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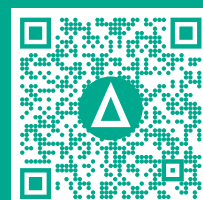
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Unfolding 2023; Travel Trends

After two consecutive years of pandemic-induced lockdowns, the tourism industry has made a massive comeback especially after mid-2022. In all likelihood, this will continue this year as well. Is there any shift in the way we travel? What travellers prefer while visiting or selecting a new destination? We singled out five trends for the travel & tourism industry to be watched out in 2023.

Here's a look at them.

CNTD ON PAGE 12 ▶



Collaboration between Centre, State & Industry key to Sustainable Tourism: MoT

TBM Staff | Mumbai

With a view to develop sustainable and responsible tourist destinations and promote sustainable tourism in the country, the Ministry of Tourism in association with Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITM), UNEP and Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI) organised the second regional workshop on Development of Sustainable and Responsible Tourist Destinations in Kolkata yesterday.

The workshop witnessed wide participation of senior government officials and tourism industry stakeholders from the States/ Union Territory of the Eastern region viz. Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Keynote address at the workshop was delivered by Prashant Ranjan, Director, Ministry of Tourism.

In his address, he highlighted the need for sustainability in tourism and significance of Centre, State and Industry collaboration in achieving this objective. He also spoke about the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision for environmental sustainability and developing border tourism and emphasized on the ways in which tourism can be aligned with Life Mission. He also highlighted India's opportunity to leverage the upcoming G20 meetings at various locations to position ourselves as a global leader in Sustainable and Responsible Tourism.

Dr Saumitra Mohan, IAS, Secretary (Tourism), West Bengal set the State level context for Sustainable Tourism. He introduced

initiatives such as the Kolkata Integrated city Pass, 'Patha Sathi' wayside amenities throughout the State, Ecotourism Parks, and Homestay Registration under which more than 2,000 homestays are registered in West Bengal. He emphasised on participation of tourism industry and stakeholders for the implementation of responsible behaviour across the tourism operations.

Uttank Joshi, Assistant Director General, Ministry of Tourism, shared success stories of



Swadesh Darshan 1.0, the flagship centrally sponsored scheme of Ministry of Tourism for creating tourism infrastructure in the country. He also gave an overview of Swadesh Darshan 2.0 and illustrated how it integrates sustainability in destination development.

Anirudh Chaoji, representative of RTSOI, deliberated with the participants on the need for sensitising the tourist and creating a demand for responsible travel. He introduced the Responsible Travellers campaign and explained ways to educate tourists about responsible behaviour.

Manisha Choudhary, Program Officer, United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) shared some landmark efforts like

the Global Tourism Plastics initiative and the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism launched in November 2021 in climate change CoP 26. Interventions at State Level and guidelines on plastic waste management in tourism sector were highlighted. She encouraged stakeholders to join such initiatives and set targets to address crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss in alignment with national and global commitments for sustainable development.

Presentations were also made by representatives of State and UTs Tourism Departments from Eastern region, calling attention to their best practices in sustainable tourism as well as challenges in implementation of sustainable tourism which were addressed by Ministry of Tourism, UNEP, and RTSOI.

The central nodal agency for Sustainable Tourism, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management briefed the participants about the salient features of Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI). The participants also took the Travel for LiFE pledge to seek their commitment towards travelling responsibly.

Grassroots industry stakeholders also presented their innovative ways of implementing sustainable tourism and success stories in different regions of eastern regions to create tangible positive impact.

The workshop strengthened the engagement among the Ministry of Tourism, State Governments/ UT Administrations and Industry stakeholders towards achieving Sustainability Goals. ♦

Opera Australia appoints Ryna Sequeira as its India Representative

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Opera Australia, one of the world's most celebrated opera companies based in Sydney announced the appointment of Ryna Sequeira as its India market representative. Ryna brings over 15 years of experience in marketing and PR within the tourism space across a diverse portfolio of international tourism, aviation and lifestyle brands. Ryna currently markets Australian Cruise Group, Australia Wide Coaches and the state of Queensland, Australia in India.

Commenting on the appointment, Andrew Guy, International Tourism Marketing

Manager, Opera Australia, said, "India is among the top 5 source markets for Australia since the reopening of borders post Covid-19. With Indian travellers seeking new experiences that are more interest based on their international holidays, the timing is right to establish our footprint in

India targeting discerning Indian travellers with a love for opera, musicals and concerts to experience the world's most celebrated performances at Australia's most iconic venues. We aim to work closely with the travel trade and media to enhance the travellers



musical experience in Australia and cater to not just experienced but also first time opera audiences. We are very proud to have Ryna Sequeira promote Opera Australia in India."

Sydney Opera House is on the to-do list of every visitor to Australia. "But seeing it isn't enough. To get the full benefit of this architectural wonder of the world, one needs to climb the steps, enter the building, and experience an opera performance that's unlike anywhere else in the world," said the release. ♦

Alpa Jani launches marketing consultancy firm 'Ace Connect'

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Seasoned tourism marketer Alpa Jani has launched a professional consultancy firm 'Ace Connect' with a vision to offer destinations, hotels and tourism products, a sustainable presence, visibility, and growth in the Indian market.

Ace Connect provides an edge in understanding the travel trade fraternity and enables to strategically link them to the right channel partners. It aims to help the hospitality, travel and tourism industry and its partners grow, by offering a whole gamut of services and solutions complying

with their expectations, and working towards meeting their objectives, targets, and goals.

