

Atout France confident of major rebound in Indian arrivals by 2024-25

TBM Staff | Mumbai



Caroline Leboucher

Caroline Leboucher, the CEO of Atout France, expressed optimism about the resurgence of outbound travel from India, anticipating a return to pre-COVID levels by the end of the year or early 2025.

Speaking exclusively to

TravelBiz Monitor in Toulouse, Leboucher highlighted the excitement surrounding France's hosting of the Olympics Games and Summer Paralympics, viewing these events as catalysts for tourism.

"France received 549,770 arrivals from India in 2023 vs. 700,000 in 2019, which is a deficit of around 22% of pre-Covid arrival numbers. Alongside India, Japan and China are other two key Asian markets that have still have a larger arrival deficit of around 40% and 60%, respectively, when compared to their pre-Covid arrivals. With France hosting world-class sporting events and the entire excitement around these huge

tournaments, we are confident of a large number of tourists coming to witness historic moments. We are already seeing recovery from India, and our assessment is to reach the pre-Covid number of arrivals by year end or early 2025," she said.

TBM EXCLUSIVE

To support the recovery efforts and enhance engagement with trade partners in India, Atout

France has implemented various initiatives. These include conducting training sessions and workshops aimed at equipping frontline staff with comprehensive destination knowledge and tools for creating tailored itineraries. Additionally, the organisation is actively promoting the 'France Connaisseur' online training programme in the Indian market.

By leveraging such outreach programmes and the heightened interest generated by major sporting events, Atout France aims to facilitate the resurgence of tourism from India, with the goal of returning to pre-pandemic arrival numbers by the end of 2024 or early 2025. ♦

Destination DC records 50% growth in visitations from India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Destination DC, the destination marketing organisation of Washington DC, has seen a growth of 50% in visitations from India, year-on-year during 2023.

Elliot Ferguson Jr., President and CEO, Destination DC, during his recent visit to Mumbai, said, "India ranks no 4 in terms of visitations, and we have seen 147,000 Indians during 2023 that is a 50% growth over 2022, and 11% hike over 2019."

He said these visitors landed directly into the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. "The key for us is how we continue direct flights from key cities in to Dallas. Leisure is a predominant proportion of inflow into the US, and MICE vertical is a growing opportunity, and business travel continues to be going strong."

Citing example of changing traveller preferences, he said that in the past the East Coast and West Coast of the USA were the preferred choices by Indians for exploration. "But now with direct air access, travellers want to explore newer destinations, indulge in enriching local experiences and explore local farm to fork options."

With regards to their strategy for the B2B market, he said, "We are keen to increase frequency of visits, the number of destinations that one visits, increase average length of stay and boost visitor spending. In that direction, we are working with operators to equip them with better tools and content to share with their client. Additionally, air connections will only further aid travel to the USA. Our airport authorities are always seeking newer destinations, and we are supportive of their endeavours." ♦



Elliot Ferguson Jr.



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SSR Travel Solutions brings 12 exhibitors for maiden three-city 'Bali Luxury Show' in India

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Cashing on the growing interest for Bali among Indian travellers with direct flight services, Mumbai-based SSR Travel Solutions recently hosted its first edition of the 'Bali Luxury Show' across New Delhi and Ahmedabad finally concluding the showcase in Mumbai. A delegation of 12 exhibitors including hotels and airlines interacted with the travel trade counterparts in each city on their offerings suited to the Indian clientele.

All the 12 exhibitors were unanimous in their opinion of the pleasant working experience with SSR Travel Solutions with quality business leads and conversion of deals, positioning the company among preferred choice of DMCs for Bali in India. Many of the exhibitors were first-time participants or entrants in India to gain their share of the burgeoning outbound pie from India.

Talking to **TravelBiz Monitor**, Sapneal Rao, Founder & CEO, SSR Travel Solutions, said, "This is must first roadshow with multiple hotels from Bali. The focus of SSRTS



is luxury, and there are many quality hotels in Bali that don't have visibility in India. These properties were keen to come to India and meet their trade partners. We have hotels from different locations in Bali participating at the roadshow, and having a limited number of exhibitors was a conscious choice to focus on the quality of discussions targeting the upcoming summer season. We have senior representatives of the hotels showcasing

their top-notch facilities to cater to the Indian market."

Rao said that they have plans to host the second edition of the roadshow in Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Kolkata by end 2024 or early 2025. "With direct flight access by Vistara and IndiGo, these hotels were keen to have their presence in India. We had 120 premium agents interacting with these partners." ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

'We target all segments of travellers from India'

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

"India is one of the top 10 markets worldwide for us," stated Mahmoud Abdelnaby, Director of Global Sales, APAC, Middle East & Africa, Melia Hotels International, while speaking on the sidelines of an event in Mumbai recently. He also said that post-COVID, the performance of Melia Hotels across the globe is quite encouraging. "There are a few destinations like Japan where we couldn't open our operations in the beginning of 2023. In such markets, we haven't fully recovered yet. But in other markets like Spain and Europe, we are doing very well," said Abdelnaby.

Melia Hotels have introduced four brands in the last three years. "We have worked hard and introduced four different brands in the market. Some of our properties have been converted from premium to luxury hotels," said Abdelnaby. In their endeavour to stay ahead in the market, they are keenly studying the



Mahmoud Abdelnaby

market as well as their competitors and taking steps accordingly. "By doing so, we are creating a benchmark for ourselves not only in the European market but also worldwide. We are also focusing a lot on sustainability; our hotel has been recognized as the best hotel in Europe and third in the world," he said.

Abdelnaby, categorically stated that they have no plan to open a hotel in India as of now. When asked to comment on the number of Indians staying at their properties in Vietnam, he said, "Vietnam is one of the favourite destinations for Indians. In Vietnam, we have 21 properties but are facing an obstacle. Not all cities of Vietnam are well exposed to the Indian market due to a lack of connectivity with India. But we have observed Indians staying there for longer time, which is 10-15 nights," he pointed out.

Talking about the target segments from India, Abdelnaby said that they have hotels for all categories; hence, they target all segments of travellers from India. ♦

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Uzbekistan Airways starts Mumbai-Tashkent flights

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Uzbekistan Airways JSC, the national carrier of Uzbekistan, today launched twice weekly flights from Mumbai to Tashkent.

The airline has been operating regular flights to New Delhi since over two decades now, and currently operating daily flights to Tashkent with onward connections to Europe, USA, Middle East and all of Central Asia.

The flight on Tuesday from Mumbai leaves at 5.40 am to reach Tashkent at 9.10 am, on the return leg, the flight leaves Tashkent at 11.20 pm to land in Mumbai at 4.10 am.

The second flight operating on Saturday leaves Mumbai at 3.05 pm to land in Tashkent at

6.35 pm. On its return, the flight leaves Tashkent at 8.50 am, to land in Mumbai at 1.40 pm.

