

AVIATION TIMES



COVER STORY

**Increasing MRO
Opportunities in India**

FACE TO FACE WITH

**Karthik Viswanathan VP
Sales, Qatar Airways**



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This issue of Aviation Times contains 76 pages including cover

Contents

16

16 Cover Story

Increasing MRO Opportunities in India

22



18 Face to Face with
Karthik Viswanathan VP
Sales, Qatar Airways

22 Profile

URAL AIRLINES

48



48 National Destination

Most fabulous trips in India you can have this October

68



68 International Destination

Enjoy Best Views of the Northern & Southern Lights

75 Skin Care

Transforming Skincare industry with Faith and Patience

75



18



1 Editorial

4

2 Chairman's Page

5

3 Mail Box

6

4 Quest & Quench

6

5 Aviation National

7-9

6 Aviation International

10-12

7 Travel & Hospitality

13-15

8 Cover Story

16-17

9 Face to Face

18-21

10 Profile

22-23

11 Article- Cathay Cargo Terminal Celebrates 10th Anniversary with New Identity

24-25

12 Article- Interview with A S Ganesan the AVP - Domestic Marketing & Sales at Jindal Aluminium Ltd

26-27

13 Article- In talks with Blane Baoynton, VP of Product Development – Intelsat

28-29

14 Hospitality- Rejuvenate and replenish at Hotel Royal Orchid Jaipur

30-32

15 Hospitality- DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer A Winter Wonderland for Celebrations

33-34

16 Hospitality- In Conversation with Roop Partap Choudhary Executive Director, Noormahal Palace and Founder, Colonel Saab, London

35-37

17 Hospitality- Interview with Gaurav Kanwar Founder of Harajuku Tokyo Café

38-39

18 Hospitality- Interview with Jatin Mallick, Chef and Co-Founder of Tres

40-41

19 Hospitality- In Talks with Ansh Khanijo, Founder, Bahce

42-43

20 Hospitality- In talks with Executive Chef Rishikesh Rai, Vivanta New Delhi Dwarka

44-45

21 Hospitality- In talks with Mohammed Shoeb, AVP- North India, Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi

46-47

22 Travel- Most fabulous trips in India you can have this October

48-49

23 Travel- Places to Witness the Most Spectacular Fall Foliage in India

50-51

24 Travel- Cultural Explorers Redefining Travel

52-53

25 Travel- Aboard Swiss Panoramic Trains The Journey is as Good as The Destination!

54-55

26 Travel- Spike In Business Travel Between Asia & Australia

56

27 Travel- Jamaica Bets Big on Indian Market

57

28 Travel- Airport Experience Can Influence Fear of Switching Off Priority Pass Research

58-59

29 Travel- In-Talks with Manpreet Bindra, President, FCM Travel

60-61

30 Travel- Navigating Travel & Hospitality Trends

62-63

31 Travel- Most-Visited Museums in New York City

64-65

32 Travel- Interview with Mohamed Ashraf, GM, Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island

66-67

33 Travel- Enjoy Best Views of the Northern & Southern Lights

68-69

34 Travel- Canberra the hidden gem in Australia

70-71

35 Travel- UNESCO Recognises Nine Asian Sites

72-73

36 Travel- APAC's Tourism Recovery Strong Post Pandemic PATA

74

37 Skin Care- Transforming Skincare industry with Faith and Patience

75-76

38 New Appointments

77

39 Subscription Coupon

78



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FRANKFINN

Editorial

Greetings!

In this edition of Aviation Times, we bring to our readers numerous interesting topics from the Aviation, Hospitality and Travel industries. Our chairman talks about how Indian aviation ready surpass the pre covid growth.

The Cover Story of this edition is about Increasing MRO Opportunities in India. In the Face-to-Face Section, we shared our conversation with Mr Karthik Viswanathan VP Sales, Qatar Airways and covered Ural Airlines in the Profile Section. Our journalists write about Cathay Cargo Terminal celebrating its 10th Anniversary with a new identity in the Aviation Section.

In the Hospitality Section, this issue of Aviation Times features Hotel Royal Orchid Jaipur. We also share our conversation with Mr Roop Partap Choudhary Executive Director, Noormahal Palace and Founder, Colonel Saab, London, Mr Gaurav Kanwar Founder of Harajuku Tokyo Café and Chef Rishikesh Rai, Vivanta New Delhi Dwarka.

Our journalist writes about Most fabulous trips in India you can have this October and Aboard Swiss panoramic trains the journey is as good as the destination. We have covered a range of Faith and Patience in the Skin Care section.

In the New Appointments section, our readers can learn about the change in top management positions in the Aviation, Travel and Hospitality industries. We hope you will enjoy this issue.

Do let us know if there are any other topics you'd like us to include in our upcoming editions.

Editor

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

The Indian Aviation sector is all set to surpass the pre-Covid levels of domestic air passenger traffic growth, as per the credit rating company - ICRA's (Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency). latest report. According to ICRA, the growth in domestic air passenger traffic in FY2024 will rise at the rate of 8-13 per cent, thus reaching 150-155 million, surpassing the pre-COVID peak levels of 141.2 million in FY2019.

ICRA has predicted a stable outlook for the Indian aviation industry amidst the continued recovery in domestic & international air passenger traffic in FY2024 and improved pricing power of the carriers.

During the first five-month period in FY2023, domestic air passenger traffic stood at 63.2 million, witnessing a year-on-year growth of 20% from 52.6 million during the same time in FY2022, seven per cent higher than the pre-COVID levels of 58.9 million in FY2019, said ICRA.

According to the ratings agency ICRA, the rapid rebound in domestic air passenger traffic is anticipated to continue into the second half of the current fiscal year. It is predicted that the number of domestic travellers will stand at 12.3 million in September 2023. Despite being 1.3 per cent lower than August, this is still close to 19 per cent higher than the same time last year and about 7 per cent higher than the pre-COVID figure for September 2019.

Domestic air traffic increased by 20 per cent from April to September this year compared to the same time last year and by 7 per cent over the equivalent period in 2019. Further, the international passenger traffic for Indian carriers surpassed the pre-COVID levels in FY2023. Although it trailed the peak levels of 25.9 million in FY2019, it is expected to cross this level in the current fiscal, with an estimated 25-27 million passengers, ICRA said.

"ICRA's outlook on the Indian Aviation industry is stable on the back of the fast-paced recovery in domestic passenger traffic in FY2023 and H1 FY2024 and expectations of the trend continuing in H2 FY2024. Moreover, the industry witnessed improved pricing power, reflected in the improved yields and thus the revenue per available seat kilometre – cost per available seat kilometre (RASK-CASK) spread of the airlines," the rating agency said.

Despite a healthy rebound in air passenger traffic, ICRA has reiterated that the domestic aviation industry still faces difficulties due to high aviation turbine fuel prices and the Indian rupee's decline against the US dollar since Covid, both of which have a significant impact on the cost structure of the airlines. The average price of jet fuel stood at ₹121,013 per kilolitre (kl) in 2022-2023 and at ₹101,833 per kl so far in the current financial year compared with an average of ₹65,368 per kl in 2019-2020.

Jet fuel prices in Delhi rose for a fourth consecutive month to reach ₹118,199.17 per kl on 1 October, a 32% spike since June. In fact, Indian airlines have started imposing fuel surcharge on airfares to compensate for the rise in fuel prices. The largest carrier IndiGo with 63% market share has announced a ₹300-1,000 fuel surcharge and fellow low-cost carrier SpiceJet has also confirmed that it will also impose a component of fuel surcharge.

"While domestic airlines have a partial natural hedge to the extent of earnings from their international operations, overall, their net payables are in foreign currency. The airlines' efforts to ensure fare hikes, proportionate to their input cost increases, will be the key to expand their profitability margins," ICRA added.

ICRA, this year, maintained that it estimates the Indian airlines to reduce their losses to ₹30-50 billion in 2023-2024 (April-March) on the back of steady growth in passenger traffic, pricing discipline and consolidation in the industry.

The Indian Aviation industry is set for an exponential growth with major developmental plans in the offing. The Indian airlines are witnessing a revival and surge in air passenger traffic that could not be imagined during the turbulent pandemic phase. However, the resilient Aviation sector has fought against all the odds and is ready to soar to greater heights. The aviation sector is a key driver of economic growth in India and needs holistic efforts from the industry stakeholders as well as the government to recuperate and realise India's true potential.

Thanking you,

(K.S. Kohli)

(Mr. K.S. Kohli is a practising Advocate in Delhi High Court and Supreme Court and is the non-executive Chairman of Frankfinn Group)





Mail Box

I enjoy reading all the articles in the aviation and hospitality sections. I hope you continue to give such informative articles. With the depreciating value of the rupee and the fall in the GDP, I hope the aviation industry is able to cope with the stress being laid due to ever-increasing costs.

Mita Dogra, Surat

I am an air hostess aspirant, always looking for informative literature to widen my knowledge about the industry. I recently came across the Aviation Times and found it to be a very useful magazine for all those students who would like to have a career in this industry.

Rosy Gurung, Kalimpong

QUEST & QUENCH

Ques. I wanted to know whether it is advisable to have prior experience with domestic airlines as a cabin crew to join international airlines and the knowledge of languages required to be known for the same. Also, is it advisable to join ground services to increase the chances of selection as cabin crew?

Ashita, Aligarh

Ans. No hard and fast rules govern the airlines; thus, it is not easy to know whether it would be advisable to have prior knowledge and experience of a domestic airline. The airlines have only one criterion: a candidate should be able to handle the passengers effectively. As long as you are a people person, you can get the job. Experience with domestic airlines assures the airline of your service attitude. However, several airlines prefer to take fresh candidates, as they are not ingrained into a certain working style. The thing to remember is that it is your personal attitude which counts.

As long as you are good at English and Hindi, it suffices for the languages. Airlines may ask you to be

fluent in a local language too, depending on the sector they want to serve. If you know any foreign language, whether French, German, Latin or Spanish, it is just an added advantage.

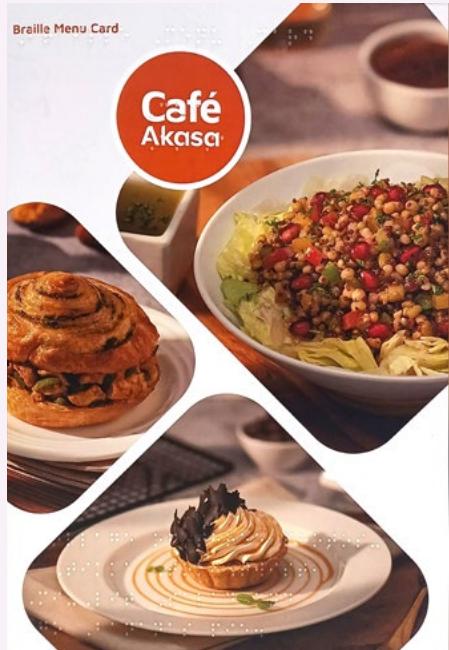
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AVIATION NATIONAL



Akasa Air enhances accessibility with the introduction of Braille Menu Cards on Café Akasa



Akasa Air, India's most dependable airline, continues its commitment to inclusivity and accessibility by introducing its inflight dining menu card in Braille, onboard its meal service Café Akasa. Developed in partnership with The Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC), the menu has been designed to ensure customers with visual impairments have a seamless experience on board.

The new Braille menu cards are thoughtfully designed and feature a variety of options, including meal choices, snacks and beverages available to order while on the flight. By incorporating Braille, passengers with visual impairments can independently peruse and select their meal preferences, enhancing their overall travel experience.

The Braille-friendly menu is in line with Akasa Air's continuous endeavour to establish a cohesive flying experience for all our passengers. Earlier this year, Akasa Air introduced its inflight safety manual in Braille, comprising detailed safety instructions in both English and Hindi to provide a safe travel experience for passengers with visual impairments.

Commenting on the launch, Mr Belson Coutinho, Co-Founder and Chief Marketing & Experience Officer, Akasa Air, said, "At Akasa, we are committed to building an airline that is socially responsible, economically sustainable, and inherently empathetic. The Braille menu card ensures that passengers with visual impairments can easily access and enjoy refreshments from one of the most distinguished offerings - Café Akasa. We are immensely thankful to Dr Taraporevala and the entire XRCVC team for their strategic direction and unwavering support in our goal towards inclusive travel."

Dr Sam Taraporevala, Executive Director, XRCVC, said, "At the XRCVC, we are committed to creating an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities. It has been a pleasure to associate with Akasa Air to create an accessible inflight menu for Café Akasa. This menu has been designed with large fonts and synchronised Braille which will cater to the needs of passengers with visual impairments. We hope that all service providers will take a leaf out of Akasa's book and work to create inclusive and accessible solutions for their customers with diverse needs."

Café Akasa, the airline's inflight meal service recently announced a menu refresh to include a wide array of meal options - including healthy meals, festive favourites, gourmet, and fusion meals, while retaining some original favourites. The new menu boasts of over 50+ meal options which have been exclusively curated with reputed chefs from across India.



Uganda Airlines Selects Çelebi India as Its Preferred Ground Handling Services Partner in Mumbai, India



Çelebi India adds another milestone by announcing its latest partnership with Uganda Airlines to deliver exceptional ground handling services in the country. This significant union displays the unwavering commitment by Çelebi to raise the Indian aviation service standards and continuously deliver global standards for ground and cargo handling services.

Çelebi India commenced supporting the ground handling services for Uganda Airlines' with its inaugural direct flight from Entebbe to Mumbai on October 7, 2023. Uganda Airlines has launched three weekly flights connecting Entebbe and Mumbai and has expressed its intention to further expand its presence in India.

With a proven track record of over a decade, Çelebi has established a culture of excellence in ground handling services at Mumbai Airport, catering to both domestic and international airlines.

Mr Tauseef Khan, CEO, Çelebi Ground Handling - India, said, "We are delighted to bring our ground handling expertise to Uganda Airlines in Mumbai. We anticipate a long-term partnership as Uganda Airlines expands its footprint in India. Our commitment remains steadfast in providing seamless services and contributing to the growth of aviation in India."

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Jenifer Bamuturaki, Chief Executive Officer, Uganda Airlines, said, "Uganda Airlines is proud to strengthen the business and commercial ties between India and Uganda by launching direct flights from Entebbe to Mumbai. We are also planning to expand our network to other points in India. We extend our congratulations to Çelebi India for supporting the growing demand for air passenger and cargo services in India."

Çelebi India recently commenced ground handling services at Chennai Airport, adding to its portfolio of nine airports in India, including major hubs such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin, Ahmedabad, Goa (Manohar International Airport, Mopa), and Kannur.

These flights are being introduced to cater to business and leisure travellers seeking new and affordable flying options to access destinations that facilitate business development and offer tourist attractions.

Vistara Announces Daily Non-Stop Flights Between Delhi and Bali

Vistara, a joint venture of Tata group and Singapore Airlines, recently announced daily non-stop flights between Delhi and Bali, starting 01 December 2023. This makes Vistara the only airline currently offering direct connectivity between the two cities. Vistara will be deploying its A321LR aircraft, with a three-class configuration, giving its customers the option to fly in Business, Premium Economy or Economy cabins when travelling on the route. Bookings for the flights are being progressively opened on all channels, including Vistara's website, mobile app and through travel agents.

Bali has become an increasingly sought-after holiday destination for Indians due to its accessibility, proximity and hassle-free visa-on-arrival facility.

Commenting on the introduction of the new destination, Mr Vinod Kannan, Chief Executive Officer, Vistara said, "India is the second-largest source of foreign tourists to Bali and with hassle-free visa-on-arrival, Bali remains one of the preferred holiday destinations for Indians, besides being popular for MICE traffic. Additionally, as the second-largest trading destination for India in the ASEAN region, Indonesia exhibits great potential for business travel as well. We are delighted to be the only airline offering direct connectivity between Dehi and Bali. We are confident that customers will appreciate having the option to travel on India's finest full service airline on the route."



Indigo's Welcomes Jharsuguda as the 84th Destination on Its Network

IndiGo recently announced the upcoming connectivity to and from Jharsuguda, also known as the 'powerhouse of Odisha'. The introduction of these daily-direct flights will seamlessly connect Jharsuguda to Kolkata from November 05, 2023 and to Bengaluru from November 15, 2023, making it the 84th domestic and 116th overall destination in the 6E network. With the launch of these new routes, IndiGo is set to enhance mobility, accessibility and interstate connectivity, providing connectivity to an important industrial and business hub.

Mr Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales, IndiGo, said, "We are pleased with the addition of Jharsuguda to our comprehensive 6E network. The introduction of these new connections from Jharsuguda is aimed at enriching domestic connectivity. Recognised as an emerging industrial hub and the powerhouse of Odisha, its linkage with major metropolitan cities like Kolkata and Bengaluru will undoubtedly catalyse trade and commerce. As we constantly venture into new skies, bridging people with their favoured destinations, we are committed to delivering on our promise of providing affordable, on-time, courteous and hassle-free travel experiences across our extensive network."



Jharsuguda is a city located in the western part of the Indian state of Odisha. It is an emerging industrial hub, particularly in the metal and cement sectors. It has a thriving industry, mostly centered around thermal power plants and mining. Jharsuguda has often been referred to as "Little India" due to its diverse demography, languages and cultures.

BLS International Wins Another Schengen Global Visa Outsourcing Contract for Slovakia

BLS International Services Ltd, a global leader in outsourcing services for governments and diplomatic missions, has signed an exclusive global visa outsourcing contract for Slovakia in 18 countries with more than 54 offices. According to industry data, 2.64 million tourists visited Slovakia in 2021 and this number is expected to increase in line with travel trends.



BLS International's extensive experience in providing exceptional visa services has earned them the privilege of working with the Schengen member countries. With this new contract, BLS International will be entrusted with the responsibility of not only offering tourist visa services and Business visa services but also national visa services, all with the aim of facilitating seamless travel and immigration procedures.

Mr Shikhar Aggarwal, Joint Managing Director of BLS International Services Ltd., said, "We extend our sincere appreciation to the Slovakia government for entrusting BLS International as their visa outsourcing partner. This collaboration reflects our steadfast commitment to excellence and unwavering dedication to delivering efficient, secure visa services. Aligned with the core Schengen principles, we are eager to

enhance the visa application experience for all, setting new industry benchmarks through innovation and customer-centric solutions. As Slovakia emerges as an enticing and fascinating new tourism destination, significantly contributing to the growth of the travel industry, we are keen to play our part. This endeavor harmonizes perfectly with our core values of excellence, efficiency, and security."

Notably, this achievement marks a significant addition to BLS International's portfolio of Schengen countries. The company already collaborates with Schengen member states such as Hungary, Portugal, Poland, Spain, Germany and Italy, offering a wide range of visa and consular services. Slovakia's inclusion in this elite group further solidifies BLS International's position as a trusted partner for governments and visa applicants alike.



AVIATION INTERNATIONAL



Honeywell Aids in The Alternative Fuel Transition Through Safety Technologies

Honeywell recently announced a new infrared-based (IR) technology that quickly and reliably detects hydrogen flames – before they grow into major fires.

Honeywell's FS24X Plus Flame Detector helps protect workers and facilities from hydrogen production and use risks. Hydrogen is highly flammable, colourless, odourless and 14 times lighter than air. No known odorant can be added to hydrogen that is light enough to "travel" along with it, making a leak imperceptible to the human senses.

"Clean hydrogen has a much lower carbon impact than traditional energy sources and has great potential for powering our future," said Sarah Martin, President of Honeywell Sensing & Safety Technologies. "By innovating in technologies that help safeguard hydrogen facilities and workers, we are driving further use of hydrogen as both a fuel source and an energy storage method."

Hydrogen fuel cells, which generate electricity, heat and water, can provide power to homes and other buildings as well as electric vehicles. The Energy Transitions Commission projects hydrogen will be the source of 13% of final energy demand in 2050 and reach a market value of \$2.5 trillion or more.

This is incredibly promising for the future of clean energy, as hydrogen can be produced from diverse domestic resources and has the potential for near-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. When hydrogen is burned in a fuel cell, the primary byproduct is water vapour.

Flame and gas detectors—particularly those like the FS24X Plus that can detect flames even in rainy, foggy or smoky conditions—are important components of a comprehensive safety programme for industrial facilities using hydrogen. Today, hydrogen is critical to our infrastructure, from oil refineries and power plants to chemical production facilities making ammonia and fertiliser. Hydrogen can also be found in data centres, battery production plants and wastewater facilities as a byproduct. To learn more about Honeywell's gas and flame detection innovations across key industries, visit the company's website.



SCAN QR CODE
TO KNOW MORE



The Singapore Airlines Group Celebrates 20 Years of Flying to Hyderabad



The Singapore Airlines (SIA) Group, which commenced operations in Hyderabad on October 29th 2003, will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its services to the city this year. To mark this momentous occasion, SIA is pleased to announce that starting October 29th 2023 and subject to regulatory approvals, it will increase its Hyderabad-Singapore services from seven times weekly to 12 times weekly as it takes over Scoot's daily services between the cities.

