



# EXPRESS TRAVELWORLD

INDIA'S FOREMOST TRAVEL BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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A proud legacy

#RVC2018:  
Culture, Connect and  
Camaraderie in  
Canada

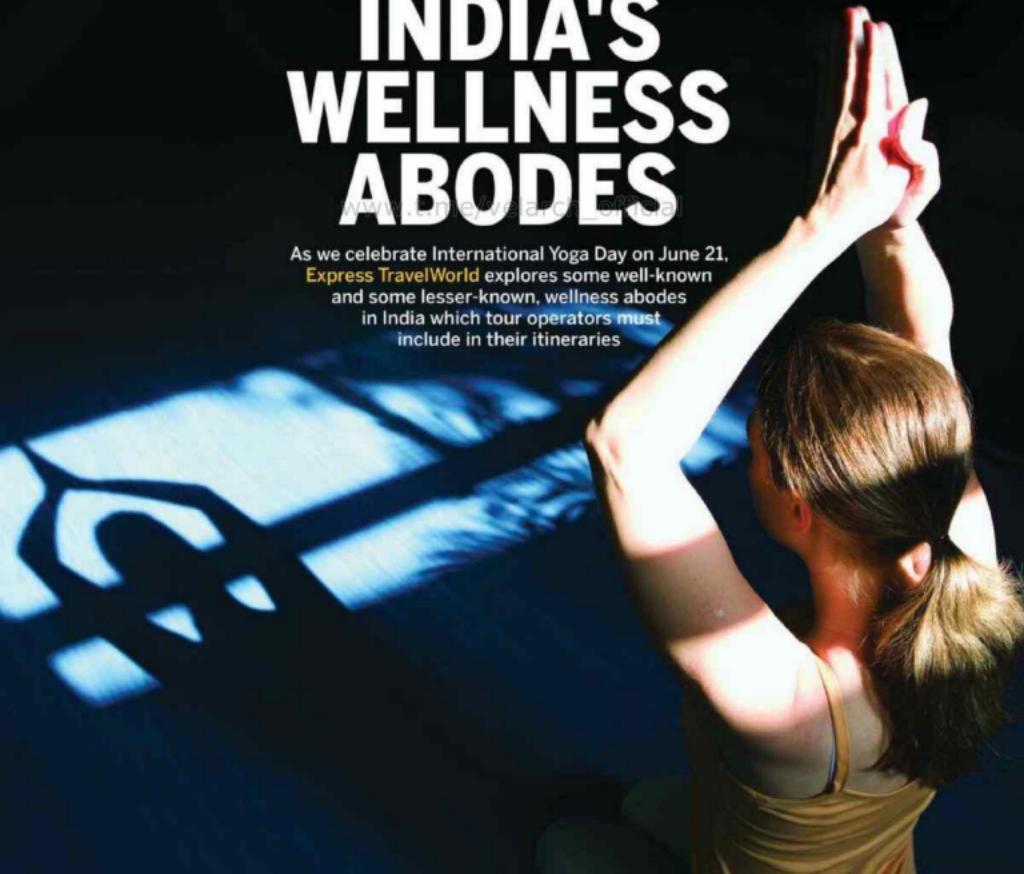
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Glamping in colonial style

## INDIA'S WELLNESS ABODES

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As we celebrate International Yoga Day on June 21,  
**Express TravelWorld** explores some well-known  
and some lesser-known, wellness abodes  
in India which tour operators **must**  
include in their itineraries





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# The Travel Counsellor - Raise your hand

I am sure you will agree there is more to travel than just stamping a place on your passport. Even for the first time traveller, it all begins with a certain expectation that leads to an experience and then finally to a cherished memory. For the seasoned lot, the story is no different - once again it's about an expectation that leads to an experience. What are we all looking for is the real question. My recent travels at various B2B tourism and trade interactive platforms clearly revealed that travel in this age is not just about travel but a kind of a therapy that works for the soul. It does not matter if you are in the heart of Times Square or on a secluded zone in an island nation - us they say "one man's food is the other man's poison".

Today's tour operator is not just selling a dream destination or vacation and being just an agent/operator. He or she is working as a travel counsellor rather than just a consultant. If you read rightly it goes far beyond just designing a tour or a travel wishful. One has to enter the very psyche of the clients, to give them what they are looking for. During one of my conversations with a Mumbai based tour operator; she emphatically stated that she has to change her role from a tour consultant to a psychologist at times. Clients open up to us on matters that are highly confidential both on the personal and professional front. It's this understanding of the



**"Today's tour operator is not just selling a dream destination or vacation and being just an agent/operator. He or she is working as a travel counsellor rather than just a consultant"**

most sensitive secrets and personal turmoils that at times works rather than just the price point. Certainly this may not be restricted to just a few and there are many tour operators who believe in working on files that are wholesome rather than shallow and go beyond just the price point. But what's interesting to note here is that few discussions across B2B tables at global forums have gone beyond just what will sell with promising margins to what can be redesigned and recreated to meet the need of that very private client. Here we are talking about a holiday which goes beyond just the word 'Bespoke'. Interestingly, there are few players and suppliers at international trade shows who have got the pulse right and are looking for those buyers who will articulate that dream into a well defined reality.

From laid-back trips to active holidays, the demands are interesting and intriguing. Our previous issue was on monsoon retreats and this issue is on various yoga retreats in India. In keeping with the International Yoga Day on June 21, we at Express TravelWorld felt it's apt to showcase few Yoga retreats that the tour operator and travel fraternity may consider worth exploring. Breathe and read on...

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# Muziris to be role model for Alappuzha and Thalassery heritage tourism projects

International Maritime Museum coming up at Pattanam

**Steena Joy**  
Mumbai

THE KERALA state government's prestigious Muziris Heritage Project will be the role model for two more heritage tourist projects at Alappuzha and Thalassery. Speaking exclusively to **Express TravelWorld**, P M Noushad, managing director, Muziris Projects, informed, "The Kerala state government is working on two more heritage tourism projects at Alappuzha and Thalassery. Muziris will be the role model for these new projects. In 2016, the finance minister and chief minister of Kerala wrote to UNESCO for listing the Spice Route Project. The 31 countries which were part of the Spice Route such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal, Oman, the GCC countries among others, have shown keen interest to contribute to

the project, both in terms of investment as well as documentation. So on June 15 and 16, ambassadors from at least 15 of these countries alongwith some of their scholars will converge for a one day discussion in Kochi to study the Muziris and Alappuzha projects. Based on these discussions, we will organise an international conference in January 2019."

Muziris Projects is fully owned by the Government of India to spearhead Kerala's greenfield project in heritage tourism. The project timeline is 10 years. Commenting on the investment so far in India's largest heritage tourism project, Noushad stated, "The ₹42.5 crore allocation by Government of India has been fully used and the state government has made an additional investment of ₹100 crore. The project hopes to break even by 2022/23. The



P M Noushad

revenue sources include the 12 boat jetties, the restaurants and the international convention centre at Kodungallur—Muziris International Research and Convention Centre—which can accommodate 1200 pax and has state-of-the-art facilities. From January to April this year we have al-

ready earned ₹26 lakh (₹12 from the convention centre)."

When complete, there will be a total of 29 museums and heritage sites in the Muziris project. Presently, six museums and three heritage sites have been opened to the public. After the first phase was opened to the public, there was a delay in completing the second phase. Denying this, Noushad said, "There has been no delay as such. Being a government project some delays are expected. The second phase has already opened."

Commenting on how the project has benefitted the local community and the trickle down effect of Muziris, he added, "We employ a lot of local labour so there is direct employment. The local community is also benefitted from tourism infrastructure development like roads, street lights, toilet blocks, boat jet-

ties (which locals can also use for their daily commutes), etc. At present we own 11 airconditioned boats and the charges are very nominal. There has been a lot of tourist footfall. Every month since January this year, around 650 foreign tourists have visited the synagogues in the area (six out of the three main synagogues are part of the Muziris Project)."

Outlining the future roadmap for the Muziris Project, Noushad informed, "We have acquired land near Pattanam for a Maritime Museum which will be of international standards and the 31 countries along the Spice Route have shown interest in contributing to the project both in investment and in data collection. The state government has allocated ₹40 crore for heritage projects this financial year and a major share of this will go towards the Spice Route and Muziris Projects."

## QTA focuses on tapping India outbound

**Sudipta Dev**  
Mumbai

QATAR TOURISM Authority (QTA) recently opened its representative office in Mumbai, with a focus on tapping India's growing outbound tourism market. Mumbai is the 11th global office of QTA. Speaking at the very first press conference, Hassan Al Ibrahim, acting chairman, QTA, said, "In September last we had launched a new strategy to double tourism. We are focused on growing tourism and India is a critical source market for us." Pointing out that there are 174 weekly flights between Doha and



13 Indian cities - 100 by Qatar Airways and 74 flights from Indian airlines, Ibrahim mentioned there has been 15 per cent growth from the India market. "We wanted to come to India

with a holistic approach. We did not do any heavy consumer drive initiatives till now," he added.

QTA is looking at delivering unique experiences to Indian visi-

itors, along with stronger engagement with the media and the travel trade. No visa is needed to visit Qatar for 80 nationalities, including Indian passport holders. This makes Qatar the most open country in the region. The key themes include culture and heritage; Museum of Islamic Art; nature; and family entertainment. The Pearl of Qatar is a modern shopping and dining destination, with luxury residences and hotels. The festivals that would be of much interest to Indian travellers are – Qatar International Food festival and Qatar Summer Festival. Among the natural wonders in

Qatar is the breathtaking scenery of Khor Al Adaid, which is the inland sea about 60 km from the capital Doha. "We are concentrating on providing experiences not available elsewhere. We are curating experiences for Indian travellers," stated Rashed AlQureeshi, chief marketing and promotion officer, QTA.

Seventy per cent of hotels in Qatar are four star and five star. Hotels are competitive in the region and accommodation options range from hotel apartments to desert camps. Being a family destination, there are affordable hotels also.

# India among top five growing markets for Booking.com

**Steena Joy**  
Amsterdam

WITH 47,500 Indian properties listed on its website, Booking.com sees India among its top five growing markets.

Speaking exclusively to Indian media at its headquarters in Amsterdam, Gillian Tans, CEO, Booking.com said, "We see India in our top five growing markets. With more than 47,000 listings, it clearly shows the amount of investment our company is making in the India market. It is a



Gillian Tans

market that is fast growing and it is one that we have prioritised."

She went on to add that the biggest change she saw in the India market is that more and more consumers are finding their way online. "Companies like MakeMyTrip have really helped open up the market. Even in the non hotel segment, a lot of models like Oyo Rooms have emerged which have professionalised the category. They have standardised the segment and bring a quality layer online," she said.



## Cox & Kings launches Self-Drive 365 for road trip enthusiasts across India

**Tanuvi Joe**  
Mumbai

COX & KINGS has always been famous for constantly innovating and releasing new products in the market that can cater to all kinds of travellers in the Indian market. For the women travellers, it introduced Getaway Goddesses and just last year, the company came out with a new segment called Enabled Travellers for the disabled people.

Hence it should come as no surprise that for the year 2018, Cox & Kings launched a segment called Self-Drive 365. Karan Anand, head of relationships, Cox & Kings said, "The travel market has been changing constantly and our company has always believed in



keeping up with the latest trends and innovating products that satisfy all kinds of travellers. From group tours to family tours and then couple travels to now the solo traveller; the market has seen a constant change. We noticed a rise in self-drive trips and to serve that market, launching this new segment is necessary."

The new segment aims to encourage travellers to discover and be a one-stop road trip planner while offering a range of road trips within Indian and across the globe.

Debojit Sen, business head, Self-Drive 365 added, "We have personally gone on these trips and made a list of destinations and activities



that the consumer can do while on a self-drive trip. After intensive consumer research, we have made a list of top 10 domestic and international trips one can take. From customised itineraries to travel assistance and insurance, Cox & Kings will take care of everything."

Cox & Kings is looking at

four segments namely - the passionate and adventurous traveller; owners of vehicles; Double Income No Kids (DINK) and young families. USA, Spain, Ireland are few of the international drives and the Himalayas, Delhi, Kerala, Rajasthan are some of the domestic trips enthusiasts can take in India.

# 'THE TRAVEL SECTOR IS A LARGE MARKET FOR SOPHISTICATED STORAGE DEVICES'

With travellers storing and sharing more data than ever before, their smartphones constantly run out of space. **Khalid Wani**, channel sales director, Western Digital India highlights SanDisk's range of solutions for travellers' storage requirements

**What changes do you see in the usage of smartphones today?**

The smartphone usage sector has witnessed a social and cultural behaviour shift over past three-four years - thanks to the affordability of smartphones, various apps for sharing content, ease of access, the choices to store and share data on the move. This need for increased data is fast growing, and this has led to innovations in smartphone features such as dual sim, multi-lens cameras, 8K videos, more in-built phone storage and RAM for faster processing, without affecting the performance or speed.