All passenger sales for Uzbekistan Airways are managed by its New Delhi-based PSA, Aero World Travels & India Sales & BSP Consolidator Arya Enterprises.

Ajay Arya, Managing Director, Arya Enterprises and Aero World Travels, comes with the experience of heading Soviet and CIS carriers for more than four decades. He has been focussed on supporting Uzbekistan Airways in all its endeavours and spreading its wings all over the India and beyond destinations. His initiatives



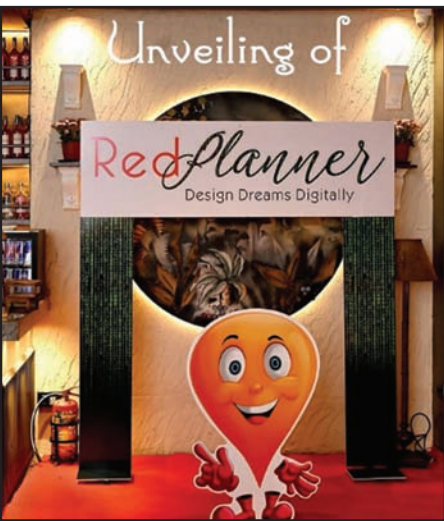
have helped develop Uzbekistan as a favourable tourism and MICE destination ex India over the past couple of decades. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

Red Carpet Travels unveils 'Red Planner' platform for seamless travel planning

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Mumbai-based Red Carpet Travels has unveiled its latest innovation, the 'Red Planner' platform. This ground-breaking technology offers live inventory of five long-haul destinations, including Canada, Scandinavia, Europe, USA, and Australia.



The 'Red Planner' platform provides travel agents with unprecedented access to ready-made packages at their fingertips, allowing them to customise itineraries with just a few clicks.

According to Rajesh Kakade, Founder & Global Director, Red Carpet Travels, the brain behind this cutting-edge system, it is the

fastest operating platform of its kind, designed to serve premium destinations effortlessly.

Kakade emphasised the platform's role in educating agents and newcomers about these sought-after destinations, making it easier for them to sell packages efficiently. The integration of 'Red Planner' with Römu, their new mascot, promises to empower agents to handle inquiries swiftly, resulting in increased conversions and revenue.

Key features of the platform include a user-friendly interface available in multiple languages, enabling agents worldwide to utilise it seamlessly. Additionally, 'Red Planner' boasts a vast repository of pre-designed itineraries, along with tools to customise them in real-time based on client preferences. Detailed excursion information and multimedia resources

further enrich the itinerary planning process.

To spread awareness among this service, Red Carpet Travels has planned an extensive marketing strategy. This includes participation in trade shows, digital engagement through social media and webinars, and leveraging the power of word-of-mouth marketing. ♦

Cyprus Airways appoints Girisons Airways as Direct Sales Agent in India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Cyprus Airways, the flag carrier of Cyprus, has unveiled its strategic move to establish a Direct Sales Agent in India, aimed at enhancing accessibility and convenience for travellers from the subcontinent. This development underscores the airline's commitment to providing seamless travel experiences and fostering tourism growth in Cyprus.

Cyprus Airways tickets are now readily available for purchase in India through their appointed Direct Sales Agent, Girisons Airways Pvt Ltd., situated in Mumbai and managed by Vivek Jain. This strategic collaboration not only enhances accessibility for Indian travellers but also fortifies Cyprus Airways' presence in the global aviation landscape, promising a seamless and enjoyable travel experience for all passengers.

Having attained the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) certification in 2018, Cyprus Airways solidifies its reputation for operational excellence and passenger safety.

Driven by its long-term goal to serve as a catalyst for tourism expansion in Cyprus, the airline continues to offer a diverse array of travel options for both local and international passengers. Operating out of the Larnaca International Airport, Cyprus Airways boasts a dedicated team of over 150 professionals, ensuring exceptional service aboard its Airbus fleet, comprising A320 and A220 aircraft, equipped with both Economy and Business Class seating options.

In its summer 2024 schedule, Cyprus Airways extends its reach to various European destinations from Larnaca, including Rome, Milan, Zurich, Paris, Barcelona, Brussels, Prague, Athens, and an array of Greek islands. Additionally, the airline has recently initiated thrice-weekly flights to Dubai.

Indian travellers are now presented with the opportunity to seamlessly incorporate Cyprus into their European travel itineraries, with the option of spending 2 to 3 days in the country. This add-on programme offers flexibility, enabling travellers to purchase a return ticket from Cyprus, thus optimising their journey across multiple European cities. For instance, travellers can conveniently opt for routes like Rome-Cyprus-Paris, thereby economising both time and expenses on the Rome to Paris leg of their journey. ♦

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Disha Shah Ghosh

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in



FCM Travel India is bullish about prospects of business travel from Southeast Asia, Greater China and its youngest source market of Japan. Sunny Sodhi, Managing Director, FCM Travel India spoke to Disha Shah Ghosh about the MICE segments driving growth, and their focus areas.

Meetings in 2023 had an exponential growth of more than 300 per cent. We have also seen a 30 per cent increase in requests for incentive trips which are making a comeback. Also known as employee reward programmes, incentive trips are used to boost employee engagement and productivity.

Q For FCM Travel, besides India which are the top 5 key priority markets in Asia?

Southeast Asia, Greater China and Japan are priority markets for FCM Travel. Asia has continued to outperform with strong performances across Southeast Asia and the re-opening of China. Japan is our youngest market, and it is an exciting and dynamic market for business travel as it is the 4th leading business tourism market based on total travel spending.

Q What is your strategy to drive the business travel market in India?

There are several strategies in place. We have heavily invested in technology and recently announced our corporate AI Centre

‘FCM Travel India’s revenue has grown by more than 20% as compared to 2019’

Q In terms of global pecking order as well as its position in the APAC region, where does India rank as a source market for business travel?

India is the 9th largest market in the world based on business travel spending. It is the 4th largest market in the Asia Pacific region, representing 5.7 per cent of business travel spend in the region.

Q What has been the growth of the business travel segment in India during 2023, and your forecast for 2024?

FCM Travel India has seen an overall business growth of more than 20 per cent in 2023 compared to 2019. FCM India’s Meetings & Events revenue has also doubled. With India’s GDP estimated to grow at 6.8 per cent in 2024, we expect a robust year ahead.

“

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Q Which vertical of the MICE segment is driving this growth of business travel from India?

of Excellence which has seen new features added to our suite of products already available to improve the customer experience and increase our operational productivity.

Aside from technology, we’ve also been working tirelessly towards clear and consistent strategies that have been successfully executed globally, with these strategies initially focusing on ‘Grow to Win’, but now also include productive operations.

We are also investing in FCM Meetings & Events which has just announced the launch of FCM Venue Finder, a platform that revolutionises the booking process for meetings and group hotel accommodations within the MICE industry.

Q What has been your revenue growth in 2023?

