

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

# travel

# SPAN

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Look Forward  
to in the  
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Shopping  
Festival  
2022**

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in 2021  
A year of  
rebuilding  
and flying  
better

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## LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE travel SPAN

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## Maldives has welcomed 1.3 millionth tourist for the year 2021 Despite the many challenges faced this year due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

**M**aldives has welcomed 1.3 million tourist visitors for the year 2021, despite the many challenges faced this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The 1.3 millionth tourist visitor milestone was achieved on 27 December 2021, thanks in no small part to the hard work and dedication of frontline workers, government agencies and tourism industry stakeholders.

A ceremony was held at Velana International Airport to welcome the 1.3 millionth visitor, Constantin Stelian Emil, from Romania, who arrived in the Maldives via GullivAir. He was welcomed by the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/ Visit Maldives) Thoyyib Mohamed, officials from the Ministry of Tourism, Immigration and MACL. Mr Emil was conferred special gifts on behalf of MMPRC, the Ministry of Tourism, and other stakeholders. This is Mr Constantin Stelian Emil's second visit to the Maldives and he is accompanied by his spouse and two children.

Applauding this momentous achievement, the **CEO and MD Thoyyib Mohamed** noted that it is the joint effort of all tourism industry stakeholders which allowed the Maldives to ease into the new normal and achieve this and other milestones during 2021.

*"Despite all the challenges, 2021 has been a great year for the*

*Maldivian tourism sector, achieving many milestones and receiving many accolades and awards, one of which was the prestigious World Travel Awards leading destination 2021 title. Reaching 1.3 million visitors is not a small achievement considering how volatile the global tourism situation has been throughout the year. This is all thanks to the consistent and courageous efforts of all frontline workers, the government, ministries, MMPRC, other stakeholders, NGO's and associations. We have many plans for the next year and will hopefully bring in even greater achievements as we proceed."*

As the parent company responsible for marketing the Maldives as a destination abroad, MMPRC carried out over 260 different marketing activities in 24 global markets this year, including fairs, roadshows, familiarisation trips, marketing campaigns, webinars, and interviews. The greatest testament to the success of these activities came on December 16th, as the Maldives secured the title of 'World's Leading Destination' for the second consecutive year.

Next year also celebrates an exceptional year to visit the Maldives—the Golden Jubilee celebration of tourism in the Maldives, with plans to conduct new and exciting activities throughout the year. MMPRC has planned over 60 in-person events, including 17 fairs, roadshows, and events scheduled for just the first quarter of 2022

We are on    

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## TAFI Holds Year End Review Meeting of National Joint Council

**T**AFI held a year-end meeting of its National Joint Council to review the year gone by and to formulate a strategy for the year ahead. Following the physical meeting in Gujarat a couple of months ago, this meeting was held virtually via Zoom. The National MC and all the Chapter Chairmen participated in the meeting.

**TAFI President Ajay Prakash** in his opening address and briefing congratulated the Chapter Chairmen for holding regular meetings and the various sub-committees for the commendable work done over the last 6 months. He reiterated his belief that an Association derives its strength not from its leaders, but its members and exhorted the Chairs of the various committees to continue the good work and to engage regularly with the membership. He praised the efforts of the membership committee which has significantly increased the TAFI membership by almost 100 in the last few months.

The Social Media committee was lauded for the excellent outreach which has resulted in generating greater awareness about TAFI. Similarly, the Tourism and the Visa Facilitation committees have been very active and Mr Anandaveloo and the Communication Committee has done

a great job of regularly producing a fortnightly Newsletter, he said.

Mr Ajay Prakash briefed the Joint Council on the meetings he, along with other office bearers, has had recently with the Civil Aviation Minister, the Tourism Secretary, the Additional Secretary and the Addl. DG Tourism, all of whom were very receptive and took note of the issues raised by TAFI. TAFI has urged the Tourism Ministry to liberalise the rules for Ministry of Tourism (MoT) recognition as that would bring more members under the umbrella and make them eligible for assistance under the schemes of the government. This would also give the government a more accurate picture of the scope and scale of the trade since, at present, a scant 1000 travel agents/tour operators are registered with the MoT.

The pernicious issue of "Ticket Capping" by airlines has been strongly taken up at the APJC and a series of meetings have been held with VFS to streamline the visa process once airline operations resume normalcy.

Similarly, the issue of acceptance of agency credit cards by airlines remains a pain point for members who are being addressed with individual airlines. TAFI is also working on an insurance scheme to protect passengers and agents alike

in case of Airline Bankruptcy. These will be thrust areas in 2022 according to President Mr Ajay Prakash.

**Mr Abbas Moiz, National General Secretary**, said that for the first time, TAFI plans to hold its National Convention within the country and is looking for a suitable Partner State who is looking to boost tourism and will give the requisite support. J&K, Karnataka, MP, Odisha and Kerala are the shortlisted States, but other states are welcome to bid. TAFI Conventions have invariably boosted tourism numbers in the host destination and it's high time, said Abbas that we look to bolster domestic tourism which has been our mainstay for the last 21 months.

Going forward, the mood was upbeat in relation to Domestic travel and tourism within the country and optimistic about scheduled international flight operations restarting, once the reduced virulence of the Omicron variant is clinically established. A series of Fam trips within the country to bolster the "Dekho Apna Desh" initiative are scheduled for the coming months and the TAFI website is being totally revamped.

The new website will be launched in January 2022. **Titul Mehta, Chairman of the WI Chapter** described the meeting as "productive, focused and timely and reflecting the desire of the current Managing Committee to engage meaningfully with the membership."

# TAFI to take up the issue of non-refundable fares charged by some airlines, without any consideration for COVID, with DGCA



TAFI Western India held its year-end Chapter meeting on 22nd December 2021 at Glocal Junction, Worli. **Chapter Secretary, Mr Burjis Mehta** brought the members up to speed on the activities since the last meeting and talked about new developments in the aviation scenario.

Many members expressed their irritation with airlines that have made a lot of fares, including Business Class fares, totally refundable – disregarding even the claims of persons affected by COVID. The President, Mr Ajay

Prakash said that TAFI would take this up strongly with the airlines and with DGCA.

**Mr Jitul Mehta Western India Chapter Chairman** announced the study tour of the Rann Utsav at the Rann of Kutch, for TAFI WI members with full support from Gujarat Tourism. TAFI PUNE Chapter will also participate in the study tour. It would be an excellent promotion of the “Dekho Apna Desh” initiative of the MOT and State Tourism Boards.

**The President Mr Ajay Prakash, National General Secretary**

**Mr Abbas Moiz and Managing Committee Member Mr Sampat Damani attended the meeting. Mr Venktesan Dhattareyan, Regional Director (West & Central Region), India Tourism Mumbai, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India** was the keynote speaker. He shared the presentation on Recognition of Tourism Service Providers by the Ministry of Tourism (revised Guidelines w.e.f 28.11.2020) with the Members. He urged all present to apply for recognition and outlined the benefits. Mr Carl Vaz shared a presentation on Expo 2020, Dubai as TAFI is one of the Supporting Partners.

Representatives from the Airlines – Air India, Vistara, Air Asia India, Go First, Indigo and Spicejet and top Hoteliers – Taj Hotels, ITC Hotels, Marriott Hotels and Oberoi Hotels were invited and shared their views with members and had a fruitful networking session with them.

## TAFI takes up issues concerning the disruption of Air India Bookings

There's something seriously wrong at AIR INDIA! Since Wednesday, 22 December travel agents across the country have been unable to access Air India's inventory on the GDS

while the flights can be seen on the airline's website. Agents are unable to view or amend even bookings made in their own offices.

*“This is a nightmare during the festive season when most flights are full arriving into India and passengers need to connect to Domestic destinations – often requiring rescheduling, due to delays,”* said **Abbas Moiz, National General**

**Secretary TAFI**, “Our Members have been complaining about the long wait times on the call centre lines.”

Attempts to contact senior management have proved futile and salespersons have been stalling and attributing the problem to a ‘Technical Issue’ without any official announcement. Unverified sources mentioned this ‘Technical Issue’ will extend for a further 3-4 days, before a resolution is in place.

*“In the days of 5G and the IT revolution, it is very strange that a ‘Technical Issue’ can persist for 4 days without a resolution,”* said a Travel Agent requesting anonymity “It's also rather surprising that the ‘Technical Issue’ pertains only to the GDS – a tool Travel Agents use to book, rebook, issue and reissue tickets,” he added.

*“Such disruptions, coupled with zero communication to the trade further erode Air India's credibility,”* said **Ajay Prakash, TAFI President**. “It's a shame that this once glorious airline has been reduced to such a sorry state. We're all waiting for the House of Tata to take over the reins of the Airline and we hope that the new management will work more closely with their trusted trade partners – the Travel Agents who have supported the national carrier at all times,” he concluded.

# SriLankan Airlines

is committed to serving India as the Airline continues to consolidate operations to pre-COVID-19 levels



Mr Dimuthu Tennakoon (Head of worldwide sales & Distribution) with Mr Saminda Perera(Head of Marketing) and Mr V Ravindran (Regional Manager-India, Nepal & Bangladesh)

**S**riLankan Airlines has assured Indian travellers that the Airline is committed to increasing the flights to destinations that were temporarily halted due to the

pandemic, restoring operations to pre-COVID-19 levels, and offering Indian travellers a wide range of connections to Sri Lanka.

**SriLankan Airlines Chairman,**

**Ashok Pathirage**, said “India is our biggest market, and we are dedicated to re-establish operations to full scale where the Indian market is concerned. We continued to operate both passenger and cargo flights to and from India even during periods of lockdown and despite many global travel restrictions. “It is an ideal time to create awareness about SriLankan Airlines’ operations in the Indian market and build confidence among travellers to book with the Airline as lockdowns are being lifted and global travel restrictions are eased, added Mr Pathirage.

“The inflow of tourists from India to Sri Lanka has increased considerably in the last few months, with Sri Lanka being one of the first few countries to open borders and welcome fully vaccinated Indian travellers including those who have taken Covaxin. India continues to be one of Sri Lanka’s most significant source markets for international travellers, “he said.

“The Airline was able to adapt to



Chairman Ashok Pathirage, SriLankan Airlines



Chairman of SriLankan Airlines Mr Ashok Pathirage in center with other management

meet the changing needs of the industry as the pandemic raged on and played a key role in bridging countries and facilitating the movement of people and critical supplies, including between India and Sri Lanka,” stated **Richard Nuttall, Chief Commercial Officer of SriLankan Airlines.**

Accordingly, Cargo operations emerged as a key activity in the Airline’s business model, and SriLankan plans to introduce more dedicated Cargo flights to its operation.

SriLankan Airlines’ Head of Worldwide Sales and Distribution, Dimuthu Tennakoon, said that the Airline is now forging ahead with plans and investments to reestablish its presence in the Indian market.

“Recently, the Airline flew down a group of Indian media personnel for a familiarization (FAM) tour of Sri Lanka, so that they could be updated on the current environment in the country for

Indian tourists in terms of facilities to ensure a COVID-Safe holiday. He added, “Likewise, we conducted several media FAM tours including a recently concluded major FAM tour for fifty top brand influencers from India who go to experience the diverse culture and heritage of Sri Lanka, which in turn they would promote to their audiences in India. Additionally, there is a pan-India brand campaign in progress at the moment.”

When global aviation was at its lowest point, SriLankan Airlines continued to launch flights to new destinations including Nairobi; Korea; Moscow; Frankfurt; Sydney; Kathmandu; and Paris during 2020 and 2021, with more destinations in the pipeline. SriLankan Airlines’ global network expanded significantly, and all-new destinations were introduced after thorough studies of factors such as demand, frequency and response. The

new routes are indicative of the Airline’s continuous commitment to enhance its network and the travel options available to its passengers worldwide.

SriLankan currently operates out of the following Indian cities: Chennai; Tiruchirappalli; Madurai; Bangalore; Hyderabad; Trivandrum; Kochi; Delhi and Mumbai. The Airline introduced a special “buy one and get one free” offer to Indian travellers in the past four months to entice them to travel to Colombo and beyond on Sri Lankan Airlines. The offer was timed along with the Sri Lankan Government’s announcement to reopen the island to fully vaccinate Indian tourists and was very successful. Furthermore, the Airline increased its frequency of flights from and to India to bring about greater convenience and choice to Indian passengers. Currently, SriLankan Airlines operates flights from 9 cities in India with 54 weekly flights.



## 36th IATO Convention: Subhash Goyal Conferred The 'Hall Of Fame' Award

**S**ubhash Goyal, Chairman of Stic Travel Group, was conferred the 'Hall of Fame' award by the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). Goyal received the award from Bhupendrabhai Patel, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, at the recently concluded 36th annual convention of the Association.

Goyal was elected President of the IATO for 14 years and has been a member of the IATO Executive Committee for 25 years. A well-respected face of the tourism industry in the country, Goyal was the founding member of the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), the umbrella body of 10 trade associations in the tourism industry, and was its General Secretary.

As the General Secretary of FAITH, Goyal played a crucial role in setting up the India Tourism Mart (ITM) platform for promoting Incredible India and was the Chairman of the Annual B2B event for all the editions so far. A true entrepreneur, while focusing on his own business and its growth and expansion, Goyal was also at the forefront to lobby

for favourable policies, concessions and reliefs, from time to time.

In an exclusive to Travel Span Subhash Goyal said, "I feel overwhelmed with gratitude for receiving the highest honour of the Tourism Industry, the IATO's "Hall of Fame". I am indebted to all the past & present Presidents, Office Bearers and EC members who decided

to confer this honour on me." Goyal said that he will continue to do work for the industry. "My gratitude & assurance to the Tourism Industry that till my last breath, I will leave no stone unturned to make India realize its true potential as the world's greatest tourist destination thereby creating millions of jobs and also eradicating poverty through Tourism.," he said.

Recounting previous years Goyal said IATO had only 300 members when he was elected as President in 1995. He worked hard on increasing the membership base of the IATO and made it a strong association with over 1500 members during his tenure. It is also during his tenure, IATO moved to its own office premises in Delhi. It was in 1995, during his Presidentship, that the then Prime Minister of the country, PV Narasimha Rao, attended an IATO convention for the first and the last time. "That event brought tourism into the limelight in the country for the first time,". He further said that his biggest achievement as IATO President was to get the E-Tourist Visa policy announced and implemented.



**Akhshay Chandra Sirisumpan**  
Director  
TAT New Delhi



**Mr. Parag Sheth**  
Founder Chairman  
SAFGR



**Mr. Rajan Sehgal**  
President  
India Golf Travellers Association



**Mr. Anil Dev**  
President  
The Golf Pass



# Thai Golf Pass Season 5 launched in India

Thailand is the perfect holiday offering something for every one of diverse interest, every age and every budget. It offers pristine sandy beaches to lush jungles, bustling busy cities to traditional villages, mouth-watering cuisines, historic Buddhist, Thailand is truly amazing!

Amazing Thailand also has Amazing Golf facilities. Ideally, located more than 250 golf courses throughout the country, by the sea, by the mountains, by the lakes, inside the cities even beside the airports. Top-quality courses, reasonable green fees, friendly caddies. From the beach resorts in the south such as Phuket to the mountainous surroundings in the north or the bustling cities of Bangkok and Pattaya, there are golf courses to suit every preference.

To promote the Amazing Golf Experience, SLW, the leading Golf Management company had launched the first-ever loyalty program for a country in 2017. 'Thai Golf Passport was launched in India to offer Indian golfers a seamless golf experience in Thailand. Indian golfers can be a part of this Amazing reward program whenever they tee off in Amazing Thailand' said **Mr Anil Dev, Managing Director, SLW.** More than 250 quality service providers like Callaway and a number of Golf Courses, Resorts and hotels are already on board as partners. While travel business took a hit due to Covid19, we are gearing up to make

Thailand the destination of choice when travel resumes' he added.

**Khun Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi Office** commenting that "Golf is one of the important segments which we focus on and continue to promote Thailand as Indian Golfer's favourite destination. In fact, destination diversity and vast choices of golf courses throughout the country are key factors attracting the large numbers of visitors coming to play golf in Thailand. I am happy to work closely with SLW to launch "Thai Golf Pass" – Season 5 and would be more excited to see all golfers joining the programme. I would like to take this opportunity and look forward to welcoming all Indian golfers to have their first tee off in Amazing Thailand once the situation improves.

Commenting on the initiative, **Mr Chitranjan Bakhshi, Business Head, SLW Golf Holidays,** said 'Thailand is the most popular destination got golfers from India. The Thai Golf Pass, which is supported by TAT, is a brilliant scheme to reward the keen golfers to experience this destination!

During the special address, **Rtn Parag Sheth, Founder, South Asian Fellowship of Golfing Rotarians** said «SAFGR will be the biggest Golfers Club in South Asia Our members are avid travellers who travel all over the world for Golf. We regularly organize golf

events for our members. SAFGR is also organising the world's largest virtual golf tournament where 5000 participants are expected for eradication of Polio. Thailand is a great destination for them too- discover beaches, shopping, food that add to a great holiday. SAFGR has already planned to make Thailand an Annual golfing destination. We had planned a Golf Retreat in 2021 but could not go due to Covid Pandemic. The event is now planned to be held in Pattaya in March 2022 and hopes this to be an annual feature."

"Our association welcomes this move which is a program unique to India. While hotels and airlines have loyalty programs is a first of its kind where a Country has created such a program. We support all golf tourism initiatives and are sure that this will really encourage golf travel," added **Mr Rajan Sehgal, President of the Indian Golf Travel Association(IGTA).**

#### HIGHLIGHTS of the Program:

- Thai Golf Pass is the first-ever loyalty program for any country
- Unique initiative by Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi
- A seamless golf experience exclusive to Thailand
- Amazing rewards on redemption of loyalty points
- User-friendly online program
- Brings all the suppliers under one platform

# AirAsia to complete RM974.5 million rights issue

*Fundraising strategy on track to provide sufficient liquidity through 2022.*



the region by democratising financial services, providing accessibility and inclusivity, serving the underserved just like the airline does, including SMEs and start-up businesses. BigPay is now focusing on securing a bank lending licence to expand its low rate offerings.

