

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

# travel

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## SPAN

### Capri Palace

to become  
first Jumeirah  
property in Italy

**The Hyatt Regency**  
Brand Debuts in Kerala

**Taj Jumeirah**  
Lakes towers  
opens in Dubai

**KLM**  
looks ahead to  
tech and travel  
trends for 2020





# HILTON DALAMAN SARIGERME RESORT & SPA INVITES HONEYMOON COUPLES

## to live a wedding in a splendid atmosphere



A landscape showcasing the splendid beauties of Aegean and Mediterranean... A hotel that blends architecture with the surrounding nature, offering an environment of luxury and comfort...sunbathing and relaxation areas in the form of small-scale beach houses on a beach exclusive to the hotel...A dedicated spa centre, where you can leave all tiredness of your wedding behind, designed with a particular manner...A swimming pool where you can enjoy special moments under the bright blue sky from your private terrace...Romantic restaurants that delight the palate.....Bars and performances illuminating your evenings with festivity...An exclusive service manner...

They say, "It continues as it begins". A honeymoon experience where every detail is delicately considered is a unique choice for couples taking their first step in life together at the Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa, where glorious nature meets maximum luxury. After your wedding, spoil yourself with your one and only...

The Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa invites you to experience service and offers dedicated to making you feel very special, comfort that embraces you with its details, a delicious culinary journey, sumptuous spa treatments... a joyous adventure filled with colour, and natural surroundings formed by the union of blue and green...all together in

your honeymoon, where you will have the most beautiful moments of your life...

Whether you seek a romantic interlude with just the two of you, or a festive time surrounded by old and new friends, our hotel offers privileged services that will transform your honeymoon into an absolute dream... With five restaurants presenting the best flavours in international cuisine... seven bars where drinks and entertainment are simply redefined, outdoor swimming pools with sparkling water and relaxing pools that promise romance and tranquillity... the Elysion Spa offering 6,000 square metres of luxe treatments... a dedicated 650-metre-long beach and gazebos where you can enjoy sea, sun and sand amid a superior service understanding...all awaits you.

### A SPECIAL CONCEPT FOR HONEYMOON COUPLES

Services dedicated to honeymoon couples at the Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa are extraordinary... with the Honeymoon Duplex Suite option other than the standard honeymoon package. In the Honeymoon Suite, you'll find a Jacuzzi, a sauna and a terrace as well as a living room and a plush bedroom. But this is not all: When





you take your first step into your most beautiful journey, you are brought to the hotel with a private transfer service. You are welcomed with Champagne and chocolate as you enter the hotel, and with wine, fruit, and appetizers in your room. As a special treat on to your first day, an in-room breakfast and or breakfast in a private area in the restaurant are just the beginning. Accommodation in a seafront Gazebo House, a massage in your room or the spa centre await you, all there to help you make beautiful memories during your honeymoon and your stay at the Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa.

Whether you choose to stay in the Honeymoon Duplex Suite or in one of the hotel's comfortable rooms ... all honeymoon couples married within two weeks - without any exceptions - are invited to enjoy dinner in an à la carte

restaurant, accommodation in a Gazebo House for one day, a fruit basket in the room, and other surprises in one day - as you select during your stay, and as you wish.

## **HILTON DALAMAN SARIGERME RESORT & SPA: THE NEW HONEYMOON DESTINATION FOR INDIAN TOURISTS**

In recent months, guests from India have joined us at the Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa, embracing the unique geography of the region. The Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa was honoured to host a traditional, fabulous Indian wedding, while the happy couple enjoy their honeymoon privileges at the Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort & Spa.



**Hilton**

DALAMAN SARIGERME  
RESORT & SPA

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# contents



## 14 AIRLINES: Vistara Completes Five Glorious Years in Indian Aviation

Vistara launched its operations on 9 January 2015 with only two aircraft and two destinations on the map. As of this day, the airline has a total of 39 aircraft in operations flying to 34 destinations across the length and breadth of India and cities abroad, and has flown over 20 million passengers. Vi

## 18 AIRLINES: Finavia airport had 26 million passengers in 2019 – a year of moderate growth in air traffic

2019 was a busy year at Finavia's airports even though growth in air traffic was more moderate than in previous years. A total of 26 million passengers (+4,2%) travelled on scheduled and chartered flights.



## 32 HOSPITALITY AND FOOD: Taj Jumeirah Lakes towers opens in Dubai

The arrival of 200 contemporary rooms and suites at Taj Jumeirah Lakes Towers has gifted Dubai with an iconic landmark, and JLT with its first luxury hotel. It is poised to become the district's preferred business engine and social heartbeat, bringing with it two unique firsts – the soon-to-open Paros, a Mediterranean inspired rooftop pool bar and restaurant, as well as an elegant ballroom. The hotel also introduces the renowned and much-loved Shamiana from the iconic Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai to the Middle East.



## 33 HOSPITALITY AND FOOD: Capri Palace to become first Jumeirah property in Italy

The existing Capri Palace hotel on the island of Capri will reopen on April 23, 2020 under its new name Capri Palace, Jumeirah. The 68-room property is located on a hillside in Anacapri, overlooking the Gulf of Naples. According to Jumeirah the hotel first opened in the 1960s, and is designed in the style of an eighteenth century Neapolitan palazzo.





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# contents



## 36 HOSPITALITY AND FOOD: Hyatt to open more than 20 luxury properties by the end of 2020

Hotels Corporation recently announced that more than 20 new luxury hotels and resorts are expected to open worldwide by the end of 2020, boosting Hyatt's luxury portfolio. The additions include new properties under the Park Hyatt, Andaz, Alila, Grand Hyatt, Miraval and The Unbound Collection by Hyatt brands.



## 38 HOSPITALITY AND FOOD: The Hyatt Regency Brand Debuts in Kerala, India

Hyatt Regency Thrissur marks the second Hyatt branded hotel in Kerala and the 13th Hyatt Regency branded hotel in India. With 77 well-appointed guestrooms, this contemporary hotel aims to bring the Hyatt Regency brand's signature hospitality to business and leisure guests travelling to the region.

## 47 INTERNATIONAL: Thailand gears for Quality and Responsible Tourism in 2020

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has reaffirmed its commitment to making travel and tourism the kingdom's most economically promising, environmentally sustainable, and culturally vibrant sector in the years to come.



## 60 INDIA: Namaste Orchha festival to encourage tourism in Madhya Pradesh

Orchha will be at the forefront of Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board's latest endeavour -- a cultural festival to encourage tourism in the state. "Namaste Orchha" that opens on March 6, seeks to draw tourist attention to the state of MP in general and Orchha in particular, by showcasing its cultural landscape through a range of activities like art, music and dance performances, guided history tours, photography tours and more.





## LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE travel SPAN

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## Madhya Pradesh Set to Emerge as a Major Destination for Film Shoots in 2020

With a noticeable spurt in shooting of films and TV projects in Madhya Pradesh, the state is set to emerge as a major film shoot destination in 2020. Aptly described as the "heart" of Incredible India, the state of Madhya Pradesh offers a host of attractive locations that have lured film producers of all genres, down the line.

As the State has become a regular visiting point for Bollywood industry, Madhya Pradesh Tourism has decided to promote film tourism of the State. More than 200 projects including Hollywood Projects like "The Bear" by Paramount Pictures, "A Suitable Boy" by BBC Production, White Tiger etc. and many Indian feature films, TV Serial/ Series, TVCs & Reality shows have been shot in Madhya Pradesh till now. Some of the recent being Panga, Stree, Sui-Dhaga, Kalank, Manikarnika, Luka Chuppi, Padman, Toilet Ek Prem Katha, Mohenjo Daro, Bajirao Mastani, Moti Choor Chakna Choor, apart from these several Web Series are also reaching out to the state and current projects cover – Rangbaaz Phirse starring Jimmy Shergill, Sharad Kelkar, GulPanag and others, Panchayat, Shuttle Cock Murder, Gullak and few TVC as well in the best suited locations like Orchha, Khajuraho, Maheshwar etc. of the state.

Projects coming up in 2020 include "Sherni", starring Vidhya Balan, "Durgawati" starring Bhoomi "Bhuj The pride of Indian" Ponnini Selvan, a multi-starrer Tamil movie directed by Mani Ratnam "Mere Desh Ki Dharti", produced by Carnival Motion Pictures. TV serials being shot in the state include Rajshri Productions upcoming television serial for Star Plus – "Dadi

Amma Dadi Amma Man Jao", "Ek Duj ke Vaaste - 2" produced by Sony Entertainment, where all the 250 episodes will be shoot in Bhopal and nearby locations.

According to **Mr. Faiz Ahmed Kidwai (IAS)**, Secretary-Tourism, Govt of Madhya Pradesh and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, "Madhya Pradesh is a perfect combination of natural settings, ancient heritage, huge water bodies, helpful administration and others to a film maker's delight which makes it a preferred destination for several years. It is something really prestigious for the State that the film fraternity is visiting our State over and over again. This is a really good opportunity for the State to increase tourism. The Bollywood producers and directors find this State more desirable as compared to other places not only because of its scenic beauty but also people here are very hospitable."

Madhya Pradesh offers an assortment of attractions to everyone who loves to travel and emerging as a destination for all season. It is the state with the forest area cover of 77,700 sq. km filled with Sal Trees & Bamboos. It has numerous wildlife hotspots with 11 National parks & 24 Wildlife sanctuaries such as Satpura National Park, Chambal Ghadiyal Sanctuary & has re-gained the tag of being "Tiger State of the Country" by having maximum tiger count (526) in the state. The roar of Tigers has increased in the dense and beautiful forests of Madhya Pradesh. The UNESCO world heritage sites of Khajuraho, Bhimbetka & Sanchi are the iconic sites in Madhya Pradesh.

We are on



**DEVENDER GROVER**

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# 4 reasons why JFK is the ideal hub for Delta's Mumbai service

Customers traveling to the United States on Delta's new daily service from Mumbai launching Dec. 22 will find themselves in another financial and cultural world capital upon arrival: New York City.

Here are four reasons why New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport is the ideal U.S. hub for this route:

New York is the largest U.S. market to India: Demand for flights between the U.S. and India has increased significantly in the last decade, and

Delta's network out of New York-JFK will allow for convenient connections for more than 50 Indian-American communities throughout the United States, Canada and Latin America.

Delta is New York's No. 1 airline: Delta has grown its presence in New York City by over 65 percent in the last 10 years and today offers more than 200 daily departures from its global gateway at JFK to more than 80 destinations in 30 countries. India is in good company: Delta has added nonstop service from JFK to Lisbon,

Portugal and Lagos, Nigeria, in recent years with Bogota, Colombia, this month.

Delta has invested significantly in the New York airport experience: The airline first unveiled its \$1.4 billion, state-of-the-art international gateway at JFK's Terminal 4 in 2013 and added 11 more gates in 2015. Elsewhere in the city, Delta just opened its first of four new concourses to comprise the airline's new \$3.9 billion facility at LaGuardia Airport.

