

## Indian aviation losses may widen to USD 400-600 mn in FY25, says CAPA India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Domestic airlines are likely to widen losses to USD 400 million-USD 600 million in FY25 despite a likely rise in traffic, Kapil Kaul, CEO of aviation consulting firm CAPA India has said.

In FY24, the Indian aviation sector's estimated losses stood at USD 300-USD 400 million, supported by market leader IndiGo's record profit. The number excludes those of cash-strapped SpiceJet, which is yet to declare results for the last two quarters.

InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, which operates IndiGo, reported a profit of INR 1,894.8 crore for



the January- March period of FY24, the sixth straight quarter of gains.

The aviation industry was on the road to

recovery, as the domestic traffic and cargo volumes reached pre-Covid levels in the previous year, Kaul said.

The domestic traffic was likely to grow at 6-8 per cent in FY25 over the previous year and international traffic at 9-11 per cent. Domestic fares rose 1.3 per cent in FY24 from the previous year and were 34 per cent higher compared to FY20, Kaul said, while speaking at the CAPA India Aviation Summit.

India's airlines are expected to add 84 aircraft this year, taking the fleet count to 812 by the end of FY25 from 728 in the previous year. The fleet size would double by 2030, he said. ♦

## For cruise biz, it is important to expand home port deployment: RWC on Arabian Gulf foray

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Cashing on the popularity of UAE as a key short-haul outbound market for the Indian traveller, Resorts World Cruises (RWC) is set to offer shorter two- and three-nights itineraries with Dubai as a home port starting October this year. The two-year old company unveiled its Arabian Gulf itineraries for 'Resorts World One' to the Indian travel trade at a glittering event in Mumbai at the St. Regis.

Upbeat about this new product, Michael Goh, President, Resorts World One, said, "We are really excited about this new development, and are positive that this will be a success story in India. We are giving passengers to sail two or three-nights or combine the itineraries and cruise for five to seven nights. India is going to be our key fly-cruise source market, especially for family travel, couples, MICE and special interest groups. For the cruise business, it is important to expand home port deployment."

Sharing his views, Naresh Rawal, Vice President - Sales, Resorts World Cruises, stated, "India contributes one third of our cruise passengers out



of Singapore. Resorts World One will debut in the Arabian Gulf for October 18, 2024 to April 2025 season, with options of Sunday, Wednesday and Friday sailing with departures at 9pm, allowing convenient fly-in and fly-out choices. This will work well for families since it will give them time to bond during a short vacation to the UAE." ♦

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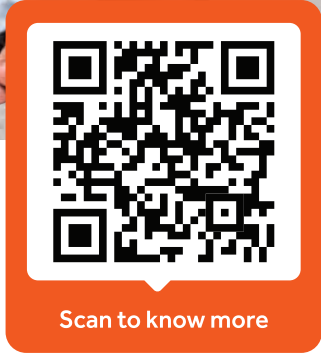
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# IATO delegation meets new Tourism Minister, pledges support for inbound tourism growth

TBM Staff | Mumbai

A delegation from the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), comprising President Rajiv Mehra, Vice President Ravi Gosain, and Honorary Secretary Sanjay Razdan, paid a courtesy visit to Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the newly appointed Cabinet Minister of Tourism, Government of India. During the meeting at the minister's office, they extended congratulations on his appointment.

According to an IATO statement, the Tourism Minister displayed keen interest in understanding the decline in international tourist arrivals and pledged full support from the Ministry of Tourism to foster the growth of inbound tourism in India.

IATO will have another meeting with the Tourism Minister to discuss in details, the issues which the tourism industry is facing in terms of inbound tourism and will share their ideas how Ministry of Tourism and other Ministries could support the tourism industry.

The release stated, "With confidence in the dynamic leadership of the new Tourism Minister, we anticipate a flourishing inbound tourism



sector in India. We expect to witness substantial growth in international tourist arrivals, aligning with the vision of our Honorable Prime Minister to attract a maximum number of foreign tourists to India.

IATO reaffirms its full support to the Government and our Ministry in achieving this objective." ♦

## Ease of flying top priority, will work to make airfares affordable: Civil Aviation Minister

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Rammohan Naidu, Civil Aviation Minister, emphasized that ensuring the "Ease of Flying" for the common Indian is a top priority for the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA). He stated that the government will collaborate with stakeholders, primarily airlines, to make airfares "affordable and accessible"



Rammohan Naidu

Naidu, took charge as the cabinet Minister for Civil Aviation recently. Outlining his vision for his ministry and the civil aviation sector, Naidu said that the passenger will be the "core" of all policies and efforts. Increasing air connectivity to tier two and tier three cities and towns and remote areas will also be a key focus area for MoCA and the ministry will actively engage with states on the same.

Speaking on the issue of high airfares, Naidu said, "Not just as a minister, I have been observing this (high airfares) as a passenger also for the last four years. It is a cause of concern". Given that airfares are deregulated in India, Naidu said that reducing airfares is not a decision he can take alone as a minister.

"I have to have review meetings on that (airfares)...call the airlines' people and have to sit with my officials also...I will definitely make it an important priority point in my review meetings...the prices also need to be affordable to the common customer," the minister said, adding that to achieve the objective of making India the world's largest domestic aviation market, airfares need to be affordable.

Demand for air travel has been surging in the post-pandemic period, and with supply chain issues and engine woes hitting aircraft capacity, aviation markets in many parts of the world—including India—have seen a significant demand-supply mismatch, leading to higher airfares particularly during peak travel periods. ♦

## Destination DC registers record visitation, India emerges as 2nd largest inbound market

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Destination DC (DDC), the official destination marketing organization for the nation's capital, announced that Washington, DC experienced its highest-ever influx of visitors in 2023. The city welcomed a total of 25.95 million visitors, marking a notable 17 percent increase from the previous year and surpassing the pre-pandemic record set in 2019. This surge in visitors resulted in a record-breaking \$10.2 billion in visitor spending and supported an unprecedented 102,366 local jobs.

Additionally, Washington, DC has emerged as a favoured destination for Indian travellers, with India ranking as the second-largest inbound market according to Destination DC. In 2023, a total of 165,100 Indian visitors travelled to Washington, DC, contributing to a significant spending of \$287,400,000.

"India continues to be an important market for Washington, DC tourism, coming in as our #2 overseas market for visitation in 2023. More importantly, India was DC's top overseas market for 2023 visitor spending. Research shows that the

India market prioritizes DC for its arts, culture, luxury amenities and shopping, and we have plans to invest to further expand our market share in 2024 and beyond." Said Elliott L. Ferguson, II, President and CEO, Destination DC.



Elliott L. Ferguson

Of the record 25.95 million total visitors, 24 million travelled domestically. That means domestic visitation has fully rebounded to 105 percent of 2019 figures. International visitation continues to trend towards pre-pandemic levels. The 1.95 million international visitors indicate an 85 percent

return, but a 40 percent increase year-over-year. International travellers typically stay longer and spend twice as much as their domestic counterparts. Ferguson further added, "This is a major milestone for Washington, DC. Put simply, we are seeing the results of our increased marketing and sales efforts thanks to the tourism recovery district legislation, and the city is benefiting from increased tourism. There is still work to do, however, since international travel hasn't fully recovered. The additional funding allows us to continue to entice international visitors who stay longer and spend more." ♦

# Mexican Consulate starts issuing multiple-entry visas in Mumbai

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Mexico has started issues visas to Indian nationals in Mumbai since April, having opened the Consulate last year.

Shedding light on this, Adolfo García Estrada, Consul General of Mexico in Mumbai, said, "Any Indian national wanting to visit Mexico, holding a valid UK, USA, Canada, Schengen or Japan visa doesn't need to apply for a visa. For others, one can apply for a Mexican visa at the Consulate in Mumbai or the Embassy in New Delhi. It is a multiple-entry visa with six months validity. The visa fee is over USD 53, and we take around 10 working days of processing time."

He was talking to **TravelBiz Monitor** at an event hosted by the Travel Agents Federation of India



Adolfo García Estrada



(TAFI) Western Region Chapter along with Global Destinations for the members to familiarise them with Mexico and its tourist offerings.

Addressing members, Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, said, "It was interesting to learn about Mexico and how it is a new destination that Indians can explore. Likewise, we hope, citizens of Mexico visit

India and explore our vast country, to see the sheer variety we have to offer."

Currently, Indian nationals can reach Mexico via Dubai or Istanbul hubs. "The establishment of direct air access depends on the demand," the CG said. The popular destinations are Mexico City and Cancun.

At the event, Global Destinations, which represents Mexican DMC 'Trip to Mexico', gave a presentation about the opportunities for FITs to explore the nation. ♦

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# India emerges as second important source market for Bear Luxe Japan

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Bear Luxe Japan, a consortium of independent and niche hotels, and a DMC, has termed India as its second most important source market.

Talking exclusively to **TravelBiz Monitor** during his recent visit to Mumbai, Hiroyuki Miyatake - Co-Founder & COO - Bear Luxe Japan, said, that they made inroads into India last year. "The USA is our biggest source market, and India ranks a close second, followed by Middle East, apart from UK and the likes. We are working with some key trade partners in Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad. In the past couple of years, there has been a growing interest among Indians for Japan since it is largely unexplored, and still a niche destination."

