

IATO hopes to achieve 1/3rd of pre-Covid business by March 2023

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Chapter of the IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators) organised a meeting for its members in Mumbai recently. Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, Ravi Gosain, Chairman, 37th IATO Convention, Jitendra Kejriwal, Chairman, IATO Maharashtra and Dadra, Nagar Haveli & Daman Chapter, and other dignitaries were present in the meeting.

Speaking to **TravelBiz Monitor** on the sidelines of the meeting, Mehra said that he is optimistic that by March 2023 they could achieve 1/3rd of the pre-Covid business. "Business has started trickling in, and I sincerely hope that we could achieve 1/3rd of the pre-Covid business by March next year," said an optimistic Mehra.

Talking about visa issues, he said that the UK visa issue will be

resolved very soon. "But the visa problem with Canada will persist for some more time," pointed out Mehra. He also said that they are losing business because China has still kept its borders closed, and Japan is partially opened. When asked which are the markets they are banking on? Mehra replied, "USA, South Africa, Europe are picking up along with the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand."

According to him, to encourage inbound traffic, the government must restore promotional activities in the overseas markets. "The promotion in the form of roadshows, advertisements in print and electronic media," he said. Mehra also said that the restoration of the MDA (Marketing Development Assistance) scheme is the need of the hour.

IATO is organising its 37th Annual Convention in Lucknow



from December 16-19. Gosain said that around 900-1000 delegates are expected to participate in the event. He also said that the convention will witness interesting knowledge sessions which will help members a lot. "I will ensure that the knowledge sessions are truly interactive and our members gain knowledge," he said. The association is also planning to bring senior bureaucrats from the states which are doing well on the tourism front. "We are sincerely trying tourism secretaries of the states that are doing well on the tourism front like Kerala, Rajasthan, Goa, Maharashtra, etc. to participate in our convention," said Gosain.

Kejriwal said that his priority is to bring destinations like Nashik, Aurangabad of Maharashtra in the limelight. "Nashik and Aurangabad have immense potential to grow as tourism destinations but are not

promoted effectively. Besides these, there are other places of Maharashtra which are also not marketed well. We are in touch with MTDC and the director of tourism of the state and they are also extending help," said Kejriwal. According to Kejriwal, the next convention of IATO will take place in Aurangabad. "Our 38th convention will take place in Aurangabad next year which will help us to promote the place as a tourism destination in a big way. We are also planning fam trips for the members of our Maharashtra Chapter so that they become familiar with lesser known destinations in the state," said Kejriwal.

Talking about the membership drive, he said that currently the Maharashtra Chapter has 148 members. "The figure will reach 200 by the end of the year," said a confident Kejriwal. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

Spain keen to promote cultural exhibitions in India with the launch of Picasso Celebration 1973-2023

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

Spain officially launched its campaign on Picasso Celebration 1973-2023 in Mumbai recently. The event was inaugurated by H.E. the Ambassador of Spain to India. Picasso Celebration 1973-2023 will witness many exhibitions and activities in Europe – mainly in Spain and France – and in the USA as well. This is going to be an important occasion for art and culture lovers, and Spain Tourism is naturally making efforts to attract people interested in this segment from India.

"We would definitely encourage the travel trade segment to promote Spain on this theme with multiple activities like exhibitions and symposiums, among others, to be held in Spain that will explore multiple facets of Picasso's art, inspirations and life. It will be certainly a unique opportunity for art and culture lovers, of course, along with exploring the variety of tourism products like luxury, urban tourism, gastronomy, nature, among others, that Spain offers," said Elisa Robles Fraga, Director, Tourism

Office of Spain Mumbai, India, while speaking to **TravelBiz Monitor** on the sidelines of the event.

She said that the response from Indian travellers visiting Spain post Covid is encouraging. "The response from Indian travellers post-Covid has indeed been excellent," Fraga said. With the travel restrictions getting more and more relaxed day by day, people are very much interested in compensating for the last two years of travel restrictions. Initially, Spain witnessed good demand from the FIT and smaller group of travellers from India but it is changing now. "Initially we saw a great demand from the FIT and smaller group travel segments, but now even larger travel groups, including MICE, are bouncing back with great demand," revealed Fraga.



Elisa Robles Fraga

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India to reach pre-pandemic arrivals by March 2024: Tourism Australia

TBM Staff | Mumbai

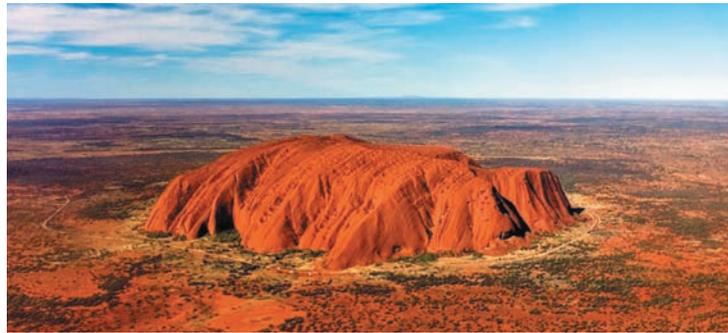
Tourism Australia is hopeful of reaching the pre-pandemic inbound arrival numbers from India by 2024. The destination marketing agency has termed India and Singapore as the two key markets to lead the post pandemic recovery process.

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager- India & Gulf, Tourism Australia, said that they have already witnessed 86% pre pandemic traffic from India for the April to August 2022 period, and are hopeful of reaching the 400,000-arrival-mark by March 2024. "India is our lead booking market, and the traffic is driven by VFR segment, followed by Incentives movement, post pandemic."

Brent Anderson, Regional General Manager for South & South East Asia, Tourism Australia, they are targeting 1 million arrivals by 2030 from India, and for

that the aviation capacity needs to grow by four times of the existing number of flights.

Both Kashikar and Anderson were talking at the launch event of a live-action short film



with CGI animated characters. The short film, G'day, is part of a new global tourism campaign inviting international travellers to Come and Say G'day, and plan and book an Australian adventure of their own.

Phillipa Harrison, MD, Tourism Australia, said "Come and Say G'day is unashamedly and unmistakably Australian. After a challenging time around the world, our

uplifting and joyful campaign will stand out in what is a highly competitive international tourism market."

Commenting on the campaign, Anderson said, "India, among other South and Southeast Asian (SSEA) markets have been critical in Australia's recovery and I'm really excited to reveal our new campaign to inspire even more Indian travellers to explore Australia. Through Ruby and Louie's adventures, we are inviting travellers to Come and Say G'day – where they can build new authentic connections with friendly Australian locals and

communities, our incredible nature, wildlife, islands and beaches, and enjoy our delicious food and drink. We are ready and can't wait to welcome back our valued travellers from India. We are excited to announce that we have Qantas as our major airline partner across multiple markets, including here in India. You might see Ruby hopping on a Qantas plane in the near future." ♦

Booking.Com appoints Santosh Kumar as Country Manager for India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Booking.com has appointed Santosh Kumar as Country Manager for India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia. He succeeds Ritu Mehrotra, who earlier served in the same role.

With full responsibility for the leadership and development of Booking.com's business in India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia, Kumar plays a critical role in driving growth, strategy and operations across one of the most dynamic and diverse regions in the Asia Pacific. He is a seasoned leader, who brings over a decade of leadership experience from the travel and hospitality industry.

As the travel industry navigates its next phase of recovery and looks at new growth prospects, Kumar will spearhead efforts to shape the future of travel in the region with a strong focus on supporting our partners in rebuilding their businesses, while ensuring the company continues to deliver the best value to our customers.