**Can you elaborate on the market for storage devices? How does the travel sector contribute to this market?**

India's travel sector has expanded in the recent years, driven by the increase in domestic spend, internet penetration and changing lifestyles and aspirations. All of these have a common link - the smartphone. Then, there is the personalisation of the experience in the form of photographs and videos created by travellers during their travels. Travellers are now sharing more data than ever before. Travellers click countless pictures and then store this data either on the cloud or use an external storage device to free up storage space, or to share data through offline mode.

A recently conducted online research found that 83



Khalid Wani

The number of smartphone users in India is expected to grow by 15.6 per cent to reach 337 million in 2018, which highest estimated growth posted by any country. The rise in the usage of smartphones will automatically result in the rise in the external storage products

per cent of Indians with a personal smartphone have run out of storage, with 29 per cent of respondents running out of space at least once a week and 62 per cent of respondents running out of space at least every three months. The travel sector is a large market for sophisticated storage devices.

**How is SanDisk filling the demand for storage space, for Indian smartphone customers?**

According to latest industry reports, SanDisk, a Western Digital brand continues to rule the consumer storage market across categories in Q4 CY2018.

SanDisk provides trusted and innovative flash storage products that have transformed the external storage devices segment. SanDisk's travel tech - on-the-go essentials are great for keeping consumers enjoying freedom from storage stress on the move. SanDisk has the perfect range of storage devices and solutions for users to manage their storage requirements better.

**Which products do you recommend for a user who is always on the move or is travelling for work to manage his data effectively without the space crunch?**

For all the iPhone users, SanDisk iXpand has been designed to be the perfect companion. It offers an easy way to free up space on their iPhone, automatically backs up their camera roll, and even lets people watch popu-

lar-format videos straight from the drive.

SanDisk Dual Drive comes in variants to suit every user. This "smartphone kil pen drive" will make data transfer and data streaming easier for our value conscious consumers.

Then, there is SanDisk Connect Stick which is the most appropriate way out for people who want to access their media or transfer large files wirelessly, stream HD videos and music, and save and share photos and videos to and from their mobile device. Compact enough to carry along, whatever weather your holiday throws at you, your precious memories will be safe.

**What is your vision for the Indian market?**

The upsurge in the number of smartphone users in India is one of the factors that makes us bullish towards the market. The number of smartphone users in India is expected to grow by 15.6 per cent to reach 337 million in 2018, which highest estimated growth posted by any country. The rise in the usage of smartphones will automatically result in the rise in the external storage products. Owing to this large size and upwardly mobile population, India is a unique market for us and presents us with immense opportunities for growth and innovation. We are making sure that our team is adequately positioned to drive our vision for the Indian market.

# Uzbekistan tests Indian waters for tourism business

Reema Lokesh  
Mumbai

A HIGH POWER delegation from Uzbekistan visited India and the city of Mumbai recently to understand the potential of business opportunities across sectors between the two countries. Tourism was one of the focus areas, others being healthcare, pharma sector, etc.

World Trade Centre Mumbai and All India Association of Industries in association with Embassy of Uzbekistan in India jointly organised an interactive meeting with H E Farhood Arziev, ambassador, Uzbekistan to India along with 15 members High level business delegation and Government officials. The tourism team showed keen interest to connect with potential tour operators in India. Focused but brief B2B interactions were held with



select tour operators and few members from TAAL-Western region. The team addressed sensitive issues like visa application process and timelines, other on field issues etc. The team promised the delegates that Visa can be granted within three working days if all necessary

documentation is as per requirement.

Elyor G Abdullayev, deputy mayor of the Izbaskan district of Andijan region on investment, innovation and tourism development, in an exclusive with Express TravelWorld, clearly stated that, "The country is keen to work closely

with the India market. We wish to connect with the right partners in India to showcase our tourism wealth. We want to show the whole country and not only the famous and well known cities. We feel our region has a lot to offer in terms of both nature and culture. We are here to address

all visa related issues and make travel as seamless as possible to Uzbekistan."

Vijay Kalantri, honorary Consul of the Republic of Uzbekistan, said that, "The country is ready to welcome India. We are here to provide all support to the partners in India."

## AI robot Sophia explores Abu Dhabi

ETW Staff  
Mumbai

SOPHIA, the first humanoid robot, who has received citizenship from Saudi Arabia, is well known in India as she visited the country twice recently. Sophia is making news again, in Abu Dhabi. The popular UAE influencer Khalid al Ameri joined Sophia on a journey to explore Abu Dhabi and discover all the excitement and one can experience on a visit to the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Sophia is officially the first robot to race Yas Marina Circuit, ride the world's fastest rollercoaster at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, and also experience

the beauty of Louvre Abu Dhabi in a new video released by Etihad Airways. Accompanied throughout by Khalid al Ameri, a popular Emirati personality known for creating heartfelt videos about himself and his family on social media, Sophia is shown to be having a lot of fun. The video showcases Sophia's visit to Abu Dhabi and chronicles her adventures around the city's landmarks to experience a range of emotions and to achieve her ultimate goal to feel.

Sophia's looks are strikingly similar to British actress Audrey Hepburn. Sophia was created by Hanson Robotics which is based in Hong Kong. The



main aim to create Sophia was to help elderly people and assist at large gatherings in the park or at major events. Sophia

the robot is fitted with cameras and microphones which work with the AI software that allows her to make eye-contact,

recognise people and even speak to them. Sophia expression of emotions is limited to only one – that is happiness.

# UIA operates first non-stop flight from Kiev to Delhi

ETW Staff  
Mumbai

RECENTLY UKRAINE International operated its first non-stop scheduled flight from Kiev to Delhi. New flights will be operated three times a week with the fourth frequency to be added on June 7, 2018. The UIA flights are operated on Boeing 767-300 (with three-class cabin configuration) to/from Delhi. UIA offers one-way economy class tickets (all taxes and surcharges included) for Delhi - Kiev flights at the price from US\$ 220.

The flights from/to Delhi are scheduled so as to provide convenient connections with the UIA flights to/from the cities of Ukraine and Europe at Kiev Boryspil International Airport, offering



passengers a vast selection of travel opportunities from the West to the East.

Evgeniya Satska, UIA communications director said, "UIA keeps developing the business model of a network carrier. To attract transit passenger traffic, we need to balance eastern and west-

ern route vectors. Currently, we can observe the UIA active geography extension in the West and restrained growth in the East. The launch of scheduled flights to Delhi will help balance our network and improve our Ukraine's image as a transit country."

[www.t.me/velarch\\_official](http://www.t.me/velarch_official)

## No charges for cancelling flight tickets within 24 hrs of booking

ETW Staff  
Mumbai

THE GOVERNMENT recently proposed abolishing cancellation charges for domestic flight tickets if the cancellation is made within 24 hours of booking. However, the proposed rule won't apply if the tickets are booked less than 96 hours (four days) before the scheduled departure time of the flight. During this 24-hour 'lock-in' period, passengers would be able to make correction in name or amend the travel date free of cost, Jayant Sinha, minister of state for civil aviation told reporters, while unveiling the draft air passengers charter.

Airline will provide lock-in option for 24 hours after booking ticket where ticket can be can-

celled without any charges. This facility will be available for passenger up to 96 hours prior to flight departure," he said. While some airlines already provide this service, some do charge a fee for corrections. The charter, however, will be binding on all airlines in domestic sector.

The charter has been placed in public domain and consultation process will be open for 30 days. The changes could be notified in two months after the consultation process, the government said. The charter proposes that passengers would be compensated ₹20,000 for missing connecting flights if the delay is over 12 hours, and ₹10,000 if the delay is between 4-12 hours.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) could look

into issues where the airlines are not in agreement with the passenger on the compensation issue, he said. According to the charter, the cancellation charges should be printed prominently on ticket and airline and their agents together should not, under any circumstances, levy cancellation charge more than the basic fare plus fuel surcharge.

The charter also proposes that if the passenger is informed about cancellation of flight less than two weeks before and up to 24 hours of the scheduled departure time, the airline must offer an alternative flight allowing the passenger to depart within two hours of the booked departure time or refund the ticket, as acceptable to the passenger.

## MATATO connects with Indian travel agents to increase tourist arrivals to Maldives

Tanuvi Joe  
Mumbai

days, Jumeriah Maldives, Soneva and Sun Siyam.

A DESTINATION showcase for Maldives was hosted in Mumbai branded as Maldivian Night organised by the Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO).

Abdulla Ghilyaz Riyaz, president, MATATO spoke exclusively to Express TravelWorld about the purpose of MATATO and the event. "MATATO is an non-government organisation and through this event we hope to connect travel agencies, airlines, travel partners, etc. Previously we used to be a part of travel trade shows and we decided that it's now time to hold an exclusive event that is completely focussed on our association and Maldives as a whole. The theme of the event is a Maldivian Night and through that we want to have direct talks with the Indian travel industry and strengthen the bond."

In association with MATATO, Sri Lankan airlines is the airline partner along with Banyan Tree, Ayada, Inner Maldives Holi-

days, Udeni Perera, manager of Western India, Sri-Lankan Airlines emphasised its support with this association, "With the arrival of neo aircrafts we hope to smoothen the travel of Indian travellers to Maldives. With over 140 flights per week, we are sure that the number of Indian tourist arrivals will double by this coming year."

Currently having somewhere around 83,000 arrivals, the number is expected to grow to 100,000 arrivals.



Abdulla Ghilyaz Riyaz and Salva Ahmed

# TMA raises awareness about innovative products in the tourism sector

**Tanuvi Joe**  
Mumbai

**TOURISM MARKETING**  
Alliance (TMA) is formed by four travel companies - Rezilive.com, Island Group, Pearl Tourism and Leisure Group & RailEurope.

Recently TMA organised a networking event for United Travel Agents (UTA) to discuss emerging business opportunities in tourism. The event was organised at VTIS Hotel Mumbai and turned out to be a huge success

as over 100 members from UTA participated eagerly listening to the speakers from TMA.

From Rezlive.com, Zaheer Jeddry, country head, India said, "Synergy is important and that's why we have come together to form an alliance that can help the travel community in India. We are especially targeting cities like Chandigarh, Dehradun, Akola, Amravati, Raipur, etc. This is more of an awareness event as that is seriously lacking in these places."

He further spoke about how

through rewards and e-vouchers, travel agents can receive more now in return for their efforts and active participation.

Aman Bhatia, manager, director, Island Group further spoke about the benefit of this alliance, "We want to create value through partnership and we're constantly innovating and ideating for new concepts and plans that will further help the travel community."

Island Group was hugely responsible for introducing Maldives to the Indian Market 18

years back, and their bouquet of niche destinations and specialisations in FIT, GIT, MICE, and destination weddings will be a huge plus for TMA.

Aliman Saliwala, business development manager, Pearl Tourism & Leisure Group spoke about their commitment and future plans, "RezLive.com brings its expertise in bookings, the Island Group brings forth its knowledge in destination weddings, Rail Europe brings their years of experience in railways and our target on three main

destinations - Africa, Australia and Europe, enhances the value of TMA by a huge mark. Connecting travel agents is what we are here for and to increase their knowledge so they might be able to offer better products to their clients is our mission."

Bela Shah, manager, sales & marketing, Rail Europe emphasised on the extensive array of rail products it offers from over 50 European train companies, catering to travellers from Americas, Asia, Oceania, India, Middle East and Africa.

## Jet Airways commences operations under the Regional Connectivity Scheme

**ETW Staff**  
Mumbai

**JET AIRWAYS**, the Indian full-service international carrier, recently announced the launch of operations under the 'Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik' (UDAN) scheme.

The airline has been awarded four routes under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) and will launch operations on three new routes out of the four routes awarded, and will subsequently launch Lucknow-Bareilly-Delhi-Bareilly-Lucknow.

On the occasion, Gaurang Shetty, whole time director, Jet Airways said, "Jet Airways started off with the aim of introducing India to a world class travel experience and connectivity embodied in the 'joy of flying'. Having pioneered the operations of the ATR aircraft in India, the launch of these new flights mainly onboard ATR aircraft, will allow Jet Airways to embark on a journey to ensure that unserved regions and underserved airports are maximised to their full potential. The UDAN scheme is a great initiative which facilitates in realising the benefits of the aviation sector, reach the vast expanse of India and its various geographies. It is our constant endeavour to provide connectivity with a view to providing a fillip to the development of trade and tourism within all parts of India."