FCM Travel India’s revenue has grown by more than 20 per cent as compared to 2019. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in



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Tourism Administration, MOTC

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & CEO

Sheldon Santwan

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Prasenjit Chakraborty

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

+91 9819263364

EDITORIAL TEAM

MUMBAI

NEWS EDITOR: Disha Shah Ghosh

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

+91 9619453170

SR.REPORTER: Asmita Mukherjee

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

+91 98342 55360

CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh & Colleen Gantzer, Anurag Yadav,

Hector D'souza, Nimit Chaudhary &

Amala Dantas

MARKETING TEAM

MUMBAI

HEAD - SALES & MARKETING

Ajay Wadode

+91 8087127814

ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

GOA

HEAD - GOA

Harshad R. Bhonsle

+91 8999047490

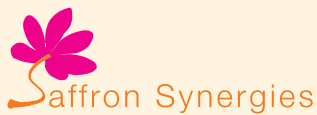
harshadrhonsle@gmail.com

COORDINATION, SUBSCRIPTION & DATABASE

Gauri Sawant: +91 8369080796

gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in

*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act



Sterling House, 5/7 Sorabji Santuk Lane,
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GROUND REALITY

There has been a steady surge among hospitality brands for announcements of ambitious hotel openings and expansion in newer and niche destinations hitherto not frequented by the Indian traveller. Take the example of Ayodhya, a host of hotel companies have jumped on the bandwagon to get their fair share of tourists visiting the pilgrim destination to seek blessings at the Ram Temple.

But it is between these announcements lies the ground reality. Such gigantic development of real estate projects would require a huge workforce to manage the property, and deliver on the brand virtue of exceptional service and sustainability ethos. This requires localisation of the brand and tweaking of the umbrella guidelines to meet the needs and suit the profile of the traveller visiting a relatively newer destination in search of an overwhelming experience.

No longer are we living in times when a cookie-cutter model would work across different geographies. The more sensitive the brand is to the evolving traveller, the easier it is to meet their expectations. There is every possibility that the experience at a certain brand in a city location is unsatisfactory, while the similar property would outperform on guest expectations in a largely underdeveloped location. The reverse of this could also be a circumstance. While the addition of new and upcoming hotels is a positive sign, and demonstrates the scope of growth of tourism and interest in newer locations, the crucial requirement of manpower with necessary skill sets and technical know-how in an extremely competitive world is non-negotiable.

And that's where established brands and skill development agencies like THSC have a key role to play by not only creating a dialogue for level-playing field on pay parity, but also making enough room for up-skilling of workforce at regular intervals. The final onus is on the hotel management companies and chains to drive the industry in a direction that is not only prepared for today, but also ready for the future.



Disha Shah Ghosh
News Editor
disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

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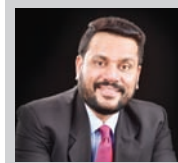
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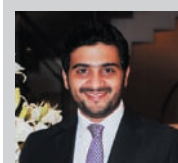
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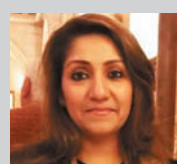
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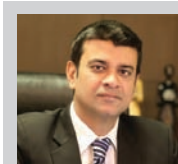
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A TRIP DOWN UNDER

Australia is friendlier, more panoramic, urban and majestically aboriginal at the same time than many parts of the world.

If one wants to connect with its people, nearly two thirds of Australians live in just five metro cities of Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide- so- that's where you go. Melbourne and Sydney, both rapidly growing cities, consistently high on liveability indexes appeals to a plethora of immigrants and tourists alike.

Both cities (like much of the country) derive heavily from English colonial heritage in street names as well as the style of architecture. But this is probably where the similarities end, especially for Sydney. Sydney boasts of a unique topography where the ocean interweaves intricately into that particular landscape, creating waterway inlets, bays, and a plethora of beaches.

Sydney's transport infrastructure criss-crosses between buses, trams, a much smaller metro, but a wide network of ferries. During our short stay, we took ferries to Mosman and Manly from Circular Quay, which is right next to the Sydney opera house. The sunset trip on the ferry was a memorable and inexpensive way of admiring the Sydney iconic landmarks of the Harbour Bridge and opera house.

Now there is a beach for every need in Sydney - from the world famous Bondi beach to the much smaller hidden coves and beaches that attract surfers, instagrammers, families, quiet swimmers and naturist sunbathers. One is never far from the water in Sydney, and the locals make the best use of it.

Melbourne has historically always been busy playing catch-up to the more popular and exciting Sydney, but as I experienced myself, it has now arrived on the scene in its own stead. It's more of the culture and gastronomic scene where Melbourne has attempted to create a unique imprint on the world stage.

While Melbourne's street art scene appeared to be a poorer cousin of London's Shoreditch, it is still quite vast and interspersed with innumerable cafes and restaurants. In fact, Melbourne has a higher density of cafes and restaurants than any other major world city. So much for city life.

Let's face it. Food isn't really Australia's original forte. It knows this and has taken the bull by its horns recently to turn matters around. What it lacks in authenticity, it has made up for in quality and improvisation. With the increasing Indian diaspora in the large cities, emergence and acceptance of Indian cuisine in the mainstream is well and truly underway.

The world famous Great Barrier Reef is the hotbed of all sorts

of marine life in Australia. Lady Elliot Island, at the southernmost tip of the reef, houses the highest density of bird species and a mesmerising coral spectacle.

Back on the coast at Brandenburg, we had a chance to see visit the Mon Repos turtle centre during hatching season. There was a rewarding midnight experience to see a turtle hatchling scramble towards on the sand and be swept away by the waves into the moonlit ocean.

Another unique experience in Australia was being able to watch a kangaroo family hop into the huge backyard of our Airbnb and remain there fairly unperturbed by our presence at a little distance. The Great Ocean Road is one of the world's great road trips and we enjoyed every moment of it. Car hire in Australia is very straight forward. Unfortunately the GPS signal was patchy and even non-existent at times in remote sections of the drive where one might need it most. Despite that in a broader sense, driving Down Under was a pleasure.

One place that has reinvented itself in the last four years is Uluru (or Ayer's Rock as previously known). The vast Red Centre of Australia is still home to the many Aboriginal tribes who are the original landowners. Thankfully Australia has respectfully recognised them lately. Many recent changes, including a ban on climbing the sacred Uluru rock in 2020 and removal of all motels from the national park itself, have meant that the place can be seen in its natural glory. That is also in line with the wishes of the Anangu tribe who have rightfully received back its ownership.

What can Australia do better to get more tourists, especially from Indian shores? Well, curated trips for desi honeymooners - adventure activities, beach resorts, wildlife themed Itineraries for one. More resorts for families near wildlife parks, preservation centres and just outside urban centres and a sustained plug for self-drive Itineraries among others can help as well.

My trip was majorly self-drive and we are glad we did it!

