adjust to the pandemic, with sufficient technology-enabled precautionary measures in place.



Pranav Kapadia, Founder & Director, Global Destinations

The last two years have demonstrated the unwavering spirit of the travel industry. The promise of a new year surely brings along hope, optimism and endless possibilities. We as Global Destinations are preparing to embrace the new year with charged energies and positive enthusiasm. Having said that 2022 will continue to be a year of perseverance but definitely more encouraging compared to both 2020

& 2021. The surge in travel seen in the last few months are clear indicators that travel will continue to rebound in 2022, despite the outbreak of a new variant of COVID-19, Omicron.



Aparna C Basumallik, Country Head, Europamundo

While the O word is creating a panic world over . COVID in one form or another is here to stay. We need to behave responsibly and move on with life .Travel as we knew it may never be the same . We need to accept it . Going by the trends this year on the domestic circuit , if there are flight options people will travel overseas too and this it's going to be good for the people and the trade .



PP Khanna, President, ADTOI

We highly appreciate people enthusiasm, their energy to enjoy their full life in 2021. Despite the pandemic threat they went for holidays, shopping etc and these helped industry slowly to come on the path of recovery. However threat is now looming again in a variant form Omicron and having gone through a catastrophic experience during the second wave, Government does not want take a chance or show any laxity in taking all precaution

to stop the spread of Omicron and soon there might be another phase of lockdown restricting movement of people at all places. However, wishing the tourism industry a great time ahead and let all of us work together to achieve it.



Munnumnn Marwah, COO, Think Strawberries

Nearly two years into the pandemic, the travel and tourism industry is now more equipped to deal with the virus. With rising global vaccination rates that protect against serious illness, I believe that if we just add a few layers of protection while travelling right now, we should be able to live more normally with this virus, rather than letting it control us. For people

planning to travel in 2022, vaccinations, masks and social distancing will help make their trip more safe.



Dev Karvat, Founder & CEO – Asego

I believe that every challenging situation brings us opportunities to innovate. Yes, the last couple of years was turbulent and chaotic for the travel and tourism industry, but it provided the insurance & ancillary services industry opportunities to introduce new tailored products & services. I am certain that with proactive and innovative measures, we will overcome the current Omicron crisis as well and resurrect ourselves with

an appetite for excellence in 2022. Furthermore, I also feel that more COVID related travel protection products will definitely reinstate a lot of confidence amongst travellers in the future."



Biji Eapen, National President, IAAI

The spread of the new variant Omicron is alarming, and travel and tourism are badly affected and standstill. Agents who restarted functioning find it challenging to meet both ends. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and we have to survive. Our mission in 2022 is survival. And we at IAAI is working on specific projects that make us stay and support our families.



Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH

The Indian Tourism Travel & Hospitality industry was eagerly looking forward to the resumption of flights in December. Since March 2020 the inbound tourism has been shut and the flights resumption as was earlier announced was one ray of hope. To salvage some business and have some cash flows to support tourism employment, we look forward to a very early re- review of this decision of extension of flights , if

hopefully the variant omicron doesn't pose a serious threat.



Dharmesh Advani, National General Secretary, ETAA

We expect slowly & steadily international borders to open where more countries allow vaccinated people to travel freely with necessary precautions. Domestic tourism will boom as never before with travellers travelling to experience the place, culture & not just for sightseeing. Travelling with friends & family will increase than travelling with larger groups. We also hope

more and more people get vaccinated. We have good expectations for 2022 for a successful travel year.



Vaibhav Kale, Vice-President, ATOAI

With the advent of what may potentially be a massive surge in the 3rd wave, the priority is to keep safe, stay responsible, keep our teams out of harms way, and to keep clients safe in the outdoor arena. Most importantly, offer products that can follow good practices, with small bubble groups, keeping the learnings from the 1st and 2nd waves top of mind. We feel this is possible and maybe, the only approach to

keep operations alive and sustainable.