Starting from June 14, Jet Airways will fly three

times a week on the Lucknow-Allahabad-Patna sector. Commencing from June 15, Jet Airways will fly three times a week between New Delhi and Nashik. Effective June 16, Jet Airways will commence operations three times a week on the Nag-

pur-Allahabad-Indore sector.

With the introduction of the new flights, guests can now travel to a host of other cities both on Jet Airways' domestic and international network via convenient connections on offer.



In the centre, Gaurang Shetty, whole time director, Jet Airways, on his left, Rubina Ali, joint secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and GK Chaukiyal, executive director, RCS, Airports Authority of India along with representatives from AAI and Jet Airways post signing the agreements for Regional Connectivity Scheme flights awarded to Jet Airways

# Dubai Cruise Terminal to open in October 2020



ETW Staff  
Mumbai

**HIS HIGHNESS** Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, VP and prime minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, witnessed signing of strategic partnership between Meraas and Carnival Corporation, that aims to transform Dubai into a major regional maritime tourism hub. The agreement highlights Meraas' support for Dubai Tourism Vision 2020, which aims to attract 20 million visitors a year to the emirate, and strengthens the company's contribution to Dubai Plan 2021, the strategic roadmap to establish Dubai among the world's best cities. Operations at the Dubai Cruise Terminal are scheduled to commence in October 2020.

His Highness also said the tourism sector is key to the development of the UAE's economy, due to the value it adds through key projects and its ability to attract millions of visitors every year.

"We welcome visitors from across the world and provide them with exceptional tourism experiences. We want them to leave with lasting memories that they can share in their countries and communities. The continuous development of infrastructure has enabled our country to be a destination of choice in the region. Supported by the talent and creativity of our people, I am confident that we will be able to establish global leadership in several sectors. The UAE will continue to be a symbol of progress and prosperity," Sheikh Mohammed added. He said that mega projects being implemented in the UAE are reinforcing the country's profile globally as a model for sustainable growth driven by diversification, innovation and productive partnerships with the private sector.

HH Sheikh Mohammed's remarks came as he approved the Dubai Cruise Terminal as the main hub for cruise tourism in Dubai. The

event was attended by Crown Prince of Dubai HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Under the agreement, signed by His Excellency Abdulla Al Habtoor, group chairman of Meraas, and Arnold W Donald, CEO of Carnival Corporation, the leisure travel company, the companies will collaborate across several strategic areas including port development, terminal management and new cruise development opportunities at Dubai Harbour and the broader region.

Dubai is set to become central to Carnival Corporation's operations in the region. The agreement mandates Carnival Corporation to assist Meraas in ensuring the cruise terminal meets the highest international standards of the cruise industry, while the relevant authorities will be responsible for security, immigration and customs.

WTTC invites transport ministers to partner with tourism sector to implement biometrics

ETW Staff  
Mumbai

THE WORLD TRAVEL & Tourism Council (WTTC) invited transport ministers attending the annual International Transport Forum in Leipzig, Germany, to partner with the tourism sector to implement biometrics to make travel more efficient and secure.

Gloria Guevara Manzo, president and CEO, WTTC said, "Travel and tourism generates 10.4 per cent of the world's GDP and creates \$13 billion jobs. Transport - aviation, maritime, road and rail - is fundamental to our sector's success. IATA is forecasting a rise from four billion annual passengers now to 7.8 billion over the next ten years,

UNWTO estimates global international arrivals to rise from 1.3 to 1.8 billion by 2030. This growth poses a challenge not only to infrastructure capacity but also how to ensure these travellers can be processed efficiently and securely."

She added, "In order for us to achieve this growth and create jobs, we need to work together to find solutions which increase capacity, enhance customer experience and ensure security. Technology is the key solution which is already being used around the world. I invite ministers of transport to partner with us to speed up the adoption of biometrics, and together we can ensure that more jobs are created."



## Park Regis Aveda, Kumarakom

One of Asia Pacific's hotel management groups, StayWell Holdings, has announced it will further expand its Park Regis portfolio in India, with the rebranding of Aveda Resort & Spa in Kumarakom to Park Regis Aveda, Kumarakom. The 44-room hotel signifies a number of milestones for StayWell Holdings, marking the group's first property in Southern India and the first hotel to open post the acquisition of StayWell Holdings by Prince Hotels. Located in the state of Kerala on India's tropical Malabar Coast, Park Regis Aveda is located in

an international tourism hub. It will be StayWell Holdings' 23rdth operational property and marks the brands move into a new space of luxury travel. Key features guests can expect at Park Regis Aveda, Kumarakom include; private cottages, villas, suites, an open poolside restaurant come lounge, La Breeze, an Ayurvedic Spa and a well-equipped fitness gym. The resort also boasts of a banquet hall with a capacity of approximately 150 guests, business center and a recreational area for use by guests at their leisure.



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## Wire Room

JusTA Hotels & Resorts announces the opening of JusTA Wire Room - Chennai's new and exclusive restaurant and bar in Design Hotel Chennai by JusTA. Wire Room is nestled inside the vibrant 17-acre Phoenix Market City in Chennai and is easily accessible from all major parts of the city. It is built with a strong focus on art and design with inspirations from the timeless local traditions of South India by ace designer Pronith Nath. The bar has a network of glowing brass strings, which is almost 20km long, inspired by the Madras pattern. These strings are stretched and counter balanced with 9600 weighted plumb bobs of different heights and sizes to create exclusive spaces within the bar. The food menu serves a wide range of international and pan-Indian dishes to the list of classic cocktails with a quintessential Madras twist. The food menu offers Malaysian classics like Nasi Lemak, Burmese Khao Suey and also the Mumbai Vada Pav among many others. The Wire Room has gold community bar tables, rotating bar tables, raised private tables, along with a main dance floor with the DJ console adorned with stylish gold pipes.

## The Tamara Kodai

Tamara Leisure Experiences launches the newest property in the Tamara brand of resorts. La Providence is a spectacular colonial building historically known to be one of the first to come up in Kodaikanal. Today restored and expanded into a getaway tucked away amongst some of the most beautiful hills in south India, The Tamara Kodai is an amalgamation of heritage and luxury experiences. The Tamara Kodai

promises luxury accommodation, each suite boasting of a bedroom with large balcony, living room, and an attached bathroom. 53 suites of French provincial design have been designed to take guests back to a time when La Providence was a monastic retreat. Each suite features wooden floors, colonial interiors, room heaters, exhaustive in-room amenities, etc. Dynamic gastronomic outlets include an all-day dining restaurant and a

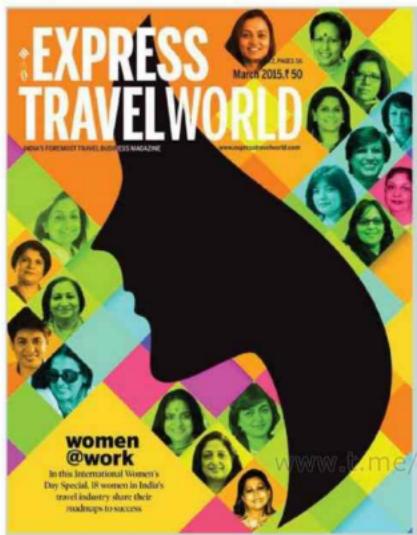
French style bistro, to cater to all kinds of taste. Designed in the original La Providence building, this restaurant has been converted to a decadent restaurant, set to put out a lavish buffet including everything from international favourites to traditional and local Indian cuisine. The restaurant also features a live kitchen counter to provide fresh, piping hot food straight off the stove, to your plate. The Bistro 1845 is a French style à la carte



bistro and bar, serving the best of European, Asian and Indian cuisine. The property also offers boardroom and conference facil-

ties which include a Ball room accommodating more than 200 guests with a spacious pre-function area.

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# cover story



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# INDIA'S WELLNESS ABODES

As we celebrate International Yoga Day on June 21, Express TravelWorld explores some of the well-known and some not so well-known, wellness abodes in India which tour operators must include in their itineraries

# cover story

## SOUKYA Bengaluru

Derived from Sanskrit word 'Soukhyam', the name 'Soukya' is an epitome of well-being, along with a harmonious state of body mind and spirit. Souky, popularly known as Dr Mathai's International Holistic Health Centre is a renowned wellness destination located in the Silicon City of India, Bengaluru. Housed amidst serene garden cover spread across 30

acres of eco-organic land, the centre offers every pre-requisite for one's holistic well-being.

The team consists of consultants and doctors from different systems of medicine, therapists and visiting national and international specialists. There are several factors that make Soukya different from spas and other healing centers and resorts around the world, including the fact that it is a residential



integrative medical facility that is the first of its kind in the world; and doctors from different systems of medicine monitor the treatments, which are done by well-trained therapists. The different systems of medicine and complementary therapies available here include Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Naturopathy and complementary therapies such as yoga, Acupuncture, Reflexology,

Acupressure and several kinds of therapeutic massages. There are several Wellness Packages and also unique Medical Programmes to address specific medical issues.

The centre has a well-built infrastructure with a 30-acre organic farm housing exotic species of vegetation and flowering trees with fruit orchards. There is a therapy centre separately for both males and females. A yoga and meditation hall is also part of this centre, for guests to meditate and make peace with their inner self. Providing world-class accommodations, the centre houses 25 spacious rooms. The ovo-vegetarian food (egg and vegetarian) served here has low salt, low

fat and low spice. There are fixed menus and guests on a Medical Programme will be put on a custom diet. Many of the fruits and vegetables come from its own organic gardens and orchards.

Souky is located 50 kilometers from the international airport in Bengaluru, and inbound tour operators can add Souky as a wellness destination in the travel packages they offer along with other places of tourist interest.

Souky was established with international collaboration from world renowned health centres in the USA and Europe. The centre is in collaboration with the International Holistic Health Association.





## ATMANTAN WELLNESS RESORT Pune

**A**tmantan, a luxurious wellness resort in Mulshi region of Pune integrates the traditional Indian healing practices with international therapies and modern fitness techniques for holistic healing. Atmantan was conceptualised by ex-Ironman tri-athlete, Nikhil Kapur and his wife, pranic healer, Sharmilee Agarwal Kapur. Atmantan is the divine amalgamation of Atma (soul), Mana (mind), and Tama (body) that encompasses the resort's integrated approach to wellness. This can be achieved by creating the perfect equilibrium of

wholesome wellness for the guests; physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially.

Nested in the Sahyadris which are crystalline mountains, the place is naturally healing that speedup and assist the wellness purpose. A minimum of three-night stay is available at the centre that enable the staff to concentrate on complete wellness of the guest. The place helps one understand the relation between sound nutrition and functioning of the body. The packages include Atmantan Living, Spa Life, Master Cleanse, Weight Balance, Journey through Yoga, Ayurveda

Panchkarma, Holistic Health, Fitness Challenge and Restorative Physiotherapy. These retreats focus on four elements of well-being through proper food, sleep, exercise and positive environment. The stay starts from three days extending up to 28 days where the guests are offered a mix of wellness programmes where they can focus on complete rejuvenation.

Atmantan Corporate Wellness Programme enables individuals to deal more effectively with stress at the work place; and strike a healthy work-life balance. The customised programme includes



interactive workshops on stress management, heart health; metabolic rate and energy balance diagnostics; individual health and nutritional consultations; fitness assessment; postural evaluation and prescription; outdoor team building activities; trekking; spa therapies; yoga for corporate life; guided meditation; group pilates; functional fitness classes; and Dance Therapy (Zumba, Bokwa, kick boxing, Bodily-wood dancing).

There are three food and

beverage venues including Vista-tara, the main dining; Chanta-ra, the barbecue lounge; and Te'-jus the juice bar. The restaurants bring in produce from the local gardens or the nearby farms to retain the freshness of meals. The outdoor meditation pavilions - Dhyana and the amphitheatre Prana, provide with some inspiring places to meditate, relax and indulge in soul searching. Healthy cooking techniques are used such as braising, steaming, poaching and grilling. Temperatures are kept low while cooking so that natural flavour and nutrients are retained whilst ensuring the food is easy to digest.

Atmantan can be reached within 90 minutes from the Pune International Airport and within a three and a half hours drive from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport.

# cover story

## THE KHYBER HIMALAYAN RESORT & SPA Gulmarg

The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa in Gulmarg is located in the Pir Panjal range of the Himalayas, covering seven acres of a coniferous forest. The 85 key resort is a beautiful showcase of architectural heritage of Kashmir. Nestled in the Himalayas, 8,825 feet above sea level and ensconced amidst pristine nature, The Khyber

Spa by L'Occitane offers luxurious and holistic well-being experiences.

