

FOR THE TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL

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## Union Budget 2022-23

# Completely Off Target

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# Body Blow for cruise tourism with the winding up of Genting Hong Kong's brands

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The cruise industry globally, and specifically in Asia has been dealt with a body blow with the winding up of Genting Hong Kong that owns the Star Cruises, Dream Cruises and Crystal Cruises brands. The company failed to secure funding to pay its debts after the insolvency of its shipbuilding subsidiary, MV Werften in Germany. Separately, Dream Cruises has also filed a winding-up application with the Bermuda Courts.

TravelBiz Monitor contacted India representatives and officials of Genting Cruise Lines, however, they refused to comment.



Cruising in Asia, with sailings out of Singapore was dominated by Genting Hong Kong. In fact, it was the Star brand that introduced the cruising concept in India in the mid-2000s with Mumbai sailings

before terminating operations here after burning hands with high operational costs and expensive port charges. It, however, gained popularity in the Asian waters having made the fly-cruise concept an aspiration for Indians with the Star Cruises' brand ships being home ported in Singapore. Having gained popularity among Asian travellers, so much so that India became its number one fly-cruise source market for the Star brand, Genting Hong Kong launched Dream Cruises as its up-scale brand with much fanfare couple of years ago.

The fallout of Genting's closure will have immediate and direct impact locally as well as internationally with millions of job losses, curtailing or complete closure of dedicated cruise teams in travel agencies, already embattled with massive loss in business due to the two long years of pandemic.

Genting Hong Kong's Chairman and CEO Lim Kok Thay resigned and its deputy CEO, Au Fook Yew also stepped down, the company informed in a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange last week. Earlier this month, the company had warned that it faces potential cross-default amounting to USD 2.78 billion, following the insolvency of its German shipbuilding subsidiary, MV Werften, after it failed to secure funding for the completion of its Global One mega-liner.

Genting Hong Kong is part of a bigger conglomerate that also includes Genting Malaysia and Genting Singapore. Among its assets, the conglomerate owns the Resorts World leisure park chain, which includes those in Singapore, New York City, and the United Kingdom. It also has 30 casinos across the U.K. Genting also owns the Resorts World theme park in Manila, and Crystal Cruises line which offers a range of round trips from Miami, Antarctica and Barcelona. ♦

## National Ropeways Development Programme will boost tourism in the country: Aditya Chamaria, MD, DRIL

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister while announcing the 2022 Budget mentioned that as a preferred ecologically sustainable alternative to conventional roads in difficult hilly areas, the National Ropeways Development Programme will be taken up on the PPP mode. The aim is to improve connectivity and convenience for commuters, besides promoting tourism.

Hailing the move, Aditya Chamaria, MD, Damodar Ropeways & Infra Limited (DRIL), said, "We are happy that the Government has taken note of the importance of ropeways in commuting and promoting tourism. The announcement of the National Ropeway Programme, where 8 projects will be taken up on PPP basis, will help accept ropeways as a mode of transport."

Talking to TravelBiz Monitor, he said that the new projects would hopefully come up in the areas that were not previously accessible. "If that is the case, there will be a major impact on tourism depending upon the place's popularity. We also

hope that all of these ropeways will be on the Make in India initiative that will boost tourism and various Indian industries that make various equipment, construction, material, etc.," pointed out Chamaria.



He also said that wherever a ropeway is created, it leads to an influx of tourists. "It is especially true for temples on hills that require people to climb; the traffic increases significantly if a ropeway is built. The surrounding areas of ropeway see parking facilities, shops come up, and infrastructure improvement.

The ropeways set off a chain reaction of overall development," said Chamaria.

The Government's focus on ropeways in congested cities where conventional modes of transport would not work, speaks volumes about the government's futuristic planning for the country. The Budget's focus on improving connectivity, especially through sustainable modes of transport such as ropeways, will take India on a path of growth, help in increasing tourism and lead to innovation in the cable car industry. ♦

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## Alex Cruz may take over as Air India CEO

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Aviation veteran Alex Cruz, former chairman and CEO of British Airways, might take over as Air India CEO soon. Cruz headed the British Airways for five years till 2020, after leading Spanish low cost airline Vueling.



Cruz quit from his role in British Airways after the airline cut 13,000 jobs in October 2020, owing to the Covid-19. Later, he stepped down as chairman too. An MS in industrial engineering from Ohio State University, the veteran is also a professor at the IESE Business School. However, Tatas haven't officially commented on Cruz's appointment yet.



TBM Staff | Mumbai

# Reunion Island A Land of Paradise

Reunion Island ticks all the right checkboxes for an island getaway. Breathtaking scenery, a balmy tropical climate year-round, and a friendly population that will be delighted to share Reunion's fusion cuisine and culture with you. And in addition, a range of leisure and outdoor activities offered to you to complete your island experience!

Located east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, Reunion Island is undoubtedly one of the most unusual island paradises on the planet and woos its visitors with its charming French way of life.

While the island has an array of factors that contribute to its appeal, one of its most striking features is its cultural and ethnic diversity. The unique Creole culture—a result of ethnic mixing—is a testament to a culture shaped by an amalgamation of Indian, African, European, Chinese and other cultures. Temples, mosques, churches and pagodas stand in unity on the island, and visitors are invited to take part in the several different cultural festivals that are held through the year. These diverse factors contribute to the appeal of the island.

## 5 compelling reasons to visit

**Gastronomy:** The island's cultural diversity can be seen in the delectable gastronomic specialties available to visitors. With each culture ascribing to a particular set of flavours, each delicacy is a representation of the different cultures who reside on the island. Samoussas, bouchons, bonbon piment, macatia, gâteau patate,

caripoulet, rougail saucisse: there's a long list of local delicacies that you can – and should – savour. The island's cuisine is a mouthwatering blend of Indian, Chinese, African, and European-influenced dishes. For an in-depth discovery of the ingredients and spices that go into the cuisine, a visit to a farmer's market is recommended. At least one farmer's market takes place on the island every day. The two best-known are Saint-Paul on Fridays and Saturdays, and Le Chaudron (in Saint-Denis) on Wednesdays and Sundays. The island is also very well-known for its rum arrangé which is a combination of local rum and fruits left to macerate for 6 months to 2 years.

**Music & Dance:** Two distinct music forms are known to have originated on Reunion Island. Sega and Maloya. Sega is a music genre typical in Rodriguez,

Seychelles as well as Mauritius. The music from Maloya is unique to Reunion Island. Sega has a distinct resemblance to the ballroom dance genre and is usually accompanied by beats from western instruments, including the guitar and the harmonica. In contrast, Maloya is a musical expression that is native to the island. It is a type of ceremony dance performed during the night and usually around a lit bonfire. Maloya, which combines music, song and dance, is a tradition that has been passed down for several generations on Reunion Island. It was brought by slaves from East Africa or Madagascar. Since 2009, Maloya has been classified as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO.

**Outdoor sports activities:** The island is a paradise for those who enjoy adventure sports. Choose

from a visit of underground lava caves, to mountain biking, canyoning, horse riding, or an exciting paragliding experience above the lagoon. In Reunion Island, you can experience a wide array of outdoor activities in an exceptional natural environment. Its temperate climate ensures that these experiences can be enjoyed almost all year round.

**Trek on scenic hiking trails:** The island has more than 1,000 km of well-signposted paths, and there is something to suit all tastes and abilities. Must-trek hikes will take you to the summit of the Piton des Neiges, into the remote, isolated cirque of Mafate, to Grand Bénare, or to Roche Ecrite. Shorter walks are also possible, for example around Grand Etang lake, at Voile de la Mariée waterfall, or to the headland of Cap Jaune.

**Saint-Gilles' Vibrant Night Life:** Don't leave the island without experiencing its dynamic night life. The locals of the island love festivals and celebrations. In the district of Saint Gilles, you will find spirited bars and restaurants where you can eat, drink, and dance all night. Apart from that, one can also enjoy jazz lounges, live bands, and traditional island performances – all promising a good night out on the town!

For more information on Reunion Island, visit: <https://en.reunion.fr/> ♦





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## GIVE THE MAHARAJA A BREAK

It's time for a fresh start since in present times nostalgia might survive in only just one place - the past.

There is an expected sense of excitement at the much vaunted and awaited change in the ownership and consequent management in Air India.

There is barely a word yet from its new owners on any meaty or tectonic shifts from how the company operated so far. Legions of pundits are rushing forth with I-told-you-so's, homilies and advice. Let's also add our two-bit to the mix.

The sudden revival of interest in the Maharaja logo is a case in point. Experts aver that it's a myth to believe that customers are brand agnostic. The old logo, we are told, has history and strength on its side.

There have been suggestions the Air India brand can be revived in public consciousness by establishing a reconnect with nostalgia garnished with more efficient deliveries. There is also an idea doing the rounds that Tatas can strike an emotional bond with the market if the brand is shown to progressing towards its old glory. Indeed, the Maharaja logo does connect, but possibly more so with a much older clientele.

It's a very young world out there. A corpulent moustachioed and turbaned mascot might not be the genie from the magic lamp at this hour to grant any wish. The smartness of the first public contact will go much further than nostalgic trips of clever advertising. True, there is a historical connect between the airline, its logo and its owners but the jury is out on whether it will reverberate with a modern clientele.

There is a steady opinion that 'the comfort appeal of brands that belonged to a bygone rose-tinted age could work' and that the new owners could build upon that brand essence through a contemporary filter. Perhaps a survey that nails public opinion could better determine the strategy than sepia-tinted reminiscences of old hands.

Given the surprises Tatas can spring up, who knows all these surveys are already done and dusted and decisions are firmed up? Perhaps a new brand, totally disconnected from the past, is already well on its way.