JFK T4 features a range of customer amenities: The terminal features dining options from New York favorites like Shake Shack, and a flagship Delta Sky Club will soon feature additional seating, a reimagined food area, and a retractable roof for its signature outdoor Sky Deck. Delta also recently launched its first biometric boarding gates at the terminal, giving customers traveling direct to Mumbai the option of boarding a flight using facial recognition technology rather than scanning a boarding pass and showing a passport. And Terminal 4 is a valued partner in sustainability: every restaurant in the facility composts, and new water-saving technologies have cut down on usage by one-third – saving 20 million gallons each year.



# Qatar Airways Celebrates its Inaugural Flight to Gaborone, Botswana



- The multiple award-winning airline becomes the only non-African operator to offer flights to Botswana with the launch of its three-times weekly service with an Airbus A350-900 aircraft
- Botswana's capital city is the ninth new destination to join the airline's growing network in 2019

**T**he first Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Gaborone, Botswana, touched down at Sir Seretse Khama International Airport on Sunday 15 December.

The flight was greeted upon landing by His Excellency Vice President of Botswana, Mr. Slumber Tsogwane, and the Minister of Transport and Communications, Mr. Thulagano Segokgo. The multiple award-winning airline will operate a three-times weekly service to the capital city of Botswana and is the only non-African airline to fly to the country.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "I am delighted to add Gaborone to our global network of more than 160 destinations. Qatar Airways is committed to expanding its network in Africa, and this new route - our 23rd destination on the continent - is another step towards achieving that goal. We take great pride in being the first Middle Eastern airline to fly to Botswana and look forward to bringing tens of thousands of passengers to this wonderful country."

Acting Chief Executive Officer and Civil Aviation Authority Botswana, Mr. Kabo Phutietsile, said: "The new route by Qatar Airways is expected to boost Botswana's aviation industry and create employment opportunities and skills transfer for the aviation industry. It gives the country an

opportunity to fully utilize and benefit from the investments in infrastructure improvement completed in the recent past. The arrival of Qatar will further boost and grow the Aviation industry and auxiliary industries. It allows for improved connectivity between Botswana and the Qatar many established routes. The spin-offs will facilitate growth of the Botswana economy."

The inaugural flight is Qatar Airways' ninth new destination of the year and the third in Africa during 2019, complementing the already popular routes to Mogadishu, Somalia and Rabat, Morocco. With Luanda, Angola to follow in 2020, the airline is making good on its promise to grow throughout the continent.

The airline will operate to Gaborone with its Airbus 350-900, featuring 36 seats in Business class and 247 seats in Economy class. Passengers can enjoy the next generation interactive on-board entertainment system, Oryx One, with a choice of up to 4,000 audio and video-on-demand options as well as complimentary Wi-Fi for passengers.

Botswana is globally renowned for its unspoiled natural environment, including the Kalahari Desert and the Okavango Delta, making it popular for its safaris & other cultural tourism.

A multiple award-winning airline, Qatar Airways was named 'World's

Best Airline' by the 2019 World Airline Awards, managed by international air transport rating organisation Skytrax. It was also named 'Best Airline in the Middle East', 'World's Best Business Class' and 'Best Business Class Seat', in recognition of its ground-breaking Business Class experience, Qsuite. Qatar Airways is the only airline to have been awarded the coveted "Skytrax Airline of the Year" title, which is recognised as the pinnacle of excellence in the airline industry, five times.

Qatar Airways currently operates a modern fleet of more than 250 aircraft via its hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA) to more than 160 destinations worldwide. The airline has recently launched an array of exciting new destinations, including Rabat, Morocco; Izmir, Turkey; Malta; Davao, Philippines; Lisbon, Portugal; Mogadishu, Somalia; Langkawi, Malaysia; and Gaborone, Botswana. The airline will add with Luanda, Angola; and Osaka, Japan, following in 2020.

## Flight schedule: Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

**DOH-GBE - (QR1377):** Departs Doha 06:55hrs, Arrives Gaborone 16:50hrs

**GBE-DOH - (QR 1378):** Departs Gaborone 18:35hrs, Arrives Doha 06:45hrs

# Somon Air

## has been awarded with Brand of the Year Award 2019

*Somon Air received the award 'Brand of the Year 2019' bestowed by the Republic of Tajikistan. During a glorious ceremony Somon Air was handed over the Gold Award.*

The Tajik competition "Brand of the Year", under the name PEAK OF GLORY, is held by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan in cooperation with the private sector and international organisations. The judicator of this competition is the State Institution "National Patent Information Center" of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan. Promotion and initiation of legal protection of trade- and service marks in Tajikistan are the main objectives of the competition. Further objectives are the identification and presentation of effective brand management and the encouragement of companies to use branding.



In 2013 Somon Air already received its first "Brand of the Year", and now in 2019 Somon Air has shown success in the international airline market. In the meantime the airline is an official member of the Multilateral Interline Traffic Agreements (MITA) Cargo which is sponsored by International Air Transport Association (IATA) and a member of the Nominating Committee of IATA. Furthermore, Somon Air launched an aviation training center for

aviation specialists at its headquarters in Dushanbe and added an Airbus H125 helicopter. The route network was expanded to include international flights from Dushanbe to Delhi and return.

To date, Somon Air has successfully operated flights from Tajikistan to Germany, the UAE, Turkey, India, China, Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The airline fleet consists of Boeing 737-300, -800 and -900 aircraft and Airbus H125 helicopter.

## Somon Air launched New Flight to Delhi

From December 1, Somon Air started regular non-stop flights from Dushanbe to Delhi and return. These flights are performed on a regular basis every week operated by a Boeing 737 aircraft. The inauguration flight carried 107 passengers from

Dushanbe to Delhi. Flights depart from Dushanbe at 03:30 local time and arrive in Delhi at 06:30 local time. Departure time from Delhi is at 08:00 local time and arrival in Dushanbe is at 10:00 local time. The flight duration is approximately 2 hours 30 minutes.

To date, Somon Air has successfully operated flights from Tajikistan to Germany, the UAE, Turkey, China, Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The airline fleet consists of Boeing 737-300, -800 and -900 aircraft and Airbus H125 helicopter.








# Jetprivilege is now Intermiles

*~ Introducing InterMiles – a programme that empowers  
and rewards the travel and lifestyle needs for new-age  
Indian consumers ~*

**J**et Privilege Private Limited (JPPL), the independent loyalty and rewards management company, part of the Etihad Aviation Group, has unveiled its new brand identity 'InterMiles', propelling its intent to fulfil the evolving travel & lifestyle aspirations of discerning consumers. InterMiles will encompass both the award-winning loyalty and rewards programme (previously, JetPrivilege) and the ubiquitous rewards and recognition currency (previously, JPMiles). The programme will offer its growing base of close to 10 million members the opportunity to earn and redeem InterMiles, the new age currency of engagement, across travel, hospitality and lifestyle services across 10+ categories and 150+ programme partners.

The company has been on an exciting transformational journey over the last 5 years to expand from an

airline-centric programme to emerging as an everyday travel-and-lifestyle rewards programme as discerning consumers have shifted beyond transactional rewards and cashback. In fact, over the last six months alone, the programme has managed over 33 billion InterMiles.

Speaking about the development, Mr. Manish Dureja, Managing Director, Jet Privilege Pvt. Ltd. said, "We are embarking on a new journey with InterMiles, built on sound business fundamentals, the trust of millions of members and the passion of a committed team. What started as a frequent flyer programme has, today, become the platform of choice that empowers our members to fulfill their travel and lifestyle aspirations. As we reinforce our commitment to the promise of making our members' journey more fulfilling, our growth plan is, focused on aggregating more benefits and simplifying access to

a growing bouquet of experiences and rewards."

The name InterMiles suggests the interchangeable nature of the rewards currency where it can be earned and redeemed across platforms including airlines, hotels, dine, shop, fuel among others. A critical part of the new design was to create a distinctive marque that would both be recognizable and memorable. The marque, comprising a dot (the first step of the journey) and dash (the way/path one takes on the journey), signifies the brand's promise to customers to make their every journey more rewarding. The brand colour is a bespoke shade, 'Twilight Red' that combines warmth, enthusiasm, playfulness and energy that will appeal to the core target group of experience seekers.

Commenting on the brand identity, Mr. Zameer Kochar, Vice President – Marketing and Member Engagement, said, "We know that seeking unique, fulfilling and memorable experiences is a key driver for India's growing segment of discerning consumers. InterMiles is driven by our vision to make a positive difference in our consumers' lives. We have therefore designed a distinctive brand identity that represents this growing community of experience seekers. The brand identity stood out among our consumers for the simplicity of the name that created easy understanding and high appeal."

The InterMiles journey is a rewarding one as every InterMile a member earns, moves them to a higher Tier with additional benefits and privileges. Earning Miles has never been easier and there is more to gain from every booking made across all travel and lifestyle categories, including more airlines with any flight to any destination, up to the last seat available, hotels, dining, shopping, re-fueling and co-brand cards. Members can discover new places, make new memories and have more fulfilling journeys with free flights, free hotels, free fuel as well as 2500+ merchandise options at the Reward Store. Members can earn InterMiles for all their activities on [intermiles.com](https://intermiles.com).

# Qatar Airways

## launches Qsuite on Delhi sector

*Qatar Airways has launched its Qsuite business class seat product on the carrier's non-stop service between New Delhi and Doha. This is present on the new A350-900 aircraft, deployed on the Delhi sector.*



**T**he product was introduced on the Mumbai and Bengaluru sector last year. Other international

destinations, on Qatar Airways' network, where this product is available are Singapore, Tokyo, London, Paris,

New York, Chicago, Houston, Shanghai and Canberra.

The Qsuite offers passengers private cabins for up to four people with privacy panels allowing passengers to transform the adjoining seats into a private suite.

This business class product is currently available on select Qatar Airways' Boeing 777-300ER, Boeing 777-200LR, Airbus A350-900 and A350-1000 aircraft.

Naveen Chawla, Qatar Airways senior manager commercial-ISC said: "New Delhi was one of the first gateways of Qatar Airways to India in July 2005. The introduction of our award-winning Qsuite product on flights from Delhi, after launching in Mumbai and Bengaluru last year, further demonstrates the strength of our commitment to the Indian market.

"With Qsuite, we have truly redefined business and luxury travel and we are certain that our passengers flying from New Delhi will gladly welcome the globally loved product in the A350-900 fleet which will now fly between New Delhi and Doha."



## VFS Global opens Bulgaria visa centres in India

Chandigarh, Chennai, Goa, Gurugram, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jalandhar, Kochi, Kolkata, Puducherry, Pune and Thiruvananthapuram.

Customers can enjoy a range of VFS Global services including automated SMS updates on the progress of the application, courier return service for doorstep delivery of processed passports, and prime time slots for submitting their applications and collecting the passports outside of regular business hours.