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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VFS Global travel trade outreach attracts 1,200 agents across 12 cities

VFS Global, advancing its pre-season engagement with the travel trade in India, organised a series of roadshows across 12 cities in February and March. The roadshows enabled the company to share insights on their plans for the upcoming peak travel season and provided the agents a platform to address the challenges that they encounter.

The programme commenced in Bhubaneswar on 19 February and concluded on 26 March in Kochi. The other cities where these roadshows were conducted include Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Jalandhar, Chandigarh, New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, and Chennai. Over 1,200 agents from across these cities participated in the event.

The events focussed on the need to book appointments in advance as most countries accept visa applications up to 90 days (3 months) before the date of travel. According to the revised Schengen Visa Code, effective 09th February 2020, one can apply for a Schengen visa up to 6 months before the date of travel.

Another issue that was reiterated at the meet was that visa appointments are free and it's only available on www.vfsglobal.com.

The agents were also updated on the operational changes taking place within the regions and VFS Global took the opportunity to promote Visa At Your Doorstep (VAYD), services and Premium Lounge.

The VFS Global team was led by Vishal Jairath, Head—South Asia, Visa Operations; Sharad Gowani, Regional Head—West, and Jaya Amit Mitra, Regional Head—South India, Sri Lanka and Maldives addressed the travel agents at their respective locations.

The event received overwhelming response from travel association such as the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), and the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI). Jyoti Mayal, President TAAI and Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, addressed the agent community in Delhi and Mumbai respectively.





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that rival the best in the world. With expanding capacities and new plans for 2024, Taiwan is poised to elevate the MICE experience to new heights.

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HICSA 2024: Record attendance marks Hospitality Industry's recovery and innovation

TBM Staff | Bengaluru

Hotelivate hosted the 19th Edition of its Hotel Investment Conference – South Asia (HICSA) at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa on 2 – 4 April 2024. This annual event is India's largest hospitality investment conference and this year it saw over 725 delegates in attendance representing various businesses across the hospitality spectrum which indicated a turning point in the industry's recovery.

The theme this year was "Savouring South Asia: Innovations in Food, Tech, and Design" which focused on the food and beverage sector and all the innovations and possibilities around it. This industry event united leaders, visionaries, and influencers from the hospitality and investment sectors for an immersive exploration of the region's rich culinary heritage, technological advancements, and cutting-edge design trends.

This year, HICSA saw the presence of three Global CEOs as speakers for this conference. Sébastien Bazin – Chairman & CEO – Accor, Mark S. Hoplamazian – President & CEO – Hyatt Hotels Corporation and Federico J. González – Executive Vice-Chairman – Radisson Hotel Group and CEO – Louvre Hotels Group.

This year's highlight was also the Culinary Carnival which brought together talented chefs, artisanal food vendors, and passionate hoteliers on Wednesday, 03rd April 2024 at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Golfshire Resort and Spa.

At the Culinary Carnival, there was a diverse and mouth-watering array of dishes from some of the most famous restaurants across India. From street food classics to gourmet delicacies, there was something for every palate. This flavorful adventure was open for all for dinner, as a part of the conference main agenda and received very good feedback. The participating restaurants were – Le Cirque – The Leela Hotels Resorts & Palaces, Glass Kitchen & Bar – IHG, Thai Soul – Hyatt, East – Marriott International, Dum Pukht – ITC Hotels, Farzi Café – Massive Restaurants and Inja – Atelier House Hospitality. The celebrations partners were Paul John Distilleries.

Commenting on the 19th anniversary of HICSA, Manav Thadani, Founder Chairman of Hotelivate said "This year has been truly exceptional, with attendees showing remarkable morale and spirit, and the numbers speak for themselves! We were thrilled to host numerous global CEOs as speakers at HICSA, making it an event of global significance and impact. All the sessions were extremely well received in terms of attendance as well as content. We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from our delegates, speakers and





sponsors for both the conference as well the culinary carnival. None of this would have been possible without them”.

A collection of presentations, keynotes, interviews and panel discussions covered a plethora of themes and topics as industry stalwarts addressed the changes that hospitality is facing in the recovery phase of the industry and highlighted the growth potential and investment opportunities going forward. HICSA 2024 was spread over a span of three days and aimed to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of South Asian hospitality, spotlighting the intersection of food, technology, and design within the industry. The conference featured an array of engaging sessions, keynote presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshops led by esteemed industry experts and thought leaders.

Some of the key highlights of the event apart from the thought-provoking sessions were Kapil Bhatia, Executive Chairman, Interglobe Enterprises who was felicitated with a Lifetime Achievement Award, celebrating a professional journey like no other. He was seen attending the event with his grandson. The ‘HICSA Hotels of the Year Awards’ presented by MakeMyTrip, recognizes the most remarkable new hotel developments in the South Asian region and as usual saw a great number of nominations. The awards have over the past ten years grown from strength-to-strength and now encompass a wide range of accommodation products across the lodging industry. Since its inception, more than 500 hotels have been nominated in various categories.





The winner of the Critics' Choice Award for Leisure was Ahu Bay, Sri Lanka and for the Urban was Greenpark Bengaluru. The winners across the other six categories were: JW Marriott Goa in the Luxury/ Upper Upscale Hotel Segment; Storii by ITC Hotels Moira Riviera, Goa for the Boutique Hotels segment; Greenpark Bengaluru in the Upscale Hotel Segment; Novotel Mumbai International Airport in the Upper Mid-Market Segment; Ginger Mumbai Airport in the Mid-Market Segment and Ibis Styles Goa Vagator in the Budget/Economy Segment.

The General Manager of the Year Awards, presented by MakeMyTrip was another highlight this year. These awards used to be a part of the Hotel Operations Summit India (HOSI) and while that conference took a hiatus in 2023, our commitment to celebrating excellence in the hospitality industry remains steadfast. The prestigious GM of the Year Awards were seamlessly integrated into the Hotel Investment Conference South Asia (HICSA) as the closing event of the main conference on Thursday, 04th April 2024. These awards are a wonderful opportunity to recognize and highlight the hard work and outstanding performance displayed by the General Managers untiringly running the show. The Jury Special Recognition Award went to Satyajeeet Krishnan – Taj Mahal, New Delhi. For the Budget Category of hotels, the winner was Tarun Singh – Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Manipal, for the Mid-Market/ Upper Mid-Market segment – the winner was Arjun Kaggallu – Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences, in the Upscale / Upper Upscale category, there were two winners with the exact same score: Sanjay Pandita – Aurika, Coorg – Luxury by Lemon Tree Hotels and Rajneesh Kumar – Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort, and for the Luxury Category, the winner was George Bennet Kuruvilla – The Ritz-Carlton Bengaluru.

