

GBTA foresees India among Top 10 global business travel markets; plans Chapter opening by 2024

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) is set to expand its footprint in the Asia Pacific region, with a particular focus on India, China, Japan, and Australia.

During her first-ever visit to India for the FCM Corporate Travel Summit, Elle Ng-Darmawan, Regional Director - APAC, GBTA, shared insights on the association's plans, stating, "We are actively considering opening Chapters in India, China, Japan, and Australia to address the diverse dynamics in these key markets."

Ng-Darmawan highlighted the goal of these chapters, saying, "Our aim is to foster community, learning and advocacy, to elevate the business travel experience in this vibrant region." The intention is to collaborate closely with business travel professionals in these markets, fostering meaningful connections and collectively shape the on the future of business travel.

She underscored GBTA's commitment to the Asia Pacific region, recognising it as the largest global hub for business travel movement. She



Elle Ng-Darmawan

stated, "We are committed to support education and continue to bring research insights from the GBTA Academy to share global insights, best practices to advance the region's Business Travel landscape."

Expressing confidence in India's business

travel potential, Ng-Darmawan stated, "As noted from GBTA's outlook on India, India is currently ranked 9th among Top 10 markets globally for Business Travel spends and we expect India's position to rise within the next 3 years."

She attributed this positive outlook to India's successful G20 Presidency in 2023, noting, "The world got a closer look at the preparedness of the destination to host large-scale events." She cited examples such as the seamless passenger movement at Mumbai Airport, expanded airport capacity, contributing to advancements in infrastructure and connectivity to welcome global visitors.

As GBTA gears up to open country-specific chapters in Asia Pacific, the association aims to play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of business travel in India and other key Asia Pacific markets. Ng-Darmawan's comments highlight the association's commitment to support knowledge exchange, and enhance awareness of industry best practices in the world's fastest growing region business travel. ♦

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India emerges as second largest market for Rail Europe in 2023: Björn Bender, CEO and Executive Chairman

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

In a significant milestone for Rail Europe, India has emerged as the second largest market for train bookings in 2023, marking a historic achievement after nearly three decades of presence in the country.

Björn Bender, CEO and Executive Chairman of Rail Europe, highlighted this development during his visit to India, stating, "In 2023, India has become our second strongest source market after the US, a first in our 90-year history. We saw a 65% recovery from India in 2022, and currently, the company is at 75% of pre-2019 levels. The growth in 2023, at 11% on both B2B and B2C fronts compared to 2019, showcases India's remarkable progress."

The growth from India accounted for approximately 10% of total tickets sold across channels in 2023. Bender noted, "India,

alongside the US, Korea, Japan, and Australia, has consistently been among our top five markets for the past decade. Now, India has risen to the second position after the US. We anticipate a 20% growth from India in 2024."

As a regular train traveller logging 75,000 kilometres in 2023 alone, Bender sees the European railway as a EUR 70 billion industry. "We anticipate the European rail sector to experience double-digit growth year on year. Our aim is to accelerate even further; on average, we forecast a 25% growth for the company, contingent upon various geopolitical factors."

Regarding product preferences from India, Rail Europe has observed high demand for Eurail Pass and Swiss Pass, along with increasing interest in point-to-point tickets. Bender highlighted the unique seat reservation technology available, facilitating agents to book a wide range of options for travellers, including



Björn Bender

seat reservations for Bernina Express and Glacier Express in Switzerland, which have gained popularity in India. Additionally, seat booking for the Eurail Pass is now offered. ♦

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RezLive.com keen to expand agent base for its Affiliate.Travel product in India

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Affiliate.Travel, an innovative product of RezLive.com, is transforming the travel industry landscape by redefining how travel partners and businesses collaborate. Powered by the vision of RezLive.com, a leading global B2B travel wholesaler, Affiliate.Travel has emerged as a game-changer in the domain of affiliate marketing for the travel sector wherein it even provides the opportunity for the affiliate to have a sub-affiliate dedicated portal which they can offer to their B2C clients or corporates.

Talking to **TravelBiz Monitor**, Tirath Shah, COO, Travel Designer Group, parent company of RezLive.com, said, "Affiliate.Travel is a

B2B2C payment gateway model, wherein an affiliate earns commission on each reservation done by them or their sub-affiliates. For travel agents engaging with corporate clients, Affiliate.travel by RezLive.com stands as a potent resource for broadening their outreach and fostering revenue expansion. This innovative tool, which is currently being used by 6,500 agents in India & counting, empowers corporate entities to utilize their company credit cards, facilitating the earning of



Tirath Shah

for the launch of new products, indicating a commitment to continual innovation and growth. ♦

commissions for the travel agency involved.

Sharing plans of expansion, Shah said they have 20,000+ direct contracts across the world, and are looking to add more inventories to their platform, besides unveiling a faster XML. Additionally, discussions are underway

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RateHawk records three-fold growth from India during Q4, 2024

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

US-based RateHawk, a B2B platform by the UAE-based company Emerging Travel Group, which offers hotel booking services, air tickets and transfers has seen a three-fold growth in business from India during Q4, 2023, since foraying in this market mid-last year.

Talking about this, Victoria Vlasenko, Senior Sales Manager, Asia Pacific Region, RateHawk, said, "My first visit to India last year was to gauge the market potential, and the opportunities here. Now we have a team of four, including two local managers, resources and are gradually expanding the team here. Between Q3 and Q4 of 2023, we have seen a three-fold growth from India. We have doubled the number of involved almost 100 more companies that have started using our system reaching over 2,000 partners, and these are big-ticket deals. We are now trying to on-board local inventory to sell abroad."



Victoria Vlasenko

Currently, 2.54 million hotels across the world are listed on the RateHawk system. "We are one of the biggest platforms in hotel bookings space. We work with over 230 global accommodation wholesalers and also develop direct hotel contracts with hotels in India to make sure that we cover not only outbound, but also domestic and inbound demand. While we also offer air ticket bookings and land transfers, hotel inventory remains our key offering. For airlines, we use the GDS, and for hotel bookings we have contracts via direct sales and through local B2B partners." ♦

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Manoharan Periasamy takes over as Director General of Malaysia Tourism

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Former India Director of Tourism Malaysia, Manoharan Periasamy has taken over as Director General of the tourism promotion agency.

In his immediate past role, he served as Senior Director for International Promotion (Asia & Africa) at Tourism Malaysia.

He is the first Malaysian-Indian to be appointed as the DG for Tourism Malaysia.

He has served three consecutive terms as Director of Tourism Malaysia for India, and was instrumental in setting up the first NTO office in Mumbai way back in 2001.

Malaysia's tourism landscape is set to embrace a new chapter with Periasamy taking over as Director General of Tourism Malaysia. He carries with him a wealth of experience and a proven track record in tourism promotion to amplify Malaysia's appeal as a global travel destination.

With a focus on showcasing Malaysia's unique offerings and leveraging international partnerships, Periasamy's leadership is expected to catalyse a significant uptick in tourism performance, contributing substantially to the nation's economy.

Periasamy's vision for Tourism Malaysia encompasses not just a revival of the sector but a robust transformation aimed at sustainable growth. A notable strategy already under his belt is the emphasis on airline route development and partnerships. ♦



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IIPT Announces the Winners of the 7th Celebrating Her awards



TBM Staff | Mumbai

On March 6th, ITB Berlin played host to the 7th edition of the Celebrating Her awards initiated in 2016 by the International Institute for Peace through tourism (IIPT).

Julia Simpson, President & CEO, WTTC, delivered the Keynote address.

- for Inclusion and Diversity
 - Marija Labovic – CEO & MD National Tourism Organisation of Serbia - for Tourism Policy
 - Adrianna Kruger – Founder Tzaneen Country Lodge, Limpopo province, South Africa – for Sustainable Tourism
- Ajay Prakash, who assumed charge as

development.