Services offered by Ace Connect will include partner relationship management, business development, travel trade partnerships, advocacy, sales and marketing strategies and implementation, public relations, and digital marketing solutions.

Covering a span of 22 years of well-spread experience in the tourism industry and serving reputed organisations such as South African Tourism, South African Airways and Thomas Cook, Jani is equipped with

an in-depth perspective of the travel field and has gained immense respect for her work and contribution to the industry.

Commenting on the launch, Alpa Jani, CEO & Founder, Ace Connect says, "Reliability, domain experience and repute are key factors for forging new partnerships. We at Ace Connect will work as an extended valued advisor and partner on an operating model that's designed to evolve and reflect the accelerated pace at which the sales and marketing landscape is moving in India."

She added, "With a growing economy, young population, and



growing middle class, India is positioned to become one of the most lucrative outbound tourism markets in the world, in the years to come. It is an exciting period for us to enter the market, identify the growth potential and need gaps and further add value and collaborate with our travel trade partners in driving and achieving their mission successfully." ♦

Airlines to benefit from increase in travel demand: IATA

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Global airlines continued to benefit from increasing air travel demand in November, with all regions recording growth, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Total passenger traffic worldwide increased 41.3 per cent annually in November, reaching 75.3 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, IATA said in its monthly report.

International passenger traffic nearly doubled from the previous November, rising 85.2 per cent and also reaching 73.7 per cent of November 2019 levels.

Demand for domestic travel in November also increased 3.4 per cent year-on-year, when travel restrictions in China continued to weigh on the segment. Total domestic traffic was at 77.7 per cent of November 2019 levels.

"Traffic results in November reinforce that consumers are thoroughly enjoying the freedom to travel," said Willie Walsh, Director General, IATA.

Commenting on the reopening of China's borders for international travel in January, he said many governments were "still playing science politics", as countries impose testing requirements

on Chinese travellers.

"Governments should focus on using available tools to manage Covid-19 effectively — including improved therapeutics and vaccinations — rather than repeating policies that have failed time and again over the last three years," he said.

All regions recorded a modest increase in seat capacity, lifting industry-wide seat capacity slightly in November compared with October, IATA said. Recovery trends for international traffic in the premium and economy-cabin classes "remain broadly aligned", IATA said.

Demand for economy-class seats — including premium economy — reached 79.6 per cent of its January 2020 level in July last year. Premium-class demand — referring to first and business-class cabins — fared nearly as well, recording 74.2 per cent of the January 2020 level.

Middle Eastern airlines recorded an 84.6 per cent year-on-year growth in November, virtually unchanged from October. Seat capacity in November increased 45.4 per cent year-on-year. Load factor, a measure of how well airlines fill available seats, climbed 16.5 percentage points to 77.7 per cent. ♦



PM Modi flags off world's longest river cruise MV Ganga Vilas in Varanasi

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the world's longest river cruise, MV Ganga Vilas in Varanasi. Ganga Vilas began its journey from Varanasi to sail around 3,200 km in 51 days to reach Dibrugarh in Assam via Bangladesh, traversing across 27 river systems in the two countries. "The beginning of the world's longest river cruise service on river Ganga is a landmark moment. It will herald a new age of tourism in India," Modi said. "Today, foundation stones have been laid for several other inland waterways projects worth more than INR 1, 000 crores. This will expand trade and tourism and employment opportunities in eastern India," he added. Modi also inaugurated a 'Tent City' on the banks of the Ganga river in Varanasi today via video conferencing. According to an official statement, the cruise will undertake a 51-day journey, with visits to 50 tourist spots, including World Heritage Sites, National Parks, river Ghats, and major cities like Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam. ♦

Travel Insurance - An indispensable element for a hassle-free travel

With the blooming tourism sector, 2023 will definitely witness the metamorphosis of travel assistance & insurance from a prerequisite to a trip essential. "Stay protected, so that you can be rest assured and do what you're meant to do on a trip - Explore the world with peace of mind!" says **Mr Dev Karvat, Founder & CEO, Asego.**



TBM Staff | Mumbai

The travel trade witnessed a massive upsurge in travel volumes as compared to 2021. Thanks to the enhanced mode of transportation and regulatory changes introduced by the Indian government to boost tourism. I am confident that 2023 will only amplify this emergence with recent technological advancements shaping the new market dynamics in India.

Today, India's tourism and travel insurance industry is experiencing a strong period of growth, driven by the burgeoning overseas, domestic and inbound travel. You will be surprised to know that over 75% of Indians who travelled to Dubai, Thailand and Maldives last year purchased Travel Insurance, which was not the case earlier. Not just that, on analysing customers' recent buying patterns, we realised that they have now grown highly product sensitive. They now seek more value, rather than just going for undervalued and inexpensive ones. They are willing to pay more for their products, provided the price of the product justifies the value they offer.

And thus, travel insurance is now also being considered as a huge revenue-generating variable and offered as a very lucrative travel ancillary service option by many of our prominent travel partners.

Well, having said that, I cannot thank our travel agent partners enough, as they are one of the most vital pillars of this great Indian travel insurance revolution. They want their customers to have a holistic experience and therefore provide a complete travel package including travel assistance and insurance to their customers. This change in the mindset has enabled us to lead as experts in this domain, and it is now much easier for us to reach out and understand their customer

needs, to design tailor-made benefits for them. Additionally, we are equipping our partners with personalized marketing support to increase consumer awareness, cutting-edge technology for increased operational efficiency and dedicated relationship managers to help them boost conversions.