They can also opt to submit their applications through the Premium Lounge that offers personalised assistance. Currently, VFS Global

**V**FS Global, a leading outsourcing and technology services company serving governments and diplomatic missions worldwide, has opened new Bulgaria visa application centres in New Delhi and Mumbai. Prior to this, customers had to visit the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in New Delhi to apply for their visas. The company is also expected to roll out Bulgaria visa services in 14 more Indian cities, namely Ahmedabad, Bengaluru,

operates 95 Bulgaria visa application centres in Kazakhstan, Oman, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE and Ukraine. Commenting on the new Bulgaria visa facilities in India, Vinay Malhotra, regional group chief operating officer, middle east, south Asia and China, VFS Global says, "VFS Global has been working closely with Bulgaria, offering visa services in other regions, and is honoured have this trust reinforced through this extension of services to India. "Bulgaria has been rapidly climbing every Indian traveller's wish list, and we look forward to providing our best-in-class visa services to them."



## Goair starts maiden flights to Saudi Arabia

*Goair has started new operations between Kannur in Kerala and Dammam in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), marking its maiden flights to Saudi Arabia.*

**T**he inaugural flight will take off from Kannur (G8 59) on December 19, 2019 and land in Dammam the same day. The return flight (G8 60) departs the same night.

This is the low-cost carrier's fifth destination in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, ninth international and 34th sequential destination.

**Jeh Wadia, managing director, Goair** says, "With the new flight to KSA, GoAir further consolidates its international network – within a short span of 14 months we have added nine destinations. Our flights to Dammam are already receiving an overwhelming



response. Dammam is Goair's fourth international destination from Kannur International Airport. I'm sure that the

new flights will add a lot of value to Indian workforce who are looking at working in or visiting Dammam."

## SIA to fly 337-seater B787-10 Dreamliner to Chennai from May



**S**ingapore Airlines (SIA) has said it will operate on Chennai-Singapore route with a Boeing 787-10 Dreamliner, replacing the Airbus A330-300, starting May next year, which will help it mount more flights to the Tamil Nadu capital city. SIA will be the first international carrier to deploy the Dreamliner to Chennai, a release said on Monday.

"Singapore Airlines is delighted to start services on this latest generation aircraft to Chennai" said David Lim, general manager for India, Singapore Airlines. SIA 787-10s are configured with 337 seats in two class configuration-- 36 in business and rest 301 in economy class.

With the introduction of the new aircraft, Singapore Airlines will increase its frequency out of Chennai to 13 flights per week from the previous 10, it said. Combined with its subsidiary SilkAir, this number will progressively increase to 17 flights a week by June next year, SIA said in the release..

# Vistara Completes Five Glorious Years in Indian Aviation; Celebrates with Customers and Community

**V**istara, India's finest full-service carrier and a joint venture of Tata group and Singapore Airlines, completes five years of redefining air travel in India and celebrates the milestone occasion. The airline announced a celebratory, special 5th Anniversary Sale for 48 hours only, across its domestic and international network and for all three classes of travel – Economy, Premium Economy and Business Class. Under the Sale, Economy Class fares start from INR 995, Premium Economy from INR 1995 and Business Class from INR 5555. To share the joy with the community, Vistara also pledged to support the education and empowerment of ten underprivileged teenagers and young adults by partnering focused programs of Smile Foundation, a Delhi based NGO.

The 'Vistara 5th Anniversary Sale' opened at 0001 hrs on 09 January 2020 for 48 hours for travel between 25 January 2020 and 30 September 2020. An advance purchase of at least 15 days is required to avail sale fares across all cabin classes. RBL Bank and Bank of Baroda credit card holders can avail an additional cashback of up to INR 2000 on booking directly with Vistara using the airline's website or iOS and Android mobile apps. Cashback of INR 500 and INR 1000 can be availed on one-way and

round-trip fares, respectively, on domestic flight bookings. For international bookings, customers can get cashback of INR 1000 and INR 2000 on one-way and round-trip fares, respectively.

Vistara has partnered Smile Foundation, an NGO that works towards the welfare of children and their families, to support two ongoing programs, 'Mission Education' and 'Swabhiman'. Vistara's association with the former sponsors the education of five youths aged between 18 and 20 for the next five years, while that with the latter supports skill-building of five meritorious underprivileged girl students aged between 13 and 19 for one year.

Vistara launched its operations on 9 January 2015 with only two aircraft and two destinations on the map. As of this day, the airline has a total of 39 aircraft in operations flying to 34 destinations across the length and breadth of India

and cities abroad, and has flown over 20 million passengers. Vistara continues to grow rapidly across India and abroad, as it is poised to induct over 50 narrow-body and wide-body aircraft over the next four years, including Airbus A320neo and Airbus A321neo for domestic and international short and medium-haul operations and Boeing B787-9 for long-haul international operations.

The 'Vistara 5th Anniversary Sale' offered customers the chance to fly India's best airline to their favourite destinations across India and abroad at attractive fares.

Vistara is India's highest-rated airline on Skytrax and TripAdvisor and the winner of several 'Best Airline' awards. It has consistently raised the bar for operations and service delivery in the Indian aviation industry in a short span of time to be today known as India's only five-star airline (per 2020 APEX OFFICIAL AIRLINE RATINGS™).





# Qatar Airways to Showcase Its Ultra-Modern Airbus A350-1000 Alongside Its State-Of-The-Art Gulfstream G500 At The Kuwait Aviation Show 2020

*The exhibition will be taking place from 15–18 January, and will draw tens of thousands of trade and public visitors*

**Q**atar Airways is pleased to announce its participation in the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020, where it will display its state-of-the-art Airbus A350-1000 fitted with its multi award-winning Business Class seat, Qsuite, and the ultra-modern private jet Gulfstream G500 from its Qatar Executive fleet.

Taking place over four days from 15–18 January 2020, the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 is held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 is an important platform for regional and international airlines and aviation companies to showcase their latest products and services. The event will kick-start the New Year for the industry, with over 300 exhibitors, 60 aircraft on display, 15,000 trade visitors, and 60,000 public visitors expected.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: “Qatar Airways is delighted to participate in the second edition of the Kuwait Aviation Show, which is set to draw thousands of visitors from the aviation industry. In this year’s edition, our Airbus A350-1000 and Gulfstream G500 will be on display to international visitors as a demonstration of our commitment to ensuring the best service for our passengers.”

“Qatar and Kuwait enjoy a strong relationship and bilateral cooperation at all levels. Demand for our flights between Doha and Kuwait City

continues to grow as we now operate 84 flights weekly between Hamad International Airport and Kuwait International Airport. We are proud to offer our passengers from Kuwait the opportunity to visit more than 160 destinations worldwide on board young aircraft via Doha.”

On display the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 will be Qatar Airways’ Airbus A350-1000. The world’s most technologically advanced aircraft features an unparalleled ambient design and superior levels of comfort and well-being, setting a new standard of passenger experience.

Qatar Airways’ Airbus A350-1000 aircraft features the airline’s patented, award-winning Business Class experience, Qsuite, which offers the industry’s first-ever double bed in Business Class, as well as stow away privacy panels that enable passengers in adjoining seats to create their own private room – a first of its kind in the industry.

Also on display will be the Gulfstream G500, the airline’s ultra-modern executive jet that sets an industry benchmark by offering one of the quietest cabins as well as optimum cabin altitude pressure. Operated by Qatar Executive, the private jet charter division of Qatar Airways Group, the aircraft is perfectly suited for passengers who wish to maximise their travel time while experiencing the ultimate in comfort and privacy.

A multiple award-winning airline, Qatar Airways was named ‘World’s Best



Airline’ by the 2019 World Airline Awards, managed by Skytrax. It was also named ‘Best Airline in the Middle East’, ‘World’s Best Business Class’, and ‘Best Business Class Seat’, in recognition of its ground-breaking Business Class experience, Qsuite. It is the only airline to have been awarded the coveted ‘Skytrax Airline of the Year’ title, which is recognised as the pinnacle of excellence in the airline industry, five times.

Qatar Airways currently operates a modern fleet of more than 250 aircraft via its hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA), to more than 160 destinations worldwide. The world’s fastest-growing airline has added several exciting new destinations to its growing network this year, including Rabat, Morocco; Izmir, Turkey; Malta; Davao, Philippines; Lisbon, Portugal; Mogadishu, Somalia; Langkawi, Malaysia; and Gaborone, Botswana. The airline will add Santorini, Greece; Dubrovnik, Croatia; and Osaka, Japan to its extensive route network in 2020.

# Four-day Cathay Pacific International Chinese New Year Carnival

*New format, new activities for families to enjoy blissful times*

**A**s the Year of the Rat kicks off a new 12-year cycle, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) is going to celebrate Chinese New Year in a brand new way – the “Cathay Pacific International Chinese New Year Carnival”. Rather than simply staging the night parade on the first day of Chinese New Year, the HKTB is putting together a carnival that will run from the first day (25 January) all the way to the fourth day (28 January) of the Year of the Rat. Organised by the HKTB and title-sponsored by Cathay Pacific, the four-day carnival will be held at the Art Park of the West Kowloon Cultural District – also a first time for the HKTB’s Chinese New Year event. In addition to the signature parade, the event will feature a variety of family-friendly elements for people to kick off an auspicious new year with their loved ones.

HKTB Chairman Dr YK Pang said, “The HKTB has been staging its Chinese New Year event for nearly a quarter of a century to spread happiness across the city. This year being the Year of the Rat, the leader of the 12 Chinese zodiac signs, it is not only the beginning of a new cycle, but also marks the staging of the 25th edition of this signature event in Chinese New Year. This provides the perfect opportunity to celebrate the much-loved festival in a new way. While enjoying the carnival, we hope the people of Hong Kong will share the festivities with their families and friends living abroad. We will also certainly show to visitors from around the world with our fun, vibrant celebrations that Hong Kong remains an open and welcoming travel destination.”

Cathay Pacific Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Mr Ronald Lam said, “As the home carrier of Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific has always sought to promote and showcase our home hub as much as possible, while



also playing our part to help develop Hong Kong into a truly international city. We are delighted to once again be sponsoring this fabulous event for the 22nd year in a row as we celebrate the Chinese New Year. We hope that both the people of Hong Kong and visitors from all over the world will enjoy this spectacular carnival, and experience the rich and vibrant festive culture of this city. We look forward to another great celebration, showcasing the fun, jubilant atmosphere and energy that embodies the character of Hong Kong.”

## Brand new four-day carnival pumping up festivities day and night

The four-day International Chinese New Year Carnival is free to all. Both international and local performing groups will join the daily parades along the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade. Even if you miss the parades, you can enjoy their stage performances from day to night. The stimulating programmes, along with the family-friendly activities, will guarantee festival-goers a great time whenever they join the event. The three highlights of the carnival are:

### 1. Greatest number of international performing troupes in the event's history

- The carnival will introduce 26 international performing troupes, a record for the event, plus 22 local performing teams, adding up to over a thousand performers. On top of taking

part in the parades, they will provide stage performances on roster from day to night. - The 26 international teams come from 19 countries and regions in Asia, Europe, the Americas and Africa. Among them, 22 teams will be performing in Hong Kong for the first time, doubling the number of last year's event. International teams that are performing in Hong Kong for the first time include:

- India's V. Unbeatable, which rose to international fame in reality show America's Got Talent, will stun with their hair-raising flipping acts and captivating dances;
- NBC World of Dance and HHI PH Varsity champions UPeez and VPeez from the Philippines will steal the spotlight with their dynamic hip hop dance moves.