Anurag Yadav  
Industry Expert

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

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

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# Parliamentary Committee suggests reviewing tax regime to increase India's share in global tourism

TBM Staff | Mumbai

A Parliamentary Standing Committee has recommended that the tax regime applicable to the travel & tourism sector be reviewed in order to increase India's share in the global tourism market from the present 1.24 per cent to five per cent.

The Committee on "Promotion of Indian Tourism in Overseas Markets – Role of Overseas Tourist Offices and Indian Embassies", headed by MP T G Venkatesh, said the Ministry should conduct surveys periodically in important source markets for India to assess the impact of the publicity campaigns on the decision of foreign tourists to visit India, the perception of the foreign tourists about the various facilities at tourist destinations, the preference of foreign tourists about the tourism products and destinations.

The committee in its report tabled in Parliament on proposed that the Ministry

recast its website in a more user-friendly manner.

"The Ministry should formulate an integrated marketing and promotional strategy to position India as a favoured



tourism destination in the tourism generating markets overseas and increase India's share of the global tourism market from the present 1.24 per cent to 5 per cent in the years to come."

"One of the major reasons for India's inbound tourism remaining grossly under-utilised has been the high rates and multiplicity of taxes

that deter inbound tourism and have led to tourist packages being out priced vis-a-vis those in competing tourist destinations of other countries," it said.

The committee further pointed out that the tax structure applicable to hotel accommodation, air travel, food and beverages consumption, not only "leads to tourist packages being over-priced but also obstructs seamless flow of tourists to our historical sites." It also noted that despite inbound tourism being a major foreign exchange earner with foreign exchange earnings of INR 2,11,661 crore in 2019, the taxes levied on inbound tourism are among the highest in the country.

"The committee, therefore, recommends that the tax regime applicable to the travel and tourism sector be reviewed holistically so that with suitable amendments India can convert its comparative natural and economic advantages into competitive advantages for the tourism sector," it said. ♦

## Covid booster dose mandatory for entering France, the rule came into effect from February 2

TBM Staff | Mumbai

According to international media reports, France will not allow tourists to enter the country if they received their Covid vaccine more than nine months ago. However, travellers



without a recent Covid vaccine can only enter France if they have a

"compelling reason". This could mean a dying relative, for example, but not for holidays.

Eurostar services have already warned customers, announcing, "If you had your full vaccine course nine months ago or more and you haven't had a COVID-19 vaccine booster, you must follow the rules for unvaccinated passengers to enter France." Simon Calder an eminent freelance UK travel journalist and broadcaster also criticised the move.

France's new rule came into effect from February 2. However, there is no official confirmation from the France government yet. ♦



## ICC appoints Gainwell Sports as hospitality agent for T20 WC Australia

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Gainwell Sports, part of Kolkata-based Gainwell Travel, has been appointed as the hospitality agent for ICC T20 Cricket World Cup Australia 2022 with access to premium VIP match tickets for all matches, including India vs Pakistan on October 23 at Melbourne Cricket Ground. As official hospitality agent, Gainwell Sports will offer food-and-drink-inclusive Match tickets packages at face value with commissions to travel agents.

Gainwell Sports is a growing sports travel company with official Match tickets, inclusive of packages for the world's biggest sports events, promoted by Gainwell Travel. ♦

# When was the last time you gazed at the sky?

By **Dr Nimit Chowdhary**, Professor of Tourism,  
Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Jamia Millia Islamia

**Y**es. When was the last time you spent some time gazing at the sky? Remember those childhood days when we slept on roofs, played and watched stars twinkle for hours. The natural night sky is our shared universal heritage. Unfortunately, however, our new generations have remained obfuscated from it. Darkness is being viewed with scepticism and fear. For many years we have dispelled darkness with artificial light. Though there is little evidence that increased lighting reduces total crime, bad outdoor lighting can decrease safety through easier exposure.

We are all familiar with the concept of nightlife, a collective term for available

popular entertainment after dark, often lasting until the wee hours of the following day. It includes opportunities for extravaganza for visitors during nights with nightclubs, concerts, theatres, cinemas, parties, pubs and bars. It is often a factor for many visitors while choosing a destination. This nocturnal social carousing turned flamboyant with the advent of artificial lighting, more so, the domestic and outdoor lighting adding to the sculptural and chromatic value of a place's landscape. Undeniably, nightlife contributes to the development of culture and socio-political movements and is thus an integral constituent of a place's personality.

Night as a resource manifests in two products- urban nightlife and the dark night sky. Unfortunately, while nightlife has for quite some time attracted tourism attention, the unsullied dark night sky has missed out. The nightscape is a precious natural resource for all life on Earth, which has inspired science, religion, philosophy, art, and literature since times immemorial. Our ancestors have immaculately gazed at stars to make sense of times, climate, and terrestrial movements and even navigate the globe.

Night sky and terrestrial dynamics have been essential elements of most religions and their cultural manifestations. In addition, they have often been subjects of literary expressions- all to remind us of the vital role they play in our lives to which we have gotten detached in our mundane modern lives. In most spiritual traditions, night skies have had an important place. As transformational tourism gains currency, gazing night sky allows an intimate connection with the world. Unsullied night sky cultivates non-conceptual awareness when looking at nature. The nocturnal landscape thus has a spiritual connotation.

Locale within the context of the landscape is a trigger for visitor interest. Often a lot of community folklore is weaved around the terrestrial constellation formation. The troika of the sky, people and place always provided a premise for harvesting and production and, over time, has become the tradition. This is a cultural manifestation of the nocturnal landscape.

Another way of looking at night tourism is presenting and making available conventional daytime heritage products at night. There are two ways of looking at it. One this enhances the supply of the

attraction- while access to attractions is available during daytime, say 8.00 am to 8.00 pm can be extended for visitors until late in the night. Two, the night view of the same heritage asset would render an entirely different experience at night. Therefore, they may be offered as an altogether different product. For example, visiting the Taj Mahal at night, especially full moon night, would be much different from visiting it during the daytime. The Palace Museum in Beijing offers a lantern festival light show late evening. Many forts and palaces in India also offer late evening light and sound shows. Rajasthan started talking about night tourism a few years back, extending access to Amber fort until late in the evening. In Rajasthan, for example, while the days are extremely warm during the summer, the evenings are particularly cooler and pleasant due to sand and sandstone. Thus, by opening up at night, tourism can also be expanded to summers.

Many resorts in the Thar desert of Rajasthan are now successfully offering night safaris coupled with traditional entertainment culminating with stargazing. A typical evening after a hot, bright day may begin with a camel ride to sunset points on the vast serene dunes of the Thar as the breeze turns chiller. Then, visitors return to an eco-friendly, makeshift seating arrangement. The traditional music and folk performances entertain them, and the traditional cuisines are served under the star-speckled night sky, which adds tints to the multi-coloured evening on harsh and dry land. Finally, guests retire to makeshift tents gazing at stars until they fall asleep. This nocturnal tourism is also becoming popular in Gujrat, Punjab and Haryana.

Several unconventional dark night tourism products have potential. For example, stargazing, observing, astrophotography, storytelling, night river cruises, dune night surfing, and other nocturnal activities can augment visitors' spiritual, rural, and eco-tourism experiences. Moreover, venturing out at night is rising, particularly among millennials. Therefore, offsetting apprehension associated with darkness and liveliness of night can contribute to reviving tourism post-COVID-19.

"No sight is more provocative of awe than is the night sky." ♦

*'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 Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He has more than 28 years of academic experience, of which he has been a full professor for 15 years in India, China, and Mexico. In addition, he was a visiting faculty at Gotland University (Sweden), the University of Girona (Spain), IIM Sirmaur, IIQM, and EDII. He is a recipient of many academic awards and recognitions who has authored 13 books and more than 150 academic papers. He has travelled extensively to around 40 countries and almost all states.



## 'A successful luxury travel brand is all about managing the guests expectations'

It may not be right to say that customers have become more demanding. Everyone has been confined and restricted from travelling. Hence, when they get a chance to get out they want it to be more meaningful, more experience driven, says **Prithish Shah, Founder & CEO, ATD Journeys Pvt Ltd,** in a conversation with **Prasenjit Chakraborty.**

**Q How is the luxury travel segment evolving especially after the pandemic?**

The luxury travel segment has been leading the recovery in the travel industry ever since the rules were relaxed in 2020. With no commercial flights, people retreated to private jets. Instead of taking a few rooms, we saw buyouts of smaller properties and private luxury villas. Long stays became a norm for many. The longingness to travel and not take it for granted made the chase for unique experiences even more in demand. As things settle down (hopefully!) we expect some of these trends to continue in the future. We are definitely seeing a trend for bucket list trips where guests are not shying away from spending big money.

**Q You have said that ATD Journeys have achieved many milestones since you started your journey in 2013. Could you elaborate?**

We started ATD in 2013 in Calcutta and then moved our HO to Mumbai in 2017. From a singular travel brand we have now expanded to three luxury brands focusing on different verticals. We have specialists on boarding taking care

of each of these brands.

We have always focused on building the foundation stronger rather than chasing expansion at record speed. Over these years we have established our name in the luxury travel space to be accredited as preferred partners for more than 15+ global hospitality brands like Four Season, Marriott, Rosewood, Aman, Shangri La, TravellerMade, to name a few. We have also won some prestigious awards such as best marketing campaign at Luxperience in Australia to being best honeymoon travel brand for last two consecutive years as awarded by WeddingSutra.

**Q In terms of servicing your customers, what are the**

year. Access to some of the coolest travel experiences available in the market. During their travels, our guests experience a seamless paper free experience with a digital itinerary.

To say customers have become more demanding may not be a correct approach I feel. Everyone has been confined and restricted from travelling. Hence, when they get a chance to get out they want it to be more meaningful, more experience driven. Our designers work endlessly to create their wishes into a reality as long as the demands are reasonable.