“The Rights Issue announced today is a key component of our overall fundraising strategy supporting a strong rebound in air travel across Asean in 2022. We are gradually resuming flights in all of our key markets and look forward to returning to pre-Covid levels on many of our popular routes in the new year alongside strong vaccination rates, better testing procedures and education in all of our markets. It also shows continued strong investor confidence in our overall recovery strategy including the digital transformation which has already received overwhelming support to date through various fundraising initiatives.

“Furthermore, we have also secured approval from **Danajamin Nasional Bhd** for an 80% guaranteed loan of up to RM500 million. All of which signals strong support for our transformation strategy to become more than just an airline in the digital era.

“Importantly, with today’s announcement,

**A**irAsia Group Berhad (AAGB) has announced that it will complete its renounceable rights issue to its existing shareholders upon listing of the RCUIDS and Warrants on Friday, 31 December 2021, successfully raising RM 974.5 million and providing a strong injection to support the overall Group fundraising strategy.

**AirAsia Group CEO, Tony Fernandes** said: “After the most challenging two years in commercial aviation history, the end is finally within reach. We have survived the pandemic. We have restructured, relaunched and are now in a stronger position to recover faster.

“We have used the downtime in flying to review every aspect of our airline operations with a strict focus on cost containment and implementing an optimal network and fleet strategy to return to the skies leaner and stronger than ever in all key markets.

“We have also transformed into a digital travel and lifestyle services group which isn’t solely reliant on airfares alone, providing a more robust and resilient model for the future. ASEAN is where we have our strongest foothold with access to over 700 million people and no other brand delivers the breadth of services we do now. Over the past 18 months, we have

launched many new business ventures to meet consumer demand in the burgeoning digital economy. AAGB is now an investment company with a portfolio of synergistic travel and lifestyle businesses that leverage technology to deliver the best value at the lowest cost, supported by strong data and one of Asia’s leading brands that remains committed to serving the underserved in all that it does.

“Earlier this year our super app achieved unicorn status in under two years after it was valued at over US\$1 billion by Credit Suisse. Our fintech venture BigPay raised up to US\$100 million in financing from **SK Group** as it continues to transform fintech interconnectivity in

our fundraising strategy remains firmly on track. We have now achieved over RM 2.5 billion of fundraising, providing strong liquidity to ramp up operations through next year when we expect to be sustainable and drive shareholder value once again.

“As our digital transformation continues to gain strong momentum, we now look forward to raising fresh capital for our fast-growing super app, our regional logistics venture Teleport and engineering company, Asia Digital Engineering (ADE) in the near future.

“Our AirAsia Super App with 16 different travel and lifestyle offerings is already one of the top three online travel agencies (OTAs) in Southeast Asia and is on its way to achieving its

goal to become the super app of choice for everyone in ASEAN, with not only the best value flights and accommodation but also food, health, beauty, delivery, edu-tech, ride-hailing and more. Teleport is experiencing significant growth capitalising on the huge surge in the region’s e-commerce industry for first to last-mile deliveries and we see huge potential for ADE to become the leading aircraft maintenance provider in ASEAN.”

The Rights Issue entailed the issuance of 7-year Redeemable Convertible Unsecured Islamic Debt Securities (“RCUIDS”) with a nominal value of RM0.75 each, plus free detachable warrants, on the basis of 2 RCUIDS with 1 warrant for every 6 AAGB shares held. As a key component



of AAGB’s fund-raising initiatives, the Rights Issue will enable AAGB to support various segments of the Group, including but not limited to, working capital and other operational costs incurred due to the outbreak

of the global Covid-19 pandemic and costs required to ramp up operations to be prepared for the rebound of international travel, balanced with funding growth of the various AirAsia digital business units.



## SITE Global-India chapter appoints Barun Gupta as President

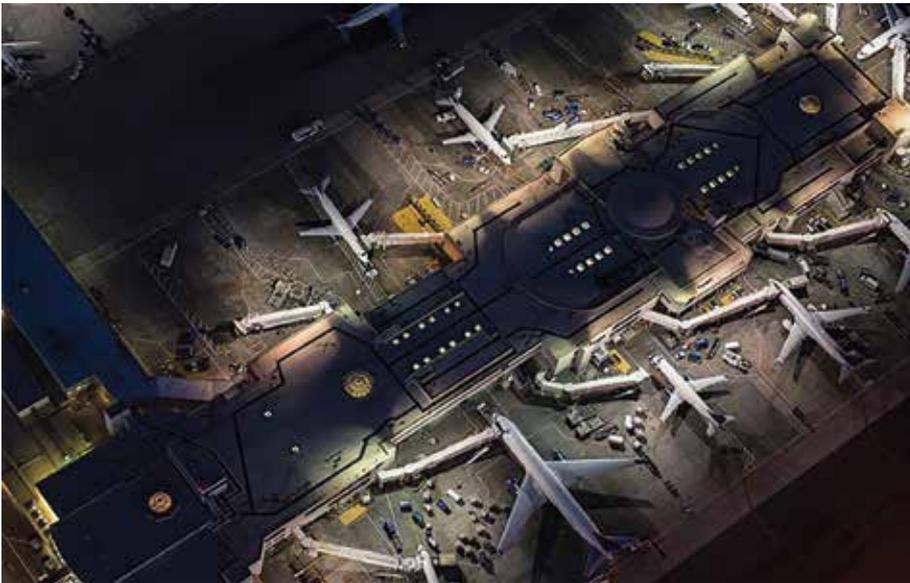
Barun will replace Nitin Sachdeva as President who has now been nominated as the SITE Global Board of Directors representing the Asia region.

**S**ociety for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), India-chapter dedicated to the incentive travel industry, has elected **Barun Gupta, Director of Sales and Marketing, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida**, as the new President for the next year (2022-2023). Barun will replace **Nitin Sachdeva** as President who has now been nominated as the SITE Global Board of Directors representing the Asia region.

Barun said, “As a leader of Site India Chapter, I will put forth my efforts to develop a community of Incentive travel specialists in India by focusing on skill development in our trade. Further, as a team together we will pivot to develop India as a source market for global incentive travel. I am also looking forward to expanding the network of Site in SAARC region and work towards adaptive recovery of the travel industry.”

# Challenges on the horizon: why the air transport industry must act now to avoid a congestion crisis

*Automation, efficiency, and simplicity to define a decade of air travel*



**E**mpty airports and grounded planes became ubiquitous scenes over the last 18 months, with COVID-19 dramatically impacting the aviation industry financially and operationally. Many pitfalls kept airports, airlines, and governments scrambling to adapt to changing passenger numbers, entry regulations, and health requirements. From social distancing measures and PCR test validation to ensuring planes were maintained effectively while out of use and pilots didn't become rusty due to inactivity – the challenges were varied and relentless.

As we finally see the graphs moving in the right direction, and as travel bubbles and pre-travel clearance forms become more familiar to passengers and staff, the industry must shift its focus forward to prevent an impending

air travel crisis. Passenger numbers are climbing globally, particularly in western Europe, the US, and India, where short-haul and domestic journeys have shown that the demand is there. It's evident passengers require a safe process and loosening of restrictions to return to the skies.

Cargo remains a silver lining, with cargo demand rising consistently and softening the financial blow with revenue expected to increase steadily. In India, Cargo revenue is expected to grow 15% YoY. This allows airlines to keep planes and pilots flying while the passenger numbers remain low.

Increasing fuel costs are exacerbating the situation for airlines as crude oil remains around USD 70 a barrel. While airlines remain cautious, replacing older aircraft with newer and more efficient ones will offset this cost

and bring an essential cut to operating expenses in the future. We see many airlines seizing an opportunity to let go of older aircraft, modernize their fleet and reduce operating costs which will benefit them in the long run and ensure a more sustainable future.

## **A slow start to recovery**

The lifting of border restrictions in many western countries has sparked splurges on short-haul vacations. European vacation destination countries like France, Spain, Turkey, and Italy see the highest flight volumes in Europe as lockdown fatigued holidaymakers take advantage of newfound freedoms.

However, the Asia Pacific region faces additional challenges without a unified regional or global approach to open travel with every country defining its own criteria for opening borders. While some countries such as Australia have done well to limit cases with good border controls, in part supported by SITA Health ETA, or Singapore, which is now looking to achieve more than 70% vaccination by end of August, quarantines and strict border restrictions remain with passenger numbers still under -90% of 2019 levels.

India is recovering fast, administering around 4.5 million per day on average, and their sizeable domestic market giving respite to the carriers. On the other hand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand face severe second or third waves. In contrast, Korea, Japan, and many other countries in the region have also seen a spike in COVID-19 cases.

There is now a growing recognition that this pandemic will be with us for a long time, and countries cannot keep borders closed for too long or risk severely damaging the economy. Travel is essential for most economies to prosper, and countries will have to have a higher risk appetite, striking a balance of acceptable case numbers while opening up borders. We do now see positive signs in this area, with countries like Singapore taking the lead. We see a close coupling with

opening measures linked to vaccination and ease of restrictions for the vaccinated population everywhere.

### Are we ready?

Data suggest that while the industry has started a slow recovery, we expect it to quickly gain pace in the coming months with rising vaccination levels. The question is now if many airports are ready to handle it. While passenger numbers will recover slowly till the flood gates are opened, new processes with additional health regulations are here to stay. Research reveals that average passenger processing and waiting times have doubled from pre-crisis peak time – reaching three hours despite travel volumes hovering at around 30% of pre-COVID-19 levels and expected to be about 5.5 hours with 75% of pre-covid levels.

Airports especially are looking at a significant challenge of managing rising and eventually recovered passenger volumes, with passengers staying in the airports longer, the following distancing and going through more processing but within the same physical space. Automation and digitization are crucial to give passengers the confidence and control back to travel and manage efficiently reduce processing times to acceptable levels ensuring passenger satisfaction.

The Asia Pacific region is a patchy situation regarding automation and digitization. Some countries are making good progress in investing in the right areas to allow seamless passenger travel and easy processes to adhere to multiple health regulations; others are lagging. The region needs to achieve ‘collective digital maturity in these areas, especially for international volumes to come back.

This is a critical time that will define the companies which will survive and thrive in this new and complex landscape. By investing in the right areas and creating an experience aligned with customers’ needs and expectations, airlines, airports, and governments can help reignite the travel market and boost economies in the process.

### Process digitization and automation

A simple and mobile-enabled process to declare health and travel credentials is key along with reducing wait times in the airport. It is essential to digitize and automate passenger processing, to ensure the same physical space can handle the recovery and passengers have control over their journey. Also, passengers should have time and energy to use the airport retail and other facilities for an enjoyable experience helping airports to survive with additional revenue streams.

Automating the passenger processing health process from submission to validation and verification – mitigates forged paper certificates and cuts inefficiencies associated with manual document checking. This, in turn, offers passengers peace of mind about meeting all requirements and gives governments the ability to automate policy applications and checks.

Being a leader in airport operation solutions SITA’s role is crucial, and we remain committed to helping the industry meet these demands with our Health Protect and Smart Path solutions allowing safer and automated border control while truly enabling ‘your face as your boarding pass’ paradigm for passengers from check-in to boarding. An example of this is how we have helped Beijing CIA airport install our Smart Path solution from check-in to boarding. The solution allows 400+ passengers to board an Airbus A380 in less than 20 minutes.

### Touchless and connected onboard experience

Another key area is the onboard passenger experience and improving passenger safety with a connected experience using the passenger’s own devices minimizing touchpoints onboard. SITA’s Passenger IT Insights 2020 showed that more than two-thirds of all passengers opt to use their own device onboard to stay connected or access entertainment. The touchless and personal device enabled experience onboard is clearly the

market demand and is fast becoming the new industry standard. Passengers now expect to be connected while using their own apps of choice and not be limited in the content available to them. SITA is helping by deploying its next-generation, fast and reliable connectivity on board to meet the growing demands and criticality of a connected experience.

### Operational efficiency

Doing more with less is the common goal for the industry now, but as traffic recovers those in the industry who have truly adjusted to leaner operations and better infrastructure will reap immediate benefits and bounce back quickly. Airports and airlines must ensure their technology infrastructure is flexible with cloud and API enabled platforms and next-gen connectivity solutions, to enable the use of next-generation common use capabilities, remote and mobile-enabled operations coupled with cost efficiency and flexible operational scalability.

SITA is helping in this area with our SITA Flex solution, an API-enabled cloud platform allowing flexible and future proof operational capability with mobile, self-service, and automated solutions on-site and off-site creating a seamless passenger flow.

For any airline, their fleet is by far their biggest capital outlay. There is an immense opportunity to leverage the connected aircraft to drive new cost efficiencies. Given the cost pressure on airlines, it is not surprising that there is a growing demand to provide solutions that help airlines to do so. In addition to more efficient newer aircraft, new systems such as tablets enabled weather monitoring applications to give pilots better visibility on weather conditions and chart better route changes leading to large fuel savings in each flight.

At SITA we remain committed to helping the industry recover and thrive and continue to bring new solutions and strategies for the industry. Our ‘Runway to Success’ website takes a deeper look at the key challenges faced by the industry.

# SriLankan Airlines reports a net Profit in December 2021, the first profitable month since the onset of the Pandemic



**S**riLankan Airlines reports a Company Profit of USD 9.25 million and a Group Profit of USD 10.66 million for December 2021, which is the first profitable month for the Airline since the onset of the Pandemic in early 2020. The revenues are up by almost 200% compared with the same period last year and have reached over 80% of the pre-pandemic level. Further, the Airline reports a profit of USD 11.43 million for December 2021 at the Air Transportation level, which is the highest recorded profit from Air Transportation in over 20 years.

“The sacrifices made by all our staff members have paved the way for a positive start for the New Year. During the past two years, we implemented multifaceted initiatives to reduce operational costs, for which each and every employee of the Sri Lankan

family contributed, and we are reaping the benefits of our efforts today. The future, however, remains extremely challenging with the spread of the new variant of the virus and we will continue to monitor the situation closely and take necessary action to ensure that the momentum achieved in December continues,” said Ashok Pathirage, Chairman of SriLankan Airlines.

SriLankan operated close to 800 flights during the month and carried a total of 228,203 passengers – in excess of 13 times the number of passengers carried in December 2020. Moreover, SriLankan uplifted a total of 7,877 metric tons of cargo, which is a 147% increase from December 2020.

SriLankan Airlines has been fraught with challenges over the past three years starting with the Easter Sunday attacks in April 2019 that

led to a decline in tourist arrivals in the immediate aftermath, followed by the onset of the pandemic in the first quarter of 2020, which is now entering into its third year.

However, as the national carrier, SriLankan Airlines rose to the occasion, by deploying resources to fly stranded Sri Lankans home from various parts of the world, including pilgrims from India and students stranded in various parts of the world including from COVID-19 stricken Wuhan in China. Since then, the Airline has not only engaged in ferrying Sri Lankans but also stepped up to assist citizens of other countries returning home. SriLankan also adapted its strategy with a renewed focus on cargo operations which was a boost for exports and air transportation of vital medical supplies, vaccinations and other commercial cargo across borders as global passenger air travel came to a virtual halt. Thus, the Airline managed to keep its fleet in operation while many other airlines grounded most of their aircraft.

Despite the difficulties of the pandemic, SriLankan has also maintained its commitment to support the national economy, bringing tourism, connecting business, carrying freight and earning foreign exchange. In the past year, SriLankan launched operations to several new destinations including Seoul; Nairobi; Moscow; Paris; and Kathmandu as the pandemic showed signs of slowing and borders gradually opened.

The new destinations were promoted through marketing initiatives in the respective markets, including by participating in international tourism trade fairs such as IFTM Top Resa in Paris and OTDYKH LEISURE in Moscow. SriLankan also became the first airline to conduct Familiarization Tours (FAM) for travel trade journalists based in Russia, France and India last year. The country’s tourist arrivals remarkably topped 44,000 in November 2021 as a result of these initiatives.

As these positive numbers ring in the New Year for Sri Lankans, the Airline hopes to continue the momentum by pressing forward with renewed energy and focus.

# Qatar Airways and China Southern Airlines Build Upon Existing Codeshare Agreement with Signing of New Memorandum of Understanding



*Latest MoU will see significant expansion of codeshare cooperation, providing greater benefits and seamless connections for passengers*

**Q**atar Airways and China Southern Airlines today signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) confirming a significant expansion of the existing codeshare agreement, and outlining greater benefits and more seamless connections between the two partners.

The comprehensive MoU signed by Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, **His Excellency Mr Akbar Al Baker, and China Southern Airlines President and Chief Executive Officer, Mr Han Wensheng**, builds upon the existing codeshare agreement signed by the airlines in December 2019.

As part of the collaboration, all future flights between China and Qatar will be code shared, allowing passengers to benefit from seamless connecting flights. The closer cooperation will also provide greater customer benefits, including increased joint lounge access and a soon-to-be confirmed enhanced frequent flyer agreement. In addition, the two airlines agreed to support the growth of Beijing's Daxing International Airport, into a leading international aviation hub

for both passenger and cargo services.

**Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Mr Akbar Al Baker**, said: *"This is the latest chapter in the story of our airline's continued journey to provide an enhanced and seamless customer experience for passengers travelling via our two hubs of Hamad International Airport, the new Beijing Daxing International Airport and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport.*

*"We look forward to further deepening our close relationship with China Southern Airlines and exploring even greater opportunities for collaboration in the years to come. Passengers can travel with confidence knowing that Qatar Airways is committed to safety, and our 5-stars COVID-19 safety rating is a testament to our efforts to remain the leading global airline for biosafety."*

**China Southern Airlines President and Chief Executive Officer, Mr Han Wensheng**, said: *"As the largest airline in China, the strategic cooperation between China Southern Airlines and Qatar Airways will provide global passengers with expanded*

*travel options and an exceptional travel experience. Our collaboration will also lay a solid foundation for the development of Beijing Daxing International Airport into a global aviation hub."*

The expanded codeshare agreement is the latest development in the Qatar Airways programme of strengthening strategic cooperation between key global airlines, which has already seen partnerships with American Airlines, JetBlue, Alaska Airlines, Oman Air and RwandaAir in recent months.

The enhanced cooperation between Qatar Airways and China Southern Airlines is subject to the lifting of current travel restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and regulatory approvals.

The national carrier of the State of Qatar continues to rebuild its network, which currently stands at over 140 destinations. With more frequencies being added to key hubs, Qatar Airways offers unrivalled connectivity to passengers, making it easy for them to change their travel dates or destination as required.