### 2. Photo spots with giant installations and decorations

- Visitors and locals can take plenty of photos against various backdrops incorporating Hong Kong's skyline, which is especially mesmerising during sunset. Photo hotspots include:

- Festive mouse cartoon characters;
- A giant inflatable caterpillar from children's favourite The Very Hungry Caterpillar, a picture book by American children's literature writer Eric Carle.

### 3. Food & games

- The first Chinese New Year market will feature 15 booths serving food and fun workshops:

- Enjoy flavourful Hong Kong, American, Taiwanese and Korean snacks, including Korean fish cake skewers in soup by Kelly's Cape Bop, a street food joint recommended by Michelin Guide Hong Kong for five years in a row;
- Workshops on balloon twisting and face painting are available to keep children happily busy.





# Virgin Atlantic

## announces A350 routes and extra Delhi and San Francisco services for 2020

- Virgin Atlantic has announced the routes that will be operated by its new A350 aircraft next summer.
- The aircraft, which features a new Upper Class cabin, will fly to Johannesburg from March 2020, Los Angeles from April 2020 (VS23/VS24), San Francisco from May 2020 (VS19/VS20) and Lagos from August 2020.
- Johannesburg will be reduced from a twice-daily B787 service to a daily one on the A350.

Virgin's A350 debuted on Heathrow-JFK in September and will continue to serve the popular route next year. The airline has 12 A350-1000 aircraft on order, all of

which are scheduled to join its fleet by 2021.

Virgin also said it will add a second daily flight on its Heathrow-Delhi service and an extra weekly flight to

San Francisco during the summer 2020 season. With the launch of flights to Mumbai from Heathrow last month, it will take Virgin to three daily services to India next summer. The additional Delhi flights will begin on March 29, departing Heathrow in the morning to complement the current evening service. Mumbai will be retimed to an evening departure. An additional Friday service will take its San Francisco route to twice-daily. It currently flies 13 times per week.

Juha Jarvinen, EVP Commercial at Virgin Atlantic, said: "Next year will mark twenty years since Virgin Atlantic started flying to Delhi, and the service continues to grow in popularity for both business and leisure travel. "The second daily service from Heathrow is an excellent opportunity to meet customer demand on this route and, coupled with our new service to Mumbai, we're able to offer even more choice and unrivalled Virgin Atlantic service to customers travelling between the UK and India." The carrier will also boost capacity on several leisure-oriented routes from Manchester next summer.



# Finavia airports

## had 26 million passengers in 2019 – a year of moderate growth in air traffic

*2019 was a busy year at Finavia's airports even though growth in air traffic was more moderate than in previous years. A total of 26 million passengers (+4,2%) travelled on scheduled and chartered flights.*

Last year, 21,9 million passengers (+4,9 %) travelled through Helsinki Airport, the largest international airport in Finland. The number of passengers using Finavia's other airports increased to a total of 4,2 million (+0,6 %). Out of the larger airports, the number of passengers increased the most at Turku Airport (+22,6 %), Helsinki Airport (+4,9 %) and Rovaniemi Airport (+2,6 %). A total of 1,5 million passengers (+1,5%) used Finavia's airports in Lapland in 2019. The number of passengers declined slightly at Oulu Airport (-3,6 %) and Tampere Airport (-2,5 %) due to a decrease in the number of flights.

### Number of transfer passengers continued to grow at Helsinki Airport

The number of passengers transferring from one international flight to another at Helsinki Airport



increased by 16,7 per cent. Flights to and from Japan, Germany, China and Sweden had the most international transfer passengers. Last year, international transfer passengers amounted to 38,6 per cent of all passengers passing through Helsinki Airport.

A total of 659 000 passengers (+18,2 %) travelled on flights to and from China in 2019. For the Japan routes, the number of passengers was 837 000 (+11,2 %). Currently, flights are operated from Helsinki Airport to nine destinations in China. Helsinki Airport also offers flights to five destinations in Japan, which is more than any other European airport offers. In addition, three weekly flights also started to operate to Beijing's new Daxing International Airport last autumn. In December, Helsinki Airport opened Europe's only direct connection to Sapporo, Japan.

1 644 000 passengers (-1,6 %) travelling on the Sweden routes, 594 000 passengers (+15,2 %) travelling on the Russia routes and 323 000 passengers (+9,4 %) travelling on the Estonia routes passed through Helsinki Airport in 2019.

"Helsinki Airport is still very successful in attracting passengers. Asian transfer passengers form a significant user group at Helsinki Airport as Finland's geographic location between Asia and Europe is ideal for transfers. During the 2020 summer season, 53 weekly flights to China and 45 weekly flights to Japan will be operated from Helsinki Airport. The smooth travel and the high quality of customer service give us a competitive advantage. For example, many services are available in Chinese both at the airport and in our digital environments," says **Petri Vuori**, Finavia's Vice President, Sales and Route Development.

Around 439 000 passengers travelled to North America from Helsinki Airport in 2019, which is approximately 103 000 passengers more than in 2018 (+30,5 %). The number of flights offered from Helsinki Airport to North America has increased

compared to last year – for example, due to the new route to Los Angeles that opened in March.

### **New routes from our network airports – Lapland remains a very attractive destination**

Like last year, routes to Germany, Sweden and Spain were the most popular when all Finavia airports were considered. For our network airports, the number of international passengers was highest on routes to Sweden. At Helsinki Airport, routes to Germany were the most popular.

Turku Airport continued its positive development as the number of passengers increased to 453 000 (+22,6 %). At Turku Airport, flights to Gdansk, Poland, had the highest number of passengers in 2019. Turku Airport's selection of direct routes to European destinations was extended considerably last year. In summer 2020, direct flights to Kutaisi, Georgia, will start to be operated from Turku Airport.

In December, Oulu Airport reached one million annual passengers for the fourth time in its history. In total, 1,1 million passengers passed through Oulu Airport in 2019, which is a little less than in 2018 (-3,6 %).

Rovaniemi Airport was used by 661 000 passengers (+2,6 %) last year. At the airport, the international route with most passengers was the route from Rovaniemi to London. During the current winter season, Rovaniemi Airport also offers flights to Manchester. The most significant route opening during the winter season was the launch of direct flights from Rovaniemi to Istanbul for the winter season in December.

The North is still very attractive – a total of 1,5 million passengers (+1,5 %) used Finavia's airports in Lapland in 2019. The number of passengers travelling on chartered flights was 309 000 (-8,0 %), and 1 374 chartered flights (-6,3 %) arrived at Finavia's airports in Lapland. Last year's number of chartered flights was affected by the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook and the classification of some of the flights as scheduled flights. The highest number

of chartered flights to Lapland came from the United Kingdom, with Kittilä, Rovaniemi and Ivalo being the most popular destinations.

Finavia's development programme for Lapland's airports to improve the customer experience and raise the level of service was completed as planned before the beginning of the 2019 Christmas season. The development programme consisted of investments amounting to EUR 55 million aimed at improving the customer experience and raising the level of service at the Ivalo, Kittilä and Rovaniemi airports.

### **A wider range of services for passengers at airports**

"2019 was a year of more moderate growth and a good year overall: air traffic still increased at a rate higher than the long-term average. At Helsinki Airport, we opened Aukio, which is the new heart of Non-Schengen area, and the new West Pier serving passengers on long-haul flights and wide-bodied aircrafts.

Finavia works persistently to provide a first-class customer experience for passengers. In Lapland, we were able to open the extensions of Rovaniemi and Kittilä airports to customers before the start of the busiest Christmas season.

It is also worth noting that our growth and development has been carried out sustainably. We are a pioneer in the development of more sustainable airport operations – all of Finavia's 21 airports are already carbon neutral," says Petri Vuori.

Finavia aims to make Helsinki Airport one of the best airports in the world in terms of both services and the atmosphere of the airport. 2020 will be a time of construction work at Helsinki Airport. The new car park P1/P2, now almost at its full height, will be opened by autumn 2020. The construction of the new entrance to the airport and the arrivals and departure halls has begun as planned. The range of services offered at the airport will be extended as new shops and restaurants are opened in the gate area during the spring.

# KLM looks ahead to tech and travel trends for 2020



**T**ravellers are changing the way they search, book and travel. How will technology and passengers influence travel in 2020? In this forecast, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines looks to the future of travel: from booking with the aid of voice technology and sustainable alternatives such as rail services, to facial recognition technology at security.

## Gen Z and millennials go for Destination Instagram\*

Surveys show that half of Gen Z and millennials consider how 'Instagrammable' their destination will be when booking. How many "likes" will it generate? The guarantee of taking beautiful holiday snaps is a prerequisite for 25.8% of them. The photos have to be authentic and taken by them personally.

## Travellers increasingly use voice technology to navigate

Many people spend hours consulting search engines and browsing websites for their ideal travel destination. "Smart speakers" are assisting them on their quest, with more and more travellers finding their ideal destination and suitable air tickets using voice technology. KLM's booking service, which is often consulted with the aid of Google Assistant, is attracting 10% more users every month.

## Travel inspiration on social media comes from friends and family\*

Instagram is expected to keep growing as a significant source of travel inspiration. Travellers mainly look at posts from friends and family (65.3%)

or click on hashtags to seek inspiration from strangers (45.9%). The role of influencers and celebrities as a source of holiday inspiration is declining more and more (14.5%). Also, more than 50% of travellers don't trust photos of holiday destinations shared by influencers.

## Combining air and train travel will become more popular

Sustainability is important and travellers are taking it into account when booking. This is why travel operators are joining forces wherever possible to offer rail tickets for shorter distances as an alternative to flying. KLM will add more options to its website to plan short distances by train. The guiding principle being that the combination of air and rail travel can be planned and booked easily.

## Are you compensating for CO 2 emissions?

More and more passengers are compensating for their share of carbon emissions. A survey\* commissioned by KLM revealed that 38.8% of travellers plan to compensate for CO 2 emissions next year. To make it easier and quicker for passengers to do so, KLM is introducing a new quick mobile payment system in 2020.

## Your face is your passport

Queues will be shorter at the airport thanks to facial recognition technology. Earlier this year, KLM conducted tests where passengers passed through checkpoints at security, lounges and boarding by showing a selfie in the KLM App on their phones, instead of

presenting their passports. The KLM App shows passengers at which airport this technology may be used. More and more passengers will encounter this technology in 2020 when new tests begin. Naturally, it is up to the passenger to decide whether they want to try this digital innovation or not.