The new five-times weekly morning services will offer more connectivity options for passengers travelling from Hyderabad to and beyond Singapore. This service will be operated by SIA's Boeing 737-8s, fitted with 154 seats – 10 in Business Class and 144 in Economy Class. The daily night services will be operated by SIA's Airbus A350s, which are fitted with 303 seats – 40 in Business Class and 263 in Economy. As a result, Hyderabad will be entirely served by SIA's full-service product. Mr. Sy Yen Chen, General Manager India for Singapore Airlines, said, "As we celebrate 20 years of serving the Hyderabad market, we are delighted to announce an increase in our weekly operations to the city. The strategic restructuring of our Hyderabad network is a testament to our commitment to continuously evolve and meet the changing needs of our valued customers. This milestone reaffirms our dedication to the local market and we are excited to provide even greater connectivity and exceptional full-service travel experiences as we forge ahead into the future."

The increase in A350 operations on the Hyderabad-Singapore route also opens up a wider range of opportunities for SIA Cargo. The aircraft's wider body will uplift large cargo consignments that need to be loaded on skids. The aircraft's temperature-control capabilities are also essential for certain kinds of temperature-sensitive cargo.

Maldivian announces Inaugural flight to Bengaluru

Maldivian, the national airline of the Maldives, has announced the launch of new flights to Bengaluru, India. Starting from October 30th, 2023, the airline will operate two weekly flights every Monday and Thursday using its Airbus A320 aircraft. The Male-Bengaluru flight will leave from Velana International Airport at 9:35 and fly down to KIA at 12:15. The flight flying from Bengaluru will leave KIA at 13:15 and reach Male at 14:50.

The new route will provide travellers with a convenient and direct connection between the Maldives and Bangalore, one of India's major cities. Tickets for the flights have gone live for sale on August 16th. The schedule has been designed to cater to the needs of both leisure and business travellers, providing options for mid-week and weekend trips. Travellers can conveniently connect to onward destinations within the Maldives using a Maldivian domestic network of 17 destinations. This new service is part of Maldivian's ongoing efforts to expand its network and provide its customers with more travel options. The airline is committed to providing its passengers with high-quality service and a comfortable travel experience.

Speaking on the occasion of the launch, Mohamed Mihad, Managing Director – Maldivian, said, "Bangalore is one of India's leading markets for high-quality leisure travel to the island nation of the Maldives. The Maldivian, with its high-quality service and perfect scheduling, will further help to bring in more tourists from India to the Maldives."





Airbus Helicopters Expands 3D Printing Capacity

Airbus Helicopters has opened a new 3D printing center at its Donauwörth, Germany site, expanding in-house capacity for this technology. The airframer now operates three machines for components made of titanium, four for plastic, and one for aluminum.



Airbus is using the process for serial production parts as well as for components for prototype aircraft such as the CityAirbus NextGen eVTOL and the high-speed Racer experimental compound helicopter.

"Among other advantages, 3D printing can reduce the weight of aircraft components, which leads to less fuel consumption. Such potential can bring financial benefits and contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions during operations," said Mr Stefan Thomé,

Airbus Helicopters, Managing Director for Germany.

Proponents have long pointed out that 3D printing uses up to 85 percent less raw material than conventional CNC machining, makes it easier to produce complex structures, and is more efficient for one-off and short production runs, using lasers to melt metal or plastic powders to create desired shapes layer-by-layer. Airbus has used 3D printing to manufacture more than 9,400 titanium locking shafts for the doors on its widebody A350 airliner since 2017.

LATAM Airlines Records More Business from India Post-Covid

InterGlobe Air Transport, GSA for the LATAM Airlines Group in India, organised a Mumbai travel trade workshop.

E

Talking about India, he said that the market is growing. "Currently, we sell more inventories in this market compared to the pre-Covid period. However, there are increased possibilities. We truly believe in the potential of India and the market offers an ocean of opportunities," he pointed out.

When asked, what makes him think India is a potential market? Patta replied, "India's Economy is growing and the local carriers have placed orders for significantly high aircraft. The Indian travellers do not just want to travel in one country. Rather, they want to see an entire region. So, we feel the market will grow more and more in the days to come."



The airline deploys its Boeing 777-300 and 787 Dreamliners for long-haul flights. "The configuration our aircraft offer is a combination of Economy and Premium Business Class with the first few rows of Economy being LATAM+ seats with more leg room. We offer Premium Economy and Economy classes for domestic and regional flights," said Patta.



TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY



Travel & Hospitality

ALL – Accor Live Limitless Launches New Brand Campaign in India

ALL – Accor Live Limitless unveils its latest campaign, India All-ways on my mind, showcasing the enchanting beauty of India.

The new campaign invites travellers to embark on an extraordinary adventure through the mesmerising beauty of India, promoting the country's rich food, culture and architecture, along with unforgettable experiences available to guests at over 50 hotels. The latest campaign is an extension of the regional activation, Asia – ALL-ways on my mind, showcasing Accor's commitment to providing exceptional hospitality experiences across Asia.

With a portfolio of exceptional hotels in India, including Pullman, Grand Mercure, Novotel, Mercure and ibis, Accor ensures that every experience, whether it be adventurous or spiritual, is both comfortable and magical. Guests are invited to discover the wonders of India and experience the renowned hospitality offered by the group's renowned properties, where modern comforts and thoughtful amenities cater to their every need.

To enhance the travel experience, members of ALL - Accor Live Limitless, Accor's lifestyle loyalty programme, can enjoy up to 25% off their bookings, inclusive of breakfast, when reserving their stay at any of the group's properties through the website or mobile app. The membership also offers a range of benefits, including curated experiences, exclusive discounts, priority check-in, last-minute room booking, free upgrades and more. With ALL – Accor Live Limitless, guests can indulge in the best of everything and create lasting memories.

Puneet Dhawan, Sr. Vice President of Operations - India and South Asia at Accor said, "India is a country that is full of life and love. From its flavourful cuisine and beautiful destinations to its warm-hearted people and exceptional hospitality, there is an endless array of discoveries to be made and through this campaign, we want India to ALL-ways be on your mind. We hope to welcome you to our incredible hotels in country and help to make memories that last a lifetime."

In addition to rewarding experiences, members of ALL - Accor Live Limitless can earn Rewards Points on every stay or dining experience at participating properties. These points can be redeemed for free nights at participating hotels, transferred to partners worldwide or converted into unforgettable moments through Limitless Experiences such as concerts, sports matches and special dinner events.





India's Dhordo amongst the 54 Best Tourism Villages announced by UNWTO



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The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has announced its list of Best Tourism Villages 2023. The accolade recognises villages that are leading the way in nurturing rural areas and preserving landscapes, cultural diversity, local values and culinary traditions.

In this third edition, 54 villages from all regions were selected from almost 260 applications. A further 20 villages have joined the Upgrade Programme and all 74 villages are now part of the UNWTO Best Tourism Villages Network. The villages were named during the UNWTO General Assembly, taking place this week in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili. "This initiative acknowledges villages that have harnessed tourism as a catalyst for their development and well-being."

Launched in 2021, the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO initiative is part of the UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Programme. The programme works to foster development and inclusion in rural areas, combat depopulation, advance innovation and value chain integration through tourism and encourage sustainable practices.

DU Digital Global Limited to manage New Thai Visa Application Centre in New Delhi

DU Digital Global Limited, a distinguished global service provider, recently announced its recent achievement: becoming the official partner for Thailand's sticker visa processing at the Royal Thai Embassy in New Delhi. DU Digital Global will oversee the meticulous management and submission of sticker visa applications for travellers aspiring to visit Thailand.

With a vast international presence, DU Digital Global is a leader in administrative tasks, including visas, passports and identity management. Its expertise has earned the trust of governments worldwide, establishing its reputation for delivering streamlined processes, top-notch security and exceptional service quality.

During a recent visit, Mr Thirapath Mongkolnavin, Hon'ble Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) of Thailand and Mr Phanuwit Vejsamphan, Hon'ble Second Secretary, expressed admiration for DU Digital Global Limited's services. Their visit highlighted DU Digital's exceptional capabilities and marked a significant milestone in the company's journey.

DU Digital accepts sticker visa applications, enabling anyone to visit the Visa Application Centre to initiate the processing. Sticker visas offer a cost-effective alternative to Thailand's visa-on-arrival and e-visa options, priced at INR 2,500 for single-entry visas and INR 12,000 for multiple-entry visas. Additionally, there is a nominal processing fee of INR 500. These visas allow a three-month validity with a single stay of 60 days from the date of entry for tourists, with processing times reduced to a minimum of four working days. Required documents include two passport-sized photos, confirmed travel tickets, hotel reservations and a bank statement reflecting a minimum balance of INR 50,000.



Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives-Leading Family Resort in South Asia

Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives announced that it has been named the 'Leading Family Resort in the Gold Category' at the prestigious South Asian Travel Awards 2023. This esteemed recognition reflects the resort's unwavering commitment to providing exceptional family-friendly experiences and services. Now in its seventh year, the South Asian Travel Awards is a highly regarded annual awards programme that celebrates excellence in the hospitality industry in South Asia.

"We are excited to receive the award for Leading Family Resort in South Asia. Our team works tirelessly to create unforgettable moments for families from around the world. This award is a testament to their hard work and dedication which inspires us to continue striving for excellence," says Mr Mark Eletr, General Manager, Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives.

Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives offers a wide range of activities and services tailored to meet the needs of families. From spacious family suites and child-friendly dining options to exciting on-site activities and a supervised kids' club.

"The resort is grateful to its guests and partners for their continued support and feedback, which has contributed to this significant achievement. We are committed to delivering exceptional hospitality experiences for families and evolving our offering by introducing new experiences and adapting others for greater enjoyment," added Mr Mark.



Vedam: A Journey Through South India's Culinary Heritage Arrives in Bengaluru



Vedam, a captivating dining destination inspired by the rich historical and traditional heritage of South Indian cuisine, officially opens its doors to the public in the bustling city of Bengaluru.

Nestled within the Goldsand Building, near Wipro Gate, Kaikondrahalli, Bengaluru, Vedam is a QSR culinary gem that promises an exquisite journey through the heart of South Indian gastronomy. With a commitment to authenticity, purity and innovation, Vedam's skilled chefs have curated a menu that showcases the vibrant flavours of South India, preserving age-old traditions while embracing contemporary culinary techniques.

Vedam is more than just a restaurant; it's a cultural celebration of South Indian cuisine. The founders, Mr Rohin Razdan, Praveen Singh and Mr Methil Razdan, bring a wealth of experience in the culinary industry with a deep-rooted connection to South Indian flavours. Their dedication to culinary excellence has resulted in a dining experience, where every bite tells a story. Discussing the grand launch, Mr Rohin Razdan, Founder of Vedam, spoke on behalf of his co-founders, stating, "Our restaurant is a testament to our deep-rooted passion for South Indian cuisine and we are elated to embark on this culinary journey with the Bengaluru community. Our primary goal is to provide an experience that authentically respects the traditions of South India while embracing the evolving tastes of today's diners. Currently, we are dedicated to introducing Bengaluru residents to the rich diversity of our cuisine, adding a contemporary twist to beloved traditional flavours at Vedam."

The restaurant presents a delightful blend of traditional flavours that cater to the diverse palates of both South and North Indian customers. Prioritising health, the restaurant employs high-quality ingredients and cooking methods that elevate nutritional value without sacrificing taste. Vedam also fully embraces food technology for ingredient preservation, secure packaging and an efficient online ordering system, all of which uphold the highest standards of quality and service.

International airfares have refused to drop after the 2021-22 reopening of borders globally. It is not uncommon to find that what once used to be a return fare is now just the one-way price. Despite this crunch, the demand is back.

Increasing MRO Opportunities in India

By: Rohit Ashok

After making components for P-8I reconnaissance aircraft in India, Boeing is looking at maintaining it here as well. Boeing successfully increased the level of India-manufactured components in Poseidon-8I aircraft and is now looking at further expanding it by also setting up maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) infrastructure for its upkeep.

Often described as 'India's eye in the sky', the P-8I has the capability of being airborne for about ten hours with a full payload of advanced weapons.

"The other major opportunity is about building an MRO infrastructure in India. The [order] for additional aircraft in India will help us increase the number of critical components in the overhaul unit. That will help deliver a sustainable and self-reliant advantage for India," Mr Dan Gillian, Vice President & General Manager of Mobility, Surveillance and Bombers



at Boeing Defence, Space & Security, said.

The Indian Navy had signed a contract for eight P-8I aircraft for \$2.1 billion in 2009, including options for four additional aircraft, for which another billion-dollar contract was signed in 2016. In February 2022, Boeing delivered the twelfth aircraft to the Indian Navy.

Referring to the programme, Mr Scott Carpendale, Vice President Asia-Pacific, Boeing Global Services for Government



Services, said the proposal for setting up MRO infrastructure in India was all about building on the successes here.

"Self-reliance for us means building on success stories that we have around us such as 40,000 flight hours and the operational efficiency of the aircraft continues. That is the unique selling proposition for us to continue expanding



our flight path globally - the ability to support these aircraft with Indian suppliers as well as expand the local MRO infrastructure," observed Mr Carpendale.

In May 2020, India launched the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' or self-reliant India programme to encourage world-class manufacturing domestically. Over the years, Indian suppliers' engagement with P-8I manufacturing has become a metaphor for self-reliance in cutting-edge defence manufacturing.

For his part, the country's Civil Aviation Minister, Jyotiraditya Scindia, has been aggressively promoting the country as the 'New Promised Land' for aerospace manufacturing.

Rapid expansion of component manufacturing

From just 30 employees and a handful of suppliers, the P-8I India ecosystem has grown to 5,000 employees and 300 suppliers. This has resulted in an economic impact amounting to \$1.7 billion to support the current P-8I aircraft fleet in service. The future delivery of an additional six aircraft will help increase this by another \$1.5 billion, according to the company data.

The aircraft, which is based on Boeing's popular 737 next-generation platform, has become an integral part of the Indian Navy's fleet since its induction in 2013. The company has also facilitated the founding of the Ashok Roy Training Simulator Complex at INS Rajali and the Kochi training complex, inaugurated in April this year. The latter features a state-of-the-art simulator for P-8I air crew and technical team

training to substantially reduce on-aircraft training time, boosting mission proficiency and aircraft availability for the navy.

Meanwhile, another six P-8I may be required by the navy to meet its reconnaissance requirements in the Indian Ocean, Boeing has said.

"According to our internal estimates, the Indian Navy may need to have a 24 P-8I fleet to meet its security needs. However,



as the end-user, they know the best," Ms Alain R Garcia, Vice President of International Business Development, said.

Amid the emergence of an increasingly belligerent China and growing tensions in the South China Sea region, India is increasingly being perceived as a counter to the Middle Kingdom by the US and its NATO allies, leading to enhanced defence cooperation between the two. □

Face to face with

Karthik Viswanathan

VP Sales, Qatar Airways

By: Manchumi

Qatar Airways, a multiple award-winning airline, won the “World's Best Business Class” for the tenth time at the 2023 World Airline Awards. Qatar Airways serves more than 160 key business and leisure destinations worldwide, with a fleet of over 200 aircraft. The airline flies to Australia, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America and South America.



In an exclusive interview with Mr Karthik Viswanathan, VP of Sales – Middle East, Caucasus and South Asian Subcontinent, Qatar Airways, he shares the airline's vision and expansion plan.

Mr Karthik is an airline industry veteran and head honcho with over two decades of experience in revenue management, systems, distribution, commercial sales and business intelligence. Mr Karthik joined Qatar Airways in 2016 and before his current position, he served as the Regional Manager for the Indian Subcontinent based in Mumbai.

How can airlines build greater resilience to survive future challenges?

To say that the last three years fully tested our resilience would be an understatement, as the entire aviation industry experienced unprecedented challenges brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic. While I'm glad that the dark days are over, I'm also very proud to say that Qatar Airways performed exceptionally well. We were one of the few international airlines that continued flying throughout the pandemic period to meet the global demand for repatriation. We continued our flights to major metros in India throughout the pandemic, playing a vital role in helping passengers travel to and from India.

Perseverance, business agility and the skill to adapt quickly to ever-changing business conditions are key to business resilience. During the pandemic, when most airlines stopped operations amidst global pandemic fear and uncertainties, Qatar Airways persevered and made it our mission to bring people home safely. We also quickly called to implement a flexible booking policy to address passengers' needs and concerns during uncertain times. We honoured our promise to be customer-centric by refunding over USD 1.2 billion in 2020 to our passengers while working closely with governments worldwide in global repatriation

efforts. These were no easy feats to execute, but Qatar Airways soldiered on and emerged stronger. Our efforts have proven to our passengers that we are an airline they can trust. Thus, Qatar Airways has learned many lessons in business resilience through the difficult pandemic period and these are valuable lessons that will continue to hold.

What is the current network of Qatar Airways and are there expansion plans?

Qatar Airways takes great pride in operating a vast global network that connects passengers to more than 160 global destinations. Currently, for the Indian market, Qatar Airways operates 13 gateways and reactivated our partnership with Indigo in December 2019 under a codeshare agreement to ensure seamless travel between Doha and Bangalore (BLR), Chennai (MAA), Hyderabad (HYD), Kochi (COK), Mumbai (BOM) and New Delhi (DEL). Together with our codeshare partners, Qatar Airways has 171 weekly flights out of India. This extensive reach allows us to serve as a bridge between diverse cultures, facilitate international travel and provide passengers with access to many destinations for both business and leisure purposes.

Earlier this year, Qatar Airways announced seven new destinations and 11 resumptions during the ITB Berlin. The seven new destinations include Chittagong, Juba, Kinshasa, Lyon, Medan, Toulouse and Trabzon, while the 11 resumptions are to Beijing, Birmingham, Buenos Aires, Casablanca, Davao, Marrakesh, Nice, Osaka, Phnom Penh, Ras Al-Khaimah and Tokyo Haneda.

How important is it for airlines to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and what steps is Qatar Airways taking to support this target?

Achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 is not just important; it's imperative for the aviation industry and the global environment. Qatar Airways recognises the urgency of this challenge and has taken substantial measures to align with this ambitious target. As a proud member of the Oneworld alliance, Qatar Airways is part of a global commitment to become the first alliance to unite behind the goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This commitment underscores our unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability and our recognition of the pressing need to mitigate the environmental impact of aviation.

Qatar Airways is fully aware of the gravity of achieving

net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and is firmly committed to leading the way. We are actively steering aviation towards a more sustainable future through a multifaceted approach encompassing fleet modernisation, technological innovation, operational efficiency enhancements, SAF adoption endeavours and adherence to global market-based measures.

In which aspect of operations do you see the potential for change through technology or process revamping?

Qatar Airways' main focus on technology is on the fleet of aircraft we operate. We invest heavily in having the most advanced fleet of aircraft, such as the Airbus A350 and Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Qatar Airways is proud to operate one of the industry's youngest and most advanced fleets, as embracing the latest aviation technology is sustainable as it greatly improves fuel efficiency.



On top of our fleet, Qatar Airways is also quick to adopt technology that enhances passenger experience. Many technological enhancements were rolled out, particularly during COVID-19, to improve hygiene standards and safeguard our passengers. For instance, during the global pandemic, Qatar Airways was the first airline to use the Honeywell UV Cabin System in 2020 to provide the best onboard sanitation. We are also the first Middle Eastern airline to trial the IATA Travel Pass COVID-19 "Digital Pass" mobile app in January 2021 and then later in July 2021, Qatar Airways is the first airline to incorporate vaccination certification in this mobile app. In February 2021, Qatar Airways also rolled out a touch-free inflight entertainment system in some aircraft where passengers can use their own devices to control the inflight entertainment system to avoid physical contact.

We pride ourselves on always being at the forefront of aviation technology to bring the best inflight experience, but in the long

run, investing in the best aircraft technology will always be our main focus.

What is your strategy for the airline?

Qatar Airways' strategy revolves around providing world-class service to our passengers through innovation. It is in our DNA to be the best, as Qatar Airways is the only airline in the world that has won the prestigious Skytrax Airline of the Year award seven times and the World's Best Business Class award ten times. We are always looking for ways to improve passengers' experience and a good example will be our award-winning Qsuite Business Class.

When designing the Qsuite Business Class, Qatar Airways had an innovative approach. They did what no airline has before by incorporating many class cabin features into a business class product, such as individual suites, fully flat double beds, dine-on-demand, etc. Then, we further innovated and provided passengers with options to configure their seats, with the double configuration for a couple and the quad configuration for a party of four. Qatar Airways Qsuite Business Class sets the industry benchmark in business class travel. It is an excellent example of Qatar Airways' philosophy of providing only the best travel experience innovatively through different customer touchpoints.

Our ultimate goal is to remain a leader in the aviation industry by consistently delivering excellence to our passengers.

Can airlines afford to pursue sustainability in the current climate and do you approach green initiatives from a business or environmental perspective?

In the current climate, pursuing sustainability in the aviation industry is not only feasible but imperative. Qatar Airways recognises the urgency of addressing environmental concerns while maintaining a thriving business. Here's how we approach green initiatives:

Balancing Business and Environmental Perspectives: At Qatar Airways, we firmly believe that sustainability is not an either/or choice between business and environmental interests; rather, it's a harmonious integration of both. Our approach is rooted in achieving a balance that benefits our business while advancing environmental stewardship.

