

Aviation Minister meets YouTube, Google to explore AI integration in tech start-ups & governance

TBM Staff | Mumbai

In a major shot in the arm for India's aviation sector, Union Minister for Civil Aviation Rammohan Naidu held detailed discussions with executives from YouTube and Google to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) for aiding technology start-ups, improving governance, and fostering transparency in the sector.

The discussions in New Delhi included YouTube Global Head Neel Mohan, Google Asia Pacific Region Head Sanjay Gupta, Google's MD of Government Affairs Sreenivas Reddy, and YouTube's Global VP for Government Affairs Lesslie Miller.

Minister Naidu emphasised the potential of AI to streamline processes, improve efficiency, and enhance transparency in the civil aviation sector. Expressing optimism, he said, "The integration of AI and technology in governance and civil aviation holds immense

potential. By working together with tech giants like YouTube and Google, we can create a more efficient, informed, and innovative aviation sector that benefits all."

aims to support start-ups contributing to the sector's growth and development through cutting-edge technology and innovative approaches.



Naidu urged Google to explore collaboration opportunities with aviation-related start-ups, highlighting the challenges faced by the industry and seeking Google's expertise in developing innovative solutions. The potential partnership

The meeting concluded with a mutual agreement to further explore collaboration opportunities and work towards implementing innovative solutions to drive the future of civil aviation and governance. ♦

Mugdha Sinha takes charge as new Director General of Tourism

TBM Staff | Delhi

In a major reshuffle, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has announced the appointment of Mugdha Sinha as Director General of Tourism. Sinha, IAS, of the Rajasthan cadre,

1999 batch, has replaced Manisha Saxena.

Her new role was facilitated by the temporary upgrading of a vacant post of DS/Director in the Department, as per an official circular.

She has previously worked in the Ministries of Textiles, Industry and

Commerce both at the Centre and in Rajasthan, her cadre state.

India extends VoA at 6 airports for nationals of Japan, South Korea & UAE

TBM Staff | Delhi

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that the Visa-on-Arrival (VoA) facility would now be available for nationals of Japan, South Korea, UAE.

These nationals can avail the double-entry VoA facility for tourism, business, conferences, and medical purposes, for 60 days.

The airports designated to offer this facility are Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai.

In addition to the

VoA, the Ministry has expanded the e-Visa facility with Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), now accessible to nationals of 167 countries. This e-Visa permits entry through 30 designated international airports and six major seaports, significantly broadening the scope for international travellers to visit India with ease. ♦





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Louisiana Tourism appoints Sartha Global Marketing as India Representative

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The Louisiana Office of Tourism, the official travel authority for the state of Louisiana in the USA, has appointed Sartha Global Marketing LLP as its Representative office in India.

Sartha has been assigned to develop and implement comprehensive travel trade and public relations programmes to inspire Indian travellers, enhancing their interest in exploring Louisiana's unique culture, vibrant festivals, and diverse attractions.

"We're excited to be working with Sartha Global Marketing on sharing all the ways you can Feed Your Soul in Louisiana," said Doug Bourgeois, Assistant Secretary of Tourism. "India is a wonderful country and its home to people who love to experience culture, food, outdoors and more. Louisiana is the perfect destination to find those authentic experiences."

Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing LLP, also added, "We are delighted to have this opportunity to promote The Louisiana Office of Tourism in India. Known for its vibrant history, culture, and celebrations, Louisiana is a unique destination bound to captivate travelers seeking rich cultural experiences. The Bayou



State is a fantastic addition to all East Coast and Southern itineraries, offering a wealth of attractions and immersive experiences to Indian visitors". ♦



Indiva Marketing to represent Morocco's La Mamounia in India

TBM Staff | Mumbai

La Mamounia, the iconic exclusive resort in the heart of Marrakech, Morocco, is now exclusively represented by Indiva Marketing. This partnership marks a milestone as it expands its portfolio to include one of the world's most prestigious and historically rich hospitality brands.

Pierre Jochem, General Manager, La Mamounia, said, "India is a rapidly growing market with a strong appetite for luxury travel, exclusive hotels, fine food and wine. We are confident that Indiva Marketing's deep understanding, and innovative

approach will help us reach new heights in this vibrant region. We look forward to welcoming Indian guests to La Mamounia, to experience the magic of Marrakech like never before."

"We are delighted to represent La Mamounia in India to bring this exceptional resort to the forefront of Indian travellers who seek an unforgettable and enriching travel experience," said Beate Mauder Kakkar, Managing Director at Indiva Marketing. "La Mamounia is a destination in itself, offering an immersive experience that combines Moroccan tradition with refined luxury. ♦

Swosti Premium achieves 5-star Deluxe classification

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Swosti Premium in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, after complete renovations and upgradation in service standards, has now been upgraded from 5-star to 5-star Deluxe Classification by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

This prestigious recognition acknowledges tireless efforts, dedication and commitment to deliver excellence in service,

amenities and overall guest experience.

The 5-Star Deluxe classification is a testament towards luxurious accommodations and amenities, world-class dining experiences, exceptional service standard and state-of-the-art facilities and services.

In the coming days, Swosti Group will be unveiling the first 5-star deluxe hotel in Puri to cater to domestic and international tourists. ♦





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Cunard captivates Indian travellers with tailored cruise experiences

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Griffon Cruises, currently promoting the iconic British cruising company Cunard Line, is tailoring its offerings to attract Indian travellers. Cunard, known for its renowned ships like Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary 2, Queen Victoria, and the newly launched Queen Anne, is enhancing its appeal to the Indian market.

"Cunard Line is known for its British heritage and its transatlantic cruises, giving Indian travellers a peek into the bygone era when the only medium for cross-border travel was a ship," said Vivek Jain, Managing Director of Griffon Cruises.

Cunard offers various sailings, including transatlantic routes from Southampton to New York and round-the-world cruises. Other itineraries include the East and West Mediterranean, the British Isles, Norwegian fjords, the Atlantic coast, and the Canary Islands. "We cover most of Europe, Japan for

cherry blossom season, as well as Australia in the summer months, Alaska, and the Caribbean Islands," Jain added.

This year, Griffon has focused on promoting Cunard's East and West Mediterranean sailings and the fjords. "We also did bookings for cherry blossom season. The British Isles and the Northern Lights are doing great for the Diwali season. In October, we are focusing on European sailings, starting from 7-day itineraries. We also have shorter sailings of 2-3 nights," Jain noted.

For the Indian clientele, Cunard is seen as an aspirational product. "It's an old English charm, and the luxury attracts Indian travellers. We have so much focus on the Indian market that we serve Indian food on our group movements. On the Queen Anne, there is an Indian restaurant as well," Jain explained.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among Indians in cruise holidays. Jain shared his experience, stating, "I have



Vivek Jain

been selling cruises for the last 20 years when the concept itself wasn't understood in the market. With 'Dil Dhadakne Do' being shot on Pullmantur ships, gradually we started educating people on the cruise experience. On Cunard, we do a lot of English activities, therefore there are guests who are mature enough to undertake a 14-day sailing."

Griffon Cruises' efforts to adapt to Indian tastes and preferences highlight the increasing demand for luxury cruise experiences among Indian travelers. ♦

TAIWAN: A MICE & INCENTIVE DESTINATION



Nestled in the heart of Asia, TAIWAN, a bustling island of activity and vibrant culture, has something to offer every traveler. Enjoy breathtaking coastal landscapes during the day and lively markets serving noodle soups and fish delicacies in the evening. The leaf-shaped island is home to more than 60 restaurants serving Indian food.

The destination has a robust transportation system with 3 international airports—Taoyuan, Taipei Songshan, and Kaohsiung. Efficient internal transit, including metro, taxis, buses, and high-speed rail allows north-to-south travel in 96 minutes, optimizing business and leisure time.