Guests can soak in stunning views from their treatment room and pamper themselves with treatment protocols that incorporate the best of the west and the east. The spa brings to life the changing seasons of Gulmarg with signature treatments where guests are encouraged

to choose from a repertoire of home grown seasonal flora which are mixed with natural L'Occitane products and fresh Himalayan water to create fusion recipes for the treatment. Treatments include Deep Tissue Intense Relief, Shea Nourishing Scrub, Revitalizing Aromachologie Massage, Re-Energizing Sun Stones, Signature Lemon Balm-Sandal Wrap, Almond Silhouette



Reshape, Area-Focused Treatments, etc. The well-being baths provides a relaxing prelude or finale that leaves the skin and the mind perfectly prepared and truly receptive to the benefits of a treatment.

The resort also has a well equipped gymnasium, and the stunning views from the floor-to-ceiling glazed windows ensure that the guests never miss a moment of the surroundings. There are separate saunas and steam facilities as well as jacuzzis for ladies and gents. The heated indoor swimming pool area has double-height windows, and a swim is particularly magical when there are blankets of snow outside.

There are many invigorating activities for guests - the Gulmarg Gondola is only minutes away, making The Khyber a ski in-ski out resort. The property is also a great starting point for treks and walks.





## SHREYAS RETREAT Bengaluru

Bengaluru has established itself as a wellness hub of India, and among its best known names is Shreyas Retreat. Located an hour's drive from the airport, Shreyas has 12 cottages spread over 25 acres of landscaped greenery, water bodies and organic gardens, the guests are able to commune with nature and benefit from its healing power. Shreyas is regarded as one of the finest yoga retreats pro-

moting the authentic spiritual tradition of yoga in a holistic manner.

Yogasana classes at Shreyas are based on both classical Hatha Yoga and Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga. All classes are adapted for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Twice daily group yoga sessions and one daily meditation session are included in the stay for all guests. For guests who would like to delve deeper into the ancient spiritual tradition

of yoga, a yoga retreat is structured carefully to allow them to experience not just the physical aspects of yoga but also karma yoga (selfless work), various yogic kriyas, yoga nidra (deep relaxation), chakrasuddhi and Trataka (candle meditation), rejuvenating massages, community service, etc. Silent Retreat Packages are a unique feature of Shreyas. The other packages include Panchakarma, Ayurvedic Rejuvenation, Joy of Giving, Wellness for the Soul



and others.

From age-old Ayurvedic treatments to modern therapies, from naturopathy to a wide range of massages, the Ansha Spa is designed to offer the best wellness experience.

Food is an integral aspect of wellness. All cooking at Shreyas starts with the chanting of a prayer, while the chefs prepare dishes inspired by their travels around the world;

Indian, Continental, Mexican and Oriental gourmet vegetarian cuisine.

The extensive facilities include an open-air, spacious yoga and meditation hall, which makes guests feel one with nature as they practice the asanas. Another highlight are the two machans in the organic garden where they can meditate or contemplate in solitude, amidst nature. The open air amphitheatre is the stage for classical dances and musical soirees, while the library offers books on yoga, spirituality, and other subjects. A Relais & Chateaux member, for inbound tour operators, a luxurious wellness yoga retreat like Shreyas can give a differentiated experience to their clients.

## YAB YUM RESORT Ashwem Beach

**G**oa has become a hotspot for yoga, thanks to the many resorts which have a focused strategy to promote wellness as an exclusive offering to its guests. Yab Yum Resort that borders Ashwem Beach in north Goa is one such idyllic destination where one can enjoy a quintessential Goa vacation along with focusing on rejuvenating your mind, body and soul.

The resort is hidden away in

two acres of lush palm grove and sheltered by the sand dunes. Here you can unwind in comfort and watch the local fishermen bring home their catch against a backdrop of beautiful sunsets.

Daily yoga classes are held for guests and visitors, and it is of a level that is suitable for all. The morning yoga classes are open to all and are adapted to whoever turns up. Private classes, family classes and children's yoga classes can also be organised. There

are often groups of families staying together, and kids yoga is a great way to engage the little ones while the parents have lunch or simply relax and enjoy some respite. Sunset classes can be dependent on pupil numbers.

The resort's Yoga Shala's simplistic and minimalist form was designed with intention. The Yoga Shala has three walls, with thatched roof allowing for maximum air circulation. Half of the remaining

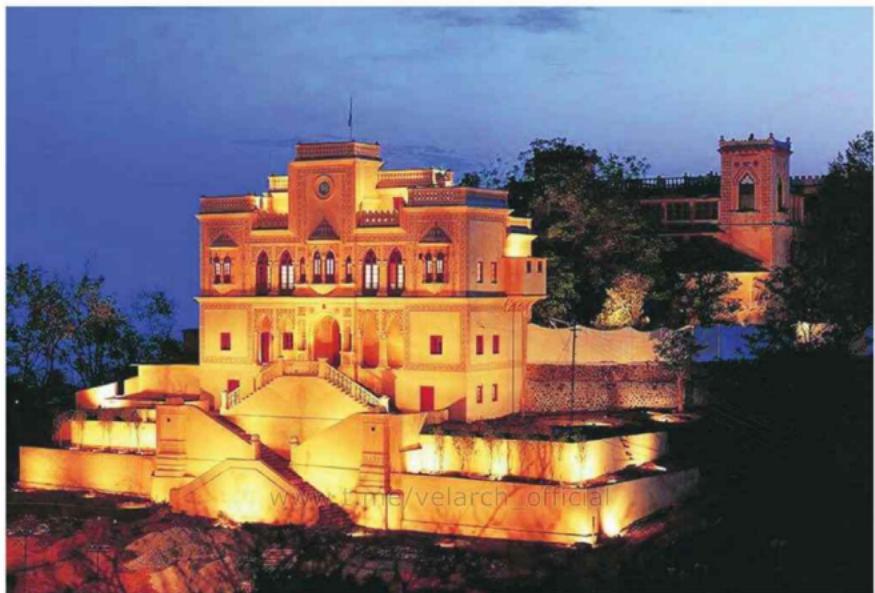


fourth wall allows a beautiful view into the lush gardens, also allowing natural light in. It is fully stocked with yoga mats, blocks, straps and bolsters, allowing each class, person or style to be accommodated. The resort welcomes those yoga teachers who wish to bring a group to stay in north Goa for a few days or even weeks. Some groups just

pay for accommodation and use the shala once per day. For other groups group dinners, massage sessions, and more are organised.

Years of careful planting and landscaping have made Yab Yum an idyllic, shady oasis; somewhere to relax, eat, drink and de-stress, also perfect as a base to explore the northern half of the state. Ashwem Beach is one of the most peaceful and least developed beaches in Goa. Travel agents can recommend the area to their clients as the famous Anjuna market is a short drive away, and the city of Mapusa is also nearby. Those who like to explore little villages, can do so in the vicinity.





[www.ananda-in-the-himalayas.com](http://www.ananda-in-the-himalayas.com)

## ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS

### Narendra Nagar

Ananda in the Himalayas is a luxury destination spa in the region of Narendra Nagar in Uttarakhand. It is situated in the beautiful 100-acre Himalayan mountain estate amidst sal forests which overlooks the river Ganges. Established in 2001, Ananda in the Himalayas was India's first destination spa. Quite close to the towns of Rishikesh and Haridwar, Ananda concentrates on yoga and Ayurvedic practices which are then combined with international

spa therapies.

The distinct feature of the property is that it includes the royal palace of Narendra Nagar, belonging to the Maharaja of Tehri Garhwal and the restored Viceregal Palace, added to the palace in 1910-11 by the Maharaja. Many years ago, given the focus on health and rejuvenation in the world, the founder was in search for a destination spa and that's when the Palace of the Maharaja at Narendra Nagar, Tehri-Garhwal was discovered. The name of the place had to be

something that embodies the spirit and ethos of what was to be offered to the guests and hence the property was called to be 'Ananda - in the Himalayas'. The former Viceregal Palace was restored and Narendra Nagar became the summer capital and the Palace is where the present vice regal suite of Ananda in the Himalayas is located.

Visitors can choose from a range of traditional Indian practices of yoga, meditation, ayurveda and vedanta along with Ayurvedic spa treat-



ments, Tibetan treatments and international therapies such as massage, body wraps and facials. The spa also focuses on a diet that resonates with the principles of Ayurveda. Several celebrities have frequented Ananda like Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates and Melinda Gates, Kate Winslet, Deepak Chopra, Nicole Kidman, Ricky Martin, Charles, Prince of Wales and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

The spa packages offered

here coupled with the rich heritage of the place makes it quite appealing for tourists all around the world. There are frequent flights from Delhi International Airport to Jolly Grant Airport in Dehradun. The flight time is 45 minutes followed by a 40 min drive to Ananda in the Himalayas.

The destination spa also focuses on education and for this purpose, The Ananda Spa Institute in Hyderabad, admitted its first group of students in the summer of 2008. This is a one of a kind educational institution that provides yoga, Ayurveda and international therapies under one roof. The institute aims to lead spa education in South East Asia and also maintain high standards throughout the region with international cooperation.

## CARNOUSTIE AYURVEDA & WELLNESS RESORT Alappuzha

**C**arnoustie Ayurveda & Wellness Resort is set on the shores of the Arabian Sea, just eight kms away from the famous backwaters of Alappuzha.

At Carnoustie, physical, mental and spiritual well-being is considered as the 'soul' focus to reach a state of optimal health and guests can achieve this through different types of yoga like the Classic Hatha Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Prenatal Yoga, etc.

Carnoustie puts the yogic philosophy into practice for total wellness. Some of the

eight yogic limbs are Yamas or Ethical Code of Conduct - Truthfulness, Niyamas or Personal Discipline - Self study, Asanas or Posture - Strong and fit body, Pranayama or Breath Control - 'Prana' means life force and 'Yama' means control of prana - control of life force, etc. The Rejuvenation programme held here includes Abhyangam which is a famous body massage in ayurveda and it can be used therapeutically and the massage is customised according to each individual, to suit his or her disease or condition.

Shirodhara is another form of Ayurveda therapy practised here that involves gently pouring liquids over the forehead, or otherwise called the 'third eye'. The name comes from the Sanskrit words shira 'head' and dhara 'flow' and the liquids used in shirodhara depend on what is being treated, but can include milk, buttermilk, oil, coconut water, or even plain water.

At Carnoustie Resorts, a detailed personal consultation for guests is conducted by senior medical experts and after a complete diagnosis of



the guest's condition, the medical experts offer short and long-term solutions that aim to help the guest to age gracefully along with improving organ health and boosting the immune system. Having a large qualified team of experts, ensures that each guest is given personalised attention.

The resort offers a range

of products to make sure that the guest is taken care of long after he or she leaves the resorts. For example, the Carnoustie Milkthistle Organic Tea has been used for over 2,000 years in European culture and helps protect the liver from toxins and is popularly known as a miracle cure for liver problems.

Tour operators can provide a balanced and relaxing experience for their clients as this resort offers a specialised team of Ayurveda experts for restoring physical and mental health as well as advice on maintaining the same. It is approximately a two hour drive from the Cochin International airport.



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## SWASWARA Gokarna

The concept of SwaSwara comes from the first sound of creation, OM, and the resort in Gokarna on Om Beach enables guests to hear the 'voice of the inner self'. SwaSwara is a sanctuary for one's Prakruti or the innermost nature of an individual and its goal is to offer a life plan for the 'reconstruction' of the mind and body to bring about balance and harmony within.

SwaSwara's signature pro-

gramme 'Swa Wellbeing' is about learning to rejuvenate the SwaSwara way. This includes deep relaxation which allows one to hear and listen to your 'Swa', your inner voice. The programme begins with an introduction to Yogic Kriyas, Yoga Nidra, Pranayama, meditation techniques, guided art and pottery sessions and interactive cooking. It also includes consultations with Ayurveda doctors and lifestyle guidance.

There is a meditation deck

on the cliff, also called as a meditation hill. Under the coconut thatch roof, participants sit on mud packed steps for guided sunrise meditation and this space offers a 180 degrees view of the scenic Om beach. The Yoga Shala is a dedicated center for Asana classes which is spread over 1600 sq ft and there is a circular, well lit space for visitors to read from an eclectic collection of books and is the only wi-fi enabled area in SwaSwara.



and for this purpose the diet provided here is well-planned and appropriate. Guests can visit the interactive kitchen gallery to understand and partake in the intensive and complex culinary process dedicated to wellbeing. All the produce comes from the organic vegetable farm at SwaSwara and the neighbourhood consists of seasonal tropical fruits and freshly caught seafood. Dairy, eggs and oils are limited in its preparations. The menu does not feature meats, hard liquor, refined sugar or refined flour.

SwaSwara can be reached within three and a half hours from the nearest airport Dabolim, Goa and the nearest railway station is Gokarna and Kumta.