Riaz Munshi, , President, OTOAI

Travel has again taken a hit again with the new Omicron variant, however once the vaccines' efficacy against the variants proves durable, we expect a big release of pent-up demand in 2022. Destinations that offer quick flights, little to no restrictions, and good mix of activities would be preferred. Given the unpredictability of restrictions, we have also noticed a trend of increasing last-minute bookings. People are becoming more

flexible and spontaneous in their travel planning.



Pranav Sinha, Head – South Asia, VFS Global

The pandemic remains volatile in the light of new variants, but it is too early to predict the impact in coming months. Of course, the travel industry remains resilient and is focusing its efforts on a strong and safe revival. At VFS Global, in 2021 we steadily resumed operations across locations keeping customer and employee health and safety as our top priority, making the visa

application journey as digitally driven as possible. The steady rise in visa applications in India demonstrates a strong intent to travel.



Naresh Rawal, Vice President – Sales & Marketing, Genting Cruise Lines

The global pandemic has brought about major changes in both consumers' priorities and the way cruise operates in a highly evolving landscape. Focus has very much shifted on safety, health and well-being. At Genting Cruise Lines, we remain optimistic of the cruise industry in 2022. Over the past year, we observed an increased in consumers' confidence in cruising as we

had successfully demonstrated safe cruises in these recent years, resulting in emerging new domestic markets with consumers also making bookings within a longer lead time in advance.



Hector Dsouza, India Representative- State Tourist Board, SouthWest Germany

As the world tries to come to terms with Omicron & the damage it may cause, travel & tourism will witness the 'see-saw' factor creeping up in 2022, especially to international destinations. Domestic travel & tourism will pick up at the drop of a hat, once the virus subsides. Scheduled international flights need to recommence

soon to bring down airfares. Unless this happens, inbound travel will take a beating in '22.



Komal Seth, Director, Linkin Reps Pvt Ltd

I am sure 2022 will be a good year for tourism industry. Tourists may prefer beach and open space properties. Travel will happen but with a new outlook. We need to be cautious and ensure that people follow Covid appropriate behaviour.y. ♦



demand, the longevity of leisure travel, and the emergence of the COVID-19 omicron variant.

"With 2022 in mind, we expect a new good start and the situation will change soon. It is hard to expect a decent business in the first quarter of 2022, but we are optimistic," said optimistic Mohan.

According to Mohan, providing a safe and clean environment for colleagues and guests is a top priority for Hyatt, he added, "We always want guests to feel confident in the care we provide. The uncertain times definitely made all the hotels plan and re-plan their strategies."

Mohan believes that despite a disruptive start, a positive shift in revenue growth across the

But if the spread continues for a long time, the peak business seasons will be no better," he said.

Speaking about utilising technology, he expressed that the coronavirus has made the world aware of the possible risks associated with physical touchpoints, and hence the goal of a hands-free experience has become crucial for both travellers and brands. From replacing tangible restaurant menus and paper in-room compendiums with scannable QR codes to contactless hotel check-in capabilities, mobile room keys, touchless payments, almost every aspect of the hospitality experience can now be accessed through guests' own mobile devices.

According to Mohan, customer demands and expectations are shifting. He stressed on one of the alternative revenue streams that he witnessed flourishing at his hotel by saying, "The focus has shifted to alternative mealtime solutions. While eating out is still considered risky, home delivery of cooked meals is gaining popularity. For the same, we introduced a contactless home delivery system, from the freshest produce salads to homely combo meals with a unique indulgence of flavours at home as comfort food is the need of the hour."

"Also, with an aim to serve something new every time to our patrons, our team of chefs have come up with a Globe-Trotting Food Menu that offers lip-smacking cuisine from around the world curated to suit everyone's taste buds," he concluded. ♦

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

'It is hard to expect a decent business in the first quarter of 2022, but we are optimistic'

Varun Mohan is the General Manager of Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore, which is the first Hyatt Centric Hotel in India that opened in 2018. Mohan is known for being tech-savvy, people-oriented, an active listener, and a strong believer in transparency and working ethics. Asmita Mukherjee spoke with Mohan to know more about his plans for the hotel.