# Emirates in 2021

## A year of rebuilding and flying better

**E**mirates progressed on its recovery path in 2021, rebuilding its passenger network to 128 cities by December including a new route to Miami launched in July. At the end of 2021, all of Emirates’ 133 Boeing 777 aircraft and nearly 60 of its A380 fleet are in active service, connecting people to their loved ones and businesses to global opportunities. In addition, over 120 Emirates Lounges and partner facilities have re-opened to serve Emirates’ premium customers and frequent flyers.

**HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Emirates’ Chairman and Chief Executive** said: “Despite the recent rise of the Omicron variant and the slight slowdown it brought to our network, we are going into 2022 with optimism. We’ve built up some great momentum this year and expect business growth to pick up speed in 2022. Aviation has always been resilient, and we will continue to work with our industry partners to build back better for our customers and communities.”

**Here’s highlighting 7 ways** Emirates has helped customers fly better, and support communities and the industry in 2021:

**1. Travel ease and confidence:**

This year, Emirates extended its *generous rebooking waivers*, the expiry of frequent flyer miles and tier status, and complimentary COVID-19 medical cover for all customers. *emirates.com* remains a top reference site for the latest travel requirements, updated at least once daily with information verified by Emirates’ on-site teams across its network. Emirates also accelerated digital initiatives to provide customers with smoother and safer journeys – being the first airline to implement the *IATA Travel*



*Pass solution* across its network on six continents; expanding its biometrics and contactless touchpoints at Dubai airport, and partnering with Al Hosn app to enable quick and secure digital verification of COVID-19 travel documents.

**2. Investment and innovation:** In January, Emirates’ Premium Economy entered service to a hugely positive response. In November, it announced a *major retrofit programme* to equip 105 aircraft with Premium Economy seats and latest cabin interiors to ensure



the Emirates experience remains best-in-sky. To inspire customers as they research and rediscover travel options, Emirates launched a sky-high stunt that captured the internet's imagination featuring an Emirates cabin crew on the top of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. It also launched the first airline virtual reality app in the Oculus Store, the world's most popular VR platform, offering customers an immersive experience of what they can expect onboard.

**3. Partnerships:** Helping travellers access even more destinations, Emirates joined hands with new interline and codeshare partners – Aeromar, airBaltic, Airlink, Azul, Cemair, Garuda, Gulf Air, South African Airways, TAP Portugal; and reinforced existing strategic partnerships with Qantas and flydubai. Emirates also signed agreements and launched initiatives to support tourism to Seychelles, Maldives, Indonesia and Costa Rica.



**4. Supporting global communities:** Ensuring communities get rapid access to COVID-19 vaccines and other medical supplies, Emirates helped form the Dubai Vaccine Logistics Alliance, and signed an MoU with UNICEF to prioritise vaccine transport for the COVAX initiative which focuses on the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. By December, Emirates had transported 600 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines on its flights to over 80 destinations, one of the largest volumes globally by any airline cargo carrier. In May, it established a humanitarian airbridge to support India in its pandemic response.



An early champion of COVID-19 vaccination, Emirates ran programmes to encourage its workforce to vaccinate to protect themselves and their communities and enable a safe return to travel. In February, Emirates operated a special flight operated by fully vaccinated employees to raise awareness of the importance of vaccination and showcase the success of the UAE's vaccination drive.

**5. Sustainability:** Emirates partnered with Falcon Aircraft Recycling and Wings Craft in a pioneering project to *upcycle its first retired A380 aircraft entirely in the UAE*, reducing waste to landfill and environmental impact. It also announced at the Dubai Airshow an initiative with GE Aviation to conduct a *test flight fully powered by sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)* on its Boeing 777 aircraft. Emirates is an active member of the World Economic Forum's Clean Skies for Tomorrow coalition which supports a transition to SAF as a part of the journey towards carbon-neutral flying.

It also has various ongoing initiatives to reduce fuel burn and emissions and ensure the responsible use of resources. This includes its longstanding use of sustainable blankets made from 100% recycled plastic bottles in Economy Class, and its latest amenity kit bags which contain items made from sustainable materials like wheat straw and rice paper.

**6. Future of aviation:** Building a pipeline of commercial pilots, Emirates Flight Training Academy graduated its 50<sup>th</sup> cadet with its successful second cohort of cadets this year. In October, Emirates hosted global aviation security stakeholders at the 5<sup>th</sup> AVESEC Global Symposium to share best practices in strengthening capabilities amid pandemic challenges. Emirates also continued to support Intelak and Aviation X-lab - incubator programmes focussed on future solutions for travel and aviation.

**7. Bringing the world together at Expo Dubai:** The Expo 2020 Dubai opened in October, and visits to the global mega-event have climbed to 8 million, as people from all around the globe come together to celebrate human achievement and inspire future solutions for the world. Through various initiatives, including programmes to encourage visitation from *small and medium-sized businesses*, Emirates continues to bring the world to Dubai for the Expo. It is also showcasing future aviation technology concepts at its Emirates Pavilion.



# China's Travel & Tourism sector is set to recover by more than 60% this year, reveals WTTC

*If key measures are followed, the number of those employed in the sector could eclipse pre-pandemic levels*

New research from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reveals the recovery of China's Travel & Tourism sector has soared ahead of many major tourism markets such as France and the U.S., and ahead of the global recovery.

Before the pandemic struck, China's Travel & Tourism sector's contribution to the nation's GDP represented CNY 11.5 trillion (11.6% of the total economy).

In 2020, when the pandemic brought international travel to a grinding halt, China's Travel & Tourism sector's contribution to the national economy fell by almost 60%, representing a decrease of CNY 6.9 trillion.

However, according to the research, and based on the current rate of recovery, the sector's contribution to the country's GDP could see a year on year increase of 60.7% this year.

This growth is almost twice the global average of 30.7% and represents an annual increase of nearly CNY 2.8 trillion.

The data also reveals Travel & Tourism's contribution to the country's economy could see a further year on year rise next year of 40.4%, representing an increase of nearly CNY 3 trillion.

Domestic spending is expected to grow by 75% by the end of this year and experience a further year on year rise of more than a third (35.9%) in 2022.

However, while international spending, which is critical to the sector's recovery, is set to grow by

just 7.2% in 2021, next year when China's border is expected to reopen to major source markets around the world, it could significantly outpace domestic spending with a rise of 94.3%.

After a loss of more than 16 million jobs last year, when Travel & Tourism businesses in China and around the world suffered catastrophic losses due to severe travel restrictions and complete border closures, employment growth is set to rise by a minimal 3.6% in 2021.

However, employment growth could experience a more positive increase next year of 17.7%, reaching more than 80 million jobs in 2022, just 1.9% below pre-pandemic levels.

**Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO**, said: *"Our research clearly shows that while the global Travel & Tourism sector is beginning to recover, China's recovery is faster."*

*"Last year, the COVID-19 pandemic saw 16 million jobs lost from China's Travel & Tourism sector. But the predicted rise in both international and domestic spend next year brings a positive outlook for both jobs and GDP."*

According to the research, the sector's contribution to the country's GDP and the rise in jobs could be more positive this year and next, if five vital measures are met by governments around the world.

These measures include allowing fully vaccinated travellers to move freely, irrespective of their origin or eventual destination.

Secondly, the implementation of

digital solutions enables all travellers to easily prove their COVID status, in turn speeding up the process at borders around the world.

Thirdly, for safe international travel to fully restart, governments must recognise all vaccines authorised by WHO.

Fourthly, continued support of the COVAX/UNICEF initiative to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines around the world.

Finally, the continued implementation of enhanced health and safety protocols, which will underpin customer confidence.

**The future could be even brighter for China's Travel & Tourism sector**

If these vital measures are followed before the end of 2021, research shows the impact on the economy and jobs across China could be considerable.

The sector's contribution to GDP could rise by 71.3% (nearly CNY 3.3 trillion) by the end of this year, and a further year on year rise of 43.3% (CNY 3.4 trillion) in 2022.

Domestic spending could increase by 85.2% this year, followed by a 37.9% growth in 2022.

International spend could rise 23.6% in 2021 and could experience a substantial year on year boost of 103.2% next year.

Employment could see a 10.5% raise this year, and a year on year increase of 20.1% in 2022, which would see the number of those employed in the sector eclipse pre-pandemic levels by more than 5.5 million.



# Tourism growth in Dubai

gathers pace with  
4.88 million visitors  
between January -  
October 2021



**D**ubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) revealed that the emirate welcomed 4.88 million visitors between January - October 2021 with international visitation during October alone reaching over one million. Reflecting the rising growth momentum and stability of the industry, strong international visitation was complemented by a robust domestic tourism market, further boosting the hospitality sector resulting in 9.4 million room nights sold between January - October 2021 in comparison to 7 million room nights sold in the same period in 2019.

**HE Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism**, commented: *"Inspired by the visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai and strengthened by the success of Expo 2020 Dubai and the UAE's*

*Golden Jubilee celebrations, Dubai has been at the vanguard of the world's tourism and economic rebound, setting the tone for sustained recovery and growth.*

*"Our multi-pronged strategy to combat the pandemic and deployment of wide-ranging initiatives to increase our global competitiveness and attractiveness is a hallmark of Dubai's highly progressive public-private partnership model, which has been a cornerstone of not only what was achieved in 2021 but what will be achieved in the next critical 12 to 24-month period. Expo 2020 also provides us with a unique platform to engage with the global community as all hotels and tourism partners work closely to facilitate visits for their guests to maximise this opportunity.*

*"Through this highly energised and cohesive tourism and economic ecosystem, I am confident that Dubai will deliver on its vision of being the*

*world's leading global centre for investment, business, talent, visitation and next-generation thinking."*

Dubai's strong reputation for safe travel internationally has resulted in both domestic and international tourism growth, as seen by the improved hotel performance. In a year-to-date study in October 2021, occupancy was at almost 64%, while the length of stay showed a 12% increase from 4.1 nights to 4.6 nights. During this period, there were 24.74 million occupied rooms nights across the emirate at an average daily rate of AED384, in comparison to 15.66 million occupied room nights at an average daily rate of AED335. Room inventory is now 6% higher than in 2019.

Taking a closer look at the profile of international visitors, research showed that in the first half of 2021, Dubai visitors were balanced across genders with 52% male visitors and 48% female visitors. During this time, the



emirate also attracted a higher first-time visitor's volume, reflecting the attractiveness of the city despite the pandemic, when compared to the first half of the previous year.

**Issam Kazim, Chief Executive Officer, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing**

commented: "At Dubai's Department for Economy and Tourism, we are proud to be part of the success Dubai has achieved so far in 2021, which has been built on the vision and leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Over the last five decades, Dubai has transformed into a global tourism and business hub and through the effective citywide management of the pandemic, the city has strengthened its position as one of the safest destinations in the world. Dubai's ability to evolve and adapt, with the support of our stakeholders and partners, has been critical in ensuring that the city continues to retain its position at the forefront of the world's leading travel

*and business destinations. With our world-class infrastructure, one of the highest vaccination rates in the world and flexible working visas, Dubai is becoming the preferred business hub for conglomerates and start-ups alike. As part of our strategy, we have consistently used innovative global campaigns to further highlight the city's multi-faceted touristic appeal and reach*

*Dubai's strong reputation for safe travel internationally has resulted in both domestic and international tourism growth, as seen by the improved hotel performance.*

*our overseas markets, with the latest being Dubai Presents. This synergetic approach to showcasing Dubai's diverse offering involves the enlistment of celebrities, influencers and community personalities to create a steady stream of ambassadors and advocates to narrate Dubai's story across gastronomy, retail, tourism, leisure and events to showcase it as the best city to live, visit and work in."*

To ensure that Dubai was top-of-mind and seen as the destination of choice for 2021, DET launched an integrated global marketing campaign via 'Dubai Presents' that broadcast over 3,500 assets across 25 languages and specifically targeted audiences that were seeking international travel, had engaged with previous campaigns or were searching for Dubai on digital channels. By creating Hollywood inspired trailers with A-list actors Jessica Alba and Zac Efron, DET simultaneously highlighted the emirates' multiplicity of offerings and reinstated its profile as 'the happening city.

Dubai's ability to evolve and adapt, combined with its diversified multi-geographic approach to markets, was key in ensuring that Dubai retained its relevance and competitiveness as a global destination and creative hub. In the last year, the emirate built momentum in business tourism as Dubai gave more flexibility and options for talent to visit and stay by introducing new categories and programmes, which included the Golden Visa, the Property Investor Visa, the Entrepreneur Visa, the Retire in Dubai Visa and the Virtual Working Visa.

The focus for DET for the upcoming year is to continue to drive growth across all sectors. Initiatives will be introduced to further catalyse Expo 2020 visitor numbers, strengthen relationships with the travel trade and explore new channels to source visitors. By highlighting Dubai's versatility, DET plans to demonstrate its position as a thriving global hub for business and tourism, gastronomy, sustainability, weddings, retail and events.

# Brand USA CEO Chris Thompson's Message: A Year of Milestones and Possibilities



**W**hat an eventful year it has been. As we moved through the spring and summer and vaccines became more and more available, we once again began to reconnect in person. First domestic events came back online and gatherings such as Destinations International's Annual Convention, the U.S. Travel Association's ESTO, and Brand USA's summer board meetings provided our industry with a proverbial shot in the arm. Later, we began to meet face to face with the global travel trade and media to restart the international visitor economy and help U.S. communities and travel companies reconnect with this lucrative segment. Events like IPW and Brand USA Travel Week Europe helped maximize the impact of the re-opening of U.S. borders to vaccinated international travellers. While it will take time for a clear picture to emerge of the next normal in international travel, and the road ahead will not be a straight line, the enthusiasm is palpable among the travel industry and visitors alike.

## Pent Up Demand

The desire to visit the USA hasn't waned much during the pandemic. Throughout 2021 we continued to maintain a pulse on consumer sentiment across our top 11 source markets to extract insights to inform our own strategies, as well as those helping our partners and stakeholders to make sound decisions. While the intent to travel remained encouragingly stable throughout the year, our most recent consumer surveying completed in the last two weeks shows intent to travel near 2019 levels, with a few markets exceeding 2019 levels. Certainly, these numbers support the anecdotes we've heard from across the industry of increased airline and hotel bookings.

Recovery won't happen overnight and there will be challenges along the way. We need to practice patience and remain flexible as we all learn how to live with the virus and move from pandemic to endemic. But by continuing to deliver compelling content, we're keeping U.S. travel suppliers connected with travel media and buyers. As we're quickly restarting key partner programs, we've helped place the United States in a competitive position for a robust and sustainable recovery.

## Rebuild Consumer Confidence

While the initial border reopenings fueled an explosion of excitement, the work to rebuild the long-term foundation of inbound visitors to the USA is just beginning. Key to that foundation is consumer confidence, which has been a major focus for Brand USA over the past three months. We have been hosting dozens of global influencers to demonstrate the USA is ready and open for business. We've enhanced our communication of U.S. entry policies to provide clarity and confidence to the marketplace, all the while capitalizing on the significant goodwill created by the loosening of travel restrictions. These tasks will continue into the new year, as we begin to capitalize on renewed confidence by serving additional content and driving consumers directly to booking options.

In many markets, travel advisors are going to be essential to help travellers navigate the new travel landscape. Brand USA Global Marketplace will continue to provide the top travel trade with the resources they need to help their clients and to promote and sell U.S. destinations and travel products. We've also strengthened the marketplace with the addition of the International Pavilion, which provides foundational

resources to partners to help them re-enter international markets and allocate more of their resources directly to driving demand.

## Writing the 2022 Story

We are starting 2022 in a much better place than one year ago. Borders have reopened, and Brand USA has already begun to roll out the welcome mat once again to millions of people around the world who have been yearning to travel. Through the United Stories campaign, we will tell the mosaic of USA stories and invite visitors to come and write their own. And in the coming months, we will continue to roll out new and compelling ways for partners to participate in this recovery campaign.

As our nation's destination storyteller, we continuously look for new ways to engage our industry and communicate all that we are pursuing to grow the U.S. economy through the power of international travel. We recently launched a podcast with you in mind. Brand USA Talks Travel is a window into Brand USA, who we are, what we do, and how we do it. Five-minute episodes are published each Tuesday and feature Brand USA staff, industry veterans, campaign partners, storytelling experts, and more. Subscribe and let us know what you think!

Thank you for all we've accomplished in 2021 and for remaining optimistic about the future of our industry. While the road ahead will have its share of twists and turns, I remain confident our industry will come back even stronger than before.

Together, we are marketing the USA.

Chris Thompson  
President & CEO, Brand USA

# D The Dubai Shopping Festival



Is Back And There's  
A Little Something  
Extra For All Of You!

*Dubai Shopping Festival 2022 attractions  
Cash prizes, raffles, discounts, fireworks and a lot more are planned for Dec 15-Jan 30, 2022*



The annual Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) has revealed its line-up for its latest edition – running December 15 to January 30 – which includes concerts, outdoor markets, pop-up dining, shopping discounts, raffles and cash prizes.

DSF organisers promised “daily surprises” starting from December 27 during the festival. Also planned daily are fireworks, drone light shows and other performances.

There will be a weekend with “the largest number of musicians

performing across the city” at TunesDXB, a hip-hop festival, pop-up global brand stores and much more.

The ‘DSF 2022 Calendar of Events’ was revealed during a media showcase at Infinity des Lumières, an immersive digital art experience at The Dubai Mall.

### 'Longest-running festival'

Speaking about what to expect from DSF 2022, **Ahmed Al Khaja, CEO of Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment**, said: “[DSF] was initially launched to boost local businesses, and has now grown into the world’s longest-running, internationally acclaimed retail festival.”

He added: “Over the years, DSF has played a significant role in growing Dubai’s reputation as one of the best cities to live in, work and visit by showcasing its breadth of offer from shopping and cultural experiences to world-class dining and entertainment.

“This year, the packed calendar of DSF events not only demonstrates our ability to safely welcome visitors from across the world but supports domestic tourism and further strengthens our position as a global retail destination.

“The retail sector is strategically important to the Dubai economy and its tourism vision to attract 25 million visitors by 2025 and DSF continues to play an important role in driving that growth.”