Neeru Modi, Director, Bear Luxe Japan said that they started operating 7 years ago as a consortium of luxury boutique hotels that didn't have access to the inbound market due to the language barrier. "Hiroyuki himself has cherry picked a lot of the properties from our portfolio. The idea was to bridge the gap and market the 75 hotels in our consortium in India, and we have started getting inquiries

from the Indian market."

Besides hotel bookings, as a DMC partner, Bear Luxe offers end-to-end services, including land transport. "We also support luxury brands and participate in Cannes with the

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Japan National Tourism Organization. With our platform, we have streamlined information about Japan and its tourism opportunities."

With regards to their client segments, Miyatake said, "We are serving a very niche clientele market such as Bollywood, Hollywood artists, and top 50 millionaires from India."

Neeru said that their focus in India is on ultra HNIs, and Hyderabad is a big market for them since clients there are well-travelled and value the experiences that Japan has to offer.

"Delhi is a big market that we want to tap into, since most of our bookings from there are made by agents in Mumbai. Another area of focus for us is the Tier-II cities in India," Neeru stated.

With regards to the food choices, Neeru, herself a vegetarian based in Japan since over 15 years, said that when the 2020 Olympics mandate was announced for Japan in 2012, the government sprang into action to create awareness about vegetarian and vegan food. "Today, every lane in Tokyo has an Indian restaurant, and availability of Indian and vegetarian food across the country is no longer a hassle." ♦

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# Taiwan Tourism concludes its multi-city roadshow in India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Making up for the lost time, Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA) has started developing the India market. To what started with OTM earlier this year followed by B2B trade networking events in Delhi and Mumbai, the tourism board has now recently concluded its multi-city road show with the final leg concluding in Bengaluru.

The roadshow in Bengaluru followed another well-attended roadshow in another IT hub, Hyderabad, the previous day. The roadshows were particularly aimed at showcasing Taiwan's MICE attractiveness and were well attended in all the cities amidst renewed interest and enthusiasm from travel fraternities as well as corporates and event organisers.

Joseph Cheng, Director of Taiwan Tourism

Administration – Singapore Office, said, "Taiwan is a small country yet packs a huge punch as a destination for every segment of travellers, and particularly the MICE groups. An advanced economy and a developed Asian country, it's an immensely powerful destination when it comes to mixing business with leisure and pleasure. Not only there are some great urban landmarks to host your events to the best of your satisfaction, but Taiwan also boasts great outdoor activities amidst its lush green mountain ranges, coastline and beaches, mountain lakes, exciting wellness offerings, its cultural treasures and heritage, and so much more."

"Furthermore, it's a very welcoming and competitive destination and adds great value to corporate events, conferences and conventions, and incentives tours," he further added

The roadshow in Hyderabad, organised



**Joseph Cheng**

at the landmark Radisson Hotel in Banjara Hills on April 18, was attended by around 80 leading MICE and leisure companies. The Bangalore road show, the next day, was also attended by almost 100 leading tour operators, DMCs and event companies from the city. The event was organised at the iconic JW Marriott hotel. Both events kick-started with destination presentation, interactive sessions and feedback, followed by networking amidst evening cocktails and dinner. ♦

## Maani Muscat Hotel and Suites appoint Global India Reps as India Representative

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Maani Muscat Hotel and Suites, Oman has appointed Delhi-based Global India Reps as its Representative in the Indian market.

The four-star property is a state-of-the-art hotel with 3 dining outlets, a swimming pool, jacuzzi, spa, gym, a conference hall and various meeting spaces to cater for large and small events.

With 161 rooms & 45 luxury apartments, it is located 10 minutes by car from Seeb Park, while the Oman Aquarium and Muscat international

Airport is 25 kms away, the property offers multiple options for family events, celebrations and weekend packages as well. Global India Reps is a representative/consulting/marketing platform having the collective experience of almost 20 years in representing, launching, promoting and creating a network for business from India – with deep connections in Europe, Asia, Central Asia & as far as Canada.

Upon signing the agreement, Ismail Al Tobi, General Manager, Maani Muscat Hotel & Suites, said, "I am delighted that through our newly appointed in-market Exclusive



Representative, Global India Reps we can introduce Maani Muscat Hotel & Suites award-winning facilities, custom services to the Indian market. Outbound travel from India presents a significant opportunity given the huge demand for this region and we wish to offer and serve the outbound travel market for 2024."

"With their unique experience, strong trade relationships, proven track record of success launching new international products from India, we are confident that Global India Reps, headed by Mr. Ashish Saran will springboard and accelerate our entry into the Indian outbound market from Asia", Al Tobi added.

Ashish Saran, Business Head, Global India Reps, added, "There is a major chunk of agents, looking at newer destinations & newer product formats, & we will reach out to them and give them a brand to associate with, creating a unique distinction for their markets."

Saran said that Global India Reps will be one point of contact for the property in India for all sales, marketing and promotion activities, while bookings will be routed direct to the hotel. ♦

## Global India Reps to represent Azeta Incoming Argentina

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Azeta Incoming Argentina, a DMC based in Buenos Aires – Argentina, has appointed Global India Reps as its India Representative.

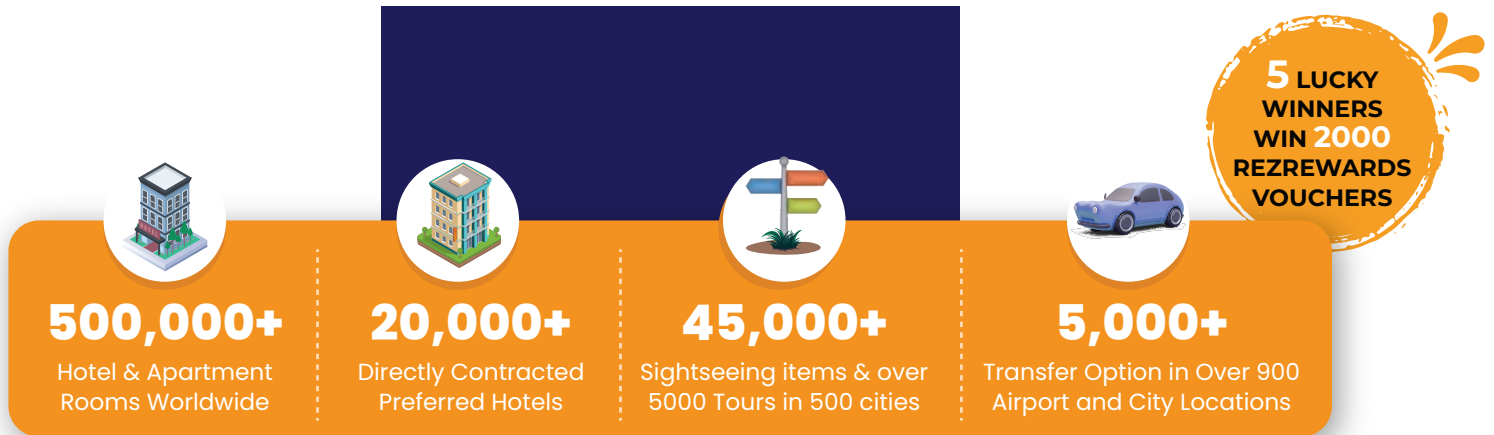
Federico Gavazza, Director, Azeta Incoming Argentina, said, "I am delighted that through our newly appointed In market Exclusive Representative, Global India Reps we can introduce Azeta Incoming Argentina programs, custom services to the Indian market. Outbound Travel from India presents a significant opportunity given the huge demand for this region and we wish to offer and serve the outbound travel market for 2024."

"With their unique experience, strong trade relationships and proven track record of success launching new international products from India, we are confident that Global India Reps, headed by Ashish Saran will springboard and accelerate our entry into the Indian outbound market from Asia", Federico, added.

Ashish Saran, Business Head, Global India Reps added "Lesser known but exciting no



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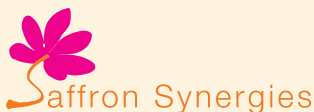
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# TREADING CAUTIOUSLY

It is heartening to see that despite the dents caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, destination marketing has started picking up its pre-2020 pace. Take the example of newer and niche destinations and attractions that are foraying into the Indian market with renewed vigour.

Azerbaijan Tourism Board is the latest destination marketing agency to make inroads in India by appointing a representative office. This is proof enough that the lure for the Indian tourists is intact and, far more profound in 2024. Ironically, this is also the time when destinations across Europe are marred by over-tourism, and protests from locals have been raging to protect their habitats.

In light of that it is imperative that the new players in the global tourism game learn from the mistakes of their predecessors. They should incorporate immediate measures in place to avoid reaching a boiling point.

This requires a thorough study of the carrying capacity of a destination. The kind of pressure that consistent tourist inflow has on the ecology of a location must be considered in advance. Effective waste management techniques also mitigate many hiccups caused by a large tourism influx.

While it is easier said than done, the world has reached a stage where tourism that is not sustainable is no longer desirable. This is evident with recent examples of adverse effects of unplanned and unregulated tourism in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and even Ladakh. It is a wise move to set realistic targets, and lay out strategic plans in that direction since tourists are looking for newer experiences and they are actually spoilt for choice.

There can be no excuse to delay checks and balances against unplanned or sudden tourism growth. For any destination looking for lucrative tourism development, the time to act is now.