Rika Jean-Francois, CSR Commissioner, ITB Berlin, added, “We are very happy to collaborate with IIPT for these wonderful awards. The Celebrating Her awards were first organised at ITB Berlin 2016 and have become one of our very important events. Women play such an important



Suma Venkatesh



Marija Labovic



Adrianna Kruger



Ajay Prakash

Three exceptional women from the world of tourism were felicitated for their achievements and their contribution to promoting tourism as a vehicle for peace and understanding. TravelBiz Monitor is the Exclusive Media Partner for IIPT events, globally.

The Celebrating Her award winners for 2024 are:

- Suma Venkatesh – Executive VP – Real Estate & Development and Asset Management the Indian Hotels Co. Ltd –

Global President of IIPT in September 2023, said “Gender equality, which is a critical part of the United Nations SDGs, is intrinsic to IIPT’s global aims and objectives and integral to fostering peace. It is also our intention, through these awards to create a network of powerful women across the world in the tourism sphere who could work with each other and serve as role models and mentors while representing IIPT as our Global Ambassadors of Peace and sustainable

role in tourism and the recognition and empowerment of women is critical for fostering peace and sustainability.”

Kiran Yadav, Director of Strategy & Global Outreach, added, “IIPT India started the awards process when we awarded 5 exceptional Indian women at the Maharashtra International Travel Mart in 2015, it is a matter of pride that the Celebrating Her awards have today become one of the most coveted and cherished awards globally.” ♦

Taiwan to ramp up investment in India with new Information Centre in Mumbai

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA) recently unveiled its new Taiwan Tourism Information Centre (TTIC) in Mumbai, an event that saw attendance from notable personalities from the travel industry.

Speaking to TravelBiz Monitor on the sidelines of the event, Trust H. J. Lin, the Deputy Director General of TTA, expressed his admiration for India, describing it as a country of immense beauty and potential for Taiwan’s inbound tourism sector. “I’ve had the opportunity to visit India 12 times, and each visit unveils something new about this vibrant market. Post-pandemic, we’ve noticed an increasing desire among Indians to explore international destinations for their holidays, with Taiwan gradually becoming a favoured choice for corporate meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) for Indian

companies,” Lin shared.

Lin attributes this interest partly to Taiwan’s robust IT sector, which attracts a significant number of Indian visitors to its exhibitions. To further boost this interest, the Taiwan Tourism Administration is offering incentives such as sponsored city tours around these events. “These incentives are a part of our efforts to enhance the visitor experience,” he added.

Targeting not just the MICE segment, TTA is also focusing on attracting families, leisure travellers, and free independent travellers (FIT), with Lin noting an increasing demand for immersive cross-cultural travel experiences.

Despite a drop in visitor numbers from India from 40,000 in 2019 to 32,000 last year, Lin is optimistic about a strong recovery, expecting to reach or even surpass pre-

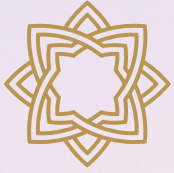


pandemic levels this year. “We’re at an 80% recovery rate, and I’m confident we’ll achieve full recovery soon,” he remarked.

To further this aim, TTA plans to ramp up its investment in the Indian market, including organising familiarization (Fam) trips for media and travel professionals, as well as boosting its presence in both print and digital media.

Lin ended on a high note, stating, “Taiwan is back, and our commitment to the Indian market is stronger and more focused than ever.” ♦

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Indian aviation sector to log 8-13 pc passenger traffic growth in FY24: ICRA

TBM Staff | Mumbai

ICRA, the credit rating agency, forecasted an 8 to 13 percent growth in Indian air passenger traffic for the fiscal year 2024, reaching between 150 to 155 million and exceeding the pre-pandemic figure of 141.2 million recorded in FY20. The agency has expressed a stable outlook for the Indian aviation sector, thanks to the ongoing recovery in both domestic and international passenger numbers and a relatively stable cost scenario.

The agency anticipates that the growth momentum will persist into FY2025, with a similar annual increase expected. This optimism is underpinned by increasing demand for both leisure and business travel, coupled with enhancements in airport infrastructure.

For FY2023, international traffic for Indian carriers already went beyond pre-Covid levels,

though it did not reach the FY2019 high of 25.9 million. ICRA predicts this number will surpass the previous peak in the current fiscal year, with an estimated 25 to 27 million passengers, marking a year-on-year increase of 7 to 12 percent. This growth trend is likely to continue into FY2025, with passenger numbers projected to reach between 27 to 29 million.

Suprio Banerjee, Vice-President and Sector Head of Corporate Ratings at ICRA, remarked on the improved financial health of the industry, highlighted by rising yields which have enhanced the revenue-cost margin for airlines. This favourable situation is expected to persist, supported by decreasing aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and stable foreign exchange rates. Consequently, the sector's net loss is projected to significantly drop to INR 30-40 billion in FY2024 and FY2025 from about INR 170-175 billion in FY2023.



ATF prices and the rupee-dollar exchange rate significantly impact airline costs. The average ATF price saw a 15 percent year-on-year decrease to INR 103,547 per kilolitre in the first 11 months of FY2024, down from INR 120,978 per kilolitre in FY2023, yet this figure was 60 percent higher than the FY2020 average. Fuel constitutes approximately 30-40 percent of airline expenses, with a significant portion of operating costs, including aircraft leases and maintenance, denominated in dollars. The Indian aviation industry's current order book stands at around 1,700 aircraft, more than double the size of the current fleet, indicating robust growth prospects. ♦

Heavens Portfolio appoints Yamini Singh as Regional Director of PR and Marketing in India & Middle East

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Heavens Portfolio has appointed Yamini Singh as Regional Director – PR and Marketing for the India & Middle East.

Yamini was recognised on the "40 Under 40" list at the India PR and Corporate Communications Awards by exchange4media in 2023. In her 14+ years of experience, she has worked extensively on building B2B & B2C communication strategies and integrated campaigns focused on building brand awareness and enhancing client reputation.

With the company entering a new growth chapter and fully-g geared to bolster its portfolio of ultra-luxury global clients, Singh has been appointed to strengthen media relations, create high-impact brand partnerships, and super charge top-of-mind awareness for the client portfolio of Heavens Portfolio in India, including the likes of LVMH's Cheval Blanc, Armani Hotels, Oetker Collection, Ultima Collection, Badrutt's Palace Hotel, and Capella Hotels & Resorts among others.

She will be instrumental in steering compelling thought-leadership content and driving strategic direction in Marketing for



Heavens Portfolio in India to cement the company's reputation as a pioneer in the future of integrated tourism representation. Additionally, she will spearhead the PR & Marketing initiatives in Heavens Portfolio's upcoming Middle Eastern operations.

Christine Galle Luczak, Founder and CEO of Heavens Portfolio, commented, "We are delighted to welcome Yamini to our universe of angels. Heavens Portfolio has spread its roots deep into Asia with India being among our key source markets and Middle East gaining steady momentum. Her unique combination of experience in Marketing, PR and Communications will be instrumental in driving strategic direction and growth for the varied list of clients of Heavens Portfolio India and its upcoming Middle East entity." Yamini conveyed her enthusiasm for her new role, stating, "I'm deeply honoured to accept this appointment. The clients of Heavens Portfolio are iconic brands giving us an opportunity to create compelling and authentic narratives that will resonate in the hearts and minds of the discerning traveller. I look forward to collaborating with our partners, stakeholders, and highly talented colleagues in upholding Heavens Portfolio's legacy of excellence." ♦

South African Tourism engages with Indian education institutes for student exchange programmes

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

With growing number of students from across India exploring overseas education opportunities, the South African Tourism (SAT) has seen a growing interest for student exchange programme.

Talking to **TravelBiz Monitor**, Neliswa Nkani – Hub Head – Middle East, India and Southeast Asia, South African Tourism, said, "There have been a lot of inquiries coming in from especially from Bengaluru followed by New Delhi, wherein universities have been approaching SAT for student exchange programmes. We are getting interest to drive student travel from India so that the youth comes in from affluent communities to explore learning options in South Africa. We are in one-to-one talks with education institutes, and we have taken some representatives to South Africa for exploring the choices available."