Economies of Scale for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF):

We actively work to produce SAF in significant volumes. This approach aligns with our business perspective by driving down

the cost of SAF, making it economically viable for the aviation sector. We are, in fact, in a concerted effort, "fighting with oil companies" to bring about the economies of scale needed to produce SAF in substantial quantities.

SAF and Carbon Footprint Reduction: Qatar Airways explores using or blending SAF with traditional aviation fuel. This pragmatic approach reduces the carbon footprint of our flights while ensuring operational efficiency. We view this initiative as a win-win scenario, benefiting our business competitiveness and our commitment to environmental responsibility.

Holistic Sustainability: Our commitment to sustainability takes a holistic approach, considering economic and environmental facets. We understand that our industry must evolve to meet the expectations of environmentally conscious travellers. By actively reducing our environmental impact through SAF adoption, we



are contributing to a greener planet and securing the long-term sustainability of our business.

Sustainability is attainable in the current aviation climate and essential. Our approach to green initiatives balances business growth and environmental responsibility. By actively pursuing sustainability, we are meeting the demands of the times and contributing to a more sustainable and eco-friendly future for air travel.

What facilities are you offering for Indian travellers?

At Qatar Airways, we hold our Indian travellers in high regard and are dedicated to offering them a range of facilities and services designed to enhance their travel experience. Here's how we cater to the specific needs of Indian travellers:

Extensive Flight Network: Qatar Airways provides Indian travellers with an extensive flight network, connecting major Indian cities to destinations worldwide. We understand the importance of flexibility in travel plans and our comprehensive flight options ensure you can choose the most convenient itinerary for your journey.

Seamless Connections through Doha: Our hub at Hamad International Airport in Doha offers Indian travellers seamless and efficient connections to a wide range of global destinations. Whether you're travelling for business, leisure or family reasons, our hub is designed to ensure a smooth and comfortable transit experience.

Delectable Indian Cuisine: We recognise the rich culinary traditions of India and our inflight dining options reflect this. Passengers can indulge in delicious Indian cuisine prepared



with authentic flavours. Our chefs take great care to provide a taste of home, even when you're soaring above the clouds.

Entertainment Selection: Qatar Airways offers an extensive selection of entertainment options, including Indian movies, music and TV shows. We understand the importance of staying connected to Indian culture and our inflight entertainment ensures you can enjoy the best Indian entertainment throughout your journey.

Comfortable and Spacious Cabins: Our spacious cabins are designed to provide maximum comfort during your flight. Relax in our comfortable seats and enjoy the journey with ample legroom, ensuring a restful experience, especially on long-haul flights. □

Diverse Language Support: We value the diversity of languages spoken by our Indian travellers. We offer multilingual assistance and inflight announcements to ensure you are well-informed and comfortable throughout your journey.

Special Dietary Requirements: We understand that dietary preferences can vary widely among Indian travellers. Qatar Airways accommodates special dietary requirements, ensuring you have meal options that suit your tastes and needs.

Family-Friendly Services: For Indian families travelling with children, Qatar Airways provides a range of family-friendly services, including entertainment options for children and the convenience of travelling with young ones.

Qatar Airways provides Indian travellers with a personalised and exceptional travel experience. Our comprehensive services, tailored to the preferences and needs of Indian passengers, ensure that your journey with us is comfortable, convenient and enjoyable.

How do you foresee the prospects for travel in Asian markets?

The prospects for travel in Asian markets appear exceptionally promising and full of potential. Asia stands out as one of the world's fastest-growing regions for business and leisure travel, with the Pacific Asia Travel Association recently releasing a very positive forecast for APAC tourism growth to be robust from 2023 to 2025.

Notably, India has witnessed a remarkable surge in foreign tourist arrivals, with a 106% increase in the first half of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022, demonstrating the country's successful efforts to revitalise its tourism sector post-COVID-19.

In this context, Qatar Airways recognises the immense opportunities in the Asian market and maintains a positive outlook. With a commitment to enhancing connectivity and customer experiences, Qatar Airways is expanding its presence across Asia, increasing flight frequencies, exploring new routes and improving services. This approach aims to cater to the diverse needs of passengers travelling to and from Asian destinations while connecting travellers to emerging markets and vibrant cities. Qatar Airways' vision is to be at the forefront of connecting Asia to the world and vice versa, offering travellers access to a global network of destinations focusing on exceptional experiences, thus becoming a pivotal player in the flourishing Asian travel landscape. □



By: Radhika

Ural Airlines is one of the largest, rapidly developing Russian airlines. New Russian, CIS, and international destinations are added to the Airline's route map every year. The Airline's base airports are first-rate Russian aviation hubs - Moscow (Domodedovo) and Ekaterinburg. In recent years, the Airline's annual passenger traffic has increased by approx. 40% per year. Ural Airlines has many years of experience in the Russian transportation industry. The Airline's history began in 1943, when the Sverdlovsk United Air Squadron was established and based at Sverdlovsk Koltsovo Airport. In 1993, after the

official division of the Sverdlovsk Aviation Enterprise into an airline and an airport, the Ural Airlines brand was established.

FLEET

Ural Airlines currently operates, under an operating lease, 43 modern Airbus aircraft (19 A320s, 10 A321s, and 6 A319s) on their Russian and international routes. The Airline's strategic plans include the beginning of operating long-haul, wide-body aircraft of Airbus A330-type.

NETWORK

Ural Airlines serves more than 101

destinations within Russia, CIS and other foreign countries.

CLASS

Business Class

It has personalised service and a higher level of comfort aboard an aircraft for passengers looking for maximum convenience during flights at airports. All Business Class passengers are checked in at a separate counter, bypassing waiting lines and saving them time. They also receive free SMS notifications about their flight status. Special luggage allowances apply to special customers – they can carry up to



12 kg of hand luggage in the cabin and check-in up to 30 kg of luggage. Business Class passengers fly in a separate cabin in front of the aircraft equipped with comfortable Business Standard seats. Before the flight, passengers are offered soft drinks and liquor. During the flight, passengers are offered an exquisite menu, wine and tea lists. A dedicated steward serves business class passengers.

Comfort Class

It is a higher comfort class with service standards corresponding to business class. On average, the cost of travelling in comfort class is 10-15% less than that in business class. Passengers are assigned seats in the front of the aircraft, two in a three-



seat row with no (hard/soft) partition wall. Comfort Class passengers are offered services like Business Class standards. The Airline introduced Comfort Class service in 2007 for the A321 aircraft type to expand the range of services offered due to

specific operating machinery layout features.

ECONOMY PLUS CLASS

It has been designed for Wings Gold Card members. This is an opportunity to apply for a service

class upgrade aboard an aircraft while booking a ticket on the economy class website. It is an opportunity for a comfortable flight with an affordable fare for passengers looking for the most affordable transportation. The Economy Class cabin is situated behind the higher comfort cabin. Passengers are assigned seats in the passenger cabin with standard seats.

FREQUENT-FLYER PROGRAMME

Wings is the frequent flyer programme of Ural Airlines. This Loyalty Programme is a quick offer for the passengers of Ural Airlines to get a discount on ticket purchases. For each flight on the Ural Airlines flights, the programme receives rebates (the size of the charge depends on the rate and direction). There's no need to save points anymore; one can immediately use a discount and pay with points for the next ticket. You also get points for participating in the Airline's promotions and purchases made online.

Cathay Cargo Terminal

Celebrates 10th Anniversary with New Identity

By: Divya Bhatia

Cathay Cargo Terminal celebrated its 10-year anniversary of full operations at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) by rolling out its new marketing brand internationally and hosting a special party for customers and stakeholders in Hong Kong.

The terminal celebrated the special occasion with a VIP dinner party attended by the guest of honour, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of the Hong Kong SAR, Mr Algernon Yau, who spoke about his time



as the first Chief Executive Officer of the Cathay Cargo Terminal during its construction and when it opened in 2013, during his time working for the Cathay Group.

Also in attendance were key stakeholders from the

Government, Airport Authority Hong Kong and the logistics industry in Hong Kong, as well as airline customers and freight forwarders.

Cathay Pacific Director Cargo, Mr Tom Owen said, "It was great to be able to celebrate our special day with so many of our customers and special friends of the



terminal. While it is important to look back and celebrate our success, we are incredibly focused on the future and in particular we will be looking to build on and expand our success in our three key areas of Digital Leadership; Sustainability Leadership; and further expanding our footprint into the Greater Bay Area of southern China, as we continue to build on our important role in ensuring Hong Kong maintains its position as the world's largest



air cargo hub."

As a part of the international rollout of the terminal's new marketing brand, the previous brands "Cathay Pacific Services Limited" and "Cathay Pacific Cargo Terminal", which represented the terminal operating company and the terminal facility respectively, have been retired and rolled into one refreshed marketing brand, "Cathay Cargo Terminal".

Cathay Cargo Terminal, Chief Operating Officer, Mr Mark Watts said, "This single refreshed brand more clearly represents our focus on the cargo terminal business and our vision to become the world's most customer-centric air cargo terminal. Our 10-year anniversary is the perfect time to roll out our new brand internationally as we look towards future growth with HKIA's Three-Runway System being fully operational from next year."

The change aligns with the Cathay Group's overarching brand redesign as well as the recent brand relaunch of Cathay Cargo, reflecting the terminal's commitment to the same "Move Beyond" ambition.

Cathay Cargo Terminal was built to bring state-of-the-art

technology to Hong Kong terminals and to raise cargo terminal service standards. Over the past 10 years, it has grown to become one of the world's leading and most advanced terminals, handling over 11 million cargo unit load devices (ULD) for 1.4 million flights and processing 16.3 million tonnes of cargo.

Currently serving 18 scheduled airline customers at HKIA, Cathay Cargo Terminal has set itself apart by focusing on customised solutions for its customers and providing world-class levels of service. Cathay Cargo Terminal provides peace of mind for its customers in the knowledge that they can rely on it to ensure shipments are processed safely, reliably and efficiently at all times.

Mr Watts added, "We are continuing to build on our impressive legacy by investing in initiatives that continually improve our handling of special cargo, such as HKIA's largest dedicated Pharma Handling Centre, which Is a part of our Total Cold Chain Solution. With more thermal dollies than any other Hong Kong cargo terminal operator, our custom-designed Mobi-Fresh containers at the terminal and inflatable truck dock shelters, we now provide the most comprehensive cold-chain solution of any terminal in Hong Kong." □

Interview with

A S Ganesan

the AVP - Domestic Marketing & Sales at Jindal Aluminium Ltd

By: Rohit Ashok

With 50+ years of rich legacy, Jindal Aluminium has pioneered the aluminium industry in India, setting a benchmark for quality and high standards in aluminium extrusion. Established in 1968 in Bangalore by Dr Sitaram Jindal, it is the largest aluminium extruder in India and the second largest in flat-rolled products. The company has an installed production capacity (Extrusions and Flat Rolled Products) of up to 2.04 lakh MT per annum.

We did an exclusive interview with Mr AS Ganesan, the Associate Vice President of Domestic Marketing and Sales at Jindal Aluminium Limited, where he talks about the importance and contribution of Jindal Aluminium in the aerospace industry.

What has Jindal Aluminium contributed to the aerospace industry using engineered aluminium components?

Engineered Aluminium provides the utmost room for safety and reliability in aerospace manufacturing. Its demand is on the rise and we are committed to contributing to the success of this sector while maintaining a key position in the evolving downstream aluminium industry landscape. Our manufacturing facilities are equipped with advanced technology to ensure precision and reliability, meeting the impeccable quality demand from the aerospace industry. We take pride in providing high-quality aluminium alloys, including 6063, 6061, 608 and 7075, to the aviation industry. In the last quarter, we even received Aerospace certification AS 9100D. Each month, we consistently engineer tonnes of aluminium, aligning seamlessly with the evolving needs of the aerospace industry.

What are the main benefits of using engineered



Mr. A. S. Ganesan

Associate Vice President- Domestic Marketing & Sales

Jindal Aluminium Limited

Aluminium in aerospace and how does it make aerospace operations safer and more reliable?

Engineered Aluminium boasts an impressive strength-to-weight ratio, making it indispensable for crafting lightweight yet robust components. This characteristic is pivotal for improving fuel efficiency and overall aviation performance. Furthermore, its corrosion resistance ensures the durability of critical components, enhancing the long-term safety of aircraft. Its excellent thermal conductivity efficiently dissipates heat, safeguarding vital systems such as engines and avionics from overheating. The material's

formability and machinability enable the precise fabrication of components tailored to meet specific aerospace requirements, ensuring a perfect fit. In the demanding aerospace world, where components are often exposed to cyclic loading,

to meet aerospace demands, emphasising durability and corrosion resistance. Investment in cutting-edge technology has led to the creation of lightweight components that enhance fuel efficiency and performance.



engineered Aluminium's remarkable fatigue resistance plays a critical role. This property significantly reduces the risk of fatigue-related failures, ultimately elevating the overall reliability and safety of aerospace operations. Moreover, aluminium, once put to use, consumes only 5% of the energy required to make the same quantity of virgin aluminium without compromising its essential properties, making it an environmentally-friendly choice. It aligns perfectly with the industry's growing environmental responsibility and sustainability emphasis.

Can you share any new developments in using engineered aluminium for aerospace applications?

In engineered aluminium, significant developments are shaping the aerospace industry. The downstream aluminium sector, known for its economic impact, is at the forefront of these advancements. Specialised aluminium alloys, such as 6082 and 7075, have been developed

Besides, sustainability initiatives align with the aerospace sector's environmental responsibility, making engineered aluminium a valuable choice for safer, more reliable and environmentally conscious aerospace applications. In addition, several trends and potential advancements are being explored in the aerospace industry, such as advanced aluminium alloys, nano-structuring, surface treatments and advanced manufacturing techniques. These developments offer exciting prospects for aerospace applications and are essential in enhancing safety, reliability and environmental responsibility.

How does Jindal Aluminium support sustainability in line with the aerospace industry's need for eco-friendly materials?

Jindal Aluminium's vision aligns perfectly with the aerospace industry's goal of adopting a circular economy approach and reducing the carbon footprint. In this direction, we emphasise minimising waste

and reducing production's environmental impact. Additionally, we prioritise energy efficiency, sustainable sourcing of raw materials and lightweight for improved fuel efficiency. Our commitment extends to research and development efforts for eco-friendly solutions and actively seeking partnerships and collaborations with experts. These collective endeavours underscore our unwavering dedication to eco-friendly materials and practices, making us a sustainable and reliable partner for the aerospace sector. The company's commitment to supporting sustainability is evident because it uses 100% green energy at its Dabaspet and Bengaluru plants.

What steps are taken to ensure that Jindal Aluminium's engineered aluminium components meet aerospace industry standards and regulations for quality and safety?

We aim to ensure that our engineered aluminium components for the aerospace industry meet and exceed the stringent standards and regulations for quality and safety. To achieve this goal, we have implemented a range of proactive measures, including obtaining the AS 9100D certification globally recognised for quality management in aerospace. Our aluminium quality and infrastructure are continuously audited to uphold the highest standards. We provide comprehensive training to our team to keep them aligned with the latest aerospace industry standards and best practices. Specialised aerospace materials and manufacturing experts have been brought in to enhance our capabilities. Our comprehensive approach underscores our unwavering commitment to delivering aerospace components that consistently surpass industry standards in terms of quality and safety.

In talks with

Blane Baoynton

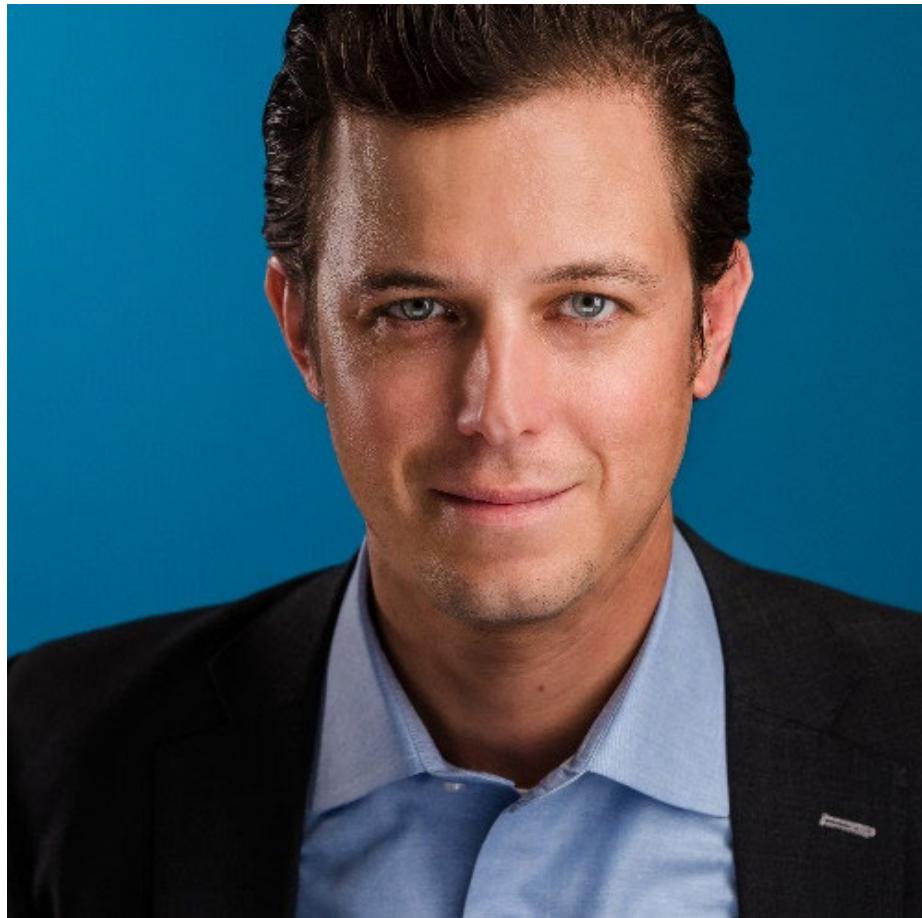
VP of Product Development – Intelsat

By: Radhika

Intelsat in-flight connectivity solutions provide a convenient, cost-effective avenue to improve both passenger and crew experiences while providing your personnel with easy-to-use tools that reduce the complexity of their day-to-day activities. Passengers are connected, entertained and informed.

Here is an interview with Mr Blane Boynton, Intelsat's V.P., Product Development. He discusses how new connectivity technology will improve the passenger experience and airline operations.

How popular is in-flight connectivity (IFC) and which airlines tend to offer it?



More than a third of the global commercial aircraft fleet now has passenger connectivity with almost every major airline. The US and European carriers have led installations of IFC solutions thus far and most domestic airlines in the USA now seek to attract customers with either sponsored, free or other types of connectivity offerings.

Passenger connectivity is most intense on daytime business routes within the USA and Europe, followed by international business flights. In contrast, IFC penetration is weakest on leisure and overnight long-haul widebody routes, partly due to gaps in coverage – although new satellite and antenna technology will remedy this.

How far has IFC technology advanced in the recent years?

Over the last five years, the big change has been the shift from air-to-ground IFC technology, which relies on aircraft antennas picking up signals from land-based transmitters to satellite-based installations. At the same time, antenna technology has leapt ahead to exploit different types of satellite coverage. The latest technology also offers airlines weight, drag and fuel efficiencies over older, gimballed panel antennas and the mechanically steered arrays that preceded



it. Intelsat's new Electronically Steered Array (ESA) antenna, for example, is built solely from microchips, has no moving parts and stands just three inches proud of the fuselage – half as high as predecessor systems.

ESAs can speak to geostationary (GEO) satellites, those in Medium-Earth Orbit (MEO) and the emerging networks of Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites from companies like OneWeb and Starlink. This eliminates any gaps in coverage, with the antenna switching quickly between one orbit and another.

What will this mean for the passenger experience?

Most IFC antennas in operation today cannot speak to LEO constellations. Their signals take longer to travel between higher-orbit satellites than they do to and from ground-based transmitters, which increases latency. New LEO-capable antennas close this latency gap, meaning snappier social media scrolling and website loading for passengers on ESA-equipped aircraft.

The next step will be multi-beam antennas communicating simultaneously with different satellite orbits. Entering service from around 2027 these new ESA antennas will offer a blended customer experience, with latency-sensitive tasks routed through LEO or MEO and less sensitive actions, like video streaming, pushed up to GEO connections.

Will airlines be exposed to endless rounds of retrofits to keep their IFC technology up to date?

Another advantage of ESAs is their modular nature, which can be snapped together to form apertures of different sizes and characteristics. After installation, any upgrades can be performed by adjusting the aperture rather than replacing whole systems.

Also, existing systems, such as the Intelsat 2Ku mechanically steered array installed across 1,500 aircraft, still offer great efficiency and throughput, making them ideal for high-density routes operated by large aircraft.

The reality is that IFC antennas are improving faster than in the past.

How long do IFC retrofits take and how future-proof are they?