The conference ultimately concluded with the famous "Hot Seat Debate" moderated by Manav Thadani, which put the spotlight on its panelists, bringing it all out in the open and with this, it brought an end to the most exciting three days. ♦





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The burgeoning “younger” affluent travellers’ segment is certainly keeping us occupied. The integration of artificial intelligence and its evolving role in this realm promises exciting prospects for the future, says **Christine Galle-Luczak, Founder & Managing Director, Heavens Portfolio** in an interaction with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

write or book with our clients- as if Heavens Portfolio was simply an extension of our client’s own sales and marketing team.

Q What trends do you foresee shaping the luxury travel sector in the coming years, and how is Heavens Portfolio adapting to stay ahead?

Conscious travel is becoming increasingly popular as a trend where you are employing the time and money spent in travelling to bring value for not just the travellers but also the community they visit.

The up-and-coming “younger” affluent segment of travellers is for sure keeping us busy too! Artificial intelligence and all the changes that it brings in that space will be fun to work with in the coming years.

We are incorporating, in our strategic planning, a lot of end consumer events which are targeted to ensure consumers understand the true proposition of our brands. This comes in many different forms— one can bring a specialist/ expert to share his knowledge and experience; other events are wellness-driven where we can bring in doctors or experts in healing who can share recommendations for healthy aging. The idea is to equip the end consumer first so they can make a well-informed decision for their travel plans. We often collaborate with third parties such as concierge agencies or consortia, in order to build such events. This is also when we can expose the sustainability approach of our clients with a greater impact.

Other plans in our development is to look for properties that are located “out of the beaten track” which seems to be where the luxury travellers seem to be increasingly interested. Moving away from only city hubs and exploring authentic remote areas.

These are just a few examples, however we have many others that are in the pipeline to ensure we are up to speed with ever-changing trends.

Q As a leader, what values and principles guide your decision-making process within Heavens Portfolio, especially concerning sustainability and responsible tourism?

As the CEO and founder, my leadership philosophy is grounded in a deep commitment to empowering individuals, fostering innovation, and driving sustainable growth. At the core of my approach is rooted in a steadfast commitment to vision, service, and adaptability. By embodying these principles and inspiring others to do the same, I am confident that we can chart a course toward sustained success, meaningful impact, and enduring value for our organization and all those we serve.

Sustainability indeed is at the forefront of our values and deeply ingrained into the company’s foundation. Not only do team

‘Conscious travel emerges as a rising trend’

Q What inspired you to establish Heavens Portfolio, and how has your vision evolved since its inception?

Heavens Portfolio is a labour of love and passion inspired by the need to discover new territories and travel experiences. A dream that I continue to carefully grow and goals we continue to achieve year on year. Having spent more than twenty-four years in Asia, this captivating continent never ceases to amaze me. In 2001, I was appointed the Director of Sales and Marketing at Chiva-Som, Thailand, a phenomenal experience where I truly understood the value of luxury hospitality. This enriching environment is what prompted the conception of an independent business venture that would fuse my former experience and expertise.

I was keen on providing personal marketing strategies for truly extraordinary travel destinations. As a result, Heavens Portfolio was launched in July 2005 in Singapore and grew to be the leader in Hotel and destination representation in Asia with satellite offices where 80 team members are currently providing their expertise to a portfolio of 50 hotels amongst them are Cheval Blanc by LVMH, Armani, Belmond, Oetker, Capella, Chiva-Som and many more iconic hotels.

Q Could you share some insights into the unique challenges and opportunities you’ve encountered as a CEO in the luxury travel industry?

I find that our industry has come a long way

and we no longer suffer what could be seen 20 years ago. Women have a greater share of voice, can express themselves and be heard and enjoy a significantly larger representation on the C-suite. Moreover, I have been very fortunate to encounter people who believed in me and supported me through the span of my career. This offered me a wonderful platform to learn and also opened doors for me that allowed me to grow the business. And I think that’s the secret sauce for success. Be it partners or team members, you need a circle of influence that’s invested in you, believes in you and is committed to walk with you.

Q How does Heavens Portfolio differentiate itself in a competitive market, and what strategies do you employ to maintain a strong position?

The birth of Heavens Portfolio in itself continues to disrupt the market since its inception. My vision and mission to inspire has translated to the agency’s comprehensive network across the region, allowing Heavens Portfolio to deliver clients’ messages, philosophies and unique experiences to influential trade and consumer audiences in the entire Asia and Middle East markets.

In doing so, Heavens Portfolio’s unique cross-marketing approach creates and bolsters brand awareness, influences decision-making, supports sales efforts, and secures editorial coverage in the markets that matter. What it does is truly inspire and educate travellers, media, influencers, and the travel trade as well as encourage them to

members travel responsibly themselves but as service providers we also support our hotel clients to share their best practices and explain to all actors of the markets how important these sustainability modalities are essential for perennial tourism. The duty goes beyond newsletters and other nicely designed EDM... as a company we understood very quickly that supporting foundations who have such practices in mind and educating and informing the next generation in such practices are not left behind.

That is why during the entire Covid crisis, Heavens Portfolio's community outreach initiatives, we took the downtime as an opportunity and endeavoured to forge a better world outlook for the company. Our focus for this and continues to be conservation and education. We supported and continue to support six foundations across Asia (specifically in India, the Philippines, Cambodia, Bali and within Singapore) and built up campaigns for them to ensure their words and efforts would also be recognised by our community.

Q What message do you want to send to the budding women entrepreneurs?

The younger generation and the way they see the world gives me a lot of hope – looking at my 11-year-old and what she has already

“ My advice for young women – Have confidence in your abilities and believe that you can succeed in the travel industry. Trust your instincts and don't underestimate your potential. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and learning. Be adaptable and resilient in the face of adversity. ”

identified as being most important in our travels is comforting as it really shows her mind is already thinking about combining new technology, platforms and tools available as well as how these can apply to formulate solutions to some of our immediate issues.

My advice for young women – Have confidence in your abilities and believe that you can succeed in the travel industry. Trust your instincts and don't underestimate your potential. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and learning. Be adaptable and resilient in the face of adversity. Find mentors who can offer guidance, support, and valuable insights based on their experiences. Seek out both male and female mentors who can provide diverse perspectives. Attend industry events, conferences, and

networking gatherings to connect with peers, potential mentors, and leaders in the field.

My advice for aspiring female entrepreneurs – Don't be afraid to speak up and assert yourself in meetings, negotiations, and professional interactions. Be confident in expressing your ideas and advocating for your career advancement. While it's important to be confident in your abilities, also remain humble and open to feedback. Recognize that there is always room for improvement and be willing to learn from others. Lift up other women in the industry and create a supportive community where everyone can thrive. Celebrate the achievements of fellow female professionals and champion diversity and inclusion in the workplace. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

NEWS ROUND UP

In aviation, our focus lies on air transportation, not hospitality: Manoj Chacko

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The Goa Tourism Department and Just Udo Aviation Private Limited (Fly91) forged a strategic partnership at the recently-concluded GITM 2024.

