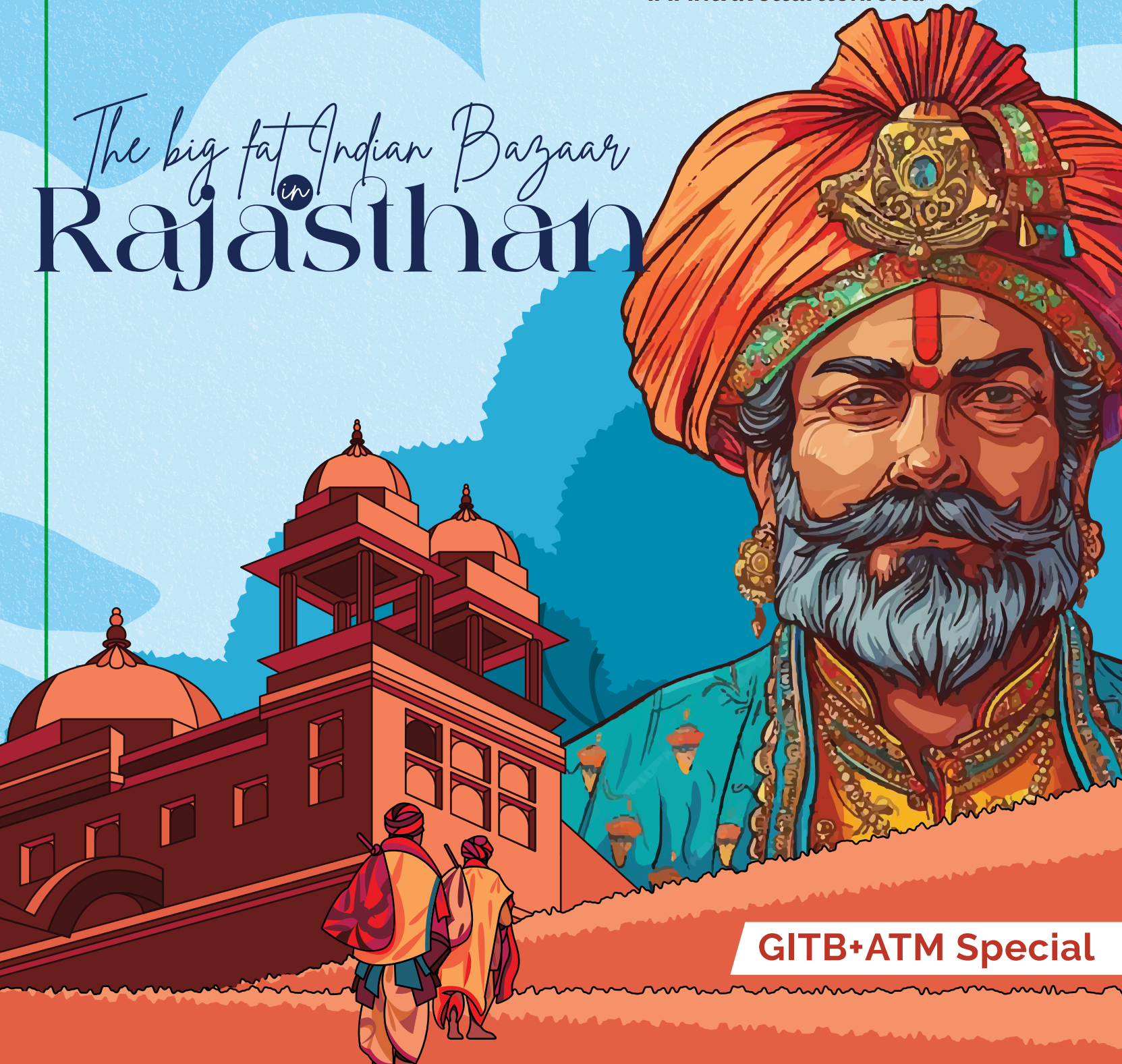


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The big fat Indian Bazaar
in
Rajasthan



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Editor's Letter

Penning this editor's note amidst the vibrant hues of Rajasthan, I find myself grounded in the essence of my beloved nation. This time, rather than delving into industry insights, I feel compelled to express my admiration for my exceptional team. Despite the absence of international travels this April, our journeys within India have been nothing short of captivating. Witnessing the authenticity of my homeland never fails to ignite a sense of wonder within me. Today, a simple sight—a Rajasthani woman gracefully balancing pots on her head—embodies the profound richness of our culture.

While my April travels may have been limited, our team's dedication knows no bounds. From the enchanting landscapes of Qatar to the culinary delights of Thailand, our turtle has unearthed treasures from across the globe for our readers. Our GITB special issue proudly showcases the allure of Rajasthan, encapsulating its magic within every page.

Beyond spotlighting industry giants like GRN Connect and Ebix, we celebrate the diversity of voices—from seasoned veterans to the spirited youth of island life. It's the stark contrasts and seamless transitions that make our stories truly resonate.

As we continue this journey, I'm filled with gratitude for your unwavering support. Here's to a bond that transcends borders and cultures. Keep journeying with us, for the best is yet to come.

Do share your feedback at bharti@travelturtle.world.

Happy Reading!

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

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Goa Tourism Department promotes FLY91 as the state's airline across all mediums

Goa-based airline FLY91 inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Tourism, Government of Goa at the Goa International Travel Mart. Through the MoU, FLY91 expressed its commitment to develop and promote the Department of Tourism's priorities. Specifically, FLY91 will promote domestic and inbound tourism to Goa, conduct activities that contribute to further developing sustainable tourism in the picturesque state, and strengthen the Goa Government's initiatives to empower hospitality businesses.



NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE HOLDINGS LTD.

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings unveils bold new vision

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. unveiled the most comprehensive new build order in its history—a total of eight state-of-the-art vessels, representing nearly 25,000 additional berths, with new classes of ships for each of its three award-winning brands—and the construction of a multi-ship pier at Great Stirrup Cay, the Company's private island destination in the Bahamas and its top-rated Caribbean port of call. This unprecedented decade-long strategy enhances its product offering, guest experiences, and operational infrastructure,

Atmosphere Core announces 10th resort in India

Atmosphere Core, a leading figure in the hospitality industry, has entered into a Hotel Management Agreement with 'JPR BHUMI DEVELOPERS' proprietor of Avongrove Tea Estate to develop a luxury resort in Sukiapokhri, nestled in the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal. AVONGROVE TEA GARDENS BY ATMOSPHERE MIRIK DARJEELING WEST BENGAL is scheduled to open in Q3-2026. The partnership aligns with Atmosphere Core's goal of reaching 25 properties by 2025 in India, and the resort marks the company's second venture in Darjeeling districts of the state of West Bengal.



39th IATO Annual Convention to take place in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

IATO team led by Mr Rajiv Mehra, President, Mr Ravi Gosain, Vice President and Mr Mahendra Pratap Singh, Chairman – IATO Madhya Pradesh Chapter met Dr Mohan Yadav, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh to invite him for the 39th IATO Annual Convention scheduled to be held in Bhopal from 30th August to 2nd September 2024. Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla, IAS, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Managing Director and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Bhopal accompanied the IATO delegation to meet the Hon'ble Chief Minister.



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Air India augments customer care with 5 new centres globally

Air India, India's leading global airline, has deployed five new contact centres, offering round-the-clock assistance to its customers worldwide. It has partnered with Concentrix, a California-headquartered customer engagement firm, to manage premium services from centres in Mumbai, Cairo, and Kuala Lumpur. The airline has also signed up iEnergizer, to operate contact centres in Noida and Bengaluru, focusing on domestic inquiries.



Jandec Travel JSC launches exclusive MICE packages

Jandec Travel JSC marks the second year in the Indian market. In commemoration of this milestone, Jandec Travel JSC is delighted to unveil its newest addition to its repertoire of services – MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) packages. With a keen eye on the evolving needs of Indian travellers, Jandec Travel JSC now offers specially curated MICE packages, designed to provide seamless and memorable experiences for corporate gatherings and events in the picturesque landscapes of Vietnam.



Saffron World B.V. opens a new office in Dubai

A leading provider of hotels, European tours and ground services in the Europe has a new office in Dubai. Utkarsh Kumar, Sales Head, APAC, shares, "This move will help the company gain access to the potential market of Dubai."



Celestyal Cruises appoints STIC Travel Group as its GSA in India

STIC Travel Group has been appointed as the General Sales Agent for Celestyal Cruises in India, marking a significant partnership between the two entities. Effective immediately, STIC Travel Group will undertake the marketing, distribution, fulfilment, and representation of both dynamic and preformed travel packages for Celestyal, in addition to providing cruise-only services across India.



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Unravelling FIT Travel's Multifaceted Appeal

In the bustling landscape of the tourism industry, one segment often overshadowed by the prominence of group travel, is the realm of FIT (Free Independent Travel) tourism. Let's delve into the nuances of FIT travel, explore its market share, revenue-generating potential, evolving trends, and future prospects, supplemented by a compelling case study and relevant statistics.

- **Bharti Sharma**





LIVE WIRE

JANUS MOTORCYCLES

FIT travel refers to individualised travel experiences tailored to meet the unique preferences, interests, and schedules of travellers. Unlike group tours, which follow pre-planned itineraries and schedules, FIT travellers have the flexibility to design their own journeys, selecting destinations, activities, and accommodations according to their desires. This autonomy fosters a deeper sense of exploration and personalisation, allowing travellers to immerse themselves fully in their chosen destinations.

The 'FIT' Magic wand

While MICE tourism garners substantial attention and revenue due to large-scale events and corporate engagements, FIT travel quietly captures a significant market share, contributing substantially to the tourism industry's revenue stream. According to recent studies, FIT travel constitutes a considerable portion of global tourism expenditure, with

statistics indicating a steady rise in independent travellers worldwide. In destinations renowned for their cultural richness, natural beauty, and historical significance, FIT travellers often spend more per capita than their group counterparts, making them an invaluable asset to destination economies.

Evolving Trends and Future Prospects

The landscape of FIT travel is continuously evolving, driven by changing consumer preferences, technological advancements, and emerging travel trends. Millennials and Gen Z, in particular, gravitate towards experiential and immersive travel experiences, seeking authenticity, cultural exchange, and meaningful interactions. As sustainability and responsible tourism gain prominence, FIT travellers increasingly prioritize eco-friendly accommodations, community-based tourism initiatives, and

off-the-beaten-path destinations. Technological innovations, such as mobile applications, virtual reality tours, and AI-powered travel assistants, empower FIT travellers to research, plan, and book their trips with ease, further enhancing the accessibility and convenience of independent travel. Moreover, the ongoing global pandemic has catalyzed a shift towards safer, more flexible travel options, prompting a surge in demand for personalised itineraries, private accommodations, and outdoor adventures.

F is for Freedom and Fulfillment

The essence of FIT travel lies in the freedom it affords travellers to plan and embark on their journeys according to their individual preferences and schedules. Unlike group tours, which adhere to rigid itineraries and timelines, FIT travellers have the autonomy to chart their own course, explore hidden gems, and

immerse themselves in authentic cultural experiences. This sense of liberation extends beyond mere itinerary customization; it encompasses the freedom to choose accommodations that align with personal tastes and budgets, select transportation modes tailored to individual comfort levels, and indulge in spontaneous adventures off the beaten path. This unparalleled freedom fosters a deeper connection with destinations, allowing travellers to venture beyond tourist hotspots and forge meaningful connections with local communities. Moreover, the ability to travel independently empowers individuals to embark on transformative journeys of self-discovery, personal growth, and cultural enlightenment, enriching their lives and broadening their perspectives along the way. In essence, the freedom to plan and travel epitomizes the essence of FIT tourism, offering a pathway to unparalleled exploration, discovery, and fulfillment.



Money-Game

To illustrate the revenue-generating prowess of FIT tourism, let's examine a case study highlighting its impact on a destination's economy.

Croatia's Tourism Renaissance

Croatia, renowned for its stunning coastline, historic cities, and vibrant culture, has experienced a tourism renaissance fuelled, in part, by the surge in FIT travel. By strategically marketing its diverse attractions to independent travellers seeking authentic experiences, Croatia has witnessed a significant influx of visitors, contributing substantially to its tourism revenue. Statistics reveal that FIT travellers to Croatia tend to stay longer, explore more regions, and spend more per day compared to group tourists. This higher expenditure encompasses a wide range of services, including



accommodations, dining, transportation, and activities, thereby bolstering local businesses and communities across the country.

Keep the ball rolling

FIT travel represents a dynamic and lucrative segment within the tourism industry, offering unparalleled opportunities for revenue generation, cultural exchange, and sustainable development. As destinations adapt to meet the evolving needs and preferences of independent travellers, the future of FIT tourism appears promising, driven by innovation, authenticity, and a deep-seated desire for exploration.

By recognising the depth and revenue potential of FIT travel and leveraging its unique attributes, stakeholders in the tourism sector can capitalize on this burgeoning market segment, enriching both traveller experiences and destination economies in the process.



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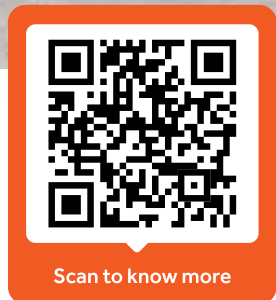
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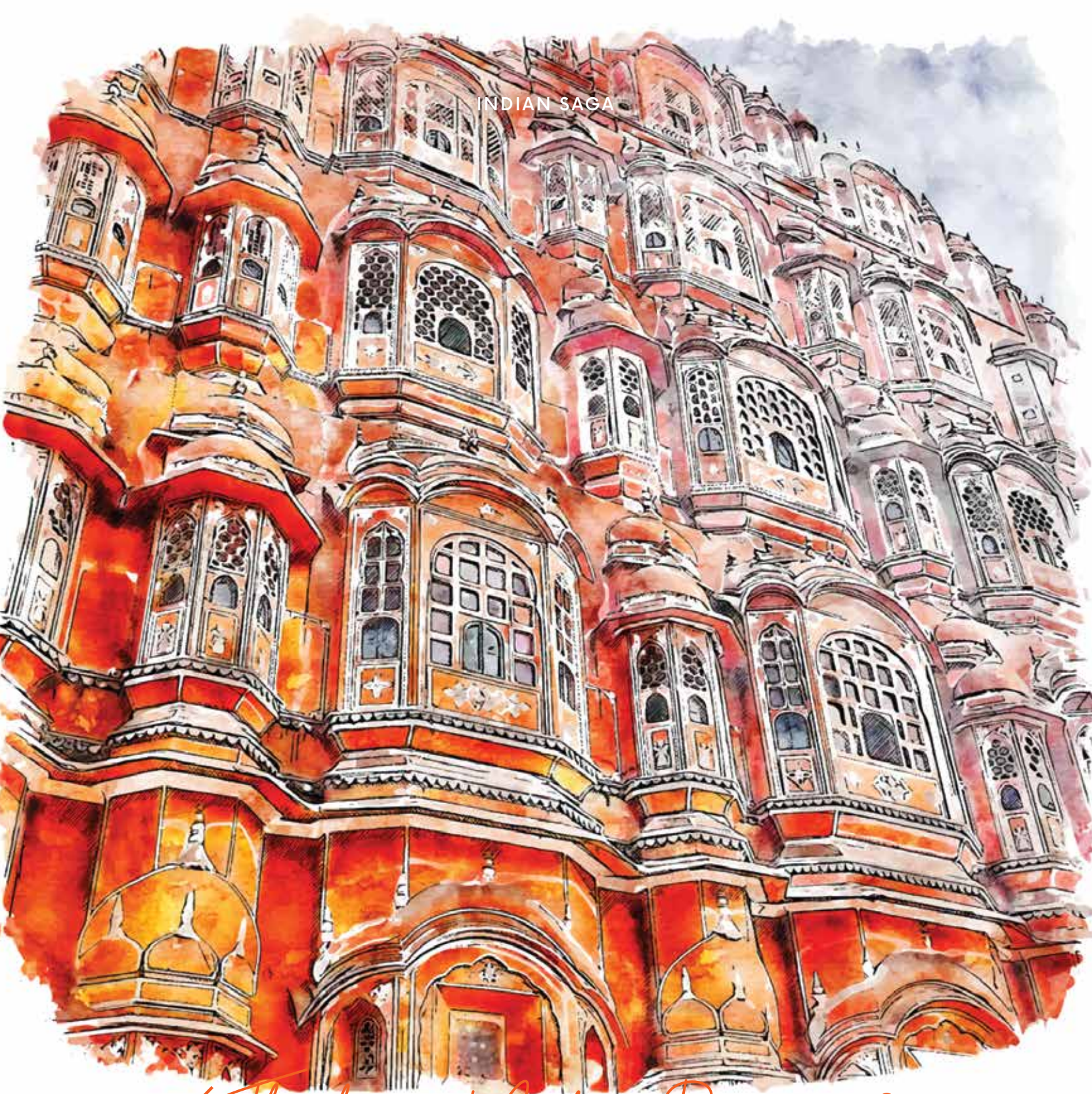
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'The big fat Indian Bazaar'
Rajasthan

Rajasthan, a mesmerising tourist destination, entralls visitors with its majestic forts, vibrant culture, and stunning landscapes. Smt Gayatri Rathore, IAS, Principal Secretary Tourism, Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation shares her valuable insights on the GITB and the coming season of tourism for the state.