**Q You feel that it is high time for ATD Journeys to scale up. What is your roadmap for this?**

Over the years we have worked hard to build the foundation and set the brands up. Scaling up a luxury travel service business is not an easy task. We have our work cut out to try and fill this space. Technology will play a big

“It's about hearing them out, learning about their personalities and being able to custom design something that suits their profile. We play the role of a travel atelier for our guests. Through our global exposure we bring in some prominent travel trends year on year.”

**innovations you brought in? Do you think customers have become more demanding now?**

When someone asks me what business are you into? I always highlight that we are in the business of “managing expectations”. Over the years we have come to realize that a successful luxury travel brand is all about managing the guests expectations. It's about hearing them out, learning about their personalities and being able to custom design something that suits their profile. We play the role of a travel atelier for our guests. Through our global exposure we bring in some prominent travel trends year on

role in this and it's something we are working on. We had some interesting plans in place for expansion even pre-covid. We feel it's time now to execute those ideas.

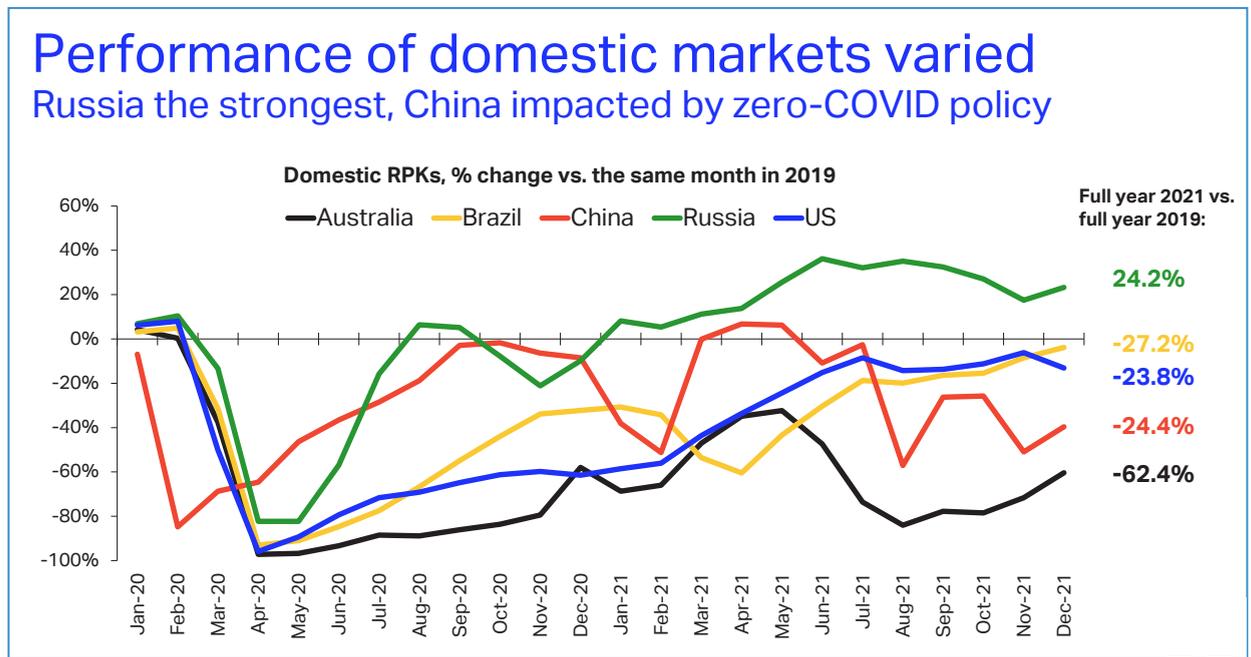
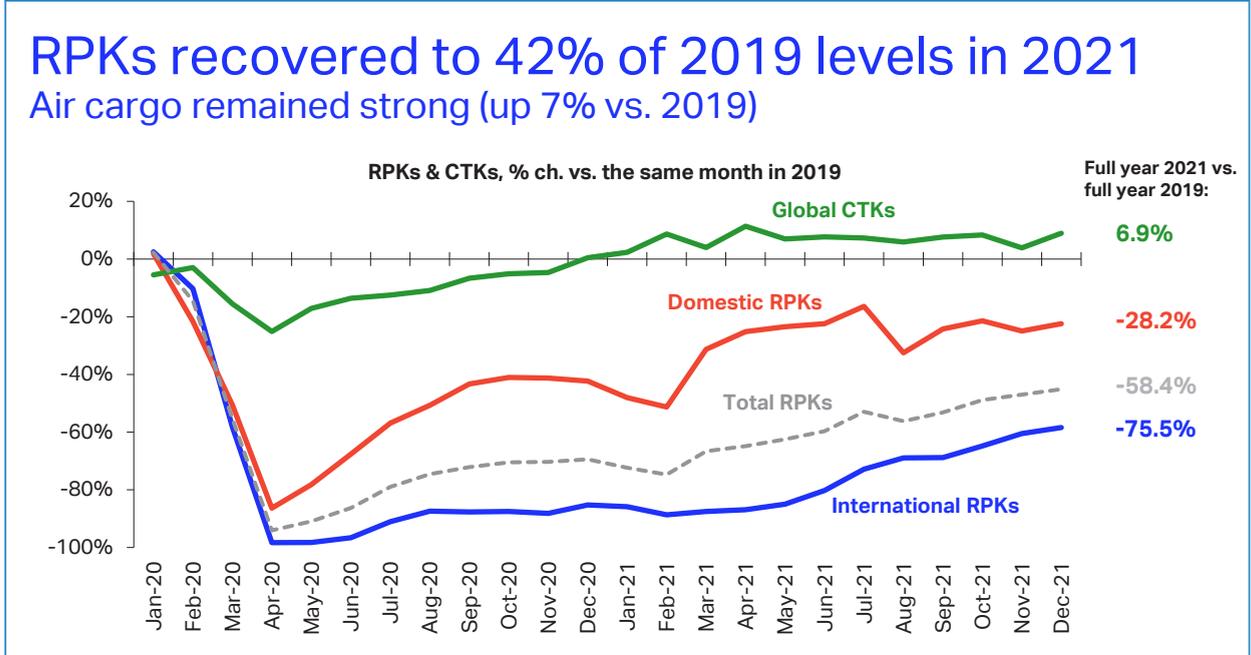
**Q How do you visualise your company two years down the lane?**

We like the Apple business model. Expensive ticket items and yet they have achieved the volume. All our designer journeys are a high ticket spend. With our focus on volume from here on we truly aim to become a global luxury and lifestyle brand in the years to come. ♦

*prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in*

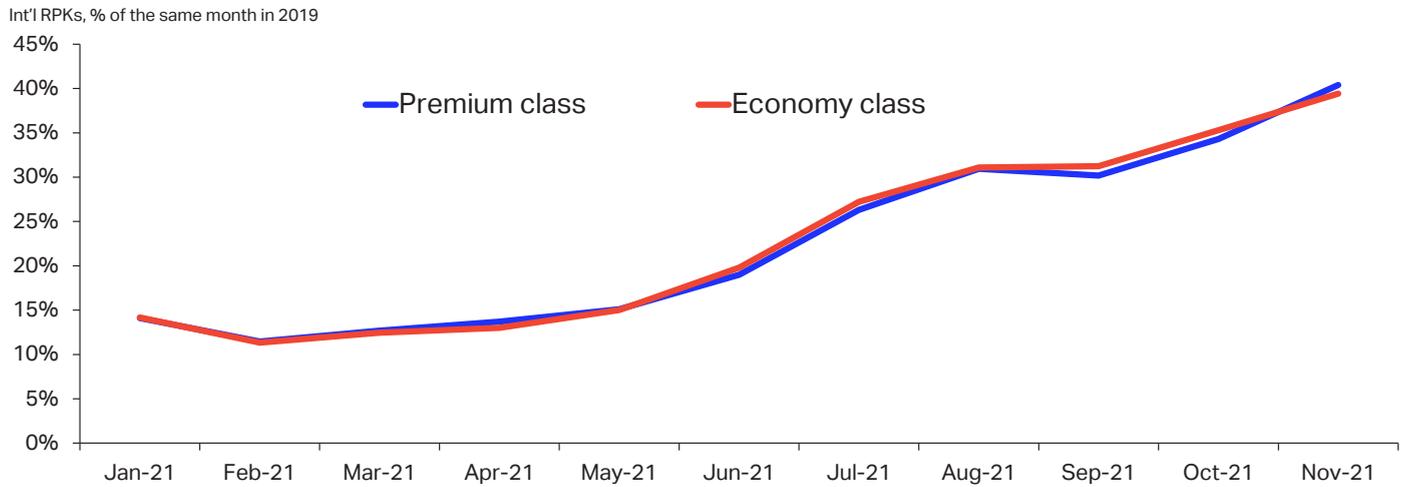
# IATA's Overview of Air Transport in 2021

The year gone by saw slow resumption of international travel with Asia Pacific lagging behind all regions with travel restrictions in place. However, there have been no clear indications of links between travel restrictions and new cases. **TravelBiz Monitor** presents the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) global overview of 2021.