"Santosh joins us as an entrepreneurial and strategic leader with an in-depth understanding of the travel and technology industry. With over 15 years of experience in managing multicultural teams, Santosh will spearhead the region with a strong focus on supporting our partners in rebuilding their businesses, while ensuring the company continues to deliver the best value to our customers." said Nuno Guerreiro, Regional Director, South APAC & Chains. ♦



CONTD FROM PG 01 ►

Spain keen to promote cultural exhibitions.....

Taking due cognisance, Spain Tourism planned multiple promotional activities in the Indian market for 2023. Besides Tier-I cities, they will also target key Tier-II cities of India as well. "Apart from online campaigns targeted towards consumers and webinars for travel trade, we are also planning multiple familiarization trips for media and travel trade to encourage travels from various segments," said Fraga.

She admits that Visa is an important issue which is restricting travel. "The issue is not just for Spain, but for other countries as well," Fraga pointed out. She also said that they have indeed made great improvements in recent years in reducing processing time, and appreciates the tremendous



efforts from the Spanish Embassy in New Delhi, Spanish Consulate in Mumbai and their visa processing partner BLS. "We understand that the demand for outbound travel has jumped suddenly and drastically in recent times, but we are constantly assessing the situation and putting our best efforts to ensure that the Indian travellers get their due opportunity to visit and enjoy our beautiful destination," she said.

Throwing light on connectivity, Fraga said that in the current times of uncertain global economic conditions, all the airlines are reconsidering their strategies, and this issue is in fact very important to them. "Having said that, Spain currently does have multiple connections with India with one stop-over in countries such as UAE, Germany, France and Turkey, among others," she said. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in



TAAI's initiative with Kazakhstan: A big boost for bilateral tourism

Disha Shah Ghosh | Almaty

The TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India) President Jyoti Mayal led a delegation to the transcontinental country of the Republic of Kazakhstan for knowledge exchange. This initiative was aimed at offering know-how about the requirements of the Indian traveller, group, individual or MICE, while on an international holiday, and the preparedness of the destination to service their demands. She is hopeful these efforts will bear fruit, and the coming two years will be crucial for trade members from both nations to offer a newer destination for an overseas holiday to their clients.

In the past two years, TAAI has actively engaged with the Kazakhstan Tourism Board at various occasions to offer them assistance in tapping and successfully catering to the Indian traveller.

Talking to TravelBiz Monitor in Almaty, Mayal said, "We met 100 trade partners of Kazakh Tourism and Almaty Tourism which included hotel representatives, resortowners, restaurateurs, DMCs and travel agents. The discussion revolved around requirements of vegetarian cuisine, improved air access, and options for shopping, and promoting the various adventure tourism activities among the Indian traveller."

She went on to add, Kazakhstan can be promoted as a year-round destination in India, with the winter months offering a great option for skiing. Moreover, with visa-free entry, ample options

for shopping, shorter flight time of three hours and cost-effectiveness of the destination, India can be developed into a promising inbound market for Kazakhstan Tourism Board and its capital Almaty. Mayal also spoke about eventually bringing in the other cities of Kazakhstan in the limelight for tourism.

However, for a destination to witness tourist traffic in volume, air connectivity is the key, and for that Mayal has already spoken to the destination promotion agency about working with airline partners. "Of course, demand is key for an airline to invest in starting new routes, and start additional frequencies. That is why effort is



first required to generate traveller interest."

Sharing his views, Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI, said, "Pre-Covid around 32,000 tourists visited Kazakhstan in 2019. As part of our interactions with the stakeholder partners and the Kazakh Tourism Board, we are working to ensure that by the end of 2023 at least 50,000 Indian tourists visit their country."

"During our trip to Almaty along with over 70 delegates from India, being Region and Chapter

office-bearers of TAAI, and its national managing committee, we met over 50 stakeholder partners like inbound operators, DMC's, Air Astana, hoteliers, Indian restaurants, activity and concierge suppliers, etc. The delegates undertook sightseeing and experienced the activities as well as local cuisine which shall assist them to promote the destination across India," he said.

Further, TAAI delegates also discussed and encouraged outbound from Kazakh to India, which shall ensure bilateral tourism between the two countries.

Bhatia said that Kazakhstan Tourism along with stakeholder partners like hoteliers, DMCs,

stakeholders from Almaty provided an opportunity for stakeholders from both countries to discuss, plan, network and draw out desired future travel itineraries between the two countries. "TAAI and Kazakhstan Tourism leaders have had detailed discussion on the way forward and will be put into action soon. TAAI has come forward to help Kazakhstan to promote Kazakhstan in TAAI's 20 Regions and Chapters to conduct roadshows where we will highlight on what Kazakhstan has to offer to Indian outbound market."

Shreeram Patel, Hon. Treasurer, TAAI stated that the three days of meeting with and interacting with the stakeholders ensured that member agents are exposed to the possibilities of offering new and interesting packages to Indian travellers. "Moreover, it was important for us to do this first-hand experiencing ourselves and offering constructive feedback to boost Indian arrivals."

Sharing his views on the conference, Sameer Karnani, TAAI MC Member, said, "TAAI had their MC meeting along with orientation for all new chapter/region OBs. In total 75 members attended the three-day event. Almaty is a beautiful and family destination, and we had meetings with the tour operators and local authorities during our trip. Despite the cold weather (-7 degrees) on the mountains, all the delegates enjoyed the trip to Shymbulak. Overall a very well organised and well-coordinated event of TAAI in association with the Kazakhstan government." ♦

For Bettiah Lokesh. Hon. Secretary General, the TAAI B2B sessions in Kazakhstan with

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| Venue 2 : BOAT & Hafta Kangjeibung | Venue : 8 Behiang and Khuga |
| Venue 3 : Ibudhou Marjing, Heingang | Venue : 9 Makhel |
| Venue : 4 Mapal Kangjeibung and Kangla Polo Ground | Venue 10: Food Park Nilakuthi Indigenous Folk Music of different communities/tribe |
| Venue 5 : Mao, Senapati | Venue 11: Koirengei Gokarting |
| Venue : 6 Khuman Lampak | Venue 12: City Convention Center |

Technology-led innovations can enable sustainable travel

By **Prabuddha Sen**, VFS Global COO (South Asia)

The wave of revenge travel across the globe has accelerated international travel faster than the industry expected. The sector must keep pace with the sudden rise in travel demands and innovate quite quickly to provide a new and evolved customer experience. The improvements within the sector are largely at the back of technology which today has permeated every part of travel, right from choosing a destination to even aspects post-travel. However, the benefits of digital transformation of the

inclusive and future ready. Next in line, come investments in technologies that will drive change through innovation. Beyond improving processes and customer experiences, technology has proven to improve the social, economic, and cultural impact of the travel industry.

While the focus before the pandemic was on reducing the environmental impact of travel, learnings over the past two years have widened sustainability horizons for businesses. The travel sector must now focus equally on customer safety & satisfaction, job creation, and creating a sustainable ecosystem. For instance, we have noticed increased adoption of DIY technologies and shifting customer expectations for digital experiences. Adapting to changing customer expectations, VFS Global, has rolled out services such as Digital Document Check, Digital Application Services (DAS) and Visa at Your Doorstep (VAYD), among others offering personalised solutions to customers.

As overseas travel continues to grow by leaps and bounds each year, in the present digital era, technology plays a major role in determining the way travel is planned and decisions are made. We are now able to make travel decisions faster, whether related to transport or living arrangement or guided tours, with the help of tools and apps available at our fingertips and this is crucial in terms of investing into to support a seamless service experience.