## AI to shorten waiting times in unforeseen circumstances

Unforeseen circumstances, such as thunderstorms, can lead to flight delays. Artificial Intelligence (AI) helps reduce inconvenience to passengers by rapidly calculating how best to deploy available crews and aircraft. This will further improve flight punctuality in 2020.

## Even more luxury and relaxation at the airport

All sorts of innovations will further improve the ways travellers spend their time at the airport. Transfer passengers will find sleeping pods in KLM's new non-Schengen Crown Lounge or they can enjoy a luxury dinner at Restaurant Blue, with dishes created by Michelin-starred chef Joris Bijdendijk.

## Mobile telephone off or at home\*

Travellers increasingly prefer to stay off their mobile phone while on holiday, or at least to use it less. On the other hand, they can't go without a phone altogether. Around 50% of passengers would prefer to use their phones as little as possible on holiday, but also indicate that this is not always possible. Almost a third of passengers would like to travel without a phone, but are afraid they will find this impossible.



## Ural Airlines announces the launch of flights to Mumbai



**U**ral Airlines will be launching 4 weekly flights operations to Moscow- Mumbai, India effective Mar 30, 2020 with brand new A320 Neo aircraft having 2 Class configuration.

Spokesperson of Ural airlines stated that, "We have selected Minar Travels to position our brand, create awareness of our products and



sell our services in this important new market. Minar Travels will use its vast experience and will be the

immediate liaison for the airline's sales development in India, including Sales, ticketing and direct support services to the travel trade."

"Minar Travels is happy to be associated with Ural airlines as their exclusive GSA in India. JSC Ural airlines is one of the fastest growing airlines of Russian Federation and has aggressive plans to grow in India market and connect the 2 important cities of both the countries as well as offer seamless connectivity within Russia including Saint Petersburg and beyond to Europe including London via their hub in Moscow. With departure from Mumbai 0540 hrs and arriving in Moscow at 1005 hrs, the airline is offering convenient timings for business travellers and tourist groups, similarly flights from Moscow will depart at 1920 hrs and arrive Mumbai at 0435 hrs. We look forward to a great working association with Ural airlines and are very optimistic of making Ural airlines operations to India a success," commented Shallin Magoo, Vice President, Minar Group.

## Singapore Airlines to fly A350 on Ahmedabad sector

**S**ingapore Airlines will deploy its Airbus A350-900 medium haul aircraft on the Ahmedabad-Singapore route. The inaugural flight SQ531 will depart from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport at 2305 hrs on February 1, 2020.

Starting with six-time weekly services on this new aircraft type, it will increase to daily operations from March 29, 2020.

With this, Singapore Airlines becomes the first international carrier to bring this aircraft type to Ahmedabad.

The A350-900 aircraft is fitted with the new business- and economy class cabin products — the business class cabin has 40 seats in a 1-2-1 arrangement and the economy class cabin has 263 seats in a 3-3-3 configuration.

Special all-inclusive fares on Ahmedabad-Singapore sector start from ₹27,700 for economy class and ₹68,300 for business class.

David Lim, general manager India, Singapore Airlines said, "Singapore Airlines is delighted to commence



services on the latest generation Airbus A350 medium haul aircraft to Ahmedabad.

"The aircraft's new regional cabin products combined with our award-winning inflight service will provide travellers from Gujarat enhanced comfort and an unparalleled travel experience."

In other news, starting March 29, Singapore Airlines will add a fifth weekly flight to Kolkata, while its regional wing Silk Air will cease services to the city on the same day.

# SWISS now flying

## with a fully-refurbished Airbus A340 fleet

*SWISS concluded its cabin refurbishment program for its Airbus A340 aircraft fleet. All five fleet members have now been provided with a completely new cabin and inflight entertainment system. As a result, SWISS now offers its passengers internet connectivity on board throughout its long-haul fleet.*

**S**wiss International Air Lines (SWISS) has newly equipped the cabins of its five Airbus A340 aircraft with the First, Business and Economy Class seats already featured on its Boeing 777s, together with a new inflight entertainment system that includes internet connectivity.

Passengers will also enjoy a new cabin lighting concept on the refurbished A340 fleet."

With the completion of our Airbus A340 cabin refurbishment program, we are further underlining our quality commitment, and now offer all our customers the same premium air

travel experience, including inflight internet connectivity on all our long-haul flights," said **SWISS Chief Commercial Officer Tamur Goudarzi Pour**.

SWISS operates its Airbus A340s on services between Zurich and Boston, Johannesburg and Shanghai. The A340 will also be deployed on SWISS's new Zurich-Osaka (Japan) route where flights commence on March 1, 2020. SWISS will further strengthen its commitment to North America by offering new, daily service to Washington, D.C. from Zurich beginning March 29, 2020. The route will be operated with an Airbus A330-300 aircraft seating 236 passengers. The new flight will bring service on the Zurich-Washington, D.C. route to 14 weekly frequencies provided by SWISS and its joint-venture partner United Airlines.

Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) is The Airline of Switzerland, serving over 100 destinations in 44 countries worldwide from Zurich and Geneva and carrying almost 19 million passengers a year with its fleet of around 90 aircraft. The company's Swiss WorldCargo division provides a comprehensive range of airport-to-airport airfreight services for high-value and care-intensive consignments to around 175 destinations in more than 80 countries.

As The Airline of Switzerland, SWISS embodies its home country's traditional values, and is committed to delivering the highest product and service quality. With its workforce of some 9,000 personnel, SWISS generated total revenues of over CHF 5 billion in 2018. SWISS is part of the Lufthansa Group, and is also a member of Star Alliance, the world's biggest airline network.







# British Airways

## to deploy A350 with Club Suite on Bengaluru sector

### British Airways introduces new plane on Bengaluru-London route

**T**he A350 aircraft is special in the sense that it is the only plane of the British Airways in India, which is loaded with luxuries such as club suites

The daily flight from Bengaluru to London, which started from January 1, is marked by sophistication, luxury, privacy and branded business cabin

**BENGALURU :** British Airways on Thursday announced the launch of its state-of-the-art A350 aircraft with the highly-anticipated club suite from Kempegowda international airport here to London's Heathrow terminal 5.

The daily flight from Bengaluru to London, which started from January 1, is marked by sophistication, luxury, privacy and branded business cabin called Club Suite with luxurious flat-bed seats, British Airways head of sales, (Asia-Pacific and Middle-East) Moran

Birger told a press conference here.

We've launched our brandnew Airbus A350-1000 aircraft on the Bengaluru-to-London routes. It's fantastic thing we can do for Bengaluru, for India as well. It's the newest aircraft we have in our entire fleet," Birger said.

The A350 aircraft is special in the sense that it is the only plane of the British Airways in India, which is loaded with luxuries such as club suites, a vanity unit and mirror, high-speed WiFi, 18.5-inch inflight entertainment screens, high-definition gate-to-gate programming and PC/USB.

Along with the all-new 56-seat club world cabin, the three-cabin A350 features the latest world traveller plus (Premium Economy) cabin, plush new pillows and quilts, new amenity kits and an enhanced service and an improved

dining experience, the airlines said in a statement. This is only the fourth destination across the entire network of British Airways to receive this aircraft. The other three destinations are Dubai, Toronto and Tel Aviv.

On why Bengaluru was chosen for the A350-1000 service to London, Birger said, As one of the busiest airports in India, Bengaluru is an important hub for the airline and we are delighted to welcome our new A350 aircraft featuring our new club suite business cabin, which is one of the most exciting developments in our current 6.5 billion investment programme." He added that British Airways is a well-established brand in India and it would continue to invest here to make air travel a seamless experience for its customers.

# IndiGo

## to start flights to Dammam from three Indian cities



*“The airline will operate a total of 10 daily direct flights connecting Dammam with Mumbai, Hyderabad and Trivandrum,” IndiGo said on Thursday, adding it is part of its bid to expand international operations and strengthen presence in the Middle East.*

IndiGo will start flights to Dammam in Saudi Arabia from February 16, making it the 24th international destination for the no-frills airline which has been aggressively expanding its operations.

Dammam would be 87th destination overall and the third in Saudi Arabia for the carrier, according to a release.

From February 16, the airline would commence services on Hyderabad-Dammam route. The flights to Dammam from Mumbai and Trivandrum

would begin from March 7.

“The airline will operate a total of 10 daily direct flights connecting Dammam with Mumbai, Hyderabad and Trivandrum,” IndiGo said, adding it is part of its bid to expand international operations and strengthen presence in the Middle East.

Commenting on this new service, William Boulter, chief commercial officer, IndiGo said, “We are excited to launch our new flights to Dammam from three cities strengthening

connectivity from western and southern India. As the capital of the Eastern Province of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dammam offers a well-balanced mixture of history, culture, business and employment opportunities for everyone.

“Dammam holds immense potential for both business and leisure travellers. We are confident that these routes will be a step towards promotion of trade, culture and social cohesion through enhanced mobility between the two nations”.

### Flight Schedule:

Flight No.	Departure	Arrival	Time of Departure	Time of Arrival	Frequency
6E 1225	Hyderabad	Dammam	0030	0250	Daily
6E 1226	Dammam	Hyderabad	0350	1020	Daily
6E 1216	Mumbai	Dammam	0245	0425	Daily
6E 1219	Dammam	Mumbai	1805	0025	Daily
6E 1837	Mumbai	Dammam	1925	2050	Daily
6E 1838	Dammam	Mumbai	2150	0410	Daily
6E 1223	Thiruvananthapuram	Dammam	1355	1705	Daily
6E 1221	Dammam	Thiruvananthapuram	0525	1235	Daily
6E 1356	Thiruvananthapuram	Dammam	0920	1140	Daily
6E 1357	Dammam	Thiruvananthapuram	0055	0820	Daily





# Spicejet

has announced the launch of four new flights on its domestic network

**A**urangabad, the airline's 53rd domestic destination last year, will be connected with Ahmedabad via a daily flight, effective February 15 onwards.

Spicejet will add an additional frequency on the Mumbai-Mangaluru-Mumbai (second frequency) sector.

The low-cost carrier will service the routes using a mix of 90-seater Bombardier Q400 aircraft and 189-seater Boeing 737-800 aircraft. All the new flights introduced will be operational daily, except the flight on the Ahmedabad-Aurangabad sector which will operate on all days except Sunday.

Flight schedule:

Flight No.	Origin	Destination	Departure	Arrival	Frequency	Effective from
SG-2933	Ahmedabad	Aurangabad	2:05 pm	3:25 pm	1,2,3,4,5,6	Feb 15
SG-2934	Aurangabad	Ahmedabad	3:45 pm	5:05 pm	1,2,3,4,5,6	Feb 15
SG-6356	Mumbai	Mangaluru	08:55 am	10:35 am	Daily	Feb 10
SG-6353	Mangaluru	Mumbai	11:05 am	12:40 pm	Daily	Feb 10

(\*1- Monday, 2- Tuesday, 3- Wednesday, 4- Thursday, 5- Friday, 6- Saturday, 7- Sunday)



# Royal Air Maroc

## to join oneworld on 1 April

**R**oyal Air Maroc will join the oneworld® alliance effective 1 April 2020, becoming oneworld's first full member in the African continent and bringing even more destinations and benefits for oneworld's frequent flyers. The entry of Royal Air Maroc into oneworld from 1 April follows a 15-month implementation programme to integrate Royal Air Maroc into the alliance. The airline's regional subsidiary Royal Air Maroc Express will also join as a oneworld affiliate member from 1 April.