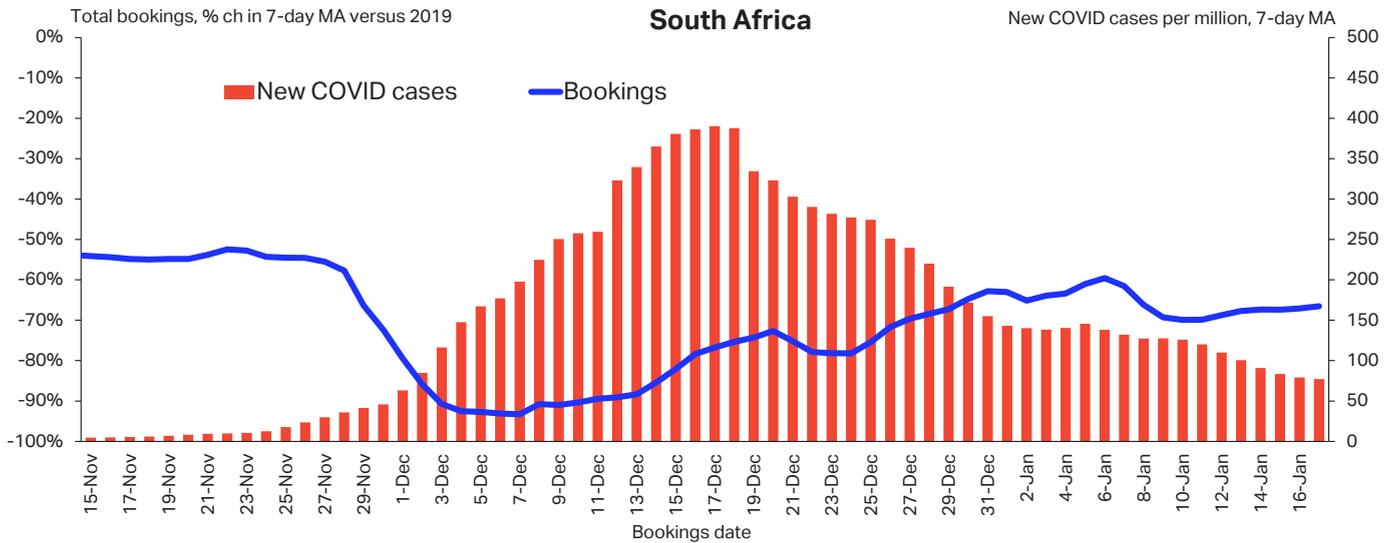
## Premium and economy international RPKs recovering at the same rate

Premium and economy class international RPKs, % of 2019 levels



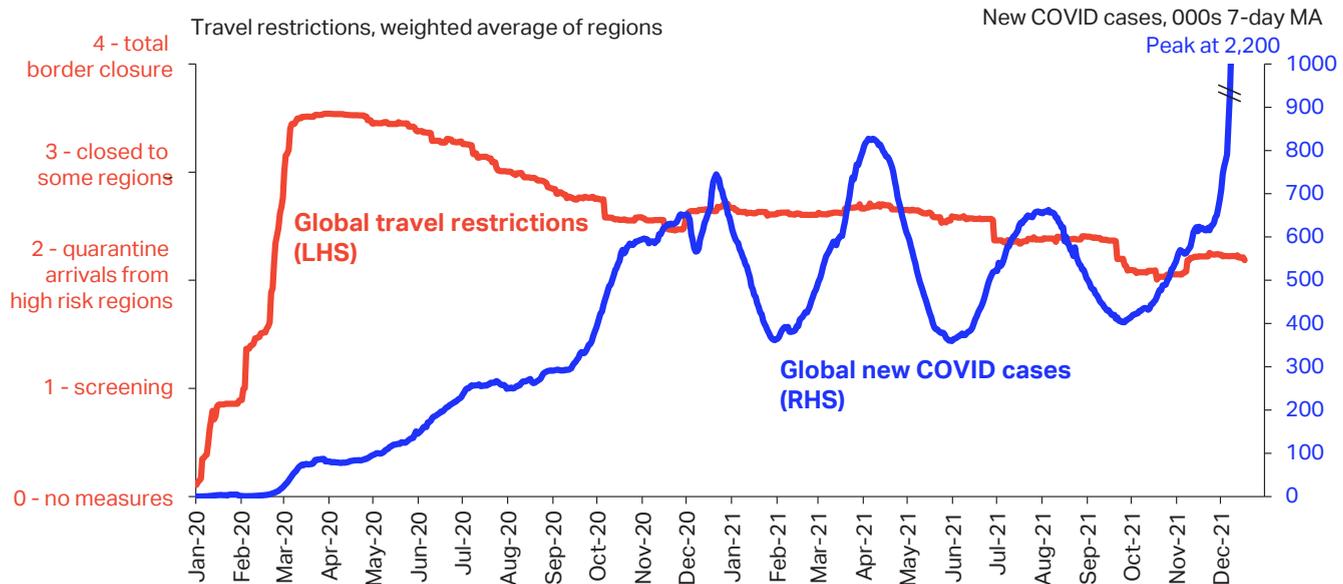
## But willingness to travel remains strong

Ticket sales rebounded in South Africa after Omicron restrictions eased



## No clear link between new cases and travel restrictions

Restrictions often maintained after cases have fallen



# Union Budget 2022-23 Completely Off Target



The Union Budget 2022 is a complete lacklustre one for the travel and tourism industry. Except the extension of ECLGS for MSMEs until 2023, the Budget is virtually silent for the travel & tourism industry. The Economic Survey which was released just one day before the Budget admitted that the travel, tourism and hospitality sector still had a long road to recovery. Naturally, the players of the industry hoped that there will be some tangible direct relief in the Budget. But that hasn't happen and the Government remains ambivalent. Hence, the stakeholders of the industry reacted sharply.



#### Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI

We live in hope and die in despair! After the Union Tourism Minister reported that the industry lost 21.5 million jobs in the first 3 quarters of 2020, after the Economic Survey admitted that the travel, tourism and hospitality sector still had a long road to recovery, one had hoped that at least after the tribulations of the last 22 months there would be some tangible direct relief, but that hasn't happened. Our demand for infrastructure status has fallen on deaf ears. MoT has an ambitious plan and an audacious vision for India@2047. But who will service those anticipated numbers of tourists if tourism businesses are driven out of business?

states for hotels and travel-tour operators. We were also expecting to the least that travel and tourism be brought under the concurrent list for industry status.



#### Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH

It's a missed opportunity. The Union Budget provides some relief and medium to long term infrastructure measures to stressed tourism travel & hospitality industry, but there was an immediate opportunity for more direct intervention to support the highly stressed tourism travel and hospitality companies and their employees.



#### Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO

Most disappointingly none of our concerns found mention in the Budget presented. Just few years ago we were earning huge foreign exchange for the government and in this hour of despair we expected some handholding by the government. An extension of the loan under ECLGS has been announced, but it is of no use for the inbound tour operators as they are not able to pay EMIs of the loan they have already taken.



#### Madhavan Menon, MD, Thomas Cook (India) Limited

The Union Budget has been disappointing. The Budget made no reference to the industry's recommendations to aid revival, including rationalization of taxes (a complete GST holiday, exemption of TCS on outbound tours, reduction in indirect taxes), removal of SIES benefit capping of INR 5 crore. For a sector that is a key contributor to the GDP and brings in valuable foreign exchange, a stimulus would have created significant value in supporting the country's road to recovery and growth.



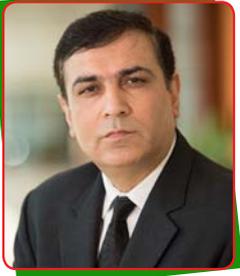
#### Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI

Our trade has been ignored once again. We suffered tremendously due to the pandemic and it was expected that the government would at least work towards positive upliftment of the travel & tourism in India, which they always portray as a priority? In our representations to the Finance Minister we had requested for GST input credits be made available across



#### Aditya Chamaria, MD, Damodar Ropeways & Infra Limited

The Budget's focus on improving connectivity, especially through sustainable modes of transport such as ropeways, will take India on a path of growth, help in increasing tourism and lead to innovation in the cable car industry.



### **Vishal Suri, Managing Director, SOTC Travel**

The two noteworthy announcements of issuance of e-passports and the expansion of the ECLGS scheme for the hospitality sector will help boost the travel and tourism industry. However, this Union Budget did not provide the industry the respite we anticipated. We hoped this Budget would offer incentives to Corporates for organising meetings and conference in India through partial or full tax exemptions.



### **Rahi Vaghani, Managing Director, Monteria Resort Pvt. Ltd**

We are welcoming the initiatives announced in the new fiscal Budget. The 400 new Vande Bharat trains and ropeway projects signify the government's commitment towards bettering our tourism infrastructure. The extension of the ECLG scheme till 2023 with an additional corpus of INR 50,000 crore dedicated to hospitality and related sectors should provide relief to most establishments especially the smaller ones.



### **Jurgen Bailom, CEO and President, Waterways Leisure Tourism Pvt Ltd**

While the travel and tourism industry has suffered significantly through the pandemic, it has also received an encouraging boost in the form of domestic travel. This momentum must be retained. Indians are travelling in India and choosing local destinations. We hope there are mindful considerations in place for the industry overall and especially cruising: which is a fairly new and unique offering in the subcontinent. With a coastline as vast as glorious India's, cruising could grow by leaps and bounds and this dream will be a reality once the government further supports its gargantuan potential.



### **Shikhar Aggarwal, Joint MD, BLS International**

We would like to applaud the government for this progressive announcement today about the introduction of e-Passports using embedded chip to be rolled out in 2022-23. A well thought initiative like this will help to boost the overall travel industry and also ease out the process for overseas travel and augment global mobility.



### **Daniel D'souza, President & Country Head, SOTC Travel**

While we are certain that the modern infra developments of roads, railways, airports, ports, waterways, and the national ropeway project mentioned under the Prime Minister's PM Gati Shakti plan will be the key drivers of domestic tourism economy, the industry would have benefitted if the government extended more direct and immediate support to the sector. We had requested the government for respite which were unfortunately not addressed and would have aided to the revival of the industry.