Breakthroughs in technology coupled with improved internet connectivity and speed are allowing 'armchair booking' of visas, flight, hotels at the click of a button. Airports are upgrading their technological solutions to ensure biometric check-ins of travellers soon. Even in the case of visa services, E-Visa services allow customers to submit their visa applications using just a mobile phone as it does not require a visit in person to the Application Centre as part of the submission process.

Leveraging on investments in solutions like machine learning now offer intuitive online application form filling support and conducting quality checks to ensure

all details submitted and documents uploaded are as per the requirement of the mission. E-Visa solutions, like the ones VFS Global offers makes it simpler and convenient for governments to make the decision on the visa application in a secured environment.

Navigating dynamic market conditions, changing customer expectations, health & safety concerns, environmental impact, and other aspects will determine the success of the travel industry. To stay resilient and drive business growth in the long run, adopting sustainable practices will become a necessity. Toward this, technology has opened the doors to innovative, efficient, and smart solutions and has provided an easy route to drive the required transformation. While technology has emerged as a key driver of change within the industry, we've only just scratched the surface. If we look for and seize the opportunities presented by the changes brought on by the pandemic, the growth of the travel industry will be unlike any other.

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

Prabuddha Sen is the Chief Operating Officer- South Asia, and leads the business operations for VFS Global in this region. In this role, he is responsible for driving teams across strategy, operations, new business development and client relationships. He also leads the Account Management Team for the key client governments of Czech Republic, Finland, and Greece. Sen joined VFS Global in February 2004 as Center Supervisor – Operations and has since successfully held multiple challenging roles within the company in various postings around the world. He has conceptualised and successfully implemented various innovative projects in the field of visa outsourcing services. Sen holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Travel and Tourism Industry Management and is currently based in Dubai, UAE.



travel sector go beyond just providing customers with a seamless journey. It has also helped brands rethink and reinvent their business operations toward more sustainable models of working.

Much like several other sectors, the travel industry has adversely impacted the planet. According to the Glasgow Declaration presented at the UN climate conference in 2021, CO2 emissions from tourism rose 60% between 2005 and 2016. Given the need to incorporate sustainable business practices, companies must set targets that enhance operational efficiency, reduce environmental impact and lead to a cultural shift that's more



Sunil Gavaskar flying with Auric Air during his recent visit to Tanzania and Zanzibar

'India is an important and upcoming market for us'

In a quick chat with **TravelBiz Monitor**, **Deepesh Gupta, Director of Sales, Auric Air** (Tanzania-based privately owned airline operator) talks about their route network and importance of the Indian market.

within Tanzania. We fly scheduled flights to over 35 destinations within Tanzania providing over 950+ connections. We operate flights to domestic destinations and across the border to Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. We do private charter flights as well.

Q What is the composition of passengers using your services?

On an average, monthly we carry 10,000 passengers per month. Our passengers include Leisure, Business, Family, and Individual travellers. The division between Leisure and Corporate passengers is 60-40.

Q Enlighten us on your fleet and plans for expansion.

The airline operates 15 aircraft consisting of Cessna Grand Caravans C208Bs and Cessna Grand Caravan EXs, a fleet which is amongst the youngest of Caravan fleets in this region. With the reliable turbine engine, this type of all weather aircrafts have



been chosen to meet the specific requirements of operating into bush airstrips within Tanzania's world famous game parks, hunting strips and to not so well maintained airstrips within East Africa. We fly 15 Cessna Grand Caravans C208Bs and 1 Dash 8 -103 at present. 1 Caravan and 1 dash 8 are being added by the end of this year.

Q What is your load factor? Which are the top 3 busy routes? –

The load factor is about 65% with major routes being Dar – Zanzibar, Arusha – Zanzibar and Serengeti – Zanzibar.

Q Where does India stand a priority market for Auric Air?

Tanzania is home to third and fourth generation of Indians, and there is a lot of familiarity in culture and language. Tanzania sees a lot of business and VFR traffic to and fro from India. India is an important and upcoming market for us. But full of challenges.

Q Any plans for Auric Air to consider international expansion of routes within the larger African belt? –

Yes, absolutely. It may take some time but one day it will. ♦

Q Tell us about your existing route network.

Auric Air is a privately-owned corporate and safari airline, based in Tanzania. We operate scheduled domestic flights from our bases at Mwanza Airport - Mwanza, Julius Nyerere International Airport - Dar-es-salaam and Arusha Airport. Auric Air provides scheduled flights to some of the most remote and otherwise inaccessible destinations

NEWS ROUND UP

Resorts World Cruises to start cruises to Phuket & Kuala Lumpur this month

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Resorts World Cruises is set to start its 5-night and 3-night cruises to Phuket from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (via Port Klang) aboard the Genting Dream, commencing this month.

Vacationers can now enjoy a cruise to Phuket with the option to embark from Singapore for the 5 Night Kuala Lumpur – Penang – Phuket cruises departing on 20 November 2022 and March 12, 2023. Alternatively, vacationers may choose to depart from Port Klang on November 21, 2022 and March 13, 2023 for a

5 Night Penang – Phuket – Singapore cruise.

Bookings will also soon be open from 15 November 2022 onwards for the 3 Night Phuket cruises from Singapore and the 3 Night Singapore – Phuket cruises from Port Klang with sailing dates available between May 2023 and April 2024.

"The response for Genting Dream's 2 Night and 3 Night cruises has been very positive and is gaining strong momentum in demand. As such, the introduction of Phuket as a cruise destination is timely, and will further fuel the growth of the domestic and FlyCruise markets in the region. Also, vacationers will now have

more travel choices to Phuket, including the comfort and convenience of a cruise ship, which are inclusive of meals, recreational activities and entertainment," said Michael Goh, President of Resorts World Cruises. "With the ongoing support of the Tourism of Thailand Authority, we will continue to work closely together to develop Phuket as a key cruise destination for Resorts World Cruises," he added.

Nongyao Jirundorn, Director Malaysia & Brunei, Tourism Authority of Thailand, said, "As the cruise tourism industry is making a comeback, we are delighted to collaborate with Resorts World Cruises to welcome more inbound tourists to Phuket and across Thailand from the cruise sector. On behalf of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, we would like to congratulate Resorts World Cruises on their first call to Phuket. We are excited that more calls to the island are confirmed and expected in 2023 and 2024." ♦



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & CEO

Sheldon Santwan

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Prasenjit Chakraborty

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

+91 9819263364

EDITORIAL TEAM

MUMBAI

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR: Disha Shah Ghosh

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

SR.REPORTER: Asmita Mukherjee

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh & Colleen Gantzer, Anurag Yadav,

Hector D'souza & Amala Dantas

MARKETING TEAM

MUMBAI

HEAD - SALES & MARKETING

Ajay Wadode

+91 8087127814

ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

GOA

HEAD - GOA

Harshad R. Bhonsle

+91 8999047490

harshadrhonsle@gmail.com

COORDINATION, SUBSCRIPTION & DATABASE

Gauri Sawant: +91 8369080796

gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in

*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act



Saffron Synergies

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

BEYOND DISSECTING ADVISORIES

Indignant post mortems on travel advisories that hurt is understandable; yet the responsibility of clearing the air and ensuring right responses is ours alone.

Global realities show that instead of being objective catalogues of security threats, Travel Advisories, especially emanating from the developed world, are often highly politicized and used as extensions of a state's geopolitical concerns.