To guarantee the best customer experience, Intelsat installs its own antenna, modem, router, software and other connectivity equipment. The full installation takes an aircraft out of service for three to five days but should – for the latest systems – give airlines roughly ten years before further big retrofits are needed. IFC solution providers like Intelsat work closely with airlines to coordinate these installation and upgrade activities in parallel with other scheduled maintenance, reducing overall aircraft out-of-service impacts.

How will an upgrade provide a return on investment for airlines with legacy IFC systems?

Aside from their fuel-efficiency benefits, ESA antennas also offer maintenance cost savings.

More importantly, as IFC becomes more ubiquitous, net passenger satisfaction is increasingly linked to the quality of onboard Wi-Fi, with some passengers even choosing an airline based on its IFC capabilities. In the past, these were mainly business customers. Still, leisure customers increasingly want to stay connected, too, with IFC use and data loads increasing steadily since the end of the pandemic.

Good Wi-Fi can drive brand loyalty, marketing opportunities and partnerships. Examples include integration with frequent flyer programmes to reward loyal customers or synergistic deals with telecom providers, which sponsor free in-flight Wi-Fi for their customers, a model that results in some of the highest take-up rates. □

Rejuvenate and replenish at

Hotel Royal Orchid Jaipur

By: Nitu

A premium 5-star hotel in the heart of Jaipur, Hotel Royal Orchid Jaipur is a sought-after hotel for holiday-goers and business travellers. The Royal Orchid Jaipur is a luxury hotel close to all key tourist spots in Jaipur, including Hawa Mahal, Jhalana Safari and the Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre. Hotel Royal Orchid, with its elegant furnishing, decor and blend of sophistication and flamboyance, with a relaxed attitude makes this an ideal stay for all discerning travellers.

ROOMS

The hotel features 139 suites and rooms, providing an elegant ambience and superior amenities.

Deluxe Room

An interesting play of wood and concrete, this category of rooms offers a vibrant contrast of bright walls and pastel interiors. They feature amenities such as twin or queen-size beds and a workstation over an area of 337 sq. ft. (31 sq. mt.).



Club Room

Club rooms are spread over an area of 337 sq. ft.



(31 sq. mt.). It has a twin or king-size bedroom and a complimentary airport pick-up and drop facility.

Plunge Room

With a living space of 585 sq. ft. (54 sq. mt.), there are eight charming Plunge Rooms that have private plunge pools



with exclusive access. They have an attached balcony, comfortable beds, a lounging chair and lamps.

Plunge Pool Suite

Overlooking the gardens, the plunge pool suite at Hotel Royal Orchid Jaipur is the most spacious accommodation category, with a living area of 800 sq. ft. (74 sq. mt.).

Suite Room

The large suites, with an area of 710 sq ft. (66 sq. mt.) each, are designed to elevate guest experience



to luxury. They are elegantly decorated with soothing colours and rich interiors. Each suite offers a pleasing view of the city.

DINING

Limelight (Multi-Cuisine Bistro), Timings: 24 HOURS



Live pizza bistro has numerous cuisines - Indian, Chinese and Continental. Guests can enjoy refreshing coffee while catching up with family & friends.

Tiger Trail (Fine Dining), Timings: 07:00 PM TO 11:00 PM

Imagine sitting in a restaurant on Tonk Road and hopping on a culinary voyage to India & its neighbours! Well, that's the world of Tiger Trail for you! So, get ready



for an exciting night while you binge on fresh Kebabs and Grills and relish various recipes borrowed from Indian, Mughlai and Afghani delicacies.

Salsa Lounge (Specialty Lounge Bar), Timings: 11:00 AM TO 11:00 PM

Salsa Lounge opens its doors to visitors looking for good times and fine wines each night. So, come over with your friends and family and binge on Tandoori, Continental, Thai & Mexican snacks with fine spirits.



BANQUET

The banqueting facility at Hotel Royal Orchid has ample parking space, luscious lawns and a large pre-function area, making it an ideal venue for video conferences and product launches and a perfect destination for weddings.

Crystal

With an area of 3700 sq ft., this pillar-less banquet hall can easily host up to 450 guests. It is suitable for hosting video conferencing, product launches, VIP parties, weddings, cocktail parties and receptions. Modern amenities like catering and audio-visual equipment are also available.

**Senate**

The Senate can accommodate up to 40 guests. This banquet hall is ideal for hosting small gatherings such as business meetings or birthday parties. It spans an area of 700 sq. ft.

Chambers

They feature a space of 600 sq. ft., this banquet hall is ideal for hosting business meetings or corporate discussions. With the capacity to accommodate up to 45 guests, the room has the necessary infrastructure and facilities to plan serious discussions and business strategies.

**Orchid Lawn**

Spread over an area of 10000 sq. ft. (929 sq. mt.), Orchid Lawn is spacious enough to accommodate over 700 guests.

**RECREATING
Swimming Pool**

The rooftop pool is an ideal option for guests who wish



to unwind after a hectic day. Dive in and feel refreshed after a few laps, accompanied by snacks in a pleasing ambience.

Gym

The gym at the hotel is designed to keep in mind the needs of a modern-day traveller. Sweat it out in the spacious fitness centre with all the necessary equipment.



With its expansive banqueting space, Hotel Royal Orchid Jaipur is a dream wedding destination, while the modern rooms and amenities make it the perfect weekend gateway. Travelling to Jaipur and staying at this hotel will surely leave you mesmerised with a memory that will make you want to return for more.



DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer

A Winter Wonderland for Celebrations

By: Divya Bhatia

Nestled in the heart of the enchanting city of Jaipur, I had the pleasure of experiencing the warmth and hospitality of DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer, during the crisp winter months. From the moment we stepped into the hotel, we were welcomed with open arms and gracious smiles, setting the tone for a truly memorable visit.

A Blend of Heritage and Modernity

Overlooking the majestic Aravali

range, the DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur Amer offers guests a unique blend of ancient culture and modern lifestyle. The 151-key hotel provides a comfortable haven after indulging in the vibrant city's experiences. With popular landmarks like Amer Fort, Nahargarh Fort and Jal Mahal in close proximity, the hotel is strategically positioned for travellers looking to explore Jaipur's rich history and heritage. The hotel's strategic location is another feather in its cap.

It is situated in the heart of the city, making it easily accessible from major tourist attractions, shopping areas and business districts. This convenience adds value to the stay for both business and leisure travellers.

Culinary Delights

The hotel boasts four distinct F&B outlets, each offering a unique culinary experience. Amber Kitchen pays homage to Rajasthan's rich culinary heritage, offering traditional dishes that tantalise the taste buds. The Garden Grill is the perfect spot for a relaxed hi-tea, while Onyx Lounge serves up light snacks. One of the standout features of DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer is its rooftop restaurant, "Aravalli Bar and Grill." The restaurant offers not only scrumptious food but also breathtaking views of the Aravalli Hills. Dining under the starlit sky while enjoying live music was a memorable experience. It's a perfect spot for couples seeking a romantic getaway and families looking for an unforgettable dining experience. In conversation with the hotel management, it was evident that DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer is committed to catering primarily to



the domestic market, aligning with the robust growth of domestic travel in Jaipur.

Hospitality

The true hallmark of any great hotel is its staff and DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer excels in this regard. The staff went above and beyond to make our stay comfortable and enjoyable. They accommodated our requests with utmost sincerity and perfection, making us feel valued guests. Their warmth and attentiveness were particularly evident during the birthday celebration, where they made my daughter's day truly special.

The Ideal Venue for Celebrations

The hotel is renowned in the city

A Wealth of Leisure Activities

The hotel offers a diverse range of activities for those seeking leisure and entertainment. Guests can immerse

enthusiasts can maintain their routines at the well-equipped fitness facility, while others can engage in various recreational activities the hotel offers.



for its 7,500 sq. ft. ballroom space, complemented by an equally opulent outdoor area. These facilities are perfect for hosting grand weddings and conventions, adding a touch of grandeur to any event.

themselves in the vibrant culture of Rajasthan with performances of Rajasthani folk dance. There's also a children's magic show and a dedicated kids' playground, ensuring that young guests have a memorable stay. Fitness

The Epitome of Tradition and Intimacy

From curating a wealth of in-house and outdoor activities to offering delicacies from the royal heritage of Jaipur, DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer encapsulates the essence of intimacy and tradition. This beautiful property beckons travellers to immerse themselves in Rajasthan's culture's rich tapestry while enjoying its comfort and luxury.

The visit to DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur-Amer was nothing short of a splendid sojourn where heritage met modernity and celebrations were etched in the backdrop of the picturesque Aravali Hills. It's a destination that caters to the desires of every traveller - be it for business, leisure or special occasions. This hotel truly stands as a testament to the beauty and charm of the Pink City. □

In Conversation with

Roop Partap Choudhary

Executive Director, Noormahal Palace and Founder, Colonel Saab, London

By: Rohit Ashok

Mr Roop Partap Choudhary is a second-generation hotelier heading Noormahal, a luxury palace hotel in Karnal, the Executive Director of Jewel Group of Hotels (parent organisation of Noormahal Palace Hotel) and Founder Colonel Saab, London (UK).

One of the country's most majestic palace hotels, Noormahal, is a royal abode of modern kings and queens. It has become an extremely preferred destination for Leisure, MICE and Weddings.



Representing the second generation of a famous hotelier family, Mr Roop Partap Choudhary firmly believes in carrying on the rich tradition of the Jewel Group of Hotels dynasty. Mr Roop is a hotelier, both by profession and passion. Before embracing the family legacy of heritage hospitality, he gained in-depth knowledge of the industry. He has experience of working with some of the most esteemed hospitality brands in the country that helped him understand the intricacies and profundity of the hospitality world. It was his time with various leading hospitality brands that fuelled his original desire to take an Indian Luxury Hospitality Brand to new heights on the global hospitality map.

In a conversation with Mr Roop Partap Choudhary, he shares his journey and experiences in the luxury hospitality industry.

Tell us briefly about your journey. How did it all start?

My journey in the realm of hospitality is a tale of family tradition, profound passion and a relentless pursuit of excellence. As a second-generation hotelier, I have had the honour of leading the Jewels Classic Hotels Pvt. Ltd., a renowned organisation that encompasses the luxurious Noormahal Palace in Karnal and Colonel Saab in London. Noormahal, in particular, is a symbol of opulence and heritage, offering a regal experience to its guests. Before taking the reins of Jewels Classic Hotels Pvt. Ltd, leading Noormahal Palace and founding Colonel Saab in London, I embarked on a path of exploration and learning.

My time with these esteemed organisations, such as ITC Maurya, Kingdom of Dreams etc. has fuelled my desire to elevate an Indian luxury hospitality brand to global recognition.

Education played a pivotal role in shaping my journey. I

earned my schooling from Shimla in India, Under Graduation from United States and Masters from Singapore. But my biggest learning experience has been at Noormahal Palace, as I have been associated with it from a very young age.

Now, at the helm of Noormahal Palace and Colonel Saab, I am committed to upholding the family's legacy of delivering exceptional hospitality experiences while also giving back to society. My mission is to make Noormahal Palace a global destination for leisure, MICE events and weddings while contributing to society and our nation. It's a journey fuelled by heritage, passion and a commitment to excellence.

What are Noormahal Palace's key selling points?

Our brand is grounded in the essence of warm Indian hospitality, ingrained in our organisation's very DNA. This commitment to Indianness and royal palatial concepts extends beyond mere aesthetics like architecture, decor and cuisine. It permeates our ambiance, service and even our mannerisms. The genuine warmth of traditional Indian hospitality isn't something that can be taught; it must be cultivated, embraced and genuinely lived. At Noormahal Palace, we ensure that when you visit an Indian palace hotel, you experience the true essence of Indian hospitality rather than formal Western-style service.

Noormahal Palace displays and houses more art and antiques than any other hotel in the country. We have on display rare antiques and artworks which have rich stories from the core of our rich cultural heritage. Right from the rare hand-painted frescos by award-winning artisans to antique paintings of royals in 18 carat gold and gems to antique Kanghis (combs) of royals adorned on the walls of royal chambers and many more.

We recognise that weddings and events are grand, momentous occasions. Therefore, we've dedicated our efforts to providing the finest experiences for hosting such events. We've made a mark by offering exceptional services for both traditional and large-scale banquets.

Our commitment to these values is evident in the support and acknowledgment we receive from our guests and stakeholders. In this regard, we've never compromised. I take immense pride in India's rich hospitality culture and am determined to elevate it to new heights through Noormahal Palace.

What sort of strategies do you implement for the development of Noormahal Palace?

Noormahal Palace, situated in the heart of a historic city, carries a unique legacy, not only for its architectural grandeur but also for the conscious decision to stand away from the bustling cities. When the idea of an Indian palatial hotel at such an unconventional location was first conceived, it wasn't a popular choice among hospitality brands. This decision itself set the tone for our brand positioning within the industry. Over the years, every strategic move we've made has been a statement, a testament to our commitment to preserving the essence of Indian hospitality while breaking away from convention.

One of our primary strategies has been to maintain the uniqueness of our brand position. We're proud of our heritage and staying true to our core strategy, even when it was unconventional, has been crucial in maintaining our strong position in the market.

Technology is now an enabler for great hospitality. Can you share some of the technological advancements made at Noormahal Palace to enhance the guest experience?

Technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing the guest experience at Noormahal Palace. We understand that in today's digital age, guests expect seamless and efficient services. To meet these expectations, we've implemented various technological advancements to provide the best possible experience.

One key aspect is our seamless check-in and check-out process. Guests can complete these formalities digitally, minimising wait times and ensuring a hassle-free arrival and departure. We know how crucial it is to stay connected, so we provide high-speed Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, allowing guests to work, stream or connect with loved ones with ease. In our rooms, we've introduced innovative room controls. These smart systems enable guests to customise lighting, climate settings and entertainment options to their preferences. To make our guests' stay as convenient as possible, we offer a dedicated guest services app. This app serves as a one-stop solution for information about the hotel, available services, dining options and local attractions.

Our website is optimised for online bookings, making it effortless for guests to check room availability, rates and make reservations with just a few clicks. Furthermore, we're committed to sustainable practices. Technology aids us in minimising our environmental footprint. We use energy-efficient lighting, smart HVAC systems

and digital processes to reduce waste. To provide a complete experience, we offer virtual tours of our hotel, allowing guests to explore our premises and rooms virtually before booking.

What are the long and short-term goals you have devised for the hotel?

Our goal is to further establish Noormahal Palace as a symbol of heritage and luxury. We want to solidify our reputation as one of India's premier palace hotels known for exceptional experiences. This means continuing to invest in the preservation of our rich history while embracing modernity. By respecting the traditions of Indian hospitality and simultaneously adopting cutting-edge technologies and sustainable practices, we aim to stand out among luxury hotels worldwide.

Noormahal Place has already earned a good reputation as one of the best wedding hospitality brands. We want to keep climbing the ladder in this area and continue to create excellence. We have seamlessly hosted more than 10 weddings in a day and in the upcoming season, we also we are looking at hosting a huge number of weddings successfully.

Environmental sustainability is also paramount for our long-term goals. We plan to implement more eco-friendly practices throughout our property to reduce our carbon footprint and contribute to the preservation of the environment.

Furthermore, we aspire to share the grandeur of Noormahal Palace with a global audience. This involves marketing strategies that reach a broader international clientele, making Noormahal Palace a preferred destination not only for Indian guests but for visitors from around the world. Through these long-term goals, we envision Noormahal Palace as a timeless landmark and a testament to the remarkable heritage of India's palace hotels.

Community engagement is an important part of any platform. How are you ensuring that you engage your community?

Community engagement is indeed a vital aspect of our operations at Noormahal Palace. We understand the significance of connecting with the local community and we have taken several initiatives to ensure we engage with them effectively.

One way we engage with the community is through our corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. We are actively involved in initiatives that focus on education, women's

empowerment and youth employment. We collaborate with local NGOs to champion these causes and our team actively participates in community engagement. We have been working closely with Bal Bhawan, Karnal and taking on many initiatives with them.

Moreover, we are committed to promoting the rich heritage of Karnal. We engage with local artisans, craftsmen and artists, supporting and showcasing their talents.

Furthermore, our employment practices prioritise hiring from the local workforce, thus providing job opportunities to the people in our community. We believe in nurturing local talent and promoting professional growth for our employees.

In essence, our community engagement initiatives extend beyond the walls of Noormahal Palace. We believe in being an integral part of Karnal's social and cultural fabric & we are dedicated to creating a mutually beneficial relationship with our community.

What do you think it takes to succeed in this industry?

Succeeding in the hospitality industry, especially in the luxury segment, requires a combination of elements. First and foremost, it demands a deep commitment to providing unparalleled guest experiences. This encompasses everything from exceptional service and personalised care to maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness and comfort.

Understanding the ever-evolving needs and preferences of guests is crucial. The ability to adapt and innovate to meet these expectations is essential for success. Additionally, building and maintaining a skilled and motivated team is vital. Hospitality is fundamentally a people-centric industry and having a passionate and dedicated staff is a prerequisite.

A clear and distinctive brand positioning is essential. In our case, embracing the core values of Indian hospitality culture and staying true to them has set us apart. It's not just about creating a brand; it's about living and embodying that brand ethos in every aspect of the operation.

Ultimately, in the competitive world of luxury hospitality, success comes from delivering a unique and unforgettable experience that sets you apart in the hearts and minds of your guests.

Interview with

Gaurav Kanwar

Founder of Harajuku Tokyo Café

By: Nitu

For the first time, Mr Gaurav Kanwar, a young aspiring entrepreneur, introduced the Harajuku Tokyo Cafe to the Indian audience. Serving an all-exclusive Japanese fare, Harajuku Tokyo Cafe offers a complete Japanese experience with Manga titles, live sushi counters and murals & installations inspired by the land of the rising sun.

In collaboration with renowned chefs from Tokyo and Osaka, Mr Gaurav curated the Harajuku Tokyo Cafe menu, ensuring flawless execution with the highest quality ingredients imported from Japan. Conducting intensive training and R&D in Japanese baking techniques and painstakingly taking care of every detail, from branding design to the outlet experience, Mr Gaurav has, over the years, nurtured the brand to make it the most popular Japanese restaurant in Delhi NCR.

Here is an interview with Mr Gaurav, where he talks about his plans and marketing strategies for Harajuku Tokyo Cafe.

What's your unique marketing strategy?

The restaurant capitalises on its 'Instagrammable' design and food, offering an immersive experience that includes live baking, a boba tea counter and quirky elements inspired by contemporary



Japanese culture. We also focus on using our brand language and colours consistently across all aspects, from packaging to staff uniforms, to create a complete and memorable experience for customers.

Why did you open a restaurant specialising in Japanese food only?

The inspiration behind Harajuku Tokyo Cafe came from my experience studying in the UK, where I developed a liking for Japanese food at market stalls and campus restaurants. After realising the unexplored potential of Japanese street food and bakery culture in India, an exploratory

visit to Japan inspired me to specialise in contemporary Japanese cuisine. We aim to introduce the unique and dynamic flavours of Japan's street food culture to India, presenting an exciting and trendy food experience to our guests.

On a global scale, what do you think Japanese food will look like ten years from now?

The rise of international cuisines, including Japanese, can continue to be a global trend. Japanese cuisine has evolved to cater to diverse palates, including vegetarian options and unique ingredients. It may further adapt to global

tastes while preserving its authenticity and we can expect more innovative dishes and fusions in the coming years.

What's your favourite Japanese dish?

My favourite dish is Katsu curry with rice and sushi.

What is your favourite dish from the menu of Harajuku?

Chicken Katsu curry and rice.



There is a lot of competition around! What do you do to make sure you get your audience?

At Harajuku Tokyo Cafe, we offer an authentic Japanese bakery and street food experience relatively unexplored in the Indian market. We focus on staying true to our core concept, creating an immersive dining atmosphere and incorporating unique design elements. Additionally, we regularly introduce new menu items and constantly innovate to keep our offerings fresh and appealing to our target audience.

How do you ensure to keep your dishes different and special in your restaurant?

At Harajuku Tokyo Cafe, we maintain

the authenticity of our dishes by using authentic recipes from Japanese partner chefs. We also add exciting innovations to our menu, such as different toppings and sauces for our pancakes and unique cheesecake recipes that are specially created for the Indian market. We emphasise the importance of using high-quality raw materials imported from Japan to maintain the authenticity of our dishes.

Who are the target customers for your restaurant?

Our primary target customers at Harajuku Tokyo Cafe are people who are interested in experiencing authentic Japanese bakery and street food culture. This includes those with a penchant for international cuisines, Japanese food



enthusiasts and those looking for a unique and Instagrammable dining experience.

Any new additions or are you planning to add anything to the menu?

Yes, at Harajuku Tokyo Cafe, we constantly innovate and plan to introduce exciting new additions to our menu every month. At our new restaurant and bar in IFC Tower Gurgaon, we are introducing a number of new dishes, including some Korean ones which are very popular in Japan. We are also introducing a dining experience with a conveyor belt for the first time in India.

What is your investment plan? Do

you have any plans to expand?