## VANA MALSI ESTATE

### Dehradun

The Vana Malsi Estate is situated in Dehradun in the Doon Valley. The 82-room hilltop retreat is filled with luxury and is set amidst an organic kitchen and herb gardens in a sal-tree reserve. The yoga capital Rishikesh is only a two-hour drive south so guests can join the pilgrims and sadhus on the banks of the river Ganges and experience a puja (offering).

The treatments are prescribed according to the

guest's objectives, medical conditions and his or her dosha (Ayurveda body type). Spa connoisseurs offer hatha yoga, acupuncture, reflexology, meditation, alongside sessions that are exotic in their Tibetan or Chinese names and in their methods. Ku nyé, pronounced as 'coo-nyee' is an ancient massage with herbal poultices and chanting which helps release tension. The raag therapy, pronounced 'raag' is healing via time spent with a flautist. The hor gyi metta is another treat-

ment that works on white channels and nerve pathways.

Vama offers Sowa Rigpa, the Tibet's traditional system of medicine which finds its roots in Ayurveda, Chinese medicine and Buddhism. Governed by the Men-Tsee-Khang, the Institute of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology of the Tibetan government in-exile in Dharamsala, the doctors and therapists are all alumni of the Men-Tsee-Khang, from where all the preparations are also procured.

The cuisine at Vana con-



nects many aspects of Vana's philosophy. The philosophy believes that what one puts into the stomach will definitely act to nourish, heal or harm. Vana tries to awaken traditional values and cultural nuances from India and its menus include vegetarian and vegan choices as well as thoughtfully sourced meat, fish and poultry. The cuisine team produces everything from bread and butter to

wasabi and ice creams in the kitchens. The team has successfully prepared traditional Indian bhojans at the Sidhbartha Festival and Vidyaloka and based on principles of Ayurveda, Sowa Rigpa, contemporary western nutrition and naturopathy, Vana's apothecary creates infusions, decoctions, topical applications and herb mixtures.

Tour operators can offer Vana to their clients as it is one of the few places in the world where Sowa Rigpa is formally offered in its complete avatar. There are frequent flights from Delhi International Airport to Jolly Grant Airport in Dehradun. The Vana Malsi Estate is then a one hour and 15 minutes drive from the airport.





# NEELESHWAR HERMITAGE

## Kasaragod

**N**eeleshwar Hermitage lies on the shores of the Arabian Sea in Northern Kerala. It is surrounded by gardens of hibiscus and frangipani, and the light and airy palm-roofed cottages blend the traditional Keralan architecture with the new modern design.

The indoor-outdoor bathrooms are filled with natural products and the in-room iPod is loaded with cool sounds

to match the serenity of this resort. Guests can spot dolphins diving in the sea while he or she re-aligns their chakras at the yoga pavilion.

One of the key wellness programmes here is The Priya Ayurvedic Spa. It has five spacious treatment rooms ranged around a central courtyard garden. Designed along traditional lines with beautifully proportioned ceilings and elegantly carved pillars, the building is well venti-

lated. The treatments are practised in a quiet way and all the preparations used are 100 per cent natural, organically produced and sourced in a way that does not have a negative impact on the environment.

One of the meditation courses available here is the Prana Energising Technique, which is a technique of yoga in which one can use their Prana Shakthi to energise their entire body and each and every



system of the body can be revitalised by this process. Transcendental Meditation (TM) involves the use of a sound or mantra, and can be practiced for 15-20 minutes twice per day. It is a method for relaxation, stress reduction, and self-development and can be taught in four, five and six days courses.

Another interesting feature of Neeleshwar hermitage

is that it trains young village men and women to serve meals, drinks and take care of the guests here. The Hermitage offers special experiences like 'Connecting with the Source' which is a course based on traditional wisdom of the Vedic philosophy and it will teach visitors an easy and enjoyable way to contact this field and enjoy its benefits. Practical techniques will be combined with an understanding of consciousness and one can also learn the principles that structure body, mind and spirit.

Neeleshwar Hermitage is approximately two hours away from Mangalore international airport and around five hours away from Calicut international airport.



# BEHOLD... IT'S BOHOL!

[www.t.me/velarch\\_official](https://www.t.me/velarch_official)

**L**ocated in the heart of Central Visayas, the island province of Bohol is the 10th largest island in the Philippines and one of the country's most iconic travel destinations. It is composed of an oval-shaped mainland surrounded by 72 smaller islands. The province is abundant in beaches and resorts. It's well-known for Panglao beach and Anda beach. Tagbilaran City, the capital of Bohol, is known as the 'City of Friendship'.

There are many attractions in and around Bohol which appeal to all types of tourists.

**Chocolate Hills:** Chocolate Hills is the most famous tourist attraction in Bohol. Resembling a giant mole hill, this natural phenomenon is uniform in shape, with some hills standing 30 to 50 metres tall. They are usually covered with grass year-round, but turn brown during the dry season and hence look like chocolates. The Chocolate



## DESTINATION OUTBOUND

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Hills complex has a hotel, swimming pool, restaurant and an observation deck from where visitors can view this amazing sight. You can get to the Chocolate Hills on your own or by joining a day tour.

**Chocolate Hills Adventure Park:** Fun for both adults and children, the Chocolate Hills Adventure Park offers thrill rides for adults and obstacle courses for children. Located approximately 55 kms from Tagbilaran City, it is only an

hour and 45 minutes away by public bus or private car. The entrance fee is PHP 60; rides are charged separately.

**Santa Monica Parish Church:** Founded in 1669 and first built of light materials, the Santa Monica Parish Church is an imposing structure famous for its sturdy arches supporting a pathway that connects the church to the convent. The specialty of the church is the altar that

was carved manually by a local and has unique, intricate designs.

**Loboc River Cruise:** This cruise is one of the most popular tourist activities in Bohol, where one can get on board a floating restaurant and enjoy the Loboc River while enjoying a buffet meal. The cruise and buffet cost PHP 450 per person and include a short

cultural show, by the local community. Loboc town is located approximately 24 kilometres from Tagbilaran City.

**Blood Compact Site:** Located in Tagbilaran City, Blood Compact Site was constructed in honour of a very important event in Philippines history. It is the place where Spanish explorer Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and

Rajah Sikatuna of Bohol met and signed a peace treaty with their own blood. This blood compact is considered as the First Treaty of Friendship between native Filipinos and the Spaniards. It was a treaty of friendship based on respect and equality. This event is popularly known as 'Sandugo'.

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# GTM 2018: A key milestone

The 44th edition of Germany Travel Mart organised in Dresden, by the German National Tourism Board and Dresden Marketing Board, highlighted another successful year for tourism in Germany and a record growth for eight consecutive years

**By Sudipta Dev**

The 44th edition of Germany Travel Mart (GTM), organised by the German National Tourism Board (GNTB) was officially inaugurated on May 6, 2018 at Dresden, the state capital of Saxony. The cohort of GTM 2018 was Dresden Marketing Board. The grand opening celebrations took place at the renowned Church of our Lady and Kulturspalast. Travel industry delegates and international media from as many as 51 countries attended GTM this year. Welcoming the delegates, Brigitte Goertz-Meissner, chairwoman of the advisory board of GNTB mentioned that 2017 was another excellent year for tourism in Germany. "It was a record eight years in a row. I want to thank all our partners as all of you have played a part in this success," stated Goertz-Meissner. 2017 saw 83.9 million international overnight stays, which was an increase of 3.6 per cent. Travel expenditure on trips from overseas to Germany was Euro 23.6 billion - an increase of 16 per cent from the previous year.

The most important source market worldwide for Germany is The Netherlands, followed by Switzerland and the US. Petra Hedorfer, CEO, GNTB said, "We have a good position in international ranking and 2018 has started well. Both Europe and overseas (long haul) have seen positive growth. We in Germany stand for openness and tolerance and welcome people from across the world. We have plenty of new products and



Petra Hedorfer

services for you to discover."

India features among the top 20 key markets, and has seen 83.8 per cent growth. Highlighting on this she said, "We have a very professional team in India who know how to deal with the Indian market. Secondly, we have invested a lot on information, thirdly social media is spreading the information which creates more awareness among people. There is also an increase in capacity - more direct flights now, it's a mixture of everything. There is high potential in Indian market and we believe in it." Regarding the new age Indian traveller who might want to see beyond the traditional sites, she stated, "Along with the traditional attractions that everyone wants to see, there are also local communities and hidden spaces, that's what we are talking about - storytelling."

Reminding that tourism is a people's business, she indicated



some of the trends that will impact the business of tourism. Hedorfer also congratulated Dresden Marketing Board for their exceptional work in hosting the event. GTM this year was an excellent opportunity to showcase the multifaceted tourism offerings of Saxony. The architectural and cultural heritage of Saxony holds a great attraction for visitors from across the world, and there is so much more to explore.

The highlight of GTM 2018 was the two-day B2B workshops at Messe Dresden, where 300 German exhibitors showcased their products. As always there was a strong representation from India and this year was no exception. Highlighting the new/interesting products which would be of much interest to the Indian market, Romit Theophilus, director, sales and marketing, GNTO, said, "The 44th Germany Travel Mart un-



ravelled GNTB's core marketing theme for 2018 'Culinary Germany'. The theme which has gained world wide popularity helps place Germany as a culinary hotspot for the Indian travellers. Trends suggest that Indian travellers are seeking newer and unique experiences, the culinary tours offered across Germany offer the well versed Indian travellers just this. With over 5,000 beers from 1,300 breweries, 300 types of bread, 1,500

types of sausages, 13 wine regions, 292 Michelin-starred restaurants and 3,000 to 5,000 Christmas markets, Destination Germany is sure to satiate the evolved Indian travellers' appetite."

Theophilus expects all the varied travel segments to contribute alike to increased visitor overnights to Germany. "We expect the incentive travellers to be one of the highest contributors, based on recent trends," he mentioned.

# Dresden: A proud legacy

Germany Travel Mart 2018, hosted in the beautiful capital of the free state of Saxony, effectively showcased the many attractions of Dresden, which is famous for its architectural and music heritage

By Sudipta Dev

**D**resden has virtually risen from the ashes to take its rightful place among the most beautiful cities in Europe. The city had suffered significant destruction during World War II bombing in 1945, and following the reunification of Germany most of its architectural heritage was restored to its former glory. A cruise along the Elbe offers stunning views of it's many palaces and historic structures, that line up both sides of the river. Elbe itself is very important to the city.

Dresden has an 800 year old history. The city itself is a delight to explore on foot, as every corner turns up a visual delight. Most tours of the old town start from the Theaterplatz Square. The Semperoper is one of the world's most famous opera houses and icon of Dresden's pride as a cultural capital. From soloist concerts to ballet performances, the opera house is a hub of many activities, including the popular Dresden Opera Ball (SemperOpernball). The Dresden State Orchestra under-chief conductor Christian Thielemann is known globally. The building's striking architectural features make it one of first

stops for visitors to the city. Architectural tours and other thematic tours are available upon request.

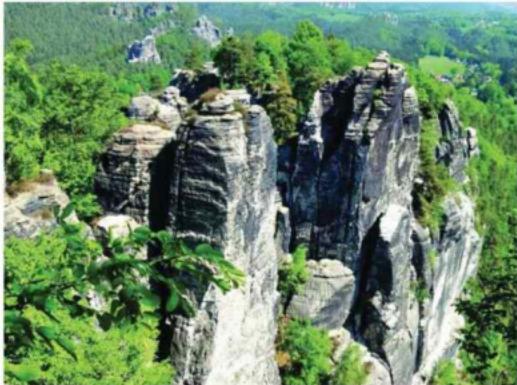
The Church of Our Lady, which was destroyed during the WWII bombing, was rebuilt and consecrated in 2005. The cathedral today is a testament to the resilience of the city and its ethos. If you are staying in Dresden for a few days, there is no way you can avoid passing the Fürstenzug - the Procession of Princes (the rulers of Saxony), a few times everyday. It is the largest porcelain mural in the world made of Meissen porcelain tiles. The Brühl's Terrace nearby popularly known as the 'Balcony of Europe' is one of the favourite places for visitors and locals alike. The terrace gets its name from Count Heinrich von Brühl, who was given the terrace as a gift by the then Saxon elector.

The impressive and expansive museum complex of

Zwinger includes the Old Masters Picture Gallery, the Dresden Porcelain Collection and the Royal Cabinet of Mathematical and Physical Instruments.

Residenzschloss, Dresden's royal palace, which had been completely burnt out now has one of the most eclectic





collections in the world in its 15 museums, including the Green Vault, the Cabinet of Prints, Drawings and Photographs, the Armoury, the Coin Cabinet, and others. The pride of the Green Vault is the Dresden Green Diamond. With a history that dates back to 1722, the extraordinary Dresden Green is believed to be from Kollur mine in Andhra Pradesh, India. For visitors from India, another exhibit of much interest is the Throne of the Grand Mughal Aurangzeb designed by Johann Melchior Dinglinger one of Europe's renowned goldsmiths. The exhibit is a stunning display of opulence and wealth in celebration of the Mughal Emperor's birthday in the palace courtyard, with 322 intricately crafted figurines of men and animals. Regarded as the greatest work of European jewellery art (created from 1701 – 1708), it is encrusted with 5120 diamonds, 160 rubies, 16 emeralds, one sapphire, 16 pearls, and more.