### Opening weekend

The latest edition of DSF will kick off with an opening ceremony on December 15 featuring live performances from Emirati superstar Balqees Fathi and Egypt’s award-winning artist, Mohamed Hamaki, with tickets starting from Dh75, on sale now on Platinumlist and Dubai Calendar.

Broadcast live on MBC and Dubai One, the DSF Opening Ceremony will be “like never before” with Augmented Reality (AR) stage integrations, a Burj Khalifa light show, dancing fountains, performance artists and much more.

The DSF Opening Weekend will also include a ‘Love Actually’ festive special at Zero Gravity; Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at The Theatre in Mall of the Emirates; Aladdin at the QE2 Theatre; Opera Al Wasl and Joseph Tawadros live at Dubai Opera; Don Moen Live at the Coca-Cola Arena; The Laughter Factory; House of Gucci film screening at Cinema Akil; Fashion Week 2021 at IMG World of Adventures; and Barça The Exhibition at Dubai Festival City Mall.

### Drone show

The second edition of the DSF Drone Light Show, back by popular demand, will return to Bluewaters, The Beach opposite JBR and the newly-opened attraction Ain Dubai. Running daily at 7 pm and 9:30 pm, the “Middle East’s longest-running” Drone Light Show will be complemented by a light show on Ain Dubai.

The DSF opening will mark the start of a 47-day citywide extravaganza with hotel flash sales; immersive pop-up fashion experiences by global brands such as SHEIN; popular DSF Markets including Etisalat Market OTB in Burj Park and the DSF Market at Al Seef.

Mega raffles, unique outdoor dining experiences at Global Village, as well as the DSF opening fireworks display, brought by the Al Zarooni Group, will make a comeback at the Dubai Festival City Mall.

### Daily surprises

Shoppers will be able to explore deals and limited-time daily surprises at select locations across the city, this DSF. Revealed only 24 hours before





from December 27, the daily surprises will see participating brands covering lifestyle, sports, fashion, beauty, home and accessories offer unbeatable time-limited discounts and deals.

### Shop and play

The popular DSF Markets will also return this year with outdoor community shopping experiences for all. The free-to-attend markets can be found in various locations across the city including Al Seef, Rigga, Al Khawaneej and Global Village.

DSF's flagship alternative shopping destination Etisalat Market OTB returns to Burj Park and will feature food kiosks and concepts from some of the region's best and upcoming brands, shopping experiences from numerous local and international brands, and live entertainment for the whole family. Including dance workshops and battles, community jam sessions, game nights, stage performances and live entertainments series by local and regional artists, as well as the region's

debut 'Hello Kitty' show.

Now a cornerstone of the DSF calendar, Etisalat Market OTB will also have its very own roller skate rink and padel court that continues to re-define the shopping experience by blending retail, entertainment and unique dining concepts and supporting SMEs.

In its ninth edition, Etisalat Market OTB will build on the success of the previous year's theme of Asian Pop Culture, delivered with a new twist to celebrate popular Korean and Japanese digital content during themed weekends. Hello Kitty will make a first in the region appearance during the first weekend.

### New concepts

This DSF will also bring Ladies Homegrown Pop-Ups, a brand-new concept making its debut at various locations across the city. The Pop-Ups will complement existing shopping experiences organised by Emirati women across Dubai.

Shoppers will also be able to enjoy exceptional experiences at global brand

activations, to be announced in January 2022.

### Dh30 million to be given away

DSF daily wins, prizes and surprises will see a total of around Dh30 million given away in winnings this DSF. The Nissan Grand Raffle is giving lucky winners a chance to drive off in a Nissan Kicks, Patrol, X-TERRA or X-TRAIL on the very first day of the festival. And with 200,000 instant prizes up for grabs every day, there will be more winners than ever at this DSF.

The INFINITI Mega Raffle brings the chance to win a sleek new INFINITI QX80 and AED100,000 in cash every day.

With the DSF Mega Cash Prize Draw, one winner has the chance to get their hands on Dh750,000 if they head over to the Idealz website or mobile app. Visit to buy a 'Hashtag Hoodie' for Dh750 and enter a draw for the largest cash prize on offer, this DSF.

The Dubai Gold and Jewellery Group Raffle will give shoppers the chance to win up to a quarter kilogram of



gold every other day on purchases for every Dh500 spent on gold and diamond jewellery, pearls and watches throughout DSF.

The Dubai Shopping Malls Group said that by shopping at selected community malls, festival-goers can enter a weekly raffle for chances to win cash prizes every week worth a total of Dh1 million.

Shop at Amber participating stores this DSF, to earn double Amber points on full-priced merchandise and a chance to win 1 million Amber points when you spend more than Dh5,000 at Bloomingdales, Harvey Nichols and other participating stores during the DSF Amber Millionaire weekend from December 16-18.

For SHARE Millionaire shoppers at Mall of the Emirates, City Centre Mirdif and City Centre Deira can also take home more than just the latest designer labels for less this DSF. From December 15 to 30 January, single spends of up to Dh300 will see shoppers enter a weekly draw

by scanning receipts on the SHARE app, for a chance to become a SHARE millionaire and take home 1 million SHARE points each.

With DSF Skywards Millionaire, shop at The Dubai Mall or at Skywards everyday partner brands this DSF and for every Dh100 spent, shoppers will be entered into a weekly draw for the chance to win 1 million Skywards Miles to travel the world with Emirates.

Dubai Duty-Free Raffle is back, and for every Dh500 spent at Dubai Duty-Free shoppers are eligible to enter a raffle draw for a chance to win economy flight return tickets to their home country, hotel stays and up to Dh50,000 in cash and vouchers. The Dubai Duty-Free Raffle ends on January 28, 2022, with a draw broadcast live on Sama Dubai TV at 10:30 pm (UAE time).

### Expo 2020 Dubai

During DSF, there is a programme of entertainment taking place at Expo 2020 Dubai for residents and visitors alike, featuring National Day and

Festive Celebrations, Daily Parades, Headline Artists at Al Wasl Plaza for Expo Infinite Nights and dance and cultural performances for Expo Beats.

### Fireworks and drone light shows

Daily fireworks displays by Al Zarooni Group are a longstanding feature of DSF, and they will be back with a bang this year to provide onlookers with even more astonishing pyrotechnic spectacles from vantage points set against a backdrop of the city's unique skyline. The daily DSF Drone Show is also back with even more innovative features to provide technology-driven entertainment experiences for all.

### AR experiences

DSF visitors can also enjoy AR experiences across Dubai, by simply pointing their cameras at QR codes at DSF shopping bags across every store in the city to unlock the doors to a new world of excitement.

### Art, music and culture

Across six locations in Dubai, there will be six unique interactive art installations from international lighting artists under the newly created 'Dubai Lights' project. Festival-goers can watch out for 'City Gazing Dubai' by VOUW at DIFC Gate Avenue, a tailor-made installation based in Dubai, with a unique soundtrack and see other amazing works of art at The Pointe, La Mer and Last Exit, Al Khawaneej.

Another exciting addition to the DSF Calendar is the TunesDXB at La Mer, featuring three days of live music and entertainment at 15 locations across the city. With the main stage at La Mer, TunesDXB will present local talent, community events and concerts showcased from January 7 to 9, 2022, which also coincide with concerts by some of the Arab world's leading superstars.

### Closing weekend

Highlights are set to include a closing ceremony featuring performances from A-List Arabic and international artists, as well as closing fireworks and fountains at The Pointe.



# Dubai Shopping Festival

## Five Things to Look Forward to in the Dubai Shopping Festival 2022

**W**hen you plan a holiday, one of the first things you do is shop for the destination. However, there is one destination that requires just the bare minimum and nearly empty bags. What else would you do if you are planning to head the largest shopping extravaganza in the world?

The Dubai Shopping Festival 2022 is happening until January 29, 2022. If you are a shopaholic at heart, DSF is the place to be for you. With stunning shopping experiences, art, cultural events, family activities, and live shows, DSF is as grand as it is beautiful.

Check out some of the most glorious things you can look forward to at the Dubai Shopping Festival.

### 1) Concerts galore

The Dubai Shopping Festival is so grand this year that the lineup of the events is as mesmerizing as the event itself. If you are spending your winter holidays in Dubai, you can sway to the soulful voices of Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Arijit Singh, tap your feet away to the tunes of James Blunt, enjoy an immersive experience learning the history and trivia of the Barcelona and collecting merchandise, or catch a show of the critically-acclaimed and awarded musical Chicago live on stage at the Dubai Opera.

### 2) The Devil can Wear Prada and more!

What is the point of going to a shopping festival if you do not go



apparel shopping? Right from super-brands like Armani, Bebe, Burberry, Prada, Jack & Jones, and BOGGI to Christian Louboutin, Verri, Rodeo Drive, and Billionaire, you name it and they have more than it. From cool casuals and sexy party wear to conservative office wear and quirky Bohemian styles, there is one (or more!) for everyone. *You cannot come to Dubai and not shop for gold. Art and creativity meet purity and affordability in the DSF as scores of gold brands put up their shops. With designs varying from modern to traditional, minimalistic to chunky, DSF is a treasure trove for gold jewellery lovers.*

### 3) The splendid night markets

The Etisalat Market OTB is at its 9th edition of the DSF and is one of the most charming alternative shopping destinations in Dubai. Set up in Burj Park, Downtown Dubai. This year, dancer-choreographer and actor Robert Hoffman is opening the event with a dance workshop to culminate in a Dance Battle Finale on December 30. This year's Etisalat Market OTB has Asian pop culture as its theme, with events based on K-Pop dance and music and Squid Games series, along with the ultimate BTS day! This year's Etisalat market OTB also has Korean and Japanese beauty products, vintage chunky shoes, street, and sportswear,



etc., along with scrumptious food stops. Apparel brand SHEIN also sets up its SHEIN YOU-TOPIA pop-up that boasts of some chic global fashion trends at The Plaza, Bluewaters. With interactive photo-op backgrounds, booths that give information about a brand, and innumerable gifts, offers, and rewards, SHEIN also has an AR makeup trial experience.

### 4) Fireworks and a playhouse

The act of 'learning by doing' is at the core of this year's festivities and so DSF is setting up in the cosy Al Seef district with workshops, activities, live entertainment, and some brilliant fireworks. Transforming Al Seef into a walkable outdoor playhouse and museum, the event will have educational interactive art

installations, that visitors of any and all ages can learn, engage and explore in. Themed around the elements – Air, Water, Earth, and Fire, the zones explain the rich history and culture of the emirates. Apart from this, the event also features, Coffee Week at DSF Market and Date Week, featuring date-inspired food. By the night, the dark sky would light up with an electric show of fireworks that would go off at midnight.

The pyrotechnics would light up the Dubai sky from January 16- 30 while there would be similar stunners at select locations on New Year's Eve.

### 5) Drones make a comeback

Last year, the DSF brought in a spectacular live show of bright colours set against the coastline. Returning on popular demand, DSF brings the Drone Light Show's second edition to Bluewaters and The Beach opposite JBR. With 45 days of high-tech production, the show would be themed around the Dubai Shopping Festival and will also showcase the lovely 'Ya Salam Ya Dubai' song by Rashed Al Majed and RedOne representing a day in the life of the Emiratis from the past to the present.

The Dubai Shopping Festival has something for everyone. Head to DSF for some stunning shopping and family time. But be careful to take all precautions during these Covid times.



## Thailand's 'Nora' dance drama inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list

*Becomes the second Thai performing art to join the list, after the Khon masked dance drama was added in 2018.*

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is pleased to report that the 'Nora' form of dance theatre and improvisational singing of Southern Thailand has been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The decision made at the 16th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which is being held online from 13-18 December 2021, sees Nora become

Thailand's second inscription on the list after the 'Khon' masked dance drama was inscribed in November 2018.

Thailand joined the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO in September 2016.

Nora and Khon are among Thailand's most significant performing arts. The Department of Cultural Promotion under the Ministry of Culture in 2009 declared Khon as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage.

UNESCO's inscription of Nora on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity reads:

*"Nora is a lively and acrobatic form of dance theatre and improvisational singing from Southern Thailand. Performances normally include a long oral invocation, followed by a presentation by a lead character who dances with vigorous and elaborate movements of the legs, arms, and fingers.*

*The performances are usually based on stories about the former lives of Buddha or legendary heroes. An ensemble*

*plays highly rhythmic and fast-paced music with a traditional Southern oboe providing the melody and strong rhythms produced by drums, gongs, cymbals, and wooden clappers.*

*The main Nora performers – whether male or female – wear colourful costumes with crowns or headdresses, beads, bird-like wings tied around the waist, ornate scarves, and swan tails that give them a bird-like appearance. Performers also wear long, metallic fingernails that curl out from the fingertips.*

*Nora is a community-based practice with deep cultural and social significance for the people of Southern Thailand. Performances use regional dialects, music, and literature to reinforce cultural life and social bonds among local people.*

*Over 500 years old, Nora is performed in local community centres and at temple fairs and cultural events, and is passed on through training by masters in homes, community organisations and educational institutions."*



## micron emergence

# a yardstick for the hotel industry

*One of the more propitious notes in the month was the continued willingness of hoteliers to hold and even drive rate. ADR in the month was \$7 higher than at the same time in 2019 after being well down in 2020. This helped drive both RevPAR and TRevPAR, which were both up triple digits over 2020, though still down considerably versus 2019.*

**T**hough the materialization of new coronavirus strains vex, it turns out, the more thrown our way, the better we now appear to cope.

Just as the world was rounding the corner on the Delta variant, along came Omicron - a rowdy interloper arriving to a party all hoped was winding down. And though the intrusion was noisy at first, Omicron could potentially be more insipid than insidious.

Despite our best efforts, there is an assumption that COVID will become an endemic disease, meaning it's here in perpetuity, like the flu. That means one thing: better get used to it. If it's Omicron one day, it could be Upsilon next.

According to **Hotstats**, for the hotel industry, that means rolling with the punches - hard or soft. The dark days of 2020 are - touch wood - never coming back and as 2021 comes to a close, the year ahead appears brighter, if not bumpy.

November data revealed the unevenness. Though the pandemic continues to impact travel, much of the trends in the U.S. in the month were seasonal in nature. A typical spike in profit in October normally gives way to a drop off in November. Gross operating profit per available room came in at \$55.68, which was a large uptick over the same month a year when

GOPPAR was still in negative territory. As it is, it's still down 29.4% against November 2019.

One of the more propitious notes in the month was the continued willingness of hoteliers to hold and even drive rate. ADR in the month was \$7 higher than at the same time in 2019 after being well down in 2020. This helped drive both RevPAR and TRevPAR, which were both up triple digits over 2020, though still down considerably versus 2019.

After steady incremental growth in Europe since April, November took a turn downward as GOPPAR dropped back to €32.59, which though well above the 2020 level was still 41% down versus November 2019.

Like the U.S., Europe has been able to retain rate, which was a full €10 higher than in 2019.

On the expense side, payroll remained €12 down versus 2019 on a per-available-room basis, helping lead to a flow-through of close to 50%.

Numbers remained wobbly across Asia in November. China is a curious case: It's a region where its backend

2020 numbers outperformed 2021. After performance took a nosedive in August due to an outbreak, it's struggled to get back up. ADR remained above 2019 levels, but occupancy remained below 50%, leading to RevPAR of \$41, which was 28% lower than at the same time in 2020. Total revenue similarly was down 25% year-over-year.

The drop in revenue, despite a still lower cost base, led to GOPPAR of \$11, which was 64% lower than November 2020 and 75% lower than in November 2019.

Dubai continued to flourish as Expo 2020 rolled on. Revenue was up on the back of strong occupancy (86%) and ADR (\$264), leading to RevPAR and TRevPAR up over the same time in 2019, 41% and 21%, respectively. The bump in revenue, combined with a lower cost base, which included payroll that was \$11 lower on a per-available-room basis compared to the same time in 2019, led to GOPPAR of \$178.46, which was a gaping 522% higher than at the same time in 2022 and 54% higher than November 2019.



# Renaissance Hotels Unveils Its Latest Resort in the Island of the Gods

*Dynamic Lifestyle Brand Brings its Theatrical Design  
and Unexpected Mindset to Nusa Dua, Bali*

**R**enaissance Hotels, part of Marriott Bonvoy's portfolio of 30 extraordinary hotel brands, unveils its second property in Island of the Gods with the opening of **Renaissance Bali Nusa Dua Resort**. Perched on the hills above Nusa Dua and overlooking sprawling views of the lush green canopy and the Indian Ocean, the new resort features 310 stylish guest rooms and four thematic pools, destined to welcome travellers



to discover unexpected gems in the tropical destination.

“Nusa Dua has long been a spirited and sought-after enclave in Bali, surrounded by natural beauty, culture, and history,” said Catherine Flint, Director, Global Brand Management, Renaissance Hotels. “We are thrilled to grow our portfolio in the island, bringing our signature spin on the hotel experience to deliver an unexpected adventure through a local frame of mind.”

Drawing inspiration from the grand theatrics of traditional Balinese dances, especially the Barong Dance, the design of the Renaissance Bali Nusa Dua Resort pays homage to one of the oldest forms of performing arts of the island. The newly opened resort is an ode to the richness of Balinese culture, brought to life by the meticulous design work of P49 Deesign. Created as sacred rituals and for entertainment, traditional Balinese dance routines are

heavily influenced by nature and guests can discover these highlights in the ‘Good versus Evil’ murals and prints at R Bar, the vibrant industrial-style design at the Backstage, as well as the charming dance performance patterns adorning the backdrop of the ballroom.

The 310 guest rooms and suites are thoughtfully-designed as a tribute to the island’s heritage – with a Balinese mask pattern on the ceiling, a modern invention of the ‘Balinese dancer’s head’ gobo light, and turquoise-accented walls for a sense of calm. Featuring breathtaking views of the island, the stylish rooms are seamlessly designed, with spacious bathrooms. A homage to the natural elements of the island, decorative wall ceramics adorn the walls to enhance the look of the space, with a freestanding ivory bathtub as its centrepiece.