To further kindle this growth, we are also reintroducing the 'Travel Agent's Engagement Programme', one of the biggest initiatives that we commenced almost a decade ago with a vision to enrich pioneering minds in the industry. Today it is known to be



a platform to enable our clients to tap various ancillary revenue generation opportunities that enables them to upsell.

Now, with the recent spurt of COVID-19 cases in China, Japan, the United States of America, the Republic of Korea and Brazil, travellers have become more cautious and are seeking relevant protection plans with higher sum insured and value-added services that cover unforeseen medical expenses and ensure them a hassle-free experience, throughout their trip. With 'Duty of Care' at the core of everything we do and as torchbearers of the travel assistance and insurance industry, we consider it our responsibility to enable it for each traveller.

Asego's array of travel assistance and insurance solutions safeguard travellers against various medical contingencies such as Covid-19, emergency hospitalisation, dental treatments, out-patient care etc. and other non-medical eventualities such as missed/delayed flights and hotel/ flight cancellations while on a trip. With millennials reinforcing the global travel resurgence, we also offer special covers for travel risks such as loss and damage of gadgets, cyber security issues, identity theft, credit/debit card fraud, etc. along with specially curated protection plans for senior citizens, cruises, extreme adventure sports and other niche travel experiences. Additionally, our range of assistance services adds value and serves as a sigh of relief for every traveller, especially the ones who conclude their journeys without filing any claims.

We recently rescued a trekker struck by acute mountain sickness from the Everest base camp to the nearest medical facility through an air ambulance, where she could recover and recuperate from the unforeseen medical condition before returning home. We're glad that the trekker had

opted for our Extreme Adventure sports cover, which helped relay details of the incident to all concerned parties in no time and the emergency evacuation team could kick into action immediately. All said and done, even the most meticulously planned trips could fall prey to unforeseen hurdles and result in a great deal of financial, physical, and emotional burden. Hence, I genuinely advise every traveller to first understand and identify their travel requirements and then opt for a travel protection plan that checks all their boxes, so that they can be rest assured and do what they're meant to do on a trip - **Explore the world with peace of mind!** ♦



KHAJURAHO Dance Festival



Blend of dance, art and culture

At this festival MPTB has introduced activities like heritage walk, nature visits, e-cycle tour, and soft adventure sports by catering to the needs of all types of tourist

Located in the Chhatrapur district of Madhya Pradesh, the UNESCO site of 'Khajuraho Group of Monuments' is famous for its Nagara-Style architecture and graceful sculptures of nayikas and deities.

The temples of Khajuraho are India's unique gift to the world, representing life in every form and moods that has been captured in stone, testifying not only to the craftsman's artistry but also to the extraordinary breadth of vision of the Chandela Rajputs under whose rule the temples were conceived and constructed. The Khajuraho temples were built in the short

span of a hundred years, from 950-1050 AD in a truly inspired burst of creativity. Of the 85 original temples, 22 have survived till today to constitute one of the world's great artistic wonders.

Every year in February, tourists witness Khajuraho Dance Festival in Khajuraho. This grand cultural extravaganza is a stunning blend of art and architecture. One gets to experience a wonderful symphony of mesmerising classical dance performances being performed by renowned artists coming from different cities and towns in India.

This mega festival is a spirited celebration of classical dance forms, art, and culture wherein renowned exponents of Indian classical and folk dances are performed throughout the week. Apart from the graceful dance performances, there are also other highlights that can be enjoyed simultaneously.

Activities and events like art exhibitions, panel discussions, interactive sessions, adventure sports, village tours and much more keep tourists

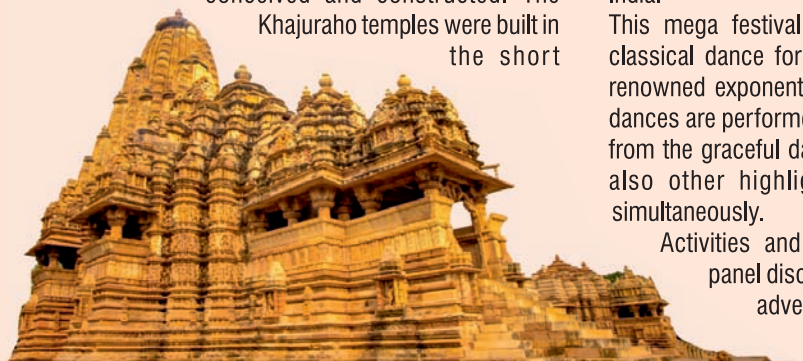
entertained throughout. The choice is yours to opt from a wide range of multidimensional activities.

Khajuraho dance festival is not only a festival of dances; it has been transformed into a wholesome festival of dance, literature, fine arts and everything. The celebration of art has been all along linked with the tourism in Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB) has taken several initiatives to publicize and engage the tourists during the week of the festival.

At this festival MPTB has introduced activities like heritage walk, nature visits, e-cycle tour, and soft adventure sports by catering to the needs of all types of tourist. Be it a dance enthusiast or an adventure lover.

Screening of movies, documentaries, along experimental cinema of famous artists are also displayed to help viewers understand the dynamics of arts, music, literature, vocals, dance instrumental music, and various art forms.

One can also indulge in mouth-watering Bundeli recipes. Enjoy the widespread dishes and feel the goodness of Bundeli food.