She went on to say that South Africa is working on introducing an e-visa for Indian travellers and same is likely to be launched soon. "We are working with the Indian government for seamless travel of citizens." ♦

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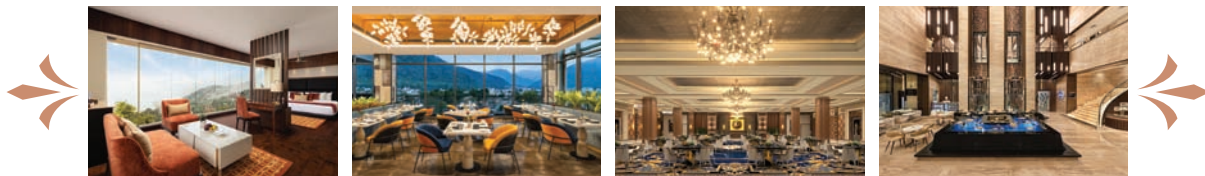


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REALITY OF CONTRASTS

At a recent conference on business travel, discussions revolved around the future of the sector, and how voice technology would soon emerge as the new and advanced medium of bookings. In a stark reality of contrasts, a trade association hosted a session for its members to introduce them on using ChatGPT to generate content for destination marketing.

This is a clear example of how complex and diverse this industry is, where a certain section of players is already contemplating moving towards matured technology use, while a large portion of the value chain is still gradually warming up to the adoption of new-age concepts to drive business.

However, what is constant among both is the need to learn, evolve and stay relevant. Gone are the days when the debate was about offline vs. online agents. The real challenge is adapting to newer technologies at a faster pace for better value and data-driven growth. The focus is now on leveraging technology to streamline processes, enhance customer experiences, and stay ahead in an industry where innovation is becoming synonymous with success. The influx and popularity of travel tech start-ups and white label solutions highlight the industry's collective realisation that staying at the forefront of technological advancements is no longer a choice, but a necessity for sustained growth and competitiveness.

It is a right move in the right direction to realise that change is the only constant.



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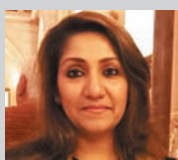
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A Lonely Child No More

By Rajeev Kohli, CIS, CITP, DMCP, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel

I started this piece two weeks ago and am now finishing it after the news of a most horrific predatory attack on a female visitor to our country. My mind is now in a state of disgust, shock, and despair, wondering how uglier India can become. And so this affects our industry as well.

I am not a pessimist, nor am I a fatalist. Quite the contrary. I believe that we each control our fate and write our futures with our actions and thoughts, individually and collectively. I consistently hear the same chatter around the industry water cooler: Inbound is down. We have no government marketing and promotions. Hotel rates are up. Room availability is an issue. The conversations are loud and depressing.

The fact is clear: Inbound tourism is the lonely child.

The system has all but abandoned this segment. Hotel partners have somewhat turned their backs on us. The government has disowned the industry. Customer demand in overseas markets is at an all-time low. These are not observations but facts.

Should we then surrender, hold our heads in despair and wait for the Grim Reaper to take his bounty? Or shall we rather be bold, band together and fight back to regain our space in the tourism eco-system? I would much rather do the latter.

One thing is clear: actions by our national associations and tourism bodies have failed to move the government to take any action towards inbound tourism. I don't expect that to change. We have been unable to get any respect for our contribution to the national GDP and foreign exchange reserves. Mark my words: 20 years from now, economists will mention the current shortsightedness in ignoring a healthy diversification of foreign reserves sources.

Here is what stakeholders in inbound tourism need to do.

First, talk to each other, to our clients, and to our local partners. We need to have open and deep discussions not only on our current state of affairs but also on what got us here. How did our industry



lose the plot so badly? What missteps did we make? What role do our associations have in the situation, and how could we have been better members? Introspection is healthy. We must learn from the past and change our course for the future.

Let's get into a room for a full day and talk it out. We leave our egos outside the door. Let our frustrations come out. These discussions will organically lead to answers. Healthy debate leads to great solutions. Right now, we are all running around like headless chickens trying to survive. Growth will never happen if we do not pause to understand.

Second, we need to accept two things.

One, domestic tourism is currently filling the needs of our hotel partners. There is nothing wrong with that. I, for one, am very grateful that domestic travellers allowed our hotels to survive during the pandemic and that our tourism infrastructure emerged unscathed. This is very different from what happened in the West when hospitality assets shut down en masse. This market will organically see a shift in spending patterns and habits, and the balance will return. When I don't know, but the laws of economics state it will. Sacrosanct.

Second, the Government of India just doesn't care. They saw the low-hanging fruit of domestic travellers where they had to do very little work, letting the

states do the heavy lifting. There is no accountability, no one to question what is and is not being done. Therefore, there is no reason for us even to think things will change in the short to medium term.

The private sector needs to finally put their hands in their pockets and create a private sector marketing fund. Even if each one of us gives 0.5% of our top line, that adds up to something better than nothing. As small as that may be compared to the government spending, it will be enough to make credible actions online. We need to get our national inbound association to release the money it is hoarding to help bring back the industry. There is no defensible reason for them to sit on crores when their core segment needs help.

We must create a private sector crisis management team to help combat the negative press. The recent attack on the Spanish visitor has brought back the tremors of the Nirbhaya case of 2012. Yet we learned nothing. It's De Ja Vu in its entirety. We have no crisis management policy, no voice or statement to counter or address the news. As the private sector, we have no official stance to say anything. Today, India is ashamed. Our claim to Incredible India stands in ruins today. The lack of reaction is all on us. No action is equally complacent to the horror. Rule #1 of crisis management is to be present, forward-facing, and honest. Unfortunately, we have none of those characteristics in those who govern or lead. So, let's now learn and do it on our own.

I can go on and on. But for now, these are just a few things we can do independently. Without asking for anyone's permission or help. What's stopping us?

Stay positive. We have been at the low before, but we always come out on top. It's our perseverance as an industry. I am proud of all of you for that. I shall be a lonely child no longer! I can no longer sit quietly. So, watch out for an email from me.

Happy to get feedback and thoughts on this issue. rajeevkohli@creative.travel ♦

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Indonesia targets 1mn arrivals from India in 2024; records 610,000 visitors last year

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Indonesia recorded 610,000 visitors from India in 2023, and the country is keen to close 2024 with 1 million arrivals, said Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister for Marketing, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MOTCE), while talking to TravelBiz Monitor on the sidelines of OTM in Mumbai.

"We surpassed the target of 450,000 visitors from India in 2023, and achieved 610,000, just short of 670,000 of our pre-Covid numbers in 2019. We are looking to close 2024, with 1 million Indian visitors," she said.

According to the Deputy Minister, the department's conversations since Covid is to



increase air access, and the direct flights from IndiGo on the Mumbai-Jakarta route and the Mumbai-Bali flights by Vistara has given a shot in the arm for tourist traffic to Indonesia. "We are keen on more direct flights to other

destinations that will enable us to diversify tourist numbers across different regions."

Talking about segments she said, Indonesia was largely a honeymooners paradise from visitors from India, but now they are tapping the weddings, FITs, Bleisure and special interest groups with improved air access and better tourism infrastructure.

Wisnu Sindhutrisno – Director of Tourism Marketing for Asia Pacific Region, said they will be hosting roadshows in Mumbai, Delhi, Chandigarh and South India as part of their direct outreach in India. "We are working with film-makers for scouting locations for shoots, and offering FAM trips to support them." ♦

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Kenya Tourism Board to incentivise agents for destination promotion as part of new campaign

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Kenya Tourism Board has launched a strategic campaign that will incentivise travel agents to promote Kenya as their preferred choice of destination.

The consumer driven campaign which will enhance awareness and drive conversions in the Indian market will involve engagement of both trade partners and consumers simultaneously.