According to Mohan, although the calendar year has changed, many of the same factors that influence hotel forecasts remain the same, including the outlook for business transient and group travel, the impact of inflation on travel

hospitality industry is expected. "The growth in travel is expected to continue as India further ramps up its vaccination rate resulting in progressed sentiments. We expect the situation to recover in the holidays and wedding seasons.



This new year, align with the new trends

By **Ansoo Gupta**, Founder, OneShoe Trust

This is a sombre moment for the travel industry. Just when the travel & tourism companies got all set for a flurry of activity customary for end-of-the-year, the threat of a new strain of the novel Corona virus -19 is looming large. And nobody really knows which way the wind will blow. Fliers are carefully watching if they can still travel and so is the government. The industry which was poised for a restart is again waiting with a bated breath.

This may all sound very gloomy but in this stillness, however restless, lies an opportunity. An opportunity to put an ear to the ground and hear the oncoming trends. Corona virus or no corona virus, some of these trends are irreversible and every single stakeholder in the travel & tourism industry will have to adapt to it. The sooner, the better.



One of these irreversible changes is our responsibility as travel businesses. In recent times, websites such as Google Flights are reporting emission data, booking.com is labelling properties focussed on sustainability. More such initiatives will follow suit. This trend is a bellwether of consumer behaviour which is not only focussed on things like cost, distance, time taken etc but also their carbon footprint.

It's very heartening to see that most such future-facing operations are emerging in India, Africa and in the lesser developed parts of the world. Perhaps that's intuitive because the very big and very rich find it difficult to change their ways. Now the real challenge is to give a considerable scale to such operations wherever

we find them. Step one in this direction is recognition, and awards can be a good way to scout and highlight such companies. In the recently concluded Responsible Tourism Awards held at WTM 2021, a few such companies were given a platform and Indian companies won in 4 out of the 6 new categories. A trend that we hope can continue and grow bigger every year

Decarbonising Travel & Tourism

GLOBAL AWARD: Govardhan Village, Maharashtra, INDIA

Govardhan Village is a 100-acre model farm community, a campus that showcases alternative technology, attracting 50,000 tourists a year. With zero emissions, 210kW of solar panels deliver 184,800 units of electricity annually. The bio-gas plant converts cow dung and other wet waste to the equivalent of 30,660 units. The pyrolysis plant processes plastic waste into 18,720 litres of light diesel oil 52,416 units of electricity. Energy monitoring saves 35,250 units. The Soil Bio-Technology plants process sewage into greywater used for irrigation, saving 247,000 units required to pump water from the river and rainwater harvesting is sufficient for months beyond the rainy season. The buildings on the campus are built from compressed stabilised earth blocks (DSEB). While a typical brick wall takes 75 MJ of energy, a CSEB wall at Govardhan takes just 0.275 MJ; all materials are sourced from within 100km to reduce the carbon emissions from transport.

Destinations building back better post-COVID

GLOBAL AWARD: Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Rural Tourism Programme, INDIA Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board's Rural Tourism Program is being implemented in 100 villages in phases. At the heart of the project is a commitment to inclusion, "One and all should get their fair share". They are working with panchayats to engage people irrespective of social (physical, literacy level, gender, ability, religious, cultural barriers, etc.) and economic situation (land ownership, income levels, access to services that enhance economic opportunities, etc.)

Increasing Diversity in Tourism

GLOBAL AWARD: No Footprints. Mumbai, INDIA

No Footprints curates niche travel experiences for travellers. Over the last six years, they have crafted twenty-two different Mumbai experiences and are now expanding

to Delhi. Their ambition is to introduce travellers to the history, culture, and diverse peoples of Mumbai and Delhi. No Footprints are expanding the range of tours offered to travellers and the intensity of the experiences they provide. Queer*-friendly tours are now offered by a range of companies across India.

Reducing Plastic Waste in the Environment

GLOBAL AWARD: Six Senses, Laamu, Maldives, INDIAN OCEAN

At Six Senses Resort on The Maldivian island of Laamu, guests join a Sustainability Tour to see innovation and experimentation in action at their Earth Lab, their hub for self-sufficiency and zero waste. The resort has set itself the goal of becoming plastic-free in 2022. This includes all front of house plastics but also food packaging.