### **Dhruv Shringi, Co-Founder and CEO, Yatra.com**

We are grateful that the government has taken relevant measures to revive the travel and hospitality industry as it is one of the major contributors to the growth of our economy. The extension of ECLGS services, as well as an increased cover for the hospitality sector, will definitely bring in the much-required relief. Yatra.com remains optimistic that the industry will continue to see buoyant growth driving overall economic growth in the country.



### **Zubin Saxena, Managing Director and Vice President Operations, South Asia - Radisson Hotel Group**

We welcome the Union Budget and the allocation of strategic aid that will enable the speedy recovery of the hospitality sector. The extension of the ECLGS with an increased cover of INR 5 lakh crores for the hospitality sector is a positive move. With domestic travel picking pace, we believe that the government's highway expansion plans will facilitate accessibility and strengthen this demand further.



### **Ronojoy Dutta, Whole Time Director and CEO, IndiGo**

We welcome the new incentives of issuing of E-passport and introduction of digital currency. The government's relentless focus on national transportation infrastructure development with the PM Gati Shakti plan will strengthen the much-needed multimodal connectivity. Having said that, we were expecting tax concession to the aviation industry with cut on ATF excise duty and allocation of concessional finance to airlines to help us come out of the pandemic.



### **Rikant Pittie, Co-founder- EaseMyTrip**

International travel has been severely impacted by the pandemic, which is why we are pleased with the introduction of e-passports with embedded chips. This will provide a big boost to travel and add a level of convenience for international travelers. Additionally, the expansion of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme by Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 5 Lakh crore will enable the small travel operators and stakeholders within the travel and tourism industry to reel back from the disruptive impact of the pandemic.



### **Alope Bajpai, Group CEO & Co-founder, ixigo**

International travel is likely to recover soon despite the progress being slowed by the current variant. The introduction of innovative initiatives like e-passports will boost security and will enhance the convenience of international travelers by cutting down long queues at immigration counters. This will help support a faster revival of international travel in a pandemic-driven environment. ♦

# Busy Year Ahead

By Ansoo Gupta, Founder, OneShoe Trust

The first month of this year has been a mixed bag of emotions for Indian travel & tourism industry. As the government was announcing the new draft policy and incentives to boost the sector, the wild spread of Omicron was curtailing the new year holiday travel plans yet again bringing the businesses to a pause once more. However, the future looks promising. As the world heads towards better management of Covid-19 and its many variants, the travel & tourism will restart with due checks and balances in place and recovery will be rapid. All we must do is be correctly prepared for it.

A mobile app for E-tourist visa, direct air-connectivity with major overseas markets,



classification of tourist destinations into categories, special tourism zones and creation of five missions are among provisions stipulated in the draft of the new national policy to ensure sustainable, responsible, and inclusive development of tourism. All this and more is being done with a goal of making India a top global destination by 2030. This is a lofty target but is definitely achievable if we all work towards a well-crafted plan.

At a macro level, the sector has already put forth its suggestions for sops and tax breaks such as IT deductions on domestic travel and tourism spends, allowing for LTA exemption every year etc. to be granted for sector revival. And while the government figures out its way around it, at a micro level, at our own operations level, two elements need careful consideration. As always, after a recession, comes a steep period of rapid growth and to make full use of that, it will be worthwhile for every travel business, big or small, wherever they are in the value chain, to diligently look into (1) Scaling Up with Technology :Is your operation taking full advantage of modern technologies available in all parts of your business (2) A keen eye towards environment protection : Not only are more and more consumers gravitating towards greener choices and even willing to pay a little extra for zero-waste holiday , conservation programmes etc, this is imperative for us if we want to sustain our destinations for a long time. Think of it as an AMC we should pay for the destinations. Just as a factory owner takes care of their machine's wear and tear for long-term gains, similarly we should do too.

Government's new draft policy seems to have its heart in the right place and eyes fixed on the right target. However, like all plans, the key to success is its execution. What will be crucial is to set the right targets which are measurable and that all stakeholders can directly contribute to. It is

imperative that the 5 proposed missions can percolate down to the smallest businesses.

1.National Green Tourism Mission to mainstream sustainability in the tourism sector. The aims of this mission include reducing water consumption and waste generation; ensuring efficient energy utilisation; roping in regional bodies for implementing tourism projects and thereby enhancing the incomes of local people as well as their living standards.

This focus on 'local people' as opposed to the tourist can be the real 2game changer here.

2.National Digital Tourism Mission to digitalize the sector seeks to empower stakeholders in the tourism sector in utilising digital technologies. As I said before, integrating modern technology is critical for every business to be able to scale up and to ensure better customer experience while running a cost-efficient operation.

3.Tourism and Hospitality sector skill mission : Given the high employability of the sector, this Mission on skill development is to ensure that India has the best trained and qualified manpower to maintain high standards of service

4.National Mission on Destination Management Organisations : to focus on ensuring synergy and coordination among public and private stakeholders. According to the Central Govt, new tourism destinations have to be identified and both government agencies as well as private entrepreneurs have to be involved in the process.

5.National Mission on Tourism MSMEs to support and facilitate the start-ups, micro, small and medium enterprises

As we move forward, it will be crucial to see how we are progressing on each. We can speed up achieving our targets by managing the overlaps between the missions : for example MSME mission and Green Tourism Mission can achieve great results faster when working in synergy.

I am personally very excited about all these five missions and would like only one more to be added significantly: educating travellers on how to travel more responsibly. By following these through we are in a good position to really catapult Indian travel and tourism into a new orbit. ♦

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



*Ansoo Gupta is founder of OneShoe Trust which is a global advocacy platform for Responsible & Mindful Travels. Gupta a Science graduate in Physics and Mathematics with a post graduate in business management and a certification in Data Science & Machine Learning from HarvardX.*

# UK Virtually with VisitBritain

TBM Staff | Mumbai

**W**ith the travel restrictions in place until January 2022, VisitBritain in association with **TravelBiz Monitor**, organised a Virtual FAM for the Indian Travel-Trade bringing the destination virtually closer than ever before.

London is the most saleable and the highest visited city in the UK for Indians. With its rich culture, history, heritage and love for sports, India and UK have a lot in common, making attractions such as the 'Historic Royal Palaces' and 'Merlin Entertainment' some of the most popular activities for Indians. Keeping that in mind, VisitBritain partnered with both these attractions giving the Indian trade a virtual look and feel of Tower of London and Warwick Castle.

The VisitBritain team of Mr. Shuja Mehdi, B2B Manager and Ms. Tishtar Parakh, Travel Trade Executive, welcomed the trade in joining the programme, while Ms. Ann Wilson, Head of Sales joined by her teammates Ms. Marie-Charles Houston, Sales Manager and Mr. Matthew Coulter, Sales Executive led the first leg of the session, showcasing the Tower of London and its hidden gems.

The Tower of London is a UNESCO World Heritage site which was beautifully showcased in a 20 minute video, giving the trade a peak into not only the main tower, but also a tour of the secret areas that are not open to general public. In addition to that, a painting of Jesus Christ, along with caricatures of Mother Mary which was discovered in 1953, during restoration was also something that the trade got an opportunity to enjoy. Another such area is the room with the oldest bell that is rung even today - every night, which has witnessed the execution of 75 noble men in the past. The



Warwick Castle

Crown Jewels collection, part of the Royal Collection, are the most powerful symbols of the British Monarchy and holds deep religious

Kensington Palace, K Hillsborough Castle and Gardens representing thousand years of history and Britain's tumultuous past.

Moving on to the second leg of the virtual Fam was where Mr. Gaurav Seth, Head of Sales, India for Merlin Entertainment gave the trade a taste of the Warwick Castle & Knight's Village, showcasing the global presence of Merlin group and an insight to its presence all over the UK.

Warwick Castle is conveniently located at a two-hour drive from the City of London, with options for self-drive, coach tours and train visits. Warwick Castle & Knight's Village is a more engaging option for guests. It enjoys 1,100 years of history, 64 acres of epic grounds, shows and Entertainment, one of the Britain's finest medieval fortress, palaces to eat and sleep. The Warwick Castle has the largest collection of armoury in the UK in its Great Hall.

Its Time Tower offers a 10-minute immersive multimedia experience capturing the unknown stories of Warwick Castle's rich and vibrant history. There are two F&B options inside the Castle. At the Conservatory Tea House one can indulge in an afternoon tea, while enjoying the stunning surroundings of the Peacock Garden; as well as a varied list of food options for vegetarian guests as well. Entertainment shows like the Falconer's Quest, which will be part of ticket cost, twice a day. Other shows include the Bowman Show, War of the Horses and The Castle Dungeon, located between first and second tower, a 15-minute activity, showcasing the darker side of the city and location.

The session ended with a Q&A segment where the trade got the chance to interact with the tourism board and the two partners which proved to be very fruitful. ♦



VisitBritain™

and cultural significance in UK's history. The Historic Royal Palaces termed as 'Place to Sit and Be Stirred' include Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Banqueting House,



Tower of London



# Cinnamon Bentota Beach targeting Indian weddings

The rich culture and history that is displayed almost at every turn, makes the property more than just a typical hotel stay and becoming increasingly popular among Indian travellers, writes **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

**C**innamon Bentota Beach, the five-star resort in Sri Lanka spread over an area of 11 acres of land across Bentota Beach enjoys a unique location, boasting vistas of the Indian Ocean and the Bentara River. The property has 159 rooms with traditional design elements unique to the destination combined with luxury amenities. Each room offers its own view of the ocean or vast gardens, and is enhanced by the hotel's signature experiences and services, including a personal stylist for the Suites.