This campaign aims to create aspiration amongst Indian travellers as well as a loyalty base with travel agencies based on the total number of passengers booked within the specified timeline. The campaign is scheduled to run for duration of four months, from February to June 2024.

The campaign, in collaboration with Network 18, one of India's largest multi-platform destinations for news and infotainment, will leverage the network's extensive reach to target a diverse audience.

John Chirchir, Ag CEO, Kenya Tourism Board said that the board was looking forward to embark on

the campaign and recognised the importance of the Indian market to Kenya's tourism "India stands as a pivotal market for Kenya in the realm of travel and tourism, and we believe that this initiative will significantly contribute to strengthening our foothold in this dynamic landscape. With high expectations riding on this campaign, we aim to forge a robust bond with the travel trade and cultivate lasting relationships. We are confident that through this concerted effort, we will not only meet but exceed expectations, propelling Kenya to the forefront of travelers' minds in India."

While commenting on this, Neeti Sharma, Director, Intrepid Marketing and Communications, said that KTB would reap the benefits of partnering with a well-known platform in the Indian market that would help in showcasing the Kenya to potential Indian visitors. "We are thrilled to partner with Network 18 and our travel partners in this market to showcase the wonders of Kenya to the Indian audience," she said

"By engaging both trade partners and consumers, we aim to create a powerful synergy that will drive demand and position Kenya as the ultimate travel destination in Africa. We are confident that this campaign will not only drive conversions but also strengthen the bond between the travel trade in India and Kenya". ♦

With 420,000 arrivals from India in 2023; Qatar Tourism hopeful of relaxation in bilaterals

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

In the past couple of years, Qatar Tourism has seen an uptick in arrivals from India with visa-free access.

Talking about this, – Philip Dickinson, VP, International Markets, Qatar Tourism, said, "India is in a unique position, despite the great demand, there are capacity constraints in terms of airline seats to come to Qatar." He is hopeful of relaxation in bilaterals to improve point to point connections between India and the Kingdom of Qatar.

Explaining trends, he said, "There is lot of interest from India for Bleisure travel and MICE movement to Qatar. India is our second largest market, and an extremely important one. From India, we are hosting high-profile events in Qatar at our two state-of-the-art convention centres." There has been a 100% increase in accommodation facility in Qatar with the nation hosting concluded FIFA World Cup in 2022. Talking about this, he said, "The development of accommodation for FIFA World Cup is part of the economic development plan for Qatar, and part of the plan to the Qatar 2030 Vision to reach 7 million international arrivals."

Qatar has seen influx of accommodation across various categories, new districts, shopping malls, attractions, rapid transport system, shopping malls, etc., to host audience and visitors from across the world.

Dickinson believes that visa-free entry, world-class Hamad International Airport, Qatar's image as the safest destination in the world, family-friendly infrastructure, and award-winning Qatar Airways make the Kingdom an attractive proposition for visitors to select the country as their choice for international holiday." ♦



Philip Dickinson

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The Best Destinations for Shopaholics to Visit



- UAE, Dubai is the best destination for shopaholics to visit, with a perfect score of 10 out of 10.
- 3 out of 10 destinations have a high safety index.
- Italy leads with the highest number of luxury stores among top shopping destinations.

Research was conducted by Ubuy.com to find out the best destinations for shopaholics to visit. The study considered factors such as VAT rate, safety index, international tourism expenditures, total luxury store numbers, and hotel prices. Each country was assigned a score based on these criteria.

UAE, Dubai tops the list with a perfect score of 10.00 due to the luxury shopping experiences offered at places like The Dubai Mall and a very high safety index. Tourists have searched for shopping opportunities in UAE more than 7 million times, which is the highest on the list. The city has 129 luxury stores in its main shopping areas and provides access to more than 1,200 retail stores.

Italy ranks second with a score of 9.25, attracting shoppers with its

well-known fashion districts in Milan. It leads with the highest number of luxury stores, totaling 434. Although it has a higher VAT rate of 22%, Italy compensates with a VAT refund policy for purchases over approximately \$170.

France is the third-best destination for shopaholics, scoring 8.75 out of 10 for offering chic shopping experiences. The country has a 20% VAT rate and a refund policy for purchases over approximately \$110. France has the second-highest number of luxury stores, totaling 377.

Canada, coming in fourth place, scored 7.32 out of 10. It's one of the two countries that do not have VAT refunds to tourists. Yet almost half a million people are searching for shopping options in the country. Along with moderate safety, Canada has the highest hotel prices, totaling

Ubuy.com											
Best Destinations for Shopaholics											
Full research											
City	Country	Score	Area (km ²)	VAT/GST Rate	VAT Refund Details	Safety Index	International tourism, expenditures (current US\$)	Searches "shopping in #"	Shopping Destinations	Total Store Number	Hotel price for 2 adults [May 10-15]
Dubai	UAE	10.00	83,600	5%	Refund on goods, 5%	Very High	15,085,000	7,067,600	The Dubai Mall, Mall of the Emiri	129	426.52
Milan	Italy	9.25	301,340	22%	Refund for purchases over €154	Moderate	12,965,000	723,060	Via Montenapoleone (Milan), Via	434	1382.28
Paris	France	8.75	643,801	20%	Refund for purchases over €100	Moderate	31,193,000	687,720	Champs-Élysées, Rue Saint-Hc	377	1360.80
Toronto	Canada	7.32	9,984,670	Don't have	No VAT refund for tourists	Moderate	-	1,263,630	Robson Street (Vancouver), We	96	1486.30
Zurich	Switzerland	6.37	41,290	7.70%	Refund for purchases over CHF	High	10,372,000	36,060	Bahnhofstrasse (Zurich), Rue di	123	1435.81
Sydney	Australia	6.10	7,692,024	10%	Refund of GST for goods bought	High	7,654,000	1,497,820	Pitt Street Mall (Sydney), Queer	127	713.00
Stockholm	Sweden	5.75	450,295	25%	Refund for purchases over 200 €	Moderate	-	19,170	Drottninggatan (Stockholm), Ma	31	1196.68
Barcelona	Spain	4.94	505,990	21%	Refund for purchases over €90.1	Moderate	-	250,790	Portal de l'Àngel (Barcelona), G	118	1094.00
Berlin	Germany	3.88	357,022	19%	Refund for purchases over €50	Moderate	101,231,000	224,230	Kurfürstendamm (Berlin), Zeil (f	171	862.00
London	UK	3.06	242,495	Don't have	No longer offers VAT refunds	Moderate	-	1,058,030	Oxford Street, Regent Street (Li	216	456.00
New York City	USA	3.00	9,525,067	Don't have	No VAT system	Moderate	48,837,000	2,534,970	Fifth Avenue (NY), Rodeo Drive	957	1529.20
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	2.99	1,104	Don't have	No VAT/GST	High	26,498,000	1,828,140	Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui	124	617.00
Shanghai	China	2.97	9,596,961	13%	VAT refund in certain cities	High	886,000	29,780	Nanjing Road (Shanghai), Sanli	494	492.10
Tokyo	Japan	2.90	377,975	10%	Refund for purchases over 5,000	High	6,741,000	1,562,030	GINZA, Shibuya (Tokyo)	408	574.40
Amsterdam	Netherlands	2.57	41,543	21%	Refund for purchases over €50	High	7,435,700	6,600	Kalverstraat, De Negen Straatje	53	1377.00
Brussels	Belgium	2.65	30,528	21%	Refund for purchases over €50	Moderate	13,928,000	65,740	Avenue Louise (Brussels), Meir	37	839.22
Vienna	Austria	2.40	83,871	20%	Refund for purchases over €75	High	5,551,000	156,380	Mariahilfer Straße (Vienna), Gei	48	783.00
Singapore	Singapore	2.35	728.6	7%	GST refund on purchases over \$	High	25,346,000	3,729,290	Orchard Road, Marina Bay San	98	689.00
Seoul	South Korea	2.17	100,210	10%	Refund at designated stores, 10%	High	-	281,980	Myeong-dong, Gangnam (Seou	144	616.00
Cape Town	South Africa	2.10	1,221,037	15%	VAT refund on purchases over Z	Low	1,594,000	233,260	V&A Waterfront (Cape Town), S	34	464.93
Buenos Aires	Argentina	2.01	2,780,400	21%	VAT refunds on accommodation	Low	2,746,000	14,100	Florida Street, Galerías Pacific	39	432.00
São Paulo	Brazil	1.90	8,515,767	Don't have	No widespread VAT refund schei	Low	6,490,000	550	Rua Oscar Freire (São Paulo), I	82	362.69
Mexico City	Mexico	1.79	1,964,375	16%	VAT refund on purchases over 1	Low	4,286,000	23,140	Avenida Presidente Masaryk (M	100	328.84
Mumbai	India	1.73	3,287,263	Don't have	No VAT refund scheme	Moderate	15,777,000	613,570	Connaught Place (New Delhi), (67	348.00
Bangkok	Thailand	1.67	513,120	7%	Refund at participating stores, 7%	High	3,681,000	5,386,140	Siam Square (Bangkok), Chatu	72	294.00
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	1.48	330,803	0%	GST was set at 0% from June 20	Low	5,206,000	6,845,550	Bukit Bintang (Kuala Lumpur), §	57	227.32
Jakarta	Indonesia	1.15	1,904,569	10%	VAT refund for tourists on purcha	Moderate	1,980,000	297,970	Jalan Malioboro (Yogyakarta), F	38	237.40