- Sudipta Saha



INDIAN SAGA

From the grandeur of Jaipur to the romance of Udaipur, each city narrates tales of valor and royalty. Travelers immerse themselves in colorful festivals, exotic cuisine, and bustling markets, experiencing the rich heritage of the state. Moreover, Rajasthan has become a sought-after wedding destination, offering couples a royal backdrop for their special day. With palatial forts, luxurious heritage hotels, and scenic vistas, Rajasthan ensures that every wedding is a magical affair, blending tradition with opulence in the land of kings.

Highlights of GITB 2024

The Great India Travel Bazaar, a joint collaboration of Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). This year being the 13th edition, GITB is all set to offer a platform to capitalise your business. In addition to this, Smt Gayatri Rathore mentions, "This is the 13th edition of GITB and over the period of time it has actually grown the number of inbound tour operators that are coming. So, the numbers are constantly increasing and every time we try to add some worthy theme to GITB. This year the idea is to promote 'Wedding in Rajasthan and follow the trend of India says I do', therefore, we have tied up with Incredible India and will be focusing on 'Yes I do' campaign through Wed in India Expo organised on 5th April. Also, Rajasthan has been the place of numerous international and domestic celebrities wedding, so it has generated a lot of interests and excitement from the prospects who desires to tie their knot. Also, we are tying up with the various wedding planners, event managers, tour operators, so that this year GITB focuses on India as general wedding destination and Rajasthan in particular."



Gayatri Rathore

Showcasing Rajasthan

GITB offers an opportunity to Indian sellers to not just interact with international buyer but also it also offers an opportunity to showcase various aspects of this culturally rich state. "We are showcasing different experiences of Rajasthan because till now, we have known Rajasthan for heritage, culture, fairs and festivals but now experiential tourism about living with the camel herders, living the desert life, living with the artisans, so anyone interested we will be curating these fam trips in such a way that inbound operators are able to experience




INDIAN SAGA

Focus on Inbound Tourism

This year too, the USP of the GITB'24 would be the intensive and sharp focus on Inbound Tourism and Buyer-Seller Meet. Adding to it, Smt Gayatri Rathore says, "As of now 285 inbound tour operators have given their consent and definitely most of the tourism boards have also given their consent. Also, most of the domestic and international chains of hotel industry that have their presence in different countries have also showed their interest. This going to be a big affair where around 500-600 operators are coming and more than 1200 B2B meetings are planned. This year, GITB will primarily focus on wedding and therefore it will showcase wedding jewellery and wedding attire of different states as well as the wedding cuisines of different regions."

Sustainable approach

As this is the 13th edition which itself speaks about the sustainability and popularity of the show. "Taking cue from the Goa roadmap, we are also focusing on responsible and sustainable tourism practices. Recently, we have organised a responsible tourism conclave in Jaipur supported by Rajasthan Tourism. Seeing the increase in number of tourists' i.e. inbound and domestic tourists, we need to focus on sustainable and responsible practices as well. We have been receiving a very promising inbound number and we have definitely reached the pre-covid era and we had an international tourist arrival of more than 18 lakhs till the month January 2024 and domestic tourists have reached to almost 18 crores," highlights Smt Gayatri Rathore.



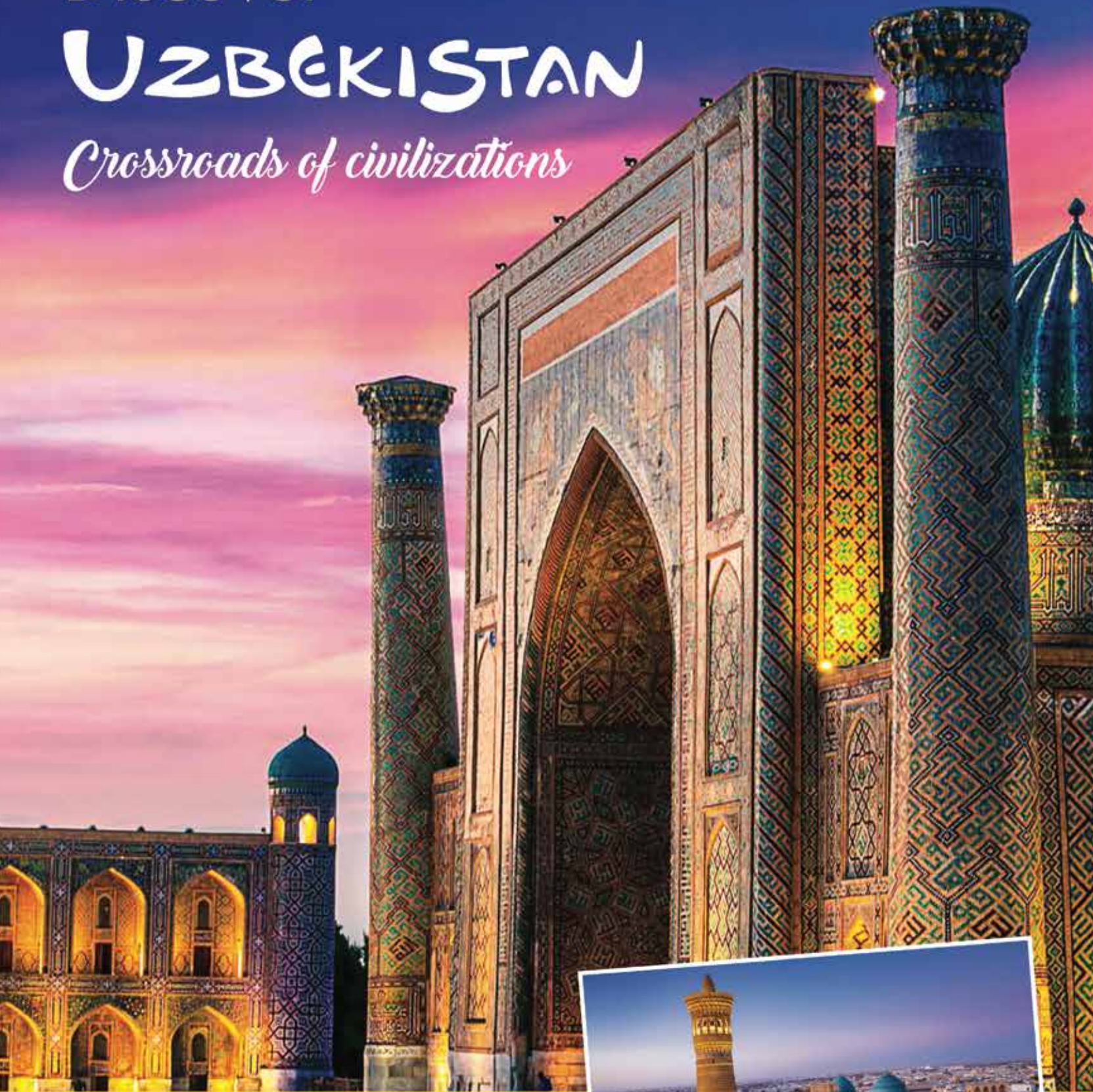
these lifestyles and they can sell it to their client," adds Smt Gayatri Rathore.

She further mentions, "We are now focusing on spiritual places and also offbeat destinations. We have given options for Bundi as the Bundi style of paintings has been very popular and it is located in a close proximity with tiger wildlife sanctuary. Jawai has also come up as a popular leopard sanctuary also the spiritual experiences such as Puskhar and Jaisalmer and Khatu Shyam Ji."



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A bright future for

Qatar's

tourism industry



Philip Dickinson

Qatar has long been known as a vibrant hub for culture, sport, and business in the Middle East. The country has recently made significant strides in establishing itself as a premier travel destination. Philip Dickinson, Leading International Market Development at Visit Qatar is focusing on creating events throughout the year for travellers.

-Tripti Jain



OFFSHORE BINOCULAR



With its exceptional growth in tourism over the past year, Qatar is looking to maintain its momentum and reach new heights in 2024. They are aiming to attract a diverse range of visitors. Qatar has ambitious plans for the upcoming year, including its focus on transit tourism, event planning, the Indian market, and the cruise industry, as well as its overarching goals for growth.

A year of events

Qatar aims to provide visitors with a wide variety of experiences, and this includes an extensive calendar of events throughout the year. From major sporting events such as the Qatar Open for tennis and Formula One races to cultural festivals like the Doha Jewellery and Watch Exhibition, there is something for everyone. Philip highlights the importance of a robust event calendar and shares, "We're making sure that every month has a range of different events to cater to various interests. By offering a mix of events, we aim to keep tourists engaged and entertained during their stay." Moreover, the country will be hosting a variety of world-renowned artists and performers across different genres throughout the year. These performances will take

place in the country's state-of-the-art venues such as the Katara Cultural Village and the Qatar National Convention Centre. Philip points out, "Our goal is to create unforgettable experiences for every visitor, ensuring they leave with lasting memories and a desire to return."

Qatar's efforts extend beyond entertainment, as it is also focusing on promoting educational and professional events. Conferences, seminars, and workshops in fields such as technology, healthcare, and finance will attract professionals from around the world. This focus on providing value beyond leisure helps position Qatar as a versatile destination that caters to a wide audience.

Focus on transit tourism: Stopover Program

As a major hub for international travel, Qatar is leveraging its position to encourage transit tourism. With millions of passengers passing through the country annually, there is a significant opportunity to capture transit business. Philip explains, "We want to convince people to stop in Qatar during their travels and experience everything the country has to offer. To facilitate this, Qatar Tourism has introduced a

stopover program in collaboration with Qatar Airways and Discover Qatar, offering affordable accommodation options starting at just \$14 USD per person per night. This initiative provides an opportunity for travellers to explore the country's rich culture and attractions during their layovers."

The stopover program aims to introduce passengers to Qatar's landmarks such as the Museum of Islamic Art, Souq Waqif, and the stunning desert landscapes. Furthermore, he adds, "We want visitors to experience the beauty and history of Qatar even if they are only here for a short period. This way, they will be more likely to return for a longer stay in the future."

Building strong relationships

India remains a key market for Qatar, and the country is actively engaging with the Indian trade sector to promote tourism. Philip shares the importance of working closely with the trade sector, and says, "We'll continue to collaborate with key players in the Indian market to boost group leisure, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions), and wedding tourism. Qatar Tourism is providing generous subventions to encourage groups to choose Qatar over other destinations, making it an attractive option for Indian travellers."

The focus on the Indian market is not just limited to group tours; it extends to creating personalised travel experiences for individual tourists and families. He



OFFSHORE BINOCULAR

explains, "By tailoring our offerings to suit the tastes and preferences of Indian travellers, we aim to create a home away from home for them in Qatar. From culinary experiences featuring Indian cuisine to hosting Bollywood events, we are committed to ensuring a warm welcome to its visitors from India."

A new grand Cruise Terminal

Qatar's cruise industry is rapidly expanding, and the new Grand Cruise Terminal serves as a testament to the country's commitment to growth in this sector. The terminal, located in the heart of the city, offers a seamless experience for passengers and access to a variety of local attractions. Philip emphasises the terminal's significance and shares, "The Grand Cruise Terminal is a beautiful facility that can

accommodate two mega-ships at once and provides easy access to the city's main attractions. Partnerships with major cruise lines such as MSC, Costa, Aida, and Silversea, Qatar is poised to become a premier cruising destination."

The Grand Cruise Terminal is not just about convenience; it also provides an introduction to the unique architectural and cultural identity of Qatar. Passengers are greeted with traditional design elements and modern facilities, creating a sense of wonder upon arrival. He adds, "We want passengers to begin their journey with us the moment they step off the ship, and that starts with a welcoming atmosphere at the terminal."

Thriving connectivity

While Qatar's tourism industry is thriving, there are still challenges

to overcome, particularly regarding air connectivity. Philip acknowledges the need for more flights from India and shares, "We need more point-to-point flights to meet the demand from India and other key markets. Qatar Airways continues to offer flights from major Indian cities, such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, with plans to expand further in the future."

Qatar Tourism is also exploring opportunities for growth in other markets, such as the United States, Europe, and East Asia. By partnering with airlines and travel agencies in these regions, Qatar aims to increase awareness of its offerings and establish itself as a key player in the global tourism industry. He adds, "We are constantly seeking new opportunities to expand our reach

and make Qatar a must-visit destination for travellers from around the world."

Qatar's tourism industry has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, and its ambitious plans for 2024 reflect its commitment to further success. By focusing on creating a diverse event calendar, promoting transit tourism, building relationships with the Indian market, growing the cruise industry, and expanding air connectivity, Qatar is setting itself up to become a top travel destination. Philip shares, "Our goal is to reach at least 4.8 million visitors in 2024 and eventually achieve our long-term target of 6 million by 2030. With its robust strategies and collaborative partnerships, Qatar's tourism industry is on track for continued growth and success in the coming years."




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Tamil Nadu



Home to breath-taking architectural wonders, charismatic landscapes, and vibrant culture, Tamil Nadu has turned out to be an ideal destination for travellers looking for diversified and magnificent travel experiences. Thiru.C. Samayamoorthy, (I.A.S), Commissioner of Tourism, is a man of vision and commitment towards taking the tourism of the state to new heights. He intends to maximise the visibility of the state on national as well as international platforms, so the state can capitalise on various segments which will boost the flow of tourist arrivals.

- Sudipta Saha



An enchanting array of experiences awaits!