Cinnamon Bentota Beach is a luxury, upscale beach resort that creates bespoke experiences for the modern traveller. Set in the natural beauty between the Bentara River and Bentota Beach, it is the master of detail, from its contemporary architecture and design to its artful cuisine. Designed by Geoffrey Bawa, one

of the most influential Asian architects of his generation, the hotel offers a rich cultural value, a repository of art, and lavish gardens.

As it is known that the pandemic has thrown a spanner in the work and due to this every hotel and resort globally has to redefine their strategy to ensure minimum revenue losses. When asked to comment, with much lesser number of business events due to the pandemic, how are you compensating the decline in MICE revenue? Dilan Bandara, GM, Cinnamon Bentota Beach, replied that they will focus on promoting the property for weddings. "But now with tourism picking up in Sri Lanka, we will continue to focus on this property being a first-choice meeting venue for visiting business tourists. We are still getting a share of local MICE events and we have a few locked in for February as well, however international MICE programmes are getting postponed. And biggest demand we are seeing so far with international MICE is for Indian Weddings at Bentota," he pointed out.

As far as attracting guests is concerned, the property is focusing on potential wedding parties to select them as their wedding venue. Besides this, they are also targeting travel influencers, bloggers to experience Cinnamon Bentota

Beach. According to Bandara, "Banquets will drive 6% of overall F&B revenue during the year. Compared to 16% in the previous year, this is low. However, overall F&B revenue has increased in the budget and banquets alone by 69%. Local and destination weddings will be the main area of focus during the year. Staycations certainly play a role in inspiring other local guests to want to stay with us and have the same experience."

Couples and families form their biggest chunk of customer segments. Apart from this, the property also receives a lot of travellers from Europe. "We have guests who travel all the way from Russia, UK and Germany to visit us. Our main markets in December were Sri Lanka – 55%, Russia – 11%, UK – 7%, India – 6%, currently in January it's the CIS Markets (Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan) that are having the bulk of the bookings," revealed Bandara.

It is important to mention here that Cinnamon Bentota Beach is very popular among Indian travellers. The reason behind this, according to Bandara, is its rich culture and history that is displayed almost at every turn, which presents them with more than just a typical hotel stays. "Our Indian guests look for the beach, water sports, Indian cuisine and luxury rooms. It can also be the experiences we offer to guests," said Bandara. Experiences at the property include fun activities for children including water sports, curated excursions and specialised destination dining that feature authentic Sri

Lankan cuisine. "Guests are spoiled for choice with six specialised restaurants, the highlight being, Nossa, an all-day dining restaurant which depicts a hawker street, with different types of cuisine," he said. Additionally, the seafood restaurant, Sea-Meats-Spice, and Asian restaurant, Zest, specialising in Sri Lankan, Indian and Chinese cuisines, pay tribute to dishes from this part of the world. "Meanwhile, Ottimo

serves a variety of pizzas and pasta together with premium cuts of steak and features a choice of Italian wines among many other unique culinary offerings. Traditional local experiences are introduced at an in-house Artisan Village offering an array of activities such as mask carving, puppetry, coconut leaf art, drumming and Beeralu lessons; all traditional handicrafts that are found in this region," explained Bandara.

What about various guidelines that an Indian tourist needs to keep in mind while visiting Sri Lanka and Cinnamon Bentota Beach? "Apart from the general COVID19 health and safety guidelines, we just ask our guests to be respectful of the art and history that make this hotel unique," concluded Bandara. ♦

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**Dilan Bandara**  
GM, Cinnamon Bentota Beach





# CONNECT



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TBM Staff | Hyderabad

**S**riLankan Airlines in association with **Travel Biz Monitor** organized two webinars targeting the Indian travel trade on January 10 and 17, 2022 respectively. Both the webinars generated an overwhelming response from the travel industry, with high levels of engagement and many inquiries from its (SriLankan Airlines) contact points subsequently.

The first webinar titled- 'The Way Forward - SriLankan Airlines in the Indian Market' provided insight about the Airline and its safety measures. Besides this, the online event also informed the attendees about the Airline's India operations and its future plans.



**Komal Seth**

Founder & Director  
LINKIN REPS. PVT. LTD.

"SriLankan Airlines, the National Carrier of Sri Lanka, and a member of the oneworld alliance, launched in 1979 is fully owned by the Government of Sri Lanka. The hub of the Airline is Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo and it currently has a global presence of 121 destinations in 55 countries (including codeshare operations). It operates to 10 cities in Far East, 9 in Middle East, 6 in South Asia, 4 in Europe, 2 in Australia and 9 cities in India," the webinar informed the audience.

## SriLankan Airlines webinar

# Generates positive response from the travel trade

The Airline also emphasized its commitment on ensuing health and wellbeing of its passengers on every step of the journey, and its dedication has been recognized with the highest attainable Diamond Standard at the APEX (The Airline Passenger Experience Association) Health and Safety Audit powered by SimplyFlying.

Throwing light on the India market operations it said that currently, SriLankan Airlines operates 13 flights from Chennai, 9 flights from Mumbai, 7 flights from Kochi, 5 flights from Delhi, Bengaluru, Trivandrum, 4 flights from Trichy, Hyderabad and 3 flights from Madurai – a week. "This frequency is expected to increase up to four times daily from Chennai, twice daily flights from Mumbai, thrice daily flights from Delhi,

gov.lk website, but they will require a Hotel Confirmation to do so. All passengers above the age of 12 must obtain a negative RTPCR from an ICMR-registered lab within 72 hours of flight's departure, as well as complete a health declaration form at <https://airport.lk/health-declaration/index.html>."

"Children below 12 years of age travelling with fully vaccinated adults will be allowed to enter Sri Lanka without an on-arrival PCR. Children of age 12-18 travelling with fully vaccinated adults will be allowed to enter Sri Lanka but on arrival PCR is needed," it added.

SriLankan Airlines has taken all measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its valued passengers travelling via Colombo Airport. While departing Sri Lanka, the belongings of the passengers will be disinfected and screened at the airport. Passengers' temperatures will be checked, and a thermal scan will also be undertaken. Protective screens are placed at all the check-in counters and hand Sanitizers are placed at convenient locations. All aircrafts are sanitized & disinfected 24/7 and all crew wear PPEs. Even meals are prepared in accordance with stringent health and safety guidelines, ensuring hygiene and safety.

Commenting on the India market, Mr. V. Ravindran, Regional Manager, SriLankan Airlines- India said, "The Indian market is an integral part of SriLankan Airlines beyond doubts, hence our focus and commitment to this market will be certain for a foreseeable future."

### Second Webinar

The theme of the second webinar was 'Welcome India'. It mainly discussed why Indians should visit Sri Lanka. Some of the reasons are.

**Less Travel Time** – Out of the 9 cities the SriLankan Airlines serves in India, Delhi is the longest route with a journey time of only 3 1/2 hours, while the rest of the routes take less than 3 hours.

**Cultural Similarity** - Sri Lanka and India have shared cultural and religious ideas/traditions for thousands of years and share numerous other commonalities.

**Hospitality** - Sri Lankans are widely known for being extremely friendly, warm, and



**Ravindran**

Regional Manager,  
India, Sales Marketing and  
Administration, India, Nepal

double daily flights from Bengaluru, daily flights from Trivandrum, double daily flights from Trichy, 5 flights to Hyderabad and daily flights to Madurai. Kochi frequency is expected to remain the same," it informed. The Airline currently has an all-Airbus fleet of 24 modern sophisticated aircraft which includes 12 A330 & 12 A320/321.

The webinar also informed the travel trade about norms of visiting Sri Lanka at present. "Currently passengers travelling to Sri Lanka can pre-book their visas on the eta.

welcoming. When travelling across Sri Lanka, visitors will aid them in any way they can.

**Affordability** - Sri Lanka has become increasingly affordable for Indians due to the exchange rate difference between the Sri Lankan and Indian rupees.

**Food** - Since Sri Lankans and Indians utilize almost same spices in their cooking, the food tastes quite similar. In addition, there are numerous restaurants that serve Indian cuisine prepared by Indian chefs. As a result, travelers can choose between local cuisine, Indian cuisine, and even western cuisine.

**Versatility** - Sri Lanka has beautiful beaches, hill stations, cultural sites, adventure/sports sites, wildlife safaris, and other attractions may all be found in a compact area of around 65,000 Square Kilometers. As a result of this versatility travellers can experience all attractions within a weeks' time.

SriLankan Airlines' pan-India connectivity makes Sri Lanka an attractive choice for huge parties attending MICE or weddings. In addition, Indians pay lower visa fees than citizens of the EU, the United States, or any other non-SAARC country.

SriLankan Airlines provides full-service to/from all Indian points, with certain segments taking less than an hour to travel. Most of their aircraft's Economy cabin have

31" – 32" Seat Pitch, in-Flight entertainment, electronic device charging.

SriLankan Airlines Business cabin provides all the Business Class comforts and delicious meal choices with flatbed seating in wide body aircrafts. Selected aircraft do provide single aisle comfort, mood lighting, night sky and WIFI.

They have Serendib Lounge for their business class passengers located on the first floor of the departure hall at BIA, overlooking the Aircraft Parking Bay. It has a seating capacity for 80 and dining capacity for 20 persons. It is important to mention here that the Sri Lankan Airlines is amongst the top 18 airlines that have the Diamond (highest) status – Apex Health & Safety Audit and was awarded the same in June 21. Safety Audit covers 58 touchpoints across the passenger journey.

Sri Lanka recognizes any Vaccine approved by the Indian government for its travellers, hence there are no restrictions on the vaccination taken.