City		Country	Total Store Number	Louis Vuitton	Gucci	Chanel	Prada	Hermes	Rolex	Versace	Burberry	Cartier	Dior	Fendi	Tiffany & Co.	Valentino	Balenciaga	Jimmy Choo	Alexander McQueen	Dolce & Gabbana	Bottega Veneta	Givenchy	YSL (Yves Saint Laurent)
New York City	USA	957	114	97	19	18	39	351	26	17	12	21	12	12	95	8	18	8	4	58	18	8	14
Paris	France	377	32	30	39	8	18	122	10	8	8	18	8	8	7	8	5	3	12	8	11	11	14
Milan	Italy	434	29	59	32	10	17	109	18	11	10	17	10	8	13	10	5	1	33	15	11	15	15
Tokyo	Japan	408	75	54	20	7	16	105	9	14	7	14	7	13	7	7	5	4	13	13	5	5	13
Dubai	UAE	129	14	7	9	3	7	42	4	8	2	6	2	2	2	3	3	1	3	4	4	3	4
London	UK	216	22	18	14	4	7	75	5	7	4	6	5	7	4	4	5	4	9	4	4	4	8
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	124	11	9	9	4	5	47	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	1	1	1	3	3
Bangkok	Thailand	72	6	10	5	2	3	21	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
Seoul	South Korea	144	20	13	13	3	11	34	4	8	2	7	2	5	3	3	3	1	3	3	2	4	4
Singapore	Singapore	98	5	6	5	3	6	35	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	3	3	3
Sydney	Australia	127	14	13	7	5	3	28	4	7	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	1	7	2	2	4	4
Barcelona	Spain	118	19	14	11	2	4	30	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	0	9	2	2	2	3	3
Berlin	Germany	171	22	13	12	2	6	71	4	3	2	4	2	5	1	2	3	1	9	3	2	2	4
Vienna	Austria	48	4	5	3	2	2	19	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Amsterdam	Netherlands	53	5	4	1	2	2	22	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	3	1	1	1
Buenos Aires	Argentina	39	5	1	1	1	1	16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1
Mumbai	India	67	8	6	5	2	1	16	2	4	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	0	3	1	1	1	2
Shanghai	China	494	115	62	21	5	16	82	12	21	5	23	16	15	11	5	5	2	33	12	8	25	25
Toronto	Canada	96	13	11	5	2	3	27	2	3	2	3	3	3	5	2	2	2	0	4	3	1	3
Zurich	Switzerland	123	8	5	5	2	8	65	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	0	4	3	1	1	2
Stockholm	Sweden	31	2	3	1	1	1	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Brussels	Belgium	37	5	3	1	1	1	13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	57	4	5	3	3	3	17	1	3	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	0	3	1	1	1	2
Jakarta	Indonesia	38	4	3	1	1	1	14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1
Cape Town	South Africa	34	3	2	1	1	1	12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1
Mexico City	Mexico	100	6	5	2	4	4	18	2	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	2	0	26	3	1	3	3
São Paulo	Brazil	82	10	5	2	3	2	15	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	0	13	3	2	2	3

\$1486 for a 5-night stay for 2 adults.

Switzerland comes next, scoring 6.37, offering exclusive and high-quality shopping, especially in cities like Zurich and Geneva. The country has 123 luxury stores and offers a VAT rate of 7.7%, with a refund for purchases over approximately \$350. Switzerland has a high safety index and second-highest hotel price of \$1,435 for two adults.

Australia takes sixth place on the list, scoring 6.10 out of 10. The country has a VAT rate of 10% and offers a tourist refund, allowing visitors to reclaim this for goods bought within 60 days of departure. With a high safety index across major cities, Australia also has lower hotel prices for two adults, totaling \$713.

Sweden, with a score of 5.75, is the seventh-best destination for shopaholics. It features 31 luxury stores and has the highest VAT rate among the top ten at 25%, applying to purchases over approximately \$20.

Spain takes the eighth spot with a score of 4.94. It has 118 luxury stores and a 21% VAT rate with a refund for purchases over approximately \$100. Madrid has a lot of active shopping locations, where a hotel for a 5-night stay for 2 adults can be, on average, \$1094.

Germany, with a score of 3.88, ranks ninth as the best destination for shopaholics. With over 171 luxury stores, it ranks fourth in the number of luxury shopping destinations. The country has a 19% VAT rate, alongside a refund policy for purchases over approximately \$55, which makes it cost-effective compared to the higher rates in countries like Italy and Sweden.

UK completes the top ten places for shopaholics with a score of 3.06. Home to 216 luxury stores, UK is not offering VAT refunds. Yet more than a million people are searching online about shopping in the UK. The country has a lower average hotel price of \$456 for two adults and a moderate safety index.

Faizan Khan, the spokesperson from Ubuy, comments on the topic. "In today's shopping world, the lines between online and offline shopping are blurred. Italy, for instance, leads with the highest number of luxury stores, totaling 434, showing a strong preference for in-person shopping. Despite the rise of online shopping, a notable portion of consumer purchases still happen offline. Retailers are coming up with new ideas to improve the shopping experience in their stores, doing things like providing personalized in-store experience with online elements like virtual try-ons and online reservations."

Methodology: The research identifies the best destinations for shopaholics by analyzing key factors relevant to shopping and tourism, which include hotel costs for a 5-night stay for 2 adults, tax rates, safety index, search popularity for shopping, and the number of luxury shops. The luxury store counts were specifically based on the presence of brands, including Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel, Prada, Dior, and other renowned brands. Each was scored on a 0 to 10 scale, where lower hotel costs, higher tax rates (for potential refunds), better safety, more search interest, and more luxury shops all contributed to a higher overall score for a country. ♦



VFS Global attracts over 400 agents across four cities as it kicks off its roadshows

VFS Global kicked off their multi-city roadshows across India to update their travel partners on their preparation for the upcoming peak travel period.

The first four roadshows were held in Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad and the focus remained on two important aspects. One is to book early to avoid disappointment and the second is that visa appointments are free and it's only available on www.vfsglobal.com. Agents were also updated on operational changes within the regions

A total of over 400 agents/tour operators engaged with the senior leadership team of VFS Global and they were led by Vishal Jairath, Head—South Asia, Visa Operations who made presentations in Bhubaneswar and Kolkata; Sharad Gowani, Regional Head—West, addressed the gathering in Ahmedabad and Jaya Amit Mitra, Regional Head—South India, Sri Lanka and Maldives addressed the gathering in Hyderabad.