Tourists, who visited Khajuraho and Panna during the dance festival, can also explore these activities



Camping : at Bear Valley Camp - Village Jhinna, District Panna: Luxury Tent (Swiss Tent also available for 15 person), Alpine tent for 18 persons, Team Games, Stargazing Trek to the hill of Panna, Bonfire, Night Jungle Safari, Live Music, Boat Safari

Village Tour : Old Khajuraho Village Tour: Start from Jawari Temple end in Brahama Temple, Demonstration of Old Panchayat System, Durga Mandir

E-Bike Tour : Visit of Khajuraho – Western group of Temples- Gol Market- Chaturbhuj Temple- Vaman Temple- Archaeological Museum

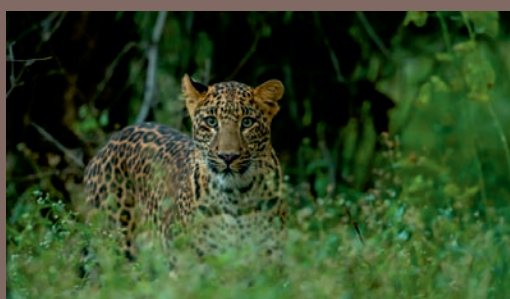
Segway Tour : Sunrisetour to Datla Pahad (2hours), Sundet tour to Dalta Pahad (2 hours),

Khajuraho by night – A joy ride (1.5 hours), Farm tour (2 hours), Trail Joy Ride (15 mins)

Water Sports : Speed Boat, Banana Ride, Shikara Boat, Raft Boat in Kutni Water Body and rafting in Ken River

A visit to Panna

If you are mulling to explore Khajuraho, do not forget to visit Panna National Park, situated just 32 km away and a mere 30-minute drive from Khajuraho. The jungles harbour many species of wildlife. The tiger can be glimpsed here, with other rare species such as the leopard, wolf and gharial.



Things to do in Panna

Explore wellness tourism at Kairali Ayurgram, Jeep Safari in Panna National park to explore wildlife in MP.

Places to visit in and around Khajuraho

Adivart Museum, Dhabela Museum, Kandariya Mahadeo temple, Chaunsath Yogini temple, Chitragupta Temple, Vishwanath Temple, Lakshmana Temple, Lakshmana Temple, Matangeswara Temple, Parsvanath Temple, Ghantai Temple, Adhinath Temple, Duladeo Temple, Chaturbhuj Temple, Sound & Light Show, State Museum of Tribal and Folk Arts, Adivart Tribal and Folk Art Museum, Dhabela Museum

Places to visit in and around Panna

Wildlife, Fort of Ajaygarh, Mahamati Prannathji Mandir, Pandav falls, National Museum, Panna Diamond Mines

Plan a trip to this picturesque destination in Madhya Pradesh and be a part of the Khajuraho Dance Festival where all these multi-dimensional segments are waiting for you to explore.



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),
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APPLYING RULES AS AN EXCEPTION

Safety is the immediate casualty if inflight discipline is enforced selectively, whimsically or not at all.

Air travel is different from trains or a drive on newly opened highways. Now that's easily a no-brainer. Road rage is evidently an alien concept in air travel but boorish behaviour and hot-headedness aren't the same in that rarefied air. Neither is drunkenness.

The incidents of disruptive flying passengers is nothing new, yet the number of such incidents continues to rise. Experts say there is easily one unruly passenger incident every 1000 flights across the world.

In the aftermath of recent incidents in our part of the world, a strange internalised xenophobic self-flagellation is being seen in some quarters. There are ample sneering comments that making air travel 'too accessible' has brought the hoi polloi in what some assume, was a 'propah' sector.

Well, this entitled snobbery is as passé as it is inaccurate. There are rude passengers across all geographical boundaries. Also, it is no one's brief to offer value judgments for there are indifferent crew behaviour as well. Basically, let it be understood. Indiscipline of any sort and by anybody during flights is a growing phenomenon and it is dangerous.

It was in 1963 that the Tokyo Convention established some sort of codification for disruptive behaviour that meets the threshold of criminal conduct. The mere possibility of an act which is capable of jeopardising safety and security is sufficient for initiating preventive, restrictive or penal steps.

There are clearly strict regulations that passengers and crew must submit to while on a flight. When passengers leave their seats before the aircraft comes to a halt it is perceived as both an annoyance and sometimes even amusement. However serious disagreements that degenerate into physical assault or drunken behaviour must have really punishing penalties.

One doesn't advocate Tasers, but probably something a little less severe cannot be discounted. Passengers need to follow rules strictly. And while on this, hushing up instances to save corporate face and reputation might also be included among actions that should be open to penal correction.

Anurag Yadav
Industry Expert

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

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

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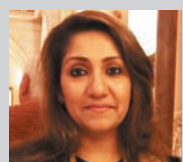
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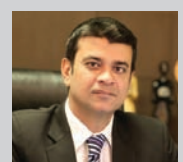
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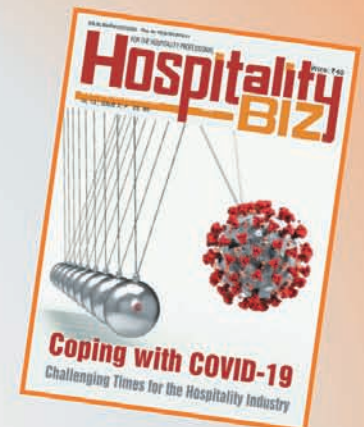
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Contact Us

Ajay Wadode: +91 80871 27814
 ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

Pooja Nalawade: +91 97690 52241
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For Subscription

Gauri Sawant: +91 8369080796 | gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in



Family & Friend Group travel back on the cards: Agoda Survey

Agoda's Family Travel Trend survey 2022 reveals that four out of five travellers will take a vacation with immediate family in the next 12 months and, while travelling with friends proves more popular than travelling with extended family, still more than half (52%) are keen to catch up with relatives for their vacation.