Ease of visa starting from instant e-visas to group visas at no cost. The climate on the island ranges from cool winters (10°C) to hot summers

(38°C), averaging 25°C, making it a year-round destination.

Top-tier cities like Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung offer excellent venues to host large gatherings coupled with local and international hotels offering different capacities for hosting incentive movement. Taiwan's shopping includes modern malls and night markets, with vibrant nightlife featuring pubs, clubs, and karaoke lounges.

The Taiwan Incentive Plan, a collaboration between the International Trade Administration (TITA) and the Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA), offers travel subsidies of up to NT\$2,000 per person per visit and a maximum of NT\$500,000 per event. This initiative seeks to promote the development of Taiwan's MICE and tourism industries by incentivizing participants to explore the country while attending events, thereby boosting local economies and enhancing the overall MICE experience in Taiwan.

With modern amenities, cultural experiences, and natural beauty, Taiwan is the perfect MICE destination from India.

For more information, contact Taiwan Tourism Information Centre in Mumbai

Email: info@blinkbrandsolutions.com or Visit the Taiwan Tourism Administration Official Website (<https://eng.taiwan.net.tw/>)



For news updates and more information log on to www.travelbizmonitor.com daily

Big Bus Tours appoints Auxilia Networks as India Representative

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Auxilia Networks has been appointed as exclusive India Representative for the iconic global hop-on hop-off bus tour brand, Big Bus Tours Group.

Auxilia will promote the Big Bus portfolio of open-top sightseeing bus tours in over 25 of the world's most popular cities across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific. They will also promote the company's other multi-national brands including leading UAE travel company Tour Dubai.

Alexi Tabrizi, Executive VP, Global Sales, Big Bus Tours, said, "India has become a key source market for our global tours across all 4 continents that we operate in. Engaging with this market is critical for us to achieve our global growth targets. The Indian traveller is aware, aspiring, and forever looking to explore new cities and destinations and there's no better way to do that than to take one of

our open-top bus tours with accompanying commentary. India is a vast and varied country, so we sought a partner with a deep and comprehensive knowledge of the market along with a solid network of trade and media contacts. Auxilia ticked several boxes for us and we're delighted to be working with PB and his team."

Phil Boggan, Chief Commercial Officer, Big Bus Tours, said, "We very much look forward to working with Paramjit and his team at Auxilia Networks in our new partnership to bring the Big Bus Tours Group global portfolio of experiences to the Indian market. We can't wait to welcome many more Indian customers to the cities that we showcase, where we can provide them with a range of experiences, from hopping on one of our Big Bus Tours buses, splashing aboard our Singapore Duck Tours, to enjoying Tour Dubai's fantastic Desert Safaris or Dhow Cruises. We are confident that our partnership with Auxilia



Networks will help us reach and serve this growing and dynamic market."

Paramjit Bawa, Founder & Principal, Auxilia Networks, said, "We are absolutely thrilled that Big Bus Tours chose Auxilia as their partner in India. What an addition to our family of premium international partners they are – we're talking about the biggest operator of open-top sightseeing bus tours in the whole world, a truly iconic global brand – in over 25 cities across 4 continents. As an example of our ambition to partner with the best companies in their respective fields, Big Bus are pretty hard to beat. We will promote their sightseeing tours and other verticals under their global umbrella through a mix of B2B and B2C activities, PR and media engagement." ♦

Pennsylvania's Happy Valley meets target of 5m visitors for 2024

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB), the official destination marketing organization for Centre County, Pennsylvania, has said that visitation to the destination has already reached the 5 million-visitor-mark, an ambitious goal set for 2024.

This milestone reflects a significant achievement for the region, showcasing its growing appeal as a prime destination for travelers.

Surrounding The Pennsylvania State University, commonly known as Penn State, this picturesque county is just a 3.5-hour drive from New York City and Washington DC. With a focus on being a four-season destination with an array of recreational, cultural and entertainment offerings, Happy Valley hosted 3.2 million day-trippers and 1.8 million overnight visitors.

With an average spend of USD 200 per visitor, the total tourism expenditure has exceeded USD 1 billion.

"I am optimistic about the future of Happy Valley tourism," said Fritz Smith, CEO of The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, who noted that visitation is a crucial economic driver for Centre County, significantly impacting employment opportunities and job creation. "We have ambitious plans to elevate tourism in Happy Valley to the next level, including the development of new hotels within the region. These efforts are grounded in a county- and organization-wide commitment to tourism, and strengthened by ongoing collaboration with the community and university." Along with the recent launch of a comprehensive, visitor-focused website – happyvalley.com — another significant milestone in Happy Valley, PA tourism is the allocation of nearly USD 1 million to 77 tourism projects for the 2024-25 fiscal year. These initiatives are expected to significantly enhance the region's appeal to both domestic and international travelers.

In India, Indiva Marketing is spearheading Happy Valley's efforts to boost leisure visitation, awareness, and visibility." ♦

Air New Zealand highlights importance of trade in India

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

Air New Zealand has seen a surging demand from India post Covid.

Imogen Thornton, Head of South & Southeast Asia, Air New Zealand, said, "There is growing interest in New Zealand from India travellers. From the 87,000 Indians that visited New Zealand

over the last year, ending April 2024, there were 42,000 VFR visitors and 23,000 leisure travellers, with leisure volumes growing at a steady rate."

Currently, Air New Zealand offers connections for Indian passengers via Singapore. "We have an alliance partnership with Singapore Airlines that operates out of 8 cities in India. On a daily basis, we operate up to 4 flights per day from Singapore to Auckland; and a daily flight from Singapore to Christchurch. Once in New Zealand, travellers can connect onto 20 destinations across the country."



Imogen Thornton

In terms of bookings, Thornton said, "Trade partners are critical for our success, and we see over 70% bookings driven through them."

As far as seat preference is concerned, she said that the Economy cabin is popular, but there is also growing interest in Premium Economy, especially since rates are competitive, and benefits many travellers,

including students, with its extra baggage allowance.

For the upcoming November to March season, Air New Zealand will be offering 20,000 more seats from Singapore to Auckland, with 11,000 of those being in Business Premier and Premium Economy.

With regards to fleet expansion, new Boeing 787 aircraft will join the Air New Zealand fleet in 2025, and the process of retrofitting the existing fleet will begin with upgrades to the interior product this Year. ♦

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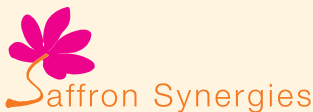
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INNOVATION AMID UNCERTAINTY

To say these are difficult times, would be an understatement. World over, there is uncertainty, political unrest and growing hostility among neighbours. Be it Russia-Ukraine, Iran-Israel, to the restricted movement to and from China, to the latest fall of the long-serving leadership in Bangladesh.

What do these developments augur for the tourism industry that is the first to bear the brunt of any untoward incident, globally?

On the one hand, not only these moments of chaos will make travel more expensive, but also force travel companies to revisit their business plans. While VFR movement and business travel may still continue to the troubled destinations, albeit with caution, the worst hit would be leisure traffic, while student travel will be reconsidered.

However, all hope is not lost. Let's not forget, every adversity opens new doors for innovation.

It is an opportune time for travel insurance providers to design a robust framework to address traveller concerns in times of unprecedented crises.

And why just the traveller, the industry itself needs to plan for its rainy days.

Indeed while it is crucial to create awareness about the risks covered in a travel insurance plan that helps travellers claim the policy coverage, some thought must be spared for the service provider's own fiscal safety.

It's true that travellers don't bother to read the fine print, and bank upon their agents or an AI ChatBot to address their queries. Creative apps can assist them to manage such issues deftly.