Starting with a flagship outlet in Select Citywalk, New Delhi, a second outlet in Ambience Mall Gurgaon and now a third one at DLF Downtown, Gurgaon, we're gearing up to open three more outlets in Delhi NCR this year and early 2024. We are also planning our expansion to other metro cities in 2024. We are operationally profitable and already getting a lot of investor interest to expand nationwide and globally. Since its inception last year, the cafes have generated revenue close to INR 100 million. Three outlets have been opened in only a year since launch and the business has grown 466% YoY.

What's next?

Our next steps at Harajuku Tokyo Cafe



include opening additional outlets in Delhi NCR and expanding to other metro cities. We have also been getting a lot of queries for franchise options and are exploring that route, along with introducing smaller store formats for rapid expansion. Along with turning Harajuku Tokyo Cafe into a globally recognised Japanese QSR chain, we have plans to launch multiple innovative and diverse culinary concepts and create a global F&B firm. □

Interview with Jatin Mallick

Chef and Co-Founder of Tres

By: Nitu

Tres Restaurant is a culinary oasis, enticing diners worldwide with its exquisite dining experience that is nothing short of extraordinary. Led by culinary mavericks Chef Julia Carmen Desa and Chef Jatin Mallick, Tres has become a beacon of gastronomic delight for over a decade. With an

and Co-Founder of Tres, to learn more about him and the restaurant. At the age of 21, Chef Mallick went to The Academy of Culinary Education and began his formal journey in the world of Culinary Arts. Beginning his work experience as a Chef trainee with Taj Group of Hotels, he went on to work

We emphasise seasonal ingredients and craft menus that highlight the essence of locally sourced produce and our passion for storytelling through food, fostering an inviting and celebratory dining experience reflecting our belief in the warmth and comfort that good food brings.



unwavering commitment to excellence, these visionary chefs have crafted a menu that preserves the authenticity of international cuisines while artfully adapting them to suit the discerning Indian palate. At Tres, the skilled chefs curate recipes with captivating stories that culminate in delightful dining experiences.

We interviewed Mr Jatin Mallick, Chef

with other top hospitality brands like IHG and DLF, to name a few.

Please tell us something about your outlet and its philosophy.

Tres embodies a fusion of global flavours and Indian traditions, continuously pushing culinary boundaries. It has established itself as a haven for gastronomic exploration, balancing authenticity with adaptation.

Tres's philosophy revolves around a relentless pursuit of culinary reinvention, aiming to enrich not just palates but also souls through unforgettable dining experiences that will surely leave you wanting to come back for this unique glocal experience.

What is your favourite dish from the menu of Tres?

My current favourite dishes are not one but two: the Shallot Tarte Tatin, where the savoury soft goat cheese is offset by a preserved walnut and apple compote and beetroot gel, a definite must-have for you and a favourite of every patron. The Baked Artichoke Hearts are accompanied by tomato jam, honey mustard and a herbed persillade crust that melts in your mouth.

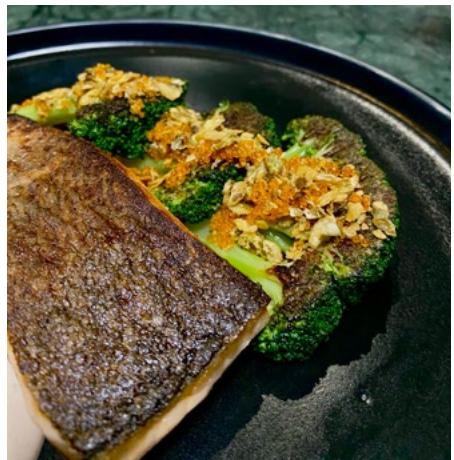
What is your favourite ingredient to create with?

One ingredient I particularly enjoy working with is herbs; their vibrant flavour and fragrance/aroma can add a delightful dimension to a wide range of dishes,

allowing for a personalised touch in various cuisines. I also enjoy experimenting with it as it presents endless opportunities to elevate the taste profile of dishes according to personal preferences. Whether incorporated in salads, soups or main courses, the versatility enables the creation of unique, memorable culinary experiences.

What is your favourite piece of kitchen equipment?

My all-time favourite equipment to cook with is the Josper Grill for its ability to infuse dishes with an authentic and rustic charcoal flavour, making it ideal for grilling meats, fish and vegetables. The grills



are versatile enough to experiment with various cooking techniques, be it roasting, grilling and smoking, to create an array of delectable dishes. It is an efficient tool for a super busy kitchen.

What's your signature dish?

Each dish on our menu has its own individuality and flavour profile. Still, our crowd favourite is the classic Spanish Porchetta, a tender and moist pork dish cooked for 24 hours and roasted with winter kale and sweet potato.

There is a lot of competition around. What do you do to make sure you get your audience?

Consistency in our product or service is imperative and we always strive to be as cohesive as possible.

How do you keep your dishes different and unique in your restaurant?

We don't try to be very over the top. We create great combinations and stick to taste as the first parameter before anything else.

our belief in the transformative power of good food to create lasting memories for all who step into our culinary haven.

Are there any new additions or are you planning to add anything to the menu?

We are constantly exploring fresh ideas to enhance our menu, especially with the winter season approaching. We're looking to introduce a range of new dishes that



Who are the target customers for your restaurant?

At Tres, we extend a warm invitation to all, aiming to enrich the lives of as many individuals as possible throughout a lifetime. Whether you are drawn to our rich heritage and cultural ethos, seeking a unique and unforgettable experience or simply craving exceptional cuisine, Tres offers a diverse culinary journey that promises to satisfy every guest. Our commitment to inclusivity and excellence ensures that every visit to Tres is not just a meal but a cherished memory, resonating with the flavours of tradition, innovation and heartfelt hospitality.

According to you, what is the USP of Tres?

Our USPs lie in the fusion of diverse flavours, our dedication to innovation and

capture the essence of winter. We will also revamp some of our classics, keeping in mind the weather and seasonal availability.

What is your favourite thing about being a chef?

Choosing to be a chef has been one of the most rewarding experiences for me. It has allowed me to transform raw ingredients into culinary masterpieces that tantalise the senses and create unforgettable experiences for my diners. The creative freedom of experimenting with flavours, textures and techniques is invigorating and provides a platform for endless exploration and innovation. Moreover, cooking has allowed me to evoke joy and satisfaction in others. It has been a deeply fulfilling experience through which I have been able to create stories, emotions and memories that I continue to cherish.

In Talks with

Ansh Khanijo

Founder, Bahce

By: Rohit Ashok

Experience the enchantment of Bahce, a captivating garden restaurant & bar with Open-Air Seating, Multi-Cuisine Delights and Finely Crafted Cocktails, in Gurugram. Enjoy sitting amidst lush greenery, perfect for unwinding and savouring culinary delights. Indulge in finely crafted cocktails that perfectly complement the diverse multi-cuisine menu featuring delectable dishes made with locally sourced ingredients. As the sun sets, Bahce transforms into a vibrant space with soft lighting, upbeat music and handcrafted cocktails.



With its fusion of natural beauty, global cuisine and lively ambiance, Mr Ansh Khanijo, Founder of Bahce, has created a place that guarantees an unforgettable dining experience.

Mr Ansh Khanijo, the driving force behind Bahce, comes from a family known to run successful restaurant businesses. He was introduced to the restaurant business at an early age, which has helped him understand the nuances of the business. After completing his education at the University of Toronto, the mantle to successfully run Bahce, was passed onto him. Mr Ansh has led operations at Bahce with utmost dedication and creativity by introducing live music nights & specially crafted menus.

In a conversation with Mr Ansh Khanijo, he shares some insights about Bahce and the journey of creating a serene oasis amidst the urban landscape of Gurugram.

Please tell us something about your restaurant and its concept.

Bahce is a captivating garden restaurant & bar located in Worldmark, Gurugram. Here, one can immerse in the serenity of open-air seating amidst lush greenery, providing a perfect oasis to unwind and indulge in culinary delights.

What's your unique marketing strategy?

Our marketing approach involves leveraging our tranquil setting as a unique selling point. We use a blend of online strategies, community engagement and targeted events to effectively reach and engage our audience.

How difficult was it to make a green oasis in a concrete jungle?

Creating a green oasis in the midst of a concrete jungle

was quite a challenge. Securing an appropriate location, effectively managing the budget and navigating seasonal considerations were some hurdles. However, through diligent research, expert guidance and resource management, we overcame these challenges.

What is your favourite dish from the menu at Bahce?

At Bahce, the menu is a delightful fusion of flavours and culinary traditions, offering a diverse range of dishes that



cater to various palates. Apart from traditional vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, our menu also offers Vegan and keto friendly flavours. Here are some recommendations.

Mezze Platter - A traditional favourite, the mezze platter at Bahce is a delightful assortment of small plates featuring Mediterranean and Middle Eastern delicacies. From hummus and baba ganoush to falafel and pepper & soy pide, this appetiser showcases a vibrant array of flavours and textures.

Mushroom And Water Chestnut Dimsums - The Mushroom and Water Chestnut Dimsums are a visual delight. It features delicate steamed dumplings that have a flavourful filling of assorted mushrooms and water chestnuts. The dimsums are garnished with a sprinkle of fresh herbs and drizzled with a tantalising touch of truffle oil.

Mock Meat Burger - The Mock Meat Burger is a plant-based delight that satisfies both - taste and cravings. The burger features a juicy plant-based patty cooked to perfection, topped with melted cheese, tangy gherkin pickles and caramelised onions for a touch of sweetness. Served with a side of crispy fries, this burger offers a satisfying and flavourful experience for those seeking a delicious plant-based alternative.

How do you ensure that your dishes are different and special?

We ensure our dishes remain special by curating a thoughtfully diverse menu, experimenting with innovative recipes, prioritising high-quality and fresh ingredients, paying attention to appealing presentation, listening to valuable customer feedback and regularly introducing exciting updates to our menu—keeping the dining experience distinct and delightful for all.

Who are your target customers?

The target customers for Bahce restaurant are primarily couples looking for a romantic dining experience, corporates seeking a venue for business lunches or dinners, young adults seeking a vibrant and trendy dining spot and ladies who enjoy brunches, suggesting a focus on a diverse customer base with an emphasis on creating an inviting and enjoyable ambiance for various demographics.

According to you, what are the USPs of Bahce?

At Bahce, our USP revolves around the ability to offer a serene oasis amidst the bustling concrete jungle of Gurugram. Bahce provides a haven where patrons can escape the fast-paced city life and indulge in moments of tranquility. Our emphasis is on allowing our guests to sip and savour in a peaceful and relaxing environment, providing a distinct and calming experience in contrast to the surrounding urban developments.

How important is sustainability for you and how do you incorporate it at Bahce?

Sustainability holds great significance for us and we are dedicated to making a positive impact on the environment. Our commitment is reflected in our design, with an open dining area surrounded by greenery and a preference for products made from natural materials. Within the kitchen, we prioritise the use of clean, eco-friendly products and maintain a well-organised waste disposal system. Not only does our open dining area offer a calming experience for our customers, but it also contributes to energy savings during daylight hours.

What are your expansion plans?

Our vision for Bahce extends across India, upholding our commitment to delivering a unique escape from the rush of daily life. We strive to replicate Bahce's serene ambience and natural beauty in locations that align with our concept, aiming to reach a broader audience in search of tranquility within their bustling routines. □

In talks with Executive Chef

Rishikesh Rai

Vivanta New Delhi Dwarka

By: Rohit Ashok

Hotel Vivanta New Delhi Dwarka features 250 well-appointed rooms, including 18 suites and a luxurious presidential suite, along with a well-equipped business centre and meetings and convention facilities spread over an area of more than 15000 sqft indoors and outdoors.

Keeping with its tradition, the Vivanta New Delhi Dwarka offers a variety of food and beverage options through its 24/7 multi-cuisine coffee shop called CREO, a theme-based Indian restaurant called INDUS EXPRESS, a trendy and



energetic bar named TIPPLE. All these outlets are well known for their finest culinary experiences, which are taken care of by a very talented and skilled Executive Chef, Rishikesh Rai.

Here is an interview with Executive Chef Rishikesh Rai, where he shared his views about the food served in the hotel's restaurants and the strategies to make the gastronomic

journey a memorable one.

Who has been your most significant influence in getting you to where you are today?

I've had the privilege of being mentored by exceptional chefs at various stages of my professional journey, enriching my skills and culinary knowledge at Taj West End. I am fortunate to have collaborated with some of Taj's finest chefs.

How do you go about menu planning? What is the process from picking the ingredients to incorporating them into the kitchen and dishes?

In our culinary profession, meticulous menu planning is an art that considers a delicate interplay of factors such as ingredient availability, seasonal variations, special occasions and the pursuit of culinary equilibrium. Within our industry, the foundation of quality is firmly established during the procurement phase. The axiom holds: quality ingredients invariably yield quality creations, a cardinal principle in the realm of gastronomy. To ensure ingredient quality, there are critical steps that demand unwavering attention:

Efficient Receiving: The initial step involves the efficient and thorough inspection of received ingredients. This scrutiny guarantees that what we acquire aligns with our exacting standards.

Transportation to the Designated Kitchen: Once the ingredients pass muster, they are meticulously transported to their designated culinary haven, ensuring their safe and timely arrival.

Storage at the Optimal Temperature: Proper storage conditions are paramount. Maintaining the right temperature and environment ensures the ingredients remain pristine, preserving their integrity.

Following FIFO (First In, First Out): Adhering to the FIFO method guarantees that older ingredients are used before newer ones, minimising waste and maximising freshness.

Mastering the Right Cooking Techniques: Finally, the art of selecting and applying the right cooking techniques is fundamental. This ensures that the potential of each ingredient is fully realised, resulting in dishes that are a testament to culinary finesse.

As for our menu planning process, it unfolds like a carefully choreographed dance. It commences with a comprehensive



assessment of ingredient availability and seasonality. We then harmonise this information with the specific occasion or theme, ensuring that each element coalesces seamlessly. The journey from hand-picking the freshest ingredients to transforming them into delectable dishes involves a symphony of creativity and skill guided by the principles of quality and excellence.

Through this methodical approach, we craft menus that not only tantalise the palate but also reflect the essence of our culinary philosophy. Every dish is a testament to our commitment to delivering exceptional dining experiences, where the journey from ingredient to plate is a masterpiece in itself.

Which is your favourite restaurant on the property and why?

My personal favourite is Indus Express. This choice is rooted in my deep appreciation for the restaurant's culinary philosophy

and unwavering commitment to authenticity in cuisine.

Which is the best-selling dish on your menu at Indus Express?

Indus Express has consistently thrilled its guests with an unwavering commitment to excellence in cuisine and service. Among our delectable offerings, the Nihari Gosht and Kebab-e-Bannau are shining examples of our most beloved and acclaimed dishes.

How would you describe your cooking style?

The culinary craft is an art form that thrives on a delicate balance of creativity and simplicity.

What is your favourite ingredient to create with?

My favourite ingredient to work with is Kashmiri morels. Their exquisite flavour and versatility have consistently allowed me to create dishes that never fail to delight our guests with their exceptional preparation.



What is your favourite piece of kitchen equipment?

My favourite piece of kitchen equipment has to be the tandoor. It offers boundless opportunities to work culinary magic and elevate the flavours of food to new heights.

What is your favourite thing about being a chef?

What I cherish most about being a chef is the constant opportunity to innovate and create new dishes by experimenting with a rich tapestry of ingredients. It also allows me to delve deep into cuisine's cultural and geographic underpinnings, fostering a deeper appreciation for the culinary world's diversity.

In talks with

Mohammed Shoeb

AVP- North India, Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi

By: Nitu

The Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi, is located close to Delhi and Gurgaon. This 5-star hotel near Delhi Airport provides the finest accommodation and state-of-the-art amenities and is a delightful haven for business and leisure travellers.

Mr Mohammed Shoeb, the Associate Vice President-North India Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi, shared more details about the property with us. Mr Shoeb is a hotel opening specialist who opened five hotels from 2005 to 2015 in southern India. He has previously worked with Radisson Hotel Group, Accor Hotels, Intercontinental Hotels Group and ITC Welcom Group.

How does Pride Plaza stand out in the competition?

Pride Plaza distinguishes itself through exceptional hospitality, luxurious amenities and an unbeatable location. Our commitment to delivering personalised service sets us apart, ensuring each guest enjoys a unique and memorable experience. Our holistic approach to hospitality truly sets us apart, engaging all five senses of traditional Indian welcome. From the enchanting fragrance that greets you to the soothing music that sets the mood, the captivating ambience and the vibrant regional Indian paintings and frescoes that adorn our spaces, every aspect is carefully curated to immerse you in the rich tapestry of Indian culture. To top it all off, our mouth-watering Indian cuisines cater to a wide range of tastes and preferences, making us the preferred choice for business and leisure travellers. Pride Plaza takes immense pride in consistently exceeding guest expectations, setting a new standard in the hospitality industry and offering a sensory journey through the heart of India's warm and welcoming traditions.

What are the USPs that your hotel offers vis-à-vis others in the market?

Pride Plaza offers a myriad of unique selling points (USPs) that differentiate us from other establishments in the market. Our prime location near the Delhi Airport and major business districts ensures convenience for travellers. The hallmark of our hotel is our world-class amenities, contemporary design and commitment to sustainable and responsible tourism practices. What



truly sets us apart is our dedication to providing an immersive experience of Indian culture. From the moment guests arrive, they are enveloped in the warmth and traditions of India. We take pride in our exceptional dining experiences, from authentic Indian cuisine that celebrates the rich tapestry of flavours to international flavours for those seeking variety. Furthermore, our versatile event spaces are designed to accommodate a wide range of MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) requirements, making us the top choice for event planners. In summary, Pride Plaza stands out for its blend of convenience,



luxury and commitment to sustainability, all intertwined with the cultural richness of India.

Is F&B (food and beverage) a big revenue earner for the property?

Yes, food and beverage (F&B) plays a pivotal role in our revenue generation. Pride Plaza has established a reputation for culinary excellence and our F&B offerings are a significant draw for hotel guests and local patrons. With a diverse array of dining options, we cater to various tastes and preferences. Our restaurants and bars consistently receive accolades for their quality and innovative cuisine. As a result, F&B operations contribute significantly to our overall revenue, showcasing our importance of providing exceptional dining experiences.

What is the marketing strategy you have adopted to promote your property?

Our marketing strategy is multifaceted, encompassing a range of channels and approaches. We prioritise social media engagement to connect with our audience and share captivating visuals and content. Additionally, we invest in targeted advertising to reach potential guests effectively. Collaborations with travel partners and participation in the industry events help us expand our reach further. Crucially, we highlight our unique offerings, such as special promotions, MICE facilities and sustainability

initiatives, to resonate with a wider audience. By focusing on these aspects and maintaining a cohesive brand image, we aim to continuously promote Pride Plaza as a top destination.

What, according to you, is the latest trend in the hospitality industry?

The latest trends in the hospitality industry reflect a shift towards more sustainable, tech-savvy and guest-centric practices. Sustainability is a paramount concern, with hotels increasingly adopting eco-friendly initiatives/ energy conservation practices and



promoting responsible tourism practices. Technology integration, including contactless check-ins and smart room controls, enhances the guest experience. Personalisation remains a key focus, with hotels striving to offer unique and immersive experiences tailored to individual preferences. There is a growing emphasis on using local and organic ingredients in the culinary realm. Lastly, wellness and health-related amenities are gaining prominence as travellers seek holistic experiences, prioritising their well-being.

What are the key challenges that lie ahead for you in the future?

While we remain committed to delivering exceptional experiences, several key challenges lie ahead. Adapting to evolving travel preferences and expectations is a perpetual challenge. Staying at the forefront of technology and digital guest experiences is essential. Meeting our sustainability goals and reducing our environmental footprint remains a priority. Additionally, managing competitive pressures in the ever-evolving hospitality market requires constant vigilance. Navigating the impact of unforeseen events, such as pandemics and global economic shifts, also poses ongoing challenges. Moreover, the scarcity of skilled manpower in certain areas of the industry is an issue we must address. Despite these challenges, our commitment to excellence and innovation will continue to drive our success in the future. □

Most fabulous trips in

India

you can have this October

By: Nitu

October is hailed as the start of the great Indian festival season, with Navratri, Durga Puja, Eid, Diwali, Christmas, New Year and more; the celebratory mood kickstarts this month. With added regional celebrations, this is the perfect time to go on holiday.

We have curated a list of our favourite places from across India that are great for a trip in October. Which one of these would you pick?

Chhattisgarh

Visit Chhattisgarh to partake in the unique Dussehra celebrations here. It is also the world's longest festival and the celebrations kick off at the Danteshwari Temple in Jagdalpur. The celebrations go on for 75 days and are not to be missed. It celebrates Goddess Danteshwari and is very different from the Dussehra celebration practices that the rest of the country follows.



Coonoor

Famous for producing the Nilgiri tea, Coonoor is one of the most beautiful hill stations situated in the Nilgiri hills on the Western Ghats, in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is situated around 20 kilometres from Ooty. Coonoor has the



beauty of tea plantations, valleys, ravines and waterfalls all around. There are quite a few trails for trekking and hiking in the surrounding hills of the Western Ghats around Coonoor.

Bandhavgarh National Park

Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh National Park is set to reopen for the winter season on October 15 and is just the place for those who love all things wild. Plan a trip to see the forest here in all its untouched glory, right before the peak tourist season. Also, the big cats here are the star attractions of the whole state.