Tamil Nadu Tourism policy envisions transforming Tamil Nadu into the most desirable experiential destination in Asia, reaching to unreached by leveraging its human resources, vibrant living cultures, diverse natural landscapes, heritage monuments, pristine coastlines, ancient traditions, and history. In alignment with this vision, I will endeavour to improve the tourist experience in Tamil Nadu across all touch points for holistic destination development, increased stakeholder collaboration, and strategic promotional campaigns nationally as well as internationally. Recognising that tourism growth requires a collaborative and coordinated approach will focus on enabling stakeholder discussions for unified and streamlined growth, focusing on 12 priority tourism segments such as Adventure Tourism, Recreation Tourism, Caravan Tourism, Rural & Plantation Tourism, Coastal Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Medical

& Wellness Tourism, Religious Tourism, Eco-Tourism, MICE Tourism, Heritage Tourism and Film Tourism. Further, the effort will be taken to promote Tamil Nadu as a land 'Where Stories Never End' with emphasis on promoting experiences for visitors rather than merely promoting sites by utilising traditional as well as digital platforms to reach out to the unreached. These steps are part of the strategic plan to increase the visibility of Tamil Nadu and to retain its position as a leading destination. Last but not the least, farm tourism or agro-tourism will be promoted as the state is involved in cultivation of a wide variety of grains, flowers, fruits, and vegetables, and people and children in the urban area, who want to experience integrated Farm practice, enjoying the micro-climate of Farm and taste farm grown fruits and vegetable. This will facilitate farm stay, additional income for farmers, and farm experience for visiting people.

The growth story

Tamil Nadu has consistently ranked as the top destination in terms of tourist visits. In 2022, TN ranked second in the Domestic Tourist Visits as per the India Tourism Statistics published by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. In 2023, Tamil Nadu recorded approximately 28.6 Crore Domestic Tourist Visits (DTV) and 11.76 lakh Foreign Tourist Visits (FTV), representing a 36 per cent increase in DTV and a 286 per cent increase in FTV over 2022 figures.

Critical factors that make Tamil Nadu unique and attractive

Tamil Nadu stands out as a unique destination, rich with potential for diverse forms of tourism. Boasting a legacy that spans thousands of years, this vibrant state is home to some of the most awe-inspiring heritage temples and historical marvels, showcasing the architectural prowess of ancient civilisations, and different

landscapes portrayed in Sangam text. From the bustling urban area of Chennai to the serene hill stations such as Ooty, and Kodaikanal, from pristine beaches to thriving wildlife sanctuaries, undulating tea gardens to ever-green coconut and mango orchards, emerald green paddy fields, Tamil Nadu offers diverse experiences to visiting tourist. Tamil Nadu is a cultural kaleidoscope featuring traditional dance forms, art, and cuisine that entices visitors with unique flavours. Home to over 80,000 temples, 411 ASI monuments, 100+ folk art forms, six UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and a 1,076 km long coastline, Tamil Nadu offers a treasure trove of attractions. The strategic location and strong infrastructure make Tamil Nadu an accessible tourism hub. With extensive rail and road networks, major airports and major seaports, deluxe busses, taxi services all over the state, good hotels to accommodate all sections of the tourists, and hospitable Tamil people with rich cuisine, are attractive to tourists. Ranked highly



Thiru. C. Samayamoorthy





for safety for visiting tourists, Tamil Nadu offers a compelling destination for tourists, blending history, culture, and natural beauty seamlessly.

Projects for the future

The state has demonstrated a proactive approach in catering to the evolving needs of tourists by introducing innovative tourism products such as Cruise Tourism, Glamping, and Caravan Tourism, Farm tourism. The Tourism Destination Development Scheme, designed to enhance tourist experiences, focuses on the integrated and sustainable development of destinations across Tamil Nadu. Adventure and Eco Camping sites are being developed across hill stations, beach sites, and dam sites, including lesser-known destinations such as Jawwadhu Hills, Kolli Hills, and Yelagiri, alongside Greenfield destinations such as Muthkuda Mangrove Forest and Vathalmalai Hill Stations. Projects aimed at improving tourist experiences at popular locations such as Hogenakkal Waterfalls, Pichavaram Mangrove Forest, and Poompuhar Heritage City, Development of Dhanushkodi is currently underway.

Innovative tourism products aimed at providing immersive tourist experiences such as 3D Laser mapping Sound and Light Shows are being introduced at important monuments such as Arjuna's Penance and Thiruvalluvar Statue. To improve the experience of tourists at destinations, multi-lingual audio guides and Virtual Tours will be developed.

The Kalaingar Centenary Jallikattu Arena was inaugurated in January 2024, is provides an immersive cultural experience and develops attractions showcasing the rich history, culture, and arts of ancient Tamil Civilisation including folk arts, sculptures, handlooms, handicrafts, and native flora around the venue.

Tamil Nadu is worth a visit

In addition to physical infrastructure development, Tamil Nadu's tourism strategy places significant emphasis on digital content creation and promoting compelling narratives. Through engaging storytelling and visually captivating content, the diverse attractions and experiences the state has to offer are actively showcased. Digital content in the form of Videos in categories such as cuisine, heritage, culture,

adventure, and other segments have been created and are shared in various platforms such as conferences, and travel marts. By leveraging digital platforms such as social media, websites, and virtual reality, it is intended to inspire and inform potential travellers about the various experiences in Tamil Nadu. The website is continuously updated to improve user experience and incorporate relevant information for visitors to plan their trips.

Through influencer campaigns such as 'Discover Tamil Nadu 2.0', lesser-known destinations such as Valparai, Poochamarthur, and Kolli Hills are being promoted. International partnerships with platforms like Travel XP and Nat Geo are bringing the beauty of Tamil Nadu to global audiences.

To showcase the allure of Tamil Nadu, a diverse range of events is planned throughout the year, offering visitor's insight into the state's rich culture and heritage. Notable annual events include the Indian Dance Festival at Mahabalipuram, the International Kite Festival, the International Balloon Festival, the Chennai Vizha (Festival), the handicrafts fair, and Namma Ooru Thiruvizha. These events serve as platforms for entertainment and cultural immersion, inviting visitors to

experience the vibrant essence of Tamil Nadu first-hand.

Strengthen partnership with the travel trade

The travel trade needs to be aware of the diverse opportunities and offerings across the state. Regular interaction and effective stakeholder management are paramount, given that the travel trade plays a pivotal role in the broader travel ecosystem. By maintaining open channels of communication and providing comprehensive information on available products and services, we aim to empower the travel trade industry to effectively promote and market Tamil Nadu as a premier tourism destination.

Efforts are underway to actively involve the travel trade industry in various trade fairs in which Tamil Nadu participates. These events serve as crucial platforms for fostering collaboration, sharing insights, and showcasing the diverse tourism products and services available across the state. By actively engaging with the travel trade at such forums, we aim to strengthen partnerships, enhance industry knowledge, and collectively promote Tamil Nadu as a premier destination for travellers.



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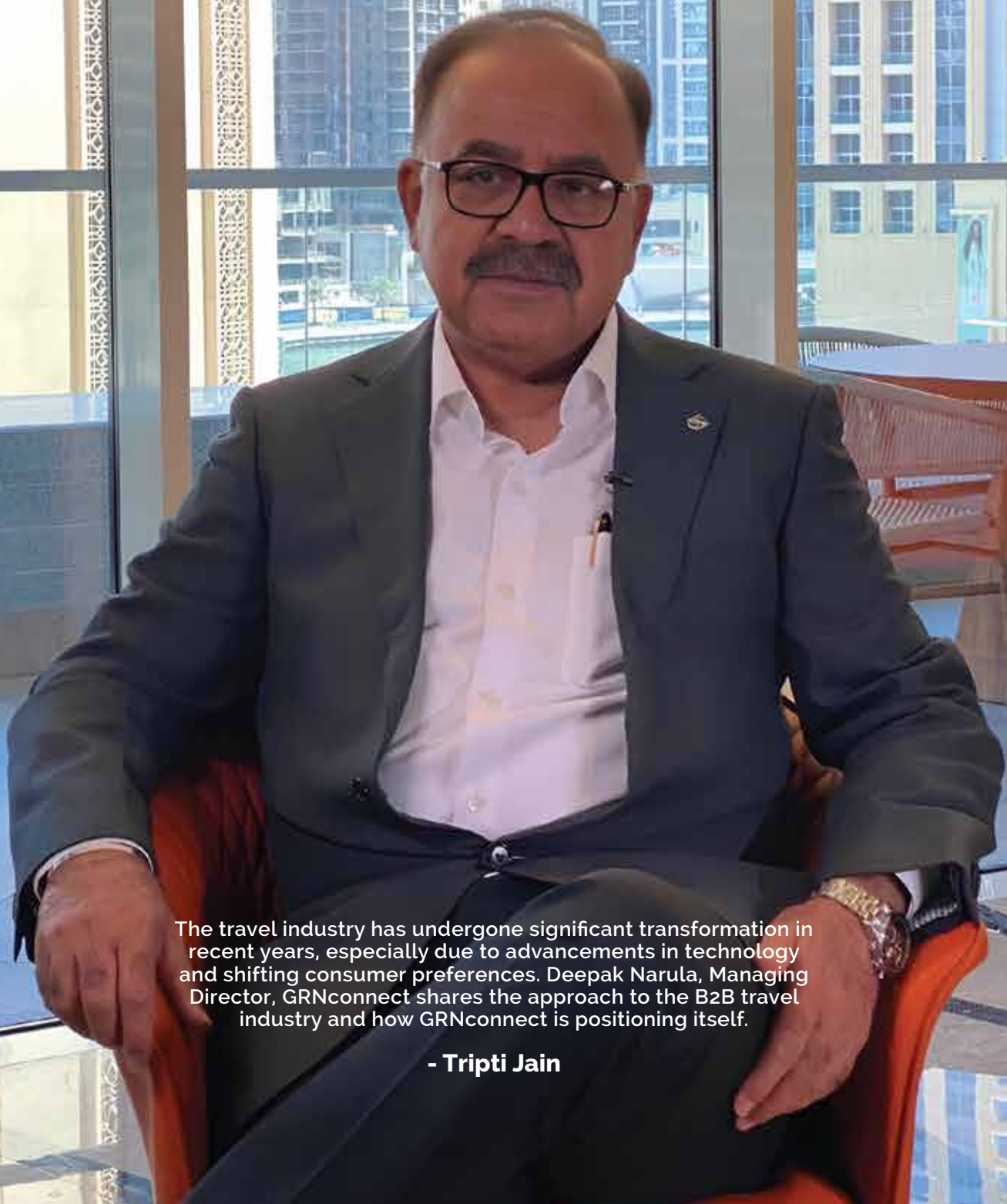
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BIZ

GRNconnect

Redefining B2B travel space



The travel industry has undergone significant transformation in recent years, especially due to advancements in technology and shifting consumer preferences. Deepak Narula, Managing Director, GRNconnect shares the approach to the B2B travel industry and how GRNconnect is positioning itself.

- Tripti Jain





A platform that is at the forefront of the transforming technology in the tourism industry is GRNconnect, a unified hotel booking platform that aims to streamline the booking process for travel companies and agents. They offer real-time access to availability and pricing information, making hotel bookings easier and more convenient for all stakeholders.

Simplifying the hotel booking process

One of the primary inspirations behind GRNconnect was the complexity and inefficiency in the hotel booking process faced by travel companies and agents. Deepak shares, "Our goal is to offer a unified platform that aggregates hotel inventory, simplifies booking procedures, and provides real-time access to availability and pricing information. This streamlined approach not only saves time and effort for trade partners but also allows them to offer a wider range of options to their customers."

Staying in sync with industry trends

They actively monitor global travel trends and engage with travel companies to understand their challenges and gather feedback. This approach allows the platform to stay in sync with the latest trends in the B2B travel and hotel booking industry. Deepak shares, "By leveraging our industry expertise and technological capabilities, we continuously innovate and

improve to meet the evolving needs of our partners. This forward-thinking mindset ensures that we remain a leading solution in the industry."

The future of the B2B travel industry

Looking ahead, the B2B travel industry presents promising opportunities for growth. The company is focusing on enhancing its user interface and experience to provide a seamless booking process. "We aim to strengthen our backend tech support to ensure reliability and efficiency," shares Deepak. In addition, "The platform plans to expand its product offerings to include more non-air products such as cruises, ground transport, and travel experiences, enabling it to meet the diverse needs of the B2B travel industry."

Transformation of the Industry

In the current year, leisure travel has emerged as the top travel segment, with leisure travellers leading the way in bookings. "Leisure travel has accounted for approximately 70-80 per cent of total travel bookings in the past year," says Deepak. This shift in travel behaviour highlights the importance of catering to leisure traveller's preferences, and GRNconnect has adapted its strategies accordingly. The platform now offers a wide range of vacation packages, tours, and experiences to meet the growing demand in the leisure segment.

Expanding reach in key markets

GRNconnect's top markets include India and other significant regions such as the Middle East and the United States. To expand its reach, the platform targets Tier I and Tier II cities within India, recognising the potential for growth in these markets. Deepak explains, "Our strategy involves targeted marketing efforts, partnerships with Tourism Boards, Hotel chains, and suppliers, as well as the enhancement of our platform to cater to the specific needs of travellers in these markets. These initiatives aim to increase our market share and establish it as a leading B2B booking platform."

GRNconnect's innovative approach to the B2B travel and hotel booking industry positions it as a forward-thinking platform that caters to the evolving needs of its partners. Deepak Narula's vision for the platform emphasises the importance of leveraging technology and industry expertise to stay ahead of the competition. His message to the coming generation of travel enthusiasts is to embrace their passion for exploration and discovery. "The travel industry offers limitless opportunities for those who dare to dream. By continuously innovating and improving its platform, we aim to lead the way in the ever-changing travel industry," shares Deepak.



EbixCash's vision for innovation and excellence

In an era marked by rapid digital transformation and evolving consumer preferences, the travel industry stands at a crossroads of opportunity and challenge. Ankur Sharma, Chief Business Officer – EbixCash, shares the mission of EbixCash which is to make every journey extraordinary.

- Tripti Jain



Ankur Sharma

EbixCash, a leading player in India's travel landscape, has been at the forefront of navigating these changes, pioneering innovation and setting new standards of excellence. With a commitment to customer satisfaction and a proactive approach to adaptation, they are shaping the future of travel in India and beyond.

Adapting to digitalisation

In recent years, the travel industry has witnessed a profound shift towards digitalisation and personalised experiences. EbixCash has embraced this trend, leveraging cutting-edge technology to enhance the travel journey for its customers. From intuitive booking platforms to personalised recommendations, the company is redefining the way people travel, making it more convenient, efficient, and tailored to individual preferences. Ankur emphasises the importance of digitalisation in today's travel landscape and shares, "Innovation

is key to staying relevant in the digital age. By leveraging technology, we can create seamless and personalised travel experiences that delight our customers and set us apart from the competition."

Embracing Sustainability

As awareness around environmental issues grows, travellers are increasingly seeking sustainable and eco-friendly travel options. EbixCash recognises the importance of sustainability and is committed to minimising its environmental footprint. From promoting eco-conscious accommodations to advocating for responsible tourism practices, the company is leading by example in fostering a more sustainable travel industry. Ankur highlights the company's commitment to sustainability and adds, "As stewards of the travel industry, it's our responsibility to minimise our impact on the environment. By promoting

sustainable travel practices, we can help preserve our planet for future generations."

Innovating in business and leisure travel

EbixCash's comprehensive portfolio spans both business and leisure travel, catering to a diverse range of travellers' needs. Whether it's corporate travel solutions for large corporations or bespoke leisure packages for adventure seekers, the company is committed to delivering excellence across all segments. By constantly innovating and adapting to changing market dynamics, they remain a trusted partner for travellers seeking seamless and memorable experiences.