It is not that the industry hasn't faced unexpected crisis earlier. This one too won't be the last.

Formulating better and sustainable insurance models for such exigencies needs immediate attention. There's no point in having to repeatedly bolt the stables after the horses have left.



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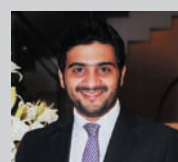
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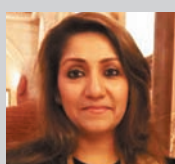
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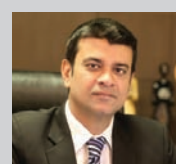
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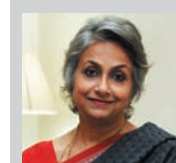
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Conversations with trade partners and research reveal that an increasing number of Indian travellers are showing interest in culture, outdoor activities, and campervans, beyond traditional adventure tourism and Queenstown. Taking this into account, Tourism New Zealand is actively working to position New Zealand as a year-round destination for Indian travellers, not just during peak seasons, says **Rene de Monchy, Chief Executive of Tourism New Zealand**, in a conversation with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

opportunities the market offers us. In these first two years of India's recovery, we are observing a return to familiar patterns. The timing of travel remains largely unchanged, with booking windows resembling pre-pandemic norms, and the average length of stay stabilizing around 13-14 days.

Our conversations with our trade partners and our own research reveal that Indians are increasingly showing interest beyond adventure tourism and Queenstown. Instead, they are expressing interest in culture, outdoor activities, campervans, etc. New Zealand is well positioned to offer a variety of unique itineraries to cater to these diverse interests.

Q How is the recovery from the India market after the pandemic?

India has been the strongest performing market, with 87,000 annual visitors returning to New Zealand. The VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) and Holiday arrivals segments contributed significantly, helping to surpass 2019 numbers. I am very optimistic about this market.

'New Zealand offers year-round unforgettable experiences for Indian travellers'

Q Could you share the reasons for your visit to India, which marks your first trip after assuming the role of CEO of Tourism New Zealand?

Yes, for the first time I am visiting the country as the CEO of Tourism New Zealand (TNZ), but as an employee of TNZ, I visited India three or four times before. The main reason for coming here is Kiwi Link, a trade event we are currently hosting. This event marks the presence of 41 New Zealand delegates for the first time since 2019.

Trade holds immense importance for us, as 85% of our total bookings are done through this channel. This is the first opportunity since COVID-19 to reconnect in person with familiar faces and to establish new contacts as well. We are discussing new itineraries and products with the trade fraternity, making this a very significant trade mission for us.

Q You have launched a new campaign titled "If You Seek". What message are you aiming to convey through this campaign, and does it signify a departure from "100% Pure New Zealand"?

100% Pure New Zealand remains our tagline; in fact, the campaign celebrates its 25th anniversary this month, having been launched in 1999. In August 2022, we introduced a campaign called 'If You Seek', which invites adventurous explorers to discover New Zealand and enjoy its diverse offerings. Having



said that, '100% Pure New Zealand' continues to be our promise and tagline.

Q You have been associated with TNZ for a long time. How have perceptions among Indian travellers about New Zealand changed over the years, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic?

I have been associated with the organization for the last eight years. Visiting India after five years, I have found that the tourism industry here remains vibrant despite the pandemic. Many of our trade partners have expressed how strongly the sector has bounced back. It is truly encouraging to see the fantastic

Q In terms of the Indian market, what new strategies or steps do you plan to implement that your predecessors did not?

One of the key challenges for the tourism sector in New Zealand is its heavy reliance on the peak season. Between December and February, 40% of the tourism sector's value is generated in just these three months. That presents a challenge due to various reasons, but it also offers a significant opportunity to alter or enhance travel patterns, making New Zealand a year-round destination. Expanding beyond peak seasons, which for us span from March to November, offers a great chance to educate Indian travellers about the diverse

experiences New Zealand offers throughout the year.

Our main objective now is to highlight to Indian travellers that a wide range of activities in New Zealand can be enjoyed year-round. Whether it's whale watching, adventure tourism, biking, experiencing Māori culture, or visiting wellness spas, these opportunities are accessible every day in New Zealand. So, New Zealand can provide Indian travellers with an unforgettable experience year-round.

We have a significant opportunity to change this perspective by offering itineraries to those seeking relief from summer heat or looking to visit during optimal whale watching seasons, such as June and July when humpback whales migrate. Our focus is on promoting year-round appeal rather than just emphasizing the summer months.

Q Does New Zealand's substantial Indian diaspora contribute significantly to tourism as well?

Certainly. Before Covid, I recall the data vividly. The traffic from New Zealand to India surpassed that from India to New Zealand, largely due to our sizeable diaspora. This dynamic is beneficial because of the inherent relationship between our two nations. The natural Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) traffic supports airlines and other sectors. While our primary focus is on holiday arrivals rather than VFR traffic as a business strategy. The close connections between the two

“

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countries facilitate easier travel due to the strong people-to-people ties we share.

Q Could you provide the number of Indian tourists who visited New Zealand in 2023?

In 2023, New Zealand welcomed a total of 84,315 arrivals, including 20,100 holiday arrivals. This represents a total arrivals recovery of 125.9% and a holiday arrivals recovery of 70.6% compared to 2019 figures.

Q India, Australia, and New Zealand share a common love for cricket. From my observation, Australia has capitalized on this passion more effectively than New Zealand. Your comment.

We have done so in the past, but not since Covid. However, it's definitely an avenue we are considering for the future. Cricket is a passion point, especially following India's

recent victory in the T20 World Cup. I'm in touch with New Zealand Cricket, and we are exploring the possibility of tours between both countries, which is always an exciting prospect. This is certainly an area we are keen to explore further in the future.

Q What is your strategy for MICE?

We have a dedicated business events team focusing on both conferences and incentive travel, which we see as a valuable complement to leisure travel, as is the case in many other destinations. In the next year, we will have three new convention centers in New Zealand—in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch—that enhance our conference capabilities. It's been encouraging to observe sustained interest in incentive travel from India as well, especially from those who prefer to travel outside the peak summer months. ♦

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TBM Staff | Mumbai

Neptune Hotels, one of East Africa's leading family-owned and operated hospitality companies, has unveiled a dedicated sales and marketing initiative targeting the Indian market. This strategic expansion effort will be executed in collaboration with Ace Connect.

Neptune Hotels, with its portfolio of safari tented camp/ and lodge in the Masai Mara and Ngorongoro Conservation Area and the Central Serengeti (opening in 2025), alongside its beach resorts in Zanzibar and Diani Beach in Mombasa, is set to captivate the Indian travel market.

"We are thrilled to partner with Ace Connect to introduce the wonders of East Africa to the Indian market," said Sheema Merali, Director, Neptune Hotels. "India represents a significant and growing segment of the global travel market, and with

Ace Connect's extensive expertise and strong network, we are confident that we can attract a new wave of travellers seeking one of a kind safari and beach experiences that are both luxurious and environmentally responsible."

Ace Connect will spearhead Neptune Hotels' marketing and sales campaigns in India. This partnership will leverage Ace Connect's market insights, strategic planning, and established relationships with travel agents, tour operators, and media outlets to effectively promote Neptune Hotels' diverse properties.

Merali expressed her excitement about expanding the company's partnership with Indian trade partners. "With our 45-year history of being a leading company in East



Sheema Merali



Alpa Jani

Africa, we are excited to extend our legacy to the Indian market. Our collaboration with Ace Connect will enable us to build strong relationships with Indian trade partners, offering them the opportunity

to experience the unparalleled beauty and hospitality that our properties and people provide."