Anchoring the six tempting food & beverage experiences at the resort is **Backstage**, an all-day dining

restaurant offering wide selections of local and international favourites at its buffet and live stations. **Lion X** is a contemporary Chinese restaurant with innovative offerings such as Dim Sum as well as Cantonese and Sichuan cuisine with a modern twist. The authentic Indonesian restaurant, **Nusantara by Locavore**, spotlights the country’s culinary heritage with a fresh look at its regional cuisines. A pottery atelier and cooking lab by day, **Tanah Liat** transforms by evening into an arts-and-crafts inspired restaurant featuring locally sourced fresh seasonal seafood and plant-based cuisines. **Atomic 17** is the resort’s resident pool bar which serves fresh juices and smoothies as well as purist cocktail as the day progresses. Integrating the lobby and lounge, **R Bar** is where guests can relax and unwind over crafted cocktails, cold-brew coffee, and more by an expert mixologist and barista. As part of the signature

Evenings at Renaissance programming – a ritual that ushers the transition of daytime to nightfall – R Bar transforms into an elevated venue where guests and locals can mix and mingle over a full cocktail program and live music every evening.

Guests can relax at **The Spa** wellness centre with treatments inspired by the art of the Balinese healing method or keep up with their fitness regime at the 24-hour gym. Featuring four thematic pools, the main pool is located across the lobby whereas the jungle pool mimics the natural beauty that the island is renowned for – crowned in lush greenery and along a man-made waterfall. The lagoon-like jungle pool is also where **The Cove** is located, a stunning wedding venue with an aisle stretching right to the heart of the pool.

The resort offers 12,055 square feet of flexible function space to host events for any special occasion. Fully equipped with advanced audiovisual capabilities, the Grand Ballroom can accommodate up to 1,100 persons. Perfect for business meetings, the resort has five event rooms and a maximum of seven breakout rooms. Renaissance Hotels’ R.E.N. Meeting program features a dedicated event team committed to delivering seamless event experiences.

The Renaissance Navigator, the brand’s on-property neighborhood expert, is always on hand to help guests uncover the best local discoveries and the hidden gems

*“Nusa Dua has long been a spirited and sought-after enclave in Bali, surrounded by natural beauty, culture, and history,” said Catherine Flint, Director, Global Brand Management, Renaissance Hotels*

that can only be experienced in that destination. For art aficionados, **Museum Pasifika** showcases artworks about Bali, painted by different artists from all over the world. For the adventurous, **Bali Paragliding** is a great way to enjoy Nusa Dua with a bird’s eye view. Guests can discover the best that Bali has to offer at **At The Corner**, where they can find unique selections of local accessories and women’s products as well as **Jenggala**, a store selling ceramics made by local artists.

The resort also showcases the spirit of the neighbourhood through its unexpected design and local collaborations. At the resort, all Front office associates, navigators, and Rbar ambassadors are donned with outfits designed by acclaimed designer *Paul Ropp*, the iconic Bali-based fashion house, featuring bold and vibrant colours that match with the resort’s design and reflect the Balinese culture.

“We look forward to welcoming business and leisure travelers to discover the unexpected experiences in one of the most inspiring neighborhoods in Bali, as well as curating a relaxing and comfortable stay for them through our design-led spaces and excellent food & beverage experiences,” said Jeffrey Tyler, General Manager.

Situated on the southern part of Bali, Renaissance Bali Nusa Dua Resort is a short 15-minute drive away from the Ngurah Rai International Airport, providing easy access for international and domestic travelers. The resort is also within close proximity to the renowned Nusa Dua Beach for those to enjoy the sun and beach.

Renaissance Hotels participates in Marriott Bonvoy, the award-winning travel program from Marriott International. Marriott Bonvoy members will earn points for their stay at Renaissance Bali Nusa Dua Resort, and at other hotels and resorts across Marriott Bonvoy’s portfolio of 30 extraordinary brands, including all-inclusive resorts and premium home rentals, as well as through everyday purchases with co-branded credit cards. Members can redeem their points for experiences including future stays, Marriott Bonvoy Moments, or through partners for luxurious products from Marriott Bonvoy Boutiques. With the Marriott Bonvoy app, members enjoy a level of personalization and a contactless experience that allows them to travel with peace of mind.

## WTTC calls on EU governments to avoid reintroduction of severe travel restriction

**J**ulia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO, joined other EU Travel & Tourism stakeholders in urging EU governments against reintroducing damaging and

ineffective travel restrictions.

“Putting travel bans in place is illogical. Fully vaccinated travellers should be able to move around freely. “The World Health Organisation says closing borders

does not work. Omicron is already well established throughout Europe. This is an act of political one-upmanship decided by people whose livelihoods do not depend on Travel & Tourism.”



# Hilton Achieves Landmark 400th Opening in China, Underscoring a Year of Achievements

*With the opening of Hilton Lanzhou City Center, Hilton demonstrates ongoing growth momentum and commitment to exceptional hospitality in China*

Leading international hospitality management company, Hilton has celebrated a new milestone in China with the opening of its 400th hotel in the country — Hilton Lanzhou City Center. The opening marks the first hotel under Hilton Hotels & Resorts in Gansu Province and signals a positive growth momentum for the company amidst a challenging year to continue the rapid expansion of its extensive presence in the market.

Located in the city's central business district and shopping area, Hilton Lanzhou City Center will provide both business and leisure travellers with direct access to the heart of Gansu's capital and key economic hub. The hotel offers a modern, professional, and high-end venue for conferences, exhibitions, and business meetings, while also injecting new vitality into the development of the city's tourism and business sector. As a Hilton property, Hilton Lanzhou City Center will feature services such as Hilton CleanStay to ensure guest health and safety in the wake of the pandemic, as well as Hilton Honors, the award-winning guest-loyalty program for Hilton's 18 unique hotel brands.

"This is a momentous milestone for Hilton's growth trajectory in the Asia Pacific as we continue our stellar run as the fastest-growing global hospitality company in the region," said Alan Watts, president, Hilton Asia Pacific. "As one of our strategic growth markets, we have continued to invest heavily in China, launching several noteworthy initiatives including our large-scale franchise

model in China, the introduction of our extended stay brand Home2 by Hilton, and multiple strategic partnerships to grow our brands and presence. Despite the numerous disruptions caused by the pandemic, we have remained steadfast on our commitment to deliver exceptional experiences to guests and to optimize our offerings for partners and owners."

## **A Year of Continued Growth in China**

In another year that remained operationally challenging, Hilton pivoted towards recovery trends to cater to evolving industry needs with new accommodation options and services. These include:

- **The launch of the large-scale franchise model with Hilton Garden Inn:**

With focused-service hotels representing the fastest-growing hospitality sector in China, Hilton introduced its large-scale franchising model to the country, starting with its award-winning focused-service brand, Hilton Garden Inn.

- **The introduction of extended stay accommodation options:**

Hilton introduced the extended-stay sector with the brand introduction of Home2 Suites by Hilton, which made its debut in China this month in partnership with Funyard. As one of Hilton's fastest-growing and award-winning brands, Home2 Suites by Hilton provides travellers with home-like amenities via the concept of "Travel + Living"

- **Providing guests with high quality, thoughtfully designed accommodations and amenities,**

**Hampton by Hilton:** Celebrating its 200th hotel opening in China in September, demonstrating strong growth since its launch in the country almost seven years ago, with more than 600 properties currently in development.

- **Elevating the levels of luxury hospitality across tier-one cities in China with established partners:**

Working closely together with esteemed partners Shimao Group, come January 2022, guests seeking authentic and inspiring hospitality can look forward to the addition of the first Conrad hotel in Shanghai, as well as Zhuhai and Wuhan in the coming years. Under the same partnership, Waldorf Astoria will mark a new tier-one city debut with the opening of Waldorf Astoria Shenzhen — providing luxury stay options in mature markets.

"Throughout the past year, our team in China has moved from strength to strength, demonstrating the resilience and potential of both our people at Hilton and the China market," said Qian Jin, president, Hilton Greater China and Mongolia. "Hilton remains committed to contributing to the sustainable development of China's travel and tourism industry, winning together with our partners, and providing more choices for our guests — evidenced today by the opening of Hilton Lanzhou City Center. We are thrilled to celebrate this 400th hotel milestone in Lanzhou, and we look forward to making further progress towards our ambitious goal of opening 1,000 hotels in China by 2025."



# Furaveri Maldives

presents Coastal Breeze

*A set of curated experiences & promotions for the festive season*

*19th December 2021 - 7th January 2022*

**B**ringing in the festive season and offering an inclusive experience to its guests, Furaveri Maldives presents 'Coastal Breeze' – a calendar of curated, handpicked experiences for guests. Furaveri Maldives is a premium resort property spread over the tropical

23-hectare natural and un-reclaimed island situated in the exotic Raa Atoll in the Maldives.

Coastal Breeze comprises of a set of adventure, leisure, cultural & culinary activities that has been curated by Furaveri for the guests who will be staying with them from 19<sup>th</sup> December to 7<sup>th</sup> January. The idea is to make the Christmas & New Year celebration for the guests special and spoil them with immersive experiences. The management has created a calendar with new activities listed for each day for every age group.

Every day from the 19<sup>th</sup> December to 7<sup>th</sup> January, there will be new promotions in cocktails, food, watersports, music, games & leisure activities. In F&B, Furaveri has planned very interesting concepts like Taco

night, Meat Teppanyaki night, Full moon beach BBQ dinner, Sangria & Seafood Tapas promotion, traditional Maldivian dinner, Maragrita promotion – the list is endless. There are also activities like sunset yoga, violin performance, cinema under the stars, Maldivian cultural show, Karaoke, etc.

For example, for Christmas the Coastal Breeze calendar will have a special 'Around the World Christmas Brunch' at Jaffaiy and 5-course Thai dinner menu at Raiyvilla for the foodies. For children, there will be a fun Kids disco & Santa's visit at kids club. For those in some mood of adventure, there is Snorkelling Safari while those who just want to relax & enjoy a drink can enjoy the Sundowner cocktails. From morning 7 to midnight, there will be activities, sessions & culinary

*The management has created a calendar with new activities listed for each day for every age group*

offerings across the resort. There are also special events planned for Christmas & New Year around music, food, and adventure.

For kids, Coastal Breeze calendar has many set of activities at the kids club which includes fun activities like Balloon fight, kids disco, Christmas tree decoration, puzzle contest, mask making, crab race, Tug of war, Mini Yoga, Paper flower making, Origami,

Football, Island discovery and many others. The highlight is definitely the fashion show on 1<sup>st</sup> January

"Coastal Breeze is an attempt to create an immersive experience for all our guests and to make this holiday season memorable. We have curated unique promotions across bar, cuisine, music, sports, adventure, culture and it changes everyday. With this, we are hopeful that more & more guests will choose to stay with Furaveri this festive season. Maldives is a hassle-free destination with visa on arrival and direct flights from many Indian cities. We look forward to hosting guests from India and have them create memories with our Coastal Breeze calendar" says Mr Ali Shiyad, **Senior Sales & Marketing Manager, Furaveri Resort, Maldives.**



# Where to Travel This Year According to Your Zodiac Sign

Is your next getaway written in the stars? If you love to consult your horoscope for career and relationship advice, it can also be your guide when planning a trip. Each of the 12 zodiac signs belongs to one of four elements — Air, Fire, Water, and Earth — and they can tell you a lot about your vacation personality.

To learn more about where to travel based on the four elements of the zodiac, Here is what Maya White, an astrologer who is also certified in AstroCartoGraphy and astrological mapping has to share. AstroCartoGraphy is a branch of astrology that shows people where they should live and travel to, based on the planets' positioning when they were born. So, if you're trying to decide between a relaxing beach week, big-city excursion or rejuvenating nature trip, let White and your zodiac sign guide you to the ultimate getaway.

## Earth (Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn)

“Earth signs are grounded people who relish quiet moments when they can truly connect with the soul of a place,” White says. “Beautiful and majestic surroundings help them feel better inside and deepen their appreciation for all of life. A day spent in nature followed by a gourmet meal helps the Earth sign traveller feel right at home in any location.”

Escape to *Hilton Sedona Resort at Bell Rock*, which is set amidst the beauty of magnificent red rock formations. Foodies can get acquainted with the region's rich flavours at *ShadowRock Tap + Table* or sip a prickly pear margarita while lounging poolside or around the fire pits in the outdoor garden porch. The allure of Arizona's high desert



promises an unforgettable journey of discovery and recovery, as Sedona is considered the “Spiritual Mecca of the Southwest” with unique energy believed to come from red rocks, evergreens, and spectacular trails. Head to the spa to try the new Sedona Energy Vortex Treatment, which features a variety of energy therapies

used to emanate sacred and powerful cosmic forces to heal body and soul.

It doesn't get much more verdant than Ireland — its nickname is “The Emerald Isle,” after all. To plan a trip that's filled with both nature and city adventures, book a stay at *Hilton Garden Inn Dublin Custom House*, which is within walking distance from the Temple Bar neighbourhood and O'Connell Street. From there, you can take day trips to see the fishing village Howth, the forests and lakes of Glendalough, and the bustling Belfast.

## Water (Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces)

“Water signs are highly sensitive to their environment, and they tune into subtleties that other people miss,” White says. “Because of this, they appreciate kindness and the extra attention that staff members at hotels like Hilton provide to all guests. A



destination that is situated on or near water, whether beachfront or lakeside, is perfect for the Water sign traveller.”

Portland, Maine is one of the coolest cities in New England, and *Canopy by Hilton Portland Waterfront* is a neighbourhood-centric hotel that features gorgeous views and local artwork. Explore the waterfront on a Canopy bike or ask a Canopy enthusiast for recommendations on the best shops, restaurants, and galleries in the area. In the evening, check out *Luna Rooftop Bar* to catch the sunset while sipping a signature cocktail and sampling delicious snacks like raw oysters and lobster toast.

If you’re looking for a warmer getaway, Miami has it all — including stunning beaches, a world-class culinary scene, art museums and galleries, and exceptional nightlife. *The Gabriel Miami South Beach, Curio Collection by Hilton* is at the centre of the action on Ocean Drive, Miami Beach’s most iconic street. Take a dip in the glass-bottom pool, indulge in Italian fare at Mia, and have a seat at Dalia’s glamorous horseshoe bar and sip a Passionate in Every Way, made with vodka, apricot jam, and passion fruit.

### Air (Gemini, Libra and Aquarius)

“Air signs thrive on the conversation with a true exchange of ideas,”

White says. “The right destination for an Air sign offers a learning environment with opportunity for social exchange. Although they are natural communicators, there also comes a time in the day when they want to unwind and set their mind at ease.”

History, culture, and a fabulous food and beverage scene come together in the nation’s capital, so it’s the perfect place for an Air sign to nourish both their cerebral and celebratory sides. *Embassy Suites by Hilton Washington DC Georgetown* is close to all the action, meaning national monuments, memorials, museums and excellent restaurants are all within three miles.

If you prefer a beachside locale, *Hilton Cancun, an All-Inclusive Resort* is set on a secluded stretch of Mayan coastline. The property features 12 elevated food and beverage options, and there are plenty of opportunities to socialize with other guests during nightly entertainment like themed parties and multi-sensory tasting experiences. Enjoy a group yoga class at the fitness centre, and take in the sea breeze while relaxing at the two oceanfront pools.

### Fire (Aries, Leo and Sagittarius)

“Fire signs are creative, and they thrive on inspiration,” White says. “Artistry fuels their passion for life, and nothing excites them more than



pageantry and a good show. They are quick to act and yearn to explore uncharted worlds. Life often rewards them with unexpected treasures. Destinations that ignite their vitality will make for a memorable trip for both Fire signs and their travel companions.”

*Highline Vail – a DoubleTree by Hilton* puts the best of Colorado’s most charming ski town in reach. Hop into “The Lift,” the resort’s door-to-mountain shuttle, for courtesy service to three lift access points in Vail Village. Fire signs will find plenty to do based on their personality — from enjoying a relaxing massage in one of the hotel’s five treatment rooms to checking out Vail’s vibrant bar and restaurant scene. Socialize with your travel companions and other guests over shared plates at on-site Pivot 62 or in front of the patio fireplace.

As the first completely new resort to open on the Las Vegas Strip in a decade, *Las Vegas Hilton at Resorts World* provides stylish accommodations and smart, elevated amenities in “The Entertainment Capital of the World” — where Fire signs can enjoy world-class dining, entertainment, nightlife and more. The hotel is part of the recently opened *Resorts World Las Vegas*, which integrates three of Hilton’s premium brands into a resort campus that boasts a stunning design, progressive technology and world-class guest service.



# Hilton Luxury Hot List

Global Properties  
to Debut in  
**2022**

*Waldorf Astoria and Conrad boast eight marquee openings next year; LXR expands development pipeline with new Middle East signings*



**Waldorf Astoria Kuwait**  
(spring 2022)

**H**ilton's iconic luxury brands will continue an impressive momentum of global growth in 2022 with nearly 10 openings and new signings slated across *Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts*, *LXR Hotels & Resorts*, and *Conrad Hotels & Resorts*. This follows eight openings in 2021 across global leisure destinations including Las Vegas, southern California, Kyoto, Seattle and the Seychelles.

"The continued growth of Hilton's luxury category is a testament to the trust and confidence our guests and development partners have in Waldorf Astoria, LXR and Conrad," said Matt Schuyler, Hilton's chief brand officer. "I'm thrilled to see our Waldorf Astoria portfolio expanding into new markets in Mexico and the Middle East as well as Conrad's growing footprint within the Americas and Europe."

Dino Michael, senior vice president and global category head, Hilton Luxury Brands, added, "I cannot wait

to extend our intuitive and bespoke service, unparalleled experiences and world-class culinary offerings to guests traveling to these dynamic destinations in 2022. And while we welcome guests to these new Waldorf Astoria and Conrad properties next year, the continued growth of our LXR pipeline will ensure an exciting future for the brand as we build a collection of truly unique and independent hotels for the sophisticated and adventurous traveler."

Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts continues to solidify its presence in both key domestic and international markets in the new year. Travelers will soon be able to experience the brand's elegant yet effortless luxury at two new properties:

**Waldorf Astoria Kuwait (spring 2022):** Located within The Avenues, Kuwait's largest retail, entertainment and lifestyle destination, the

prestigious Waldorf Astoria Kuwait will feature 200 contemporary, spacious, and sun-drenched deluxe rooms and suites with panoramic views of the glittering Kuwait City skyline. Guests will enjoy a transformative journey of the senses at this ultra-luxurious property, from world-class dining venues, including the highly-anticipated Japanese restaurant concept, ROKA Kuwait, to the awe-inspiring 13,560 square foot Waldorf Spa. The hotel's exclusive Club Lounge redefines luxury, combining intimacy and comfort with bespoke service. Meanwhile, beautiful meeting and event spaces — including a spectacular Grand Ballroom — provide idyllic venues for unforgettable celebrations or tailored corporate events.