Growing the Local Economic Benefit

GLOBAL AWARD: Village Ways, Mumbai, Maharashtra, INDIA

Village Ways was successful in obtaining training contracts from Madhya Pradesh. The Village Ways model is distinctive. Guests are invited to walk through the landscape from village to village with a local guide staying in purpose-built village guesthouses, owned, managed and staffed by the community. All the village committees which manage the guest houses operate transparently.

While some stakeholders are showing an agility to respond to this change in consumer behaviour, others are still figuring their way out, trying not to disrupt what seems to have been working so far(!). On the other hand, a whole lot of travel and tourism companies all over the world have been dedicated to handling the impending changes from even before the pandemic. And it is this readiness, this long-standing alignment to purpose that enabled some travel firms to respond better to the crisis brought upon by the black swan* event of the pandemic as also to the impending white swans* of climate change and related financial, social and geographical changes. ♦

Ansoo Gupta is founder of OneShoe Trust which is a global advocacy platform for Responsible & Mindful Travels. Gupta a Science graduate in Physics and Mathematics with a post graduate in business management and a certification in Data Science & Machine Learning from HarvardX.

'The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.'



Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

Planet Abled

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

Anticipating the impact of technology, 14 years ago, TravelBiz Monitor introduced an industry-first live news portal, with hourly online reporting on travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality industries. Since then, we have created a niche for ourselves by providing analytical stories and statistical information to the travel trade on a regular basis. To keep this momentum going, the Editorial team has decided to showcase new-age technology products and services every month that have the potential to disrupt the market further. Moreover, the time now is also appropriate as the on-going pandemic has further widened the scope of using technology.

For this unique initiative, TravelBiz Monitor has partnered with 'Start-up Mentor Board', a visionary platform with credentials in business, technology, e-commerce, digital market place, payment solutions and IT infrastructure, to highlight the stories of new-age technology ideas. Start-up Mentor Board has been set-up as an initiative to mentor and guide the travel technology driven start-ups and facilitate collaboration in the larger travel ecosystem.

Website – <https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com>

The Board is spearheaded by well-known thought leader Ashish Kumar, who is also the Co-Chairman of FICCI Travel Technology Committee. It comprises Bharti Maan, who has led start-ups to scale rapidly; Patrick Richards, an experienced travel industry leader in the UK; Chetan Kapoor, an analyst with deep understanding of the travel and tourism business and trends; Kartik Sharma, an artificial intelligence practitioner; Karthik Venkataraman, a digital transformation & an e-commerce visionary; Jure Bratkic, who led innovative solutions in the USA and Kyasha Bhoola, with expertise and advanced insight into the travel industry across Africa.

***One can register for the SMB Program at**

<https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com/form.html>

Startup Name: Planet Abled

Core Team: 5 persons

Founding year: 2016

Company Website: <https://planetabled.com>

Description: Planet Abled helps make the travel industry inclusive so that persons with disabilities and elderly are able to have the freedom of choice to travel.

1.3 billion People with disabilities and over 250 million elderly face societal, infrastructure and communication barriers every time they think of going for a family vacation or an evening coffee in the neighbourhood. Even though they have a combined disposable income of over USD 8.1 trillion.

Planet Abled started as a travel service provider to travellers with all types of disabilities so that they could travel solo, go on a romantic getaway, an adventure or travel with family and friends based on their accessibility needs. To change things for the better, now we are putting verified destinations and experiences on a platform to allow travellers to make informed decisions powered by technology.

The company is also an ecosystem enabler which helps the travel industry stakeholders to expand their customer base, revenues and become well equipped to welcome guests with all types of disabilities and impairments. This is achieved by rating their services on accessibility and consulting and training them to improve their disabled friendly rating overtime for a fee.