"We are honoured to collaborate with Neptune Hotels and support their entry into the Indian market," said Alpa Jani, CEO, Ace Connect. "East Africa offers a treasure trove of experiences that align perfectly with the aspirations of Indian travelers. Together, we aim to create a strong presence and build lasting connections with our target audience." ♦

NEWS ROUND UP

East Africa's Neptune Hotels partners with Ace Connect to tap Indian market

Explore the best of Switzerland with the Swiss Travel System

From boutique cities to alpine villages, glacial lakes to snow-clad mountains, historical vineyards to Michelin-starred restaurants, there is always something to explore for every traveler when in Switzerland. The best way to travel across Switzerland is by Swiss Travel System - for a hassle-free, convenient and comfortable journey.

Swiss Travel Pass- One Country, One Ticket

<https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-in/microsites/in/one-country-one-ticket/>

The Swiss Travel Pass is the key to Switzerland's public transport network. This single ticket enables visitors to explore Switzerland from end to end seamlessly by train, bus and boat or mountain railway on 3, 4, 6, 8 or 15 consecutive days.

Benefits of the Swiss Travel Pass!

- Free and unlimited transportation by train, bus and boat
 - Free travel for children up to the age of 16
 - Free entry to over 500 museums across Switzerland such as the FIFA Football Museum in Zurich, the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and Chillon Castle in Montreux
 - Free use of public transportation in over 90 cities and towns across Switzerland
 - 50 per cent discounts on many other mountain excursions
 - Unlimited travel on panoramic routes (excluding seat reservations) such as Glacier Express, Bernina Express
- Switzerland's premium panorama trains are world-famous,



Bernina Express – The most spectacular of all Alpine crossings, the Bernina Express seamlessly connects the cool north of Europe to the sunny south! This train journey most deservedly enjoy UNESCO World Heritage status. Operating on the world's highest-altitude railroad, the Bernina Express traverses the Alps, passing the glaciers down to the palm trees.

<https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-in/experiences/bernina-express/>

Gotthard Panorama Express - Launched in 2017, The Gotthard Panorama Express takes travellers on a mesmerizing journey from Ticino along the historic Gotthard panoramic route to Lucerne. This 5hr 25 mins journey is a combination of boat, train and two of the most beautiful regions of Switzerland blend into a first-class experience and showcases a diverse side of Switzerland!

<https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-in/experiences/gotthard-panorama-express/>

Swiss Travel Guide app

The Swiss Travel Guide is your essential travel companion for travels by train, bus and boat throughout Switzerland. Thanks to this app, any journey can be planned to perfection, and you will never miss a highlight! Whether it's a journey on the panorama train, a boat excursion or a visit to the museum – the app shows you over 500 Swiss highlights that you can call up and add to your personal travel cockpit any time, regardless of where you are, via an integrated map. You can also enjoy discounts on culinary offers, guided city tours and mountain railways.

The Swiss Travel Guide app is available for free download in English in the App Store and in the Google Play store as well.

For further details, visit: [MySwitzerland.com/Rail](https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-in/experiences/gotthard-panorama-express/)

Please find below the link for more details on Swiss Travel System:

<https://www.travelswitzerland.com/en/tickets-prices/passes-discount-cards/swiss-travel-pass/> ♦



captivating passengers with their large panoramic windows with views of breath-taking sceneries. They are surely one of the most beautiful ways to experience Switzerland. Here are three journeys that one must experience!

Glacier Express – The journey in what has been dubbed the world's slowest express train takes travellers across the Alps - from Engadine right to the Matterhorn - within roughly eight hours, passing through 91 tunnels and over 291 bridges.

<https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-in/experiences/glacier-express/>



Interlaken: Switzerland's all-year-long adventure hub!

If you're an outdoorsy person who can never have enough of adventure come rain, cold, sun or snow, you should add Interlaken to your bucket list! This adventure capital of Switzerland located between Lake Brienz and Lake Thun in the lap of the Swiss Alps, promises adrenaline-packed experiences — through summer and winter — for all thrill seekers.

Multi-seasonal must-dos in Interlaken

Skydiving:

- Take a leap of faith from a plane and float amongst the clouds, surrounded by snow-capped peaks in winter and verdant valleys in summer.

Jetboat:

- Buckle up for a high-speed jet-boating ride on Lake Thun and enjoy the thrill of speed and water surrounded by Alpine beauty.

Canyon Swing:

- Like living on the edge? Try the canyon swing that offers a heart-pounding free fall over gushing, roaring water before swinging through the stunning Aare Gorge.

Paragliding:

- Glide like a bird over snow-kissed peaks in winter or lush meadows in spring with views that will leave you breathless.

Other attractions:

Yash Chopra Statue:

The statue of Indian Film Director Yash Chopra, who single-handedly

swi⁺zerland

boosted the popularity of Switzerland among Indian tourists through his films, is a frequented hot spot among Indian tourists. The government of Interlaken awarded him with the honorary title of 'Ambassador of Interlaken' in 2011.

Funky Chocolate Making:

At the Funky Chocolate Club, you can indulge your sweet tooth with a hands-on chocolate-making experience. This activity comes highly recommended by Chopra, who made his own chocolates during a recent visit.

Jungfrauoch, Grindelwald First, Harder Kulm:

Jungfrauoch, also known as Top of Europe, is another iconic attraction in Interlaken, especially for Indian travellers. Olympic gold winner Neeraj Chopra's frozen Javelin sits at the Ice Palace and a plaque commemorating his achievements hangs on The Jungfrau Railways' Wall of Fame.

Grindelwald First, an ideal starting point for action-packed hikes, the new 'First Cliff Walk by Tissot' and the picturesque Harder Kulm Panorama Restaurant towering over Interlaken offering fantastic views and delicious food, are other highlights. ♦



LET ART SET THE NARRATIVE

In a world of soft power, it is in any establishments' interest to promote new versions of art of its young artists.

The business of tourism, especially in these parts, has tried to maintain a discreet distance from art that remotely dares to make a comment on social issues or even political circumstances, howsoever objective it might be in its presentation.

Often discussions with the usual pundits (or czars, if you please) of the art world on how it could promote a destination, nation or civilization leads to a sort of impasse. It stops at the argument that art is the holy cow which must never be used as a tool for promoting any 'ism' or narrative. Any effort to use art to transmit some social message, howsoever kosher, is anathema to some purists.

The young do not have such boundaries- in fact they thrive on using creativity to respond to happenings.

It is in this context that a recent published monograph by an Indian artist working in Belgium, Baptist Coelho, piques curiosity. It also, unintentionally, delineates a direction which could create a whole new niche for promoters of either tourism in general or soft power of India in particular.

Mumbai born Baptist had previously won several awards including the prestigious Sovereign Asian Art Prize in 2016. He also performed and exhibited his works worldwide such as at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, Pump House Gallery, and London.

One of his noted works was in which he interpreted an online satellite view of the Siachen glacier through deftly arranged bandages. Using bandages as a metaphor, Coelho's installation tried to convey the pain and wounds of the soldiers posted in

Siachen. He actually went to Ladakh to speak with officers, mountaineers and locals to understand the mindscape.

Beyond that particular exhibit, his art is an exploration of war and its human toll which is a universal story. His installations and photographs focus on articulating unspoken stories in war and conflict. He has exhibited worldwide in museums and galleries and his creativity has been noted for its global appeal. In his creative pursuits Baptist uses interdisciplinary projects with diverse mediums such as installation, photography, sculpture, print, drawing, collage, audio-video and performance.

Now this monograph of Coelho is an overview of his works from 2006 to date which includes a selection of 56 artworks, 10 essays by international academics, curators, historians and a mountaineer, and a conversation with the artist himself. While the book was published and printed by the In Flanders Fields Museum, Belgium in June, 2023 after his year-long residency there, it speaks a global language that speaks beyond the context of his immediate works.