A FORTNIGHT ON THE LONG WHITE CLOUD

Why shouldn't New Zealand be on the top list for the Indian outbound?

The best way to experience any destination is to get out of the overtly too-well-planned itinerary mould which supposedly gift wraps a destination. In the case of New Zealand, it is such a charming place that very few staid coach tours under a timekeepers watch can ever hope to deliver perfectly.

Just last month, a two week self-drive trip through New Zealand drove the idea with still more conviction that the country needs to be lived in and not traipsed through to get what it's all about.

Reports suggest, not unexpectedly, that arrivals from India to NZ increased 124% over the pre-Covid figures. Indian visitors are next big spenders, close behind the UK and Germans.

What familiarisation trips by most NTOs can't really deliver is the soul of a destination. I've never regretted my decision to explore destinations on my own. A self-travel agenda opens up personal experiences, and that quintessential local flavour that lends credence to the usual glossy brochures and slick promo films.

The abundance of spectacular drives, well-marked roads and the sheer absence of crowds, which most Indians are so accustomed to at home, provides a wonderful time. Or reprieve, if you please.

In fact at almost every adventure site I met a surprising number of young Indian travellers. Many of them were students or young professionals from Australia, but a sizeable number was from mainland India.

Compared to an earlier generation, this new set is more ready to experiment to with new cuisines and dabble in high adrenaline stuff.

Queenstown and Rotorua seems to dominate the adventure experiences. In fact, the Maori history and culture is inevitably played up everywhere but more so in Rotorua since that's the place where the Maoris set up their lives till European interventions created an entirely new world.

When the Maoris first discovered the North Island of that land they famously exclaimed it was just like a long white cloud! Travellers and settlers have never stopped seeking it out ever since.

Conversations with desi travellers I met on adventure trails reveal that a certain word-of-mouth chatter has ignited this young and upwardly mobile fraternity and that is set to make a change for tourism prospects.

The kind of holiday that this demography of Indian travellers is looking for includes adventure activities with them wanting to enjoy natural landscapes through scenic flights, drives and walks.

Meanwhile small interventions or tweaks might make self-drive tours still more convenient. For an eminently memorable country, returning cars at different locations in New Zealand can be a bit

prohibitive. We had to alter our itinerary considerably due to this.

Our original South island itinerary included a visit to Abel Tasman Park and the Marlborough wine area, concluding in taking the scenic ferry from Picton to Wellington. Instead we ended up driving back Queenstown to avoid a needlessly additional obscene expense of returning the car at Picton, Wellington or even Christchurch.

Also, everything shuts down at 8pm or so - no restaurants anywhere for those who tuck in late night. An exception could be Auckland, including central districts of major cities like Wellington.

Additionally, however providential, iffy weather can be any travellers nemesis. Spending just a day and half in Franz Josef where we drove for the glacier heli-ride left us disappointed as rain cancelled the helicopter ride and the glacier walk as well. The next best thing of buying tickets to a saprotrophic half-hour film on the majestic glacier really wasn't compensation enough. Maybe tourism NZ should use AI and create the virtual reality experience like 'Horizons of Khufu' - the amazing virtual reality show at London that walks one through the pyramids! I'm sure that will be a major add-on to the glacier adventures. Thankfully, the next day morning the weather cleared and we took the exciting helicopter ride over Mt. Cook where Edmund Hillary trained before conquering the Everest.

For many new age travellers, mention of NZ still carries an impression of a very British Colonial or European culture as well as the scenery. Indeed there are many similarities. For instance, we found the typical English staple cuisine of pies and fish & chips all over NZ. The beautiful mountains of South Island also competed in our minds with the combined scenery of the European Alps and the Scottish highlands.

Perhaps NZ has a job at hand to break away from that mould and highlight it's absolute uniqueness. It has so many distinct aspects for tourists in terms of its unique flora & fauna, Maori culture and a tradition of adventure activities. They should aggressively market these aspects.

The country is eminently safe and easy to travel, even for those first-time visitors who don't have a lot of travel experience.

If anyone loved the cinematic Lord of the Rings, who won't love its Middle Kingdom where it was filmed to such effect?

Anurag Yadav

Anurag Yadav is a travel author and columnist, writing on hospitality and design. An avid traveller, he has published 5 books and divides his time equally between Delhi and London.

The views are personal.

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Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

Yanolja Cloud Solution (formerly eZee Technosys)

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.vgmtechsolutions.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.vgmtechsolutions.com/form.html>

yanolja
cloud solution

Startup Name: Yanolja Cloud Solution (formerly eZee Technosys)

CEO: Aeijaz Sodawala, **CTO:** Harshdeep Khatri

Founding year: 2005

Company Website: www.yanoljacloudsolution.com

Description:

Yanolja Cloud Solution (formerly eZee Technosys) is an end-to-end global hospitality tech provider with over 17 years of experience. YSC is a complete Hospitality Technology Provider and #1 hotel tech provider in India, which is further solidified by 33,000+ clients and 45,000+ licenses in over 170 countries across the globe. YCS has a stronghold on R&D and is constantly introducing innovations in its solutions to benefit the industry. With a stronghold on R&D, YCS is introducing innovations in its solutions to benefit the industry. Today, eZee is the #1 hotel tech provider in India and the global Top 2 PMS provider.



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Journeying through the Soul

From *Peripatetic Wisdom* to *Peregrinate Devotion*

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

In its various forms, travel has long held a profound place in the human experience. From early pilgrimages to modern-day journeys of self-discovery, travel has been intertwined with spiritual and philosophical exploration. Travel is a tapestry of spiritual exploration, where each traveller weaves their own unique thread. As we journey through life, we may find ourselves drawn to the intellectual, the spiritual, or the transformative aspects of travel, or perhaps to a combination of them all. In this diversity lies the beauty of the human spirit, endlessly seeking, questioning, and evolving on the winding road of travel.

In ancient Greece, the concept of “peripatein” emerged, laying the foundation for the term “peripatetic,” which denotes the act of “walking around” or “wandering about.” Drawn from Aristotle’s teachings, it is not merely about physical movement but a journey of intellectual contemplation and philosophical exploration. The Peripatetic traveller seeks wisdom and enlightenment through travel, viewing each step of the journey as an opportunity to delve deeper into the mysteries of existence. In contrast to the intellectual contemplation of peripatetic philosophy, the term “Peregrinate” carries connotations of a spiritual pilgrimage. Rooted in the Latin word “peregrinari,” which means “to journey abroad,” Peregrinate represents a profound and purposeful journey, often with a spiritual or transformative goal.

Peregrination has deep historical roots, dating back to ancient religious pilgrimages. In Christianity, for example, pilgrims would embark on long and arduous journeys to visit holy sites, seeking spiritual renewal and a closer connection with the divine. These journeys were not undertaken lightly; they were acts of devotion and a means of atonement. Pilgrims believed their physical travels mirrored their inner journey towards spiritual purity and enlightenment.

As the peripatetic philosophy emphasizes intellectual exploration and the pursuit of wisdom and understanding through travel, it aligns with the “*Gyan Marg*,” as it involves seeking knowledge, asking philosophical questions, and engaging in contemplation during the journey. Travelers following this path view the act of travel as a means to gain insights into the world and life’s fundamental

questions.

On the other hand, Peregrinate philosophy aligns with the “*Bhakti Marg*,” which is the path of devotion and surrender. Travellers who peregrinate often undertake journeys with deep spiritual intentions, seeking a closer connection to the divine or a transformative inner experience. It involves rituals, acts of devotion, and a profound sense of faith in the journey’s spiritual significance.

Experiences

Peripatetic travellers thus engage in intellectual and philosophical practices during their journeys. They may record their observations, engage in debates, and ponder the fundamental questions of existence. The travel experience is an intellectual exercise. On the other hand, Peregrinate travellers participate in rituals, prayers, and acts of devotion during their journeys. They may visit holy shrines, perform acts of penance, and seek guidance from religious leaders. The travel experience is a profoundly spiritual and ritualistic one.