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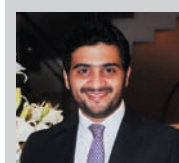
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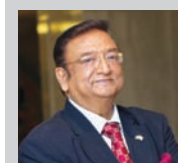
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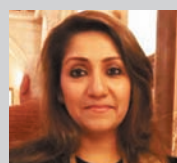
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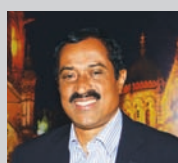
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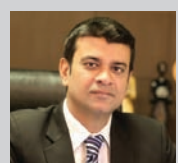
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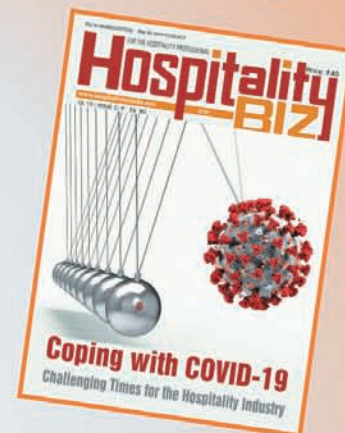
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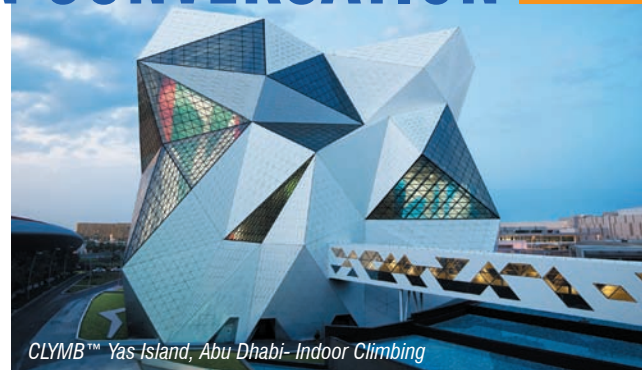
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At ATM in Dubai last month, **Liam Findlay, CEO - Experience Hub, Miral Destinations** spoke to **TravelBiz Monitor** about their priorities in India, and the strategy to drive growth.



CLYMB™ Yas Island, Abu Dhabi- Indoor Climbing



CLYMB™ Yas Island, Abu Dhabi

## ‘The incentive market is a priority for us’

### Q Can you give us a brief overview of your recent activities in the Indian market?

India has been our top market for several years now. In 2022, we fully recovered from the impact of Covid-19, surpassing our pre-pandemic numbers. Last year alone, we experienced a remarkable 55% increase compared to 2022, solidifying India as our top market worldwide.

### Q Could you elaborate on the key factors driving this expansion in India?

Our success in India can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the continuous

development of Yas Island's attractions, including Ferrari World, Yas Water World, Warner Brothers World, SeaWorld, CLYMB, and Etihad Arena, along with new hotel offerings like Hilton, WB, and DoubleTree, have contributed significantly to attracting Indian travellers. Additionally, strategic partnerships with influencers like Ranveer Singh and collaborations with popular shows such as Master Chef and Dancing with the Stars have helped boost brand awareness. Moreover, our focus on both B2C and B2B marketing strategies has been instrumental in engaging with Indian travellers across various demographics and regions.



Yas Island, Abu Dhabi

### Q Considering India's evolving travel landscape, how do you plan to adapt your strategies to sustain this growth?

As India's outbound travel market continues to mature, we recognise the importance of staying ahead of the curve. One of our key strategies is to cater to the changing preferences of Indian travellers, such as shorter stays and multi-generational travel. We're also closely monitoring the growth of Tier-II and III cities, which are emerging as significant feeder markets. Expansion plans, including doubling the size of Yas Water World and introducing new attractions like Harry Potter, are aimed at offering diverse experiences for families, couples, and individuals. Moreover, we're intensifying our focus on the incentive market, MICE, and weddings, leveraging Yas Island's proximity to Abu Dhabi International Airport and ample hotel accommodations.

### Q Can you tell us more about your efforts in the incentive market and any upcoming initiatives?

The incentive market is a priority for us, given Yas Island's appeal as a destination for corporate events and group travel. With convenient airlift and a wide range of activities, Yas Island offers an ideal setting for hosting large groups. We're also collaborating with tourism bodies to offer attractive incentives for event organisers. Additionally, we're revamping our online learning programme for the travel trade to provide valuable insights and updates to our partners.

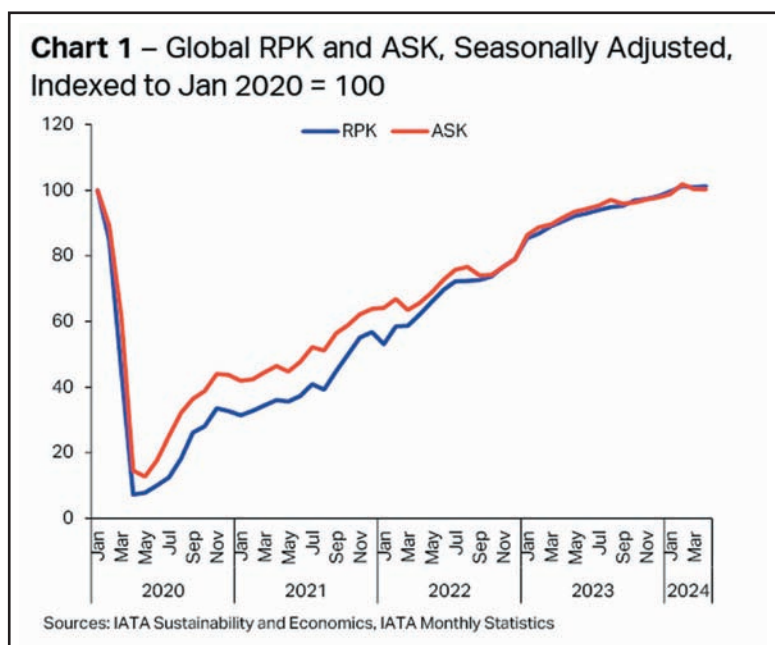
I'd just like to emphasise our commitment to the Indian market and our enthusiasm for the future. We believe that by staying agile, innovative, and customer-centric, we can continue to exceed the expectations of Indian travellers and cement our position as their preferred destination. ♦

# Air Passenger Market Analysis

## Demand for air travel continues to rise in April

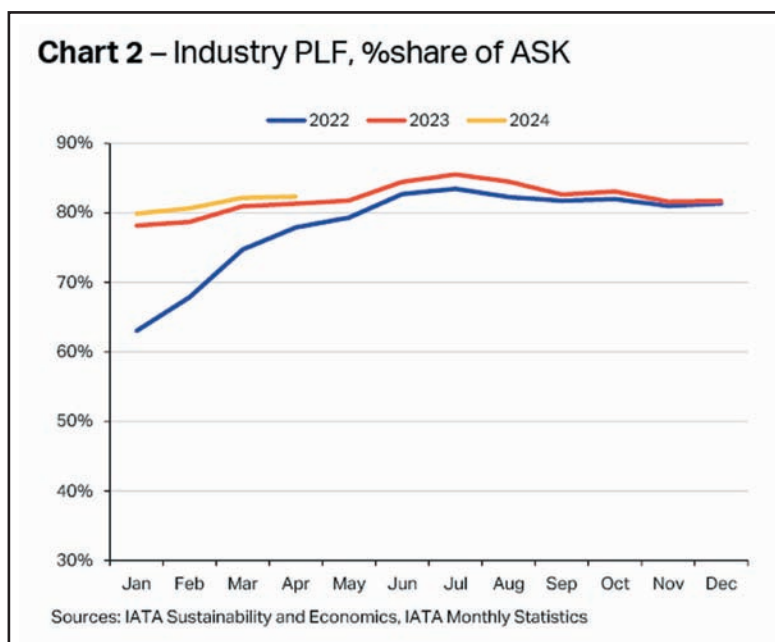
### Industry passenger numbers still on the rise

In April 2024, industry-wide air passenger traffic surged by 11.0% YoY, measured in RPK. Despite a slight slowdown from the previous two months, the annual growth rate remains in the double digits, with an impressive growth streak which began 36 months ago. Notably, the industry continues to surpass pre-Covid levels (Chart 1).