Another astounding display of the goldsmith's craft is the Golden Coffee Service, an elaborate setup fit for royalty. While the Weapons Gallery showcases the tools of warfare, The Electoral Wardrobe gives every visitor an insight into the royal wardrobe centuries ago.

The Albertinum is another important building. It was an armoury, and was later converted into a museum in the beginning of the 19th century, now it is a gallery of new masters, showcasing art from the Romantic period to the present. Currently the building is being reconstructed. The Transport Museum, which is one of the oldest buildings in the city, showcases an interesting collection of vehicles across various modes of transportation - from the bicycle to the train, tracing the history of each. Among the newest addition to the city's vibrant music and events scene is the Dresdner Kulturpalast, the concert and events venue, which reopened in 2017. Another modern landmark is Kraftwerk Mitte Dresden, an erstwhile industrial site which is now a hub for arts and creativity.

### Picturesque Pirna

A short drive from Dresden is the picturesque town of Pirna, located near the Sandstone Mountains in the Elbe valley. A town of 39,000 inhabitants, Pirna is a perfect destination for any vacation and the gateway to Saxon-Switzerland. Its location is another advantage - just about 90 minutes from Prague, and a few hours away from Berlin and Poland. The city was

the inspiration for several works of the famous painter Bernardo Bellotto, which now occupy a place of pride in Dresden's Old Masters Picture Gallery. Today if you visit the Castle Sutzenstein, which is currently hosting an exhibition by famous German-sculpture Hans Scheibl, you can get some of the best panoramic views of Pirna city from the terrace. And yes, visitors can also get a unique opportunity to sculpt a sandstone brick and take it home.

Sandstone is the source of life in Pirna, there was a time when one-third of its population worked in the sandstone industry. Among the most important structures is The Church of St Mary in Pirna, which is also built with sandstone and a late Gothic church. The other highlights of the stunning interiors are - the exquisitely painted vault ceiling, the original sandstone altar from 1614 and a five centuries old stunning baptismal font. The church is also used as a venue for classical concerts.

The Town Hall is centrally located and another striking building, which dates back to the first half of the 16th century. Another important building is the Tetzelihaus, the home of Dominican friar Johann Tetzeli, an opponent of Martin Luther. The city is fa-



mous for its gates, which are in various styles - Renaissance, Gothic, Baroque.

### Bastei rocks

The Elbe Sandstone Mountains covers an area of 710 square kilometres and attracts seven million tourists annually. The highlight of Elbe Sandstone Mountains is Bastei rocks and the famous Bastei bridge from where visitors can get breathtaking views of the surrounding area, including the meandering Elbe river.

There are several walking trails, and the popular activities include mountain biking, trekking, riding, cross country skiing, etc. The area has been the site of many film shoots like The Chronicles of Narnia, Inglourious Basterds, The Reader, Hansel & Gretel, and many more. There are many accommodation options here including hotels, guest houses and camp sites. The exclusive spas and health resorts in these idyllic natural surroundings are also popular with visitors.

# #RVC2018: Culture, Connect and Camaraderie in Canada

Rendezvous Canada 2018 (RVC 2018), which was held recently at Halifax, Nova Scotia, witnessed an estimate 1,875 registered delegates, an all-time attendance record (1,851 set in 2017) in the show's 42-year history. India was well represented by a robust number of tour operators. By **Reema Lokesh**

**I**ndia is an extremely important market for us, with respect to tourism sector and we warmly welcome our India contingent at RVC 2018 to this part of the world," emphasised David F. Goldstein, president & CEO, Destination Canada, in an exclusive conversation with Express TravelWorld. We as countries have only explored the tip of the iceberg in the tourism space and there is so much more one can achieve together through such platforms and connect opportunities, a thought which was expressed by Destination Canada's forerunners in tourism. Emmanuelle Legault, VP, International, Destination Canada, gave India a warm welcome by introducing Carl Vaz, CEO & strategy director and GSA Destination Canada for India as the new kid on the block with a lot of promise. Destination Canada has renewed their faith in the India market with new strategic planning and focus to reach out to a wider platform of buyers and target market.

## India director's voice

Articulating further, Vaz said, "India's economy is witnessing promising growth and is set to grow at 7.5 per cent this year, which means more disposable income etc. The visit of the honourable prime minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, along with honourable minister of small business and tourism and leader of the government in the House of Commons, Bardish Chagger, in February 2018,

helped a lot to kick off work in India. As per projections, 30 million Indian travellers will travel outbound this year - a growth of around 30 per cent as last year. As far as the travel of Indians into Canada is concerned, the prediction is that 270 thousand Indians will be visiting Canada this year, a growth rate of seven per cent. They will spend over half a billion Canadian dollars, which is a growth rate of 10 per cent. It's important to understand that these travellers spend on an average 2000 dollars on an air ticket to Canada from India. They are serious about their spend and their experience. An average person spends 6.5 Canadian dollars for a six days stay. India has a robust population of the millennials in the world. They are holding promising jobs and they want out of the ordinary travel experiences. The millennials is a sector who wants to travel for special occasions. Social media is powerful in India. Further, there has been a 37 per cent rise in air capacity from India into Canada, which is important to note. The travellers like the outdoors. We need the support of the PMOs and DMOs in the room. Adventure travel is highly popular." As per statistics, Destination Canada through its market research has projected that the market size in India is 3.7 million. From the response to that finding, 78 per cent said they will definitely visit Canada in the next two years. That is a market size of 2.9 million. "There is immense opportunities and we can work on it together," added Vaz.



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### Canada's tourism vision

On May 11, 2017, minister Bardish Chagger, launched Canada's Tourism Vision. It's a five-year, whole-of-government approach to increasing the number of international tourists who come to Canada by seizing the global opportunity that tourism offers.

In 2017, Canada had its best year ever for international visitors coming to Canada. Canada welcomed 20.8 million visitors from around the world in 2017 and revenue from those international visitors topped \$21.3 billion. Tourism is a major driver of Canada's economy, bringing value to Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast. Tourism is the largest service export and represents more than two per cent of GDP. Total tourism revenues from domestic and international travellers were CAD 97.4 billion in 2017. As per reports, the number of international overnight visits to Canada will increase by 30 per cent by 2021. The number

of tourists from China will double by 2021. Canada will compete to be one of the top ten destinations in the world by 2025. Canada will achieve these goals by making strategic tourism investments in the areas of marketing, access and product. The Government of Canada, under the leadership of the prime minister Trudeau, has made substantial progress towards these goals.

### New Signature Experiences

Destination Canada announced eight new signature experiences in 2017. These unique new experiences highlight Canada's history and culture as well as adventurous Arctic experiences in Canada's North. The Canadian Signature Experiences programme has grown to over 200 members.

#### New Canadian Signature Experiences:

- Exploring a Canadian Landmark with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (Manitoba)

• Museum Grand-Tour with the Canadian War Museum (Ontario)

• Railtown Urban Eats Tour with Off the beaten Track (British Columbia)

• Winter Arctic Discovery with Inukpik Outfitting (Nunavut)

• Arctic Circle Tour with Nature Tours of Yukon (Yukon)

• Canadian Arctic Reindeer Signature Package with Tundra North Tours (Northwest Territories)

• Gawa Canyon Tour Train (Ontario)

• Canyon Sainte-Anne (Quebec)

The Millennial Travel Programme, which gave Canadian and international millennial travellers a chance to experience the country, surpassed its goals. It reached 7.3 million Canadian millennials in 2017, far exceeding the programme's goal of 4.4 million, and increased travel by millennials by 16 per cent more than tripling the targeted five per cent. Destination Canada also extended this programme to attract millennials in key for-

eign markets. It reached an audience of 300 million and generated 250,000 leads to partners to remarket specific tourism offerings and convert the lead to a visitor. Throughout 2017-2018, Destination Canada also continued to harness the power of digital technologies to improve its marketing efforts. Through its North Star 22 partnership with provincial, territorial and municipal marketing organisations, and in partnership with Statistics Canada, Destination Canada embarked on a project to better understand how and where international visitors spend money in Canada and how to better segment its target audiences. Canada in 2017 translated into more than 35,000 jobs and contributed more than \$2.8 billion to Canada's GDP.

At RVC 2018, comprehensive presentations were made by every region in the country. Atlantic Canada was presented by Kelley Keefe, Atlantic Canada Tourism, representing Tourism New Brunswick, Tourism Prince

Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Tourism. Pamela Wamback, Travel Media Specialist, provided an insight into the region of Tourism Nova Scotia. Lisa Lavechchia, president and CEO, Destination Ontario, articulately introduced Destination Ontario to the media.

Québec, was represented by Alexandra Leclerc, director, international business development and Andre Martel, senior manager business development, Québec Tourism. Travel Manitoba, was represented by Colin Ferguson, president & CEO. Frontiers North Adventures, Assiniboine Park Conservancy, Gangler's North Seal River Eco Adventures, Tourism Winnipeg, Clear Lake Country, Lakeview Hotels & Lodges were well represented in the region.

Maria Greene, director of Global Partnerships, Destination British Columbia, put into perspective new itineraries and tourism attractions to be explored. Amy McInnis, manager of marketing, Tourism Saskatchewan, spoke about

## SPOTLIGHT



the region's tourism potential. Canada's Prairies and Parks Canada revealed the tourism promise and possibilities to explore. RVC's closing dinner by Atlantic Canada hosted 1850 dinner guests, wherein 1.5 tonnes of fresh hard shell lobster was served by a team of 130 servers. Toronto, Ontario will host the next Rendezvous Canada 2019 from May 28 - 31, 2019.

### Buyers speak

Maitreyee Vakharia, director of Pathfinders Holidays, felt that RVC 2018 was a perfect platform to experience and explore new areas of Canada. She feels Canada is certainly a premium destination for the clients and there is great potential as the destination offers various experiences at a favourable rate of exchange. According to her, it is a destination that will appeal to the maturing Indian travel market who are seeking new experiences.

Mathesh Lalla, senior manager - Leisure Travel (Outbound) Thomas Cook believes

there is a lot to offer for his clientele in terms of new places in Canada. The interest towards Canada is growing but it's for those who have already explored few other popular countries. Canada, according to him, has tremendous potential not only in summers but in early winters as well.

Zubin Khambatta, director, Shree Yash Destinations affirmed that RVC is a great tool toward promotion of Canada. "Though Canada is part of Yash's nervous system we still feel that we could promote it better. The fall and winter markets are great too. Canada, today is a four seasons destination with people wanting to travel during fall and winter too. Thousands of turquoise blue lakes, beautiful waterfalls and lakes, millions of Christmas trees, celestial Northern Lights and great wild life, Canada is certainly a world class destination."

Ramesh Godia, CEO, Varun Worldwide Holidays mentioned, "RVC 2018 was a great eye opener for us. It gave us exposure to the lesser known re-

gions in Canada and gave us the opportunity to network with service providers who do not have a presence in the India but are keen to work with the Indian market. We were looking to collaborate with activity providers, transporters and hotels in the less popular regions of Canada and RVC has helped us build contacts with them. Canada as a destination has had ebbs and flows when it comes to our clients. However, over the last three-four years we have seen a steady growth in the number of clients wishing to visit Canada."

Sapneal Rao, promoter and CEO, SSR Holidays said, "For me it was the first RVC and hence a highly knowledgeable one. Direct meetings with your potential partners proved insightful, wherein one can identify the unique elements of each region which would help in selling the destination better based on client profile and requirements. I felt there was a lot to learn and wish I had more time to learn more. I see Canada as a repeat destination for my kind of clientele. I also

saw it as a great opportunity for business. It's a country where many regions are unsold and where there is opportunity for travel experts and consultants to make money as the space is not crowded yet. Once again, RVC 2018 was a great learning and networking opportunity, which will surely help me build great business into Canada in coming years."