Sri Lanka has a total of 8 UNESCO Heritage Sites, out of which 6 are Cultural & 2 Natural namely-

Ancient City of Polonnaruwa, Ancient City of Sigiriya, Old town of Galle, Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple, Sacred City of Anuradhapura, Sacred City of Kandy, Sinharaja Forest Reserve, Central Highlands

of Sri Lanka

Commenting on business prospect, Mr. Ravindran, said, "The last two years 2020 and 2021 were challenging to every business organization and Airline were not an exception either, but the encouraging fact is we survived those tough times hence we will continue to achieve our organizational goals and objectives."

The target segments of the Airline are Leisure Travellers, Meetings, Incentive, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), Destination Wedding Travellers, Corporate/Business Travellers, Visiting Family and Friends (VFR), Seafarers/ Marine Travellers, Trader traffic.

"In today's rapidly changing era, the COVID-19 variants are becoming a part and parcel of the travel and tourism story. Travellers today need to travel at ease but be prepared for the unexpected, which is the need of the hour now. The travel and tourism industry has gained some pace in the last few months, and I believe, it shall continue. In these times, it's also important to conduct informative webinars for educating the travel trade. We are thankful for Travel Biz Monitor for carrying out the webinar series for SriLankan Airlines so effectively and efficiently," said Komal Seth, Founder & Director, LINKIN REPS. PVT. LTD. ♦

## NEWS ROUND UP

# Indian tourist arrivals to Singapore falls drastically

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The number of Indian tourists to Singapore has reduced to a record low of 54,000 in 2021 from 1.42 million in 2019, prior to the outbreak of Covid-19.

India ranked among the top three visitor source markets for Singapore. However, the latest numbers display a drastic fall in tourism in the city-state.

According to India's tourism statistics, Singapore was among the top 10 destination country for Indian Nationals' Departures (IND) during 2020.

Furthermore, a total of 2,89,287 Indians visited Singapore in 2020 which was 3.97 pc of the total departures in the year.

Even though China, India, and Indonesia were the top three visitor source markets

last year the numbers dropped a great deal from the pre-covid year.

In 2021, Singapore saw 88,000 visitors from China, 54,000 from India, and 33,000 from Indonesia.

During the last pre-COVID year, 2019, the top three sources of visitors were similar. Singapore drew 3.64 million visitors from China, 3.08

million from Indonesia, with India rounding up the top three with 1.42 million visitors, wrote author Lee Kah Whye.

In addition to that, India's tourism statistics show that Singapore availed 60278 e-tourist visas in 2019 for India which was 2.1 per cent of the total e visas availed.

Furthermore, in Jan-March 2020 a total of 10,227 visas were availed by Singapore for India which was 1.2 pc of the total e-visas.

Singapore had only 330,000 international visitors in 2021, the lowest on record. It is less than two per cent of the 19.1 million tourists who came to its shores in 2019.

STB said that while the numbers in 2020 and 2021 represent only a fraction of Singapore's tourism performance prior to the pandemic, it is encouraged by the signs of recovery. ♦



# Three-Day international conference by Jamia focuses on “Enterprise and Entrepreneurialism in Tourism and Hospitality”

✍️.....TBM Staff | New Delhi

New Delhi-based Jamia Millia Islamia organised a three-day 3rd International Conference on Enterprise and Entrepreneurialism from January 28 to 30, supported by the Union Ministry of Tourism (MoT).

The conference saw the unique blend of more than 20 sessions - including three plenary and five technical tracks of discussions, discourses, deliberations and workshop - witnessing newer research insights and the best practices with viable solutions being presented on Entrepreneurial Opportunities, Women as Entrepreneurs, Contemporary Issues, Innovation and Technology, etc. in Tourism and Hospitality.

With the presence of international thought leaders, inclusive of 4 serving or former Vice Chancellors, 20 world-class speakers representing 5 International and 11 national Universities, 2 institutes of higher education run by the MoT, along with government-

run 2 Entrepreneurship Development Institutes, the conference offered the participants a unique opportunity to discuss, deliberate, interact so as to open up to the many facets of Entrepreneurship in Tourism & Hospitality, and participate in workshops to learn and hone their skills to publish world-class researches by the Influential editors of travel & tourism international journals.

At its culmination, the Chief Guest of the valedictory session, Dr Venu Vasudevan, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary of Higher Education and Tourism, Government of Kerala, congratulated Jamia Millia Islamia, on organising a comprehensive, well thought out and extremely relevant international conference. He posited that there is a great need to encourage community involvement and women participation in entrepreneurial activities for a resilient recovery in the tourism and hospitality sector in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. He believed that the stakeholders of the industry must have learnt from the conference with its practical and theoretical underpinnings. He also highlighted the Kerala model of entrepreneurial responsible tourism which emphasises on the triple-bottom line of social, economic and environmental sustainability with the inclusion of the local communities.

Other guests of honour, Prof. Syed Inayat Ali Zaidi, Former Dean Faculty of Humanities and Languages, Jamia Millia Islamia, outlined the traditional wisdom of the Indian business communities as the bulwark of entrepreneurial zeal in India which weathered many great upheavals since historic times. On similar veins, Anil K Rajput, Joint Secretary, ADTOI, recounted the successful entrepreneurial models of distant, off the beaten track destinations and the need to replicate these on a wider scale.

Over the three days, the conference initiated



the much-required public engagement and discourse on the issues of the revival and resilience of entrepreneurship in the wake of Covid-19 and its impacts on tourism and hospitality with the special contributions of women in entrepreneurship. It refocused the role of higher education and innovation in the domain to enhance the efficiency of entrepreneurship and to welcome new avenues and opportunities offering solutions to the beleaguered industry and offer direction for its bright future.

From the industry it was well represented by Rajeev Mehra the President of IATO and Hon Secretary of FAITH, Dr. Madhu Chandok, President Women's Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (WICCI), Delhi Chapter, Sonia Singh, Co-Founder Nippon Taiyo Hospitality.

In her inaugural address, Honourable Vice Chancellor Padma Shri, Prof. Najma Akhtar stressed upon the need for an active collaboration of the industry and the academia. She emphasised that the University has always striven to bring out the best research and collaborative projects with the practitioners making it an institution at the forefront and aspiring evermore to deliver solutions even at the international level.

The online conference commenced with the

addresses by the Patrons of the conference, Prof. Nazim Husain Al-Jafri, Registrar, Jamia Millia Islamia and Prof. Mohd. Asaduddin, Dean Faculty of Humanities and Languages.

Addressing the delegates, the Conference Chair and Head of Department, Dr. Sarah Hussain stated that tourism has been one of the fastest growing sectors in India and the world. The university owing to its close association with tourism companies has been alive to the present conditions.

The Chief Guest, Vice Chancellor of the Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Prof.

SP Bansal, highlighted the paradigm shift that has taken place in the new normal with the new trends of staycations and other practices and he also stressed the need to promote local tourism in the country side to create job opportunities for the local villages.

The Guest of Honour Vinod Zutshi, former Tourism Secretary while addressing the gathering, spoke about the draft National Tourism Policy and the great work done by the government in

supporting the entrepreneurs financially and in offering the ease of doing businesses through simplification of registrations of the Tourism entrepreneurs under the MSME portals. Also he highlighted the government's role in making a conducive atmosphere for the support of the new start-ups.

Conference Patron addressed the gathering and talked about the social entrepreneurship. He said that the university understands the importance of harnessing the innovative capabilities and entrepreneurial possibilities.

This was followed by the key note address by Prof Parikshat Singh Manhas, Director, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Faculty of Business Studies, University of Jammu. Key take aways from his address were the model of successful strategies for the Entrepreneurs with the inclusion of components such as tech savviness, adaptability, flexibility and acquiring of relevant skills amongst others. With this, the new age entrepreneurs shall be able to overcome the vagaries of crises in tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship as the key ingredients.

The Conference Co-Chair Prof. Nimit Chowdhary, DTHM Jamia Millia Islamia concluded the inaugural event with the deep and profuse vote of thanks to all the guests and the participants. ♦



## ‘Travel and trade will certainly rebound and reach pre-Covid levels in this year’

**Shiv Bose, General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Goa – Panaji** is optimistic that this year hospitality will get back its lost charm. According to him revenues are expected to surge and reach pre-covid levels by Q3 of this year. If given a chance, Bose would caption this year as ‘Time to Travel’. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Bose to understand his expectations from 2022.

### Q What are your expectations from 2022?

I am optimistic that this year we shall heal ourselves. We suffered personally, professionally and financially in the last two years and the dawn of this new year will emancipate this pain. However, caution needs to be exerted since the prevalent situation is volatile and requires us to be responsible citizens. Travel and trade will certainly rebound and will reach pre-covid levels in this year. If given a choice, I shall caption this year as “Time to Travel”.

### Q What operational changes do you think hoteliers/hotel operators need to focus on as the industry recovers?

The pandemic has taken a toll on the operational efficiency of all establishments. Cost contingencies and redundancies have a long-term impact and

therefore it is important to recuperate faster. Hoteliers and restaurateurs will need to get the spring in their step and align for success. It is imperative that we all look inward and check on our existing infrastructure and process methodologies to make a long term plan for financial resurgence and growth.

### Q What pandemic-based long-term effects do you see for the hospitality industry?

The pandemic has undeniably caused long-lasting effects on the industry. The adoption of

technology has become the fulcrum of hospitality. Contactless payments methods, self-check in kiosks, express checkouts, digital menus and messaging service to limit contact between staff and guests and smart keys are some of the changes I see continuing in the long term.

### Q What concerns do consumers still have regarding travel safety?

Guests are cautious about their well-being and safety and expect hotels and resorts to adopt hygiene and sanitization programs. In line with these expectations, we have adopted the “Hilton Clean Stays” program. It is a holistic and robust program that ensures we welcome guests in a sanitized environment and maintain all the necessitated protocols towards their well-being.