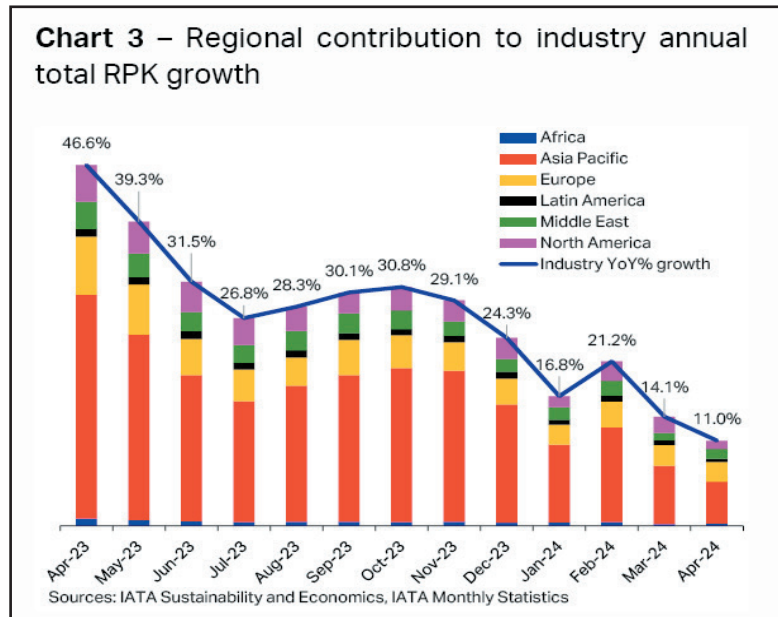


In seasonally adjusted (SA) terms, total RPK bounced back with a 0.3% month-on-month (MoM) growth, reversing the negative trend observed in March. Meanwhile, the year-on-year (YoY) growth remained positive at 11.8%, mirroring the non-SA data. The PLF,

which represents the percentage of available seats filled by passengers, further validates these positive developments. Current PLF values exceed those of the past two years. Additionally, the supply of available seats, measured in Available Seat-Kilometers (ASK), closely tracks the expansion of passenger traffic. Industry ASK YoY growth stood at 9.6%, albeit slower than March, while the total load factor reached 82.4%, representing a 1 percentage point (ppt) increase compared to the previous year. (Chart 2).



The largest contributor to the total industry passenger growth is the region Asia Pacific, with European carriers taking a distant second place. Asia Pacific, which previously lagged in recovery, has closed most of the gap with the remaining regions although the slowdown of domestic RPK in PR China weighted on the region's total figures this month (Chart 3).



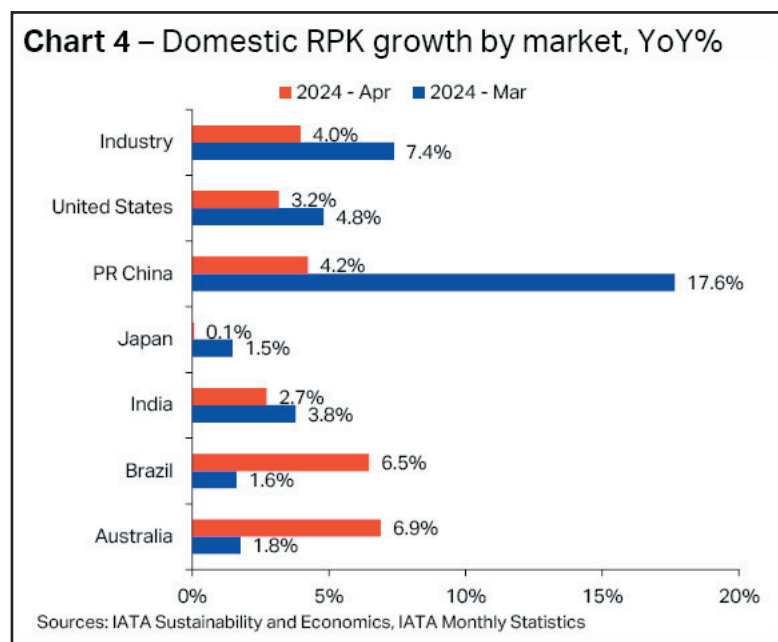
### Domestic traffic growths settle to one digit

Industry total domestic RPK continued to grow in April at a rate of 4.0%. However, this growth rate diminished compared to the previous two months, which is consistent with most monitored markets.

The markets of Australia and Brazil outperformed the industry, achieving year-on-year (YoY) growth rates of 6.9% and 6.5%, respectively (Chart 4).

Conversely, the domestic market of PR China experienced a significantly slower pace of growth, with YoY growth at 4.2% in April. This deceleration can be partly attributed to a return to seasonal norms following the end of spring holidays.

The RPK YoY for the US and India slowed to 3.2% and 2.7%, respectively. In contrast, Japan's domestic RPK declined to 0.1% YoY.



Air passenger market in detail - April 2024									
	World share <sup>1</sup>	April 2024 (% year-on-year)				April 2024 (% year-to-date)			
		RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt)	PLF (level)	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt)	PLF (level)
<b>TOTAL MARKET</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>82.4%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>81.3%</b>
International	60.1%	15.8%	14.8%	0.7%	82.2%	20.0%	19.6%	0.3%	80.8%
Domestic	39.9%	4.0%	2.1%	1.5%	82.6%	9.1%	4.9%	3.1%	82.1%

<sup>1</sup>% of industry RPKs in 2023

This dip aligns with historical seasonal patterns, as demand tends to wane in April due to the end of the fiscal year and the start of school spring holidays. Nevertheless, Japan’s overall RPK trend remains positive, supporting an optimistic outlook (Chart 4).

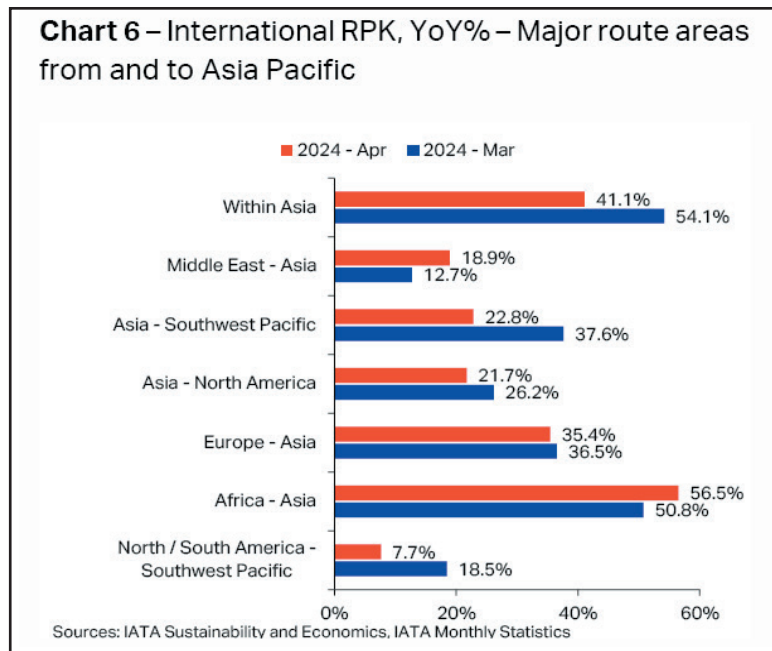
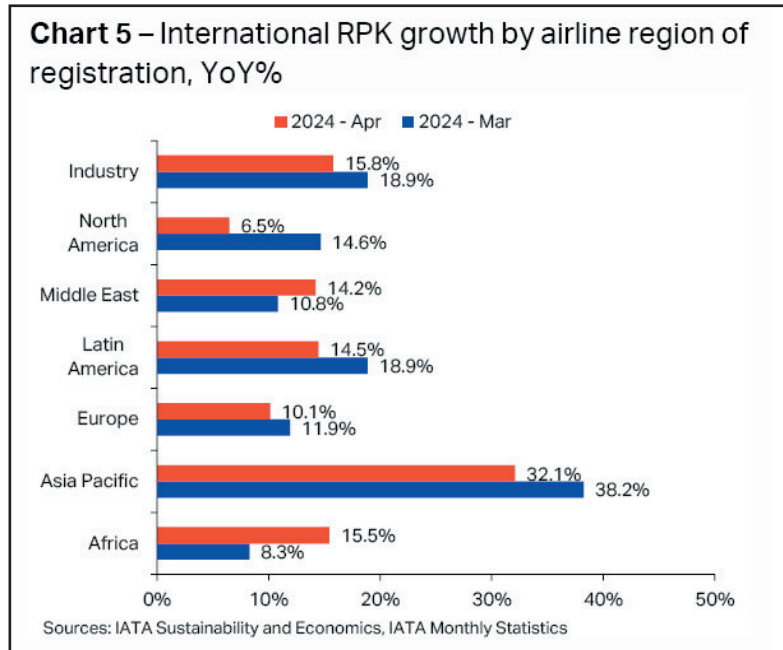
**International traffic growth decelerates but remains strong**

In April, international passenger traffic continued to be the primary driver of industry-wide growth, surging by 15.8% YoY (Chart 5). Concurrently, April’s levels of International RPK maintained a positive trajectory toward pre-2020 levels. Airlines across all regions achieved growth rates exceeding 6%, with Asia Pacific leading the way at an impressive 32.1%. All other regions maintained healthy growth rates, in the double digits for all but North America, with respect to the previous month’s.

Asia Pacific routes have seen this month again impressive increases, reflecting the ongoing resurgence of international traffic from and within

rising demand for air travel globally. Domestic ticket sales had already risen substantially in 2023, following the reopening of PR China and the heightened interest of its travelers for domestic destinations. Over the past weeks, domestic ticket sales increased even further, peaking around the end of April 2024, as Chinese consumers booked ahead and during the week of holidays that took place early in May. International ticket sales roughly followed the same trend (Chart 8).