Impact

Peripatetic travel often leads to intellectual growth and a broader perspective on the world. Travellers may return with new insights and philosophical perspectives. The impact is primarily cognitive and intellectual. Peregrinate travel often has a profound impact on the traveller’s inner self. It can lead to spiritual transformation, a sense of purification, and a deeper connection to the divine. The impact is primarily spiritual and emotional.

Imagine someone embarking on a journey to explore ancient ruins and historical sites, akin to the peripatetic philosophy. During this adventure, they not only absorb the intellectual richness of these places but also engage in contemplative practices like journaling or philosophical discussions. In a separate case, consider another person taking a pilgrimage to sacred sites or embarking on a spiritual retreat, aligning more with the peregrinate philosophy. This journey involves not only visiting these significant places but also participating in rituals, prayers, and acts of devotion, seeking a deeper connection to the spiritual aspects of life.



In our contemporary world, it’s common for individuals to fuse these approaches. They might visit historical landmarks for their intellectual and cultural value while incorporating mindfulness or meditation to enhance the spiritual dimension of the journey. This blended approach recognizes the interconnectedness of external exploration and inner reflection, turning the act of travel into a transformative experience that nourishes the mind, body, and spirit.

Thus, whether one is on a quest for knowledge or a journey of self-discovery, travel remains a powerful and enriching endeavor, weaving together threads of intellectual curiosity, spiritual devotion, and personal transformation in the diverse fabric of human experience. ♦

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

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IATA's Air Passenger Market Analysis

Resilient industry-wide growth brings global traffic to near recovery

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) released data for January 2024's global passenger demand indicating a strong start for the year. Total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPKs), was up 16.6%; total capacity, measured in available seat kilometers (ASK), was up 14.1%; and the load factor was 79.9% (+ 1.7pt). TravelBiz Monitor presents highlights of the report.

Air passenger market in detail - January 2024

	World share ¹	January 2024 (% year-on-year)			January 2024 (% ch vs the same month in 2019)			
		RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt)	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt)	PLF
TOTAL MARKET	100.0%	16.6%	14.1%	1.7%	-0.4%	-0.5%	0.1%	79.9%
International	60.1%	20.8%	20.9%	0.0%	-4.3%	-4.1%	-0.2%	79.7%
Domestic	39.9%	10.4%	4.6%	4.2%	6.7%	5.8%	0.7%	80.2%

¹% of industry RPKs in 2023

Industry-wide traffic is now closer than ever to monthly recovery

Industry-wide air passenger traffic, measured in revenue passenger-kilometers (RPK), is now closer than ever to achieving monthly recovery, standing just 0.4% under 2019 levels (**Chart 1**).

Growth momentum was sustained as the new year began, total traffic increased 16.6% year-on-year (YoY) and 1.2% month-on-month (MoM) in seasonally adjusted terms, a strong performance considering that the industry is now approaching the 2019 threshold. Industry seat capacity rose consistently with passenger numbers. Available seat-kilometers (ASKs), saw 14.1% annual growth and reached 99.5% of pre-pandemic levels, as a result passenger load factor (PLF) was 1.7 and 0.1 percentage points (ppt) above the same month's level in 2023 and 2019 respectively. Regions saw diverse but mostly positive outcomes, in line with the observations at the global scale (**Chart 2**).

The majority of airline regions have now exceeded their 2019 benchmark on a monthly basis. North America has sustained recovery for the longest time, growing over pre-Covid numbers for 10 consecutive months. Asia Pacific was the only region to not see

pre-pandemic levels of traffic, nevertheless sitting only 6.7% under January 2019 numbers and still experiencing stark growth as total RPK increased 31.8% YoY.

The region has been driving most of the industry-wide growth over the past months, contributing to more than half of the global RPK annual increase (**Chart 3**). The ongoing recovery in that part of the globe will continue to propel industry figures but also fuelling further growth as key markets continue to expand. Overall, great momentum subsists at the industry scale with strong annual growth while total traffic is closer than ever to 2019 levels.

Diverse outcomes on the domestic side...

Domestic traffic in monitored economies have seen diverse developments. Domestic tourism in PR China stimulated further expansion in air traffic, in comparison to the same month in 2019 and 2023, RPK increased 15.0% and 33.2% respectively (**Chart 4**). Seat capacity in the country remained elevated compared to the previous years, reflecting the market's expansion as well as the more frequent use of widebody jets.

Traffic in India stood steady against pre-pandemic levels in January while increasing 3.9% YoY. Japan previously saw declining traffic in relation to the broader economic situation and sentiment in the country, in January RPK increased 3.1% MoM in seasonally adjusted terms after 3 consecutive months of decline. Nevertheless, traffic levels were only 4.3% under pre-pandemic while growing 2.9% annually.

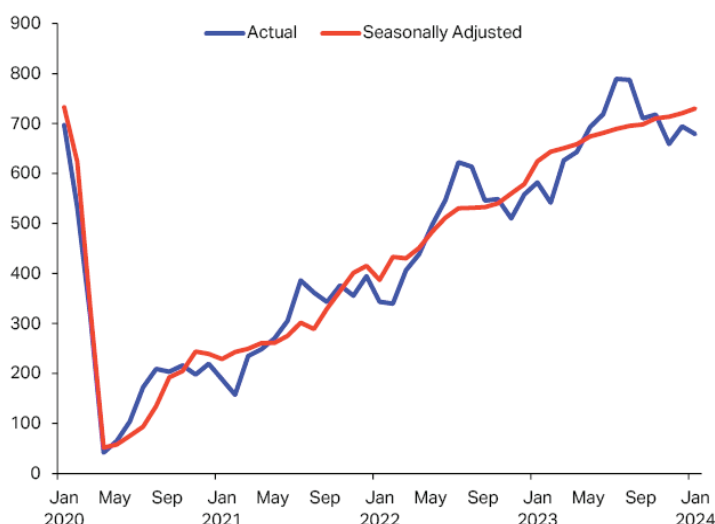
Passenger traffic in Australia underperformed in January. While RPK were 12.7% under pre-Covid, the country saw 5.3% YoY growth. Passenger load factor was 5.7ppt inferior in contrast to the same month in 2019.

US domestic traffic saw a slight decline of 2.2% MoM in seasonally adjusted terms, explained by the harsh winter weather conditions some parts of the country experienced over the month. Despite those events, traffic growth continued at a solid rate of 3.1% YoY and 5.9% against pre-pandemic. In Brazil domestic growth stagnated as RPK increased by a modest 0.2% YoY. As opposed to 2019 numbers, the country's passenger numbers also trended sideways, extending the trend observed over the past year (**Chart 4**).

...while international traffic recovery remains on track

Industry-wide RPK growth remained on track as the new year started, making an additional step towards recovery. Passenger traffic grew 20.8% YoY and apace MoM with 1.2% growth in seasonally

Chart 1 – Global air passengers, RPK, billions per month



Sources: IATA Sustainability and Economics, IATA Monthly Statistics

Chart 2 – Total RPK growth by airline region of registration, YoY% change vs. 2019