"Innovation is at the heart of everything we do. By anticipating market trends and evolving customer preferences, we can stay ahead of the curve and continue to deliver best-in-class travel solutions," shares Ankur about the company's approach to innovation.

Navigating the tourism landscape

EbixCash swiftly adapted to the changing landscape in the past few years, implementing contactless technology, flexible policies, and enhanced safety measures to ensure the well-being of its customers and employees. As travel restrictions ease and confidence returns, they are poised for a strong rebound, ready to lead the industry into a new era of growth and prosperity. Ankur shares, "The pandemic forced us to rethink our approach

to travel and innovate like never before. While the road ahead may be challenging, I'm confident that our unwavering commitment to excellence will see us through."

Charting a path for the Future

EbixCash remains steadfast in its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and customer satisfaction. With a clear vision for the future and a relentless pursuit of excellence, the company is well-positioned to capitalise on emerging opportunities and overcome future challenges. By staying true to its core values and embracing change, they are shaping the future of travel and setting new standards of excellence for the industry as a whole.

Ankur shares his optimism for the future and adds, "The future of travel is bright, and we are leading the way. With a focus on innovation, sustainability, and customer satisfaction, we will continue to push the boundaries of what's possible and create unforgettable travel experiences for our customers."

With a relentless commitment to customer satisfaction, a forward-thinking approach to technology, and a dedication to sustainability, the company is charting a course for the future that promises to redefine the way we experience the world. As travellers embark on new adventures and explore new horizons, they will be there every step of the way, ensuring that their journey is seamless, memorable, and truly unforgettable.



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Exploring
Indonesia's
tourism landscape

Indonesia's tourism offers diverse landscapes, including Bali's beaches, ancient temples, lush rainforests, and vibrant cities such as Jakarta. Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia shares insights into the dynamic tourism landscape of the country.

- Naina Nath



OFFSHORE BINOCULAR

Indonesia's resurgence in tourism

Deputy Minister Marthini expresses her delight at being in India. She emphasises Indonesia's strong presence at industry events and exhibitions, attributing it to the country's remarkable tourism growth. "We have witnessed a 98 per cent increase in tourist arrivals since last year! In 2023 we welcomed 8.5 million tourists, but in 2024 we have already reached 11.7 million," she shares.

Indonesia has made significant strides in its tourism recovery, with Deputy Minister Marthini revealing that the country is nearly 90 per cent back to pre-pandemic levels. Particularly noteworthy is the resurgence in Indian tourist arrivals, with a substantial increase in incentives offered to encourage travel.

Diversifying tourism beyond Bali

While Bali remains a popular destination, Indonesia's efforts to promote other regions, including Lombok, Labuan Bajo, North

Sumatra, and Borobudur in Central Java are in full swing. These destinations offer a range of experiences including natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique activities, catering to diverse traveller interests. To facilitate tourism growth, Indonesia has established strategic hubs in Jakarta, Bali, North Sumatra, and Bintan-Batam, providing convenient access to various destinations across the archipelago.

The Deputy Minister emphasises the importance of integrated marketing activities to showcase Indonesia's cultural richness beyond traditional tourism offerings and shares, "Indonesia showcases an impressive range of over 17,800 islands, each with its unique charm. Among these, our developmental focus centres on five key destinations."

Island hopping is a thing!

Lombok, positioned adjacent to Bali, offers pristine beaches and vibrant nightlife, making it a prime candidate for

development. The trio of Gilis further enhances its allure, while the majestic Mount Rinjani stands as a testament to its natural beauty. Labuan Bajo emerges as a burgeoning tourist hub, home to the legendary Komodo dragons. With expanding infrastructure, it promises to become a cornerstone of Indonesian tourism. Set off on a captivating journey of island hopping, where each stop, from Pulau Padar to Pink Beach, unveils breath-taking vistas. Though amenities may be basic, the natural beauty remains unparalleled. Venturing northward, Lake Toba in North Sumatra presents a tranquil retreat, reminiscent of Switzerland's serene landscapes. Central Java's Borobudur, a UNESCO Heritage Site, embodies Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and is a magnet for travellers seeking historical immersion. Lastly, Likupang is an emerging destination, inviting travellers with its unspoiled charm and strategic accessibility.



Ni Made Ayu Marthini

Film Tourism is a game changer!

The role of film tourism in promoting Indonesia as a desirable destination, citing collaborations with Indian filmmakers and Bollywood stars such as Aishwarya Rai. The country has emphasised on their on-going efforts to collaborate with Indian travel associations and airlines for capacity building and joint promotional activities.

Embracing sustainable

Acknowledging evolving traveller preferences, Indonesia is embracing special interest tourism, including wellness retreats, eco-tourism, and regenerative tourism. The country has a keen focus on the importance of sustainable practices to preserve the environment and empower local communities while catering to diverse traveller interests.

Simplified visa process

The visa process for Indian travellers has been simplified, with the ease of online application and minimal requirements, further facilitating seamless travel experiences between India and Indonesia. One can simply go online, and pay \$45 USD and obtain a visa to enter our country.

Deputy Minister Marthini extends a warm invitation to travellers to explore Indonesia beyond the familiar tourist hotspots encouraging visitors to venture into lesser-known regions, discover hidden gems, and contribute to the sustainable development of Indonesia's tourism industry.





GOING THE EXTRA MILE AT ANANTA HOTELS

In the vibrant landscape of India's hospitality industry, Ananta Hotels stands tall, offering a blend of luxury, culture, and unmatched experiences. Gagan Katyal, VP Sales & Strategy, Ananta Hotels shares how they are redefining the standards of hospitality across the country.

- Tripti Jain

A legacy of luxury

Ananta Hotels boasts a legacy of luxury, with each property crafted to perfection, offering an oasis of tranquillity and opulence. Gagan emphasises the importance of creating spaces that resonate with guests and shares, "Our aim is to provide not just accommodation but an unforgettable experience. From the sprawling resorts in Udaipur to the upcoming properties in Ajabgarh, Jaisalmer, and Karjat, every property of ours exudes elegance and sophistication."

Embracing regional riches

An integral part of Ananta Hotels' success lies in its ability to embrace and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of each region. Gagan highlights the significance of incorporating

local flavours and traditions into the guest experience, and shares, "We believe in immersing our guests in the vibrant tapestry of India's diverse cultures. Whether it's savouring authentic Rajasthani cuisine or witnessing traditional folk performances, guests at our hotels are treated to an authentic taste of India."

Pioneering expansion

Under Gagan's strategic guidance, Ananta Hotels is embarking on a journey of expansion, with ambitious plans to introduce new properties across the country. "We see immense potential in emerging destinations, and our upcoming resorts in Ajabgarh, Jaisalmer, and Karjat are a testament to our commitment to growth and innovation. With each new venture, we aim to set new benchmarks in luxury hospitality," he adds.

Nurturing culinary excellence

At the heart of Ananta Hotels' success lies its culinary prowess, where every dish is a masterpiece crafted with passion and precision. Gagan emphasises the importance of offering a diverse and tantalising culinary experience, and shares, "Food is not just sustenance; it's an expression of culture and identity. From traditional Rajasthani delicacies to global gastronomic delights, the culinary team ensures that every meal is a journey of flavours and aromas."

Creating unforgettable memories

The ultimate goal for Ananta Hotels is to create unforgettable memories for every guest who walks through

the doors. "Hospitality is about more than just providing a place to stay. It's about creating moments that linger in the hearts and minds of our guests long after they've left. Whether it's a destination wedding in the picturesque landscapes of Udaipur or a rejuvenating retreat in the serene hills of Karjat, we strive to exceed expectations at every turn," shares Gagan.

Ananta Hotels is driven by the vision to explore the hospitality industry beyond its limits. With a commitment to luxury, culture, and innovation, they continue to redefine the art of hospitality, offering guests experiences that are truly extraordinary. At Ananta Hotels, the mission is to create moments that leave a lasting impression and memories that last a lifetime.





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Island Life's Journey towards experiential excellence

In the ever-evolving landscape of travel, where trends shift like tides, Island Life emerges as a beacon of innovation and customer-centricity. Sanket Mishra, Director of Operations, and Puneet Gera, Associate Director of Sales and Operations, share their vision to propel Island Life to new heights of success.

- Tripti Jain



Puneet Gera

Sanket Mishra

Riding the wave of experiential travel

Sanket believes that the essence of modern travel lies in experiences that transcend the ordinary. Speaking on the same lines he further shares, "Today's travellers seek more than just a destination; they crave immersive experiences that enrich their lives. Island Life has been quick to recognise and adapt to this shift, curating unique and unforgettable experiences for its clientele. From snorkelling with vibrant marine life in the Maldives to exploring the mystical beauty of Meghalaya's hidden waterfalls, every journey with Island Life is a voyage of discovery."

Anchoring in sustainability

Sustainability is the word that is important to the current travel and tourism industry. It is not just a trend but a guiding principle that shapes every aspect of Island Life's operations. Puneet

shares, "As custodians of some of the world's most pristine destinations, we have a responsibility to protect and preserve them for future generations. We are committed to promoting eco-friendly practices, supporting local communities, and minimising its carbon footprint. Through initiatives such as beach clean-ups, tree planting drives and partnerships with sustainable resorts, we are paving the way for a more responsible approach to travel."

Navigating the Seas

Island Life has been resilient in the face of adversities and striding the landscape of tourism in the past few years. Sanket shares, "The pandemic forced us to rethink our strategies and adapt to a new reality. Hygiene and safety became paramount concerns for travellers, prompting us to implement rigorous health and safety protocols across its

destinations." Furthermore, Puneet adds to this and shares, "We understand the importance of providing peace of mind to our clients, and we spare no effort in ensuring their safety and well-being."

Charting the road for expansion

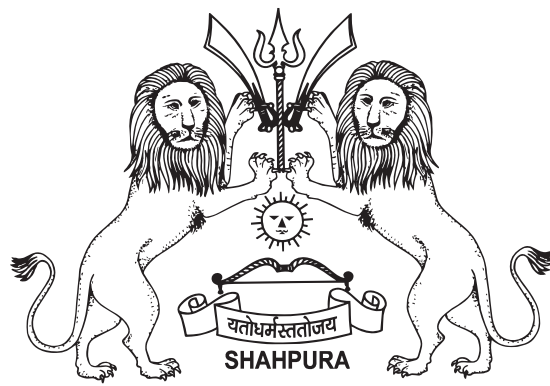
As Island Life continues to chart new horizons, the focus on strategic expansion and diversification is a must. Puneet shares, "We are constantly exploring emerging markets and identifying untapped opportunities for growth." With branches already established in key destinations such as the Maldives, Mumbai, and Dubai, Island Life is now setting its sights on new markets in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and beyond. Sanket adds, "Our goal is to offer our clients a diverse portfolio of destinations and experiences, ensuring that there is something for everyone."

Sailing towards customer satisfaction

At the heart of Island Life's success lies its unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction. Sanket shares, "We believe that our clients deserve nothing but the best, and we go above and beyond to exceed their expectations." Agreeing to this ideology Puneet shares, "Our clients are not just customers; they are partners on a journey, and their happiness is our ultimate reward. With personalised service, attention to detail, and a passion for excellence, we continue to set the standard for luxury travel experiences."

In the dynamic world of travel, Island Life stands as a shining example of innovation, sustainability, and customer-centricity. The company's journey is far from over, but with a steadfast commitment to excellence, they will continue to navigate the waves of change and emerge stronger than ever.





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Global Destinations

Fostering strong client partnerships

Known for its exceptional market approach, Global Destinations being a reputed travel solution provider understands the fundamentals of the market and offers a phenomenon solution to those who desires to expand their reach in the India market. Pranav Kapadia, Founder, of Global Destinations shares on their plans to assist their clients with excellent services.

- Sudipta Saha

VISION FOR 2024

Global Destinations has enjoyed a successful 15 years built on a foundation of tourism representation and marketing excellence. Our partnerships with over 20+ esteemed clients worldwide; including tourism boards, hotels and resorts, airlines and DMCs; and the dedication of our team have fuelled this journey. Pranav Kapadia shares, "We are incredibly grateful for their contributions. Looking ahead at 2024, our vision remains focused on solidifying our position as the undisputed leader in the field. We will achieve this through exceptional service, cutting-edge solutions, and unwavering integrity. Building on our established partnerships is paramount."

Furthermore he adds, "We are committed to fostering even deeper relationships and exceeding the unique needs of each client. Capitalising on the growing trend of personalised travel experiences, 2024 will be a year of amplifying industry recognition for 'Wanderlust Bespoke' by Global Destinations. This service caters perfectly to our bespoke travel partners offering them meticulously curated products. By expanding Wanderlust Bespoke's reach, we can unlock a world of unforgettable journeys."

THE NEW ADD-ONS

2024 has been a year of strategic growth for Global Destinations. They have welcomed several esteemed new clients to their portfolio, solidifying the presence in key travel markets. Adding further, Pranav Kapadia mentions, "We've bolstered our

expertise in two sought-after destinations by on boarding DMCs - Trip to Mexico and Nexa Travels & Incentives (Turkey) as valued partners. These partnerships strengthen our foothold in the popular Mexican and Turkish markets. Their in-depth local knowledge allows us to offer our existing clients a deeper understanding of these destinations, enabling us to develop even more impactful sales and marketing campaigns that resonate with potential travellers."

He further explains about the Wanderlust Bespoke by Global Destinations front and shares, "We're excited to announce our representation of Kavya Resort & Spa in Nepal. Partnering with Kavya allows us to tap into the growing market for wellness travel and slow travel. Through Wanderlust Bespoke, we showcase our unique offerings to a health-conscious audience seeking unforgettable experiences. By strategically expanding our portfolio and fostering strong client partnerships, we are well-positioned to deliver exceptional results and fuel mutual success in 2024 and beyond."

THE JOURNEY OF TIER II & III MARKETS

Tier II and III markets have increasingly become significant players in the global tourism landscape. These markets represent cities and towns beyond the primary metropolitan areas and are often characterised by emerging middle-class populations, improving



Pranav Kapadia

infrastructure, and growing disposable incomes. For Global Destinations' tourism clients, tapping into these markets can offer substantial growth opportunities and diversify their customer base.

"Recognising this potential, we at Global Destinations have actively engaged with Tier II and III cities. We've participated in roadshows and trade events at locations such as Guwahati, Raipur, Indore, Udaipur, and many more. These initiatives have been well-received by the local travel trade, resulting in a positive response and promising leads for our products and services," says Pranav Kapadia.

OFFER HIGHEST QUALITY AND SERVICES

Global Destinations goes beyond simply offering services. Pranav Kapadia expresses, "We strive to be a trusted advisor dedicated to our client's

business's success and growth. We understand that every client is unique. Each one will have specific needs, goals, and challenges. That's why we offer customised solutions, meticulously tailored to the requirements. Our team is our secret weapon. Comprised of seasoned professionals with extensive industry experience and expertise, we stay ahead of the curve. We constantly update our knowledge on the latest trends, technologies, and the best practices. This allows us to not only provide you with informed advice but also develop innovative solutions that propel your business forward."

He further adds, "Furthermore, we leverage our deep understanding of both global and local tourism markets. This translates into valuable insights, effective strategies, and actionable recommendations."



Saraca Hotels and Resorts expands horizons, now at GITB Jaipur and ATM Dubai!