That much is evident in the treatment of language in some travel advisories that they can also be a covert tool of political sanction. This was well highlighted internationally during the pandemic. Now this factor can never be obliterated or even tackled on its own by a business or industry, especially like tourism.

However some measures must be established to raise the voice of reasonable caution as opposed to blanket sledgehammer declarations and advisories.

A study showed that 'substantial differences in the treatment of language in travel advisories by certain tourism market countries revealed a persistent use of words related to risk and potential threats even though the reasons for them were no longer present.

In today's vulnerable world, tackling and clearing the air of uncertainty is essentially dependent on efficient information management. Quite a few years back there was talk of codifying and tabulating codes for safe and honourable tourism across the world. In fact, much was registered and put into words on this subject.

The Code of conduct for Safe and Honourable Tourism was never a legally binding diktat but merely a set of guidelines to sensitise organisations regarding significance of training personnel and also properly notifying guests. It also covered various aspects of ethical business practices and marketing.

It was assumed that after having been informed and after accepting it in principle, awareness building and sensitisation workshops would follow as a matter of course. It was even touted that for every hotel or travel agency two persons will be trained and appointed as focal points to monitor whether all norms and guidelines of the code are followed diligently.

In our corner of the world, the details of monitoring this monitoring process still appear at sea. Or did we miss something?

Anurag Yadav
Industry Expert

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

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

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Travel & Tourism GDP to return to 2019 levels by end 2023: WTTC

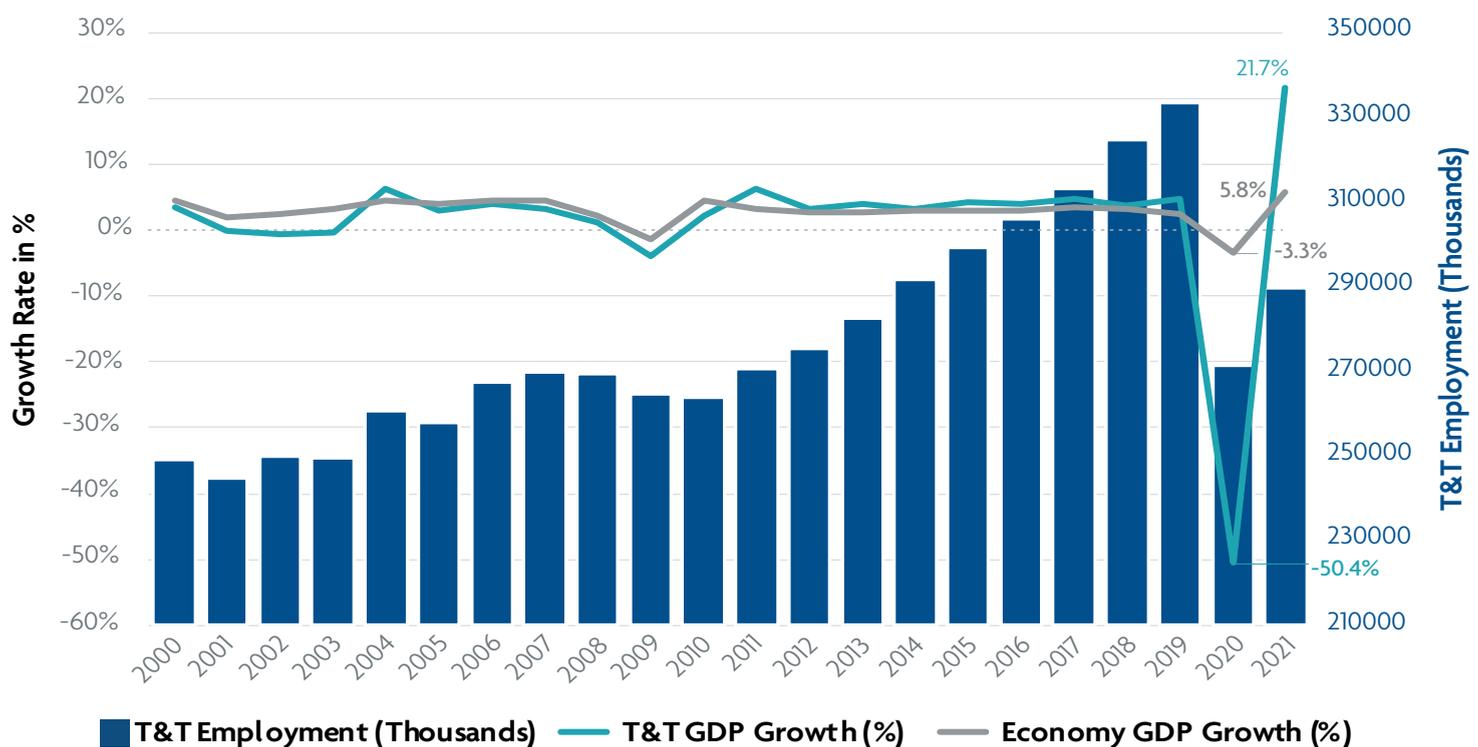
While 2021 saw the beginning of the recovery for the global Travel & Tourism sector, it was slower than expected, due in part to the impact of the Omicron variant, stringent and inconsistent border restrictions and the lack of coordination among governments to tackle the pandemic. Travel & Tourism's contribution to GDP increased by USD 1 trillion (+21.7% rise) in 2021 to reach USD 5.8 trillion, while the sector's share of the whole economy increased from 5.3% in 2020 to 6.1% in 2021. Additionally, the sector saw the recovery of 18.2 million jobs, representing an increase of 6.7%. However, the future outlook is positive, and the sector is once again showing its resilience and ability to bounce back, says WTTC in its Economic Impact 2022 report. Travel & Tourism GDP is set to grow on average by 5.8% annually between 2022 and 2032, outpacing the growth of the overall economy (2.7% per year). The WTTC research shows that Travel & Tourism GDP could return to 2019 levels by the end of 2023. **TravelBiz Monitor** presents highlights. ♦