While an artist by definition actually transcends national boundaries and represents more of a human canvas than a geographical angle, his work definitely carries the impressions of his milieu. To put it blandly, it also highlights the background of the work and opens a door towards creating interest in the subject, location and origin of it all.

Baptist's work as an artist, though never intended that way, does create a space for the Indian story to be told in an international idiom.

A year from now a massive and ambitious museum, probably larger the Louvre, is opening at the stately Rajpath at New Delhi. It will bring the story of India's millennia old civilization to the world in a modern setting.

Since art transmits a story better to the audience, it opens up the usually receptive mind of people to appreciate contemporary situations and developments in a broader and more perceptive sense. That's good for promoting sensitivity. It's good for developing a confident narrative as well.

Museums displays offer interpretations which visitors interpret on their level of engagement. The narrative, however, is nudged on by the exhibits and their display through careful curation. Any museum therefore is a subtle vehicle of soft power, creating an influence with its own agenda. The necessity of incorporating art, especially the installation form, can be an ideal way to bring greater relevance to any such project.

Wonder if the exhibits in this truly ambitious upcoming project will dare to go beyond artefacts? Will the museum delve into installations that reach out with a more contemporary idiom?

Baptist Coelho's works could indeed provide an example how.

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.*

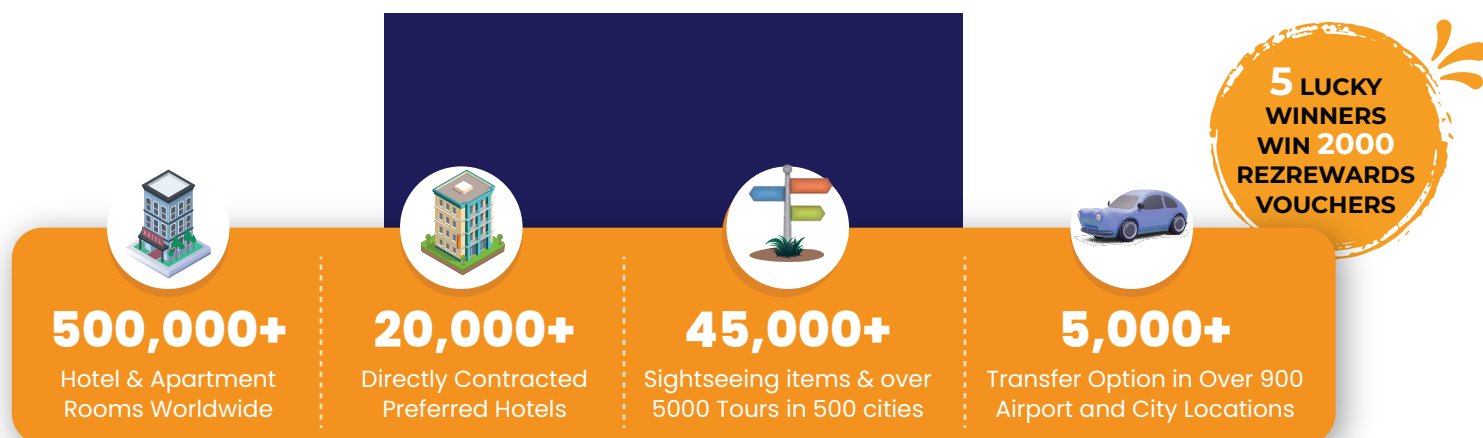
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The ITSA Regional Conference Asia is scheduled to be held from February 7 to 9, 2025 at Amity University Noida Campus, bringing in a gamut of industry stakeholders on a single platform. **Prof Manohar Sajnani, Dean Amity University** spoke to **Disha Shah Ghosh** about the idea behind this initiative and its relevance.

She will explore how technology is reshaping the tourism landscape, making it more accessible, efficient, and sustainable. Her presentation will offer valuable insights into the strategic use of digital tools for enhancing the tourist experience and driving green investments.

In addition to our Keynote Speakers, the conference will feature a series of panel discussions that will delve into various aspects of sustainable tourism. Topics will range from eco-friendly accommodations and green transportation to community engagement and the role of policy in promoting sustainable practices. These discussions will bring together a mix of industry leaders, academics, and practitioners to provide a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in the field.

Attendees can expect lively debates, practical case studies, and the exchange of innovative ideas that will contribute to the development of sustainable tourism strategies. The conference will be a melting pot of knowledge and experience, with the ultimate goal of fostering collaboration and driving the industry towards a more sustainable future.

‘The tourism sector has a considerable environmental footprint & social impact’

Q As an educationist, what made you curate an idea for an International Conference with sustainability as its ethos?

As an educationist, the impetus to curate an idea for an International Conference with sustainability as its ethos stems from a profound recognition of the urgent need to address the global challenges we face, particularly in the realm of tourism. The tourism sector, while being a significant driver of economic growth and job creation, also has a considerable environmental footprint and social impact. It is imperative that we, as educators and thought leaders, facilitate platforms for dialogue, innovation, and action that promote sustainable development, regenerative tourism, and responsible investment.

The concept for the conference was inspired by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all. By focusing on sustainability, we aim to bridge the gaps between tourism knowledge and practice, ensuring that the sector contributes positively to the planet and its inhabitants.

The conference is designed to bring together a diverse array of stakeholders, including academics, industry professionals, policymakers, and community leaders, to share insights, exchange ideas, and forge collaborations that can lead to tangible outcomes. It is our belief that through collective effort and a commitment to sustainability, we can shape a more resilient and prosperous tourism industry.

Q What kind of speaker line-up and discussions will we see as part of this conference?

The speaker line-up for this conference is designed to inspire, inform, and provoke thought-provoking discussions among attendees. We are thrilled to announce that Timothy Jung and Mariana Sigala will be joining us as Keynote Speakers, bringing

Q India is considered as the fastest growing aviation market, as well a promising source market for a host of international destinations, and therefore what value will participants derive from this conference?

Participants at the conference will derive significant value from the event, particularly in

“ The conference is designed to bring together a diverse array of stakeholders, including academics, industry professionals, policymakers, and community leaders, to share insights, exchange ideas, and forge collaborations that can lead to tangible outcomes. ”

their expertise in sustainable tourism, digital ecosystems, and the future of travel to the forefront of our event.

Prof. Timothy Jung, a renowned expert in AR/VR and technology along with sustainable tourism development, will share his insights on how the industry can adopt practices that not only preserve the environment but also enhance the well-being of local communities. His keynote will focus on the principles of regenerative tourism and how it can be implemented to create a lasting positive impact.

Prof. Mariana Sigala, a leading authority on digital innovation in tourism, will discuss the transformative power of digital ecosystems.

the context of India's position as the fastest-growing aviation market and a promising source market for international destinations. Here are some key benefits participants can expect:

By participating in the conference, attendees will be well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the growing aviation and tourism markets, with a focus on sustainability, digital innovation, and strategic investment. This will enable them to make informed decisions, foster partnerships, and drive their businesses or organizations towards success in an increasingly competitive and dynamic industry. ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

Parsi wisdom for Barcelona's streets: The **sugar-in-milk** metaphor for **respectable** tourism

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

Barcelonians struggle to regain their lost spaces

While our previous discussion explored micro-aggressions in tourism, the recent aggressions in Barcelona have captured global attention and deepened the debate. To protest mass tourism, Barcelonians marched through the streets, sealed off hotels and restaurants, and even sprayed tourists with water pistols. Their efforts aimed to highlight problems like overcrowding, gentrification, and the loss of local culture. As residents face congestion, rising rents, and loss of neighbourhood due to tourism, protests have surged. Noise, pollution, and shrinking public spaces add to their frustrations, prompting locals to demand a tourism overhaul that prioritizes their needs.