Saraca Hotels & Resorts, where the essence of the “Ashoka Tree “ also known as the sorrow-less tree, permeates every aspect of our properties.

It is a collection of intimate luxury boutique hotels and resorts currently operating close to 100 keys across three unique properties: a heritage hotel in Lucknow, a jungle resort in Jim Corbett and a resort perched on a 300-year old Portuguese fort in the northernmost part of Goa.

In the realm of international travel to India, our hotel and resorts have emerged as coveted destinations for tourists hailing from the United States, Australia, the Middle East, Europe and beyond.



Saraca Hotel Lucknow: Embracing Heritage

In the heart of Lucknow, amidst its historic lanes and grand architecture, “ The White Jewel” stands as a testament to heritage and hospitality. Inspired by the Nawabi era, our property with 41 rooms and suites radiates elegance and charm, inviting guests to immerse themselves in the region’s rich cultural heritage. We prioritize not only luxury but also authentic experiences across the only “Classic Heritage Hotel” in the city through our curated culinary wonders both local and international, cultural tours and events.

For travelers heading to the sacred city of Ayodhya, the hotel serves as a tranquil stopover. Guests can plan convenient day tours to Ayodhya curated by the hotel while enjoying Lucknow’s cultural legacy.

Saraca Resort and Spa Corbett: Embracing Nature

Set amidst the tranquil wilderness of Jim Corbett, Uttarakhand Saraca Resort & Spa Corbett, the 45 rooms and suites with spectacular views of the tiger trails in dense Corbett jungle, beckon guests to reconnect with nature’s splendor. The resort is conveniently connected by air and road from the capital region of Delhi, India.

From exhilarating jungle safaris to peaceful riverside retreats, wellness (yoga & spa retreats), curated photography tours, every moment at our resort celebrates the harmony of sustainability, wild life, local culture & cuisines.

Amit Razdan, Chief Operating Officer, Saraca Hotels & Resorts says “Saraca Hotels and Resorts takes pride in being a luxury, heritage and a sustainable hospitality chain.

By 2025, we aim to double our properties, expanding our footprint in India and Sri Lanka”.

Fort Tiracol Heritage Hotel Goa: kaleidoscopic view of the Arabian Sea and the estuary of the Tiracol River

The 17th-century Portuguese fort was converted into a warm and private resort secluded from the hustle and bustle of the city, peacefully perched on the northernmost tip of Goa. It is the most famous heritage resort in Goa, a picture post card featuring elegant Portuguese décor in rooms, suites, restaurant, and bar with breathtaking views of the Arabian Sea and Tiracol River.

Culinary Experiences at Saraca Hotels & Resorts

Embark on a culinary journey at Saraca Hotel Lucknow and Saraca Resort & Spa Corbett, where our exceptional restaurants await discerning diners. Azrak, derived from the Arabic word for blue, offers a regal dining experience reminiscent of a bygone era, with meticulously restored decor and a symphony of international and regional cuisines, 1936 Ristorante pays homage to the year of Saraca’s inception, offering European delicacies specially authentic Italian surrounded by whispering trees overlooking the Courtyard. Asian Table, blends tradition with innovation, offering a fusion of flavors that transport diners on a journey through China, Japan and South East Asia.

Our hotels & resorts offer spectacular curated dining experiences under the backdrop of heritage, jungle and beach settings.

“Bandhan” - a luxury nuptials initiative, the heartfelt union of two souls, finds its perfect abode at Saraca Hotels & Resorts. In Lucknow or Corbett, our spaces blend elegance, tradition, and modernity.

Discovering exquisite destinations with Kazin DMC

Luxury travel isn't merely about visiting exotic destinations; it's about experiencing the epitome of opulence and sophistication. Vikrant Grover, Director of Azerbaijan & The Caucasus, Kazin DMC shares his valuable take on the new face of luxury destination experiences.

- Tripti Jain

In the realm of luxury exploration, Kazin Destination Management Company (DMC) stands out. Specialising in crafting bespoke journeys to enchanting destinations such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Belarus, they redefine the art of luxury travel.

Unveiling the allure of exotic destinations

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in the travel preferences of Indian adventurers, with a growing fascination for offbeat and exotic destinations. Vikrant shares, "The appeal of destinations such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Belarus lies in their unique blend of cultural richness and natural beauty. These countries offer an escape from the ordinary, inviting travellers to immerse themselves in captivating experiences."

India, with its diverse landscape and cultural heritage, has long been a hub for travellers seeking unique experiences. However, in recent years, there has been a surge in interest among Indian tourists to explore destinations beyond the traditional tourist circuit.

Crafting immersive traveller experiences

At Kazin, luxury isn't just a label; it's a promise of unforgettable experiences tailored to perfection. Vikrant emphasises, "Our mission is to

go beyond the ordinary and curate journeys that resonate with the deepest desires of our travellers. From exquisite accommodations to curated culinary odysseys and exclusive adventures, every detail is meticulously crafted to exceed expectations."

The hallmark of luxury travel lies in the attention to detail and the personalised touch offered to travellers. Whether it's a private tour of ancient historical sites, a gastronomic journey through local cuisine, or a thrilling adventure in the wilderness, every aspect of the journey is thoughtfully designed to create lasting memories.

Azerbaijan: Where heritage meets hospitality

Among the jewels in their crown, Azerbaijan shines brightly with its blend of ancient heritage and modern allure. Vikrant shares, "Azerbaijan captivates travellers with its rich tapestry of history, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality. From the ancient streets of Baku to the serene landscapes of Sheki, every corner tells a story of bygone eras and timeless charm." Azerbaijan, often referred to as the 'Land of Fire,' is a country steeped in history and tradition. From the UNESCO-listed Old City of Baku to the mud volcanoes of Gobustan, Azerbaijan offers a wealth of experiences for travellers seeking to uncover its secrets.

Kazakhstan: A tapestry of diversity

Kazakhstan, with its vast expanses and diverse cultural mosaic, beckons travellers seeking adventure and discovery. Vikrant shares, "Kazakhstan is a land of contrasts, where towering mountains coexist with endless steppes. From the bustling markets of Almaty to the tranquil shores of Lake Balkhash, each destination offers a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Kazakh culture." Kazakhstan, the largest landlocked country in the world, is a melting pot of cultures and landscapes. From the modern metropolis of Nur-Sultan to the ancient city of Turkistan, Kazakhstan offers a diverse array of experiences for travellers to explore. Whether it's horseback riding on the vast steppes, skiing in the Tien Shan Mountains, or indulging in traditional Kazakh cuisine, there's something for every luxury traveller in Kazakhstan.

Georgia and Belarus: Hidden gems of Eastern Europe

Georgia and Belarus may be lesser-known, but they hold untold treasures for intrepid explorers. Vikrant expresses, "Georgia's picturesque landscapes, renowned wine culture, and warm hospitality make it a hidden gem waiting to be uncovered. Similarly, Belarus enchants travellers with its



Vikrant Grover

pristine forests, charming towns, and rich historical heritage." Georgia, nestled between Europe and Asia, is a land of stunning natural beauty and ancient traditions. From the snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus Mountains to the lush vineyards of Kakheti, Georgia offers a wealth of experiences for travellers seeking authenticity and adventure. Belarus, with its idyllic countryside and medieval castles, is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered. Luxury travel is not just about visiting glamorous destinations; it's about experiencing the essence of a place in its truest form. With Kazin, travellers can immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of culture, history, and natural beauty that Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Belarus have to offer. Whether it's exploring ancient ruins, savouring local delicacies, they ensure that every journey is a masterpiece of luxury and refinement.



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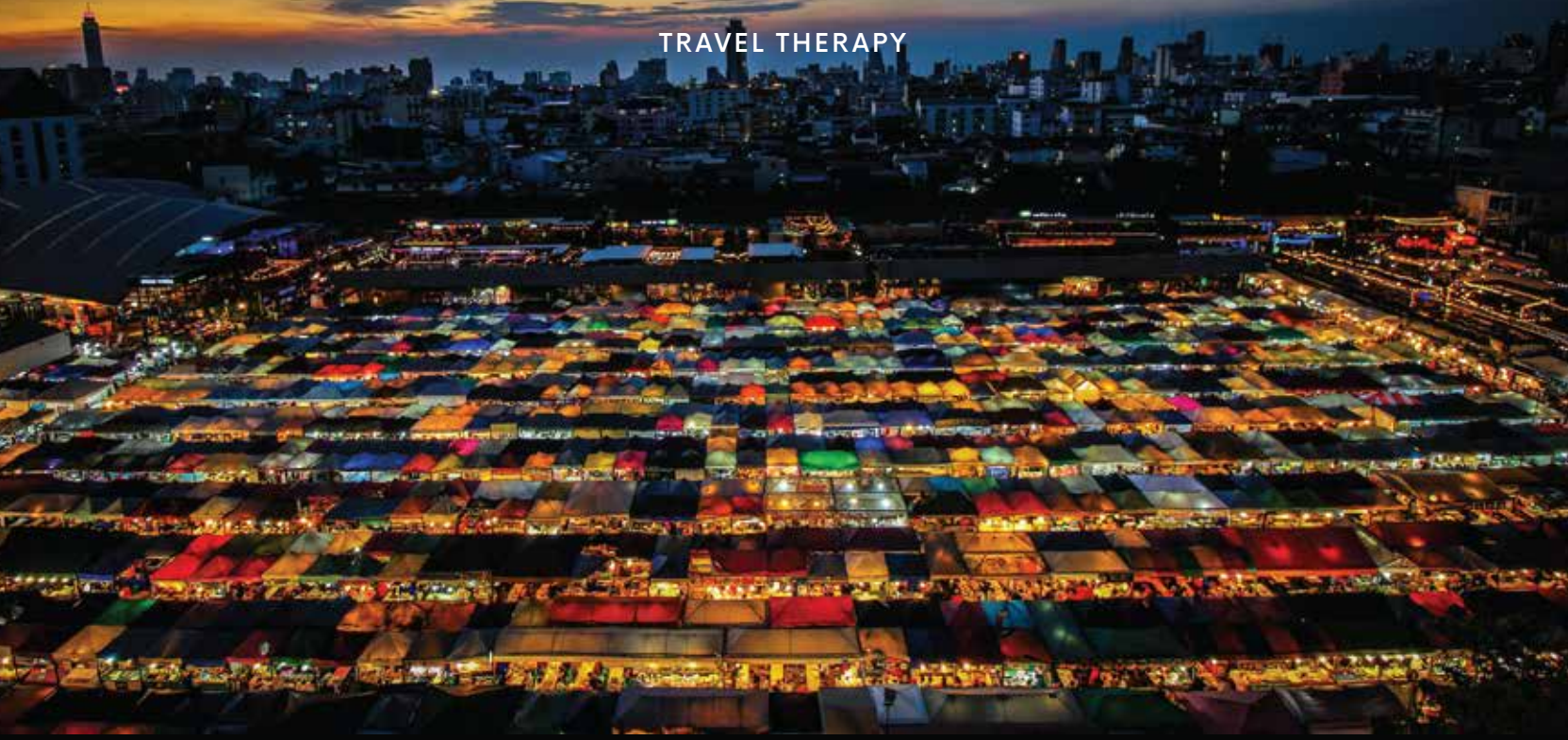
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A TASTE OF THAILAND!

Picture this scene! A Thai cook pondering over a simmering pot of gaeng pet (hot curry), resolutely adding another handful of tiny green chillies, called prick kee nu in Thai, a single one of which can blast the average uninitiated foreigner smack out of his chair. The verdict is out! The fact is that Thais like their food 'spiced up'.

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia



A harmonious blend of the spicy, the subtle, and the sweet and sour, meant to be equally satisfying to eye, nose and palate, Thai food is essentially a marriage of centuries-old Eastern and Western influences harmoniously combined into something uniquely Thai. Though served with a flourish, it clings to their traditional roots, with each dish riding on the guiding principle of harmony. 'A minute and detailed cuisine' is how Pinki Arora, an expert on the subject describes Thai cuisine. "The vegetables and fruit have to be cut in a particular way, to a particular size, and presentation is as important as taste. The technique of Thai cooking is all about blending of four flavours with roots, herbs and leaves to create something unique". According to Pinki, Thai cuisine comes in a large range, and its characteristics depend on who

cooks it, for who, for what occasion, and where? The cuisine relies on fresh produce, eating habits are dictated by social norms, and different palates are satisfied by refining and adjusting dishes. Tracing the history of Thai food means mapping out the nation's history! Stemming from the communal way of life led, Thai cooking involves ample use of herbs and spices that keep one healthy and close to one's roots and cultures. Thai food is the only one to have a combination of spicy salty, hot and sweet tastes. Originally, Thai cooking reflected the characteristics of a waterborne lifestyle, with aquatic animals, plants and herbs being the major ingredients. Traditional cooking methods were stewing, baking or grilling and Chinese influences introduced

frying, stir-frying and deep-frying. Culinary influences from the 17th Century onwards included French, Japanese, Portuguese, and Dutch. Thais were very adept at 'Siameseising' foreign cooking methods, and substituting ingredients. The ghee used in Indian cooking was replaced by coconut oil, and coconut milk substituted for other dairy products. Overpowering pure spices were toned down and enhanced by fresh herbs such as galangal and lemon grass. Keeping up with international trends, Thai cooking and food has undergone changes, but genuine Thai food isn't easy to imitate, mainly because of the ingredients used. They are the key to the cuisine. Thai ingredients don't have consistency, so one has to know what each item tastes like.

Introduced during the late 1600s by Portuguese missionaries, chillies are as intrinsic to Thai food as garlic is to French, with the Thais liking their food highly spiced. Some half dozen different kinds of chillies are freely used, the hottest of them all being a deceptively pretty little orange one called prik nu luang. If opting for less spicy fare, go for the moderately seasoned noodle dishes. A typical Thai meal might include a clear soup (perhaps bitter melons stuffed with minced pork), a fried dish (fish and ginger), a steamed dish (mussels in curry sauce), a hot salad (beef slices on a bed of lettuce, onions, chillies, mint and lemon juice) and sauces into which the food is dipped. There must be harmony of tastes and textures within individual dishes and the entire meal.



TRAVEL THERAPY

A huge attraction is snacks and Hors d' oeuvres, savoury tidbits that can be eaten alone or as side dishes! Traditional favourites include spring rolls, stuffed dumpling, satay, crisp fried rice noodles topped with sweet and spicy sauce, puffed rice cakes with herbed topping, and spring rolls. Representing the playful and creative nature of the Thais, creative presentation is a big part of Thai snack-making.

Then there are the salads! Called yam, Thai salads thrive on harmony of tastes and flavours, and are sour, sweet and salty. A simple dressing works equally well for meat, seafood, vegetable and fruit salads, and is made from sugar, fish sauce, and lime juice. The heat comes from fiery little bird chillies, but just how a salad should be depends on the texture

and flavour of the meat, vegetable or fruit used.

An intrinsic part of Thai cuisine is the chilli dip! The dips entail some complexity and are usually served with vegetables, meat or fish. A cook can whip up a bowl of dip from chillies, garlic, onion and shrimp paste, fermented fish, dried shrimp, sour tamarind etc. A dip can be a main dish or side dish, added to a pan of fried rice to flavour it, or drizzled on chips to jazz them up.