Royal Air Maroc was first announced as a oneworld member-elect in New York in December 2018, weeks before oneworld celebrated its 20th anniversary and launched a transformation of the alliance. oneworld and Royal Air Maroc will host a joining ceremony in March in Marrakesh to celebrate the airline coming on board. Royal Air Maroc to join oneworld on 1 April – 2 Royal Air Maroc will add 39 new destinations in 23 countries to the oneworld network, offering more flights and options for the

frequent flyers of the alliance's member airlines. The national carrier of Morocco, Royal Air Maroc connects its base in Casablanca with 108 destinations in 54 countries over six regions – Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East, North America and South America. These include oneworld hubs at Amman, Doha, London Heathrow, Madrid, Miami, Moscow Domodedovo and New York John F Kennedy. Effective 1 April, oneworld frequent flyers will enjoy the full range of oneworld benefits and services when travelling with Royal Air Maroc. The more than one million members of Royal Air Maroc's Safar Flyer loyalty programme will be able to earn and redeem awards on all oneworld member airlines effective 1 April.

Top tier members of Safar Flyer will have access to oneworld's network of 650 lounges worldwide, and other benefits including priority check-in and boarding.

Safar Flyer Platinum card holders will enjoy oneworld Priority Emerald privileges, which include access to First

and Business Class lounges, First Class priority check-in, priority boarding and fast track at select security lanes. Safar Flyer Gold card holders can look forward to oneworld Priority Sapphire privileges, including access to Business Class lounges, Business Class priority check-in and priority boarding. Safar Flyer Silver card holders will have access to oneworld Priority Ruby privileges, including Business Class priority check-in among other benefits. Flights operated by Royal Air Maroc will be available as part of the oneworld Explorer and Global Explorer fare products beginning 1 April.

Royal Air Maroc already codeshares with five oneworld members – American Airlines, Iberia, Qatar Airways, Royal Jordanian and S7 Airlines – with more partnerships expected in the coming months. American Airlines has also announced service to Casablanca from 4 June 2020, marking the airline's entrance into Africa. "We are honoured and delighted to welcome Royal Air Maroc into the alliance, adding our

first full member in the fast-growing African continent. The quality service and global network offered by Royal Air Maroc will position oneworld as the preferred alliance in Africa, where Casablanca is a leading global financial centre,” said Rob Gurney, CEO of oneworld. “We want to thank the team at Royal Air Maroc for all their hard work in the past year to prepare for its historic entrance into oneworld, and look forward to celebrating with them in Marrakesh in March.” “We are proud and excited to become the wings of oneworld in Africa and we are looking forward to a very successful cooperation that benefits our mutual clients. While the average duration of the integration process varies between 18 and 20 months, it would take us

just 15 months, between the invitation and the official integration, to become a full member of the prestigious oneworld Alliance. This is mainly due to the fact that our systems were at a higher level, which facilitated their alignment with those of the Alliance; and also thanks to the great efforts of our teams, who were motivated to lead successfully this grandiose project for Royal Air Maroc and the Kingdom,” said Abdelhamid Addou, Chief Executive Officer of Royal Air Maroc.

Royal Air Maroc is oneworld’s first new full member to join the alliance since 2014. The entry of Royal Air Maroc is the latest milestone in a year of transformation for the leading global alliance. In the last 12 months, oneworld unveiled new digital

technology to enable a truly seamless travel experience across member Royal Air Maroc to join oneworld on 1 April – 3 carriers and announced plans for the first oneworld branded lounge at Moscow Domodedovo Airport. The alliance also introduced a fresh brand positioning and tagline, Travel Bright, to kick off the alliance’s third decade and better reflect the millennial generation of today’s travellers. oneworld has embarked on this path of transformation as it continues its track record of being the most awarded global alliance. In 2019, it took home no fewer than eight airline alliance awards, and was the repeat winner of all of them, reinforcing its status as the preferred alliance of customers and the travel community.

## India’s commercial airline fleet grew 29% in 2019

*From 520 in 2018, the number of commercial aircraft in the country rose to 669 in 2019.*

India’s fleet of commercial aircraft growing by nearly 29%, Hindustan Times reported. This is despite Jet Airways shutting down operations in 2019 with its fleet of 123 aircrafts. Data from the country’s aviation regulator, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), reveals that in 2019, the country’s eight domestic carriers added 145 aircraft to their fleets, compared to 104 new aircraft in 2018.

**GoAir**, which inducted 17 aircraft in 2018, added 13 in 2019. **SpiceJet** inducted 46 aircraft, including six Bombardier Q400 for services to smaller cities, under the regional connectivity scheme. **AirAsia India** added eight aircraft in 2019 compared to five in 2018. **IndiGo**, the country largest airline with 47.5% of the passenger share, added 53 aircraft in 2019 compared to 60 in 2018. **Vistara**, which started international operations in 2019,

inducted 21 aircraft last year compared to five in 2018. National carrier **Air India**, inducted only three aircraft in 2019, while it had inducted 12 aircraft in 2018. **Air India Express**, a subsidiary of Air India, did not induct any new aircraft last year, but had inducted two Boeing B737 in 2018. **Alliance Air**, also an Air India subsidiary that mostly connects Metros to tier 2 and 3 cities, inducted three aircraft in 2018 and one in 2019.

The expansion of the commercial airline fleet indicates airlines are optimistic about future passenger growth. “Airlines prepare a plan of fleet expansion after studying the demand and supply ratio. It can be expected that Indian carriers will launch more flights, especially in the international sector, in the days to come.”

Aviation experts said that they expected passenger growth in 2020-21 to be significantly higher than the

previous year. The growth will also be affected by the fate of B737 MAX and the Airbus with A320neo aircraft, both of which have been grounded for safety reasons. The original manufacturer of Airbus A320neo is in the process of getting its problematic engines fixed. The deadline given by DGCA to retrofit the aircraft is January 31.

Kapil Kaul, President of the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA- India) said, “Indian carriers have been expanding despite grounding of B737Max by the DGCA and technical glitches faced in Airbus A320neo aircraft. Similarly, it is expected that the major airlines will focus more on international expansion in FY [financial year] 2021 and will continue their aggressive expansion in FY 2020 higher than planned. This will be done to compensate for the capacity released by Jet Airways and to secure slots in Mumbai airport.”



# Indian passports to have lotus symbol



**N**ew Indian passports will have a lotus symbol printed on them. This move by Indian government is facing harsh criticism from individuals and organisations, who

deem it unnecessary.

However, the Ministry of External Affairs of India (MEA) has issued a clarification on this. In a recent media briefing, Raveesh Kumar, official

spokesperson, MEA, India said that the printing of lotus symbol is a part of the government's enhanced security feature to identify fake passports.

He further stated that the move is in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) guidelines.

ICAO is a UN specialised agency that works with its 193 member states and industry groups to create international civil aviation standards and recommended practices, and policies for a safe, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible civil aviation sector.

The lotus symbol was chosen as it is the national flower of India. Although, other national symbols that hold a primary importance in India's past and present will also be used on the passports on rotational basis.



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# Vistara Adds Kathmandu to Network with Flights Starting 11 February, Opens Bookings

**V**istara, India's finest full-service carrier and a joint venture of Tata group and Singapore Airlines, today added Kathmandu, Nepal, as the fifth international destination to its fast-growing network. Vistara will operate daily

flights between Delhi and Kathmandu starting 11 February 2020, the bookings for which open today, progressively on all channels including Vistara's website [www.airvistara.com](http://www.airvistara.com), Vistara's iOS & Android mobile apps and through travel agents.

**Mr. Leslie Thng, Chief Executive Officer, Vistara**, said, "We are happy to launch services to Kathmandu, the gateway to a country with significant trade and cultural ties with India. The timing could not have been any better, as Nepal recently kick-started its global tourism campaign, 'Visit Nepal Year 2020' and prepares to welcome 2 million tourists this year. These factors make Kathmandu a promising addition to Vistara's growing network. As India's only five-star carrier, we look forward to contributing to Nepal's tourism growth meaningfully and providing business and leisure travellers alike the finest way to fly between the two countries."

With a vast domestic route network in India, Vistara customers can take convenient one-stop connections to/from Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune among other cities. Introductory round-trip fares between Delhi and Kathmandu are as follows:

Vistara is India's highest-rated airline on Skytrax and TripAdvisor and has been the winner of several 'Best Airline' awards. In a short span of five years, Vistara has raised the bar for operations and service delivery in the Indian aviation industry by offering the finest flying experience to travellers.



Sectors	Economy	Business
Delhi-Kathmandu-Delhi	INR 9,999	INR 39,999
Kathmandu-Delhi-Kathmandu	NPR 16,999	NPR 61,999

## SCHEDULE OF FLIGHTS BETWEEN DELHI AND KATHMANDU

(All timings shown are in local times)

Flight No.	From	To	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
UK155	Delhi (DEL)	Kathmandu (KTM)	1400 hrs	1615 hrs	Daily
UK156	Kathmandu (KTM)	Delhi (DEL)	1715 hrs	1845 hrs	Daily

Above mentioned flight details are subject to final regulatory approvals.

# W First arner Bros' hotel to open in Abu Dhabi



World's first Warner Bros' branded hotel, The WB Abu Dhabi, is set to open in 2021 on Abu Dhabi's Yas Island. The brand has collaborated with Miral, a key name in developing Abu Dhabi's leisure and tourism sector for this hotel.

Yas Island in Abu Dhabi continues to expand its offerings for its visitors through new collaborations with world's leading organisations.

Currently, under development, adjacent to the existing Warner Bros World Abu Dhabi theme park, the property is set over eight storeys and will offer over 250 rooms with interiors inspired by Warner Bros's film and television library.

The property will house a range of amenities and facilities for leisure and business travellers. This includes a child-friendly pool as well as indoor and outdoor Kid's Club options, a large ballroom, meeting rooms and a fully-equipped fitness centre.

The hotel's contemporary design will also include signature WB restaurants,

a premier spa and a shaded rooftop pool where guests soak in Yas Island's distinctive skyline.

Pam Lifford, president of Warner Bros. Global Brands and Experiences said, "Following the successful debut of Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, we are thrilled to expand our presence in the region with the studio's first-ever branded hotel. This new venture will pay tribute to Warner Bros' legacy of rich entertainment, offering fans a unique way to experience their favourite brands and characters."

Adding to this, H.E. Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, chairman of Miral said, "We are excited to announce the development of the world's first Warner Bros. themed hotel, here on Yas Island. This is yet another step in our journey to position Yas Island as one of the top global destinations for entertainment, leisure and business. Our partnership with Warner Bros. is a unique collaboration that adds another dimension to the outstanding immersive experiences available on Yas Island."