Speaking to TravelBiz Monitor after signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Manoj Chacko, MD & CEO, Fly91, said that they are focused on responsible travel and sustainable tourism. “Goa has always been an inbound destination. Our commitment is to connect India in a way that has never been done before. We want to provide better options for the people of Goa to travel,” said Chacko.



When asked about his decision to enter the aviation industry amid its challenges, he responded, “It's not as dire as it seems. I've always believed that when aviation professionals transition into entrepreneurship, they often establish successful airlines. Look at IndiGo, for instance. An aviation professional from India founded it, and after 18 years, it boasts one of the highest market caps globally.

Similarly, David Neeleman in the US has successfully launched multiple airlines. There are numerous examples like these.”

He also said, “For us, aviation is about air transportation not hospitality. There are many airlines that have made that mistake.”

The airline has started its operation last month with flights on the Goa-Bengaluru route. The carrier will commence operations between Goa-Agatti-Goa, Goa-Jalgaon-Goa and Hyderabad-Jalgaon-Hyderabad, starting April 18, 2024. The new routes will establish direct connectivity between these destinations, offering travellers enhanced accessibility, increased flight options. The airline presently operates two ATR 72-600 aircraft with more aircraft expected in the coming months. ♦



prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

Immersive experiences: Unveiling *Rasas* through *Indriyas*

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

The Indian philosophy refers to 'rasas' as emotional or aesthetic experiences that arise from interactions between the external world and the "indriyas". The term "indriya", in turn, refers to the senses. The human perception and interaction with the external world occur through the operation of these indriyas. There are traditionally five main *Indriyas* or *Jnana Indriyas* (Cognitive Senses). *Chakshu*- the sense of sight; *Shrotra*- hearing; *Ghrana*-the sense of smell; *Rasana*- the sense of taste; and *Sparsha*- the touch.

Traditionally, there are nine main rasas, which represent different emotional states- *Shringara* (Love or Erotic), *Hasya* (Laughter or Humor), *Karuna* (Compassion), *Raudra* (Anger), *Veera* (Courage), *Bhayanaka* (Fear), *Bibhatsa* (Disgust), *Adbhuta* (Wonder or Amazement), and *Shanta* (Peace or Tranquility). Rasa theory is particularly emphasised in Indian aesthetics, drama, and literature. These rasas are not just emotions but are also regarded as aesthetic experiences that can be evoked through various forms of art and storytelling.

The centrality of this discussion revolves around how *rasas* (emotions) are and can be triggered and experienced through *indriyas* (sensory perception). The *indriyas* play a crucial role in receiving stimuli from the external world, and these stimuli then lead to the generation of emotional responses (*rasas*) within an individual. Let us see how *indriyas* and *rasas* can be used to create tourism products.

Consider the Taj Mahal, a tourist attraction. In the mornings, the Taj Mahal may attract explorers and history buffs. Through sight (*Chakshu*), guided tours can reveal architectural details, historical significance, and war echoes, deepening comprehension of the monument's history. Guides may tell stories (*Shrotra*) of the Taj Mahal's construction and architecture with the clang of swords and the resonance of ancient battle commands, interweaving auditory senses into the historical fabric. In the backdrop, the site managers can use scents (*Ghrana*) of Mughal-era herbs and spices. Every inhale can transport visitors to the past. In addition to sight and scent, this journey may involve taste (*Rasana*). Traditional breakfast may offer a tantalising

glimpse into Mughal cuisine. Finally, hands can explore (*Sparsha*). Technology-enabled touchable displays can let history be felt- the stone's texture and craft's tradition beneath your touch. With mediaeval battles and architectural genius, each *Indri* will stir Rasa (emotions) that will kindle the spirit of exploration, etching memories of courage and awe in the heart of the Taj Mahal's historical adventure, allowing courage (*Veera*) and wonder (*Adbhuta*) rasas to converge.

With ASI's on board, the Taj Mahal may become a romantic historical site for high-paying couples and honeymooners at night. This customised encounter can ignite love and unite hearts in its eternal embrace. Through the eyes' lens (*Chakshu*), the Taj Mahal may appear gently lit by sunset, enhancing its romance. The architectural marvel is the setting for a twilight love story. Melodies awaken (*Shrotra*). Elegant and romantic live classical music serenades couples with harmonies that mimic their emotions with every note. Scents (*Ghrana*) from flowers and candles can be released into the air. The smell swirls on the breeze, enchanting every breath with love. But more than sight and scent are involved. The palate may also convey emotion (*Rasana*). A romantic dinner with various gourmet foods awaits in the stunning setting, creating a tasteful tapestry. As couples sit (*Sparsha*), the atmosphere comforts them. Cradled by intimacy and connection seating, shared moments are heightened by the calm of the surroundings. *Shringara* (Love) and *Shanta* (Peace) Rasa create an intimate and peaceful atmosphere in this symphony of sensations. The Taj Mahal's ethereal splendour inspires love transcending time and space, leaving couples with precious memories.

Cultural immersion enthusiasts and families may be targeted in the afternoons. Guided tours reveal the Taj Mahal's beautiful details, craftsmanship, and stories as eyes (*Chakshu*) explore. Families may congregate for storytelling (*Shrotra*) sessions to pass on monument folklore and history. During cultural events on the outskirts, incense and indigenous spices (*Ghrana*) may fill the air, engulfing visitors in the sense of Agra's culture. The Rasa of authentic native foods and beverages connects guests to the mediaeval culinary tradition from their



earlier Delhi visit. Craft lessons or visiting a curious shop outside the Taj Mahal can connect visitors with local traditions through the touch (*Sparsha*). *Adbhuta* (Wonder) and *Karuna* (Compassion) rasas combine in this story, immersing visitors in the Taj Mahal's rich cultural fabric. The past and present intersect to promote empathy for historical traditions and a deep understanding of the human tales within its walls.

We need to realise that *indriyas* are the channels through which sensory experiences occur, while the *rasas* are the emotional and aesthetic responses that arise from these sensory interactions with the material world which the visitors seek. Tourism service providers need to be creative in invoking *indriyas* to generate *rasas* for different audiences (read different experiential tourism products)- interestingly using the same resources. ♦

'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 17 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 24 books and more than 240 academic papers and chapters. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states within the country.

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Indian travellers planning to spend more, use travel hacks and seek new adventures: Report



With 62% of Indians planning to spend more on travel this year vs. global average of 40%, Indians are willing to go the extra mile to have a fulfilling travel experience in 2024.

While spending more, Indians are also looking for value for money by mastering the art of using travel hacks to make their journeys more affordable and rewarding. These findings were revealed in the American Express Travel® 2024 Global Travel Trends Report based on survey data from across India, the United States, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

There is an evident travel boom amongst Indians with 65% planning more domestic trips and 48% planning more international trips this year. In terms of using travel hacks, the survey indicates that as many as 43% of Indians planning on taking a trip in 2024 (vs global average of 30%) are using credit card points to offset flight and hotel expenses, while 42% (vs global average of 26%) are opting to book from companies offering complimentary hotel benefits such as room upgrades and credits. Furthermore, 35% of Indians planning on taking a trip in 2024 are planning to stay in a mix of luxury and more affordable hotels and 31% are planning to travel during off-peak seasons or stay with friends or family during their travel.