Mernoz Shastry, director, Mazda Travel felt that RVC is Canada's largest trade event connecting international buyers with Canada's tourism industry partners. This offers a huge knowledge gathering opportunity to the buyers. "We prepare for the event well in advance and booking appointments with preferred suppliers is key to success. This is a must attend event for anyone wanting to do business with Canadian suppliers. RVC is a well structured event with appointment sessions spread over three days giving buyers opportunity to book 75 appointments with Canadian tourism partners. India is relatively a small market for Canadian

suppliers. Once India generates strong visitor numbers, suppliers will be more tuned to meet and connect with India specific buyers. With direct air connectivity, we expect passenger arrivals to continue growing over the years. Canada is a winter wonderland. Learning to ski/snowboard, dog sledding, snow shoeing, ice walks, sleigh rides, snow tubing are some of the family friendly activities available during winter. We are working with our Canadian partners to showcase Canada as a year round destination. India market is fragmented and business flows through thousands of agents spread across India. Bulk of these agents have limited destination and product awareness and are blindly price driven. This is a maturing market and with its ability to generate large numbers, worldwide destinations are eager to do business in India. India is a challenging market for Canadian suppliers and demands a lot of patience and long term commitment," said Shastry.

# Holistic hospitality

As the first international branded hotel in Saurashtra, Mercure Dwarka has a unique positioning to offer a holistic hospitality experience to those visiting the holy city from India and overseas

By Sudipta Dev



**M**ercure Dwarka is the first international branded hotel in the whole of Saurashtra region. Mercure is a mid scale hotel brand for the Accor Group and a certified four-star property in Dwarka. According to Arindam Mukherjee, hotel manager, Mercure Dwarka, looking at the market dynamics and demands in the region, Mercure was chosen as the best fit for the hospitality scenario in Dwarka, which is a pilgrim destination. "We thought of coming up with the Mercure brand which will give safety, security, good clean environment, a good place to sleep and good quality sleep," he says, adding that most people visit Dwarka come on a circuit including

Ahmedabad and Somnath.

Located strategically on the Porbandar - Dwarka highway, Mercure Dwarka is currently the largest inventory in the city with 99 rooms. There are a few hotels in Dwarka, but Mukherjee believes that the overall holistic experience can come only from a brand like Mercure. Security is a key focus in the property - it is the only hotel in Dwarka with baggage scanners, CCTVs. The décor from the lobby to the restaurants, to the rooms are themed around the presiding deity of the city, Shri Krishna. While beautiful paintings dominate the walls in rooms, the lobby has high ceilings with natural light coming in. "The décor is obviously Krishna themed as most of the people are coming for reli-





## DIVINE DWARKA !

Located at the north west part of Gujarat, the Dwarkadish Temple is one of the Char Dhams for Hindus. The beautiful temple with its exquisite carvings is also called Jagat Mandir. While the original temple is believed to have been constructed by the great grandson of Shri Krishna, the current temple is from the 16th century. The temple has five storeys and is built on 72 pillars. It is a large complex in the centre of the town, with many temples.

Next to Dwarkadish Temple is the Sudama Setu and Gomti Ghat. The serene atmosphere of the river bank is wonderful experience to soak in the spiritual essence of the place. The spot where Gomti river meets the Arabian Sea is another highlight of Dwarka. There are many temples on the banks of the river, which are frequented by visitors.

The highlight of Shrivapi Beach near Dwarka is the lighthouse and scenic view accentuated by crystal clear waters. A visit to Dwarka is not considered complete without going to Beyt Dwarka - an island off the coast of

Dwarka. The ferry from Okha takes about 15 minutes to reach the island, which has few important temples. Enroute to Beyt Dwarka is Nageshwar Temple, which is one of the 12 self-existent jyotirlingas. Here Lord Shiva and Devi Parvati are worshipped as Naga and Nagini. The temple is famous for the colossal 25 m tall statue of Lord Shiva, in the complex.

Gopi Talav is another nearby destination which is a must visit. The story goes that the Gopis from Vrindavan unable to bear separation from Sri Krishna merged with the soil here. The clay of the pond, called Gopi Chandan, is considered special and can be bought by visitors.

A short drive from Dwarkadish Temple is the beautiful temple of Sri Krishna's chief queen Rukmini Devi. The stand-alone temple has exquisite sculptures on the outside. As with other places, there is also an interesting myth associated with the temple tracing its origin to a curse by Rishi Durvasa that Rukmini Devi cannot share the residence of her husband.



Arindam Mukherjee

gious purpose and Dwarkadish Temple. We would like people to have a good feel of the place as they are coming for pilgrimage. And, it is a vegetarian hotel. We serve a lot of Jain food as well, keeping in mind that people are on a pilgrimage," mentions Mukherjee. Maakhan is an all

fresco restaurant, which is also unique to the city.

Mostly groups come to stay at the property and also FITTs. "When I talk about FITTs, it is two/three families coming together. What has happened in recent times is that Gujarat has got a lot of publicity because of

its advertisement as a tourism destination promoted by Amitabh Bachchan. Gujarat is now on the travel map of most people. They come to cover a few places and Dwarka has a significant relevance," states Mukherjee. The property has tied up with travel agents in Ahmedabad, and gets significant business from online also. There are also walk-ins and those coming from Accor hotels site.

Sharing how he sees Dwarka developing as a destination in times to come and how the hotel is positioned for this, Mukherjee acknowledges that Dwarka is de-

veloping. "We have positioned ourselves ahead of the time looking at the business which is going to come in one year and a half," he says.

The hotel has hosted a few MICE groups from Ahmedabad. "We are going to promote Dwarka as a destination - beyond temple tour, with MICE groups, for a two-day conference we can have an itinerary for them - we have tied up with a certified scuba diving instructor for water activities near Gomti Ghat, along with snorkelling and day trips," informs Mukherjee. Going forward he sees a lot of MICE

groups coming, and trying out activities like beach camping, water sports, etc.

Mukherjee is looking at many international guests coming over during the winters, particularly those associated with ISKCON. For the followers of ISKCON there is a special package (discounted rate rooms, all inclusive package, special banqueting facility for large groups at no additional cost). The property has tied up with SOTC, Cox & Kings. NRIs from Gujarat are another market segment. Major movement of people coming to the city is from October to March.

# Glamping in colonial style

A jungle lodge nestled deep in the marshy plains of the Terai in Uttar Pradesh offers understated luxury in the heart of wilderness. Jaagir Lodge, Dudhwa, the first permanent luxury product of The Ultimate Travelling Camp (TUTC) is for the discerning traveller who wants the best of comfort and adventure. **By Steena Joy**

**A**round five hours by road from Lucknow, The Ultimate Travelling Camp (TUTC), the glamping (glamorous camping) brand has added to its diverse portfolio, a hunting lodge that offers the ultimate luxury in the lap of nature.

Originally named Bikramban Farm, Jaagir Lodge, Dudhwa sits on the edge of the Dudhwa National Park and Tiger Reserve, one of Uttar Pradesh's lesser known national parks. TUTC's site is also a gateway to three other distinct forest reserves - Katerniaghata, Kishanpur and Pilibhit. So the lodge offers easy access to three bio-diverse and unique habitats of the Bengal tiger, the rare swamp deer, the elusive barasingha with their magnificent 12-pointed antlers and the gharial.

TUTC is a super-luxury glamping brand that introduces the discerning traveller to different adventures in exceptional locations within India. The brand already has four camping sites, two in Ladakh (Thiksey and Diskit with 14 tents and 8 tents each) and one in Kohima, Nagaland which remains open for 10 days and has 10 to 14 tents. Jaagir Lodge, Dudhwa is TUTC's first permanent site. The colonial structure was built

in the late 1940s by Kewal Singh. After his death in 2012, it was converted into a hotel. Because of its location in the flood plains of the Terai, Jaagir Lodge is only open from December to June.

## Bespoke luxury

En route to Jaagir Lodge, one can see fields and fields of sugarcane, which are supplied to sugar factories in Palia Kalan, the closest town. The white facade of Jaagir Lodge has a rustic charm to it with the front porch having a long verandah typical of the colonial period and a courtyard surrounded by bougainvillea and frangipani trees. The trees around the property are home to many owls and other birds so the трyst with wildlife starts right here. The property has seven rooms - three luxury and four suites with six more units set to be operational soon. The rooms are bespoke luxury, four poster beds, antique furniture and modern amenities with an interesting twist. Some of the suite rooms even have old Singer sewing machines and old drums that have been used as side tables. Each of these rooms also have a different eclectic design and fresco wall-papers that give them a distinct quaint ambience. Every room has its own butler and guests





can get used to being waited upon. Jaagir Lodge also has its own naturalists who escort guests on safaris. Whether atop an elephant for sighting rhinos in Dudhwa or in an open jeep for a rare sighting of Kazirka, the one-eyed tigress in Kishanpur, with their valuable insights naturalists make safaris unforgettable experiences. "For the next season, Jaagir Lodge is building four Luxury Huts with a common sitting area and two Luxury Villas with the original domes. There will also be a Safari Club - a community recreational area with indoor games,

a bar and a cinema to watch documentaries," says Rajnish Sabharwal, COO, TUTC.

Interestingly, the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve's tiger conservation programme, 'Project Tiger' was championed by well-known conservationist, "Billy" Arjan Singh who lived a few kms from the lodge. This is why one of the luxury huts is named Billy's Hut after him. Jaagir Lodge has many books on him - recommended reading for guests who want to learn more about the man who pioneered wildlife conservation in Dudhwa. While Dudhwa has its own one-horned

rhino rehabilitation programme, Katarniaghata is famous for its Ganges river dolphins and the gharial. Boat rides here can get you up close to watching them in their natural habitats. Sloth bears, fishing cats and the paradise flycatcher are some of the rare species one may chance upon while on a safari.

Jaagir Lodge has its own vegetable garden for the cuisines at Pavilion Restaurant. From the camp manager to the chef to the butler and naturalist, the team at Jaagir Lodge contribute to making the wilderness experience as bespoke as TUTC.



The team at Jaagir Lodge, Dudhwa with Rajnish Sabharwal, COO, TUTC (third from left)



# FLYING HIGH WITH BIRD ACADEMY

Bird Academy is one of South Asia's leading IATA- certified Authorised Training Centers. **Radha Bhatia**, chairperson, Bird Group speaks about the institution's focus on bridging the employability gap within the aviation and aerospace sector since last two decades

By Sudipta Dev

**B**ird Academy was recently awarded the IATA 2018 Regional Top Performer Award at the Global Training Partners Conference in Istanbul, one among the many achievements in its two decades of existence. For the last nine years the institution has been awarded by IATA, and it is yet again a proud moment for Radha Bhatia, chairperson, Bird Group, who says, "After my post graduation, I started my work life as a school teacher. That was my first job, and once a teacher is always a teacher. I got married and then shifted to Delhi. Joined my husband's business and there I used



Radha Bhatia

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to take fresh people and train them myself. That was sort of a passion for me. Later on, I thought it was a great need in the industry to have academies, institutes, so we created Bird Academy." Officially, the academy came up in 1998 and got accredited to IATA in 2002.

The courses given include travel, tourism, aviation, security. "We have a whole list of courses. We are also accredited to DGCA to do Cat 16 and 17 for dangerous goods," says Bhatia. She informs that she had the honour to open the first Skill Development Centre in Chandigarh, in February 2018. This is a collaboration between Civil Aviation

Ministry, Airport Authorities, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Aerospace & Aviation Sector Skill Council (AASSC). "We have been mandated to do a particular training, the two trainings that are done are Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Security. We are the only today to have this important tieup with NSDC for skilling in aviation sector. The target to be achieved is 2400 people in three years, and 70 per cent have to be placed," mentions Bhatia. The Government of Odisha wants to replicate the NSDC programme in the state. "We will also be doing it in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, and have been contacted in Maharashtra," she adds.

The faculty at Bird Academy are mostly from the airline background. Bhatia acknowledges it is not easy to get good faculty as trainers are very few. "We took few trainees and tried to increase their knowledge. That is an effective way of retaining them as they see a lot of growth and excitement in their career," she says. Bhatia affirms that when she had started, the vision was to educate people, "We need the manpower within our group companies and outside also." Bird Academy has tieups with airlines, big travel agencies and OTAs for placements.

## GIRLS IN AVIATION

Women in Aviation is part of an international organisation, with chapters all over the world. In India there are 55 members, from different fields in aviation. WAI also sensitises youngsters for various jobs in the aviation sector. "There are so many jobs in the sector. We try to bring more women and train them for particular jobs like what we did in Kochi - we trained young girls to do baggage handling. We will also teach them driving and then train them on to airlift for handling baggage loaders. The girls are very enthusiastic. We catch them young. The first time we did for five airports, last year for 10 and this year it is going to be 17-18 airports," states Bhatia.

Global Girls in Aviation is celebrated every year on Sept 24. "To go to 17 airports at one go is not possible, so we will kick off from June. Airports Authority of India has been helping us out from the start. They offer us the airports, we contact the schools in nearby areas, and invite the girls to the airports, take them around and explain to them about the jobs. Our members fly in voluntarily to address the girls and tell them how they have reached the level," says Bhatia. Last year a booklet was launched with KPMG with 30 job profiles in aviation, which will help guide these youngsters how to proceed. "Last year we tried to invite a few parents, so that once they make up their mind there should be someone at home to support them," adds Bhatia, pointing out that if one takes into account manufacturing also, there are more than a hundred jobs in the aviation sector.