## Aman to open Miami property

Luxury hotel group Aman has announced plans for its second urban US property, to be located in the Faena District of Miami's South Beach. The two building development will be situated on the site of the former Versailles Hotel, and will offer a hotel and branded residences. No details have been released regarding room count or facilities – the project is scheduled to be completed in 2023.

Ahead of this Aman is set to open its first urban US hotel and residences within the Crown Building in New York's Manhattan towards the end of next year. The group also operates resort properties in Jackson Hole (Wyoming) and Canyon Point (Utah). The Aman brand was founded in 1988, with the first property (Amanpuri) opening on the Thai island of Phuket. The group now has 39 hotels and resorts in 22 destinations, and recently opened Aman Tokyo at the foothills of the Hidari Daimonji Hill in the northern part of the city.

Other forthcoming destinations include Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Bangkok. Commenting on the news Vladislav Doronin, Chairman and CEO of Aman said: "My strategy for Aman places continued focus on developing further urban destinations for the brand following the success of similar projects such as Aman Tokyo. "Aman Miami will give our guests the opportunity to connect with Aman in a culturally rich urban environment, whilst also serving as a gateway to Amanera in the Dominican Republic and Amanaya in the Turks and Caicos."





## Lemon Tree Hotels makes international debut



**L**emon Tree Hotels' first international property has opened its doors in the glitzy emirate of Dubai. Owned by Al Waleed Real Estate LLC, Lemon Tree Hotel, Dubai is a 20-minute drive from Dubai International Airport; and is located on Al Wasl Road. Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City, Barsha Heights, and Knowledge Park are in close proximity.

Touted as the first branded midscale hotel in the area, this Lemon Tree property features 114 well-equipped rooms for leisure and business travellers. Their F&B offering is called the Lemon Tree Café, which comes with an al fresco extension.

The hotel also houses a conference room, a swimming pool and a high-end fitness centre among others. Rattan Keswani, deputy managing director, Lemon Tree Hotels and director, Carnation Hotels, said: "We are delighted to enter Dubai with our partners Al Waleed Real Estate. This is our first hotel in the UAE, and we feel that it holds immense business potential. "We have a locational advantage, with the hotel strategically situated close to famous destinations like Burj Al Arab, Kite beach and the Mall of Emirates, and are equidistant from Business Bay and JLT, the two major business districts of Dubai. "Such is our proximity to the Burj Al Arab, that our guests can enjoy unhindered views of the iconic building from the pool deck, and even some of the rooms."



## New Grand Mercure property opens in Gujarat

**A**ccor has opened a new Grand Mercure branded property in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT), a smart city in Gujarat that connects the business capital, Ahmedabad and political capital, Gandhinagar. The hospitality brand has partnered with India's leading developers, Brigade Group for this hotel.

The 151-key Grand Mercure Gandhinagar GIFT City features local elements that are seen across the hotel's premium services, food and accommodation. The hotel has a speciality restaurant called Samaroh, which offers authentic delicacies from Gujarat. Built to cater to the needs of a business traveller, the hotel houses six meeting rooms. There is a pillarless

ballroom that can accommodate up to 200 delegates.

Leisure facilities include a high-end fitness centre, an infinity pool with a separate party area and a yoga pavilion. Commenting on this new opening, Jean-Michel Cassé, chief operating officer, India and south Asia, Accor said, "We are extremely happy to launch Grand Mercure Gandhinagar GIFT City, the first international branded hotel, in the foremost operational smart city of the country. "With the support of Brigade Group, we have successfully established three Grand Mercure properties in the country and look forward to collaborating for more hotels going forward."

# Taj Jumeirah Lakes Towers opens in Dubai



**T**aj Jumeirah Lakes Towers has opened since December 8. The 200-key property was inaugurated by His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan, the head of the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Social Development. Taj Jumeirah Lakes Towers is located 30 minutes from both, Dubai International airport and Dubai World Central airport, and is a five minute walk from the metro station. It is also within easy reach of the city's key commercial areas and prominent tourist attractions.

An eclectic mix of art at the towering hotel juxtaposes its Indian roots with its middle East location. Room categories are Superior, Deluxe Balcony Taj Club, Executive Club rooms; One Bedroom suite; and the Presidential suite. Shamiana restaurant, a signature outlet of the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, is also housed at Taj Jumeirah Lakes Towers serving a pan-Indian menu accompanied by live entertainment. Additionally, there is a bistro cafe called TJ's for casual dining. The hotel also boasts Paros, a

Mediterranean inspired rooftop pool bar and restaurant.

The hotel is pegged to be a key space for events thanks to a large pillar-less ballroom. With capacity for 250 guests, it's the first ballroom in the Jumeirah Lakes Towers neighbourhood. The fitness centre at Taj Jumeirah Lakes Towers is open 24 hours a day and stocked with state-of-the-art equipment and offers city views. There's also a steam and sauna room. From now until January 10, 2020, the hotel is running an introductory offer with rates including breakfast, early check-in, late checkout and 15 per cent off at all dining venues.



# Capri Palace

to become  
first  
Jumeirah  
property in  
Italy

**J**umeirah Group has announced plans to add its first Italian property next year. The existing Capri Palace hotel on the island of Capri will reopen on April 23, 2020 under its new name Capri Palace, Jumeirah. The 68-room property is located on a hillside in Anacapri, overlooking the Gulf of Naples. According to Jumeirah the hotel first opened in the 1960s, and is designed in the style of an eighteenth century Neapolitan palazzo.

Features include an outdoor pool, private beach, the Capri Beauty Farm medical spa facility, and two Michelin-starred restaurants – the two-star L'Olivo, and the one-star Il Riccio, which is the only beach club worldwide to hold a Michelin star.

Jumeirah said that it had “exciting upgrades and refurbishments” in the pipeline for the property. Capri Palace, Jumeirah will become the group’s sixth hotel in Europe, joining Jumeirah Frankfurt, Jumeirah Port Soller, and three London properties – Jumeirah Lowndes Hotel, Grosvenor House Suites Jumeirah and The Carlton Tower, Jumeirah. The last of these is currently closed for renovation, and scheduled to reopen in spring 2020.

The Dubai based company is also set to open properties in Bali and Muscat next year. Commenting on



the news José Silva, chief executive officer of Jumeirah Group, said: “We are proud and excited to welcome Capri Palace, Jumeirah into our portfolio. It is one of Europe’s most recognised and well-respected hotels, with a global reputation and following. “We are pleased to announce that the hotel’s current General Manager Ermanno Zanini

will continue in his role, taking on additional responsibilities as Regional Vice President for Italy and Spain for Jumeirah Group. “Capri Palace, Jumeirah embodies our brand values of providing excellent service, unrivalled culinary experiences and inspiring design, and joins our existing collection of European properties in London, Mallorca and Frankfurt.”



# Courtyard by Marriott

## opens in Amritsar



**C**ourtyard by Marriott has opened in Amritsar, marking the brand's 18th property to open in India. Situated in the spiritually revered city of the Golden Temple, the 104-key hotel is located just 20 minutes from Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International airport. Rooms are equipped with comfortable bedding, local artwork, basic amenities, ergonomic work areas and smart technology.

Amritsar Kitchen is the hotel's all-day dining restaurant led by Chef Anirudh Deshpande that serves local and international fare. Vue Bar and Grill — the rooftop bar — serves cocktails and grills with a view of the cityscape. The hotel features 436 sqm of banquet spaces. This includes a meeting room with an inbuilt LED wall.

Commenting on the launch, Neeraj Govil, senior vice president, South Asia, Marriott International says, "Courtyard



by Marriott is one of our fastest growing brands globally and based on the success of the brand in India, we foresee tremendous opportunities for our newest addition in Amritsar."

Apart from the Golden Temple, Amritsar is also known for the iconic "lowering of the flags ceremony" at the Wagah Border between India and Pakistan, the Jallianwala Bagh and its world class War Memorial, the Gobindgarh Fort and the Harike Bird Sanctuary.

# The Luxury Collection unveils Seychelles property



**T**he Luxury Collection, a part of Marriott International, has acquired the private island retreat, North Island, Seychelles. With this, the brand boasts its first private island destination. Offering 11 plush villas, this property is 30 km from the mainland and is accessible by a helicopter flight or an hour boat ride. The resort is operated by ASMALLWORLD, a leading online travel and lifestyle community.

Each villa has been designed using local materials and features an interior inspired by Robinson Crusoe. The dining

offering is called the Piazza at North Island, headed by Michelin-Star Chef Akira Back. Set up on the waterfront, the restaurant offers private dining facilities. Tapas and cocktails during sunset can be enjoyed at the Sunset Beach Bar.

On arrival, guests are invited for a relaxing therapy at The North Island Spa. Other recreational activities available on the island include snorkeling, diving, fishing, sunset cruises, kayaking, paddle boarding, surfing, guided excursions and forest trails.

Anthony Ingham, global brand leader, The Luxury Collection says, "North Island is one of the most rare and luxurious destinations in the world, making it a natural fit for The Luxury Collection and our global explorers who seek authentic experiences and connections to both pristine nature and elevated personalisation.

"This is the first private island within The Luxury Collection portfolio, and we're delighted to be expanding our footprint of captivating destinations with storied pasts and protected futures."

## Marriott-Prestige Group extend partnership

**M**arriott International and Bengaluru-based real-estate developer Prestige Group have signed an agreement to open six new hotels across India.

The Marriott hotels will open across south India and will be constructed by Prestige Group across W, JW Marriott, Tribute Portfolio and Moxy brands, with nearly 1,000 keys for each brand.

W Bengaluru (opening in 2025), Tribute Portfolio Resort Bengaluru (opening by 2021), Tribute Portfolio Hotel Kochi Maradu (opening by 2022), JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa (opening in 2022), Moxy Chennai and Moxy Bengaluru (opening between 2021 and 2025) are the upcoming openings by the duo.

The group's recent partnership with Prestige Group launched Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre, which is Marriott's 100th hotel in India. Aloft Bengaluru Cessna, Business Park is also owned by Prestige Group and managed by Marriott International.

Set to debut in India, the 'Moxy' brand targets next-gen millennial travellers with its fun and edgy service, vibrant social spaces, and contemporary, tech-forward guest rooms.

Tribute Portfolio hotels represent independent, boutique hotels offering travellers a unique but budgeted experience.

Speaking on the latest deal, Rajeev Menon, president – Asia Pacific



(excluding Greater China), Marriott International says, "We are thrilled to be introducing Moxy, our 17th brand in south Asia with such an experienced and hotel developer like the Prestige Group."

Marriott International has 120 hotels across 16 brands in India.





# Hyatt

to open more than  
**20** luxury properties  
by end of 2020

Hyatt celebrates the 40th anniversary of its Park Hyatt brand in 2020, and the group is aiming to open more than 20 properties across its luxury portfolio between now and the end of next year. The additions will be split across the group's Park Hyatt, Andaz, Alila, Grand Hyatt, Miraval and The Unbound Collection by Hyatt brands. This week sees the opening of the Park Hyatt Doha, and later this month Hyatt will also unveil the Great Scotland Yard hotel under its Unbound Collection portfolio.