Tourism's tightrope

On one hand, tourism is considered a boon for local economies, creating jobs, distributing spendings and generating tax revenue that supports public services and infrastructure. Locals understand that growing tourism will foster cultural exchange, bringing diverse perspectives and opportunities for growth. Also, when managed well, tourism supports conservation efforts and preserves cultural heritage, offering tangible benefits to local communities. However, on the other hand, residents are deeply invested in preserving the quality of life they've enjoyed for centuries. This hard-earned balance, evolved over generations, is at times threatened by unchecked tourist influx and its impacts.

The milk and sugar story of Parsi migration

In the 7th century AD, the Parsis fled Persia to escape persecution and sought refuge in Gujarat, India. The local king resisted them by presenting a bowl filled with milk, symbolizing that the land and society were already whole and there was no place for outsiders. The Parsi high priest responded by adding sugar to the milk without spilling it, symbolizing that they would sweeten the local community life while maintaining their unique identity. Their presence would not create any problems for the hosts and they won't be even visible. This gesture impressed the king, who allowed them to settle. Over the centuries, the Parsi community has lived the promise by contributing hugely to the local life. Today, this tale serves as a powerful metaphor for how visitors should seamlessly blend into a society, sweetening and enriching it without disturbing

its innate harmony. Tourism, much like the arrival of the Parsis, introduces outsiders into established communities. This interaction can be either enriching or disruptive. Barcelona is a case in point.

Tourists should be like **sugar in milk**-enhancing without overpowering

Embrace slow, non-disruptive travel by respecting and celebrating local cultures. This means understanding local customs, supporting community businesses, and minimizing environmental impact. Act as if you are invisible, blending seamlessly into the community and enriching the destination. By following this approach, one creates genuine connections and promote sustainable tourism that benefits both the visitor and the hosts, just as the Parsis did in their migration to Gujarat.

The "sugar-in-milk" principle provides an inspiring template for engaging with travel destinations in a way that is both enriching and respectful. This timeless metaphor reminds us that tourism should be more than just a fleeting experience; it should be a meaningful journey where we aim to be more than mere visitors. Instead, we should strive to be thoughtful participants in the cultural tapestry of the places we explore.

Meaningful and respectful tourism

First, educational initiatives are crucial. Imagine arriving at a new place not just to see but to truly learn and imbibe. Engaging with locals, tourist guides, and travel agencies helps tourists discover their destinations' history, traditions, and social dynamics, transforming them from mere sightseers into mindful travellers who respect and honour the local culture.

Second, community-based tourism should be our travel goal. This means supporting local businesses, joining community-led tours, and participating in activities that genuinely benefit residents. Such efforts ensure that tourism has a positive impact and builds relationships with the community.

Third, we must advocate for regulatory measures. Smart policies like visitor limits for popular spots, differential pricing and fair rental controls help preserve cultural landmarks and balance the needs of both tourists and locals.

Finally, embracing sustainable tourism practices is critical. This involves more than just reducing waste or conserving resources; it's about understanding how our actions



affect the environment and making choices that support long-term sustainability. Also, remain aware of the challenges faced by the community. Tourists should be informed about their environmental impact and encouraged to use practices that protect and preserve the originality of the places they visit.

Happy hosts create happy places

When locals are satisfied, they craft lively spaces filled with joy. Their happiness turns every visit into a memorable experience, blending heartfelt hospitality with local charm. A thriving community creates a thriving tourism experience- where residents and guests enjoy a harmonious, enriching time spent together.

Let us take these lessons to heart and work towards a future where tourism respects the past, supports the present, and enriches the future for all involved. ♦

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

Dr. Nimit Chowdhary, a distinguished Professor and Head of the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, brings over 30 years of teaching expertise to the table. With 18 years as a professor across India, China, and Mexico, Dr. Chowdhary has also enriched minds as a visiting faculty at renowned institutions including the University of Gotland (Sweden), Girona University (Spain), IIM Sirmaur, IIQM, and EDII. Celebrated for his academic excellence, he has penned 30 books and over 300 scholarly papers, articles, and chapters, and has guided 23 PhD candidates. A globetrotter who has explored more than 40 countries, Dr. Chowdhary is a recognized authority in the field of tourism.



Arenes_Nîmes©Olivier_MAYNARD_CRTLOccitanie

Treasures of Occitanie

A Journey through Nîmes, Uzès, & Carcassonne

Nestled in the heart of South Western France, the Occitanie region is a confluence of history, culture, and natural beauty. From the Roman grandeur of Nîmes to the medieval charm of Carcassonne, this region offers a wealth of experiences for travellers.

Its key highlights include the Musée de la Romanité, the Nîmes

Arena, the Maison Carrée, the picturesque town of Uzès, and the breath-taking medieval citadel of Carcassonne.

Nîmes

Often referred to as the 'Rome of France,' Nîmes is a repository of Roman architecture. With a history dating back to 2,000 years, its Roman heritage is beautifully preserved. A must-visit is the Musée de la Romanité, a modern museum that offers a deep dive into the city's rich Roman past. The museum's innovative design and interactive exhibits provide an engaging experience, showcasing artefacts of the Roman Empire.

The Nîmes Arena is an ancient Roman amphitheatre, built around 70 AD. It is well preserved even today. It once hosted gladiatorial contests and other public spectacles. Today, it continues to be a vibrant cultural venue, hosting concerts, and historical events transporting visitors back in time.

Uzès

A short drive from Nîmes, the town of Uzès offers a charming contrast to the grandeur of Roman architecture. Known for its medieval streets, elegant townhouses, and vibrant markets, Uzès is a delightful place to explore on foot. The town is particularly famous for the Duchy of Uzès,



Musée de la Romanité Nîmes©Stephane_Ramillon_CRTLOccitanie



Uzes©City of Uzes



a well-preserved castle that has been the seat of the Dukes of Uzès for centuries.

Uzès is also notable for its connection to the Pont du Gard, a UNESCO World Heritage site, notable for the Roman hydraulic engineering. The nearby Musée de l'Eau showcases the aqueduct's history and construction, offering insight into the ingenuity of Roman engineers.

Carcassonne

The city of Carcassonne, a UNESCO World Heritage site is renowned for its medieval citadel. The Cité de Carcassonne is one of the largest and best-preserved walled cities in Europe, with its double walls and 53 towers creating a striking silhouette against the sky. Walking through its narrow, cobbled streets, visitors can explore the Château Comtal, the Basilica of Saints Nazarius and Celsus, and numerous quaint shops and restaurants that bring the medieval atmosphere to life.

Carcassonne's rich history, dating back to Roman times and flourishing in the medieval period, is palpable in every corner of the city.

F&B Options

Beyond its historical treasures, Occitanie is also known for its rich culinary traditions. The region's cuisine is a delightful mix of flavours, influenced by both Mediterranean and French. Visitors can savour local delicacies and some classic wines.

Whether exploring the ancient Roman sites of Nîmes, strolling through Uzès, or basking in the glory of Carcassonne, Occitanie offers a diverse and enriching travel experience. Its blend of historical landmarks, cultural depth, and culinary delights make it a delightful visit to the South Western France. ♦



Sunita Amarnani, Executive VP, V-explore Travel Management Private Limited

It was indeed a wonderful exceptional experience in the Occitanie region! The areas explored - Nîmes, Uzès, Montpellier, and Carcassonne, are indeed known for their beauty, history, and the warmth of the local people. The French

cuisine and wines were a highlight, and to add, the region caters well to vegetarians too.

It's a place where travellers can immerse themselves in the rich culture, enjoy the scenic landscapes, and indulge in the culinary delights.