Travel & Tourism GDP

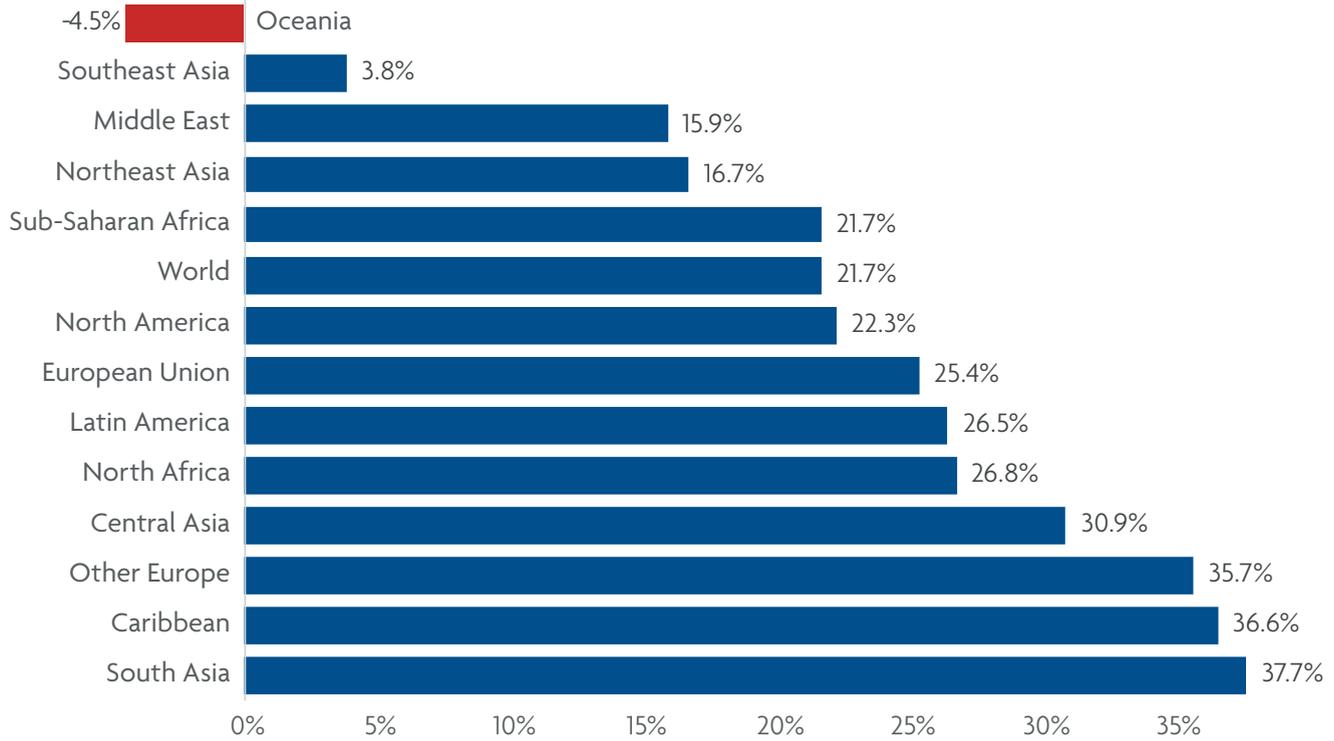


- Travel & Tourism GDP declined by **50.4%** (USD 4,855 billion) in 2020 vs the overall economy's decline of **3.3%**
- Travel & Tourism GDP grew by **21.7%** (USD 1,038 billion) in 2021 vs the overall economy's growth of **5.8%**

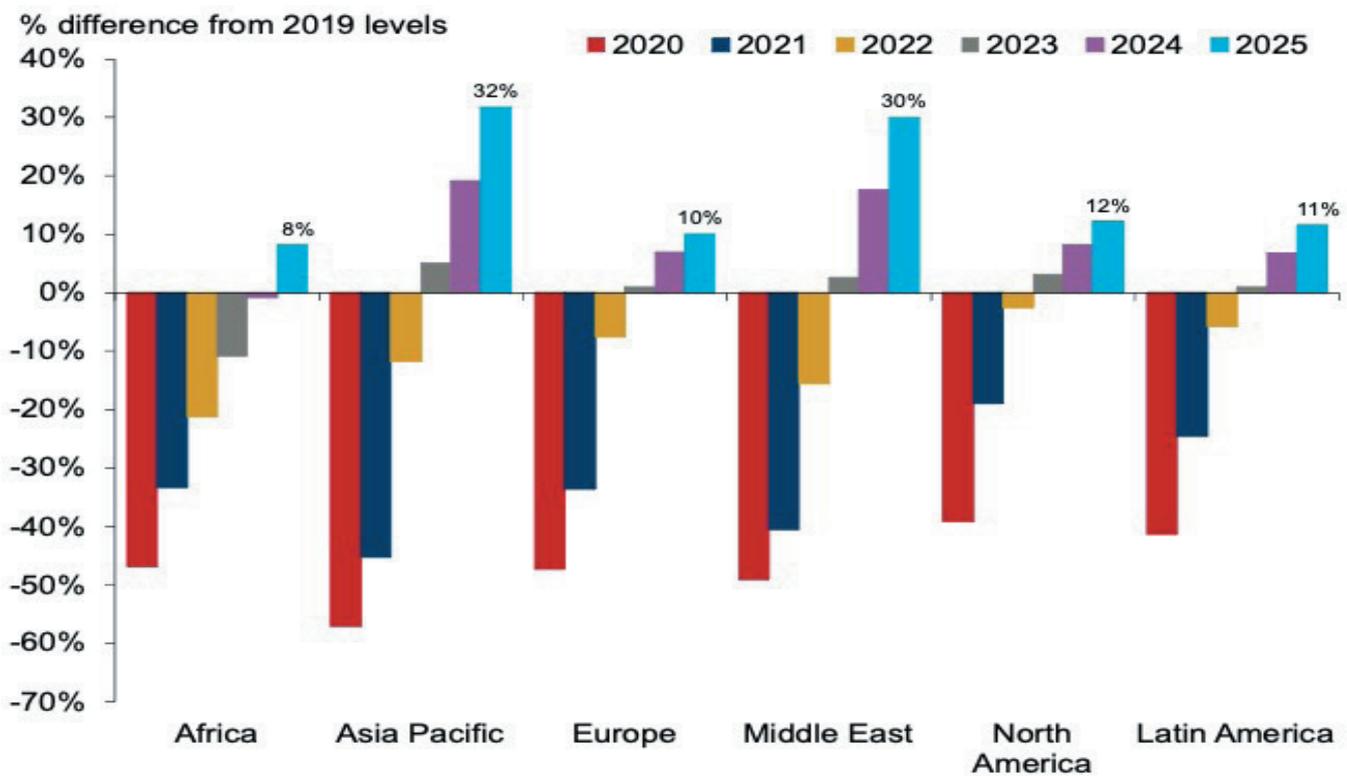
Economic Impact Timeline, 2000 – 2021



Sub-regional Travel & Tourism GDP change, 2021 vs 2020



Travel & Tourism GDP for 2020-2025 Forecast (% below 2019 level)



Forecast: 2022-2032

2022-2032 KEY FACTS

126mn
New jobs

Average Annual Growth
(T&T GDP)

+5.8%

vs

Global Economy GDP
average annual growth rate

+2.7%



‘There is no fundamental change in our strategy for the Indian market post-pandemic’

Gregg Wafelbakker, General Manager Asia, Tourism New Zealand, in a conversation with **Disha Shah Ghosh** talks about India as an inbound source market, and their trade activities here.

Q How is your strategy different compared to the pre-pandemic era for the Indian market?

Pre-pandemic, India ranked on the 6-7 spot for inbound arrivals, ranking very high for us. We saw 67,000 arrivals from India in the year (2019) leading up to the pandemic that had doubled in five years growing at an average of 15% each year. India was already an important market before the pandemic, and will continue to be so.

The strategy that we have for India won't fundamentally change because the strengths pre-pandemic are continue to remain, and i.e. India is a large and growing market; it has a natural bias towards our off peak arrivals, i.e. the summer holidays. The peak travel time to New Zealand is April May June and October November, and that enables us to spread the visitation.

Our strategy will remain the same which includes working with trade partners, media and of course a lot of work online and offline, and in principle we will continue to maintain that.

For the first time we had a trade marketplace in Singapore where we had buyers from 4 countries, and 15 of them from India. The event was successful and the feedback from buyers and suppliers

was satisfactory. This trade show was about reconnection. The next edition would be decided on the popularity and the outcome of these events.

Q In the absence of direct air access, what efforts are being made to bridge that gap?

Pre-pandemic, Singapore Airlines offered the largest choice of flights, followed by Malaysia Airlines via Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, Thailand and China Southern Airlines. We expect to recover back through 2023.

As a destination marketing organisation, we work with airports that put together business

Q Which traveller segments are your focus areas?

40% of traffic from India consists of Leisure travellers, and 50% is VFR. VFR wasn't an area of focus for now, but the pandemic pivoted focusing on the domestic travel market to push the economy. The more New Zealanders know about their destinations the better, because then VFR traffic can maximise contribution to domestic tourism. The other focus is on business events, as incentives travel is a growing market for us. Through our trade relations we focus on the Incentive component, like our partner Thomas Cook that is a full-fledged tour operating company.