“Indian travellers are embracing the spirit of adventure and exploration in 2024, driven by a desire for new experiences and cultural immersion. From using travel hacks to embarking on solo journeys, Indians are redefining the travel landscape with their changing preferences and behaviours. At American Express, we understand the evolving needs of consumers and strive to empower our Card Members with rewarding offers and benefits, enhancing their travel experiences wherever they venture,” said Sanjay Khanna, CEO and Country Manager, American Express Banking Corp., India.

With food and accommodation as the top aspects of travel, beach vacations, adventure trips and metropolitan travel top the charts for Indians.

- For 71% of Indians, food is the top travel aspect they aren't willing to compromise on (vs global average of 52%) while a close 67% Indians aren't willing to compromise on accommodation.
- 67% of Indians planning on taking a trip in 2024 would like to plan a beach vacation in 2024.
- 58% of Indians planning on taking a trip in 2024 would like to indulge in outdoor adventure trips including camping, surfing,

skiing and mountain climbing.

- 55% of Indians planning on taking a trip in 2024 would like to take a metropolitan trip and explore a new city.

Embracing solo adventures: The allure of exploring new cities, unwinding on relaxing beach getaways, and discovering domestic destinations, solo resonates strongly with Indian adults.

- 34% of Indians are planning on traveling solo more often this year vs global average of 18%.
- 84% of Indians planning on traveling solo in 2024, plan on taking a solo trip centered around self-love and treating themselves.
- Reconnecting with themselves (46%), getting a break from chaotic daily life (39%) and being independent (34%) are the top reasons Indians would consider going on solo trips.

Spontaneity beckons: With the rise of structured nature of modern life, Indians are increasingly craving flexibility in their travel arrangements, carving out space for impromptu travel.

- 58% of Indians are interested in taking last-minute trips in 2024 with 40% generally booking only a week or less in advance in the past.
- Exploring cities other than where traveling (46%), dining (45%) and nightlife and excursions (43% each) are parts of the trip Indians prefer to be spontaneous.
- The freedom to explore without pressure (50%), flexibility to visit multiple destinations (49%), and the opportunity to immerse themselves in new cultures (48%) are cited as top motivations for spontaneous travel.

Thriving on sporting excitement: For sports enthusiasts, travel is not just about sightseeing but also about experiencing adrenaline-pumping events firsthand.

- 29% of Indians, surpassing the global average of 14%, plan to travel more often for sporting events in 2024.
- Football/soccer (47%) Formula 1 (30%), and the 2024 Paris Olympics (24%) top the list of sports events for Indians planning to travel for sporting events in 2024.
- Paris (43%), London (42%) and New York City (37%) are top destinations among Indians planning on travelling for a sporting event this summer. ♦



In just 9 years, Travomint has spread its wings across 60+ countries. **Alok K Singh, Co-Founder and CEO, Travomint** spoke to **Disha Shah Ghosh** about their journey, challenges and the differentiating factors of the platform.

‘Travomint’s hybrid booking model caters to digital-savvy & traditional booking travellers’

Q How has Travomint evolved over its 9-year journey, adapting to the changing landscape of the travel and tourism industry?

Travomint’s journey over nine years is a testament to our adaptability and innovation in this dynamic travel landscape. Beginning as an India-based Online Travel Agency (OTA), we have grown into a global travel service provider, catering to customers across 60+ countries. As a bootstrap company, we have achieved significant milestones, expanding our global footprint, introducing user-centric services, leveraging cutting-edge technology, and maintaining financial independence amidst industry turbulence. These accomplishments collectively contribute to our successful 9-year legacy, demonstrating our capacity to adapt, innovate and thrive in the ever-changing travel industry.

Q How does Travomint leverage technology to enhance the customer experience?

At Travomint, our expertise in technology is the bedrock of our unmatched customer experience. We seamlessly integrate the latest innovations to provide personalised solutions for each traveler’s requirements. With intuitive interfaces, real-time updates and AI-driven recommendations, our platform ensures smooth bookings and hassle-free journeys. Furthermore, we consistently invest in research and development to keep abreast of industry trends and evolving consumer preferences, solidifying our position as a prominent player in the travel industry for nine years.

Q Considering the diverse travel preferences and trends, how does Travomint plan to continue meeting the evolving needs of its customers in the years to come?

At Travomint, we are committed to meeting the evolving needs of our customers through innovation, flexibility and personalised experiences. We are actively enhancing our platform by integrating advanced AI algorithms to deliver customised recommendations, streamline bookings, and provide real-time updates. In addition to this, we are dedicated to expanding our range of services to include unique experiential offerings and sustainable travel options, ensuring we address diverse travel preferences and trends in the coming years.

Q Can you tell us about some of the key services or features that sets Travomint apart from other travel booking platforms?

Certainly! At Travomint, we offer a range of key services and features that set us apart from other travel booking platforms:

1. **Comprehensive Booking Options:** We provide users with access to a wide selection of flights, car rentals, hotels, and vacation packages, allowing travellers to conveniently plan and book their entire trip in one place.
2. **Cost effective:** We stand out for our pocket-friendly deals on flights, hotels, car rentals, and vacation packages.
3. **User-Friendly Interface:** With an intuitive and easy-to-use interface, we make the booking process seamless and hassle-free for travelers, irrespective of the kind of

services they are taking.

4. **Real-Time Updates:** We keep our customers informed with real-time updates on flight status, gate changes, and other crucial travel information, helping them stay organized and prepared throughout their journey.
5. **24/7 Customer Support:** Our round-the-clock customer support assists users with any queries or concerns they may have before, during or after their trip, guaranteeing a smooth and enjoyable journey.
6. **Personalised Recommendations:** We leverage advanced algorithms and user preferences to provide personalized recommendations to our customers, for flights, hotels, car rentals and vacation packages. It not only helps them discover new destinations, but also experiences aligned with their interests.

Q How does Travomint ensure the security and privacy of its users’ information during the booking process?

We employ robust security measures, including encryption, data protection policies, secure payment gateways, regular security audits, and compliance with regulations to safeguard users personal and financial data. We have partnered with trusted payment processors and payment gateways that comply with data security standards. As a PCI DSS validated company, Travomint ensures the security and privacy of its customers’ information throughout the booking process through various measures.

Q Could you share some insights into Travomint’s growth trajectory and future expansion plans?