Gulmarg

While Gulmarg is blissful at any time of the year, exploring

the place in October is all the more beautiful, with all the autumn colours popping up. Its idyllic meadows and plush stay options are for those in irrevocable love with the mountains.

Kullu

Much famed as the "Nature Lover's Paradise", Kullu treats travellers with an alluring open valley that offers panoramic views of the majestic hills. Covered with deodar and pine trees, Kullu is situated at a height of 1,230 metres, engulfed with lush greenery, pristine river streams and a wonderful



climate. Perched in the lap of nature, the town - Kullu is pure bliss to explore. Kullu Dussehra is another celebration that attracts people from all across the country. If you are seeking a trip that takes you closer to the locals' culture and practices here, this is the time to join in the celebrations.

Kumarakom

Kumarakom in Kerala is one of the best places to visit in October and is a great pick for a tropical holiday. The place is also home to some of the country's most loved wellness and hospitality brands, making it perfect for a staycation



in the backwaters here.

Mysuru

Pick Mysuru if you are looking for a grand Dussehra celebration. The place gets decked up for the festival, a multi-day celebration that sees locals and travellers joining



in the revelry. It is also the time for an insight into the royal world of Mysuru.

Yumthang Valley

Situated in North Sikkim, Yumthang Valley is a paradise on earth full of natural wonders and picturesque beauty. It is home to a zillion flowers, spectacular mountains & a serene river and is often called the 'Yumthang Valley of Flowers'



like the one located in Uttarakhand. Its breathtaking and magical surroundings make it a must-visit place for every traveller. While the state is reeling under the devastation caused by the recent flash floods, there are attempts to continue welcoming tourists to the state. This trip is best done in late October, when the infrastructure and people are again in shape to accommodate travellers. □

Places to Witness the Most Spectacular Fall Foliage in India

By: Nitu

As the oppressive heat of summer yielded to the cool, crisp breeze of autumn, nature in India underwent a stunning transformation. The lush greenery became a magnificent tapestry of red, orange and yellow hues. It was fall season and the display of autumn foliage was equally diverse and awe-inspiring in a land known for its diversity. Here are five places to witness the most spectacular fall foliage in India.

Srinagar, Kashmir

The "Heaven on Earth" is shrouded in a mystical regalia during autumn. The lanes of Kashmir are adorned with beautiful rusty brown chinar leaves, creating a stunning view. If you plan a trip to Srinagar in October, a Shikara



ride on the Dal Lake is a must-try experience to witness the fall foliage in all its glory. After the boat ride, indulge in some delicious local delicacies like Goshtaba, Rogan Josh, Korma with butter naan and the celebrated Wazwan. Finish your meal with some sweet Firni or Kahwa, a local tea with aromatic spices. You can also stroll in the colourful Mughal Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to soak in the warmth of autumn's natural hues.

Best Time to Visit: April-October

Getting There: To reach Srinagar, Kashmir, you can fly to Srinagar International Airport from major Indian cities like Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore. Alternatively, you can opt for a scenic road trip from Jammu, approximately 270 kilometres away and enjoy breathtaking views of the Himalayan landscape.

Dharamshala

Dharamshala located in the Dhauladhar range, is a true delight for the eyes during autumn. In October, the town is draped in a blanket of crimson leaves, creating a picturesque scene that is hard to resist. Travellers can trek to the Bhagsunag waterfall or spend a peaceful morning at the Dalai Lama temple in McLeod Ganj, just



10 km away. While you're here, visit one of the cosy cafes and indulge in some delicious Tibetan cuisine. We highly recommend Cafe Illiterati for its warm ambience and mouth-watering Italian food. You can also check out Crepe Pancake Hut.

Best Time to Visit: September-November

Getting There: To reach Dharamshala, you can fly to Gaggal Airport, the nearest airport. Another option is to take a train to Pathankot, followed by a scenic bus or taxi ride to Dharamshala, around 85 kilometres away.

Ladakh

Autumn is the perfect time to visit Ladakh, as the barren landscape transforms into a beautiful canvas of orange and yellow leaves. The breathtaking Pangong Lake and Nubra Valley views will leave you speechless. Take the time to soak it all in and try the local thukpa, steamed momos and spicy dip. It's the perfect way to warm up on a cool autumn day. On your way back, don't forget to enjoy a cup of hot butter tea and pick up some homemade apricot jam and churpi, a cheese made from the milk of domesticated yaks called "dzomo." It's similar to Italian ricotta and is an absolute must-try!

Best Time to Visit: September-October



Getting There: To reach Leh, you can fly to Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport, the region's main airport and operate flights from major Indian cities like Delhi and Srinagar. Another option is to embark on an adventurous road trip from Srinagar or Manali, but be prepared for challenging terrain and high-altitude conditions.

Mussoorie

Uttarakhand is known for its stunning hill stations and Mussoorie is a favourite destination for road trippers in North India. The drive from Delhi to Mussoorie is especially scenic during the autumn months. Once you arrive, take some time to find a quiet spot amidst the lush greenery and bask in the comforting autumn sunshine. To satisfy your appetite, head to Landour Bakehouse, where you

can indulge in some delicious desserts.

Best Time to Visit: September-November

Getting There: To reach Mussoorie, fly to Dehradun's Jolly Grant Airport, the nearest airport and then drive approximately 35 kilometres to Mussoorie. Alternatively, you can reach Mussoorie by train to Dehradun Railway Station and then take a taxi or bus to the hill station, enjoying the region's scenic beauty.

Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Lovingly known as the "Queen of the Hills," Shimla is a beautiful sight in India during autumn. The mountain peaks are adorned with streaks of orange and yellow, creating a breathtaking view. The pine forests provide



the perfect backdrop for a scenic toy train ride and you can shop for unique souvenirs at the Lakkar Bazaar. To top it off, you can indulge in a creamy soft serve or a warm cup of hot chocolate at Mall Road while enjoying the scintillating fall foliage in the distance.

Best Time to Visit: October-November

Getting There: To reach Shimla, you can take a train to Kalka, which is the nearest major railway station and then board the iconic Shimla-Kalka Toy Train, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to enjoy a scenic ride through the Himalayan foothills to Shimla. Alternatively, you can drive or take a bus from nearby cities like Chandigarh or Delhi. □

Cultural Explorers Redefining Travel

By: Rohit Ashok

Hilton's third-annual trends report looks at how each generation views travel, from the digital-native Gen Zer to the experienced Baby Boomer. This Trends Report for the year 2024 unveiled some of the emerging trend poised to redefine the future of travel: the rise of the 'GenerAsian' traveller. This new generation of Asian travellers is driven

the 'GenerAsian' traveller is marked by a strong sense of pride in their country of origin as a travel destination. An astounding 85 per cent of Indian respondents expressed this pride, reflecting a growing global appreciation for Asian culture, food and design.

This shift can be attributed to globalisation, where Asian culture

Asian innovation, design and cuisine.

The 'GenerAsian' traveller's priorities differ from those of conventional travellers. They seek unique local experiences over convenience or price. In fact, 77 per cent of Indian respondents indicated that they are likely to book accommodations based on access to these unique experiences, surpassing the global average of 65 per cent.

Indian travellers are also passionate about exploring local and traditional food and beverages, with 91 per cent ranking it as their top priority. Connecting with the local community (90 per cent) and gaining a deeper understanding of the destination's history and heritage (87 per cent) are also crucial to them. This suggests a strong desire for authentic travel experiences.

Culinary experiences emerge as a unifying passion point among Asian respondents in the survey, with respondents from China, India, Japan and Singapore all prioritising food and beverage in their travel plans for the next year.

In their pursuit of self-discovery and cultural immersion, 82 per cent of Indian travellers are reducing spending



by a deep desire to understand their cultural heritage and they are making their mark on the global travel landscape.

In a global survey conducted in partnership with Ipsos, one of the world's leading market research and polling companies, the findings say that

and traditions have become more accessible and appealing to international audiences through pop culture and social media. The world has witnessed greater representation of Asian culture in various industries, from matchmaking traditions featured on popular reality shows to international recognition of

in other areas of their lives to prioritise travel, significantly higher than the global average of 64 per cent. Moreover, 81 per cent of Indian travellers plan to increase their travel spending in 2024, outpacing the 65 per cent global average.

This inclination for travel goes beyond pent-up demand; it reflects India's economic growth story. The middle-and upper-class consumers in India have accumulated savings during the pandemic, enabling them to fulfil their travel aspirations.



These insights are a part of Hilton's comprehensive 2024 Trends Report, which delves into the profile of the 2024 traveller and their desires and preferences. After surveying over 10,000 travellers from nine countries and conducting in-depth interviews with Hilton travel experts, the report identifies four key themes driving change and

innovation in travel for 2024 and beyond:

Investing in sleep: Gen Z travellers prioritise winding down, with considerations like regulated workout routines and alcohol avoidance. In India, listening to music or podcasts and choosing trusted hotels with quality

mattresses are top sleep priorities.

Value of connectivity and personalisation: Globally, 80 per cent of travellers find it important to book their trips online, with Millennials and Gen Z leading the way. In India, 85 per cent of travellers share this sentiment.

Culture and experiences: Culinary experiences and exploration top the list of travel priorities across generations. In India, dining and adventure experiences are particularly significant.

Business travel redefined: Travellers are committed to maximising their time on the road, blending work, family, friends and leisure.

Hilton's Trends Report is the result of qualitative and quantitative research, including stakeholder interviews across various divisions of the organisation and research phases conducted with Ipsos, one of the world's largest market research companies. It offers a glimpse into the evolving landscape of travel and the emergence of the 'GenerAsian' traveller as a significant force in shaping the industry's future. □

Aboard Swiss Panoramic Trains

The Journey is as Good as The Destination!

By: Divya Bhatia

Riding Switzerland's panoramic trains is a must-do experience for travellers and it's easy to see why! These trains offer breathtaking sights, where the destination becomes secondary to the awe-inspiring voyage. Each leg of the trip unfolds with stunning vistas, making the entire journey a feast for the eyes.

When you match that experience with the country's well-established Swiss Travel System (STS), considered one of the most efficient public transport networks globally, you know you've hit the jackpot regarding travel sojourns. With the system's all-in-one ticket — the Swiss Travel Pass (STP), travellers can hop on trains, buses and boats across the magnificent Swiss countryside and its vibrant cities.

All STP pass holders can also embark on the unforgettable Grand Train Tour of Switzerland aboard the country's renowned panoramic train routes.

Here are a few most popular panoramic train rides that are always on time and convenient for all passengers, offering glimpses into local life.

Glacier Express

The Glacier Express is known as the 'slowest express train in the world' for a reason! On this captivating 8-hour journey between Zermatt and St. Moritz, passengers are treated to unfiltered views of breathtaking landscapes, deep valleys, picturesque villages and magnificent mountain ranges through panoramic windows. The Glacier Express offers an unrivalled experience as it crosses over 291 bridges and through 91



tunnels, showcasing some of the country's most complex and ingenious engineering.

Throughout this luxurious rail journey through the Swiss Alps, passengers are treated to an exclusive bar and onboard entertainment, freshly prepared meals and a selection of regional wines that perfectly complement the scenic views.

Bernina Express

On the Bernina Express ride to Tirano from St. Moritz, one passes through Lugano, the Mediterranean haven that merges the best of Swiss and Italian cultures and awes with its small-town charm. The Bernina Express navigates the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Rhaetian Railway, taking passengers through awe-inspiring landscapes that include glaciers, alpine forests, charming Swiss villages and the famous Landwasser Viaduct — an architectural masterpiece. This route offers different views in different seasons. In winter, you see the magic of frozen lakes and snow-covered mountains and can even

catch glimpses of local skiers making the most of the season. In summer, verdant fields and farming settlements enthrall in all their vibrant beauty.

What sets this train route apart is its ascent to the Bernina Pass, which reaches a breathtaking 2,253 metres above sea level, making it Europe's highest railway journey!

At Alp Grüm, which offers one of the most unforgettable views on the route, travellers can hop off for 15 minutes and take picture-perfect photos. A roving minibar and a range of culinary delicacies are also available onboard.

GoldenPass Express

The GoldenPass Express is an enchanting train journey connecting Lucerne to Lake Geneva in 3 hours and 15 minutes. It offers a seamless transition from the snow-capped peaks of the Swiss Alps to the lush green meadows of the Lake Geneva region, providing captivating vistas at every turn. This journey is remarkable because it is the only train connecting Interlaken to Montreux, offering a unique experience bridging the Swiss and French regions. From the Alpine scenery to charming towns and vineyards, passengers can witness the diverse landscapes of Switzerland and France all in one extraordinary trip.

The GoldenPass Express ensures maximum comfort and privacy with small compartments and the new "prestige" travel class features adjustable leather seats that rotate 180 degrees, providing unobstructed views of the idyllic landscapes. With exceptional culinary offerings onboard, including snacks, light meals and beverages, passengers can indulge their senses while immersing themselves in the breath-taking beauty of both countries.

Luzern-Interlaken Express

The Luzern-Interlaken Express is the shortest ride connecting Lucerne and Interlaken. Still, it also offers a scenic route through the heart of Switzerland, showcasing the region's stunning landscapes and picturesque lakes. Passengers are treated to breathtaking views as the train winds through charming Swiss towns, emerald lakes and lush meadows. The iconic peaks of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau add a touch of old-world romance to the journey, evoking a sense of awe and wonder.

The train's interiors are meticulously maintained, providing passengers with clean and comfortable surroundings. With

ample space and a well-equipped onboard bistro, passengers can fully immerse themselves in Switzerland's natural grandeur while enjoying the highest level of comfort.

Gotthard Panorama Express

The Gotthard Panorama Express offers a two-in-one experience that perfectly combines a scenic boat trip with a



panoramic train ride! From Lugano to Flüelen, passengers enjoy the historic Gotthard route aboard the Express. From Flüelen, they take a boat cruise on a historic steamboat or modern boat across Lake Lucerne. This captivating journey concludes in the Italian-speaking city of Lugano, making it a delightful blend of Swiss and Mediterranean influences.

Warm meals are served on the boat and snacks and beverages can be enjoyed on the train. The first-class coaches are spacious, with enough room for six-footers to stretch out and enjoy the panoramic views. On the train's photo coach, one can open the windows, feel the fresh air and take photos!

Traversing the magnificent Swiss countryside by train is a convenient mode of transportation and an eco-friendly, sustainable way to explore this stunning destination. You can buy the STP as early as 11 months and as late as 90 days before travelling to Switzerland to start using the country's diverse public transport network spread across over 90 cities and towns, the moment you land. The tickets provide captivating vistas, engineering marvels and an appreciation for Switzerland's grandeur. The journey itself becomes a memorable part of the travel experience. Discover Switzerland's beauty and create lasting memories with the Swiss Travel System. □

Spike In Business Travel Between Asia & Australia

By: Divya Bhatia

New statistics released today by FCM, the flagship large-market corporate travel division of Flight Centre Travel Group, has revealed the gateway between Asia and Australia has soared for big business in the previous quarter when compared to 2022.

The figures showed that bookings between July 1 and September 30, 2023 versus the same time last year between India and Australia, saw an increase of 21 per cent. Bookings from Asia, which included China, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia took off by a whopping 83 per cent – a near doubling of demand between the two continents.

According to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the trade interests are inextricably linked. Australia's two-way trade with ASEAN is greater than their trade with Japan or the United States, passing AUD 178 billion in 2022.

India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia are also in Australia's top 15 trading partners for 2022. In any match-up of economic complementarity with growth potential, the greatest trade and economic opportunities for Australia over the next 30 years, lie in the ASEAN region.

Mr Gaurav Luthra, FCM Managing Director for India, said, "Travel between our continent and Australia has always been critical for trade. Our latest innovative statistics show a demand for large businesses

to head Down Under ramp up. It's no coincidence that the growth in the number of bookings coincides with airline capacity coming back and more seats being offered. Singapore Airlines and Qantas have swapped out smaller aircraft for A380s to key cities such as Sydney and Melbourne. Another trend that we're seeing is corporate travellers extending their long-haul stay to take advantage of holiday destinations and



Australia is the perfect place to do this. Meetings, events and conferences have also come back strong in the last three months and that's reflected in these increased booking numbers. Businesses are valuing face-to-face meetings now more than ever as the euphoria of Zoom and Teams fades away in favour of in-person occasions."

The recovery for South-east Asian inbound travel into Australia (mainly Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia) is slightly ahead of the curve and Tourism Australia is not taking its foot off the pedal.

Ms Phillipa Harrison, Managing Director, Tourism Australia, stated, "When we look at these three markets, we don't just look at the population, but we look at the

population's propensity to travel and the number of high-yielding travellers. High-yielding travellers are not high-net-worth individuals, but instead, people who spend a lot of their discretionary income on travel, and like what Australia offers in terms of nature, wildlife, and good food and wine."

However, current skyrocketing airfares may deter some Asian travellers from choosing to holiday in Australia.

As to whether Tourism Australia has a plan to help bring down current high airfares, its Executive General Manager of Eastern Markets & Aviation, Mr Andrew Hogg, said, "Like every industry, the global aviation industry has struggled to recover, and this is something out of our control. What we can do is to encourage capacity back to Australia, where the growth in capacity will help to normalise pricing."

Mr Hogg noted, "There's a lot of confidence in Australia from our aviation partners and we've seen them keep capacity in the market. Our job is to make sure that the demand is there and work with airlines on the demand, so that they will commit to more capacity in the future." He, however cautioned, "Airfares will never be the same as pre-Covid".

Currently, Australia's inbound is sitting at around 77 per cent of pre-Covid levels and once airlift is back on track, Ms Harrison shared that Australia will see a full recovery "sometime in 2025". □

Jamaica

Bets Big on Indian Market

By: Rohit Ashok

As Indians become some of the most travelled people in the world, they are exploring the less travelled roads and looking at the exploring countries which were not some of the most-visited destinations earlier. Jamaica acclaimed India as a high potential tourism market at their annual trade event, JAPEX 2023. There is a huge and developing interest for Indian tourists to come to the island destination.

The Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX), an industry trade show hosted annually by the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA), in association with the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), concluded in Montego Bay, with all signals pointing to strong arrival numbers from across the globe. Jamaica says that they see big prospects in the India market and are looking at opportunities to build traffic out of India.

Addressing the press launch of JAPEX 2023, the Tourism Minister, Mr Edmund Bartlett emphasised that JAPEX 2023 is more than just a trade show, “it is a symbol of our recovery”. He stated, “This year’s event holds even more significance, as it follows a period of unparalleled challenges for the global travel tourism industry. The pandemic tested our collective resolve, but it also re-enforced our resilience”.

With a target in sight of earning USD 4.1 billion, Mr Bartlett, Minister of Tourism is pleased that Jamaica is having its best year ever in visitors’ arrivals. His enthusiasm was shared as the tourism sector celebrated the return of JAPEX with an elaborate opening event at Chukka Outpost on the Sandy Bay coastline.

“As we currently stand, we are about to have the best year in the history of tourism in Jamaica for stopover arrivals, 2023,” he exuded.

In 2019, Jamaica announced expansion in the island’s hotel industry with 10,000 new rooms in the upcoming years.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic put a halt to the tourism business worldwide. During the recession, investors were still interested in Jamaica and new investment options were being introduced. Post- pandemic, the tourism industry is rebuilding itself; Jamaica is back on track to expand its hotel industry, now with 15,000 new rooms over the next 3 to 5 years.

During the Destination Update, led by the Director of Tourism of Jamaica, Mr Donovan White, there was a special emphasis on the importance of the Indian market to Jamaica, as Indian travel trade and media physically participated for the

first time in this event this year. Mr White also introduced TRAC Representations as Jamaica Tourist Board’s representative in the Indian market. Mr White told tourism stakeholders that he was encouraged by the work being done by TRAC, as their Indian representative agency run by Mr Rajeev Nangia.

“They’ve (TRAC) served us exceedingly well and now we are looking to increase our activities with TRAC Representations in India and beyond,” Mr White said.

Mr White also mentioned that the popular Jamaican Cricketer, Mr Chris Gayle has a huge fan following in India. Gayle will be working with Jamaica to attract more Indian travellers to the island destination. “I am very well connected with the leadership of the tourism fraternity in India; our airlift is getting stronger and we intend to participate in the various trade events in India. We’re excited to tap into the Indian market”, stated Mr White.

Mr Donovan White, Director of Tourism while addressing the first day of JAPEX 2023 at the Montego Bay Convention Centre said, “We also want to look at the Indians residing in Canada, the United States and the UK. So, our incursion into India is not going to be just any subcontinent of India, but also in the Indian diaspora”. □

Airport Experience Can Influence Fear of Switching Off Priority Pass Research

By: Rohit Ashok

According to new global research from Priority Pass, owned and operated by Collinson – surveying 8,500 people across 11 countries – over a third (35%) of people find it difficult to truly switch off from everyday life while on their travels.