**Waldorf Astoria Cancun (fall 2022):** Set on 100 acres of secluded coastline, Waldorf Astoria Cancun will be a beachfront oasis where travelers



**Conrad Tulum  
Riviera Maya  
(January 2022)**

## HOSPITALITY

can find a rich Mexican heritage combined with Waldorf Astoria's elegant hospitality and unforgettable experiences. The hotel will offer stunning ocean views from its 150 suites, the Waldorf Astoria Spa which integrates Mexican healing traditions, and five restaurants and bars which will provide local cuisine flavors.

Conrad Hotels & Resorts, which currently hosts the majority of its portfolio in the Asia Pacific region, is gaining traction within the Americas and Europe, opening six new hotels in 2022:

**Conrad Tulum Riviera Maya (January 2022):** Nestled among verdant tropical vegetation, overlooking the Caribbean Sea's turquoise waters,

the new-build Conrad Tulum will be Conrad Hotels & Resorts' first hotel in Quintana Roo on the eastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, set to debut in January 2022. The property will provide a secluded haven for travelers featuring a design aesthetic inspired by Tulum's lush landscape, picturesque beaches, and surrounding nature reserves.

**Conrad Shanghai (January 2022):** A prime example of a true luxury conversion, Conrad Shanghai will be the first hotel under the luxury brand in Shanghai and Hilton's largest Conrad hotel in Asia with more than 700 rooms, expanding Hilton's luxury footprint in one of the major gateway cities of China. Targeted to open in January 2022, the hotel is located at

People Square, the most renowned tourism and business district of Shanghai which is also in close proximity to various tourist destinations and commercial centers, as well as office buildings.

**Conrad Los Angeles (spring 2022):** Making its debut as Conrad Hotels & Resorts' first California hotel, Conrad Los Angeles will open its doors next spring as part of *The Grand LA*, Los Angeles' newest dynamic destination for shopping, dining and entertainment. Designed by legendary architect Frank Gehry with world-renowned interior design from Tara Bernerd & Partners, the 305-room luxury hotel will feature an interior design aesthetic inspired by Gehry's



Conrad Shanghai  
(January 2022)



*Conrad Los Angeles  
(spring 2022)*

captivating architecture mixed with the West Coast Modernist movement. The property will feature bold and contemporary rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows; locally inspired culinary experiences; an elevated indoor/outdoor lobby; a rejuvenating spa; a private pool deck offering views of downtown, and much more. Perfectly situated among some of the city's most prominent cultural venues including Walt Disney Concert Hall, Grand Park and The Broad, the property will serve as a true destination within a destination.

**Conrad Chia Laguna Sardinia (spring 2022):** Debuting in spring 2022, Conrad Chia Laguna Sardinia will be a family-friendly resort inspired by Sardinia's local history and culture. The hotel will undergo an extensive renovation that will update and enhance all guest rooms, common areas, restaurants and bars to be in line with Conrad's refined, yet contemporary brand aesthetic. The refurbishment will pay homage to Sardinia with each space featuring its own distinct design while remaining connected through the use of natural materials and colours. Guests in 2022 will be the first to



*Conrad Chia  
Laguna Sardinia  
(spring 2022)*



**Conrad Nashville  
(spring 2022)**

experience the new luxury property that will feature multiple dining destinations that celebrate the local cuisine, serene pool, and chic spa.

**Conrad Nashville (spring 2022):**

Ideally situated in the heart of Music City, Conrad Nashville gracefully blends urban sophistication with refined elegance to create a luxe retreat within the bustle of the city. Pairing Southern hospitality with a new era of modern luxury, the hotel is part of the new Broadwest development, steps away from the city’s best restaurants, shopping, entertainment, music, and sports venues. Designed by Champalimaud Design, Conrad Nashville caters to guests through its design, culinary and artistic offerings which include the locally-inspired mainstay restaurant led by a celebrity chef, stylish lobby bar with classic cocktails and afternoon tea, rooftop pool terrace and bar, and wellness center. The 13-story glass building is comprised of 234 spacious guest rooms and suites, complete with floor-

to-ceiling windows that offer incredible views of the city and in-room soak tubs with Byredo bathroom amenities for utmost relaxation. The property also features over 11,000 square feet of multi-purpose space for social gatherings and meetings.

**Conrad Rabat Arzana (fall 2022):**

Conrad’s first Morocco property, Conrad Rabat Arzana, will make its debut in fall 2022 located near the capital of Morocco, Rabat’s town center. The new hotel will be part of the exclusive and new Arzana development and will feature 120 guest rooms with ocean views from its elevated waterfront location overlooking a tranquil lagoon and beach. Guests will be able to experience breathtaking surroundings while enjoying locally-inspired food and beverage at two unique restaurants offering all-day dining and specialty cuisine, in addition to the lobby bar and pool lounge available for refreshing drinks day and night. The hotel will also offer a fully-appointed spa and salon as well as 600+ square meters of events

space comprised of a grand ballroom and four meeting rooms.

Hilton’s newest luxury brand, LXR Hotels & Resorts, experienced impressive global growth, more than doubling the collection’s portfolio in 2021 with landmark openings including Oceana Santa Monica, Crockfords Las Vegas at Resorts World, Mango House Seychelles, ROKU Kyoto and Hotel 1000 in Seattle just within the last year. LXR will look to expand the collection’s Middle East footprint in 2022 with several soon-to-be-announced signings in the region as well as the most recently announced urban boutique resort located in Diriyah Gate Development Authority’s Wadi Hanifah masterplan, representing the brand’s debut in Saudi Arabia. This captivatingly intimate retreat, nestled in the historic Wadi Hanifah, will feature 80 immaculately designed guest rooms and enchanting villas, offering guests a lush escape of tranquillity and relaxation for those looking to explore beyond the vibrant Diriyah town.



## Marriott International Signs Agreement with Melco Resorts & Entertainment to Bring Macau's First W Hotel

**M**arriott International, Inc. has announced that it has signed an agreement with Melco Resorts & Entertainment to bring the W Hotels Worldwide brand to Macau. Scheduled to open in December 2022,

**W Macau - Studio City** is expected to become an iconic addition to the world-class leisure destination through its detail-driven, unexpected design, signature Whatever/Whenever® service, and innovative programming.

*“Macau’s super-charged energy and unique identity as an entertainment hub, together with its mix of Eastern and Western culture, makes it a natural fit for W Hotels,”* said **Henry Lee, President, Greater China, Marriott International.** *“In line with Marriott International’s “Brand + Destination” development strategy, we are excited to work together with Melco Resorts & Entertainment to introduce W Macau - Studio City and bring the brand’s luxury lifestyle to Macau.”*

Situated in the heart of Cotai, W Macau - Studio City will serve as the buzzing centerpiece for Studio City Phase 2, a multi-complex development that includes indoor and outdoor water parks, cineplexes and state-of-the-art MICE facilities. W Macau - Studio City expects to feature 557 guestrooms, including 127 suites and wellness facilities, a spa, a fitness centre, and an indoor swimming pool. The hotel is also set to include two destination dining venues – one featuring international cuisine with an Asian twist and another with the finest Chinese and Portuguese dishes. Set to be a first in the Greater China region, W Macau – Studio City is slated to feature a W Sound Suite, the brand’s signature, on-site recording studio as well as a WOOBAR where guests can connect. Additionally, the new hotel will offer 1,100 square meters of event and meeting space.

**Mr David Sisk, Chief Operating Officer – Macau Resort of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said,** *“Melco is thrilled to welcome W Hotels to Studio City and Macau. W Hotels is without a doubt one of the world’s most iconic luxury lifestyle brands, and we expect the hotel to elevate Studio City’s hospitality offerings to a new level. Together we look forward to bringing new experiences to our guests and further strengthening Macau’s proposition as a world-class leisure destination.”*

Marriott International currently operates nine properties and residences under the W Hotels brand across Greater China. W Macau – Studio City is anticipated to mark the brand’s tenth property in Greater China.



# Meliá Hotels International

- the most sustainable hotel company in Spain and Europe for the third consecutive year



The Spanish hotel group is also ranked second in the world by S&P Global, the sustainable investment agency that evaluates companies in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.

**M**eliá Hotels International has once again been recognised as a leader in sustainability in the hotel industry, announced by **The S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA)**. Despite the profound impact of the pandemic on the travel industry, Spain's largest hotel company has continued to strengthen its commitment to help combat climate change and preserve the future of travel destinations.

CSA is the most comprehensive assessment in the world of the performance in the sustainability of

more than 10,000 companies across all industries. In 2019 and 2020, Meliá ranked first in the global hotel industry, and in 2021 the hotel group maintains its leadership in Europe and Spain. The hotel group specifically is amongst the leading companies in the world in the Governance and Economic dimension, once again achieving the top score in terms of Climate Strategy.

*"With a global presence on four continents, we are committed to working towards a new sustainable and responsible hospitality model, increasing the contribution of the industry to society and helping protect the planet."*

We are very proud that Meliá is the brand that is leading this transformation and that we are seen as a benchmark for sustainability in the world, given that this will be key to the tourism of the future", said **Gabriel Escarrer, Vice Chairman and CEO of Meliá Hotels International**.

### Leader in the Environmental dimension

As part of its environmental commitment, Meliá is making steady progress towards decarbonising hotels as a strategic priority. In 2015 the hotel group signed up to the

commitments defined at the COP21 in Paris, updating them after the Katowice summit to limit the average increase in global temperature to less than 1.5°. Meliá is working at many levels to help achieve this, such as designing and constructing more efficient and sustainable hotels, as well as carrying out several projects to reduce its carbon footprint.

Over the last five years, Meliá invested €25million to implement sustainable criteria, including the development of the CO2PERATE project to improve energy and water management in hotels, through the use of artificial intelligence, as well as increasing its purchases of clean energy. Currently, 61% of the Meliá's properties use renewable energy sources - 100% in Spain, France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Meliá is also involved in waste management – in 2018 it created

a roadmap to eliminate single-use plastics, and it is currently participating in a pilot project to create a circular hotel economy in Mallorca, which transforms organic waste into compost, to then be donated to local farmers and later buy produce from them. To reduce food waste, Meliá is using technologies such as Leanpath, which allows the registration and monitoring of organic waste, and adopts measures to reduce food waste by up to 30%.

**Positioning in the Social and Governance dimensions**

The S&P Global assessment also includes other criteria which evaluate Meliá's performance in the social dimension and governance and economic dimension. The economic dimension has made the most progress thanks to greater transparency and rigour in good governance, and the ESG risk management - amongst others - is

becoming one of the companies with the best practices in this area.

Meliá also performs well in human capital management, where it has continued to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion. One of the highlights in this area is its participation in Closingap, a cluster of Spanish companies formed in 2018 to provide greater visibility for the contribution of economic and social value made by women. Equally notable is its recent partnership with the "CEO for diversity" project, supported by the CEOE Foundation and the Adecco Foundation. This campaign, #CEOPorLaDiversidad, calls for further diversity, equality and inclusion strategies in all Spanish companies, starting with the CEO. The CEOs involved aim to champion these causes and create visible change within their companies, becoming ambassadors for the business sector in Spain.

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# The Leela Gandhinagar launches Diya, the uber-luxury dining space

*The speciality Indian restaurant serves a delicately crafted medley of flavours ranging from kebabs and curries to local vegetarian delicacies.*

The Leela Gandhinagar opened the doors of their speciality Indian restaurant- Diya, offering a mélange of authentic handpicked ingredients that represents a distinctive culinary trail from ancient to modern India created by a talented Indian Master Chef at the helm.

The cuisine at Diya embodies a mélange of authentic handpicked ingredients that represents a distinctive culinary trail from ancient to modern India created by Master Chef Mohammad Javed, also known

as the Master of Spices, at the helm. Diya offers a wide variety of vegetarian options, including many delectable treats from the Northwest Frontier cuisine, to indulge in.

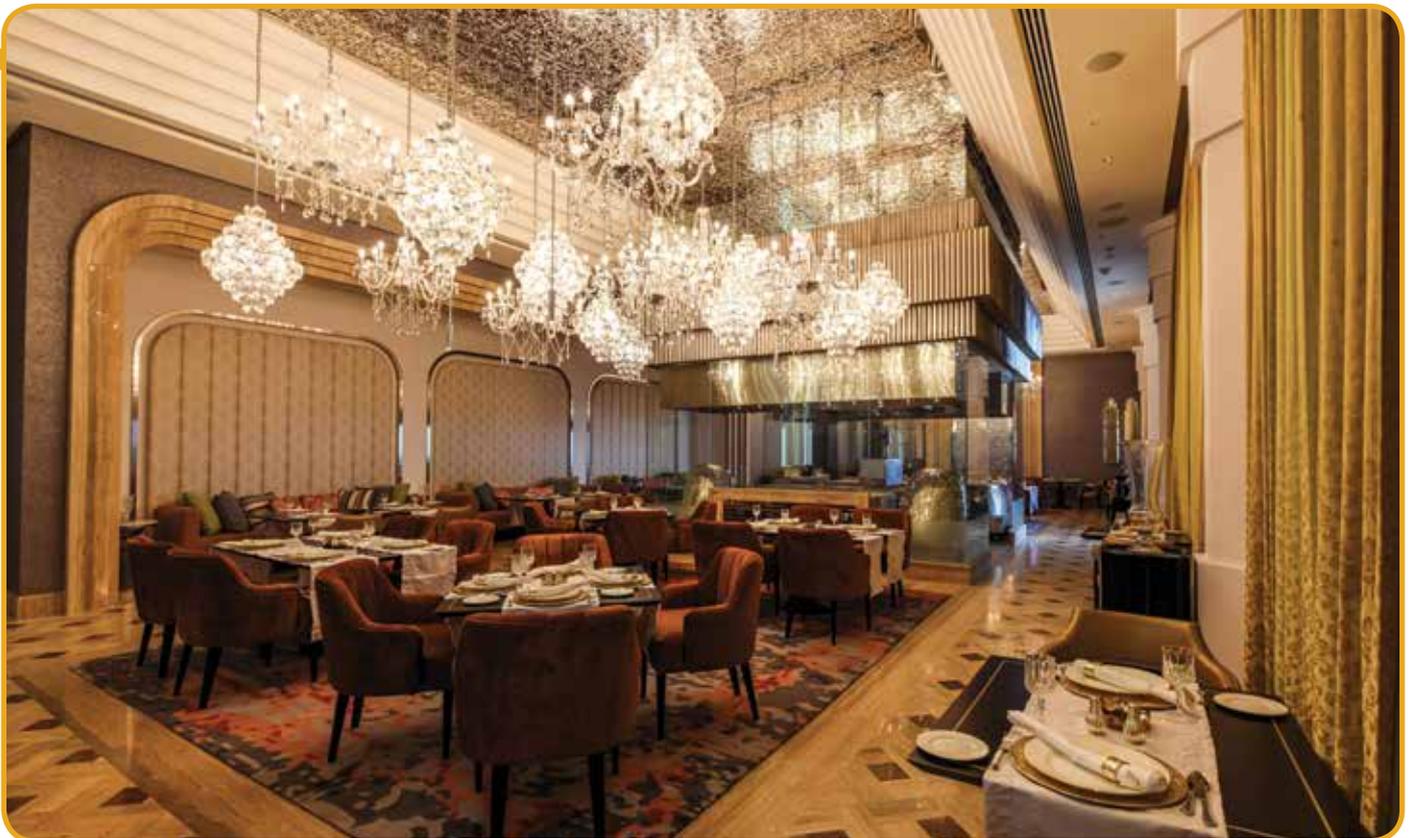
Diya represents a stimulating sense of curiosity created by an interesting play of light on the carved contours of the silver metallic ceiling. The interiors of the Diya are elegantly anointed with champagne gold paisley brocade walls, juxtaposition with beautiful Venetian mirrors and artwork showcasing the archaeological grandeur of Gujarat.

The private dining space in Diya is

exclusively designed to create a myriad of memories along the lines of the artisan who has painstakingly stitched together the mosaic patterns in the 'thikri' designed walls. The handcrafted silver metallic ceiling compliments the contemporary chandeliers and makes dining at Diya a magical experience.

"Culinary excellence is an integral part of The Leela experience. Diya is the jewel of The Leela Gandhinagar, and its launch further enhances the culinary offerings. We are confident Diya will be the new address for all food connoisseurs of the twin cities of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar to revisit their happy culinary memories," said Jaideep Anand, Vice President and General Manager, The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre Complex.

"Chef Mohammad Javed, who is at the helm of Diya, brings with him over a decade of cooking experience and stories from the lineage of Nizams of Hyderabad and Lucknow's famous Tundai Kebabs and Kakori Kebabs to complete the package," he added





## Marriott Bonvoy introduces new campaign Power of Travel

As the world slowly takes the road to recovery after a year of limited travel, Marriott Bonvoy reignites the passion for travelling as it brings to India its global campaign 'Power of Travel'. Aimed at encouraging and inspiring travellers, the campaign calls out to people to bravely set out on the road to adventures and self-discovery, embracing the transformative power of travel.

After a year spent in isolation that put a pause to many people's lives, making people more distant than ever, Marriott Bonvoy's new campaign brings the promise of endless experiences on a joyride with a gentle reminder that travel has the power to reshape the world. The global ad film, curated specially for this campaign is a beautiful compilation

of choicest travel moments of people from across the globe as they set out on the journey to experience the many wonders of the world. The 360-degree campaign will run for 4 weeks across print, digital and Out of Home mediums across India.