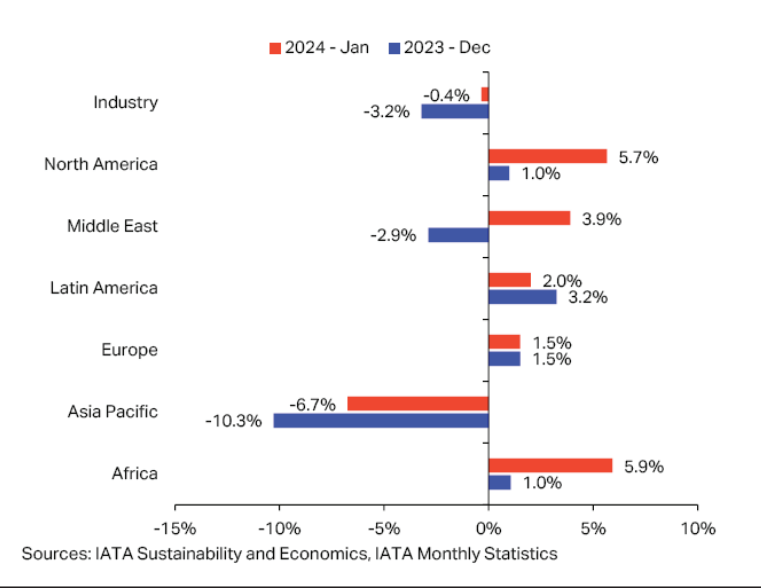
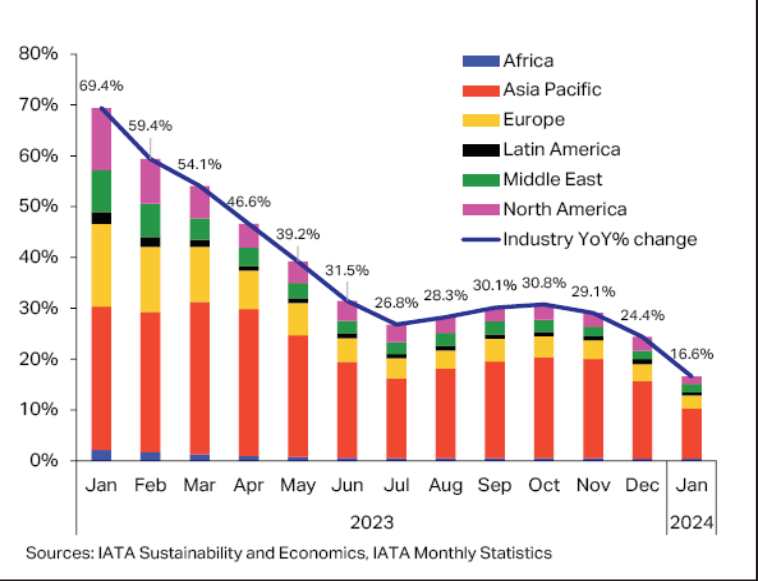


Chart 3 – Regional contribution to industry annual total RPK growth



adjusted terms. Airlines in all regions have seen growth over the year led by Asia Pacific where international RPK increased 45.4% YoY. Despite tailing the other regions in terms of recovery, Asia Pacific RPK climbed rapidly towards 2019 levels in January, reaching 83.7% (Chart 5).

Europe and Latin America as well as the Middle East also maintained a positive direction as international traffic trended around pre-pandemic numbers in January. Africa saw 2.9% growth over January 2019, achieving monthly recovery for the first time since the initial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. North American carriers still lead the industry as these outperform 2019 international passenger numbers by 6.4%.

International traffic in major route areas largely reflected the performance of airlines in different regions. Passenger flows over the North Atlantic between North America and Europe still boast outstanding results compared to major traffic lanes, RPK were 6.5% above pre-pandemic in January. This route area has now fully recovered and continues to expand as January marked the 13th consecutive month of growth over 2019 levels (Chart 6). Route areas between the Americas, Europe and the Middle East have been leading in outperforming 2019 levels across the board. The ramp up of international operations from and to the Asia Pacific region has accelerated in January 2024 compared to the previous month

(Chart 6), with the exception of the Asia – North America route area where geopolitical tensions have impacted the complete return of air services between PR China and the US. ♦

Chart 4 – Domestic RPK growth by market, YoY% change vs. 2019

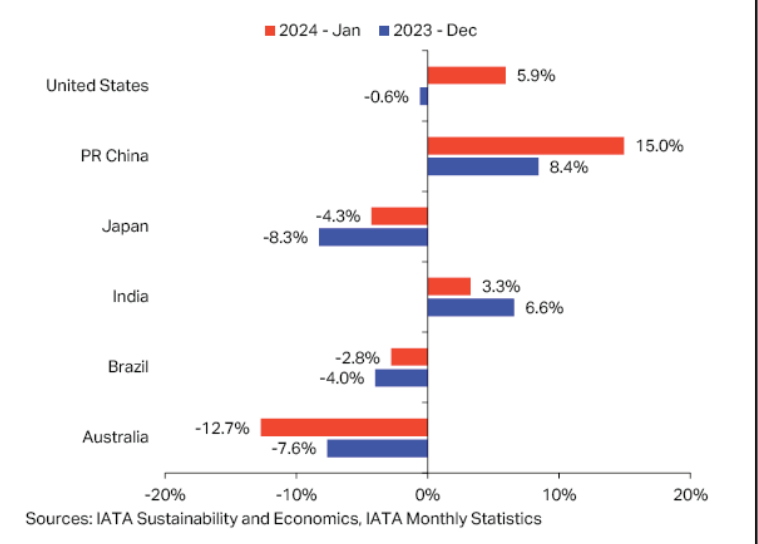


Chart 5 – International RPK growth by airline region of registration, YoY% change versus 2019

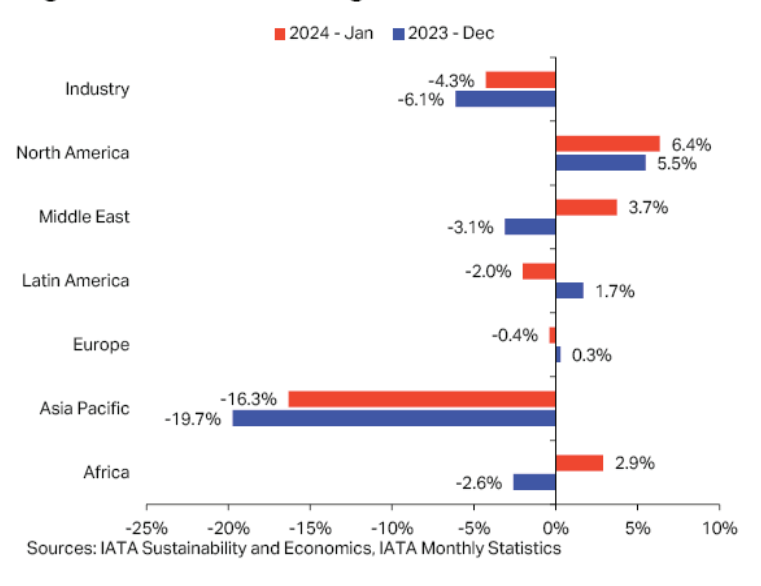
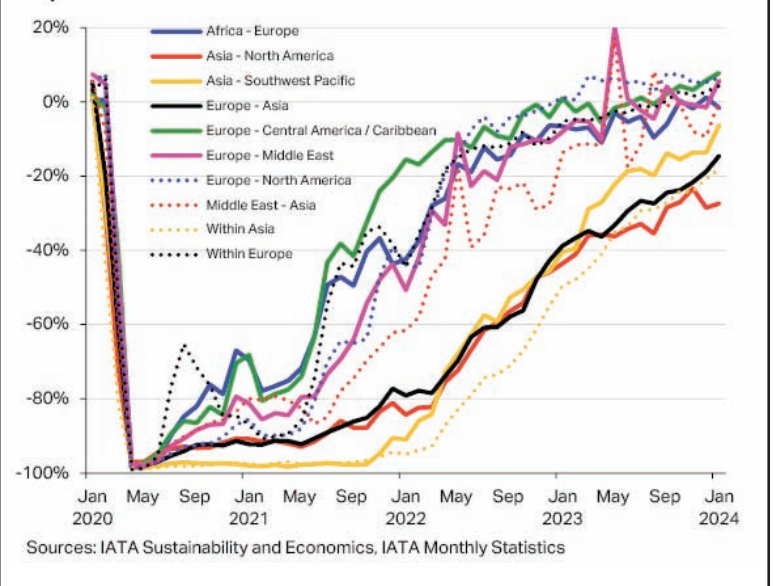


Chart 6 – International RPK, YoY% change vs. 2019 – Top 10 route areas in 2019



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