### Q What kind of revenue growth are you foreseeing for your property this year? Are you expecting increased occupancy during the holiday and wedding season?

Revenues are expected to surge and reach pre-covid levels by Q3 of this year. We witnessed the spike in Q4 of 2021 and revenues rose by 40% in comparison to same time the year before. This year we have budgeted ourselves to over 70% growth in comparison to 2021,

which was muted year on all fronts.

### Q Which customer segments (short-haul/long-haul/leisure/corporates/staycations) and from which locations are you expecting to form the major pie of your business in these coming months?

We are focusing on transient and social groups, with a key eye on the wedding segment. Staycations and value based offers will be on the rise as more families plan their pending vacation and get on the road to explore places. We have launched the “Dream Stray” and “Great Small Breaks” that give value based inclusions to vacation seekers in making their stay at Double Tree by Hilton Goa, Panaji, truly memorable.

### Q How can hotels utilize technology on their continued recovery journeys?

By adopting technology, we have realised that it can play a vital role in delivering personalized hospitality. We have used the benefits of technology from our rooms to our restaurants and have ensured that the merits of human interactions are not compromised. From digital compendium and digital keys in guest rooms, to scan and pay option at all our restaurants, we have ensured that technology enriches our overall service direction.

### Q What are your short- and long-term plans for the property?

The resort has taken a new approach and has implemented numerous process changes to benefit visiting guests. From kids friendly touch points to tie-ups with vendors to explore Goa and its hidden locations. We offer a very personalized service experience to all our guests and customize each stay as per guest desire. From celebratory stays to vacation visits, our service delivery is designed for all discerning travellers. We are also launching “Elle Spa and Salon” to improve the rejuvenation and personal care aspect for our guests. ♦

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# Kaziranga & Jorhat: Destination for Tourists and Angel Investors

By **Gargi Sarma**, Assistant Professor in the Department of M.Com,  
K C Das Commerce College, Guwahati

**T**he Mughal's last unconquered frontier of India, presents numerous desirable destinations for a jaunt/ holiday. Its majestic biodiversity allow its tourists to relish some good times with a complimentary shade of bright vibes. The state takes pride in celebrating the joy of being blessed with seven (7) National Parks and sixteen (16) Wildlife Sanctuaries and the largest tea producing region in India. So, a tourist can experience a Safari and have a slice of Tea Tourism for a lasting holiday experience.

In India when orate is about the Greater One horned-Rhinoceros, Kaziranga National Park-a World Heritage Site is the destination. World's largest habitat of this mammal with rich flora and fauna also, roofs the Big Five and the internationally recognised Bird Area. Kaziranga being a boosted location, finds pleasure in welcoming the highest number of both National and International tourists. Hence, this has led to avenues for both Innovative and Imitative Business Ideas. Blessed with the Location Advantage, Kaziranga has favoured

most of the business ideas and investors. As an upshot, the place has been well developed as Tourists Friendly Spot too. It's because of the availability of services desired by tourists to have one impeccable experience. Success of numerous Business ideas and Investors can be located as the prime backers behind this development.

Location Advantage generates Business Ideas which in turn easily convinces Investors.

The perks of such ideas are reflected in accommodation facilities- premium to low budgeted accommodation facilities in the name of resorts, home stays, lodges and hotels, savouring ethnic cuisines and beats and rhythms of Folk Dance and Music of the state. This assures breathtaking panoramic view of the region. Tourists generally admire the availability of three essentials in a new place- Accommodation which fits their budget, Ethnic Food and Leisure Activities.

These developments are an amalgamated participation of both Government and Private Investors. Considering the cravings of the tourists, more business ideas on providing the 'After Safari Ethnic Joy' are generated. Angel Investors back such ideas which hold the potentiality of earning a good return, income generation and recognition of local skills.

Spots like Animal Corridors & View Points and also a religious halt point namely Haldhibari Burhi Mai Mandir adds to the glory of the journey into Kaziranga. Tourists can now head towards the

tea capital of Assam-Jorhat which waits with its two most beautiful Heritage and Luxury Tea Bungalows.

Jorhat owns the title of 'Tea Capital of Assam'

Thengal Manor and Kaziranga Golf Resorts belong to the Khongiya Barooah Family, who were the known tea planters of Assam. These mansions are skilfully run by Heritage Northeast Group. Thengal Manor holds its beauty as a mansion with the colonial architecture and shares the pride of being the launch place of Assam's first ever Assamese Newspaper – Dainik Batori back in 12th August 1935. Whereas Kaziranga Golf Resort residing in a land stretched with greens beyond horizon, boasts about its prime centre of location namely-The Burra Sahib's Bungalow or the Old Bungalow and the 18 Hole Championship Golf Course which is referred amongst the unique Golf Courses of the world. This heritage sight gives a slice of the colonial lifestyle and tea gardens to the tourists. These places have been developed under the arena of Tea Tourism. Tourists are given a firsthand experience of tea testing and also tea garden visits. Tea being a known and popular beverage of the country, tourists looks forward to the journey which entails the plantation and preparation of tea as a product. These heritage bungalows from the British period are presented as Heritage cum Luxury Hotels for the tourists. The idea was to promote Tea Tourism with a luxurious stay. When in Assam, tourists like to take a puff of the Tea Environment and Jorhat seem to be a good choice from Kaziranga.

The road distance from Kaziranga to Jorhat's peak heritage locations ranges from 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours only.

The availability of transport facilities, a working tea environment, heritage mansions and British aged architecture makes Jorhat a best destination after Kaziranga. The idea of a clubbed holiday package covering both the places will bring in more tourists to both the places equally. Also, Jorhat with its Unique Selling Proposition as the Tea Capital of Assam holds the potentials of generating good business ideas and discovery of more such places as tourists' destinations. The Location Advantage of Kaziranga can be shared with Jorhat in a brilliant manner to enlighten tourists about many understated places. However, such ideas can reap returns only when they are tapped well by Idea generators & Angel investors using their efforts and risk taking capacity. Also, promotional campaigns can be planned and employed to popularise the destinations of Jorhat. ♦

*Gargi Sarma is working as Assistant Professor in the Department of M.Com at K C Das Commerce College, Guwahati. Her academic and professional interests lie in Management and Marketing. She is an avid academic having completed her Masters in Commerce, Masters in Arts (Economics), M.Phil program and pursuing her Doctoral work in advertising. Sarma has presented over 20 research papers in National & International seminars and published 10 research papers in reputed journals.*

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





# Start-Up Forum

## Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

### Sublimis Technologies Private Limited

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

**A**nticipating the impact of technology, 14 years ago, **TravelBiz Monitor** introduced an industry-first live news portal, with hourly online reporting on travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality industries. Since then, we have created a niche for ourselves by providing analytical stories and statistical information to the travel trade on a regular basis. To keep this momentum going, the Editorial team has decided to showcase new-age technology products and services every month that have the potential to disrupt the market further. Moreover, the time now is also appropriate as the on-going pandemic has further widened the scope of using technology.

For this unique initiative, TravelBiz Monitor has partnered with 'Start-up Mentor Board', a visionary platform with credentials in business, technology, e-commerce, digital market place, payment solutions and IT infrastructure, to highlight the stories of new-age technology ideas. Start-up Mentor Board has been set-up as an initiative to mentor and guide the travel technology driven start-ups and facilitate collaboration in the larger travel ecosystem.

**Website – <https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com>**

The Board is spearheaded by well-known thought leader Ashish Kumar, who is also the Co-Chairman of FICCI Travel Technology Committee. It comprises Bharti Maan, who has led start-ups to scale rapidly; Patrick Richards, an experienced travel industry leader in the UK; Chetan Kapoor, an analyst with deep understanding of the travel and tourism business and trends; Kartik Sharma, an artificial intelligence practitioner; Karthik Venkataraman, a digital transformation & an e-commerce visionary; Jure Bratkic, who led innovative solutions in the USA and Kyasha Bhoola, with expertise and advanced insight into the travel industry across Africa.

\*One can register for the SMB Program at

<https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com/form.html>

**Start-Up Name:** Sublimis Technologies Private Limited

**Core Team:** 4 Persons

**Founding year:** 2020

**Company website:** <https://www.sublimis.tech/>

**Descriptions:** Sublimis identifies the need for business continuity and growth across the Global SME & MSME network and has become the technology enabler for businesses across sectors by making them market and cost efficient through higher market reach, automation, scalability thereby increasing productivity and efficiency for clients and giving them better ROI and reducing TCO, a solution that has been missing until now.

"Brahmaand" is an end-to-end disruptive leisure travel ERP platform that makes various processes, components, services and systems come together through real-time seamless integration, giving clients the complete control to distribute, manage and automate their business across the travel and hospitality verticals.

The platform is Vertical Agnostic, Responsive, Global, Multi-Company, Distribution Channels, Source Markets, Destinations, Client Segments, Supports Multi-Lingual Requirements, borderless with Local configuration, multi currency, depending on the market and supports all Point of sale with unlimited products, suppliers, users, and clients.

The best part of the platform is that it is easily configurable and supports cherry picking as per client needs. That make this platform completely affordable and Sublimis takes over completely as technology partner, and the client can focus on their core business. Intelligent recommendations, cross selling and upselling capabilities will open new avenues to distribute your products and services to unique market segments with pre-built, dynamic, hybrid and flexible packaging.

Brahmaand can be used by anyone in Global Travel and Hospitality domain from tour operators, travel agents, OTAs, DMCs, MICE companies, cruise companies, Airlines wanting to distribute Holidays, Accommodation Companies, Attraction Companies, Car Rentals, Luxury Operators, Sports Operators, Adventure Companies, Rail Operators, Tourism Boards, Representation Companies etc.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB17GoSykfbe5kVp73oJAHg>



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