*"Marriott Bonvoy, Marriott International's renowned travel program, encompasses an extraordinary portfolio of 30 brands and is designed to add richness to the travel experiences of every traveller while extending the promise of safety, exclusive benefits and diversified experiences,"* said **Julie Purser, Vice President, Marketing, Loyalty & Partnerships at Marriott International**. *"Our campaign communicates a positive attitude while opening the door to endless experiences that people can explore with Marriott*

*Bonvoy when they are ready to hit the road again."*

Since its founding over 90 years ago, Marriott has embodied the belief that travel is essential to fostering humanity. In today's environment, this sentiment is more relevant than ever after this long period of stagnancy and reflected in the pent-up demand the industry is seeing. Having always embraced an indomitable spirit, Indians have expressed keen interest in resuming travel with safety being a top priority. While domestic tourism has been growing steadily over the past few months, a recent Deloitte survey revealed that 57 per cent of Indians have expressed interest in travelling internationally for vacations in the next three months.

# Shangri-La Eros New Delhi's Sorrento restaurant introduces new dishes



**S**orrento, the Italian restaurant at Shangri-La Eros New Delhi is launching a refreshed menu featuring new delicacies, innovative by-the-table dishes and re-imagined dining experiences. The new menu is a blend of modern and traditional preparation methods, promising diners a unique culinary experience.

**Chef Gagandeep Singh Sawhney** and his team of experts have combined their creative skills to conceptualise a menu full of authentic and modern Italian dishes. Sorrento takes an innovative approach to Neapolitan cooking, a cuisine that has a history of almost two thousand years.

The menu features an array of delicacies such as an Italian Charcuterie

board, Sorrento's Mozzarella Bar, Caesar Salad on Wheels, Signature Panzanella Salad, Classic Minestrone and Asparagus Veloute, served with fresh Italian bread to start with. Guests can also indulge in warm and comforting Wild Mushroom, Three Tomato and Rock Lobster Risotto.

An Italian meal is incomplete without fresh handmade Pasta and Pizza. Sorrento's homemade pasta factory dishes out artisanal delicacies like Homemade Lobster Chittara finished tableside, Duck Ravioli, Chicken Agnolotti and Mushroom Tortelli. The Classic Neapolitan Pizza at Sorrento is made with Biga dough and flavoured with house-made San Marzano Sauce. Biga is a type of pre-fermentation used for

making bread and Pizza. This makes the Pizza lighter, softer and more flavourful. The selection includes Bufalina, Bianco, Caponata e Gamberi, Regina and Calzone.

With the introduction of the new family-style sharing platters, diners can now enjoy delicious rustic Italian dishes with friends and family. The 'Da Condividere' menu features roasted Spring Chicken, braised Lamb Shank and a grilled seafood platter.

To finish this culinary experience, guests can indulge in Sorrento's special Dolci that includes the renowned interactive Tiramisu, or Classic Lemon Meringue Tart or they can enjoy digging into delicious homemade Gelatos. The refreshed menu is available for Lunch and Dinner.



## India gears up to announce new tourism policy

*The Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is coming out with a new tourism policy to strengthen and build the capacity of the tourism sector in order to provide better services and facilities to the visitors, said Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism during the inaugural session of the 'Tourism Week' at the India Pavilion in Expo2020 Dubai.*

**T**he Government of India is coming out with a new tourism policy to strengthen and build the capacity of the tourism sector to provide better services and facilities to the tourists visiting the country said, Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India at the inaugural session of the 'Tourism Week' at the India Pavilion in EXPO2020 Dubai.

Elaborating on the tourism policy, Verma added, "The policy will create five missions including National Green Tourism Mission, to mainstream sustainability in the tourism sector; National Digital Tourism Mission, to digitalize the sector; Sectoral Mission on skill development, to ensure that the country has the best trained and qualified manpower to maintain high standards of service; National Mission on Destination Management, to focus on ensuring synergy and coordination amongst public and private stakeholders and National Mission on Tourism MSMEs to support and facilitate the start-ups, micro, small and medium enterprises."

He further said, "In order to kickstart inbound travel, India has offered 5 lakh free e-tourist visas and India is now opening up international travel in a calibrated manner. All our airports, railways and road transport have taken adequate measures for public safety and so have our tour operators and

hospitality operators. As a result, India saw a significant spurt in domestic tourism in past few months."

"India is celebrating and commemorating 75 years of Independence as 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' showcasing progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements. Ministry of Tourism in partnership with Tourism stakeholders will launch various incentives and initiatives to encourage and facilitate your visit to India. India will host the G-20 summit next year and many meetings across various tracks will be held in India in various cities," Verma added.

Speaking on the occasion, **Dr Aman Puri, Consul General of India in Dubai and Deputy Commissioner-General for India at Expo 2020 Dubai** said, "Travel & Tourism is a crucial sector to the Indian economy, contributor to employment and GDP. By 2030, we are expecting this sector to contribute upwards of USD 500 Billion to our GDP. India-UAE tourism is one of the busiest sectors in the world fuelled by the 3.3 million strong and vibrant Indian diasporas in the UAE. While UAE to India sees 50,000 tourists a year, UAE received over 6 million Indian tourists. Expo 2020 Dubai is the first Expo in the MEASA (Middle East, Africa and South Asia) region, and we are proud to announce

that Indian visitors are largest in terms of visitors by nationality at the Expo."

Puri added, "We would like to see this global platform enabling and catalysing the institutional linkages so that the two nations can grow together and support each other's socio-economic transformation. We would like to urge the Dubai Tourism Board to continue sharing India's story and continue marketing various aspects of India's tourism sector such as Sustainable, Spiritual, MICE to name a few."

**Hoor Al Khaja, Associate Vice President, International Operations – Department of Economy and Tourism of Dubai** said, "Dubai is home to over 200 different nationalities and Indian nationals form a very important part of the city multinational fabric accounting for the largest proportion of the expatriate population in the UAE. We are pleased to see that India's iconic pavilion continues to be one of the most visited pavilions and a major attraction amongst visitors."

The 'Tourism Week' (3-15 January) being organised by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, will comprise of various sessions which will be presided over by representatives from the Ministry of Tourism and States including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Punjab, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, among others.



Kochi to Host the

# 11<sup>th</sup> Kerala Travel Mart in March

The 11th edition of Kerala Travel Mart (KTM), one of the largest congregations of the tourism industry in the country, will be held in Kochi in March 2022. It will be inaugurated at Grand Hyatt at Bolgatty, Kochi, on March 24, 2022, and the subsequent events will be held at Sagara and Samudrika Convention Centres in Willingdon Island. The KTM is expected to give an impetus to the efforts to revive the pandemic-hit tourism sector by attracting visitors from across the globe.

The main theme of this edition will be caravan and adventure tourism, Tourism Minister Mr P. A. Mohamed Riyas said during a press conference. The event will give greater prominence to domestic tourism which is seeing a revival during post-Covid times. A minimum of

1,500 buyers are expected to participate in the KTM 2022.

Mr V. Venu, Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism), said the KTM was expected to revive the tourism industry and bring a qualitative change in the sector. Mr V. R. Krishna Teja, Director, Tourism, and Mr Baby Mathew, President, KTM, were among those present during the press conference.

The KTM is a trade fair aimed at promoting tourism in Kerala and facilitates meetings involving buyers, sellers, media, government agencies and others. Exhibitors are owners and operators of hotels, resorts, houseboats, Ayurveda centres, hospitals, tour operators and agents. The KTM enables visitors to know and learn about as well as explore Kerala.

# Kerala Tourism set to make Beypore Water Fest a grand spectacle

*Beypore Water Fest fascinates French team; calls on Minister Riyas to convey appreciation*



**T**he pioneering Beypore Water Fest that concluded ahead of the New year has added a new event from Kerala on the global tourism map, earning plaudits from domestic and foreign travellers – particularly a group of visitors from France.

Deeply impressed by the event held at the ancient port town of Beypore on the Malabar Coast, three French visitors called on **Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas** to convey their appreciation of the organizing excellence and variety of items the festival featured. They also pledged their support to boost water tourism in Kerala.

The Minister told visitors that Kerala plans to develop water tourism as a major segment by tapping on the inherent potential of the state and seizing on the growing global demand. He also said the Department of Tourism has plans to set up a surfing school at Beypore.

*“We are glad that the inaugural edition of the Beypore Water Fest could grab global attention and that would encourage Kerala Tourism to take it forward as an annual feature”,*

Shri Riyas said after meeting the

French trio: sport kite experts Maxim David, his wife Katia Zden besides Marie Pierre.

The trio said Kerala had “great prospects” in developing kite flying as a recreational sport. The discipline can be included in the proposed surfing school, they told the Minister.

A coastal strip six km south of Kozhikode, Beypore had functioned as a port providing a vital link in maritime trade with West Asia, long before the advent of the western colonialists.

**Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism) Dr Venu V.** said Kerala’s local celebratory events can be brought to the global limelight if they are

conducted on the lines of the Beypore Water Fest, held from December 26 to 29, “That can help boost our tourism products,” he added. *“We can do it by making the best use of the unique heritage of each such locality”.*

**Kerala Tourism Director Shri VR Krishna Teja** suggested that all District Tourism Promotion Councils can think of organizing events on the line of the Beypore Water Fest. : *“We will support brilliant and viable proposals that have immense potential to boost tourism.”*

The festival, declared open by superstar Mammooty, also marked the beginning of the Kerala Government’s plan to develop Beypore as a Model Responsible Tourism destination to bring to world attention the heritage of the ancient port town as Malabar’s commercial hub, with a legacy of building the water-resistant wooden Uru ships locally.

The festival featured races and celebrations in ten venues. These included kayaking, paddle race, display boat, boat races, the Navy’s band music and an exhibition of naval ships. The festival also saw a sailing regatta curated by retired Naval officer-yachtsman, Commander Abhilash Tomy, the first Indian to complete a solo, non-stop circumnavigation of the world under sail.





## India to become the hub for spiritual and religious tourism

*Vast investment opportunities available in the rapidly growing Indian Tourism sector*

India has an opportunity and potential to become a hub for spiritual and religious tourism, as the government is all geared up and focused towards showcasing the strength of the religions and philosophies of India to the world, said, **Smt. Rupinder Brar, Additional DG, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India.**

She was speaking at a session virtually on the **'Investment Opportunities in Travel, Tourism and Hospitality'** held yesterday during the 'Tourism Fortnight' at the India Pavilion, EXPO2020 Dubai.

"Tourism has exponential possibilities to boost the entire services industry in the next decade.

Being the largest service industry of the country, it has a high impact on employment, export earnings and regional development and thus is a key engine of India's growth story," **she added.**

Making a strong pitch for investment

opportunities available in the Indian Tourism sector, **Smt. Brar said,** "Despite the pandemic, India saw an inflow of USD 2.93 billion of investment in tourism, as compared to USD 1.07 billion in the financial year 2019. In terms of the market size and business potential, there is a huge untapped business opportunity available in the Indian Tourism sector."

**Smt. Shilpa Gupta, Addl. Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board said**

"The state of Madhya Pradesh is a microcosm of everything that India has to offer to the world. I would like to invite all the potential investors to come and invest in the tourism sector of the state."

**Shri Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav, Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha** in his virtual address said that tourism is one of the key sectors for the state of Odisha. The state has a very diverse tourism offering, starting from religious places to coastlines and wetlands to wildlife.

A session on Luxury Tourism was also organised by the Ministry of Tourism on 6<sup>th</sup> January, wherein it focused on showcasing the changing face of luxury tourism in India, luxury tourist destinations across the country and initiatives are taken by the Government to make travel safe and secure. The session was attended by Smt Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Culture & Public Relations, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, Smt. Sumita Saroch, Joint Director - Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Shri Nikhil Desai, Managing Director, Goa Tourism Development Corporation & Mr Prateek Hira, Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee, UP State Council and President & CEO, Tornos. The session was moderated by Mr Pronab Sarkar, Immediate Past President, Indian Association of Tour Operators.

The Tourism Week will conclude on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022.



**Smt. Rupinder Brar, Additional DG, Ministry of Tourism**

# 'Heal in India' initiative to boost medical tourism growth



## **S**hri Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India,

said that India offers the best of both modern and traditional systems of medicines and can provide holistic healing to people from across the world.

"Our country is one of the prominent destinations for medical tourism owing to the availability of quality healthcare treatment facilities at considerably low cost. The Indian systems of medicines such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, etc. are among the most ancient systems of medical treatment, of the world," he said while speaking at the session, 'Heal in India – Rejuvenate the Body, Mind and the Soul' yesterday during the Tourism Week at the India Pavilion, EXPO2020 Dubai.

"The number of international patients increased from 4.3 lakhs in 2016 to 7 lakhs in 2019, with an estimated market size in the range of USD 6 billion in 2019. Some estimates suggest USD 9 billion in 2020 before pandemic hit," he added.

Talking about the potential of medical tourism in India, he said, "India has become a favourite destination for yoga and wellness with its focus on traditional therapies through AYUSH – the government of India recognizes medical value travel and wellness tourism as important sectors having the potential of accelerating the country's development and attaining the objective of Aatmanirbhar Bharat".

"The Ministry of Tourism constituted National Medical and Wellness

*Growth of Medical Value Tourism (MVT) is key to India's development and achieving the goal of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'*

Tourism Board to provide a dedicated institutional framework for the promotion of medical and wellness tourism, including the Indian system of medicine. We are developing the 'Heal in India' brand to market India as a medical and wellness tourism destination. Under the campaign, an integrated communication strategy to promote brand India will be prepared and executed in partnership with the industry," he added.

Through a virtual address, Dr Atul Mohan Kochhar, CEO, National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers, said, "We started with one program in 2006, now we are running 21 programs under the accreditation, certification and empanelment arms. We have also partnered with more than 12,000 hospitals and are actively collaborating with NHA (National

Health authority) and Ayushman Bharat Yojana to create a strong system for transparent medical care."

Addressing the session virtually, Prof Randeep Guleria, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said, "India has the advantage of providing holistic care using alternate medicine, Ayurveda and other methods including yoga and allopathy. Therefore, we need to look at preventive health packages and treatment health packages specially for patients who have non-communicable

diseases like hypertension, diabetes, artery disease, or chronic respective diseases."

Dr Sangita Reddy, Past President FICCI and Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals, said during her virtual address, "Indian healthcare system has high-quality hospitals. The nurses, doctors and other health care professionals are at par with the best in the world. India also has 39 Joint Commission international accredited multi-speciality hospitals with some of the latest technologies, infrastructure, and patients are discerning that the internet is a great medium of communication".

"We are also committed to training and development of other ecosystems. Multiple doctors and nurses from various countries in Africa have visited India and have been part of the training program. We are committed to developing global partnerships in treatment, training, learning and research," she added.

The session was also attended by experts in the healthcare industry including Mr Sandeep Nanduri, Director, Tourism Department, Government of TamilNadu, Mr Krishna Teja, Director, Tourism Department, Government of Kerala, Dr Azad Moopen, Chairman and Managing Director, Aster DM Healthcare, Dr D Ramanathan, Managing Director & Chief Physician, Sitaram Ayurveda and Mr Abhilash Ramesh, Executive Director, Kairali Ayurvedic.



# Busan

## HAEVENUE

the best MICE destination in the post-pandemic era

*One of the world-renown convention cities, Busan where the daily life of citizens harmonize with five-star luxury beach hotels, exhibition and convention infrastructure, and commercial facilities for recreation and leisure, is busy leaping toward the 'Global Top 10 MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, & exhibitions) City' in a post-pandemic era.*

One of the world-renown convention cities, Busan where the daily life of citizens harmonize with five-star luxury beach hotels, exhibition and convention infrastructure, and commercial facilities for recreation and leisure, is busy leaping toward the 'Global Top 10 MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, & exhibitions) City' in a post-pandemic era. Busan successfully hosted APEC South Korea 2005, 2012 Lions Clubs International Convention, 2019 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit with high evaluations by participants.

In particular, 'HAEVENUE' (Haeundae International Conference Complex)

with potential for MICE business in Busan, will grow into the ‘optimal MICE destination’ in the post-Covid world. HAEVENUE is an area designated by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in March 2020 with a size of 2,390,000? including BEXCO in the Centum City business district, Nurimaru APEC House, and deluxe hotels in Haeundae. A huge amount of exclusive investment will be into MICE infrastructure over the next four years. Moreover, Busan was selected as the ‘first Korean international tourism city’, with a special budget of 150 billion South Korean Won for tourism infrastructure.

As the world entered the third year of the Covid pandemic, the global MICE industry has witnessed the rapid development of conference technologies encompassing hybrid manners (online and offline), VR meetings, holograms, and the metaverse, while seeing the hosts raising the bar. In addition, the city eligible for the ‘perfect MICE attraction’ is not only based on infrastructure, but also on the competence of the local community.

The MICE special zone, ‘HAEVENUE’ from the Centum City to Nurimaru APEC House to Haeundae area is the only international conference complex in Korea for bleisure travel where business and leisure can be enjoyed at the same time. BEXCO (Busan Exhibition & Convention Center), accommodations (Paradise Hotel, Park Hyatt, Westin Josun Busan, Grand Josun), theatres (Busan Cinema Center), and unique venues (Nurimaru APEC House and Museum DAH) are closely located in this area.

“HAEVENUE is a place that has convenience, safety, accessibility, and the unique MICE infrastructure only provided in Busan,” said the official from BTO. “Busan is the optimal MICE destination with affluent resources of MICE industry, boasting quarantine, safety and security levels. We ask for your interest in Busan that will become a paradise of MICE industry leading the post-pandemic era.”



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**HAEVENUE**



**HAEVENUE**  
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Paradise Hotel Busan



Grand Josun Busan



Park Hyatt Busan



# Malaysia Airports upgrades the passenger experience at Kuala Lumpur International Airport

*Automated and low touch experiences arrive for domestic and international passengers at Terminals KLIA and KLIA2, supporting COVID-19 recovery.*

**D**omestic and international passengers flying from Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KUL) can now benefit from new SITA biometric-enabled self-service touchpoints following a significant technology upgrade.

The extensive technology deployment features a hardware and software overhaul, including introducing more than 100 SITA biometric-enabled self-service Smart Path kiosks – the TS6, SITA Smart Path Bag Drop, and an IT infrastructure refresh. SITA's brand-new slimline TS6 kiosks are available from December 2021 and feature wireless connectivity. The kiosks are ready and enabled for SITA Flex and the next generation of common-use API-based services that facilitate a low-touch, fully mobile passenger experience.

The new SITA Smart Path TS6 kiosk was the winner of 2021 IF Design award for the slick, sustainable, and adaptive design, which can be customized to fit with the airport's brand design and specific customer

needs. The modular design also means enhancements and modifications can be made without replacing the entire kiosk, bringing added cost efficiency and sustainability benefits.