Curry lovers rejoice! Curries abound, each with its own delectable taste and flavours. The heart of all Thai curries is the curry pastes, which unlike Indian and other curries are made from fresh herbs and spices. The paste is cooked in coconut cream before meat or vegetable is added. A simple Thai curry paste comprises

dried chillies, shallots, and shrimp paste. More complex curries include garlic, galanga, coriander roots, peppercorns, lemon grass, and kaffir lime peel. A plain but good meal may consist simply of a soup and rice. Traditional Thai soups are unique because they embody more flavours and textures than commonly found. Meat or vegetable is cooked in broth or coconut cream with a 'soup base', usually a blend of spices and herbs, which flavour the soup. For a hurried, complete meal, just opt for single dishes that include rice and noodle preparations such as Phat Thai and Khao Phat.

Sweeten up! A Thai dessert is intrinsic to a good meal. Uniformly sweet, they are particularly welcome after a strongly spiced and herbed meal.

There are sweet desserts, comprising native sweets, including sugary confections wrapped in banana leaves, and also delicate custards in ripe coconut.

At the end of the spectrum come the fresh fruits- a story unto themselves. Predominant are grapes, durian, melon, papaya, mangoes, or jackfruit. Going beyond being a mere food item, carved fruit are parts of Thailand's image itself, featuring in advertising and tourism promotion campaigns. Who hasn't marvelled at the intricate designs produced by ladies seated on the ground, cutting, sniping, chiselling and arranging in myriad patterns and compositions, until what they've produced is a work of art.

To the point, one almost hesitates to spoil the decorations...!



About the author

Inder Raj Ahluwalia is a world-renowned international travel journalist & author. His professional profile features awards from several European and Asian countries, among others.



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Cruising into the Future A voyage of innovation

The cruise industry stands at a pivotal moment in its history, navigating a course towards innovation and sustainability. Nishith Saxena, Founder & Director of Cruise Professionals LLP, shares insights on steering the industry towards a brighter, more sustainable future.

- Tripti Jain



With a focus on proactive environmental measures, technological advancements, cultural exchange, guest safety, and sustainable growth, the cruise industry is poised to embark on a transformative journey towards a brighter, more sustainable future.

Navigating environmental blocks

Nishith is acutely aware of the environmental challenges facing the cruise industry. "Sustainability is not just a buzzword; it's imperative for the future of cruising. Cruise lines are investing heavily in eco-friendly technologies, such as LNG-powered ships, advanced waste management systems, and shore-side power facilities," he shares. He also emphasises the importance of proactive measures and shares, "By minimising our environmental footprint, we can ensure the preservation of the pristine destinations we visit." Moreover, he stresses the significance of collaboration between industry stakeholders and regulatory bodies to

implement sustainable practices effectively. "It's not just about what cruise lines do independently; it's about collective action towards a greener future," he shares.

Embracing technology

Technology plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of cruising. From AI-powered personalisation to virtual reality simulations, technology is reshaping every aspect of cruising. Cruise lines are leveraging technology to enhance guest experiences and streamline operational processes. Nishith shares, "Collaboration with cruise lines through Cruise Professionals LLP ensures the integration of cutting-edge solutions that elevate the onboard experience while improving efficiency." Furthermore, he envisions technology as a tool for enhancing sustainability efforts. he shares, "We're exploring innovations such as advanced propulsion systems and energy-efficient lighting to reduce our environmental impact. By embracing

technology, the cruise industry can not only deliver exceptional experiences but also minimise its ecological footprint."

Fostering cultural exchange

Cruising is more than just reaching destinations; it's about fostering meaningful cultural exchange. Nishith shares, "Cruise lines have a unique opportunity to promote cultural understanding and appreciation. We work closely with local communities to develop authentic shore excursions that showcase the richness of each destination while respecting its heritage and traditions. We believe that responsible tourism practices can enrich the travel experience for guests while benefiting local economies."

He emphasises the importance of responsible engagement with host communities. "We strive to create mutually beneficial partnerships that prioritise cultural sensitivity and economic empowerment. By fostering cultural exchange, the cruise industry can promote global understanding and appreciation for diverse cultures," he explains.

Prioritising guest safety and well-being

Guest safety and well-being have become paramount concerns for the cruise industry. Nishith emphasises the importance of stringent health and safety protocols to instil confidence among travellers. He shares, "Guests should feel reassured that their health and safety are top priorities. Cruise lines have implemented comprehensive measures, including enhanced sanitation procedures, onboard medical facilities, and pre-embarkation health screenings, to safeguard the well-being of passengers and crew alike."

He highlights the role of transparency and communication in addressing guest concerns. "We

prioritise open dialogue with guests to address any questions or apprehensions they may have regarding their safety. By prioritising guest safety and well-being, the cruise industry can build trust and resilience in the face of unforeseen challenges.

Charting a course for responsible growth

Sustainability is not merely a goal; it's a journey towards responsible growth. Nishith envisions a future where cruising serves as a model for sustainable tourism practices. He shares, "By investing in renewable energy, reducing single-use plastics, and supporting local conservation efforts, we can chart a course for sustainable growth. We are collaborating with industry stakeholders to develop holistic sustainability strategies that prioritise environmental stewardship while delivering exceptional travel experiences." He emphasises the importance of long-term planning and commitment to sustainability goals. "Sustainable growth requires a collective effort and a steadfast commitment to preserving our planet for future generations. By charting a course for sustainable growth, the cruise industry can pave the way for a more environmentally conscious future," he adds.

As we chart a course into the future of cruising, Nishith Saxena's vision for innovation and sustainability serves as a guiding light. Through his leadership at Cruise Professionals LLP, he continues to drive positive change within the industry, balancing luxury travel experiences with environmental responsibility. He believes in his words, "Together, we can navigate the waters of change, ensuring that every voyage is not only a journey of discovery but also a commitment to preserving our planet for generations to come."



Nishith Saxena





FLY24HRS SOARS AMIDST THE TOURISM LANDSCAPE!

Fly24hrs stands as a symbol of resilience and ingenuity in the global travel sector. Faced with turbulence, the company has exhibited strategic acumen and unyielding perseverance. Vaseem Parvez, Vice President Sahil Raj Chaudhary, CEO, Fly24hrs share the journey of creating a brand in the industry.

- Tripti Jain





Vaseem Parvez

Fly24hrs is in accordance with the evolving circumstances and maintaining a steadfast commitment to excellence; they are not only thriving, but surpassing notable milestones along the way. This triumph is marking a new phase of expansion and advancement. Through innovative strategies and unwavering determination, Fly24hrs has redefined industry standards and positioned itself for continued success in an ever-changing landscape.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

The journey of Fly24hrs reflects a tale of adaptability and agility. Vaseem Parvez, reflects on the challenges faced and shares, "The past few years have forced us to rethink our strategies and pivot swiftly to meet evolving customer needs. We have demonstrated remarkable flexibility by swiftly implementing safety measures, introducing flexible booking policies, and leveraging technology to enhance the customer experience of our brand. Speaking on the same lines Sahil shares, "Adaptability has been the key to our survival and success. We embraced change and emerged stronger than ever."

ACHIEVING MILESTONES

Despite the hurdles posed, Fly24hrs remained steadfast in its pursuit of excellence. Within a span of just two years, the company achieved a significant milestone by expanding its presence pan India. Vaseem takes pride on this accomplishment and shares, "Our journey to pan India presence symbolises our unwavering commitment to growth and expansion. It's a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team." Sahil shares the same sentiments and says, "Achieving our first goal within such a short timeframe is a testament to the resilience and determination of the Fly24hrs family."

LEVERAGING KEY SEGMENTS

Air ticket consolidation emerged as a cornerstone of the brand's success, serving as its best-selling segment. Vaseem highlights the importance of this segment and shares, "Air ticket consolidation has been instrumental in driving revenue and customer loyalty for us." Furthermore Sahil adds, "By focusing on this key segment, we are able to carve a niche for ourselves in the highly competitive market. We recognised the potential of air ticket consolidation early on and invested resources strategically to capitalize on this opportunity."

EXPANDING HORIZONS

Looking ahead, Fly24hrs has ambitious plans to expand its portfolio of services. Sahil shares, "This year, we are focused on integrating additional services such as holiday packages, travel insurance, visa services, and



Sahil Raj Chaudhary

railway bookings into our online portal." Speaking on the same lines Vaseem adds, "Diversifying our offerings will not only enhance customer satisfaction but also position Fly24hrs as a one-stop solution for all travel needs. By broadening the service offerings, we aim to cater to a wider audience and strengthen its competitive edge in the market."

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES AS WE GO!

As the travel industry rebounds and competition intensifies, Fly24hrs remains poised to navigate the challenges ahead. Vaseem understands the industry and explains, "The market is highly competitive, but we are confident in our ability to face challenges head-on and seize opportunities."

Sahil resonates with the same ideology and adds, "We have identified numerous areas for growth and expansion, and we are committed to capturing those opportunities. With a strategic approach and a dedicated team,

we are well-positioned to continue the upward trajectory and emerge as a leader in the travel industry.

The journey of Fly24hrs serves as a testament to the resilience, adaptability, and innovation that define successful businesses in today's dynamic landscape. Vaseem concludes and shares, "Our ability to adapt to change and embrace innovation has been instrumental in our journey towards success." Sahil adds to this and says, "We are excited about the future and confident in our ability to overcome challenges and achieve new heights of excellence."



Universally Loved, Universal Studios

Universal Studios, renowned for its legacy in cinematic history is an iconic destination drawing travellers from around the globe. Andrea Blackman, International Sales Manager, Universal Studios, sheds light on the strategic approach towards reintroducing the brand to the Indian market.

- Naina Nath

With a primary focus on understanding the evolving needs of travellers, she highlights the importance of market re-acquaintance. Through carefully curated market analysis, Universal Studios aims to tailor its offerings to meet the diverse expectations of Indian travellers, whether that means leisure tours or educational excursions.

The OG v/s the New-Age

Universal Studios comprises two major parks in the United States: Hollywood in California and Florida in Orlando. The distinction between the two is significant, with Hollywood being the original studio with a century-long cinematic history and still functioning as a working studio after all these years. Meanwhile, Florida's Universal Studios offers a range of attractions including Islands of Adventure and Volcano Bay, with the upcoming addition of Epic Park in 2025. Andrea shares, "I believe the most significant aspect of my inaugural visit to India. We want to reintroduce

ourselves to the market and inform people about our presence. In the United States, we have two major locations: the original one in California and the second one in Florida."

Targeting Indian and international markets

For Indian travellers, obtaining visas remains a challenge, but there's optimism as visa processing times have significantly reduced compared to previous years. The studio's focus lies in understanding market expectations, whether it's for first-time travellers, educational tours, MICE or FIT tours. "While locals contribute significantly to our visitation numbers, Universal Studios is keen on reviving the international market, particularly from key markets such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Korea. Marketing efforts are aligned with LA Tourism, with plans for collaborations and participation in trade events in India," shares Andrea.

Inviting travel pros

Universal Studios provides comprehensive training programs through the Universal Partner Community (UPC) for travel trade professionals. This certification program offers rewards, including discounted tickets, encouraging first-hand experiences of the park's offerings. She shares, "In terms of visitation, the best time for Indian travellers to visit Universal Studios Hollywood is between January and April to avoid crowds. Group bookings offer incentives such as complimentary tickets, while children under two enter for free."

Immersive attractions for all ages

Super Nintendo World and The Wizarding World of Harry Potter are immersive experiences catering to diverse age groups. The park offers a variety of attractions, from family rides to thrill rides, along with the iconic Studio Tour showcasing Hollywood's cinematic heritage. Andrea adds, "The Park's seasonal events, such as Halloween Horror



Andrea Blackman

Nights and Grinchmas, offer unique experiences for visitors. Universal Studios emphasises on accessibility, with wheelchair access throughout the parks and accommodations for service animals."

Universal Studios Hollywood welcomes Indian travellers to experience the magic of Hollywood and offers a diverse range of attractions suitable for all age groups. With on-going efforts to facilitate travel and enhance visitor experiences, Universal Studios remains a preferred choice for travellers worldwide.





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Stride the world of cruise with Discover The World - India



Dipti V. Adhia

Discover the World - India is a preeminent travel representation company, offering an extensive range of travel services across India and the Indian Subcontinent. Dipti V. Adhia, Country Director, Discover the World - India shares insights on the company's growth in the industry.

- Naina Nath





As a part of the esteemed global network of Discover the World, the company specialises in sales, marketing, and distribution services for various travel brands, ranging from airlines and cruise lines to hotels, car rentals, and online travel agencies. With a dedicated team of experienced professionals and a strong foothold in the Indian market, Discover the World - India remains steadfast in delivering exceptional service and value to its principals and the travel fraternity at large.

Steady growth and market penetration

Discover the World - India, under the astute leadership of CEO Chitparan (Chippy) Jegathesan and Country Director Dipti V. Adhia, has exhibited robust performance both locally and globally. The company has witnessed a consistent increase in revenue quarter over quarter, indicative of healthy growth within the travel industry. "This growth trajectory underscores

our commitment to our old and new clients while we simultaneously expand our market reach into new geographic regions." Additionally, the high levels of client satisfaction serve as a testament to the exceptional services offered by us," shares Dipti.

Predictions for the Cruise Industry

Looking forward, the cruise industry is positioned for sustained growth over the next five years. Fuelled by rising demand from both established and emerging markets, cruising has become a favoured choice for travellers across diverse regions globally. Dipti shares, "Factors such as the emphasis on sustainability, advancements in technology, and the exploration of new destinations are anticipated to influence the course of the cruise industry. With India emerging as a promising market for both domestic and international cruising, substantial opportunities for growth and innovation exist within the sector."

Strategic Marketing Initiatives

Regarding marketing activities, Discover the World - India is gearing up for a focused approach in 2024. "Emphasising digital marketing initiatives, particularly through social media and search engine optimisation, we aim to enhance our visibility and reach within the Indian market. Concurrently, efforts to strengthen relationships with existing principals and expand their client base through various marketing channels, including trade shows, roadshows, and webinars, remain at the forefront of Discover the World - India's strategic agenda for the year," shares Dipti.

Upcoming developments and initiatives

Exciting developments are on the horizon for Discover the World - India, including new client acquisitions, technological integrations, and strategic

marketing endeavours. She adds, "With an eye toward the future, we anticipate favourable outcomes for both 2024 and 2025, paving the way for continued growth and success. As these initiatives unfold, the company remains committed to delivering unparalleled service and value to its esteemed clients and partners."

Dipti V. Adhia extends a heartfelt message of appreciation to Discover the World - India's preferred partners and the entire travel trade community for their unwavering support. She shares, "Amidst the evolving landscape of the travel industry, we remain dedicated to innovation and the integration of new technologies aimed at enriching the travel experience. With a steadfast commitment to delivering unparalleled service and value, Discover the World - India looks forward to charting new pathways for growth and collaboration in the years ahead."



Forestis Dolomites

A luxurious alpine retreat

Nestled in the heart of the majestic Dolomites, the Forestis offers an unparalleled escape for those seeking luxury, wellness, and natural beauty. Teresa Unterthiner and Stefan Hinteregger offer their perspectives on the exceptional qualities that make the Forestis Hotel a truly unique destination.

-Tripti Jain



Teresa Unterthiner & Stefan Hinteregger





HOTELLIGENCE

Forestis is a sustainable hideaway to experience nature, space and time. This upscale retreat blends seamlessly with its stunning surroundings, creating a sanctuary that harmonises with nature while providing guests with the finest in modern amenities.

Teresa explains, "The goal was to create a space that seamlessly integrates with the surrounding environment, providing guests with a sense of peace and serenity." Stefan agrees to this and adds, "The hotel's design embraces the natural landscape, ensuring that every detail enhances the overall guest experience."