Travellers from Singapore (61%), Taiwan (61%) and Vietnam (59%) are most likely to take at least one trip with immediate family. Meanwhile, people from The

Philippines (47%), Indonesia (40%) and Malaysia (35%) are most likely to plan two or more family jaunts in the coming year. When it comes to vacationing with extended family, its travellers from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam that take the top three spots, with those from Japan, Korea, and Singapore least likely to take the whole family along for their travels.

"The more the merrier for holidays seems to be the message across Southeast Asia, India and beyond this year as Asia finally reopens for travel. The Agoda's Family

Accommodation Preferences for family and group travel

Accommodation preference when travelling with family/group	Global Ranking	Most likely of all markets to consider each accommodation type	Least Likely of all markets consider each accommodation type
Budget Hotels	1	Philippines India South Korea	Vietnam Malaysia Australia / Singapore
Holiday Homes & Guesthouses	2	Indonesia Malaysia Taiwan	Japan South Korea Philippines / United States
All Inclusive Resorts	3	Thailand Vietnam South Korea	Japan US and Indonesia
Hotel Chains	4	Japan United States Singapore	Philippines Thailand Vietnam
Luxury Hotels	5	Taiwan India Singapore	Philippines Thailand Malaysia / Indonesia

Travel Survey shows people really want to enjoy the company of friends or extended family on their vacations with more than 80% of travelers planning to travel with immediate family and 52% opting to travel with other relatives too," explained Enric Casals, Associate Vice President, Southeast Asia and Oceania, Agoda Partner Services.

Friends reuniting

Australians are renowned for their love of their mates, but it seems it doesn't translate to going on holiday with them, with travelers from Australia ranking only 9th most likely to take a trip with friends this year, knocked off the top spot by travellers from the Philippines, followed by Vietnamese and Indian travelers.

2023 Value hunters

When it comes to travelling with families or in a group traveller worldwide are seeking more value for their trips with Budget Hotels, Agoda Homes vacation rentals and Inclusive Resorts cited as the top three group travel preferences.

"Family travellers often have more complex requirements when choosing their holiday accommodation. Often, they need more space, perhaps with cooking facilities as offered by Agoda Homes, or the services such as babysitting, kids' clubs, extra beds or interconnecting rooms offered by family-friendly hotels. Being able to search on one platform, like Agoda, for accommodation, flights, ground transportation and fun filled activities at the destination takes away a lot of the hassle of travel planning, meaning there is more time to relax and enjoy spending time with loved ones," Casals



continued.

Travellers from Philippines (59%), India (44%) and South Korea (38%) showed a high preference for budget-friendly hotels, while those from Indonesia (42%), Malaysia (39%), and Taiwan (38%) preferred vacation rentals which tend to offer additional facilities such as kitchens or separate living and sleeping areas. This is in contrast to almost half of Japanese travelers (43%) who favored chain hotels as their accommodation of choice and 34% of Thai travelers who leaned towards the convenience of all-inclusive resorts.

Border closures continue to concern travelers

Despite travel optimism and growth outpacing pre COVID levels, 77% of travellers globally indicate some concern about international borders closing again while they are overseas. Travelers from most recently opened markets including South Korea and Japan are most concerned, in comparison to those from markets that quickly removed border restrictions including US, Australia and India. ♦

Companion Trends

Travel companion expectations in the coming 12 months

Companions	At Least One Trip			Two Trips or More		
	Global	Most Likely	Least	Global	Most Likely	Least likely
Partner/ spouse	38%	India (51) Vietnam (48) Singapore (47)	Thailand (31) Japan, South Korea (33)	34%	Philippines (44) Malaysia (41) Indonesia (40)	Japan, Singapore (25) Vietnam (28)
Immediate family (household)	52%	Singapore, Taiwan (61), Vietnam (59)	Japan (33), Australia (39) United States (42)	28%	Philippines (47), Indonesia (40), Malaysia (35)	Japan (14) Singapore (15) US (16)
Extended Family	42%	Indonesia (59) Philippines (58) Vietnam (58)	Japan (9) South Korea (15) Australia (27)	10%	Philippines (20) India (14) Thailand, Indonesia (13)	South Korea (1) Japan, Singapore (3)
Friends	50%	Vietnam (63), Taiwan (59), Thailand (54)	Japan (24) United States (41) Australia (42)	23%	India, Philippines (38) Indonesia (31)	Japan (9), Australia(11) Singapore, South Korea, United States (13)



Unfolding 2023; Travel Trends

✍️.....Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

Inbound

In all probability the arrival of foreign tourists will increase in 2023 but much depends on how effectively tourism promotion is undertaken in key global markets, especially at a time when India is looking at closing down its overseas tourism



offices. And this holds true for the MICE segment as well.