As countries open up, we have gone from 4 million arrivals, and out of that 1 million came from Asia. The contribution of Asian travellers is valued at 3 billion dollars in 2019. What we need

“ Pre-pandemic, India ranked on the 6-7 spot for inbound arrivals, ranking very high for us. We saw 67,000 arrivals from India in the year (2019) leading up to the pandemic that had doubled in five years growing at an average of 15% each year. India was already an important market before the pandemic, and will continue to be so. ”

cases to airlines, and the role we play is collaborating with them around the demand. The research that we undertake is about the demand, and the sustainability of that demand. We will continue to support airports in this endeavour. Having a direct flight will be preferable, but it's not an easy decision to make.

Q What kind of marketing budget are you allocating for India?

We allocate funds depending on the current and future potential of our source markets, and India is a priority emerging market so we allocate funds relevant to that.

We have a target audience of 12.3 million people, which is a niche, so our focus has been Mumbai and Delhi, and logically it makes sense to continue to focus on these markets because we are getting 60,000 arrivals from India.

to do to build more resilience going forward is looking at more markets and more audiences. By building a portfolio of resilient markets, we have more balance in times of crisis.

Q Are you only focusing on high-spending visitors from India?

High quality visitors, doesn't mean high value, the latter is a component of the former, and India leans towards that. The average length of stay of Indians in New Zealand is 14 days because they are staying more, spending more and exploring more parts of the country.

We are looking for high quality visitors across four different parameters - Economic

Environmental, Communities and Culture. New Zealand is a premium destination, and Indians have a bias towards that. ♦

disha.shah@safronsynergies.in

Wild Mahseer, Balipara: Jump-Start to Assam's Tea Tourism

By **Gargi Sarma**, Assistant Professor in the Department of M.Com, K C Das Commerce College, Guwahati

Tea is one of the popular and most favoured beverages of the Indians. It is referred to as a 'Source of Energy' and 'Refreshment' in itself. Assam boasts as the world's largest tea growing region. Tea plantations can be seen all throughout the state. It adds to the beauty of the greens.

Assam welcomes a good number of domestic and international tourists every year. Tea- with its rich unique taste has successfully captured the hearts of all its tourists. Talking about the contemporary era, it has witnessed a shift in the proclivity of the tourists. They find delight in tapping new experiences. Further, their well-nurtured passion for nature too has backed in bringing out pristine ideas into the Tourism Sector. Tea Tourism is one such remarkable concept which has emerged as a treat for the tea and nature lovers. The motive behind this idea is providing a magnificent experience in a property adjacent to a tea estate. A heritage stay, adventures/activities, knowledge on tea, tea tasting rounds, complimentary teas of different flavours, etc are the essentials of the concept. However, every owner will craft his/her own way to provide the guests with an extraordinary feel amidst the breezy milieu of the tea gardens.

It was back in the year 2005 when, Tea Tourism started in Assam with the set up of a resort- 'Wild Mahseer' in the Balipara region of Sonitpur District. It was developed in the property of Addabarie Tea Estate which has the Heritage British Bungalows of that unforgettable era of History. The idea of gifting tourists with a splendid yet historic memory with tea was conceived by Mr. Ranjit Borthakur- Founder Forester Balipara Foundation and Chairman -Visionary River Journeys and

Bungalows of India Pvt. Ltd. Ever since it has been a gateway for the tea lovers.

There was once a fascinating tale about the planters and their leisure activity-'Fishing'. Mahseer was one of the large fish found and fished by the planters in this area around the property which led to the coining of the resort's name as Wild Mahseer. The property is an absolute planned experience reserved for its guests especially, the Tea Lovers.

With its well conserved lush greens and puffs of fresh air tourists, receive a cordial greeting. The pride of the property is the Burra Bungalow which is around 180 years old and is certified as a Heritage Building by the Directorate of Archaeology. The resort has other accommodations too which are named strategically after Tea Leaves or Tea. To name a few-Ambrosia, Camellia, Silver Tips, Golden Tips etc. Also, the bedrooms of these cottages are named distinctly. This concept of naming the accommodations is an excellent way of allowing the tea lovers to know about their favourite beverage a little more than Google. The colonial architecture of the bedrooms reminds about the past days of the British era and also makes the guests taste heritage luxury amidst tea gardens.

The area offers room for activities like Cycling, Bird watching, Photography, Spending time with nature, Tree hugging, Cooking and a Walk around the Botanical Ark. Flamboyance of this bio-diverse property also lies in the plants, different species of birds and butterflies of the ark. As the resort aims at treating the tea lovers, it has arrangements for complimentary cups of tea for all the guests. Nature with its serene vibes has a remarkable glory. The property therefore lets their guests spend some



good time with nature by restricting televisions and in room dining facilities.

The Dining area of the property is named First Flush. Interestingly, it used to be a tractor shed a century back. Flush refers to the seasons in which tea is harvested. There are four flushes in general. The dining spread in Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner is deliberately planned with the local cuisines for the guests to relish the ethnicity in food. A walk into the Addabarie Tea Estate is also included in the list for the tourists to look at the tea plantations and the tea workers on their mission of picking tea leaves.

Tea Tourism was conceptualised in the area not only to attract tourists but also to assist community development in the area. Elephant Country is one such hub inside the resort which roofs the products hand-crafted or prepared by the local artisans. These products also mark the efforts put forward to sustain and acknowledge the craftsmanship in the locals of the eastern Himalayan area.

Tea Tourism can be a brilliant idea only when it is strategically designed prioritising the outlook of the tea lovers. Wild Mahseer is an example of that perfect strategy which is destined to provide its guests a grand tea experience inside the property. ♦

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



Gargi Sarma is working as Assistant Professor in the Department of M.Com at K C Das Commerce College, Guwahati. Her academic and professional interests lie in Management and Marketing. She is an avid academic having completed her Masters in Commerce, Masters in Arts (Economics), M.Phil program and pursuing her Doctoral work in advertising. Sarma has presented over 20 research papers in National & International seminars and published 10 research papers in reputed journals.

So, go slow!

By **Dr. Nimit Chowdhary**, Professor of Tourism, Faculty of Management Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia

"We have lost our sense of time. We believe that we can add meaning to life by making things go faster. We have an idea that life is short-and that we must go faster to fit everything in. But life is long. The problem is that we do not know how to spend our time wisely."

-Carlo Petrini

For a long time, I have been pointing out that every place has a personality. Included in this personality is the characteristic rhythm of the place. Often unexpressed, all of us are cognizant of the pace of a place. The pace of life in some places is nimbler than in others. Often, we say city life is faster than that of the villages. Both locales receive visitors who intend to traverse the destination.

Generally, visitors have limited time to negotiate an expansive destination. They seek support from local service providers- the ground handlers or some local tour guide to try to visit as many attractions as possible in the shortest possible time by working out an efficient itinerary and shorter route.

A typical tour may look like six cities across four countries in 6N/7D, and getting to know, only what the tour guide has on his script. Organized, efficient, itinerary-based tourism allows a destination to accommodate tourist en-masse. However, visitors are often confined to a tourist bubble and often a tourist area to achieve this. This arrangement deprives rushing visitors of a deep, authentic cultural experience. As a result, they fail to grab the pulse of the place. They see the place but fail to internalize the feel of the place, its persona.