Design and Architecture

The Forestis Hotel's design and architecture are a testament to its commitment to sustainability and harmony with the environment. The hotel is built with local materials

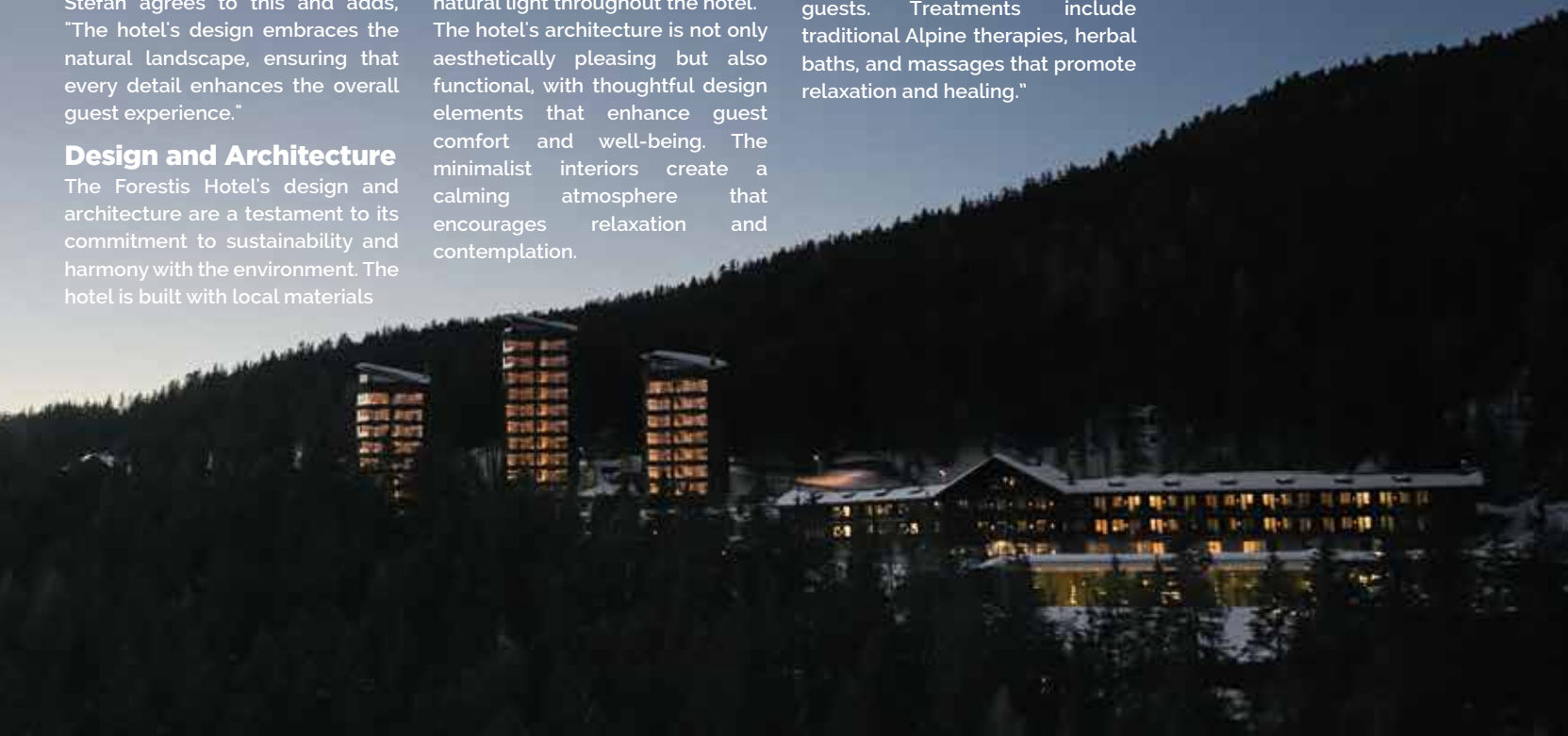
such as wood and stone, which not only support the region's economy but also blend naturally with the landscape.

Teresa shares, "The use of natural materials was crucial in creating a sense of continuity between the hotel and its surroundings." Stefan emphasises the importance of natural light in the design and shares, "Large windows offer breath-taking views of the Dolomites, while also maximising natural light throughout the hotel." The hotel's architecture is not only aesthetically pleasing but also functional, with thoughtful design elements that enhance guest comfort and well-being. The minimalist interiors create a calming atmosphere that encourages relaxation and contemplation.

Wellness and Spa

The Forestis Hotel offers an array of wellness and spa facilities designed to rejuvenate the mind, body, and spirit. The spa is a sanctuary of tranquillity, featuring treatments inspired by the surrounding Alpine environment. Teresa highlights the spa's focus on natural elements and shares, "Our spa integrates water, wood, and stone to create a soothing and immersive experience for our guests. Treatments include traditional Alpine therapies, herbal baths, and massages that promote relaxation and healing."

Stefan adds, "The wellness centre is designed to provide guests with a holistic experience, allowing them to connect with nature and find balance. From the Finnish sauna to the outdoor infinity pool, guests can enjoy a range of wellness amenities that cater to their individual needs."



HOTELLIGENCE



trails or participating in a cooking class, guests can create lasting memories during their stay."

Commitment to Sustainability

Sustainability is at the core of the Forestis Hotel's ethos. The hotel prioritises eco-friendly practices to minimise its environmental impact and preserve the pristine landscape of the Dolomites.

Teresa highlights the hotel's sustainable initiatives and shares, "We use energy-efficient lighting, water-saving measures, and waste reduction strategies to ensure that our operations are as green as possible. The hotel also supports local farmers and artisans, contributing to the community's

economic well-being."

Stefan explains the importance of setting an example for other luxury hotels and shares, "Forestis Hotel demonstrates that luxury and environmental responsibility can coexist, serving as a model for sustainable tourism. The hotel's dedication to sustainability not only benefits the environment but also enhances the guest experience.

The Forestis Hotel stands as a beacon of luxury, wellness, and sustainability in the Dolomites. With its stunning design, exceptional spa facilities, exquisite cuisine, and diverse activities, the Forestis Hotel offers an unparalleled retreat for those seeking a true escape in the heart of the mountains. Whether guests come for relaxation, adventure, or cultural enrichment, they will find it all at the Forestis Hotel, a haven of serenity and beauty.



Culinary Delights

The culinary experience at the Forestis Hotel is an adventure in itself, with a strong emphasis on locally sourced ingredients and regional flavours. The hotel's restaurant, led by talented chefs, offers a diverse menu that highlights the rich culinary heritage of the Dolomites.

Teresa describes the restaurant's philosophy and shares, "We take pride in using fresh, locally sourced ingredients to create dishes that celebrate the flavours of the region. The seasonal menu changes regularly to reflect the availability of local produce and ingredients."

Stefan appreciates the culinary team's creativity and adds, "The chefs at Forestis Hotel craft innovative dishes that not only taste exceptional but also pay homage to the local culture. Guests can enjoy a variety of dining experiences, from intimate dinners to outdoor picnics with panoramic views of the mountains."

Activities and Experiences

The Forestis Hotel offers a wide range of activities and experiences that allow guests to fully immerse them in the natural beauty of the Dolomites. From guided hikes and mountain biking tours to skiing adventures in the winter, there is something for everyone.

Teresa explains, "We want our guests to experience the wonders of the Dolomites first-hand, which is why we offer various outdoor activities throughout the year. In addition to outdoor pursuits, the hotel hosts cultural events and workshops that showcase the region's traditions and craftsmanship."

Stefan adds, "Our goal is to provide guests with a well-rounded experience that combines adventure, culture, and relaxation. Whether exploring the mountain



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An enchanting escape **BANYAN TREE**

With dazzling accommodations set amidst a show stopping backdrop, a stellar spa and top-notch restaurants, Banyan Tree Dubai makes quite an impression.

- Misbaah Mansuri



HEADS IN BEDS



Earlier this year, beneath the iconic Ain Dubai wheel, a transformative change unfolded along the beautiful Bluewaters beachfront. The luxury, eco-conscious Banyan Tree brand took over the property previously known as Caesars Palace Dubai. Just a few months into their tenure, the resort already feels entirely transformed, offering a fresh and unique luxury experience.

First impression

The first Banyan Tree resort to grace Dubai offers an exclusive slice of paradise with sweeping views of the ravishing backdrop. As I step onto this pristine property, I'm enveloped by a palpable sense of tranquility, a hallmark of the renowned Singaporean hospitality that Banyan Tree is celebrated for.

Among its 178 luxurious accommodations, Banyan Tree Dubai features an expansive four-bedroom villa complete with a personal pool and direct beach access, perfect for privacy and exclusivity. The hotel boasts a robust array of amenities, including seven diverse restaurants, three outdoor pools, a state-of-the-art fitness centre, a chic beauty salon, and the award-winning Banyan Tree Spa. Each facility is crafted to meet the



high expectations of the hotel's A-list clientele and delivered with the distinct elegance and tranquillity that the Banyan Tree brand is known for.

Back in my room, the contemporary decor blends seamlessly with local touches. The floor-to-ceiling windows and expansive balcony offer panoramic views of the ocean that are simply breath-taking. The bed, a plush sanctuary of comfort, promises a restful night, complemented by the exclusive Banyan Tree amenities. Each element of the room is designed to heighten comfort and enhance the luxury of my stay, making every moment at the Banyan Tree Dubai an experience to cherish.

Demon Duck by Alving Leung

In the evening, I find myself at Demon Duck by Alvin Leung where the atmosphere shifts into high gear. The venue, known for its cool and slightly theatrical ambiance, comes alive as it dishes out the best of Asian cuisine with a creative twist. Sipping on signature cocktails inspired by Hong Kong's vibrant cityscape, I can't help but feel drawn into the excitement and flair of it all. I am treated to an exquisite culinary adventure that blended classic Asian flavours with innovative twists. The standout

HEADS IN BEDS

dishes of the evening, each bursting with unique flavours and artful presentation, captured the essence of Chef Leung's daring culinary style.

First up was the bang bang chicken, a delightful surprise, straying from the traditional to introduce a more nuanced flavour profile. The chicken was tender, each bite enveloped in a subtly spicy and creamy sauce that set the stage for the journey ahead.

Following this I tried the wasabi prawn toast with tobiko and mango salsa. This dish was a showstopper—crispy toast layered with a generous topping of succulent prawns, the sharp bite of wasabi perfectly balanced by the sweet and fresh mango salsa. The addition of tobiko added a pleasant crunch and a pop of sea freshness that elevated the dish from great to unforgettable.

The sichuan chilli prawn was another highlight, perfectly cooked prawns bathed in a rich, garlicky Sichuan sauce that had just the right amount of heat to make your palate dance without overwhelming it. The spice level was expertly calibrated to enhance the natural sweetness of the prawns, making it a dish I kept coming back to throughout the evening.

The Singaporean chilli shrimps mantou was a comforting yet bold dish. The mantou, soft and fluffy, served as the perfect

vessel for the robust, tangy sauce of the chilli shrimps. The dish was thoughtfully composed, ensuring that each bite was as satisfying as the last, with the sweetness of the shrimps shining through the spicy, tangy sauce.

The chocolate & matcha fondant, served with a side of brown rice ice cream, was a masterful creation. Cutting into the fondant released a warm, gooey centre that perfectly combined the rich bitterness of dark chocolate with the earthy tones of matcha. The brown rice ice cream was a revelation—its subtle sweetness and grainy texture provided a delightful contrast to the molten cake, serving serious dessert goals.

Next came the rose bubble bath, a visually stunning and tastefully unique dessert that immediately caught the eye. The dish featured lychee rose ice cream, known for its light floral notes and sweet lychee flavour. It was presented in a whimsical setup that mimicked a luxurious bubble bath, complete with edible "bubbles" that playfully burst with each bite. The combination of lychee and rose was refreshing and not overly sweet, providing a gentle, soothing finish to an adventurous meal.

The service remained impeccable through the courses. Special mention must be made of the restaurant's assistant general manager; Tamara whose attentive oversight and warm, engaging presence ensured every detail was top-notch. The staff's enthusiasm

for the dishes was infectious, and their detailed descriptions added an extra layer of appreciation for the craftsmanship involved in each dessert. Each course was presented with a brief explanation, enhancing the dining experience by connecting the dish to its culinary roots and Chef Leung's creative vision.

Afternoon tea at Tocha

Another highlight from the stay was the Japanese afternoon tea experience at Tocha, a contemporary Japanese tea house at Banyan Tree Dubai, is an artful fusion of tradition and modernity, designed to delight tea connoisseurs and those in search of a tranquil respite. The setting of Tocha, with its serene ambiance and minimalist, elegant decor provided the perfect backdrop for a sophisticated tea session.

The menu was thoughtfully curated, beginning with a selection of savoury delights that cleverly incorporated Japanese flavours into classic afternoon tea fare. The egg pudding was a delicate start, topped with green pea, baby cress, sesame seed, and soya pearl—each bite was a subtle play of textures and earthy flavours. The wagyu beef was another standout, featuring perfectly roasted beef with a hint of teriyaki sauce, nestled in toasted bread and accented with pickled onion and lettuce for a refreshing crunch.

The langoustine, served on a bed of Japanese rice with a spicy truffle sauce and shiso cress, was beautifully presented and burst with the flavours of the sea, enhanced by the rich, earthy undertones of the truffle. THE CURED SALMON was equally impressive, paired with lemon cream and beetroot on ray bread, offering a perfect balance of smoky and tangy notes.

The crispy tuile, intriguingly flavoured with wasabi and tomato, provided a spicy, tangy kick that cleansed the palate and prepared it for the sweet treats to follow.

Moving on to the patisserie section, the Tokyo banana was a highlight, with its light sponge cake enveloping a creamy banana filling, all coated with a delicate layer of white chocolate. The vanilla & chocolate cream puff was a delight, combining a chocolate choux pastry with chantilly cream and a drizzle of salted caramel for a sweet and salty profile.

The sakura & green tea dessert was a delicate assembly of sakura jelly, matcha mousse, and vanilla sponge—each layer distinct yet harmoniously blended. The strawberry shortcake was a classic, made with airy cotton cake and fresh strawberries, topped with a light whipped cream that melted in the





HEADS IN BEDS

mouth. The raspberry & matcha mochi rounded out the experience, a creative twist that combined the chewiness of mochi with the freshness of raspberry and the earthy depth of matcha. The purin cream caramel offered a comforting end to the tea, with its soft vanilla curd and rich caramel sauce providing a satisfyingly sweet finish.

Beach day at Alizée Pool & Beach

I also revelled in a beach day at Alizée Pool & Beach at Banyan Tree Dubai which was a perfect blend of relaxation and indulgence under the sun. The setting is expansive, sprawling out across a terrace that leads into a shimmering pool and extends down to the white sand beach. It's the quintessential spot for anyone looking to unwind in a laid-back, yet distinctly chic environment.

The day kicked off with tropical sangria, a refreshing concoction that perfectly captured the essence of a beachside retreat.