The data also shows that the airport experience is critical to how well people can – or cannot – switch off, with more than 6 in 10 (62%) travellers saying pre-flight issues can initiate ‘Fear of Switching Off’ (FOSO) on the rest of their trip. However, FOSO can be subsided with particular airport services: 53% of people



said that visiting an airport lounge has improved how they've been able to switch off during previous travels.

Unpacking FOSO

With travel once again on a resurgent ascent, Priority Pass asked respondents what was causing FOSO and holding them back from experiencing the true benefits of travel.

The constant pressure to be connected is proving a challenge for many. The majority of respondents admitted to feeling worried about missing messages when not looking at their phone (73%),

feeling more stressed having it turned off than on (67%), or leaving their accommodation without it (59%).

The presence of FOSO is particularly prominent among younger travellers. Over half of Gen Z (aged 18-27) respondents admit they struggle to reduce their phone usage (58%) and still



check work messages (51%) when travelling, which far exceeds that of Baby Boomer (aged 59-77) respondents (33% & 29% respectively).

According to 76% of all respondents, tackling FOSO ahead of travel could significantly benefit their overall well-being. This implies that its influence lasts beyond the moment you return home and forms an important part of your day-to-day happiness.

Making every trip count

As such, Priority Pass asked survey respondents to dig deeper into the habits and environments that best enable them to combat FOSO and effectively switch off on their travels.

The airport experience has fast become a leading barometer for how well people can relax or enjoy their trip. However,

data also suggests the pre-flight experience can actually be a valuable place to tackle FOSO.

In addition to those that have already enjoyed the airport lounge experience, 70% of all people believe that visiting one would have a beneficial impact on how they switch off for the remainder of their trip. Travellers selected a smooth check-in, food & beverage, sleeping and shopping as the next most effective ways to switch off pre-flight.

For many, ‘that holiday feeling’ associated with travelling actually begins long before arriving at the airport. One-third (34%) of people switch off when they’re planning their trip, highlighting how important it is for the travel industry to make every step of the journey stress-free and enjoyable, from the booking to the beach.

Mr Christopher Evans, CEO of Collinson International.

He added, “We remain agile to changing travel trends to ensure we’re always innovating our range of premium

respondents to build the perfect FOSO-free trip. According to them, the best type of travel to switch off is a trip to the beach – followed by a city break, safari and wellness retreat. The ideal time to go away for most travellers is 1 to 2 weeks, although three



“We all know that being able to switch off and get away from the stress of every day is more important than ever. That is why so many are turning to travel. However, from our research, FOSO is real. We want to ensure people can unwind and relax from the start of their journey, creating memorable experiences,” said

experiences and providing offerings which go beyond the airport lounge. From pre-booking airport transfers and lounge access to visiting sleeping pods, gaming lounges and spa experiences; we are evolving our portfolio worldwide to ensure travellers can switch off at every point of the journey.”

Finally, Priority Pass asked survey

out of the four Asian countries surveyed, namely Hong Kong, India and Thailand, prefer to go away for two to six days only. The ideal pre-flight activity is to visit an airport lounge.

Mr Sumit Prakash, Country Director, India and South Asia, Collinson, added, “56% of travellers in India believe visiting an airport lounge helps them to ‘switch-off’ before their trip begins. This is further supported by our recent Asia Pacific customer engagement and loyalty research report, where airport lounge access topped respondents’ list of travel benefits, with other highly rated experiences including dining, lifestyle and wellness experiences. Aligned to this, we are looking forward to welcoming travellers – especially with the holiday season approaching – to our network of over 60 airport lounges and travel experiences in India and over 1,400 worldwide.” □

In-Talks with

Manpreet Bindra

President, FCM Travel

By: Divya Bhatia

FCM Travel is the corporate travel business of the Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG). FCM is an alternative corporate travel company that aims to make business travel a pleasure. It works to provide flexibility to its customers so they can manage their corporate travel on their own terms. Their modern user platform, combined with the best customer service in the industry, will keep you moving swiftly and with ease.

From enhanced travel experiences to saving strategies, spend control, data visibility and more – FCM helps you travel differently and better.

With MICE travel prospects on an upswing, Mr Manpreet Bindra, FCM India Meetings & Events President, is keen to leverage technology solutions to capitalising on the growing demand for high-quality and personalised event experiences.

Here's a conversation with Mr Bindra, where he shares insights about the industry forecast and his business strategies.

What is the market size for managed travel in India today?

The global MICE market size, in terms of revenue, is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 6.6 per cent from 2022 to 2030 to reach USD 1563.3 billion



by 2030. The revenue of the organised events industry in India was estimated to be more than 100 billion Indian rupees in the financial year 2021 and it employs 60 million Indians directly and indirectly.

How do you leverage technology solutions for a seamless business travel experience?

Technology is an enabler to enhance the customer experience and ease of business:

- a.** Hybrid event platforms for managing diverse participation needs and accommodating both in-person and online attendees seamlessly,
- b.** A dedicated event app for schedules and interactive features also creates a very personalised experience,
- c.** We also incorporate augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) experiences for immersive and interactive events whenever needed,
- d.** Implementing gamification elements within the event also increases engagement and participation. This could involve quizzes or scavenger hunts, all facilitated through technology,
- e.** Onboarding of technology for Strategic Meeting Management,
- f.** Event Management technology for registrations and management,
- g.** Event budget management and financial reporting platforms.

These tech solutions not only elevate attendee experiences but also showcase our commitment to cutting-edge event management solutions.

What kind of investment are you making for new customer acquisition and securing new events?

Our approach for new customer acquisition and securing events for MICE is holistic – combining digital marketing strategies such as social media outreach, search engine optimisation, relationship-building, maintaining partnerships with key stakeholders across industries and tourism boards, valuable content creation, and technological innovation for immersive event experiences to create a well-rounded and effective strategy. We are also investing in our people by upgrading our sales and account managers in

meetings and events space.

What is your action plan for expansion beyond India?

We believe the meetings, events and event travel markets are ripe for disruption worldwide. FCM Meetings & Events is expanding globally to be well-positioned to capitalise on the growing demand for high-quality and personalised event experiences that have seen an exponential bounce back.



It's clear the demand for in-person connection continues to increase, with recent data showing conferences and events being one of the top two reasons for travel among both SME owners and decision-makers. The passion and engagement we're seeing are very encouraging and this is something that has been and continues to be felt globally.

We have a talented and diverse FCM M&E leadership team in key markets across the globe who are genuinely thrilled at the opportunity to elevate our MICE offering across our prospective and existing client base.

Our recent announcement is a significant milestone for FCM M&E, a business that already has a strong footprint across several countries on multiple continents and the company is committed to providing its customers with unique and memorable experiences – while staying true to the wider FCTG 'glocal' philosophy.

What is the division of business vs. events for your India business?

In India, more than 20 per cent of our business comes from Meetings & Events. Our aim is to be the travel management company of choice for meetings, events and event travel. □

Navigating Travel & Hospitality Trends

By: Rohit Ashok

As the world of travel continues to evolve, so do the preferences and expectations of travellers. A number of travel trends ebb while others flow and reshape the way hotels, resorts and tourism boards approach their offerings. Here are a few emerging trends shaping the tourism and hospitality industries.

Personalised Experiences at the Forefront

In an era of hyper-customisation, travellers are seeking experiences that resonate with their individual preferences and values. The one-size-fits-all approach no longer works. Hoteliers and resorts are harnessing the power of data analytics to better understand their guests, enabling them to craft tailored experiences that span from room preferences and dining choices to curated activities.

Collaboration with local businesses and artisans is on the rise, offering guests a taste of authenticity and a deeper connection to the destinations they visit. This not only enhances the guest experience but also contributes to the local economy, a unique selling point that astute travellers are increasingly appreciating.

Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

The clarion call for sustainable and responsible tourism is growing louder by the day. Travellers are now keenly aware of the environmental and social impacts of their journeys and are making conscious choices to minimise their carbon footprint. Hotel brands and resorts are responding by adopting eco-friendly practices, encompassing everything from energy-efficient infrastructure to waste reduction initiatives.

Additionally, partnerships with local communities are being forged to ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably. This not only enhances the destination's allure but

also bolsters its long-term viability. PR efforts are shifting towards spotlighting these sustainable practices and interweaving them into the brand's narrative, striking a chord with environmentally conscious travellers.



Wellness and Mindful Escapes

The pandemic has prompted a collective shift towards prioritising mental and physical well-being. Wellness tourism is no longer just optional; it's a fundamental aspect of the entire travel experience. Hotels and resorts are seamlessly integrating wellness offerings, whether through on-site spas, yoga and meditation sessions or clean and organic cuisine.

In the corporate world, wellness retreats have become a popular choice for team-building and professional development. This trend has opened new avenues for collaboration between hotels and businesses, leading to innovative packages designed to cater to the holistic needs of corporate travellers.

Tech and AI Experiences

AI and technology are now omnipresent in our lives and the

travel industry is leveraging them to enhance guest experiences. From contactless check-ins and digital concierge services to augmented reality guided tours, hotels and resorts are finding innovative ways to seamlessly integrate technology into the guest journey.

This trend extends to virtual travel experiences as well. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are being harnessed by hotels and resorts to offer potential guests a taste of their offerings before they even set foot on the premises. This not only serves as an enticing marketing tool but also facilitates a more immersive booking experience.



Authentic Cultural Immersion

Modern travellers are seeking more than just surface-level experiences. They aspire to immerse themselves in the local culture and gain a deeper understanding of the destinations they explore. Hotels and resorts are collaborating with local artists, historians and cultural experts to offer immersive workshops, participation in local festivals, guided tours and interactive experiences that transcend typical tourist attractions.

Tourism boards are also playing a pivotal role in promoting authentic cultural experiences. They are partnering with local stakeholders to curate itineraries that showcase a destination's unique heritage, traditions and artistic expressions. This enriches the traveller's journey while contributing to the preservation of cultural treasures.

Flexibility and Safety Assurance

The turbulence caused by the pandemic has forever altered the way travellers view flexibility and safety. The travel industry has responded by adopting fluid and open booking policies and stringent health and safety protocols. Hotels and resorts

are investing in advanced cleaning technologies and practices to reassure guests about the high levels of hygiene and safety in their accommodations.

The Rise of Destination Weddings and Special Occasions

People are increasingly drawn to the allure of celebrating the special moments of their lives in exotic and picturesque locations. This trend has created a unique synergy between the hospitality and wedding and event industries.

Hotels and resorts are capitalising on this trend by offering comprehensive packages that combine stunning venues with personalised services. Destination Events and Weddings not only provide a memorable experience for the people involved but also for their guests, who get to enjoy a vacation alongside the celebration.



Tourism boards are actively promoting their destinations as ideal wedding and event destinations, showcasing their natural beauty, cultural richness and ease of arranging ceremonies and receptions. The blend of travel and celebration presents an opportunity for hotels, resorts and tourism boards to collaborate and create seamless experiences that cater to the desires of the people celebrating the special occasion and their guests.

From personalised experiences and sustainable practices to wellness-focused getaways and tech-infused adventures, the travel industry is poised to create memorable and transformative journeys for the modern traveller. By staying attuned to these trends and adapting their offerings accordingly, hotels, resorts and tourism boards are ensuring that their brands remain relevant, inspiring and integral to the ever-evolving world of travel. □

Most-Visited Museums in

New York City

By: Divya Bhatia

As the city that never sleeps, New York City is a global hub for artistic expression and historical preservation. Nestled within its bustling streets are an array of museums, each a testament to human creativity and heritage. These cultural sanctuaries attract millions of visitors annually, offering a rich tapestry of experiences that showcase the artistic evolution of humanity. There is an institution for every interest, whether in art, history, science or quirkier subjects.

From iconic institutions housing classical masterpieces to contemporary art hubs pushing boundaries, we've carefully curated a list of the most visited museums in this diverse metropolis. Join us as we embark on a journey through time, culture and artistic ingenuity, exploring the must-visit museums that define the essence of New York City.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Opened in 1880 and situated in Central Park, this iconic New York institution contains 5,000 years of art under one roof, from prehistory to the latest in contemporary



works. Its unparalleled collection comprises more than two million objects that include Old Master paintings, the Ancient Egyptian Temple of Dendur and the Museum's famed period rooms. Among the Met's greatest collections are the works presented in its galleries of 19th- and early-20th-century European paintings and sculptures. In Gallery 825 are ten works by Vincent van Gogh, with another seven in Gallery 822.

The Museum lives in two iconic sites in New York City—The Met Fifth Avenue and The Met Cloisters. Millions of people also take part in The Met experience online.

American Museum of Natural History

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific,



educational and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 45 permanent exhibition halls, including the Rose Centre for Earth & Space, the Hayden Planetarium and galleries for temporary exhibitions.

The Museum conducts research in anthropology, astronomy, entomology, herpetology, ichthyology, invertebrates, mammalogy, mineralogy, ornithology

and vertebrate palaeontology. The Museum has a 485,000-volume library on natural history and photo, film and manuscript collections. The Museum is renowned for its exhibitions and scientific collections, which serve as a field guide to the entire planet and present a panorama of the world's cultures.

Museum of Modern Art

Set in the heart of Midtown Manhattan, the grandiosity of MoMA is deceptive. The Museum spans 630,000 square



feet, housing spaces for exhibitions, film screenings, public programming, education and scholarly research. The Museum reopened in the fall of 2019 with an addition of more than 40,000 square feet of gallery space. The Museum is filled with modern and contemporary art — from Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night* to cutting-edge photography, film and fashion.

The range is far-reaching, the execution is measured and the galleries are well-paced. The second, third and sixth floors house expansive, well-lit galleries for temporary exhibitions. Subject matter varies, from a focus on a specific artist to a thematic question like "What was/is/will be the effect of clothing and accessories on the 20th- and 21st-century world?" Not all exhibitions will appeal to the masses, but the approach is always dialogue-driven.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Swelling out towards the city of Manhattan, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum was the last major project

designed and built by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1943. It opened to the public in 1959, six months after his death, making it one of his longest works in creation along with one of his most famous projects. The Guggenheim is an inverted ziggurat shape which took years to build. Among the delays were redesigns of the building and the onset of World War II.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is arguably the most important building of Wright's late career. A monument to modernism, the unique architecture of the space, with its spiral ramp riding to a domed skylight, continues to thrill visitors and provide a unique forum for the presentation of contemporary art.

Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum

The Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum is a non-profit educational institution featuring the legendary aircraft carrier Intrepid, the space shuttle Enterprise, the world's fastest jets and a guided missile submarine. Explore history, science and service at the Intrepid Museum.



Walk the decks of Intrepid's legendary aircraft carrier, a National Historic Landmark and see twenty-eight aircraft, including the world's fastest military jet. Get an up-close look at the space shuttle Enterprise and British Airways Concorde and enter Growler, the only guided missile submarine open to the public. The Museum also features the Explorium, a fully interactive exhibit space where you can climb into a real Bell 47 helicopter and land a space shuttle. □

Interview with **Mohamed Ashraf**

GM, Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island

By: Nitu

Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island all-villa luxury resort stands out for its spectacular location, tucked away in the crystalline turquoise waters of the North Malé Atoll, just an hour by speedboat or 15 minutes by seaplane from Malé Airport. In one of the most picturesque settings in this stunning archipelago, Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island's idyllic location offers privacy for dreamy getaways, a blissful island retreat for friends and family and experiences to suit the more active traveller. The resort's surprising panoramic architecture and calming interiors are the work of sophisticated Singaporean design studio Maja, which has created an elegant contemporary ethos in harmony with the natural environment, echoing modern Mediterranean chic. This design sets it apart from the rest. The resort is set amid lush green vegetation. Every aspect of the resort's architecture and design has been considered to deliver breathtaking vistas



across the Indian Ocean and create an exceptional barefoot experience when guests arrive on this island paradise.

In an interview with Mr Mohamed Ashraf, General Manager of Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island, he shares detailed insights of the property.

How does Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island stand out in the competition?

Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island distinguishes itself by offering an all-encompassing experience of effortless luxury. We have created a resort journey where Mediterranean-chic blends with a relaxed island vibe, allowing guests to enjoy the island on their own terms. Our service and product offerings are flexible and cater to diverse guest preferences, whether they seek relaxation, adventure, culinary delights or wellness experiences. Nestled in the Maldivian natural beauty, our resort's design harmonises with the pristine surroundings, immersing guests in the picturesque tropical haven. This commitment to providing a holistic guest journey sets us apart in the competitive hospitality landscape.

What are the USPs that your hotels offer vis-à-vis others in the market?

Our resort stands out in several ways. We feature contemporary architecture, with one-, two and three-bedroom villas, each offering a private roof terrace providing breathtaking lagoon and beach views. Our villas are incredibly spacious, starting at 351 square metres, offering a canvas for unique private experiences, from massages or yoga sessions to starlit rooftop dinners. We also pride ourselves on our signature dining experiences, including the international debut of Jumeirah Group's renowned restaurants, Shimmers and KAYTO. Shimmers offers exceptional Mediterranean cuisine with beach club settings, live DJ performances and stunning ocean views, while KAYTO presents

a unique blend of Peruvian and Japanese cuisine. Our service exceeds expectations, with designated Island Hosts (butlers) and over 50 weekly activities catering to travellers of all ages and interests.

Is F&B (food and beverage) a big revenue earner for the property?

Food and beverage are the vibrant heart of our guests' journeys at Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island. It is not just about savouring delicious dishes; it is a profound culinary voyage. Beyond the acclaimed Jumeirah restaurant brands, our all-day dining at GLOW provides a gastronomic passport to a world of flavours that span continents. But what truly sets us apart are our intimate and bespoke dining experiences, from wine experiences with a view of beachside dinners under the stars to dining on a private sandbank just minutes away from the resort. These food and beverage experiences have become the essence of celebration and the creation of cherished memories for our guests, making F&B a significant revenue driver for our property.

What is the marketing strategy you have adopted to promote your property?

Our marketing strategies encompass various online and offline channels to effectively reach our target audience. We focus on conveying the unique experiences and luxurious offerings that define our resort. By utilising social media, partnerships and targeted advertising, we aim to engage with potential guests globally, showcasing the beauty and hospitality that await them at Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island.

How is Jumeirah Maldives performing regarding tourism in MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions)?

Our resort provides a premier all-villa

destination that combines timeless elegance and exceptional event experiences. We have well-equipped indoor conference facilities for small business gatherings and our spacious outdoor areas are ideal for team-building activities. Furthermore, our exclusive buyout option for the island provides a flexible and customisable approach to hosting events. We also offer diverse activities and entertainment, ensuring a tailored, distinctive experience.

What sustainability initiatives has Jumeirah Maldives taken and what is your sustainability roadmap for the next few years?

At Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island, sustainability is integral to our mission. We are dedicated to preserving the natural beauty of our surroundings,



offering educational marine programmes, hosting coral reef restoration projects and organising regular beach and reef cleaning initiatives. We have minimised our environmental footprint with biodegradable amenities, eliminated single-use plastics and prioritised sustainable purchase practices. Energy efficiency is paramount in our design and we have implemented various water conservation measures. Responsible seafood sourcing, the utilisation of locally sourced ingredients and a commitment to empowering local talent showcase our dedication to sustainability. We continually strive to create a positive impact on our environment and inspire our guests to

embrace a more sustainable vacation, ensuring sustainability remains central to our operations in the coming years.

What do you think it takes to succeed in this industry?

Success in the hospitality industry hinges on a few core elements: genuine dedication to meeting guests' needs, staying open to change and constantly learning. Strong leadership and teamwork play a huge role, as do paying close attention to the details and being able to communicate well. Staying relevant in the industry means being creative and environmentally friendly. Resilience is crucial in overcoming inevitable challenges and ethical conduct is the bedrock of trust and reputation. Embracing and celebrating diversity in all aspects enriches an establishment and keeps it vibrant in a dynamic industry.

What, according to you, is the latest trend in the hospitality industry?

The latest trend sweeping the hospitality industry is the resurgence of "staycations" and the ascent of local tourism. In this context, our resort's strategic proximity to Male enables us to welcome local guests seeking short getaways and special celebrations readily. We recently had the pleasure of hosting a group of local guests for a birthday celebration, creating a memorable and cherished experience for them.

Furthermore, the trend of responsible travel and sustainability has gained tremendous momentum. As guardians of some of the world's most pristine natural environments, we embrace sustainability as a core commitment. By championing sustainable practices, we protect the environment and deliver authentic, responsible and fulfilling experiences for our guests.

Enjoy Best Views of the

Northern & Southern Lights

By: Radhika

This year, the Northern Lights have enchanted people with brilliant and widespread displays across Europe and other parts, but especially Iceland. While the science behind the phenomenon is violent (it is caused by particles emitted by the sun crashing into atoms in the earth's atmosphere), the result has fascinated mankind for centuries and has been the stuff of folklore and magical tales of indigenous people.

The lights are commonly known to occur within 2,500 km of the North Pole, but on particularly hectic activity days, they can be seen further south. The season is usually from September to March, though sightings vary depending on geography and auroral activity. Ideally, the best viewing is done when the skies are dark, cloudless and free from light pollution, so areas free from human habitation are the best bet. The northernmost countries are best suited for this. Canada, Iceland and Lapland are some of the places with the best chances of catching this natural show.