Overall, the increase in trip bookings made in March and April for travel during the months of May and June suggests that air traffic and demand in both domestic and international segments are expected to



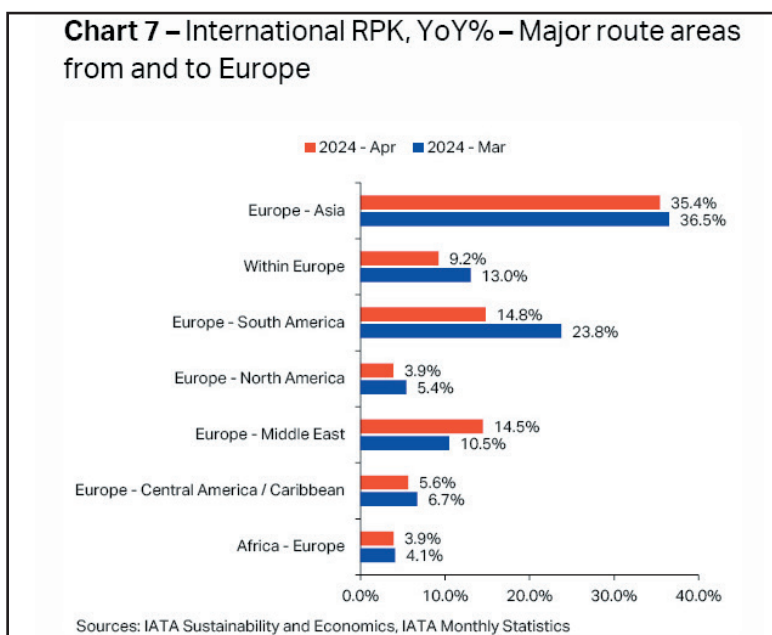
the region (Chart 6). Most of these continue to see decreasing growth rates in line with their respective RPK numbers reaching towards pre-pandemic levels, with two exceptions. Traffic in the Middle East – Asia route area has currently totally recovered and rises above its 2019 historical peak while growth pace accelerated this month, reaching 18.9% YoY against 12.7% in March 2024. Air flows between Africa and Asia have considerably strengthened over the past decade as the two regions built tighter economic ties. In April, RPK climbed 56.5% YoY, a slight step up from 50.8% in March.

Air travel from Europe shows a different picture. Nearly all routes are now surpassed pre-Covid levels of traffic while conserving a substantial positive momentum (Chart 7). Markets have seen diverse changes in RPK increases comparatively to the previous month, however remaining somewhat in the vicinity of previously observed tempo. As of April 2024, only Africa – Europe had not seen recovery in passenger numbers, while RPK climb in this route area was stable at 3.9% YoY.

**High demand for air travel as the industry enters peak period**

Total ticket sales remained higher than the previous year, indicating

maintain the solid positive trend observed so far. Domestic sales were up 9.9% YoY and international 15.1%, for a total increase of 12.5% industry-wide, a strong start for the global industry as the peak period begins (Chart 9). ♦





**Markus Tan, Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia & Africa (IMESA), Singapore Tourism Board (STB)** spoke to Disha Shah Ghosh about the comparison between India and China as tourism source markets, and their unique campaigns to engage travellers from India.

## ‘Our strategy is multi-pronged and customer-centric’

**Q Considering your experience of overseeing the Chinese market, how different are the source markets of China and India for STB?**

Both China and India are major source markets for Singapore. Recognising their significance, STB has strategically engaged with these two diverse markets to capitalise on their potential.

India is the fifth-largest source market for Singapore, more than 1 million tourists visited the island city in 2023. Tourism flows from India to Singapore have remained strong through 2024 as well, with nearly 250,000 visitor arrivals in the first quarter alone. India continues to remain a significant market for Singapore, underscored by the deep cultural affinity and connections between the two nations. Recognising this importance, our efforts signify a concerted endeavour to nurture and enhance the bond between India and Singapore. In 2023, nearly 1.4 million visitors from Greater China visited Singapore, and the numbers grew steadily to nearly 800,000 arrivals in the first quarter of this year.

STB's marketing strategies and promotional activities for India and China are tailored to each market to effectively attract and cater to the specific needs and interests of the consumers. This may involve highlighting different aspects of Singapore's offerings, such as cultural experiences, entertainment, shopping, and family-friendly attractions, to resonate with the preferences of each market. Through meaningful collaborations and creative marketing initiatives, we continue to make Singapore a top-choice destination for travellers globally.

**Q A host of destinations, hotels and attractions are wooing the Indian**

**market, especially family travellers and millennials, in that context how are you tailoring your strategy for India to continue staying on top of the mind?**

Singapore appeals to a broad swathe of Indian travellers; our key segments include Families with Young Children and BTMICE travellers, who have traditionally been our core tourism segments. We are also targeting the Early and Established Careers segment, a high-growth and high-spend leisure segment.

STB's marketing approach in India centres on leveraging our understanding of Indian audiences and partnering with strategic in-market brands and channels to engage them through bold, agile, and innovative initiatives.

One recent campaign, Made In Singapore (MIS), builds on the Passion Made Possible brand, showcasing Singapore's ability to transform everyday moments into extraordinary experiences. The campaign includes global and local activations, collaborations with Indian brands, and immersive experiences to drive travel considerations and visits to Singapore.

STB has also inked partnerships with MakeMyTrip and PhonePe to drive travel to Singapore and enable seamless transactions for Indian travelers. Additionally, the 'Family Playdates' Made In Singapore' campaign, launched in partnership with Singapore Airlines Group, Sentosa Development Corporation, and Mandai Wildlife Group, offers special deals for Indian families. Overall, STB is committed to crafting creative experiences that resonate with Indian travellers and position Singapore as a must-visit destination for lasting memories and incredible adventures.

**Q How are you using the digital medium for your consumer & media campaign?**

Our strategy is multi-pronged and customer-centric. In addition to leveraging influencers and digital content to ignite interest in visiting Singapore, we are always on the lookout for creative ways of engaging our Indian audiences and making Singapore a must-visit destination to create lasting memories and have an incredible adventurous trip.

Additionally, we have also leveraged digital platforms such as YouTube and MX Player to engage audiences in India. Through captivating initiatives such as the YouTube series 'Ananya Unscripted in Singapore,' starring actress Ananya Panday, we have showcased Singapore's diverse attractions in an enchanting and relatable manner. Additionally, our collaboration with the Indian OTT platform MX Player has resulted in the release of an interactive feature film titled "Lost & Found in Singapore," offering viewers an immersive explorative experience. Furthermore, our observation of a rising trend among female travellers embracing solo adventures led to the creation of the web series "On My Own in Singapore" in collaboration with Tripoto. This series beautifully portrays the journey of a solo traveller discovering the wonders of Singapore, inspiring others to embark on their own self-discovery journeys. Through interactive digital billboards and collaborative endeavours, STB continues to engage modern travellers, sparking excitement for unique experiences in Singapore.

In all our marketing endeavours, being 'agile, bold, and creative' has always been our north star. We have had a rich line-up of initiatives in 2023, and in 2024, we are committed to continuing to work with partners that will help us not only engage effectively with our target audiences but also help strengthen Singapore's destination brand story in the process.

**Q What can we expect from STB in the year ahead in terms of B2B outreach, engagement & participation?**

STB's dedication extends to diverse travel trade events, fostering visibility and collaboration within the industry. Emphasising genuine partnerships, STB sees counterparts in the travel trade as 'partner friends,' engaging in discussions, receiving updates, and participating in joint initiatives aimed at promoting Singapore to Indian audiences. Our collaboration efforts also extend to regular communication via our dedicated WhatsApp channel and active participation in road shows and engagement platforms. Later this year, we will also be going to Chennai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Kolkata with our Singapore industry to engage our in-market B2B travel partners. On the MICE front, we have engaged in various initiatives and partnerships. Recent endeavours encompass familiarisation trips for MICE intermediaries, spotlighting unconventional venues like yacht experiences, historic museums, and scenic locales such as Mount Faber. ♦

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# INDIA CANNES GO STILL HIGHER

*Congratulatory messages are all good but clearly independent cinema in India needs more and sustained institutional support.*

Generating positive and welcoming perceptions about the country is not the brief of solely tourism departments. A larger understanding and action at a general administrative level everywhere goes a long way in making any country an interesting (and consequently a tourism worthy) prospect.

Today everyone is preening after the Indian success at Cannes. Few remember that when Cannes debuted on the roster of great festivals of global cinema an year before our independence, an Indian film 'Neecha Nagar' had made waves at that inaugural event. It strongly depicted social challenges and wowed the audiences, jury and film buffs of the time. Unfortunately it wasn't so welcomed 'officially' within its own country of origin. In fact in later years, despite the token acclaim of Satyajit Ray and many others, let's face it - the quasi-official indigenous response to their creations was an 'oh well' if not a frown.

That cinema had become a strong medium of creating perceptions globally didn't register as strongly as it should have within the country. Bollywood and other regional cinema carved their niche out of their own efforts, volition, and commercial drive and of course the passion of an entertainment-loving population.

The FTIIs and other film institutes served willy-nilly as the poor man's cinematic focus. And this despite the immense talent they nurtured and created. It goes to the credit of individual talent that they survived and actually kept growing among bureaucratic indifference. No wonder, in the absence of sufficient 'official support' the efforts of small film makers, non-commercial projects and film creators of socially ignored subjects remained pretty much on the fringe. At best, they earned the tag of 'parallel cinema'. It's to their credit that they survived.

At the recent UKAFF at London I had the opportunity of learning about newer Indian film creators besides other south Asian cinema. Films from the sexual minorities, especially from India also had their day at the festival. The films were part of the festival's repertoire and thankfully not bracketed as a sub-genre in the scheme of things. Though invariably the accent was on the biggies and star power in general yet it was encouraging to see consistent and tireless independent film makers, even from the LGBTplus cinema leaving a mark with their creativity.