The founder started the company because she could never go for a holiday as a child as she has parents with disabilities. As an adult the family holidays never ended in a pleasant experience. She comes with 37 years of personal experience of challenges faced by persons with various types of disabilities. And over the last 6 years, has been an accessible travel service provider, in perhaps the most inaccessible country in the world, successfully.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/uK5UTbzd94mg1hGeA>



Forecasting Travel in 2022

By Hector Dsouza, Founder, L'orient Travels

Reality is the perfect coexistence of opposites', best sums up travel, tourism & hospitality in 2022. Add to this 'those with deep pockets' have a better probability of making huge gains. Just when the world of travel was opening to unprecedented footfalls, Omicron 'announced' its arrival! While the effects of this variant are largely unknown, authorities across the world are taking a cautious approach. At the other end of the spectrum, a larger vaccinated population will probably ensure lower fatalities & hospitalisation.

So, when will travel finally open up to

its 2019 levels? Keeping fingers crossed & hoping all goes well, will be the new norm as eradicating Covid-19 & its variants completely may well turn out to be more challenging than we presumed. Yet another intriguing vertical of global warming & its vagaries is likely to throw up more challenges, hence 'caution' will be the watch word!

International arrivals across the world are being subject to more checks at arrival ports & a negative Covid test on arrival is compulsory at many arrival terminals across the world. Barring essential travel, tourists, group & business travellers are unlikely to take the risk & postpone travel plans to a future date. Added to this is traditionally cold winter months in the Northern Hemisphere where cold & influenza increase. Trans-country travel in this part of the world could witness a tepid response until early March 22.

Medium & long-Haul traffic will witness huge flow of traffic during the traditionally busy summer months of May to September, as cases could reduce & percentage of vaccinated will reach a new high. It is probable the intensity of virus mutants will subside & travellers will hit the road once again. The caveat though is airlines needing to revert to their normal schedules & abolishment of the air bubble. Prices of air transport will return back to more realistic & affordable levels, unlike today the price of air tickets often runs into thousands of dollars.

Around this time, there is a great likelihood of the transportation sector consisting of air, sea & land reining in the insurance sector to basically offset losses caused by sudden closure of borders due to restrictions. Service providers will need to pay a small premium which will be added to the cost of the ticket & thereby ensure consumers will receive a full refund if transport services are affected. This will boost confidence of consumers, in the event of curtailment or shutting down of services.

Those with deep pockets be it airlines, hotels, home stays, OTA's, transporters will use the opportunity to make bargain deals with big ticket purchases, undercutting the market & offering more flexible cancellation policies. This will increase sustainability & ensure large gains when travel returns to normal in the near future.

With flexible & last-minute cancellation policies, OTA's will benefit the most from the resurgence that will take place whenever there is no threat of disruption either from these causes - disease, climate or civil unrest, in different parts of the world. With deep pockets, larger market share & greater accessibility, OTA's are likely to reap benefits faster than other verticals in the coming year.

Hotels & accommodation providers will walk the tight-rope between managing inventory of unsold rooms, absorbing demand in high season, maintaining employee-guest ratios & ensuring safety as well as providing high standards for maximising consumer satisfaction in 2022.

Being 'first off the starting block' could be an approach of many tourism boards in the next year. Creating visibility & adding brand value could well be the thought uppermost in the mind, considering arrivals dropped to negligible levels in 2020 & 2021. Strategic tie-ups, loosening the purse strings for marketing & educating service providers like tour operators & travel agents could well be the norm in 2022. Those failing to hit the 'right chord at the right moment' could well be out of the race!!

At the end of the receiving stick for the better part of two years, retail 'brick-n-mortar' tour operators, guides & travel agents will be hoping for a quick revival of fortunes & return to normal levels of travel in 2022. The backbone of the tourism industry, they have been the frontline of the industry for several decades now. The hope is this vertical gets an equal share of the staggered benefits travel throws up in 2022!!!

The friendly travel-agent-next-door could very well reap decent returns, mainly because of their reliability & constant 'ear-to-the-ground' approach, they possess. The password for continued success will hover around having a huge knowledge bank, professional adequacy, timely updates & regular brand building. Times have changed, constant changing of situations & unpredictability will continue; the resilience that humans often display needs to continue, especially in the world of tourism, travel & hospitality in 2022. ♦

'The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.'