Occitanie has left a lasting impression on me, and I would recommend every traveller to come and experience the region's allure, seeking authentic and enriching experiences.

I would like to thank the Air France Team and Atout France India team, specially Sheetal Munshaw for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this fantastic familiarisation tour that was filled with loads of learning, knowledge and tons of fun. It was indeed a perfect Rendezvous.



BCD survey reveals gap between travel policy and traveller compliance

While over half of travel buyers consider their travel policies very effective, two-thirds of travelers still book outside of the travel policy

While many business travelers know of and often refer to their company's travel policy, there's still a gap between policy awareness and policy compliance, according to a recent BCD Travel survey of 1,200+ business travelers worldwide. The survey looked at changes in travel policies and traveler satisfaction with current regulations.

Travel policy awareness

In a corresponding April survey of 200+ travel buyers, BCD found that two-thirds of travel buyers consider their travel policy to be extremely or very effective.

On the surface, this statistic seems to hold true when business travelers are asked about their company's travel policy. The survey shows that more than 95% of travelers know where to find the travel policy, and nine out of 10 have consulted it (with a quarter doing so frequently). Eight out of 10 travelers have consulted their travel policy within the past 12 months. And half are satisfied with the policy.

"Based on our survey results, travelers in NORAM are less inclined to consult their corporation's travel policy compared to travelers from APAC and Europe," said Craig Bailey, president, Americas at BCD. "This could result in more out-of-policy bookings. While these bookings create extra costs and, in some cases, risk issues, the lack of awareness around policy changes could also hurt the organization's overall goals, for instance, regarding sustainability."

One factor contributing to this behavior may be the frequency around travel policy communications. A quarter of APAC travelers reported receiving communications about their travel policy often compared to only 15% of NORAM travelers.

Out-of-policy bookings

The survey shows that more than two-thirds of travelers deviate from their company's travel policy. Most often, this is due to client meetings requiring out-of-policy transportation or accommodation or booking conference and event accommodations with non-preferred suppliers. As a result, traveling employees often need additional approvals for non-compliant bookings.

Companies can boost travel policy compliance through employee involvement and engagement. BCD provides expert advice on how to build a strategy to maximize compliance, including integrating solutions that travelers want to use, with the data insights travel managers need to influence behavior.

Desire for flexibility

Over one in five travelers said their company's travel policy isn't responsive to traveler needs or is too restrictive. In fact, three in 10 want more flexibility when booking either transportation or accommodation. A quarter said they'd benefit from increased spend limits and additional air ancillaries. One in five are interested in more policies for traveler well-being.

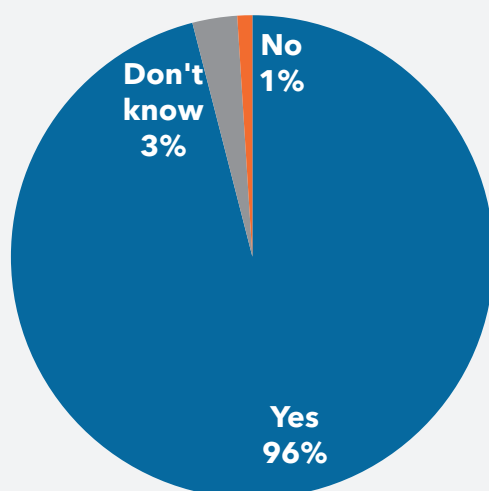
"When you understand your travelers' needs, you can make impactful changes to your policy. A simple and effective way to do that is through surveys," Bailey said. "While of course you must set limits that align with the company goals, a good travel policy sets its travelers up for success. This, in turn, helps the company stay within both its budget and keeps lines of communication clear."

BCD's TripSource® booking and trip management solution ensures travelers stay engaged at every step of their journey. TripSource

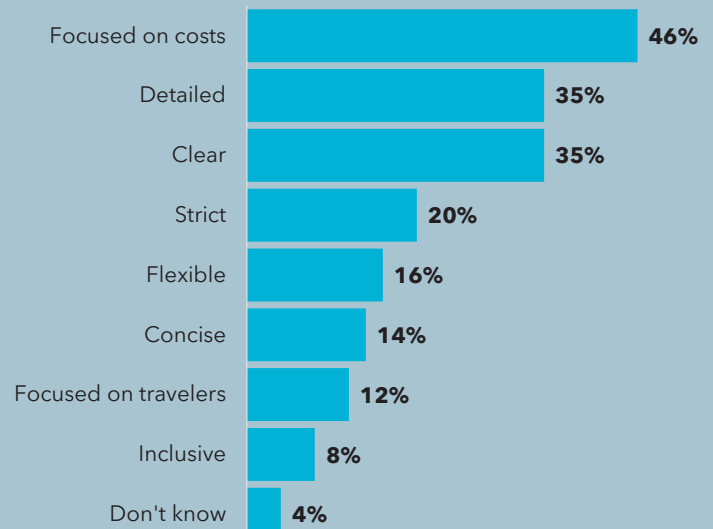
Travel policy

96% of travelers report having a published travel policy in their company. The policy is cost-focused, according to half of respondents.

Travel policy availability

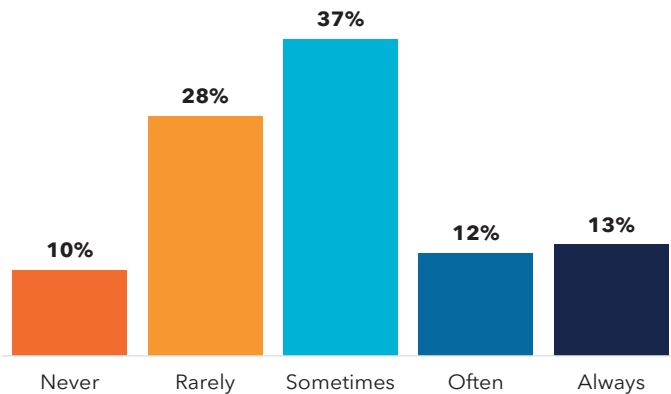


Travel policy overview



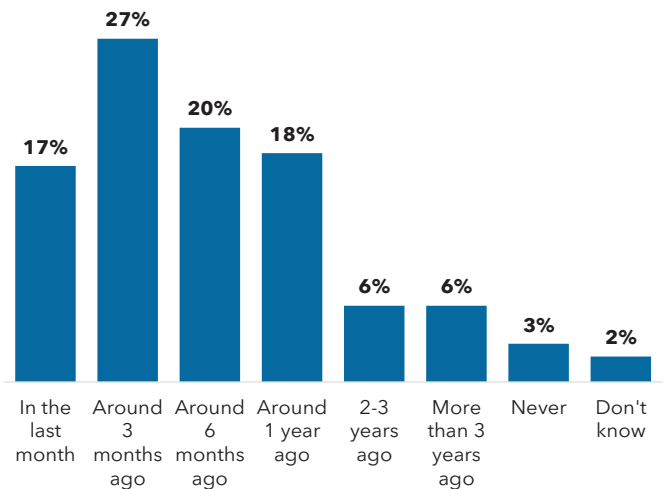
Using travel policy when planning a trip

When planning business travel, nine in 10 consult travel policy, a quarter doing so frequently.



Last policy check

Eight in 10 consulted their company's travel policy in the past 12 months.



influences behavior by displaying client-specific travel policy guidelines directly at the point of sale. It triggers timely policy messages that encourage smart decisions and boost compliance throughout the trip. Also, travel managers can include all essential policy details, contact information, and safety resources for travelers' convenience.