With the success at Cannes last month, the government has rightly come forward to congratulate the talent and creativity of the hitherto not-much-talked-about winners. It would be opportune to use this success to underline the necessity of some sort of enhanced institutional support to independent cinema within India. The success of any movie spawns a subliminal current of positivity about the country where it is shot or based upon. Such sentiment translates into a desire to experience, resulting in tourism



generation, to put it blandly.

The image of a country is actually the sentimental image constructed in the mind of people through the narrations of others. Cinema is the subtle yet sure tool to firm up those sentiments.

'Three Idiots' was one movie that massively catapulted Ladakh into the nation's collective tourist landscape. The movie 'Krishh' increased Indian outbound travel to Singapore at least six times over. 'Best Marigold Hotel', 'Slumdog Millionaire' and 'Life of Pi' created strong inbound interest in India.

The UKAFF and other bodies like London Indian Film festival are strong mediums abroad that help generate space and interest for independent films from India and South Asia. They get direct support from British government institutions towards it. India needs a clearer picture and impetus for to do something like that here.

By assisting independent films, governments can generate interest and promote tourism as well though they don't appear directly linked. To be fair, institutions like NDFC do lend a hand but that needs to step up many notches in scale.

Neeraj Churi, an independent film producer based at London advocates for institutional support to independent film makers within India. At least their travel to various film fests and exhibitions should be subsidised and their works promoted to film fests across the world. It takes just some organisational sense with love of cinema to identify films and film-makers who are not part of the mainstream and present them to the world film bodies on an institutional platform.

Data reveals that the film tourism sector valued at USD 66.7 billion a year ago, is projected to reach USD 128.78 billion by 2032. If not for art, fair play and social consciousness, the government better dig into the lure of commerce, if nothing.

#### Follow him

YouTube: @everywherewithanurag

Instagram: @everywhere\_with\_anurag

**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.*



# Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

SkipQ

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>**



**Start-up Name: SkipQ**

**Core Team: Saba Azhar and Jure Bratkic**

**Founding year: 2021**

**Company Website: <https://www.skiptq.com/>**

Description: SkipQ is a deep tech, multi-lingual, travel retail company with the focus on merging all vendors and service providers at all airports around the world on a single mobile platform. The company is transforming travellers airport experience into a seamless journey of comfort and convenience. It offers purchase lounge access, personalized meet & greet assistance, reliable airport transfers, cutting-edge e-SIM technology, and more even before their journey begins. SkipQ redefines convenience for modern travellers.

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





Cricket has always been a draw for Indians visiting Australia. **Julia Swanson, Chief Executive, Melbourne Convention Bureau, spoke to Disha Shah Ghosh about Melbourne being a melting pot of events in Australia, and securing incentive groups for Boxing Day Test Match.**

## ‘There has never been a better time for Indian groups to travel to Melbourne’

**Q What role does MCB play in terms of supporting inbound MICE movement into Melbourne?**

The Melbourne Convention Bureau has extensive knowledge of the destination and can advise planners on the best activities, attractions, and accommodation to include in an incentive program in Melbourne and regional Victoria. For over 50-years, our team has collaborated closely with event planners to create bespoke itineraries and provide access to exclusive experiences.

Whether it's a group of 20 or 2,000-plus, MCB provides free advice and assistance, supplier recommendations for over 130 business event vendors, help with site inspections, and to facilitate a smooth international experience, we also offer information about customs and immigration procedures. Depending on the size of the group and number of nights spent in Melbourne, MCB can offer financial incentives to planners.

**Q At a time when the MICE movement from India is seeing a steady surge, how are you working on securing incentive groups from India for the Boxing Day Test Match 2024?**

Melbourne is Australia's events capital with a year-round calendar of vibrant events. The Boxing Day Test Match takes place every year from 26th December (Boxing Day) to 30th December. This year's Test promises to be the hottest cricket ticket in town as Australia vs India. The ICC T20 World Cup 2022 saw roughly 20,000 Indians travel to catch the action. We see several corporates planning their incentive reward programs to include sporting events, with this year's Test guaranteed to be a highlight for MICE groups.

**Q Cricket has always been a pull factor for the Indian market. How are you combining cricket with the overall leisure in Melbourne experience for bleisure travellers?**

Cricket enthusiasts are always in for a treat in Melbourne because of the iconic MCG, or as locals call it 'The G'. Fans can take an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the stadium and visit the interactive Australian Sports Museum within the MCG. MCG Events Indian chef Naman Kochar can whip up an Indian spread for MICE events catering to groups of various sizes overlooking the MCG arena. MCB can assist in organising this exclusive experience.

Our city is renowned for its exciting food and drink scene, quirky laneways, street art, and the world's best coffee. A short drive out of the city, delegates can experience stunning landscapes, native nature and wildlife, and award-winning wineries. The Great Ocean Road is one of the most scenic driving routes in the world. Here, delegates can see the 12 Apostles and even take a helicopter ride.

Only 90-minutes from Melbourne, delegates can witness the penguin parade, a phenomenon that takes place only in Phillip Island, Victoria where Australia's famous little penguins make their way home from the sea. Phillip Island Nature Parks, a multi-award-winning ecotourism organisation, also operates other attractions, including the Koala Conservation Centre, Churchill Island Heritage Farm and the Nobbies Centre.

Step back in time to Victoria 1850s gold rush era at Sovereign Hill with several group experiences such as gold panning and underground goldmine tours.

Delegates can enjoy a delectable meal at a vineyard restaurant, taste highly awarded Australian wines, and be a part of the wine making process at one of Yarra Valley's

wineries. Rochford Winery offers immersive incentive team building activities from barrel rolling, wine blending or stomping on grapes.

And while you're in the Victoria's regions, groups can ride on Australia's oldest running steam train, Puffing Billy or experience gourmet menus and stunning views on the Q Train. There's so much more to see and experience in Melbourne and beyond.

**Q How are the F&B offerings in Melbourne being weaved in your tourism promotion plan?**

Melbourne is home to some of the world's best restaurants offering a diversity of cuisines that appeal to delegates of all backgrounds. With an abundance of restaurants, food tours, and interactive culinary experiences, delegates can indulge in the city's renowned gastronomic offerings. Moreover, the city offers an array of Indian cuisine options such as internationally acclaimed chef Jessi Singh's Daughter in Law, located in the one of the city's iconic laneways.

**Q Which are some of the iconic venues in Melbourne to host a variety of MICE events?**

Melbourne proudly has the highest number of conference venues in the country, all conveniently situated in the city centre. The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) is a premier choice, with over 197,000 square meters of conference space available in the convention district. In addition to MCEC, there are more than 80 distinctive venues within Melbourne's city centre, offering a diverse range of options for unique events from CENTREPIECE at Melbourne Park home of the Australian Open, to Showtime Events Centre situated along South Wharf Promenade, parallel to the Yarra River and gazing over the Melbourne city skyline and the Melbourne Showgrounds – this large and versatile venue where MasterChef Australia is filmed, offering unique and flexible indoor and outdoor spaces to name just a few. The possibilities are vast, accompanied by top-notch cuisine, entertainment, and service.

**Q Please comment on the connectivity to Melbourne in terms of flights and visas ?**

Melbourne is well-connected to India with 11 weekly direct air services from Delhi and Mumbai on Air India and from Delhi on Qantas Airways. Premium airlines like Singapore Airlines, Malaysian Airlines and Sri Lankan Airlines also have excellent one-stop connections. The Australian visa application process for Indians is the best in class with faster turnaround times and completely online processing (no need to handover the physical passport). MICE groups are offered a single window service with more efficient processing. There has never been a better time for Indian groups to travel to Melbourne. ♦

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# Rise and Rise of Destination Duping!

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

Imagine standing on a pristine beach, the sound of gentle waves lapping at your feet, the air filled with the scent of salt and adventure. You look around and realize there are no crowds, no noisy tourists jostling for the perfect selfie. Instead, you find yourself in a serene, unspoiled paradise that feels like your own secret discovery. Welcome to Gokarna, the hidden gem that rivals Goa's famed coastline without the chaos. This is the essence of destination duping—a smart travel trend transforming how we explore the world, offering unique experiences and tranquillity where only the well-trodden paths once existed.

Travel has become easier nowadays, and people are looking for new and affordable places to visit. This has led to a trend called "destination duping." It's when travellers choose cheaper, lesser-known spots that offer similar experiences to popular but crowded destinations. Social media and a desire for genuine experiences drive this trend, letting tourists enjoy culture and nature without high costs or large crowds. Post-pandemic, people want to travel but avoid crowded places. Social media shows hidden gems that are as beautiful as famous spots. Cost is a big factor; dupes offer similar experiences for less money. For instance, Ljubljana is cheaper than Venice but just as scenic. Young travellers seek authentic experiences over touristy ones. Destination duping guides them to lively, less crowded places. Plus, it helps support sustainable tourism by easing pressure on popular spots.

## Why dupe?

Destination duping offers a plethora of advantages for intrepid travellers. Firstly, it provides significant cost savings, enabling tourists to stretch their budgets further while enjoying high-quality experiences. This financial relief allows for longer stays or more frequent travel, enhancing overall satisfaction.