As first-generation entrepreneurs, my brother Vivek K Singh and I, encountered numerous challenges common to new ventures. Navigating through these challenges demanded resilience, determination and of course, adaptability. I believe that these qualities are crucial for ensuring a sustained growth in a competitive market. Travomint’s hybrid booking model caters to both digital-savvy customers and those preferring traditional booking methods, carving a niche in the competitive travel market.

Drawing on our knowledge in digital marketing, we have successfully crafted brand recognition, a cornerstone of sustained growth. Strategic partnerships and global search engines have expanded our reach and facilitated competitive deals. Moving forward, we aim to bolster our collaborations with travel tech providers, underscoring our dedication to ongoing expansion and providing budget-friendly options for travelers worldwide. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

Nature's Paradise, Haflong - A Promising Road in Hospitality Sector

By Dr. Gargi Sarma, Assistant Professor, Rabindranath Tagore University, Hojai, Assam

Amidst the hustle & bustle of everyday life, people look forward to a peaceful weekend. This has turned out to be the choice of people because it is believed that 'Tranquility heals a stressed mind'. Nature, with its beautiful landscapes, attracts people and assures a rejuvenating stay. Weekend Gateways have their own charm. They have grown popular as the work life of netizens made a paradigm shift. People like to take a Kit-Kat break before the Monday Blues start scaring them. This can be referred to as a prime reason behind the growth of Domestic Tourism. Also, such growth has led to many beautiful discoveries - Untapped Tourist Destinations.

Greens & Hills in Assam has never failed to amaze the travellers. It homes numerous beautiful destinations. One of such destinations is Haflong, in the Dima Hasao District. It is tagged as the only Hill Station of Assam and stands at an altitude of 2300 ft above sea level. The place boasts its lavish landscapes & majestic hills. The place is a Nature's Paradise. It has everything a traveller



The pristine greens under the crystal blue sky delights the travellers throughout the journey.

Weekend kickstarts as the eyes start capturing the magical beauty of nature.

Blooming wild flowers amidst the hills and Jimsonweed (Datura) flowers on the Mahadev tilla road pave the path towards the main town. It's remarkable to catch on to the fact that "Clean roads also enhance the beauty of this place". The town marks a special significance, and the credit goes to the Milky-White fences and the British-Styled street lamps all over the town.

The place is a six (6) hour drive from Guwahati. Also, train journeys prove to be another convincing option for reaching the destination. The town pulls the travellers to the endless viewpoints at different locations within the town. It can be said that Haflong allows to pick a viewpoint of the traveller's choice. However, the most popular amongst all must be Dimalik Viewpoint. For the mornings and evenings one can take a round of the Haflong Lake. It gives a mesmerizing view of the lake and the area around. The Hanging Bridge together with the lake makes a remarkable combination. On taking

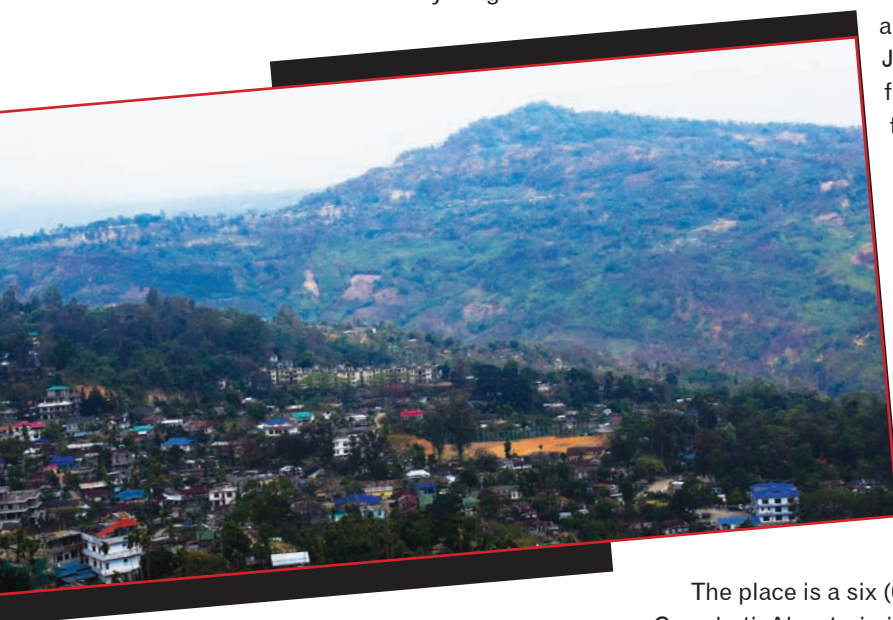
the bridge route, it leads to a wonderful hilly park with a café at the hilltop. 'What an extraordinary view this place gives!'. Undoubtedly, this is meant for the nature enthusiasts to spend some leisurely time. Haflong also has a very attractive Circuit House. The establishment promises a pleasing view of the hills and town. Also, it is a place for Photo Lovers. Not to forget, the beautifully crafted Council Gate is another captivating view of the town side.

'A traveller's experience depends on the hospitality of the place tapped.' Therefore, to push the Tourism scores constant efforts are given in Hospitality sector under Tourism. A beautiful destination like Haflong has its own perks as a Tourist Ideal Location. This Nature's Paradise also connects to other beautiful destinations like Jatinga and Maibang. Haflong being the town headquarters has quite some accommodations which makes it easier for the tourists to halt and take a tour to the connected places. Despite the number and age of such options the Hospitality Sector shows a slow growth. As such, it is still not able to gain the Location Advantage.

With the developed connectivity and infrastructure, the place is once again gearing up as one of the loved Weekend Gateways. This calls for Investment opportunities primarily in Accommodation and Food. Considering the rich natural heritage and ethnicity of the place Resorts can be a promising avenue. It can generate more tourism scores likewise and the place will sparkle as the tourists' loved gateways. Also, the residents here can be applauded for their warm and welcoming gestures. This too can be utilized to refurbish the Hospitality Sector. Certainly, a promising road lies ahead for settling the scores in this regard. ♦

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

Dr. Gargi Sarma is working as Assistant Professor in the Department of Commerce at Rabindranath Tagore University, Hojai. She was earlier hosted by KIIT, K.C.Das Commerce College as Assistant Professor and Gauhati University as a Guest Lecturer. Her academic and professional interests lie in Management and Marketing. She has presented over 20 research papers in National & International Seminars and published 13 research papers in reputed journals.



would prefer to have in his/her travel bucket. The journey to this place will excite the Nature's Admirers as it offers many exquisite views. Every turn of the journey reserves a spectacular view of the nature's magnificent landscapes for the travellers. The ups and the curves of the roads add a different yet enjoyable shade to the weekend. It will be worth mentioning that Haflong welcomes a pleasant weather during November- March. The soft and cool zephyr makes the journey a comfortable one.

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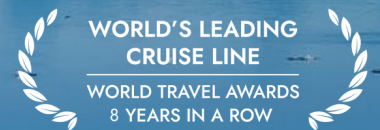
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