Infused with white wine, Bombay Sapphire, Mancino Bianco Vermouth, and a homemade tropical fruit cordial, each sip was bursting with fresh, fruity flavours that complemented the sunny backdrop. The drink was beautifully presented, adorned with slices of fresh fruit that added an extra touch of tropical paradise. For lunch, I opted for the chili cheese nachos and the chili & cheese hotdog—both hearty choices that promised to satisfy my beach day cravings. The nachos were generously topped with tomato salsa, sour cream, jalapeños, olives, black beans, and avocado. Each component was fresh, and the nachos struck a perfect balance between spicy, creamy, and crunchy textures. The chili & cheese hotdog was equally impressive. The beef hotdog was juicy and well-seasoned, topped with chili beef and melted cheese that added a rich, indulgent flavour. The coleslaw and pickled jalapeños provided a crunchy, tangy contrast that cut through

the richness of the chili and cheese beautifully. It was comfort food at its finest, elevated by the beachside setting.

The final touch

The crowning jewel of my stay at the Banyan Tree Dubai was undoubtedly the visit to the Banyan Tree Spa, where tranquillity and indulgence merge to create an unmatched wellness experience. Greeted with a soothing foot bath and herbal refreshments, the stage was set for a session of profound relaxation.

The highlight of the spa visit was the Balinese massage that was a masterful display of technique and tradition, utilizing rhythmic strokes and aromatic oils that seeped deep into the muscles, releasing tension and fostering a sense of deep relaxation. The ambient sounds of the spa, from the soft music to the subtle flow of water, contributed to an atmosphere that felt detached from time and space.

This experience was a perfect

reflection of what Banyan Tree Dubai stands for—luxury, tranquillity, and exceptional service. Staff at Banyan Tree Dubai, always gracious and attentive enhances every experience with their warmth and professionalism, ensuring that each guest feels uniquely valued. The property's commitment to an eco-conscious and luxurious experience is evident in every detail, from the choice of sustainable materials in the décor to the organic ingredients in their spa treatments and culinary offerings. From the elegant, meticulously designed rooms that offer panoramic views of the Arabian Gulf to the diverse and superlative culinary delights at the property's multiple dining venues, every aspect of Banyan Tree Dubai is crafted to impress and indulge—the brand's distinct touch and allure casting its magic in every aspect.

NYC

Creating iconic landmarks

New York City, home to the world's busiest airport system and the number one port of entry for the US international travellers is experiencing tourist influx from all over the world. Makiko Matsuda Healy, Senior Vice President, Tourism Development Market, New York City Tourism + Conventions shares the plans to engage Indian travellers in order to promote NYC as a preferred destination.

- Naina Nath



Makiko Matsuda Healy



NYC: A prime destination

NYC welcomed 61.8 million travellers in 2023, indicating a significant recovery of 93 per cent of the city's record 2019 visitation levels. Additionally, in 2023, New York City saw the arrival of 3,36,000 Indian travellers, marking the market's complete rebound to pre-pandemic visitation levels, with an anticipated 3,83,000 visitors expected this year.

NYC Tourism + Conventions is actively engaging the Indian market through various events and meetings to promote NYC as a premier destination. This year's activities included B2B meetings, networking events, and showcasing iconic landmarks and entertainment options. NYC received continued support from six partners: Empire State Building, Trump International Hotel & Tower NY, Hudson Yards, Millennium Hotels, Circle Line Sightseeing Cruises, and Madame Tussauds. Adding to it, Makiko Matsuda Healy shares, "New York City Tourism + Conventions plans to launch our global tourism campaign in India in the second quarter of 2024, with the goal of driving visitation."

The travel trade academy program

The recently launched Travel Trade Academy program which includes Hindi subtitles is meant to enhance engagement with the Indian travel trade regarding New York City's offerings. This free online educational tool provides essential destination knowledge about the five boroughs, empowering agents to effectively cater to evolving consumer preferences. "With subtitles available in 10 languages, the Academy serves as a self-driven learning platform to inspire travel operators worldwide to curate personalised NYC itineraries for their clientele," says Makiko Matsuda Healy.

India: an emerging market

India, the world's fifth-largest economy presents significant opportunities for NYC tourism. With an average 11-day stay, Indian visitors contributed \$569 million to NYC's economy in 2022, spending \$2,200 per person. In 2023, 3,36,000 Indian tourists visited NYC, marking a return to pre-pandemic levels. Leisure accounted for 68 per cent of visits with business making up 32 per cent.

Indian travellers typically prefer solo hotel stays and book air travel between March and May, highlighting their importance as a key market for NYC tourism's recovery and growth. "The bond between the Indian Travel Trade and New York City Tourism + Conventions reflects our joint

commitment to providing unforgettable experiences for global travellers. Your insights and collaboration are vital as we navigate the current landscape. New York City welcomes Indian travellers seeking inspiration and adventure. We are committed to strengthening ties with the Indian market and exploring innovative avenues together," mentions Makiko Matsuda Healy.

Destination updates

- LaGuardia Airport: Completed an \$8 billion transformation to a single main terminal, enhancing transportation access and passenger amenities.
- John F. Kennedy International Airport: Undergoing a \$4.2 billion redevelopment, including a new Terminal 6 and upcoming Terminal 1 opening in 2026.
- Newark Liberty International Airport: Developing a 2.5-mile elevated guideway train system to reduce emissions and traffic congestion.
- Stonewall National Monument Visitor Centre: NYC's first LGBTQ+ history centre opens in 2024.
- ICC Men's T20 World Cup: Hosting eight matches at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, including the India-Pakistan clash on June 9.
- FIFA 2026 World Cup: New York/New Jersey to host eight matches, including the final, in the expanded Club World Cup.
- New York City Football Club Stadium: NYCFC building New York's first professional soccer stadium, creating 16,000 jobs and adding \$6 billion to the City's economy.

Must-visit spots & activities for Indian travellers

- Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island
- Times Square
- Central Park
- Broadway Shows
- Museum Mile Top of the Rock Observation Deck Food Tour in Queens
- Little India in Jackson Heights



Chiva-Som and Zulal Wellness Resort

Showcasing wellness excellence in India



Dr. Mubaris Ahamed



Ms Joelle Elkhoury

A recent collaboration between Chiva-Som International Health Resort and Zulal Wellness Resort brought a taste of wellness excellence to Mumbai, India. Dr. Mubaris Ahamed, TAIM Specialist and Ms Joelle Elkhoury, Family Wellness Specialist, Zulal Wellness Resort, share their valuable insights showcasing award-winning wellness cuisine, spa therapies, and consultations.

-Naina Nath



HOTELLIGENCE

The event, held in partnership with Kathiwada City House, aimed to introduce guests to the unique offerings of these acclaimed wellness destinations.

The pop-up spa experience

The highlight of the showcase was a two-day Pop-Up spa event, offering guests the opportunity to indulge in 20-minute experiential massages. This immersive experience allowed guests to sample Chiva-Som's renowned spa therapies first-hand, with expert therapists on hand to provide consultations and treatments.

Bringing Wellness to Life

Dr. Mubaris Ahamed, TAIM Specialist and Joelle Elkhoury, Family Wellness Specialist, Zual Wellness Resort, emphasised the importance of experiential wellness. By providing personalized consultations and treatments, guests gained a deeper understanding of traditional Arabic and Islamic medicine, as well as family wellness practices. Through pulse checks and tailored recommendations, guests experienced the holistic approach to wellness promoted by both resorts.

Culinary Delights and Chef Collaborations

In addition to spa experiences, the event featured culinary collaborations, with chefs from Chiva-Som and Zual presenting their wellness-inspired menus. Cooking demonstrations allowed guests to witness the preparation of nutritious and delicious dishes, showcasing the resorts' commitment to holistic dining experiences. The event catered not only to new guests but also welcomed past patrons, providing an opportunity for reconnection and exploration.

Wellness beyond borders

Both Chiva-Som and Zual Wellness Resort are at the forefront of wellness trends, offering innovative programs tailored to individual needs. From family wellness initiatives to

personalised consultations based on traditional medicine, these resorts are redefining wellness experiences. With a focus on sustainability and holistic wellbeing, they continue to inspire guests from around the globe.

The collaboration showcased the highest standard of wellness achievement. Through immersive spa experiences, culinary delights, and personalised consultations, guests gained invaluable insights into holistic wellness practices. As these resorts continue to expand their offerings and reach, they reinforce their commitment to nurturing the mind, body, and soul.

"The concept we're aiming to convey is to provide a glimpse of Chivasom and Zual. Chivasom is renowned for its therapists and therapies, as is Zual. Family wellness, while not firmly established in India, is a focal point. Introducing this concept here seemed ideal, particularly for TAIM. While we're familiar with Ayurveda and Thai medicines, TAIM is an area where we're still learning. Our intention is to delve into this concept because, as experience teaches, it leaves a lasting impression. Through our consultations, therapies, and food, our goal is to allow people to fully grasp what Chivasom and Zual offer." - Dr. Mubaris Ahamed, TAIM Specialist, Zual Wellness Resort

"Zual Wellness by ChivaSom opened in 2022, marking its second anniversary this year. Zual represents not only an expansion of the ChivaSom brand in terms of property but also a broadening of services. While ChivaSom Hua Hin is an adult-only resort, prioritizing privacy and tranquillity, Zual in Qatar embraces a more inclusive approach. ChivaSom believes that wellness should be accessible to all ages, starting from childhood, fostering a family-wide understanding of wellness principles. To accommodate this ethos, Zual features two distinct areas: Zual Salinity



caters to adults seeking self-discovery and solitude, mirroring the environment of ShivaSom Hua Hin. Meanwhile, Zual Discovery provides opportunities for families to engage in wellness activities together. As pioneers in family wellness resorts, Zual offers tailored experiences for both adults and children, ensuring each family member has the opportunity to pursue their wellness goals," shares Joelle Elkhoury, Family

Wellness Specialist, Zual Wellness Resort. Alongside individual 'me time,' Zual emphasises family bonding through a range of wellness-focused activities and offerings. For children, age-appropriate activities are provided, categorised into four age groups, catering to their developmental stages and maturity levels. Afternoons are dedicated to encouraging families to spend quality time together.



From Royal Weaves
to Vibrant Prints

Discover TEXTILE TOURISM IN MADHYA PRADESH

Unveil the magic of Rich Textile Heritage

Madhya Pradesh is inevitably a kaleidoscope for textile lovers, with centuries-old tradition of handloom weaving and dying skills passed down through generations. Textile Tourism in Madhya Pradesh offers an immersive experience that surpasses the souvenir collection dating back to 5000 years. Let us take a peek into some of the top destinations in Madhya Pradesh for textile tourism.

CHANDERI

The thin air like Chanderi Cotton textile, a hand-woven interlacement of gold and silver warp and weft forming popular motifs like paisley, guinea design, peacock, mehrab and flowers beholds the rich and prestigious



culture of Chanderi. The fabric was exclusive among royals and the then Queen of Baroda put a price on sarees after rubbing the fabric onto her cheeks. Folklores are prevalent as soft as the cloth as high was its price. Chanderi sarees are not just a textile or a cloth, but a handwoven saree exemplifying the history and the century-old tradition of sarees that come in three types of fabrics - pure silk, silk cotton and Chanderi cotton.

MAHESHWAR

Nestled on the banks of the Narmada River, Maheshwar a centuries-old centre for handloom weaving, has been famous for its



beautiful Maheshwari sarees characterised by vibrant colours, gold zari borders, and unique pit loom weaving techniques. These sarees, known for their unique style, were introduced by a queen about 250 years ago. Traditionally made from cotton, they come in a variety of designs including plain, striped, and even geometric patterns. Explore the bustling handloom market, visit heritage havelis showcasing the craft, or try hand at weaving a small piece of cloth under the guidance of a master weaver.

HAND BLOCK PRINTING ON TEXTILES

One of the few art forms practised through its original technique, the Nandna Print is a colourful block print produced in the village of Tarapur in Neemuch and Umedpura. This comfortable clothing is the traditional attire of the Bhil and Bhilal tribes.



The town named Bagh near the historic city Mandu boasts a 1000-year-old tradition of Bagh Print, a unique form of natural dye block printing. Visit a printer's workshop to witness the meticulous process of hand-carving wooden blocks and printing intricate floral and geometric patterns onto fabric.

Bherugarh is the centre of Batik Printing near Ujjain. This age-old wax-resist dyeing and printing craft is considered to have been practised in Egypt, Japan and India for over 2000 years. At present, textile lovers can visit Bherugarh and witness over 800 men and women working as printers in the village.

Handblock printing fabric-tying and dyeing crafts belong to Indore. For Handblock printing vegetable and natural dyes such as indigo, turmeric roots, pomegranate skin, lac, iron, etc. are utilised to create the colours in this technique which produce a complex yet understated impression. The amazing part is that since the natural colours penetrate the cloth, they do not quickly fade enhancing the fabric's aesthetic appeal. While in fabric tying and dyeing craft is referred to as Bandhani or Bandheji in Madhya Pradesh.

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is recognising the potential of textile tourism and taking steps to promote this unique travel experience. Pranpur village in Chanderi is India's First Craft Handloom Tourism Village developed by the tourism department. This unique initiative intends to allow tourists to visit the weaver's community in Pranpur and directly interact with artisans, witness the weaving process, and understand the cultural significance of these textiles.





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EVENT AFFAIR



H.E. Haymandoyal Dillum, High Commissioner of Mauritius to India celebrates the 56th Anniversary of Independence and the 32nd Republic Day of Mauritius

Around 300 guests comprising Indian dignitaries and senior officials, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, business and industry leaders and Mauritian nationals including Mauritian students attended the event. The Hon. Shri Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West) at the Ministry of External Affairs of India represented the Indian Government to the function.



The Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in India, and Meliá Hotels International, organises an interactive session

The Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in India, in collaboration with Meliá Hotels International, organised an interactive session to promote the Cuba destination in the Indian market. More than 40 representatives of travel agencies, national and international airlines, businessmen and print and digital media were present.



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APPOINTMENTS



Ministry of Tourism

Suman Billa returns to MoT as Additional Secretary. IAS officer of the 1996 Kerala cadre, Suman Billa, former Joint Secretary with the Union Ministry of Tourism has been reinstated as Additional Secretary at the central department. His appointment comes as a replacement for Rakesh Kumar Verma, a distinguished IAS officer of the 1993 Punjab Cadre, who previously served as Joint Secretary within the Ministry before his elevation to Additional Secretary. Verma has transitioned to the Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation in a similar capacity.

Minar Group

Minar Group appoints Deepak Kumarr Bhatnagar as CEO. Mr Bhatnagar, a respected figure in the tourism industry, joined Minar in July 2023 and has swiftly risen to this pivotal leadership role. Having earned his postgraduate degree in Tourism from the University of Delhi, Mr Bhatnagar has amassed over 36 years of invaluable experience in the sector. His illustrious career includes significant stints at esteemed organisations such as SITA and Le Passage to India. Mr Bhatnagar is celebrated for his exceptional skill in creating unique travel experiences and has been an influential Executive member of the Indian Tour Operators Association.



Sabre

Sabre strengthens APAC team with the appointment of seasoned industry leader Rajiv Bhatia. Rajiv, formerly of Bird Group, joins as Executive Director, APAC Market Expansion and will be instrumental in further expanding Sabre's footprint in key growth markets, including India, one of the world's fastest growing travel marketplaces. With extensive experience in the travel space, Rajiv brings a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record of success to Sabre's dynamic, customer-centric team.

Finnair

Finnair, the national airline of Finland, announces the appointment of Anupam Vig as the new General Manager for India. Anupam Vig is a dynamic professional with over two decades of experience in the airline industry. His expertise lies in developing and implementing innovative sales strategies that drive growth and expand market presence. Throughout his career, Anupam has demonstrated a deep understanding of industry dynamics and consumer behaviour, consistently delivering results by identifying business opportunities.



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