Iceland

From the capital, Reykjavik, to the remotest part, Iceland



is in the enviable position of being a vast canvas for the Northern Lights. Though you must get away from city lights and find a dark area, it is less problematic in the wilderness. Some restaurants a little away from Reykjavik offer viewing with themed drinks, dim lighting and wraparound windows for an enhanced experience – you can be cosy and warm while still getting a spectacular show. Many of the country's natural sites, such as Asbyrgi Canyon, Thingvellir National Park and Kirkjufell Mountain, are the most notable and ideal spots to see the lights.

Finland

One of the best and easiest places to see the Northern Lights is in the Finnish Lapland, an expansive region comprising



more than 20 districts in Northern Finland. Saariselka and Inari, within the Arctic Circle, are incredibly beautiful places and you can combine reindeer sledge rides, snowmobile drives, snowshoeing and tobogganing during the day with spectacular light viewing at night. This is also the land of the indigenous Sami and their culture and heritage are everywhere to see and experience. If fantasy and festival spirit is what speaks to you, then Rovaniemi, the land of Santa Claus, is the perfect place. While these tend to get crowded during aurora season, just south of the Lapland border, places like Syote, especially

in the national park region, offer great viewing opportunities. There are glass igloos, glass villas by the sea and glass dome cabins by several lakes for unrestricted viewing pleasure.

Norway

Like Finland, Norway has a plethora of vantage points where the Northern Lights are visible. But the best place is undoubtedly Tromso in Northern Norway, located in the auroral oval. While there are several ways to experience the



lights, a fun way is to take the cable car up to the summit of Mount Storsteinen for the best possible views in the area. If you prefer a much cosier ambience, then the seats and perhaps even drinks from the Skybar should do the trick. But if the wild outdoors interests you, then Svalbard, the expansive Norwegian archipelago, is the place. This is also the place for a unique phenomenon – the lights are sometimes visible during the day, too.

Yukon, Canada

Canada's Northwestern most province, Yukon, is also among its least populated. From the capital, Whitehorse, which is closer to the province's Southern border, to the unending expanse of outdoors stretching Northwards, it is possible to see magnificent



auroral activity for almost eight months – from August to April. This is among the few places where it is possible to see not just green but neon shades of yellow, orange, blue and

purple, though most of these are occasionally visible. Stay in a viewing chalet or book a guided viewing session.

Ladakh

Though India is far too south for any Northern Lights visibility, a related phenomenon was seen in the mountains of Ladakh for the first time in recorded history a few years ago. Witnessed at Hanle, which is at an altitude of 5290 mts, where the Indian Astronomical Observatory is located, the event was rare and a red band of the auroral arc was seen. However, since the Northern Lights are unpredictable,



the chance of seeing them in Ladakh again is also uncertain, but scientists agree it cannot be ruled out. On the other hand, the night sky and views of the Milky Way are guaranteed.

Australia and New Zealand

Like the Northern Lights, lights are also seen around the Southern Pole and are called Aurora Australis or Southern Lights. There is also some speculation that the Southern Lights often mirror the Northern Lights. Though widely visible



in Antarctica, it is recorded less since it is inhabited only by research stations. However, they are visible from several parts of Australia (Tasmania and Victoria) and New Zealand (Stewart Island, Otago Peninsula and Great Barrier Island). Flights are also offered for aurora viewing, which fly around until the lights are spotted. □

Canberra

the hidden gem in Australia

By: Nitu

Most of us look forward to our vacations and are always in search of unique, beautiful spots to explore. With an increase in the number of travel destinations and diverse experiences, deciding on the right place takes time and effort. This city is a hidden gem you must consider for your next trip if you like sustainable travel, innovations, art, culture and natural beauty.

Here are five compelling reasons for you to add Australia's capital, Canberra, to your bucket list –

Sustainability

Eat, stay and explore sustainably in Canberra – a different kind of capital. With its multiple green initiatives, Canberra



is known to be one of the most sustainable cities in the world. It uses 100% renewable energy for the entire city and showcases how there are plenty of ways to enjoy while being conscious of your environmental footprint.

Savour the sustainable offerings at eateries such as Capital Brewing Co., Two Before Ten (Aranda), Monster

Kitchen & Bar and Sweet Bones Vegan Café. You can also indulge in sustainable pampering at the Australian National Botanic Garden's Jindii Eco Spa, which offers indigenous spa treatments using wild native ingredients. Spend the night stargazing across the southern skies from one of the solar-powered bell tents at Cubby & Co. at Mount Majura Vineyard. There's so much more here than what meets the eye.

Experiential celebrations such as Floriade

Brace yourself to witness Floriade in Canberra, the biggest spring celebration in the whole of Australia. This month-long festival commenced on 16th September 2023 and is open to all age groups, including your furry friends. The theme for this year, 'Floral Wonderland,' aims to encourage visitors to escape into their own wonderland as they explore the magical charm of over one million blooms. The flower and entertainment festival is nothing less than a medley of delight and surprise. The festival is enriched by integrated sculptures, vibrant cultural celebrations and an array of other artistic features, making it truly distinct and captivating.



Culture

Canberra is filled with top galleries, world-renowned national museums and more. Experience awe-inspiring views, unique adventures and top-notch entertainment at the National Arboretum Canberra. The Arboretum, a 250-hectare site, houses over 44,000 rare and endangered trees and is considered a place of beauty, conservation, scientific research, education, tourism and recreation. From catching the latest exhibition of local arts at Beaver



Galleries, one of the city's oldest and most renowned locally owned galleries, to heading to the National Portrait Gallery or the nearby National Gallery of Australia, which is privileged to host the world's largest collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, it's time you let your eyes feast in the cultural hub of Australia.

Accessibility

Canberra is known to have the most physically active community in Australia. The city is easily accessible for everyone – walkers, cyclists, motorbikes and cars. The extensive network of cycleways and footpaths makes getting outdoors more enjoyable and safer. Staying in Canberra gives visitors easy access to reminiscing

destinations such as the picturesque Namadgi National Park, ski fields and the stunning Snowy Mountains region and an easy three-hour drive to the city's north will take you to Sydney. In a nutshell, you can explore the region



surrounding Canberra with ease and the diverse range of experiences the city offers are mostly 15 minutes away from each other.

Innovation

Canberra recently celebrated its newest, most unique festival curation for anyone who loves innovation. The Winter Innovation Festival in Canberra was launched to embody the city's identity as the 'Knowledge Capital' of Australia. The ultimate goal of the festival was to make



Canberra an open ground for innovation, art and science while also celebrating creativity, experimentation and groundbreaking ideas.

From sustainability to innovation to easy accessibility, this Australian city is a must-visit place. □

UNESCO

Recognises Nine Asian Sites

By: Divya Bhatia

The 45th session of the World Heritage Committee inscribed 42 new sites and approved the extension of five sites on UNESCO's List. Of the 42 new sites, 33 are cultural and nine are natural. Here are the nine Asian sites that UNESCO recognises.

Cambodia – Koh Ker: Archaeological Site of Ancient Lingapura or Chok Gargyar

The archaeological site of Koh Ker is a sacred urban ensemble of numerous temples and sanctuaries, including sculptures, inscriptions, wall paintings and archaeological remains. Constructed over a twenty-three-year period, it was one of two rival Khmer Empire capitals – the other being Angkor – and was the sole capital from 928 to 944 CE. Established by King Jayavarman IV, his sacred city was believed to be laid out based on ancient Indian religious concepts of the universe. The new city demonstrated unconventional city planning, artistic expression and construction technology, especially using large monolithic stone blocks.

China – Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er

Located on Jingmai Mountain in southwestern China, this cultural landscape was developed over a thousand years by the Blang and Dai peoples following practices that began in the



10th century. The property is a tea production area comprised of traditional villages within old tea groves surrounded by forests and tea plantations. The traditional understory cultivation of old tea trees is a method that responds to the specific conditions of the mountain's ecosystem and subtropical monsoon climate, combined with a governance system maintained by the local Indigenous communities.

India – Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas

This serial property encompasses the three most representative examples of Hoysala-style temple complexes in southern India, dating from the 12th to 13th centuries. The Hoysala style was



created by carefully selecting contemporary temple features and those from the past to create a different identity from neighbouring kingdoms.

India – Santiniketan

Established in rural West Bengal in 1901 by the renowned poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan was a residential school and centre for art based on ancient Indian traditions and a vision of the unity of humanity transcending religious and cultural boundaries. A 'world university' was established at Santiniketan in 1921, recognising the unity of humanity or "Visva Bharati". Distinct from the prevailing British



colonial architectural orientations of the early 20th century and European modernism, Santiniketan represents approaches towards pan-Asian modernity, drawing on ancient, medieval and folk traditions from across the region.

Indonesia – The Cosmological Axis of Yogyakarta and its Historic Landmarks

The central axis of Yogyakarta was established in the 18th century by Sultan Mangkubumi and has continued as a centre of government and Javanese cultural traditions. The six-kilometre north-south axis is positioned to link Mount Merapi and the Indian Ocean, with the Kraton (palace) at its centre and key cultural monuments lining the axis to the north and south that are connected through rituals. It embodies key beliefs about the cosmos in Javanese culture, including marking life cycles.

Vietnam – Halong Bay–Cat Ba Archipelago extension of “Halong Bay” (first inscribed in 1994 and updated in 2000 and 2023)

Halong Bay includes some 1,600 islands and islets in the Gulf of Tonkin, forming a spectacular seascape of limestone pillars. The property's extension comprises many limestone islands and towering limestone pillars rising from the sea, with eroded notches, arches and caves creating a picturesque and beautiful landscape. Seven key ecosystem types are found here and the area is home to threatened endemic species such as the Cat Ba Langur (*Trachypithecus poliocephalus*), the Cat Ba Tiger Gecko (*Goniurosaurus Catbaensis*) and the Asian Small-clawed Otter (*Aonyx cinerea*).

Mongolia – Deer Stone Monuments and Related Sites of Bronze Age

Located on the slopes of the Khangai Ridge in central Mongolia, these deer stones were used for ceremonial and funerary practices. From about 1200 to 600 BCE, they stood

up to four metres tall. They are set directly in the ground as single standing stones or in groups and are almost always located in complexes that include large burial mounds called khirgisüürs and sacrificial altars. It is covered with highly stylised or representational engravings of stags and deer stones, which are the most important surviving structures belonging to the culture of Eurasian Bronze Age nomads that evolved and then slowly disappeared between the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE.

Republic of Korea – Gaya Tumuli

This serial property includes archaeological cemetery sites with burial mounds attributed to the Gaya Confederacy, which developed in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula from the 1st to the 6th century CE. Through their geographical distribution and landscape characteristics, types of burials and grave goods, the cemeteries attest to the distinctive Gaya political system in which polities existed as autonomous political equals while sharing cultural commonalities. The introduction of new forms of tombs and the intensification of the spatial hierarchy in the tumuli sites reflect the structural changes experienced by Gaya society during its history.

Thailand – The Ancient Town of Si Thep and its Associated Dvaravati Monuments

This is a serial property of three parts: a distinctive twin-town site featuring an Inner and Outer Town surrounded by



moats, the massive Khao Klang Nok ancient monument and the Khao Thamorrat Cave ancient monument. Together, these sites represent the architecture, artistic traditions and religious diversity of the Dvaravati Empire that thrived in Central Thailand from the 6th to the 10th centuries, demonstrating the influences from India. The local adaptation of these traditions resulted in a distinctive artistic tradition known as the Si Thep School of Art. The entrance fee is THB30 for Thais and THB100 for foreigners. □

APAC's Tourism Recovery Strong Post Pandemic

PATA

By: Radhika

The recovery in tourism in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region after the COVID-19 pandemic has been “strong and robust” and the numbers have reached about 80 per cent of 2019’s figures, the Chief of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Mr Peter Semone said during the 46th edition of the PATA Travel Mart held at the International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

Mr Rakesh Kumar Verma, additional secretary in the Union Ministry of Tourism, in response to a query on India’s tourism recovery after the pandemic, said, “The performance this year is around 80 per cent of our pre-pandemic level”.

Talking about India’s target for the tourism sector in the long run, Mr Verma said, “By 2047, we are looking at 100 million international tourist arrivals and 20 billion domestic visits. And USD 1 trillion tourism economy. But that is a conservative figure, our industry is striving for USD 3 trillion.”

The physical version of the PATA Travel Mart is being held after a gap of three years due to the pandemic.

“Recovery from 2019 numbers in the Asia-Pacific region, we are running at about 80 per cent. So, there is a recovery and I have to say it’s a strong and robust

recovery,” Mr Semone said when asked about the recovery made in tourism sector in the Asia-Pacific region.

“The quality of tourism, in terms of lengths of stays, is better. It seems, when people are travelling, they are travelling a little bit more seriously and in a bit more committed way,” he added.

He also shared some of the factors that have led to this “good recovery”.

“Pent-up demand for travel is one of the main factors, I think, as people have been wanting to travel since the pandemic, when restrictions were imposed,” he said. A lot of travel incentive deals were offered by agencies once borders began to be opened again and people were also yearning to travel to meet their family members in other countries, so these factors also contributed to the recovery in tourism in the region.

Exhibitors from South Korea, Nepal, Malaysia, Taiwan and some of the states from India also participated in the event. The Union Tourism Secretary, Ms V Vidyavathi and other senior officials of the Ministry were also present on the occasion.

Ms Vidyavathi said, “Besides promoting the ‘Travel for LiFE’ initiative, the ministry is also focusing on shining light on lesser-

known tourism sites - the “hidden gems” of India, to urge tourists to try out new destinations while the lessening burden on the existing ones.”

When asked about India’s plan to reach its 2047 target, Mr Verma said, “We have the variety and diversity of Indian (tourism) products & I think, we will be able to make inroads in all the important markets”. He said that with this kind of “transformation in supply side”, it will help attract tourists.

Bangkok-based PATA, founded in 1951, is a renowned not-for-profit association recognised internationally for its role as a catalyst in the responsible development of travel and tourism in the Asia-Pacific region.

The event in Delhi brings together tourism professionals and business stakeholders from across the world, offering a unique platform for networking, learning and collaboration, officials said.

Supported and sponsored by the Macao Government Tourism Office since 1995, this year’s awards recognise the achievements of 23 separate organisations and individuals in various categories, including Kerala Tourism, Korea Tourism Organisation, MGM China, Tourism Fiji and SriLankan Airlines, according to the official website of PATA. □

Transforming Skincare industry with Faith and Patience

By: Nitu

Faith and Patience is a skincare and hair care brand that is committed to providing high-quality, cruelty-free products that help women feel confident and beautiful. The brand's mission is to empower women to embrace their natural beauty and enhance their skin and hair with safe and effective products.

The name "Faith and Patience" is inspired by the idea that achieving beauty takes time and effort, but anyone can achieve their desired look with Faith and Patience. The brand's philosophy is based on the belief that skincare and hair care should be enjoyable and empowering, not something that women feel pressured to do.

Faith and Patience offer a range of skincare and hair care products that are designed to enhance natural beauty. The brand's skincare line includes cleansers, toners, moisturisers and serums, all made with high-quality, natural ingredients that are gentle on the skin. The hair care line includes shampoos, conditioners and styling products, all formulated to promote healthy, beautiful hair.

Faith and Patience is more than just a skincare and hair care brand – it is a community of women who share a passion for natural beauty and



self-care. The brand's commitment to empowerment, education and self-confidence is evident in everything they do, from its products to its educational resources. Overall, Faith and Patience is a skincare and hair care brand that is dedicated to providing high-quality, cruelty-free products that help women look and feel their best. With a focus on natural beauty, empowerment and education, Faith and Patience is a brand that is truly making a difference in the



beauty industry.

We had a conversation with the owner of Faith and Patience, Ms Richa Agarwal, where she shares her views with us.

Ms Richa Agarwal founded this brand in 2018. The journey actually started in 2014 when she started researching and making cosmetics for friends and family. She studied in Singapore, Dubai & Sydney for four years, where she discovered the importance of reading labels of beauty products and being

aware and conscious of choosing natural and organic cosmetics.

When asked about the concept of 'clean beauty' and how effectively can it substitute the chemical ingredients used by other skincare brands, Ms Richa shared, "Today's consumers are far more aware and do check labels closely. It matters to them what the ingredient and application is and then a conscious choice is made. Clean beauty is a growing trend in the skincare and cosmetics industry. It represents a commitment to using natural, non-synthetic components that are gentle on the skin and less likely to cause irritation or health concerns."

She added, "In today's skincare



landscape, many brands are making a conscious effort to steer clear of ingredients like parabens, phthalates and synthetic fragrances. Instead, they're championing plant-based and eco-friendly alternatives. Brands are pushing the boundaries by incorporating unique and sustainable ingredients into their

products. From using Camel milk to Seaweed and Algae in skin care products, Bakuchiol, derived from the Babchi plant, is a natural alternative to retinol, to using Cactus Extracts in moisturisers and serums. These innovative ingredients are transforming the beauty industry, offering consumers a wide range of natural options to address various skin



concerns and enhance their skincare routines."

Talking about the skincare labels, like ethical, vegan, organic, paraben-free, that are highlighted by the brands these days and understanding the true meaning of these labels, Ms Richa said, "Clean beauty consumers are drawn to products that prioritise natural, non-toxic ingredients and ethical, sustainable practices, aligning with their values of health and environmental responsibility. Clean beauty is not just a skincare choice; it's a commitment to purity, health and the environment. Users are embracing these brands because they understand that what we put on our skin should nourish and not harm us. Clean beauty is a holistic approach to looking and feeling good that resonates with those seeking healthier, safer and more ethical skincare and cosmetic options." □

NEW Appointments

FORTUNE HOTELS WELCOMES NEW GENERAL MANAGER TO LEAD HUBBALLI



Fortune Hotels, an ITC hotel group member, is delighted to introduce the new General Manager- Mr Pankaj Yadav, in Hubballi, reaffirming the brand's dedication to delivering exceptional service and memorable guest experiences. Pankaj Yadav comes with the expertise and shared commitment to upholding Fortune Hotels' foundational principles of excellence.

Starting as a mixologist at ITC Kakatiya Hyderabad, he quickly transitioned into F&B Operations and worked at renowned establishments like Green Park and Lemon Tree Hotels in India and Dubai. Mr Pankaj was key in opening three major Lemon Tree Hotels.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC ANNOUNCES NEW COUNTRY MANAGER FOR INDIA



Virgin Atlantic appoints Ms Shivani Singh Deo as Country Manager – India. Ms Shivani has represented Virgin Atlantic for the past eight years as Marketing and Communications Manager. Before Virgin Atlantic, Ms Shivani's career included international market exposure across retail, media and lifestyle industries. Ms Shivani will lead the commercial strategy in India at an exciting time as the airline grows its India network further in 2024 by launching a daily London Heathrow to Bengaluru service from 31st March 2024.

CATHAY APPOINTS NEW REGIONAL HEADS FOR CORPORATE (SAMEA) AND TRADE (INDIA & SRI LANKA)



Cathay, the Hong Kong-based premium travel lifestyle brand, announces the appointment of Mr Vinod Viswanathan as Regional Head of Corporate for South Asia, Middle East & Africa (SAMEA) and Mr Talha Shaikh as Regional Head of Trade for India & Sri Lanka. In their new roles, Vinod will drive Cathay's business growth and profitability within SAMEA.



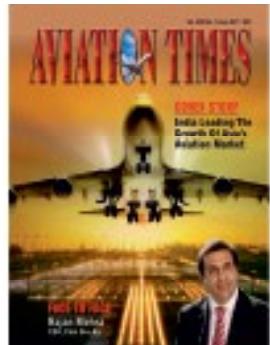
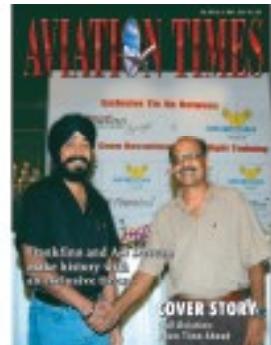
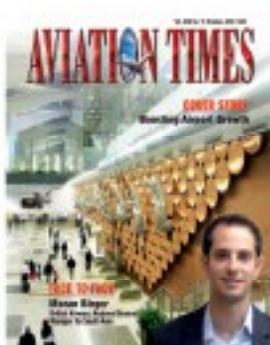
Mr Talha will identify new business opportunities and strategically optimise revenue across the company's channel partners in India and Sri Lanka. With over fifteen years of experience in aviation, corporate travel and global distribution, Mr Vinod has held senior roles such as Head of Sales and Marketing - India and South Asia at Air Mauritius, in addition to roles with Flight Centre Travel Group, British Airways, Oman Air, and Travelport. Mr Talha brings over 16 years of diverse experience in Aviation Sales, Marketing, and Operations spanning various facets of the dynamic Aviation industry. Over the last 13 years at Cathay, Mr Talha has showcased exceptional domain knowledge and analytical skills for driving new business opportunities in India and Sri Lanka.

KAPIL SHAH JOINS AS FINANCIAL CONTROLLER AT FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON NAVI MUMBAI



Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai, Vashi announces the appointment of Mr Kapil Shah as its new Financial Controller. With over a decade of dedicated experience in the finance domain, Mr Kapil brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge to his new role.

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