Alison Caffyn's (2012) principles of slow tourism:

- Minimize travel distance
- Maximize the time available for the trip
- The mind should relax
- Consuming local food in local restaurants
- Shopping in local markets or directly from producers
- Acquire new skills
- Minimize mechanization and use of technology
- Authentic experiences; and above all
- Minimize carbon footprint

Further, this rushing through the place often upsets the local quiet. Often while there is a natural rhythm in the place, a few

visitors can be seen in a harrowing hurry. Slow tourism is the antithesis of this rush. Slow tourism concerns the speed at which one should traverse the destination- allowing sufficient time for the visitor to internalize the place while living like a local.

Essentially slow tourism means a paradigm shift from a consumerist and materialistic luxury mindset to one that values meaningful, authentic experiences at the destination. Moreover, post-COVID, tourists are avoiding a run into the crowd at popular attractions. Instead, they look forward to exploring a place at their leisure, experiencing and internalizing the local culture. Experience-based travel can be accomplished in various ways, including by making deliberate decisions, forming relationships with others, and participating in local communities and cultures.

An extended stay at a place helps one spend time and become more mindful. Reduced mobility, besides personal rejuvenation, also helps lower one's global footprint. Moreover, elements of travel and tourism need to be reoriented towards slow tourism. Different places on earth are bestowed with various natural resources which have been experimented with by locals and have now become a part of their legacy. Visitors like to connect with the place through the hosts' lenses. They try to connect with the locals through their food and nutrition, paying homage to local vegetables, herbs and cookery. Any opportunity to learn cooking from a local enriches visitors' experience manifold. Further, using traditional foods, plant-based remedies, oils, and rituals is often an antidote to technology-driven everyday mundane life.

Relaxation, introspection, escapism, novelty seeking, involvement, and exploration are the driving forces behind slow travel. Slow excursions are taken by persons looking for unique experiences in new temporalities, new locations, and new social groups that will stimulate their emotions. Slow tourism is, therefore, transformational. Simply put, it is the dive into the deep ocean (local cultures) to taste the hidden authentic view (realities) of



the blue world (society). In addition, this engagement with the community offers a chance to reflect, which is important for transformation.

Slow travel also entails going off the grid, getting away from the daily grind, and enjoying digital detox experiences. Reduced reliance on technology is another aspect of slow travel, which requires consciously forgoing some conveniences. Finally, slow tourism involves

more physical work. Therefore, for the modern traveller, renting bikes, doing walking tours, or going on trips by public transportation are all appealing possibilities. Often hiking, biking, backpacking, and spiritual and culinary tourism are more likely to be slow.

Perhaps the desired way to negotiate a destination is to groove in with the natural tempo of the place to internalize it without disturbing the subtle quiet there. Slow tourism is, therefore, sustainable, fulfilling travel experience which includes awareness of the difficulties faced by the locals. It is increasingly important in a world facing the threat of climate change, as well as the challenges associated with preserving cultures, traditions, and communities, that travel gets slow and mindful. So, go slow! ♦

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

Dr. Nimit Chowdhary is a Professor of Tourism with the Faculty of Management Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has more than 29 years of the academic experience of which he has been a full professor for 16 years in India, China, and Mexico. In addition, he was a visiting faculty at Gotland University (Sweden), the University of Girona (Spain), IIM Sirmaur, IIQM, and EDII. He is a recipient of many academic awards and recognitions. He has 16 books and more than 175 academic papers and chapters to his credit. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country.

Q Tell us about the offerings of Moustache Escapes.

At Moustache Escapes, we have four kinds of offerings. With reference to accommodation, we offer different types of experiential property like backpacker's hostels, resorts, campsites, and boutique properties as well. We also do organise trekking events at some breath-taking mountainous areas at a variety of locations like Kashmir, Leh, Madhya Pradesh, etc. Our other two offerings include customised or specially curated tours and experiential activities like desert safaris or river side camping.

Q Which are your key source markets in India?

In my opinion, while considering India, our key source markets are not based on geography, but rather age group. Moustache Escapes' target audience and major source of revenue is derived from the young travellers who are between the age of 18 to 25 years, as they are the most enthusiastic to explore and experience unique activities.

Q How are you tapping inbound travellers from abroad?

Foreign travellers often rely on the reviews they read online.

“As far as B2B business is concerned, we count majorly on developing and nurturing relationships with travel agents, educational institutions, sports academies, and corporates, etc.”

Hence, at Moustache Escapes, the constructive feedback and reviews are the essence while tapping inbound travellers from abroad. Moreover, while social media marketing is beneficial for publicity among Indian travellers, word of mouth always helps to spread a positive brand name for us among inbound guests.

Q How are you promoting your offerings among the B2B and B2C markets?

With regards to B2C markets, our products or services are mostly promoted through different marketing processes like SEO rankings, influencer, or blogging activities, etc. Additionally, a review system also plays a major role in the B2C sector. On the contrary, as far as B2B business is concerned, we count majorly on developing and nurturing relationships with travel agents, educational institutions, sports academies, and corporates, etc.

Q India has been a potential market for many overseas

destinations and products. How has the Indian traveller evolved over the years?

The industry trends have certainly changed over a span of time. Amongst the youth, the spending on travel has also increased considerably. Similarly, the frequency of the same has also been on the rise. In present times, the younger

crowd is more particular about taking regular breaks from their daily routine and opt for adventurous trips as well as 'aesthetic' or 'instagrammable' locations for their stay. They often prefer budgeted yet experiential trips. Conversely, with respect to the middle aged and older guests, their first preference would always be inclined towards



'Post-pandemic, the definition of budget travel has evolved'



luxury and relaxed stays. Hence, at Moustache Escapes, we cater to the preferences of guests from all age groups with our different kinds of accommodation.

Q What kind of scope do you see for budget travel and hostel accommodation in India, especially post pandemic?

Post-pandemic, the definition of budget travel has evolved and there is indeed Post-pandemic, the definition of budget travel has evolved immense scope for it in our country. Travellers today are seeking unique experiences within budgeted packages. With this thought in mind, and recognising its future potential, Moustache Escapes is curating such packages.

During the pandemic, a lot of the thriving hotels eventually closed due to loss of business. Moustache Escapes, however, has set foot in the industry to ensure budgeted hostel accommodation with distinctive activities for its guests. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

Jaipur-based Moustache Escapes, focusing on young travellers, has seen an increasing demand for seeking unique experiences. **Deepak Agarwal, Director at Moustache Escapes**, talks to **Disha Shah Ghosh**, about traveller interest, changing behaviour and online reviews.



Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

The Tarzan Way

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

Anticipating the impact of technology, 16 years ago, **TravelBiz Monitor** introduced an industry-first live news portal, with hourly online reporting on travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality industries. Since then, we have created a niche for ourselves by providing analytical stories and statistical information to the travel trade on a regular basis. To keep this momentum going, the Editorial team has decided to showcase new-age technology products and services every month that have the potential to disrupt the market further. Moreover, the time now is also appropriate as the on-going pandemic has further widened the scope of using technology.