It is imperative to understand that the demand in the inbound business is quite different when compared with the pre-Covid time. Besides focusing on safety, it is important to rejig the Incredible India Campaign. Experts believe that there is a need to relook

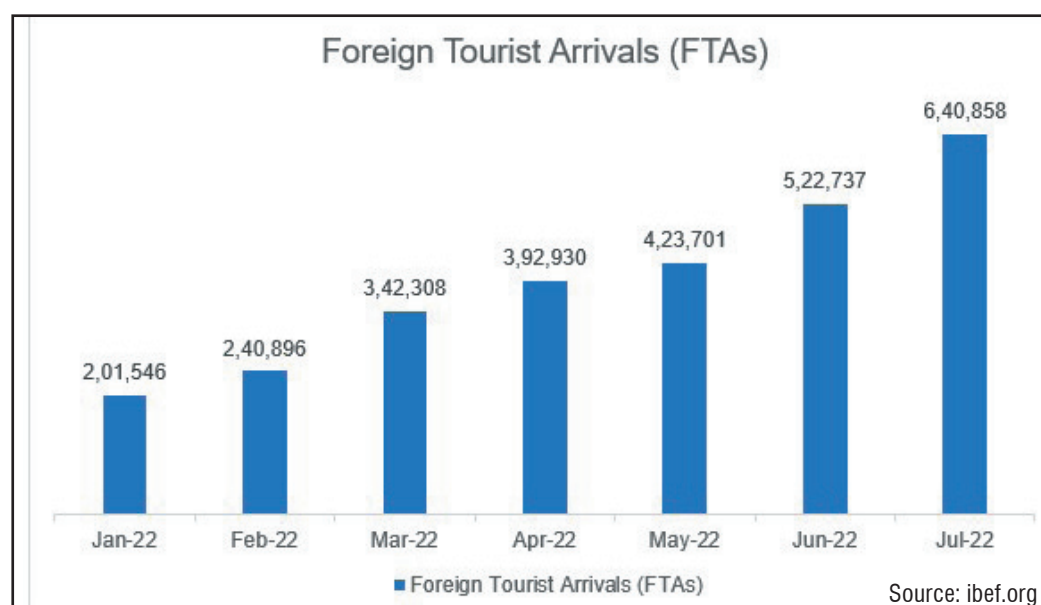
at the campaign. This is because branding has always been complimenting India's cultural side which is synonymous with the crowd. If it continues (branding) the same way it would be detrimental for the inbound sector, because the world is not yet Covid-free. There has to be emphasis on offbeat trails, experiences that include nature, wildlife, wellness, yoga, serenity and the outdoors rather than festivals and events that encourage crowds and large gatherings.

One important development, with India taking over the G-20 Presidency, the recall of brand India will definitely grow in top global source markets, driving increased international guest visits to India. The Government of India is aiming to bank on this trend.

Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has

decided to shut down its seven overseas offices tasked with promotional activities by March 31, 2023. According to a government officer associated with the sector, said, "The government somewhere feels that the expenses incurred on the functioning of these offices are not worth the promotions that the Indian tourism sector gets abroad." He added that the government feels that digital medium and existing embassies can be good alternatives.

There is nothing wrong to close down the overseas offices if such offices fail to live up to the expectations. But there should be an alternative strategy in terms of aggressive promotional activities and campaigns in more and more countries. The government is definitely working on this, and hope that it will announce its decision very soon.



Outbound

Tourism is gradually getting back on the growth path. Interestingly, every country is wooing the Indian tourist, making outbound an even more lucrative segment when compared with pre-covid situation. China used to be an important country for the rest of the world as far as tourism is concerned. But the ongoing Covid situation in that country turned the focus more on the



Indian market. Sanctioned on Russia also plays an important role in this direction. Hence the scope is enormous.

According to a Nangia Andersen LLP and FICCI report, the outbound trips from India will surpass USD 42 billion by 2024. Here, the government could bring about certain policy changes to boost this growing market. The report titled 'Outbound Travel and Tourism - An Opportunity Untapped' highlights then up-and-coming Indian travel market, and outlines a framework for creating a more value for money experience for Indian tourists and travellers.

To facilitate Ease of Doing business, and promote the interests of Indian firms dealing in outbound travel, the government could look at steps like increasing direct connections to popular and upcoming destinations, allowing foreign cruise vessels to operate on Indian waters, besides taking concerted and coordinated efforts on multiple fronts to propel the outbound tourism market soon.

India's economy will continue to build on its success after an initial lull in 2020. Current projections show the national GDP of India will reach USD 4 trillion, 50% higher than 2021 levels according to GlobalData's Macroeconomic database. The growth within India's economy will directly contribute

to a boost in the middle-class population, resulting in increased wealth and disposable income. It poses an excellent opportunity for destination marketers who can capitalise on its young population comprising Gen Z and millennials who have a propensity to travel abroad. Furthermore, its improving infrastructure and developing low-cost airline market means outbound travel is both affordable and accessible.

In 2021, Indians spent approximately USD12.6 billion on outbound trips, compared to USD 22.9 billion in 2019. While the reason for decrease in spending could be due to the pandemic, these figures point out the huge value that can be captured from Indian outbound travellers, added Nangia Andersen LLP and FICCI report.

Domestic Tourism

There is not even an iota of doubt that the domestic tourism sector acted as saviour for the entire industry during its most difficult period. And perhaps made us realise that there has to be an equal focus on both domestic and inbound and outbound tourism. It is, therefore, not surprising that focus on domestic tourism will continue in 2023 as well. The states which will offer enhanced product choices, more offbeat destinations and alternative accommodations, etc. are sure to draw more tourists.

Domestic travel, especially the leisure segment, gave winds to the industry in 2022 and the same is expected to continue in this year as well. In a country of about 1.4 billion people, which has an expanding middle class, the domestic travel market has huge potential for much further growth in the coming years, believes industry experts.

India needs to have a very robust domestic



tourism sector, and it is not prudent to entirely rely on international tourism. It is high time to go beyond the areas that are unexplored. So, there is a need to develop and showcase newer tourist destinations to attract travellers with basic infrastructure. Connectivity is one of the biggest shortcomings that need to improve. Government is working to increase the number of airports in the country to 200 by 2024 from 140 airports, which is a good sign.