## MOVEMENTS

### Cathay Pacific

Cathay Pacific Airways recently announced the appointment of **CHRIS KEMPIST**, currently general manager Flying, as director Flight Operations with effect from mid-2018. He will oversee all aspects of the airline's flight operations. Kempist takes up the position after 25 years of service at Cathay Pacific; his last two years as general



Chris Kempis

manager Flying, where he was responsible for managing the airline's flying standards, including check and training activities. He is the Air Operators Certificate (AOC) holder for training at Cathay Pacific. Kempist joined Cathay Pacific in 1993 as a First officer on the Boeing 747 fleet, later becoming a Training First officer on the Airbus fleet and received his command in 2002. After joining the Flight Operations management team in a training management role in 2004, he was appointed Chief pilot (Airbus) in 2008, where he was responsible for standards, flight-technical and operational matters on the Airbus fleet.

### Schenker India

Schenker India, part of DB Schenker, the transport and logistics division of the Deutsche Bahn Group, has announced that **VISHAL SHARMA** has been appointed as the new chief executive officer - India and the Indian sub-continent, with effect from May 2, 2018. He will be succeeding Oliver Bohm who has taken up a new role as Europe chief commercial officer after spending



Vishal Sharma

20 years in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region. With over 17 years of experience with Maersk, Sharma held various strategic leadership roles in Europe & Asia, and is also well versed in the 3PL and SCM Industry, where he in particular was Area CEO for India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka of a 3PL. Apart from this, he also has a wealth of entrepreneurial experience in start-ups and business incubation. Sharma holds an MBA from Chicago Booth, and has a strong interest in technology solutions in fields such as analytics and SaaS.

### The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali

The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali has announced the appointment of **ORIOL MONTAL** as general manager. A seasoned hotelier with over 20 years of experience, he has arrived on the island direct from a four-year tenure as general manager for JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa. With a solid background in hospitality



Oriol Montal

services, Montal first entered the workplace in 1994 as Assistant Food & Beverage manager with Hotel Barcelona Santjs. Upon joining The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Arts in Barcelona, he remained in his hometown for several more years fine-tuning his expertise across several different departments. He then relocated to The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai as executive assistant manager Rooms Division. Upon joining the Marriott brand as general manager for JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa, Montal successfully repositioned the property as a leading family resort in Asia. Having assumed responsibility for The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali and the adjacent Bali International Convention Centre, he now faces the challenge of maintaining award-winning status on a regional and global level.

### Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield

**RANJU ALEX** has been appointed as the Multi-Property vice president, Bengaluru & Kochi and general manager for Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield. After a 17 year tenure with The Oberoi Group, Alex moved to Marriott International. Prior to this new role, she served as the general manager of the JW Marriott Kolkata and Multi Property vice president for East India, Bhutan and Bangladesh. She is a true champion of the values and commitment towards service excellence which encompasses taking care of associates and their career development



Ranju Alex

### The St. Regis, Mumbai

The St. Regis Mumbai has announced the appointment of **SAURABH DUBE** as director of Sales and Marketing. Dube brings over 14 years of rich experience in the realm of Business Development and Sales and Marketing within the luxury segment and hospitality industry. He will lead the dynamic sales team of The St. Regis Mumbai, creating and overseeing revenue plans and surpassing targets. Some of the leading brands that he has been associated with are The Oberoi Hotels, The Marriott International, Hyatt Intl. and The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts. Dube also has a distinguished accomplishment of successfully launching both



a luxury brand & hotel with his stint as Sales Head for Sofitel Mumbai BKC. His key focus areas include Revenue Management, Business Development, Sales and Marketing with a keen interest in Hotel Management & Operations.

plans. She enjoys the diversity of dealing with guests, meeting individually with department heads, exploring opportunities for improvement, solving concerns and moving forward together as a team. She is very passionate about women empowerment and advocates it at her workplace. Her work towards gender diversity has resulted in her being invited by several countries like Sweden, Netherlands, UK and the US as a key note speaker on women related issues.

### RoomIt by CWTÖ

RoomIt by CWTÖ, the hotel distribution division of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, the global travel management company, has appointed **JACK STAEBLER** as its new chief technology officer. Staehler will be based in RoomIt's Chicago headquarters and join both CWTÖ's Product & Technology and RoomIt leadership teams. He has held a number of VP technology roles with Cendant Travel, Orbitz and Sears Holdings, and most recently with RR Donnelly, a global provider of marketing and business com-

munication solutions and services, where he has been leading digital product & software development, investment strategy and process management. Staehler holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from the University of Wisconsin.

### The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi

**RAHUL PURI** has been appointed as the general manager at The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi. He is a seasoned hospitality professional with 20 years of international expertise having worked in India & China. He joined Marriott



Rahul Puri

## MOVEMENTS

International in 2005 at Sherraton Hongkong Hotel and Tower then transitioned into the role of area director for Revenue Strategy for India, Australia and Malaysia in 2011, which culminated into his most recent assignment as senior area director of Revenue strategy South Asia leading more than 100+ hotel portfolio. In his career journey, Puri has held several senior roles both on & above property and at corporate offices across various International hospitality brands in Asia Pacific such as InterContinental, Hyatt and Taj Hotels. In his new role, he will be focusing on the overall operations at the property, driving hotel performance, guest satisfaction, diversifying Food and Beverage experiences, focussing on strong brand positioning of the hotel while creating a positive workforce environment.

### Hyatt Regency Ludhiana

Hyatt Regency Ludhiana appoints **MANAS BANERJEE** as general manager effective May 14, 2018. Following a distinguished career in hospitality and with over 20 years of experience, his most recent assignment was as general manager at Hyatt Bangalore MG Road. As general manager, his responsibilities include overseeing all aspects of property management in accordance with the company mission statement, including the maximisation of financial performance, guest satisfaction and staff development within established



Manas Banerjee

quality standards. Banerjee is also responsible for managing and developing a successful relationship between the owners of the property and the Hyatt management team. He is a hotel management graduate from the Institute of Advanced Management Kolkata and commenced his career with Holiday Inn, Krishna (now Taj Deccan). This was followed by a move to Holiday Inn Vadodara and then to ITC Fortune Hotels Chennai. Subsequently, Banerjee joined Radisson Hotel as the general manager, where he played a key role in the hotel's opening and performance, followed by a general manager stint at Crowne Plaza Electronic City Bangalore.

### Radisson Hotel Group

Radisson Hotel Group has appointed **SAURABH PRAKASH** as its new vice president, Commercial, Asia Pacific. Based at the company's Asia Pacific headquarters in Singapore, Prakash is a member of the Asia Pacific executive committee and will oversee all aspects of the region's commercial activities, including sales, revenue optimisation, distribution, marketing and loyalty. A highly-skilled hotelier and revenue management strategist with over 15-years of experience, Prakash has worked for industry-leading hotels across Asia Pacific. He spent a majority of his career with Marriott International, where he worked in India, Malaysia, China and Singapore. Prior to this role, he was general manager & vice president, Asia Pacific, with TSA Solutions, a hospitality consultancy and solutions provider, in Singapore.

### Indore Marriott Hotel

Indore Marriott Hotel in Madhya Pradesh appoints **DEVESH RAWAT** as their new general manager.

Rawat's role includes overseeing and monitoring all departments, managing the commercial and operational strategy & performance of the hotel, ensure full compliance to Hotel operating controls, SOP's, policies, procedures and service standards and safeguarding the quality of operations both (internal &



Devesh Rawat

external audits). He brings in 18 years of rich experience of working with luxury hotels & resorts. He began his career at The Oberoi Raj Vilas, Jaipur. In 2004, he moved to Renaissance Mumbai Hotel and Convention Centre and gradually climbed up the ladder as director of Restaurants and Catering. He was also promoted as asst. director of F&B at JW Marriott (Jaipur), followed by The Leela Palace Kempinski, Bangalore, as the F&B manager. Prior to joining Indore Marriott Hotel, he was with Sheraton Grand, Bangalore, at Brigade Gateway where he was duly recognised as 'the most inspirational Leader' in 2014.

### Kochi Marriott Hotel and the Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport hotel

**ANOOP JOSEPH** joins as the new Multi Property director of Sales & Marketing of the Kochi Marriott Hotel and the Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport hotel from May 2, 2018. Joseph is a result oriented professional

### Lords Hotels & Resorts

Lords Hotels & Resorts has appointed **SIVA KUMAR** as its manager, Human Resources, Corporate. Kumar has over 22 years of industry experience and carries a generalist profile in Human Resources - Operations and Employee Engagement. A Post Graduate in Human Resources Management, he has previously served at The Trident Hotel - Chennai, Holiday Inn Group of Hotels, INOX Leisure Limited and Oakwood Premier & Residence and Accor. His immediate last profile was that of



Deputy Head - Human Resources with Della Adventures and Resorts.

### Novotel Hotels & Resorts, Goa

AccorHotels recently announced the appointment of **YOJAN DAS** as the Guest Experience manager for Novotel Hotels & Resorts, Goa. With over seven years' of experience in the hospitality industry, Das will be responsible for team management, business and skill development at the property. At Novotel Hotels & Resorts, Goa, her core responsibilities will include overseeing and co-



Anoop Joseph

with over 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry with an expertise in the sales and marketing function in India and International markets. In his new capacity, he will lead in developing and implementing sales and marketing strategies for both the hotels in Kochi. Prior to his current role, Joseph has previously worked with International Brands like IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group), the Movenpick Hotels and Resorts, The Leela Hotels and Resorts, Accor Hotels Group which included serving as the director Sales at Crowne Plaza Kochi. He holds Masters in Tourism Administration from Christ College Bangalore and a Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management from Pondicherry University.



Yojan Das

ordinating for various hotel amenities. In her attempt to manage the visitors, Das is proactive in all the activities by making sure the travellers are content. Das was associated with leading hotel chains like Vivanta by Taj, Goa, Bangalore and ITC Sonar Kolkata.



**KERALA TOURISM SCORES AGAIN** Kerala Tourism's 'Project Muziris' has been chosen the Best Innovative Tourism Project at the Global Star Awards 2018, the tourism and hospitality awards event. Noushad P M, managing director of the Muziris Projects had received the prominent award at the event held in New Delhi



**STRENGTHENING INDIA TIES** Indonesia's minister of Tourism, Arief Yahya, visited New Delhi from May 6 to 9, 2018 along with a delegation from Jakarta. Upon arrival in Delhi, the minister met with top tourism operators and members of the media.



**VISIT VICTORIA SHOWCASE IN INDIA** Carmen Smith, head of International Markets, Visit Victoria was in Mumbai to showcase the State of Victoria's commitment to the India market and met with tour operators in India



**MUSIC FEVER** W Hotels Worldwide debuted FUTURE RISING in Asia Pacific at W Goa, a platform in partnership with Mixcloud that identifies, cultivates and celebrates emerging artists and creatives all over the world



**RUNNING FOR A CAUSE** David Beckham officiated at the inaugural Light The Night Run charity vertical race in support of Macau Special Olympics held at The Parisian Macao's half-scale Eiffel Tower



**SOFITEL GRANTS A WISH** Ambassadors of Sofitel Mumbai BKC came together to share the power of a wish with Make-A-Wish Foundation India as the hotel organised various activities at their Grand Salon ballroom for the children with critical illness.



**EXPANDING TO THE EMIRATES** Rove Hotels, the contemporary midscale hotel brand and a joint venture between Emaar Properties and Meraas, recently announced its expansion to Ras Al Khaimah, with the first Rove hotel in the emirate in Al Marjan Island



**RODAS CELEBRATES 18TH ANNIVERSARY** Rodas, an Ecotel Hotel celebrated its 18th anniversary by launching various activities that included in-house guest participation, food festival for employees and pledge to take care of the environment



**INDIA JOINS IN THE ROYAL WEDDING** Three JW Marriott hotels across India joined in the celebrations of the wedding of Prince Harry to Meghan Markle as each venue livestreamed the royal wedding in real-time on big screens



**HYATT CENTRIC DEBUTS IN INDIA** Hyatt recently announced that it is introducing its seventh brand in India - Hyatt Centric, with the opening of Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore



**CONNECTING WITH SPORTS ENTHUSIASTS** West Indies cricketer Darren Sammy joined hands with Air Arabia for his charitable foundation and interacted with young sports enthusiasts in Mumbai



**KAJOL MEETS HER WAX LOOKALIKE** Bollywood star Kajol unveiled her wax figure at the Madame Tussauds Singapore. Her figure is the newest addition to the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards Experience



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