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

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

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

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

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

Startup Name: The Tarzan Way

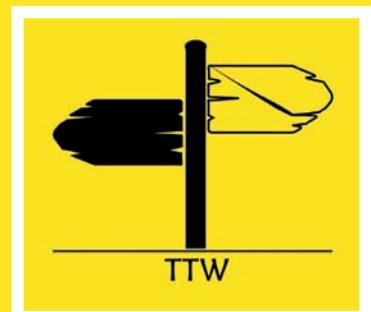
Core Team: Shikhar Chadha, CEO
Shivaank Tripathi, CTO
Devansh Chawla, Technical Head & Operations Manager
Naman Mittal, Marketing Head

Founding year: 2018

Company Website: <https://www.thetarzanway.com>

Description: TTW is an AI based go-to local friend for the travellers, enabling them to craft personalised trips within seconds. On our platform, travellers can just answer a few questions and our sophisticated software builds a highly tailor-made & fully editable travel plan within seconds, where users can book everything in just one click and enjoy 24/7 live support while travelling. Complementing our personalized trips, we've unique, 100% customizable & immersive tours & experiences on our platform, whether "Living among the Nomads" or "Learning the traditional Handicrafts of Kutch", and a lot more.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIhHLPkbJXY>



Q What are some of the travel tech innovations that Sabre is currently working on?

Currently there are three innovations that Sabre is working towards – first being adapting to NDC (New Distribution Capability), our position as both an aggregator and an airline IT provider allows us to deliver retailing solutions across the end-to-end customer journey, from offer creation all the way to fulfilment. Second, is the 'Offer and Order Management'. This retail travel marketplace will allow airlines to tailor offers that are dynamically retailed and distributed across any channel and third, we are keenly researching and working towards Travel AI, in partnership with Google. This would mainly help OTAs (Online Travel Agents) or airlines to be able to personalise itinerary for travellers. These are the top three tech innovations that Sabre is planning to offer in the B2B space.

effort to ensure all our employees understand the importance of data and how to handle it through periodic training and assessments. Since we are a complete GDPR compliant company, we make sure that we don't look at individual records. We work with large data sets and generalise it. We don't work on individual records, and no personally identifiable data is looked at or shared or taken for analysis.

Q Enlighten us on the developments at Sabre's Global Capability Center in Bengaluru.

Overall, we are a part of building

'We currently have more than 60% of our compute in public clouds, this gives Sabre the agility & competitive edge'

“ Currently there are three innovations that Sabre is working towards – first being adapting to NDC (New Distribution Capability), our position as both an aggregator and an airline IT provider allows us to deliver retailing solutions across the end-to-end customer journey, from offer creation all the way to fulfilment. ”

Q Which among these innovations are ready for roll out?

We are working simultaneously on all three tech innovations. Everything depends on the market demand, and accordingly the innovations will be rolled out. One of the immediate innovations that we are looking to launch is the 'Offer and Order management'.

Q The travel industry deals with large amount of customer data. How are your products designed to protect and secure customer data?

Sabre Corporation is absolutely a GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) compliant organisation. We deal with numerous types of sensitive data. We spend a lot of

cutting-edge technology that will change the way we travel. The Offer and Order Management, we also call it 'Retail Intelligence' is partly built from the Sabre GCC in Bengaluru. This innovation is a combined effort of different teams such as architects, R&D, product, sales, etc. On the People front, we have very flexible and open work culture, work timings, hybrid work models. On the people upliftment front, we make sure that employees are current, and they are provided with ample opportunities to up skill themselves. We conduct a lot of trainings to help employees deal with the hybrid work model. Overall, we provide an environment where our team members can thrive, have fun, and do their best work.



Q What are the measures implemented by Sabre to enhance its technology transformation?

Technology transformation is an important piece of Sabre's strategy. Over the past few years there has been steady investment towards tech transformation initiatives. Our focus is on migrating most of our compute to the public cloud which will help us innovate at a faster pace and deliver reliable, secure solutions faster to our customers. We currently have more than 60% of our compute in public clouds, this gives Sabre the agility and competitive edge.

Q How are your tech products geared to tap the changing landscape of the aviation industry?

Our tech products help large airlines, airports to perform large functions and their operations with ease. Our products give the ability to the airlines, agencies and OTAs to get better distribution and reach across channels. There are several innovative offerings that are being worked on currently to help our customers do their business with ease. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

Sriram Gopal Swamy, Vice President, Information Systems, Sabre Global Capability Center, Bengaluru, in a conversation with **Disha Shah Ghosh** sheds light on their three innovations under progress.

India Hai Khaas : 2022 poised to be record year for Yas Island



Liam Findlay

90% market recovery already this year over 2019, robust 50% growth in Indian visits lately, record attendance from India 'ever' during the 2022 Indian summer travel months, Yas is fast emerging as the most sought-after leisure and entertainment Yas Island for Indian outbound travellers

Shayan Mallick | New Delhi

Is there a Covid impact? Not for Yas Island! And definitely not from the Indian market! One of the most eclectic entertainment and leisure hotspots in the world, Yas is almost hitting at the pre-pandemic visits and revenue numbers, and there are still a Yas Island few months to go before the year ends. Driving this recovery is its biggest market, India, and some of the bold destination marketing initiatives that Yas Island has undertaken this year in this market.

According to Yas spokesperson and CEO of Experience Hub, Liam Findlay, Yas Island has recorded a robust 50 per cent growth during the Indian summer travel months this year over the 2019 summer months, and a yet more robust 66 per cent growth in August 2022 alone over the same month in 2019. Besides, he points that the year till date performance is no less impressive, making it quite evident that Yas Island is poised to surpass its 2019 performance. Experience Hub is the trade and promotion arm of Yas Island and Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi.

According to Findlay, "The recovery this year, what we are seeing is, 90 per cent versus 2019 already. But for the Indian summer travel period we are seeing 150 per cent recovery versus 2019 numbers. So it's definitely paid

off (Market development initiatives in India) and we hope that it (Growth from India) continues, that's what we are hearing from our partners."

Yas's revenue expert accompanying the CEO for this interview chips in calling the 2022 summer the best Indian numbers, producing 'record attendance' from India 'ever', as Findlay adds that "August 22 was another record month for Yas in terms of Indian visits." The leisure and entertainment destination recorded 166 per cent visits over the same month in 2019, a strong 66 per cent growth over the corresponding period.

So what's engineering the turnaround and recovery? One of the world's leading leisure and entertainment destinations, Yas Island has heavily invested in developing the Indian market which is returning the favour on no less equal terms. Findlay attributes the growth to Yas 360 degree market development approach encompassing consumer as well as the trade. Yas launched the hugely successful viral marketing campaign '**Yas hai to Khaas hai**' with popular Bollywood star Ranveer Singh earlier this year in March. It was soon followed by the very popular International Indian Film Academy and Awards (IIFA Awards) in June at the newly launched 18,000 seating capacity indoor entertainment venue Etihad Arena on the Yas Bay Waterfront.

But that's not all. Early next year, IIFA Awards will make its second consecutive visit to Yas Island for its 23rd edition, giving Yas Island, Etihad Arena, Abu Dhabi as well as the UAE another high profile event that will garner huge visibility and eyeballs and consequently another boost at popularity, brand equity and visits.

Commenting on the recent branding exercises, Findlay says, "India has generally been the top market for UAE. For us on Yas Island, it's always been one of the top markets. What we saw is that there was an opportunity to expand on that market. So as you have seen in the last 12 months we have heavily invested in the Indian market through brand ambassadorship through Ranveer Singh. We also had the IIFA Awards. Next year we will have IIFA again, so we will have IIFA twice in two years. So we are doing a lot of work with Bollywood. Then there are B2C campaigns within core market and we will continue investing."

Furthermore, the Yas Island spokesperson pointed, that they are also "very heavily investing in B2B with campaigns" that will help them further expand footprints within India. "We have four offices across four cities in India now with our main office in Mumbai" he added pointing to Yas' expanding outreach, especially in the B2B space. ♦



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Buyer enquiries:
 call: +919890765617
 email: mohit@gps-india.com