Hector Dsouza is the founder of L'orient Travels (since 1986) & India Rep for the State Tourist Board of Southwest Germany. A prolific travel writer with over 1.2 million words to his credit, he began by publishing a Travel Magazine, Travel-n-Tell in 1993. He switched over to online mode in 1997, continuing to this day. Featured in a number of national as well as a couple of international publications including – Times of India, Economic Times, ET Travel World, Mid-Day, Dreamscapes, & E Turbo, his forte is describing travel destinations, tourism analysis, & opinionated reporting.



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+919225248070
+919820224272

36th IATO Convention

A platform for rebuilding confidence

The 3-day convention discussed the measures to provide fillip to the tourism sector after the covid-19 pandemic. Besides this, the business sessions organised during the event also gave rise to many new ideas for the development of the country's tourism sector.

.....TBM Staff | Mumbai

The 36th Annual Convention of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) took place between 16-19 December, 2021 at Hotel The Leela, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Tour operators from across India came to Gujarat to attend this 36th Convention of IATO. They had discussions on 'Brand India: The Road to Recovery' during the three-day convention.

The event was inaugurated by Bhupendra Patel, CM, Gujarat along with G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, Director General Tourism, Govt. of India and Hareet Shukla, Secretary Tourism, Govt. of Gujarat.

Terming the convention as total success, Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, said, "It was a grand success and more than what we had expected." "This convention was by far one of the best conventions of IATO as per feedback received not only from the members but few industry stalwarts who were present in the convention. This all could happen with whole-hearted support from Hareet Shukla, Secretary Tourism, Jenu Devan, Managing Director



& Commissioner Tourism, Govt. of Gujarat and his team," said Mehra.

The event witnessed the presence of senior government officials from the Centre in the panel discussions and in the valedictory session which include, Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary Tourism; Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General Tourism; Rajiv Jalota, Chairman Mumbai Port Trust; Raj Muthuraj, Additional DG. Directorate General of Foreign Trade. From the State Governments S.K. Srivastava, Dept. of Forests & Environment, Government of Gujarat; Shilpa Gupta, Additional Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board; Manoj Kumar, Managing Director, Jungle Lodges & Resort, Govt. of

Karnataka; G.S. Itoo, Director Tourism Kashmir; Rajiv Jain, Addl. GM, IRCTC; Dr. Abhay Sinha, Director General, Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) had also participated in the event.

Other eminent personalities participated in the panels were Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy & Revenue Officer, IndiGo; Nakul Anand, Executive Director, ITC Hotels & Chairman FAITH; Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, The Indian Hotels Company Limited; Anuraag Bhatnagar, C.O.O., The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts; Ajay Bakaya, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts; CA Talati, Chairman SEPC; to name a few.

Business sessions were very fruitful and well attended. These business sessions gave

rise to many new ideas for the development of the country's tourism sector as well as for the creation of Brand India.

Ashish Vidyarthi, famous Bollywood actor and motivational speaker was the Speaker in the motivational session, who inspired the members that we need to stand strong during these crisis and look for the future opportunities.

In the evening of all the three days entertainment programmes were organised and singers like Abhijeet Sawant, Jimmy Felix and Urvashi Arora enthralled the audience.

The Leela Gandhinagar, venue of the convention, was as imposing as its quality of excellent hospitality. All arrangements including transport were perfect to order.

This year's IATO Run was a great fun and all participants enjoyed morning cold breeze in almost zero pollution environment with AQI level below 50. Flag off was done by Bhavina Hasmukhbhai Patel, silver medallist in table tennis in 2020 Tokyo Summer Paralympics. She was also felicitated by IATO during the inaugural function.

Following the convention, 5 post convention tours were organised and over 200 delegates explored Gujarat by visiting places of their interest like Statue of Unity, Somnath, Dwarka, Jamnagar, Porbandar, Modhera, Bhuj, Patan, Little Rann of Kutch.

"The basic purpose of having this convention was to bring our members come out of their house, relax their mind, interact with each other and rebuilding confidence. Having Karaoke Singing competition was to give an opportunity to the talented members to enhance confidence and to perform on the stage," said Mehra. ♦



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