As part of the software updates, Malaysia Airports has migrated to Windows 10 and upgraded its CORE servers, network equipment, and

Baggage Reconciliation System to deliver enhanced speed and secured data communications.

The upgrades are part of a broader transition from Airport 3.0 to Airport 4.0, which requires a fully integrated digital ecosystem that provides a seamless passenger journey with the use of business intelligence and the collection of big data. Besides improving passenger experience, goals such as optimizing terminal use, increasing operational efficiency, and growing revenue are part of the Airport 4.0 project.

SITA will continue its role as an innovation partner to Malaysia Airports, with planned proof of concepts exploring single token and touchless journeys to improve the passenger experience and drive new efficiencies.

Sumesh Patel, President, Asia Pacific, SITA, said: "We are delighted to partner again with Malaysia Airports and support the airport in its recovery from COVID-19. Ensuring fluid passenger experiences while balancing operational efficiency is a high priority for airports globally. With this deployment, we've delivered on both elements, future-proofing the airport for a touchless journey via enhanced biometric capability while also driving down operational costs and increasing the resilience and agility of IT infrastructure."



# Arunachal Pradesh's first airport is expected to be ready by August 2022



**A**runachal Pradesh's chief minister Pema Khandu said that the state's first airport Hollongi is expected to be ready by August 2022,

ahead of the scheduled completion date.

The airport is supposed to be completed by November 22 next year

as per the original agreement with construction agencies. However, the central and state government authorities are pushing for its commissioning by August next year.

Once commissioned, the airport will be the first in the mountain state with a runway of 2300 meters eligible for landing and take-off of Boeing 747 aircraft.

While the acquisition of required land (5 acres) on Assam side, shifting of 132 KV Power Gridline and diversion of Kokila river are under process about 74 per cent work has been done on the 4-lane approach road of about 4 kilometres to the airport, which will be completed by January 31 next year.

## Sonale Zagade is the new General Manager of Hyatt Regency Gurgaon

*She brings to the table expertise that includes delivering significant financial performance, enhancing service standards*

**S**he brings to the table expertise that includes delivering significant financial performance, enhancing service standards

Sonale Zagade has been

appointed as the General Manager of Hyatt Regency Gurgaon.

As the General Manager of Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, she brings to the table expertise that includes



delivering significant financial performance, enhancing service standards.

A passionate hotelier, Sonale brings unmatched enthusiasm and a forward-thinking approach with her major strength in hotel operations and has strong business insights

with a remarkable history of working with leading brands as Leela Kempinski, Starwood Hotels and have been with Hyatt from 2013.

Her last assignment was with Grand Hyatt Mumbai as Hotel Manager before joining as General Manager at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon.



In 2021, the air transport industry has been forced to adapt nearly all operations to adhere to rapidly changing regulations and travel requirements, from health status verifications to fluctuating border controls based on virus hotspots and emerging new COVID-19 variants like Omicron.

It has also been a year punctuated with extreme weather events, including an unprecedented deep freeze in Texas and record heatwaves in Canada. The year ended with the COP26 summit articulating a vast volume of work that needs to happen immediately to avoid climate catastrophe.

**Sébastien Fabre, the CEO, SITA FOR AIRCRAFT**, examines the five critical travel technology trends emerging from the pandemic and set to transform the industry in 2022 and beyond. He calls for sustainability to be baked into today's essential industry transformation.

1. Automation and digital health are the keys to industry recovery

Despite airport and airline, IT budgets being slashed by the COVID-19 crisis, spending on automation of passenger processing is seeing a rise.

The industry continues to battle new challenges with COVID-19 variants, and while there are many hurdles that must be overcome to stimulate global travel, the need for low-touch and efficient operations grows stronger. Automation and digitization are crucial to give passengers the confidence and control back to travel efficiently and reduce processing times to acceptable levels. Biometric technology offers an essential solution to address this issue with airports around the world investing in future-proofing operations.

In addition to automated passenger processing, we need to standardize and digitalize health verification to ensure easier, safer, and more seamless travel in the face of ongoing health concerns. In November 2021, SITA announced that to support the recovery of the travel industry, it will make its Digital Travel Declaration solution – which allows passengers to share required travel and health documentation with governments ahead of travel – available to governments free of charge globally. This is aimed at addressing the global challenge of submitting and verifying health documentation which remains a major impediment to the recovery of

the global travel industry.

2. Airport operational efficiency and sustainability will work in harmony

Agility, scalability, and operational efficiency have become critical considerations for airports' business models amid the fast-changing environment imposed by the pandemic. Airports will need to operate leaner operations, drive ancillary revenue, and adapt to fluctuating passenger numbers. For that reason, cloud technology remains a key investment area. At the same time, almost all airports also plan to implement business intelligence solutions to gain better visibility across their operations, focusing on key areas such as flight operations and asset management.

Through operational efficiency, airports can also drive significant sustainability gains. According to ACI, 235 airports across Europe have committed to net-zero by 2050, and more than 90 airports are now set to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. A recent collaboration between SITA and Envision Digital is designed to help these airports in their journey towards meeting their sustainability commitments, combining solutions

that optimize airport operations to reduce local emissions while optimizing infrastructure-related energy consumption.

Following calls from COP26 and rising passenger demands for more sustainable travel, airports have a sharp focus on reducing Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Most airports have implemented sustainability initiatives such as building airport infrastructure (green spaces, use of natural light and renewable energy), widely available recycling points, and smart building technology and automation. Airports are showing a continued interest in IT that supports more sustainable printing practices as well as end-of-life recycling of IT equipment and promoting energy savings. Outside of the cost-saving benefits, industry figures estimate that improving aviation operations and infrastructure could reduce emissions by up to 10%.

3. The pressure will remain on airlines to be more sustainable

In the air, significant efficiencies can be achieved today with potential fuel and CO2 emissions reductions of up to 10% for the flight phase. Technology can provide pilots and dispatchers with real-time access to accurate multi-source weather reports. Today's solutions can help pilots optimize their flight profiles to maximize fuel efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and improve situational awareness for safer, more comfortable flights. eWAS Pilot provides accurate 4D weather forecasts and real-time updates from various sources to warn about hazards such as thunderstorms, lightning, clear air turbulence, strong winds, icing, and even volcanic ash. Based on this information, pilots can dynamically determine the most economical flight paths that avoid adverse weather.

The software suite OptiFlight helps save aircraft fuel and reduce CO2 emissions during the three flight phases: climb, cruise, and descent. The focus currently lies on the climb-out – the most fuel-consuming phase of a flight – and the cruise phase. In combination with airport operational efficiency, solutions like these can

have a major impact today while alternative fuels are being developed and refined over the following decades. In 2022 SITA will expand its focus to offer new technologies that support ground movements as well as aircraft condensation trail reductions.

4. Regional and domestic airports must prepare for a post-pandemic boom

With domestic air travel in bigger markets such as the United States, India, and China, the first to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, regional airports are set to play an outsized role in the coming years. The question is, are they prepared for a surge of passengers?

While the operational challenges for international hubs are similar, we'll likely see regional airports experiencing capacity constraints sooner as domestic travel resumes at an accelerated pace. The potential for national economic prosperity will also be significantly affected by their ability to improve the passenger journey while cutting costs and managing evolving health requirements through technology.

Passengers travelling from regional airports also demand the same digital experience and efficiencies they receive at international hubs. On top of that come greater airline expectations, route volatility, space constraints, staff multi-tasking, and a myriad more. Then, of course, as journeys become more digital, there's the growing need for seamless interoperability across travel systems and technologies – not just among airports large and small, but also with other modes of transport.

Ready-to-go cloud-based (SaaS) airport management capabilities to help optimize resources while supporting collaborative processes and decision-making will be essential for these airports to thread the needle between passenger satisfaction, capacity, and profitability.

As travel becomes more connected and intermodal, having unified digital systems that simplify the passenger journey across land, sea and air will become increasingly important.

5. Blockchain will become a key technology and bring new efficiencies to air travel

Blockchain holds immense potential for the air transport industry because of its unique ability to share information instantly, securely, and privately between the dozens of stakeholders across airports, governments, airlines, and OEMs.

The air transport industry spends US\$50 billion a year on aircraft spare parts. Yet, tracking and tracing of these spare parts as they move between airlines, lessors, and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) remains largely manual.

There is no one single view of how to track hundreds of millions of records of transactions between these entities, exacerbating risk and cost. And if there is any inconsistency between stakeholder systems, the risk of data overlap increases – as does cost.

Airlines face some of the most complex issues related to MRO, from a lack of digital records to supply chain difficulties, system inconsistencies, and burdensome costs. We believe that blockchain will be vital to solving these challenges.

For pilots, SITA has developed a proven blockchain-based solution enabling the verification of an electronic personnel license (EPL) without network connectivity. Allowing offline verification in an efficient and privacy-preserving way, SITA's contribution supports the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) adoption of an industry-wide digital standard for the use of EPLs on international flights.

On the passenger side, blockchain could solve many of the efficiency challenges the industry faces today. In 2021 SITA, together with Indicio, tech and the Aruba Health Department, trialed the Aruba Health App, a pilot that makes it easy for visitors to share a trusted traveller credential – based on their health status – privately and securely on their mobile device. This credential will provide access to participating hospitality sites on the island.

# PATA Annual Summit 2022 Set to Bring Global Travel Leaders to the UAE



The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has announced that the next PATA Annual Summit will be held live and in-person from March 22 - 25, 2022 in **Ras Al Khaimah**, the northernmost Emirate of the United Arab Emirates.

The event will be the first time that the not-for-profit travel trade association, which serves government, tourism offices, hotels, airlines and other travel-related companies with interests in the Asia Pacific region, will host its Annual Summit in West Asia. Hosted by *Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority* (RAKTDA), the four-day event will lead a global forum on sustainable growth and the value and quality of tourism today, bringing together international thought leaders, industry shapers and senior decision-makers who are invested in driving tourism to, from and within the Asia Pacific region.

Comprising of conference elements, experiential networking sessions, the PATA Executive Board and Board Meeting, and Annual General Meeting, the four-day Summit will be hosted in various locations across the Emirate, including the Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah, The Ritz-Carlton Al Wadi Desert and Al Hamra International Exhibition & Conference Center. Exploring the theme *'Reconnecting the World'*, the program will provide

a platform for PATA's public and private sector members and partners to convene on critical industry topics, including destination recovery strategies, sustainability and resilience, human capital development and innovation.

Additionally, PATA delegates will visit Expo 2020 to gain insights on sustainability, innovation and design of best practices around the world, including PATA Destination Members' pavilions.

*"We are honoured to be working with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority in bringing together our industry network to discuss opportunities and best practices to enable recovery and sustainable growth,"* said **PATA CEO Liz Ortiguera**.

*"Next year's event programme, under the theme 'Reconnecting the World', will take on a format that is more experiential, will maximize in-person connections and engage an appreciation for this beautiful destination plus the unique opportunity to experience Expo 2020. I invite all of our members, partners, Chapter members and industry colleagues to join us for this long-awaited opportunity."*

**Raki Phillips, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority**, added *"We are delighted to host the Pacific Asia Travel Association*

*Summit for the first time in 2022. We look forward to productive talks and insights from industry leaders on critical topics shaping the industry today. As we continue to navigate through an ever-changing tourism landscape, it is even more critical to facilitate these important discussions and share key learnings. Being selected as the host destination is a testament to our destination recovery and resilience, sustainable initiatives and experience in hosting world-class events."*

Considered as the fastest-growing destination in the Middle East, Ras Al Khaimah set a global benchmark by being the first city in the world to be certified safe by the 'SafeGuard Label' from Bureau Veritas and the 'Safe Travels Stamp' from the World Travel and Tourism Council. It was also named the 'Gulf Tourism Capital' for both 2020 and 2021 by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

With over 7,000 years of fascinating history, traditions and culture, Ras Al Khaimah promise an authentic and easily accessible Arabian experience. A haven of year-round sunshine, the Emirate features pristine beaches, lush mangroves and terracotta dunes, as well as fertile, green oases and the dramatic, awe-inspiring vistas of the majestic Hajjar mountains. From cultural escapes to eco-tourism and adrenaline-fueled adventures to beach retreats, Ras Al Khaimah caters to a full suite of travellers. The unique natural beauty of the Emirate, combined with its world-class tourism infrastructure and portfolio of global hospitality brands, makes it the perfect destination for both leisure and adventure travel as well as for business travellers.

To register for the event, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pata-annual-summit-2022-tickets-227553537757>. For more information, visit [www.PATA.org/pas-2022](http://www.PATA.org/pas-2022) or email [PAS@PATA.org](mailto:PAS@PATA.org).



# Pata India new managing committee 2022

**P**ATA India Chapter held its 249th EC Meeting on 23rd December 2021. Mr Arvind Singh, Chairman PATA India Chapter & Secretary Tourism presided.

PATA India Chapter announced its Executive Committee, which was elected unopposed and Office Bearers for the term 2021-23, as follows:

Mr Arvind Singh, Secretary, Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, will lead PATA India Chapter as its Chairman.

#### Category: Active Government

1. Mr Arvind Singh – Secretary Tourism, Government of India, Ministry of Tourism New Delhi
2. Mr Rakesh Verma – Additional Secretary Tourism, Government of India, Ministry of Tourism

#### Category: Associate Government

3. Mr G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi

#### Category: International Carrier

4. Mr Rajinder Nath, General

Manager Commercial, Air India. New Delhi

#### Category: Domestic Carrier

4. Mrs Rajni Hasija – Chairman & Managing Director, Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation Ltd. New Delhi

#### Category: Industry

##### A. Travel Agent & Tour Operator

5. Mr Jatinder Taneja – Managing Director, Travel Spirit International Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi
6. Mr Vikram Madhok – Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent (I) Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi
7. Mr Anoop Kanuga – Director, Bathija Travels Pvt. Ltd. Mumbai
8. Mr. Sunirmol Ghosh – Director, Indo Asia Tours (P) Ltd. New Delhi

##### B. Hotels

9. Mr Parveen Chander Sharma – Vice President, Indian Hotels Co. Ltd. Mumbai
10. Mr Arjun Sharma – Managing Director, Select Holiday Resorts Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi
11. Mr Rohit Arora – General

Manager, Apeejay Surendra Park Hotels, New Delhi

#### Sustaining Category

12. Mr SanJeet – Director, DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi

#### Co-opted Members

13. Mr J. K. Mohanty – Chairman & Managing Director, Swosti Group, Odisha
14. Mr Riyaz U.C. Managing Director, Spiceland Holidays & Entertainment Private Limited, Kerala
15. Mrs Ragini Chopra, VP, Interglobe Enterprises Pvt Ltd.

Further, the following members were elected unanimously as the office bearers of the PATA India Chapter for the term 2021-2023 during the EC meeting held on dated 23/12/21.

**Mr Jatinder Taneja, MD, Travel Spirit International, Vice Chairman**  
**Mr Vikram Madhok, MD, Abercrombie & Kent, Hon. Secretary**

**Mr SanJeet, Director, DDP Publications, Hon. Treasurer.**

**Mr Runeep Sangha will continue as Executive Director, PATA India Chapter.**

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# Vinod Kannan takes over as Chief Executive Officer at Vistara



Commercial Officer in January 2020 with responsibility for developing, executing, and sustaining Vistara’s corporate strategy and ensuring the airline’s commercial success. He played a pivotal role in launching Vistara’s international operations, expanding its domestic network, fleet size and driving the airline’s steady growth during the pandemic.

“I am honoured to be given the opportunity to carry forward the momentum that **Mr Leslie Thng** has built during his time at Vistara. I look forward to continuing strengthening Vistara’s position, in both - Domestic and International markets, along with such a capable and resilient team”, said Mr Vinod Kannan.

Mr Kannan spent over two decades working with Singapore Airlines (SIA) and has held several senior positions in the airline’s head office in Singapore as well as overseas. He holds a Master’s degree in Business Administration from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

**Mr Deepak Rajawat, the new Chief Commercial Officer**, has been with Vistara since inception and held several leadership roles in Corporate Planning and Finance functions. He was the Divisional Vice President & Head of Corporate Planning with the airline until 31 December 2021. In his new role, he will be spearheading a wide portfolio of Vistara’s strategic and commercial functions, including but not limited to pricing and revenue management, network planning, sales & distribution, partnerships & alliances, product development, in-flight services, marketing, branding and customer experience.

Vistara, India’s finest full-service carrier and a joint venture of Tata group and Singapore Airlines, today announced the appointment of Mr Vinod Kannan as Chief Executive Officer, effective 01 January 2022. Also, **Mr Deepak Rajawat has been elevated to take up the role of Vistara’s Chief Commercial Officer.**

Mr Kannan started his stint with Vistara as the Chief Strategy Officer in June 2019 and took over as Chief

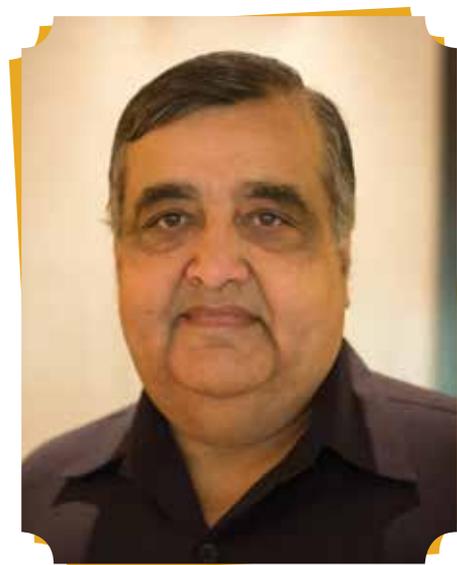
# IATO calls for a uniform travel policy across states

The Indian Association of Tour Operators has urged the Centre to have a ‘One Nation One Travel Policy’ for international travellers. The association said differences in travel policies or guidelines between States is “leading to confusion” for foreign and international travellers.

“While travelling to India, foreign tourists think of India as one destination and they plan their travel as per

guidelines of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and as advised by the tour operators. But multiple State-level policies discourage international tourists from travelling to India which is already down to negligible levels due to the pandemic,” **Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO**, said.

A single travel policy will pave way for “robust bookings as and when normal international flights resume,” he said.



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