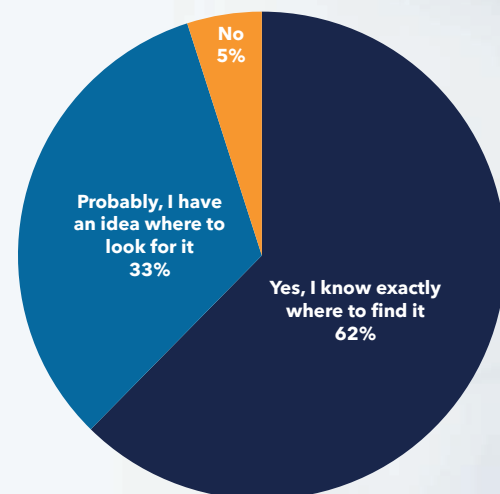
Low impact on job acceptance

While only 8% of surveyed travelers admit the travel policy influenced their decision to take their job, a quarter acknowledge that it influences their willingness to stay with the company. The travel policy's impact varies by region – again supporting the need to understand travelers' specific needs and beliefs. Almost half of APAC travelers say the policy is likely to affect their decision to stay with a company while 27% of EMEA and 21% of NORAM travelers say so.

"Sharing your travel policy to new hires during the onboarding process is key," said Bailey. "They're excited and eager to learn. Take advantage of that and stress the importance of your travel policy to new employees. Explain what it is, how it relates to company goals, and why it's important to comply with the policy. It's not just about cost savings, but also about duty of care and sustainability."♦

Where to find the policy

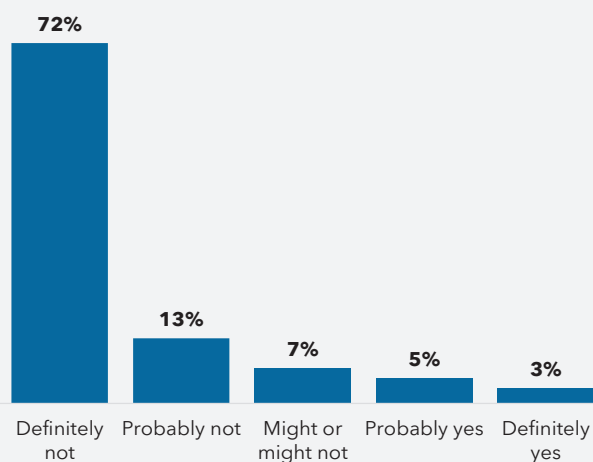
95% of traveling employees know where to find the travel policy, when needed.



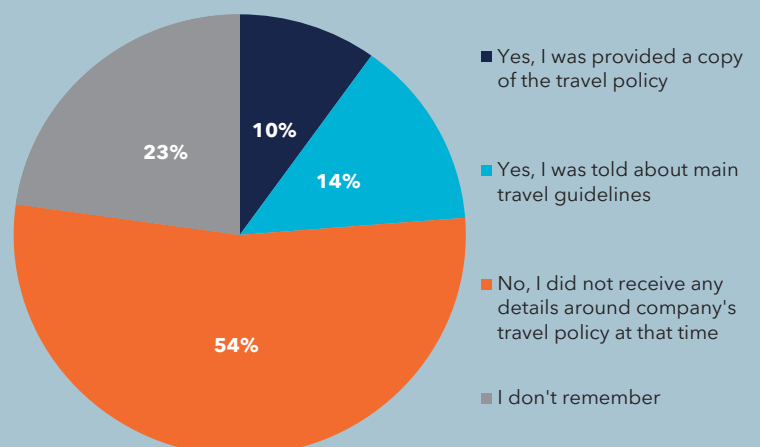
Travel policy and employment

While 8% cite travel policy influencing their decision to join their company, for most this factor wasn't decisive.

Impact of travel policy on decision to join company



Travel policy provided when offered the job





Onyx Hospitality Group has a two-pronged approach to tap the Indian market. In a conversation with **Disha Shah Ghosh, Bharath Satyavolu, VP, Commercial, Onyx Hospitality Group**, shed light on their areas of focus and expansion plans.

‘Currently our focus remains on further strengthening our presence in the SEA’

Q How important is India as a source market for ONYX Hospitality Group?

India is a very important market for ONYX Hospitality Group, currently holding the position of the third largest market year-to-date (YTD). Indian travellers are choosing ONYX's properties for both business and leisure, drawn by the diverse and exceptional offerings across the portfolio. Amari hotels are the most popular among Indian guests,

Q Are you in talks with any stakeholders in India for signing hotel management agreements?

Our strength has always been in the SEA region, where we have established a solid foothold with both owned properties and strong partnerships with hotel owners. Our primary focus currently remains on further strengthening our presence in the SEA region. However, we are open to exploring

brand standards and quality, prioritizing adaptability akin to smaller entities while leveraging the robust distribution capabilities of larger corporations. This approach facilitates close collaboration with partners, effective strategic development, and sustainable growth. 'Southeast Asia' is pivotal as it represents our stronghold—our turf ground.

Therefore, our current expansion focus remains exclusively within this region. While we remain dedicated to fortifying our presence here, we are open to opportunities that align with our brand values and could potentially extend our distinctive Thai Hospitality experience to new markets.

Q In terms of industry collaboration, how are you engaging with the travel trade?

ONYX Hospitality Group Commercial Team, along with several GMs and leaders from our properties, attended tradeshow and conferences in the key source markets to meet our existing and new business partners, sales offices, and sales agencies. Some of these tradeshow and sales activities are:

- ITB Asia in Singapore
- ITB Berlin Germany
- ATM Dubai
- Roadshows in the key cities of India
- Roadshow in Middle East
- Roadshows in UK, Germany, Taiwan, South Korea
- Appreciation lunch to key business partners in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur
- TTM Bangkok
- PATA Exchange UK
- China Roadshow

Q What is your strategy for customer acquisition?

When it comes to customer acquisition strategy, we have 2 pronged approach – what we call online and offline. Or in other words, traditional channels, and digital channels.

Firstly, for offline / traditional channels. A good example of a strategy here is to engage our partners face-to-face via this roadshow. To understand their needs and build trust as well as showcasing our USPs and promote the brand. Moreover, we are broadening our reach to additional urban centers i.e. Chennai and Bengaluru, not only for Leisure but more on the corporate and MICE segments.

And now coming to the digital channels or online, we have our own website where guests can book directly – we offer a loyalty program to reward our customer with special offers/ discount for members, and other benefits such as room upgrade, dining voucher and other exclusive privileges.

And for the online part, we also collaborate with key online partners (OTAs) and participate with their campaigns such as School breaks and Diwali campaign. ♦

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Our emphasis on ‘medium-sized’ underscores our commitment to upholding brand standards and quality, prioritizing adaptability akin to smaller entities while leveraging the robust distribution capabilities of larger corporations. This approach facilitates close collaboration with partners, effective strategic development, and sustainable growth. ‘Southeast Asia’ is pivotal as it represents our stronghold—our turf ground.

followed by OZO, Oriental Residence, and Shama, respectively.

Thailand is one of the most popular countries for outbound travel in the Indian market (accounting to approximately 5% of outbound travel). Preferred destinations in Thailand include Bangkok, Pattaya, and beach destinations, particularly Phuket.

Our roadshow in India is a strategic initiative to strengthen our relationships with our valued Indian travellers, who are increasingly seeking unique and memorable experiences, which we strive to provide through our diverse brand portfolio.

opportunities in India that align with our brand values and allow us to bring our distinctive Thai Hospitality experience to new markets.

Q ONYX Hospitality Group has a concentration of hotels in Asia. Are you looking at expansion in Europe, USA or Australia?

ONYX Hospitality Group's vision is centered on becoming the best medium-sized hospitality management company in Southeast Asia.

Our emphasis on ‘medium-sized’ underscores our commitment to upholding

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