Secondly, it offers a more relaxed and enjoyable experience by avoiding the crowds that often plague famous tourist spots. Travellers can explore at their own pace, take unhurried photographs, and truly immerse themselves in the local environment without the constant jostle of fellow tourists.

Additionally, destination duping fosters authentic cultural immersion. Visitors to lesser-known locales can engage more deeply with the local community, experiencing traditions, cuisines, and lifestyles that might be diluted or commercialized in more popular

destinations. This deeper connection often leads to more meaningful and memorable travel experiences.

## A win-win scenario

Destination duping provides a dual advantage, benefiting both overcrowded popular destinations and the lesser-known locations that serve as their dupes. For popular destinations, the primary benefit is reduced tourism pressure. Overcrowding can lead to the degradation of natural and cultural sites, strain local infrastructure, and diminish residents' quality of life. By diverting tourists to alternative locations, these hotspots can preserve their attractions and maintain a more sustainable tourism model.

On the other hand, dupe destinations gain significant benefits as well. These lesser-known locales benefit from increased tourism, supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and enhancing infrastructure development. As these destinations grow in popularity, they gain visibility and recognition, fostering further tourism and investment.

## Strategy: Incredible India!

By positioning Indian destinations as dupes for popular international hotspots, India can unlock many benefits. Firstly, this strategy can significantly boost domestic tourism by encouraging travellers to explore local alternatives that offer experiences similar to those of international favourites.

This approach also promotes sustainable tourism, alleviating the pressure on heavily visited sites like Goa and Jaipur preserving their natural and cultural heritage. Additionally, it fosters economic growth in underdeveloped regions. It enhances India's global tourism appeal by showcasing its diverse and lesser-known attractions.

Ultimately, by embracing destination duping, India can create a more balanced and sustainable tourism industry, distribute economic benefits more evenly, and reveal the hidden gems that make the country a genuinely diverse travel destination.

## Offer India!

India's hidden gems serve as excellent dupes for popular international destinations, offering similar experiences at lower costs and without crowds. Gokarna provides serene beaches akin to Goa's, while Lachen in North Sikkim offers breath-taking landscapes comparable to Ladakh. Khimsar Village offers cultural immersion and desert scenery, rivalling



Jaipur's allure. Vagamon, with its rolling hills and tea gardens, is a tranquil alternative to Ooty. Kalpa Village, overlooking the Sutlej River Valley, provides an intimate experience similar to Shimla. These destination dupes allow travellers to enjoy famous locales' charm while promoting sustainable tourism and enriching local economies.

## So, let's dupe!

Destination duping isn't just a travel trend but a solution to contemporary challenges. By opting for lesser-known destinations that offer comparable experiences, travellers can enjoy more affordable, relaxed, and authentic vacations. This benefits overcrowded hotspots by alleviating tourist pressure and uplifts lesser-known locales through economic growth and development. For India, embracing destination dupes could revolutionize domestic tourism, promote sustainability, and showcase the country's diverse attractions. As more travellers join the movement, destination duping has the potential to reshape the travel landscape, creating a more balanced, sustainable, and enriching experience for all adventurers.

So why follow the crowd when you can forge your own path to discovery? Let's dupe! ♦

*'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 Sirmour, 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.

# Chinese spend USD 196.5bn on international travel in 2023, recovering top position

As per UN Tourism, China has recovered its position as top spender on international tourism in 2023 as Asia and the Pacific consolidates its recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. In 2022, the list of top spenders was headed by the United States. France, Spain and USA took the top spots for most-visited destinations.

## Top Tourism Spenders in 2023

Chinese expenditure on travel abroad reached USD 196.5 billion in 2023, ahead of the United States (USD 150 billion), Germany (USD 112 billion), the United Kingdom (USD 110 billion) and France (USD 49 billion). Making up the top ten spenders for 2023 are Canada, Italy, India, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea. India jumped to 8th place, from 14th in 2019, confirming the growing importance of the country as a source market, while Italy rose from 10th to 7th position.

## Top in arrivals and receipts: France, Spain and USA consolidate their positions

France consolidated its position as the world's most visited destination in 2023 with 100 million international tourist arrivals. Spain was second with 85 million, followed by the United States (66 million), Italy (57 million) and Türkiye, which closed the top five with 55 million international tourists.

Completing the top ten most visited destinations in 2023 are Mexico, the United Kingdom, Germany, Greece and Austria. Compared to before the pandemic, Italy, Türkiye, Mexico, Germany and Austria all rose one position, while the United Kingdom rose from 10th to 7th and Greece from 13th to 9th.

On the side on international tourism receipts, the ranking is led by

the United States, earning USD 176 billion in 2023, followed by Spain (USD 92 billion), the United Kingdom (USD 74 billion), France (USD 69 billion) and Italy (USD 56 billion).

Following the above, destinations earning the most from international tourism in 2023 include the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, Australia, Canada, Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Macao (China), India and Mexico which complete the top 15 list of tourism earners.

Upward movements in the ranking among the top earners include the UK jumping to the 3rd position from 5th pre-pandemic, the United Arab Emirates from 13th to 6th, Türkiye from 12th to 7th, Canada from 15th to 9th, Saudi Arabia from 27th to 12th, and Mexico from 17th to 15th.

Croatia (from 32nd to 25th), Morocco (from 41st to 31st) and the Dominican Republic (43rd to 34th) also moved up in the Top 50 ranking by receipts in 2023, as did Qatar (from 51st to 37th) and Colombia (50th to 44th).

## Looking ahead to a full recovery globally in 2024

As per the latest World Tourism Barometer, in 2023 international tourist arrivals recovered 89% of 2019 levels and 97% in Q1 2024. UN Tourism's projection for 2024 points to a full recovery of international tourism with arrivals growing 2% above 2019 levels, backed by strong demand, enhanced air connectivity and the continued recovery of China and other major Asian markets.

Total export revenues from international tourism, including both receipts and passenger transport, reached an estimated USD 1.7 trillion in 2023, about 96% of pre-pandemic levels in real terms. Tourism direct GDP recovered pre-pandemic levels in 2023, reaching an estimated USD 3.3 trillion, equivalent to 3% of global GDP. ♦





# A Captivating Journey through Sri Lanka: SriLankan Airlines Indian Media FAM 2024

TBM Staff | SriLanka

When I received the invitation to join the Media Familiarization (FAM) trip to Sri Lanka from Aviareps India, the official representative of the SriLankan Airlines (main sponsor), and accommodation partner Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, I knew it would be an exceptional experience. The trip promised an immersive exploration of Sri Lanka's captivating offerings, and it did not disappoint. Coordinated by Aviareps India and supported by Walker's Tours - our local DMC partner, the journey was meticulously planned and flawlessly executed.

## Day 1: A Warm Welcome in Colombo



SriLankan Airlines Business Class

Our adventure began with an early morning departure from Mumbai. To our surprise and delight, SriLankan Airlines graciously upgraded our economy tickets to business class. The business class experience was nothing short of luxurious. The comfortable seating, which reclined into a flatbed, ensured a restful flight. The in-flight meals were gourmet delights, showcasing both international and Sri Lankan cuisine, enhanced by an array of high-quality beverages. The warm hospitality of the flight attendants set the tone for the entire trip.

Upon arrival in Colombo, we checked into the Cinnamon Grand Colombo, where a sumptuous

breakfast awaited us. Our first day included a rejuvenating luxury wellness treatment at NIJA Spa, which was the perfect way to unwind after the flight. Lunch at Long Feng Restaurant at Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo was a delightful culinary experience. An afternoon of shopping allowed us to explore the vibrant local markets. The evening was capped off with cocktails at Breeze Bar, hosted by SriLankan Airlines, followed by a delectable dinner at Chutneys Indian restaurant.

The warmth and hospitality extended by our hosts made us feel right at home.

## Day 2: Nature's Beauty at Beddagana Wetland Park



Beddagana Wetland Park

The second day began with an early departure to Beddagana Wetland Park, a serene haven for bird watchers. The City Trails Tour with Nature Trails provided an educational experience, highlighting the rich biodiversity of the wetlands. After a hearty breakfast at Plates Restaurant, we embarked on a four-hour journey to Cinnamon Lodge Habarana.

Lunch at Ehala Restaurant at Cinnamon Lodge Habarana was a culinary delight, followed by an excursion to Minneriya Wildlife Park. The safari was an educative experience, offering insights into the lives of Sri Lankan elephants in their natural habitat. The day concluded with a cultural show and dinner at Ehala Restaurant, enriching our understanding of Sri Lanka's traditions.

## Day 3: Historical Wonders and Coastal Charms



Dambulla Cave Temple

Our third day began with a visit to the Dambulla Cave Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The ancient murals and statues within

the temple complex were awe-inspiring, offering a glimpse into the island's rich spiritual history. From there, we traveled to Trincomalee, arriving at Trinco Blu by Cinnamon for Lunch at Captain's Deck Restaurant which provided a taste of the local cuisine. The afternoon was spent exploring Koneshwaram Temple and Lover's Leap. Each site had its own unique charm, blending natural beauty with historical significance. Dinner at Ehala Restaurant at Cinnamon Lodge Habarana capped off a day filled with exploration and discovery.