For domestic tourism to flourish there is also a need to infuse fresh ideas. One has to carefully see what the demand in the market is. This will help the stakeholders to supply accordingly. One has to keep in mind, every state or region has its niche areas and can attract travellers from different segments. While focusing on these, it is also important to keep in mind that traffic needs to be well distributed because responsible tourism is the order of the day.





Sustainable Tourism

The recent past has witnessed a shift in trend towards eco-friendly and green products and services in every sphere, and tourism is no exception. Today, sustainable tourism is more than a buzzword because it benefits the sector in myriad ways. The Covid-19 pandemic has further reinforced the importance of sustainable tourism and at the same time expedited the adoption process. So, for the tourism industry of India it is a pressing need to accelerate the process. The hospitality industry is doing a decent job in



this direction. To put India prominently on the sustainable tourism map, there is a need for proactive collaboration among stakeholders, Central and State governments.

The industry has to keep in mind that India will have a population with an average age of 34.7 years by 2036. This is very important as this age group is the most defined, aware, and independent and at the same time contributes

significantly to tourism growth. And they want to explore newer destinations and have better experiences regardless of the amount of money they have to spend.

It is clear, going forward, tourists both domestic and foreign, will more consciously seek tourism products and destinations which have greater focus and consciousness on sustainability and responsibility. To make it successful, it is essential to ensure that small and medium players are also actively involved in the process. In simple words, sustainability becomes an integral part of tourism. Sooner we understand, the better!

Technology

The last few years have witnessed adoption of an array of continually-evolving new age technologies in the travel and tourism industry of India. The pace of adoption will continue in many areas this year as well and mid-level players will also

opt for it. Whether a traveller making his/her booking, or a travel agency extending its services or hospitality industry showcasing their properties, amenities, services, etc., technology is paramount.

It has been seen that the role of artificial intelligence within different businesses has increased dramatically over the past decade, and the last few years, in particular, have seen much more widespread adoption in the travel industry. Going by the mood of the industry, it is certain that Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence and related applications are set to become a more integral part of a traveller's experience. More and more people would prefer technology for searching to-visit-places and booking tickets, hotel rooms and leisure services.

Besides this, the travel and tourism industry may also go for new-age biometric authentication technologies. For example, new-age fingerprint recognition, facial recognition, finger and palm vein pattern recognition technologies, and facial and behavioural biometrics (gait, voice, and accent recognition) are expected to be adopted by the industry giving personalisation altogether a different meaning. When it comes to hotels and resorts, they would definitely increase the use of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies. The use of such technologies will help magnify their value propositions to their customers.

While technology will make it easier to research and book travel and experiences, it has also been observed that the DIY (Do It yourself) approach has many problems. Keeping this in mind, it is believed that knowledgeable and efficient travel consultants and tour operators would also be in demand. The complete shift in technology will take some more time. ♦

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MICE group tour operators or financiers ?

By Tarun Malhotra, Director InORBIT Tours Pvt Ltd

It seems just like yesterday when I ventured in the business of MICE groups, it's been more than 27 years with a humble beginning in 1995.

We started with a small group to Far East, Dubai and later on conducted MICE (So called Incentive Experiential trips) groups to almost 85 countries with some out of the box itineraries and experiences. We have conducted more than 900 group departures till date.

tours or have we diluted the so called experiential trips to a different meaning altogether today?

1. Expectation of the corporate today from a MICE tour operator or as I call them the – You need to be L1 (Means the cheapest cost, does not really imply to services I guess) to get the business, irrespective of the quality, wow factor, experience etc.
2. A tour operator should be able to give a credit of 25 – 50 % of the total tour cost for almost 1 to 2 months. Amounts ranging between INR 50 Lacs to INR 5 crore.
3. The entire process starts from the proposal level to the final execution of the trip. Now comes the excuses from the corporate post the event. Our team is traveling, seniors are out of country, invoices are not checked, etc. which is only a method to further delay the process of final payment which is released maybe if you are lucky post 2 months or maybe more provided the overall tour was satisfactory.
4. As I remember, the tour was never expected to be satisfactory but had to be the most experiential one with utmost success starting from the experience of full-service carriers, five-star hotels etc. Gala dinners with the most sought after venues like Castles, Near the Pyramids of Giza or the Great Wall of China, Artist performance etc. which

cannot be measured being an L1 in a bidding process. One cannot expect MERCEDES IN A MARUTI SHOWROOM? Can you ?

5. Can one buy Mercedes with an online bidding process to being an L1 and then ask for credit that first we get to use the car for a month or two & then based on performance we will decide whether to pay or not ?
6. It's high time, the stakeholders in all travel companies, who unfortunately claim that they are MICE tour operators, but fail to give the experience against only being L1, to start introspecting whether they should allow their team to grant such credits & malpractices in future?
7. While airlines, hotels, visa, coach, sightseeing etc. do demand payment upfront with no credit facilities, why should a tour operator finance such trips and for the benefit of whom? The client is right on his part for always asking at least 8 – 10 agencies to bid and selects to the lowest bidder.

Isn't it high time that MICE tour operators give a deep thought to benefit themselves while keeping the service intact to the clients & not merely be a financier? Or we will all end up losing some huge amounts which can end up on the closure of our companies like it has happened with a few ones already. ♦

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



What seemed the best back in those days was that there was a complete hand holding with the corporate right from the concept of the trip, targets to employees or dealers, destination selection, the WOW factor like gala dinners, product launches, motivational speakers, team-building exercises etc. which would contribute to the overall success of the entire tour which is fondly remembered by most of the delegates even till date when I receive a comment that they travelled with me in 1999 or 2000.