### Day 4: From Heritage to Modernity



Galle Fort

After breakfast at Ehala Restaurant, we departed for Bentota. The journey through Sri Lanka's picturesque landscapes was a treat for the eyes. Upon arrival at Cinnamon Bentota Beach, we enjoyed a delectable lunch at Ottimo Restaurant. The afternoon included visit to the Galle Fort, showcasing Sri Lanka's rich architectural heritage.

The evening featured cocktails followed by a sumptuous dinner at Cinnamon Bentota Beach. The luxurious setting and warm hospitality made for a perfect end to an eventful day, blending heritage and modernity seamlessly.

### Day 5: Art, Adventure, and Relaxation



Bufo @ Cinnamon Bey Beruwala

Day five began with breakfast at Ottimo Restaurant, followed by an art tour of the property. The tour, led by the in-house art curator, highlighted the architectural influence of the renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. The morning continued with a mangrove boat ride and water sports, offering a mix of adventure and relaxation.

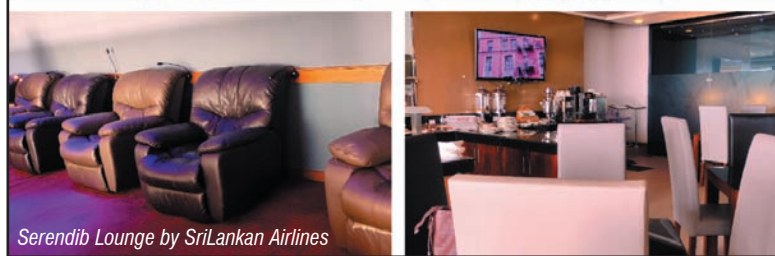
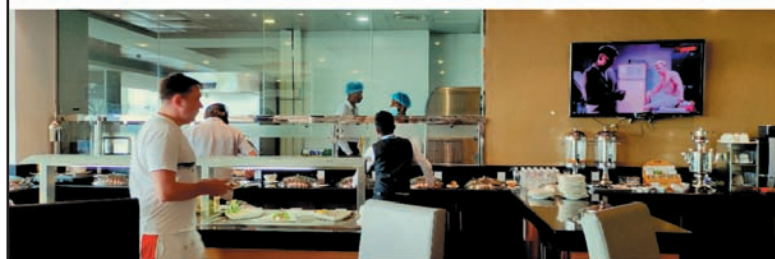
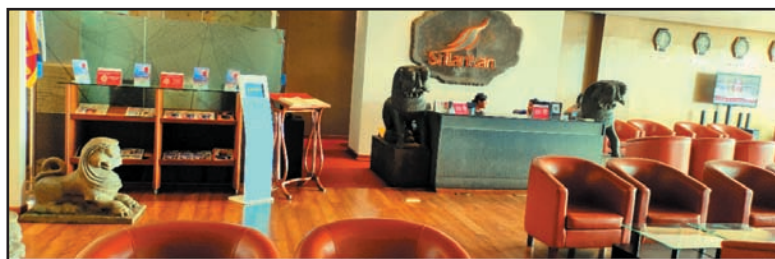
Lunch at Cinnamon Bey Beruwala Hotel was another culinary highlight, showcasing the diverse flavors of Sri Lankan cuisine. The afternoon was reserved for leisure, allowing us to unwind and enjoy the tranquil surroundings of Cinnamon Bentota Beach. A lavish dinner spread at Ottimo Restaurant provided a fitting conclusion to a day of art, adventure, and relaxation.

### Day 6: A Fond Farewell

The final day began with breakfast at Ottimo Restaurant, followed by a leisurely morning at Cinnamon Bentota Beach. As we prepared for departure, the sense



Indian Media FAM Trip Group



Serendib Lounge by SriLankan Airlines

of camaraderie and shared experiences among the group was palpable. Our return journey was made even more special with another upgrade from economy to business class, including access to the business class lounge. This ensured a comfortable and luxurious end to our trip.

### The Pillars of the Journey:

**SriLankan Airlines**, the main sponsor of the FAM trip, played a pivotal role in making the journey remarkable. As the National Carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the One World Alliance, SriLankan Airlines is renowned for its outstanding service, comfort, safety, and reliability. The airline operates an all-Airbus fleet, including the state-of-the-art A330-300 and modern A320/321neo. Their commitment to excellence was evident throughout our trip, from the luxurious business class experience to the exceptional inflight service.

SriLankan Airlines' extensive network, providing convenient connections to 115 destinations in 59 countries, ensures that travelers can easily access the beauty and diversity of Sri Lanka. Their strategic hub at Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo serves as a gateway to major cities across Europe, Australia, the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and the Far East. This connectivity makes Sri Lanka an accessible and attractive destination for travelers worldwide.

**Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts**, as our accommodation partner, provided luxurious and comfortable stays throughout the trip. Their properties offered a perfect blend of modern amenities and authentic Sri Lankan charm, ensuring that our experience was both relaxing and memorable.

**Aviareps India**, representing SriLankan Airlines in the Indian market, expertly coordinated the trip. Their meticulous planning and attention to detail ensured a seamless and enjoyable experience for all participants. Their efforts were instrumental in showcasing the best of Sri Lanka and highlighting the airline's superior offerings.

The Media FAM trip, organized by SriLankan Airlines and Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, was an extraordinary experience. From the luxurious accommodations to the meticulously planned excursions, every detail reflected the warm hospitality and rich culture of Sri Lanka. Walker's Tours ensured seamless travel logistics, while Aviareps India's coordination made the trip a resounding success. This immersive journey not only showcased the beauty of Sri Lanka but also highlighted the island's potential as a premier travel destination. With SriLankan Airlines' exceptional connectivity and service, reaching this paradise island is as enjoyable as exploring its many wonders. ♦



Vietnam's Grand Ho Tram, a sprawling 160-hectare integrated resort boasting USD 4.3 billion investment, is eyeing Indian tourists. Their sights are set not just on individual tourists, but also on attracting large groups and on the wedding market. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with **Akshay Moza, Vice President of the Commercial Division at The Grand Ho Tram**, to delve deeper into their plans for the Indian market.

With our partners at One Rep Global, we are implementing a dual strategy. Firstly, our offline and online sales efforts are targeting large groups and the wedding business. This focus aims to attract substantial bookings and enhance our brand's visibility.

Equally important are our PR and marketing activities. These efforts are crucial for positioning our brand and complex in the market, especially with the recent start of direct airlift services. We are leveraging these efforts by bringing key opinion leaders (KOLs) and influencers to our properties, amplifying our reach and appeal.

We are also creating attractive packages for consumers, highlighting our proximity—just a two-hour drive from Ho Chi Minh City. The wedding segment is another key focus, not only for generating business but also for enhancing brand recognition in the Indian market. To support this, we have introduced Indian dishes and are working with outsourced Indian chefs, with plans to hire full-time chefs based on demand.

## 'We are targeting the high-end FIT market'

**Q Can you elaborate on the key drivers behind The Grand Ho Tram's recent rebranding? What specific aspects of the brand identity have been revamped?**

Nestled in Vietnam, Grand Ho Tram is poised to be the top resort and entertainment complex in the country and a leading venue in the Asia-Pacific region. With a focus on positioning itself as Vietnam's leading casino destination, we aim to attract players from all over, offering an experience they'll want to return to repeatedly.

The complex boasts an array of attractions, including 15 diverse F&B outlets, a golf course, game zones, and cinemas, each of which can be marketed independently, enhancing the venue's appeal. Additionally, it features one of the largest MICE venues in Vietnam, catering to large-scale conferences and events. This multifaceted approach ensures the complex stands out as a premier destination for entertainment and leisure in the region.

**Q How will the rebranding help The Grand Ho Tram to better resonate with its target audience? Are there new segments that you're aiming to attract?**

We are currently targeting Viet Kieu expat communities - primarily Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, and Japanese. Western expats, though part of the market, are not the primary focus due to business nature and volume.

We now aim to attract new markets from Malaysia, India, and the US, offering amenities that cater to these nationalities. With 1,100 rooms across two IHG properties—Intercontinental Grand Ho Tram and Holiday



Inn Resort Ho Tram Beach—the resort features a vast casino with slot machines, live tables, and an exclusive VIP area. The addition of Ixora Ho Tram by Fusion introduces 46 villas and 164 residences, providing private, spacious accommodations for families and groups.

The resort boasts numerous dining options, bars, and a state-of-the-art convention center for over 1,000 guests. Its highlight, The Bluffs golf course, designed by Greg Norman, is a multi-award-winning, 18-hole championship course, recognized as one of the best in Asia and ranked among the world's top 100. This combination of luxury and diverse offerings positions Ho Tram as a premier destination for global travelers.

**Q How is The Grand Ho Tram targeting Indian travelers to visit their resort?**

Additionally, we are targeting the high-end FIT market and promoting golf tours, which are significant attractions in the region.

**Q Does The Grand Ho Tram have any plans for expansion?**

The entire 160-hectare integrated resort strip, with a USD 4.3 billion investment, stands as a lucrative opportunity, unmatched in size in the southern region, drawing significant investor interest.

Additionally, there are 38 hectares available for further development, starting with Ixora 2, a new condotel and villas project. This development will add 575 keys, split between condotels and villas, bringing the total to 2,000 keys, making it one of the largest integrated complexes in the area. ♦

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