But do we have the same response to the tour even today ? Lets introspect of what's the latest trend for MICE ? What are the key Factors in determining the





Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

SITC.Travel

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: SITC.Travel

Core Team: Geeta V.Gouri (Founder/CEO)

Founding year: 2022

Company Website: <https://sitc.travel/>

Description: The company is working on a b2b SaaS tool that disrupts how the travel industry works by automating travel costing & itineraries using the most sophisticated algorithms. It has enabled the generation of all possible combinations of itineraries along with complete costing including auto-generation of planning text and add-on and all in just three clicks. It's that simple. The company supports even the agent-admin model where it suits best when a travel agent works with say a destination expert and all is done via software and in real-time. For now, they are catering to the safari market in Africa and India and in 2023 the company will release for the non-Wildlife market too. Currently, they have a few companies signed up from India, East Africa & from the US.

<https://youtube.com/shorts/3OUi4Whf9UU>



Transformative retreat!

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

Travel needs can be mapped to Maslow's need hierarchy. Travellers seek solutions to their hierarchy of needs through appropriate hospitality, including the stay. At the lowest rung, the basic needs include physiological needs like food, water and shelter, and safety and security needs. As the travellers get assured of these basic needs, they seek to address higher-order *psychological needs*- first the love and belongingness, more so, at the place they are staying and then the next level- the esteem needs- matching the place of stay with their status or the one they want the world to see- the Instagramability. They take cognisance of the aesthetics of the place. Once all the 'other' needs are met, the travellers seek to address the highest-order *self-fulfilment* needs. At a lower echelon is self-actualisation, where they seek to achieve their full potential, which includes learning and broadening their horizons. The raised consciousness propped by the service scape gradually leads to transcendence.

UNWTO reports also suggest that transformational tourism is one of the top travel trends, which cannot be construed without spaces for guests that facilitate immersion in a trance. Transformational hospitality is trending. Service providers are experimenting with creative ideas to curate transformational experiences for their guests. Let us look at some of them.

Travellers are seeking personal well-being- physical, mental and spiritual. So soon, we will have more **Transformation Retreats** that address guests' needs, whether they want to get over a difficult time in their life, figure out what their life's purpose is, or test the physical endurance of their body. For example, a retreat that targets emotional and physical transformation may offer its guests dance therapy or yoga and meditation sessions. Similarly, writers' retreats offer curated getaways for creative minds.

Susan Sontag, in 1964 wrote that *Art is a form of nourishment of consciousness, the spirit*. Alain de Botton echoes this sentiment- *Art holds out the promise of inner wholeness*. Thus, Art is increasingly used for mental and spiritual therapy. Spiritual ideals and concepts like beauty, creativity, honesty, generosity, discernment, patience, and perseverance are manifested in Art. Today, guests seek more intimate, immersive journeys that appeal to

their artistic selves and thus prefer putting up in places where creativity and connection are nurtured- thus creating a demand for **Art Hotels**. Art could include murals, paintings, hand-painted tiles, fabrics, photographs, handicrafts, and whatnot.

Evidence suggests that sleep quality and spiritual well-being are closely connected. Spiritual sleep is an ancient practice. Through dream incubation, yoga nidra, or general meditative practice, spiritual sleep can augment self-awareness. Sleep deprivation, on the other hand, affects our overall well-being. Contemporary work pressures conflagrated by COVID have created sleep disorders. Sound sleep is not just a component of travel. Patrons are consciously seeking **Sleep Concierges** as a key travel trend. Accommodation providers are trying to add AI-powered adjustable beds, comfortable blankets, hypoallergenic pillows, soundproofing, curated music, room light and temperature controls to create a better guest experience. Sleep Spas are even deploying hypnotherapists and sleep experts.

Travellers seeking spiritual overhaul have limited transformative experiences as their nervous system does not allow them to transcend their bodies when certain nutrients are absent. Nourishing the body, in turn, nourishes the spirit. Unfortunately, the contemporary lifestyle causes nutritional stress. Food plays a vital role in one's ability to reach a deep contemplative state. Thus, there is a growing demand for adaptogenic menus. Adaptogens are herbs and mushrooms that improve one's body's capacity to deal with health-related issues. Siberian ginseng, Ashwagandha (Indian ginseng), Tulsi (Holy Basil), and Schisandra berries are examples of popular adaptogenic plants. **Adaptogens** are more visible than before on restaurant menus now.

Many countries are relaxing the use of psychedelic drugs, considering the growing evidence of positive impacts on mental health. As a result, psychedelic immersions are fast emerging as an alternative fast-track therapy for recuperation from PTSD. In addition, as people travel for rejuvenation, service providers are considering psychedelic immersions in controlled settings for accelerating mental well-being. Many hospitality entrepreneurs offer curated



LSD, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), and mescaline getaways for clients.

Similarly, digital immersion can augment the guests' indoor experience by stimulating multiple senses. In particular, Augmented Reality (AR) serves to modify a person's perception of their physical surroundings in real-time. As a result, accommodation providers may boost their offers by using interactive elements in their rooms. Many hotels are seeing the benefits of using AR to make the hotel environment more immersive to spend time in. The room's view or mood can be changed at the guest's discretion. Many accommodation providers are realising the advantages of digital immersion to improve the guest experience.

Spaces hosting guests will be increasingly designed to immerse them in transformative experiences. ♦

'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 at the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has more than 29 years of 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 authored 20 books and more than 200 academic papers and chapters. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country.



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