The long-awaited hotel on the site of the former Metropolitan Police HQ will feature 153 rooms, a signature restaurant, library, gym, whiskey bar / clubroom, cocktail bar, palm court style lounge, and a 120-capacity ballroom. There will also be design



references to the building's police and military past, including "secret doors, hidden rooms, shields, emblems and historic details etched into glass and metalwork".

The group's online reservations system shows that rooms can now be booked for stays from December 9.

### Great Scotland Yard Hotel

The Unbound Collection will also add the Hotel du Palais Biarritz in June next year, with Hyatt stating that the brand "is seeing its strongest growth to date in Europe". Other openings over the next year include Andaz Bali, Andaz Shenzhen and Andaz Palm Springs, Grand Hyatt properties in Kuwait, Nashville and Gurgaon, and Park Hyatt hotels in Auckland and Jakarta. The group will also open two Alila properties in Dalit Bay (Malaysia) and Hinu Bay (Oman) next year. Hyatt acquired the brand when it purchased lifestyle hotel management company Two Roads Hospitality last year. A full list of recently-opened and forthcoming (some beyond 2020) Hyatt properties across the group's luxury brands can be seen below.

Commenting on the news **Mark Vondrasek, chief commercial officer, Hyatt**, said: "With our growth



acceleration in the luxury segment, we will have the opportunity to care for more travellers around the globe through a range of differentiated high-end experiences. "We're excited to

expand into new markets and enhance the global footprint of our brands, giving our guests and members additional ways to connect with our luxury offerings in places where they want to be."



### Planned Alila openings

Alila Dalit Bay in Malaysia (2020)  
Alila Hinu Bay in Oman (2020)  
Alila La Gruyère in Switzerland (2023)  
Planned / recent Andaz openings

Andaz Dubai The Palm (2019)  
Andaz Bali (2020)  
Andaz Shenzhen in China (2020)  
Andaz Xiamen in China (2020)  
Andaz Palm Springs in the US (2020)  
Andaz Prague (2022)  
Andaz Seoul Gangnam in South Korea (opened 2019)  
Planned / recent Grand Hyatt openings

Grand Hyatt Hefei in China (2019)  
Grand Hyatt Al Khobar (2020)  
Grand Hyatt Kuwait (2020)  
Grand Hyatt Gurgaon in India (2020)  
Grand Hyatt Jeju in South Korea (2020)  
Grand Hyatt Nashville in the US (2020)

Grand Hyatt Shenzhou Peninsula in China (2020)  
Grand Hyatt at SFO—only on-airport hotel at SFO (opened 2019)  
Planned / recent Park Hyatt openings

Park Hyatt Doha (2019)  
Park Hyatt Auckland (2020)  
Park Hyatt Jakarta (2020)  
Park Hyatt Niseko Hanazono in Japan (2020)  
Park Hyatt Suzhou in China (2020)  
Park Hyatt Kyoto in Japan (opened 2019)  
Planned The Unbound Collection by Hyatt openings

Great Scotland Yard (2019)  
Hotel du Palais Biarritz in France (2020)  
Planned Miraval openings

Miraval Berkshires Resort and Spa in the US (2020)



HOSPITALITY AND FOOD

# Hyatt Regency

## Brand debuts in Kerala - God's own country

*Hyatt Regency Thrissur marks the second Hyatt branded hotel in Kerala and the 13th Hyatt Regency branded hotel in India*

Hyatt Hotels Corporation recently announced the opening of Hyatt Regency Thrissur in the cultural capital of Kerala, India. With 77 well-appointed guestrooms, this contemporary hotel aims to bring the Hyatt Regency brand's signature hospitality to business and leisure





guests travelling to the region. The hotel marks the continued growth of the Hyatt Regency brand in India and joins more than 195 hotels under the brand, including 12 locations across the country.

“We are thrilled to announce the opening of our very first Hyatt Regency hotel in the beautiful and vibrant state of Kerala”, said Sunjae Sharma, vice president - India operations, Hyatt. “The Hyatt Regency brand caters to leisure as well as business travellers, which are steadily growing in the state. This launch underlines the importance of the globally celebrated Hyatt Regency brand in India, which is now present in 13 cities across the country. True to the brand’s lineage, the all new Hyatt Regency Thrissur is the embodiment of contemporary

accommodations designed for productivity and peace of mind.”

With offerings tailored to suit both leisure and business travellers alike, Hyatt Regency Thrissur aims to provide guests with a seamless, stress-free experience in Kerala. Conveniently located near prime cultural centers, the Thrissur IT Park, iconic monuments, museums, galleries and shopping at the Kalamandalam Centre, an hour away from Cochin International Airport and 10 minutes from the railway station, the hotel will allow guests to seamlessly conduct business while also allowing for the opportunity to visit some of the city’s best attractions.

### Guestrooms

The 77-room hotel features 69 spacious guestrooms and eight suites, including a presidential suite. Ranging from 323 to 1,335 square feet (30 to 124 square meters), each guestroom is equipped with best-in-class amenities and offer scenic views of the pool or gardens.

### Dining

Regency Café is open 24-hours and offers a creative menu with a range of selections including local Kerala fare, traditional North Indian dishes and authentic Asian and Continental cuisine. The restaurant’s vibrant aesthetic and ambience make it the perfect venue for family celebrations, business lunches, or an intimate gathering. Additionally, for guests looking for a sweet treat, visit Nougat, which also offers a wide selection of unique desserts.

### Meetings and Events

An ideal venue for conferences and weddings with 27,469 square feet (2,552 square meters) of indoor and outdoor space, Hyatt Regency Thrissur offers guests and event planners flexible options for gatherings of all sizes.

The stylish Regal Ballroom features 9,289 square feet (862 square meters) of space and can easily accommodate up to 900 guests. The Regency Ballroom is spread

over 7,535 square feet (700 square meters) and can accommodate up to 800 guests, along with an accompanying 3,229 square foot (300 square meter) pre-function area to welcome guests. Additionally, Nattika serves as a meeting room ideal for intimate gatherings and business conferences for up to 150 guests, while the Ruby VIP lounge is ideal for small groups with its warm and inviting design. The hotel also incorporates three studios each covering 645 to 1,076 square feet (60 to 100 square meters) of space.

### Well being

Guests can relax in the hotel’s refreshing outdoor pool or enjoy an energizing workout at the hotel’s fully equipped fitness center. The hotel also offers a rejuvenating selection of services at Santata Spa, with signature traditional and international treatments, including fun chocolate treatments for kids.

### Location

Hyatt Regency Thrissur provides guests with seamless access to the region’s most popular attractions. Guests can easily visit the Bible Tower, the tallest church tower in Asia, along with Athirapally Falls—an extraordinary waterfall on the Chalakudy River. A cultural trip to Kerala Kalamandalam, which is one of the biggest tourist attractions of the city, promises to be a memorable experience with celebrated performances of the classical arts of Kerala.

### Special Opening Offer

To provide World of Hyatt members even more ways to be rewarded, World of Hyatt is offering members the opportunity to earn 500 Bonus Points for qualifying nights at Hyatt Regency Thrissur till March 31, 2020, as part of World of Hyatt’s new hotel member offer. Additional participating hotels and their offer stay periods can be found at [worldofhyatt.com/newhotelbonus](http://worldofhyatt.com/newhotelbonus). No registration is required, and members can earn on top of other offers.



# A Fresh Start

# W Hotels

## Announces New In-Room Amenity

*Every W Hotel Around the World to Feature New On-The-Road Regimen from Eco-Conscious Skin and Haircare Leader The Davines Group; Brandwide Collaboration Includes Three Exclusive New Products*



**H**eads are about to turn. W Hotels Worldwide today unveils its new unisex amenity line with Italy-based, luxury sustainable beauty brands, Davines and /skin regimen/ of the Davines Group. Together, W and the Davines Group - brands with cult followings - will be shaking up self-care routines from Chicago to Chengdu with sustainable skin and hair care products available at all W locations in 2020.

Unbound by traditional definitions of beauty, both W and the Davines Group are champions of self-expression and individuality, encouraging people to act consciously, and feel fabulous wherever they go. From sink to spa, the new line-up of in-room hair and skin care (which replaces the brand's long-time amenity partner, bliss) will now include Davines and /skin regimen/ best-sellers as well as exclusive new formulas, available only to W guests:

**Davines MOMO Shampoo**  
**Davines MOMO Conditioner**  
**Davines MOMO Shower Gel (W Exclusive)**  
**/skin regimen/ Body Cream (W Exclusive)**  
**/skin regimen/ Cleansing Cream**  
**/skin regimen/ Vegetable Soap (W Exclusive)**

"W takes a bold approach to self-care and this new brand collaboration is no exception," said Anthony Ingham, Global Brand Leader, W Hotels. "In choosing a new amenity line, we road tested many brands and formulations and not only love the way the Davines Group products look, smell and feel, but the values they stand for as a company. We are very excited to bring these products to all of our guest rooms across the globe."

From a shampoo and blowout at W's AWAY Spa to an in-room shower

after a long FUEL workout, W guests will now have access to an elevated line of luxury beauty products with a highly sustainable edge. From natural ingredients like yellow melon extract found in their signature "MOMO" products, to their world class research lab in Parma, Italy, Davines Group artfully blends science and nature, harnessing the power of both to offer products that are as effective as they are refreshing.

"We are thrilled to be collaborating with one of the most dynamic, contemporary hotel brands in the world," says Jorge Blanco, Creative Director, Davines North America. "We found a kindred spirit in W as we both have made a name for ourselves by doing things differently, and this amenity project is no different. We look forward to seeing how our self-care collaboration will inspire people from around the world to seek a deeper extension of the in-room amenity experience we are now proudly offering with W."

In addition to being the in-room and in-suite brand of choice at W hotels globally, /skin regimen/ and Davines products will also be used at all W Away Spas starting in 2020 alongside sister brand, [ comfort zone ]. Davines is a certified B Corporation and CO2 neutral company that supports reforestation to offset its carbon emissions. In addition, all products are sulphate- and paraben-free. As part of Marriott International's initiative to reduce its hotels' environmental impact worldwide, W plans to offer the new amenities in waste-reducing, full-size bottles by the end of 2020.



# State of California to boost travel and trade ties with India

*Eleni Kounalakis, the lieutenant governor of California, who is visiting India along with the Bay Area Business Council, said with a significant number of Indian technology professionals in the Bay Area, the potential for growth through investment and partnership in the tech sector between the two countries is enormous.*

**T**he state of California in the US is looking at boosting trade ties with India and wants more foreign direct investment (FDI) from the country and more Indian visitors through tie ups with industries like Bollywood, besides a greater share of California's exports coming into the country, said Eleni Kounalakis, the lieutenant governor of California on a visit to India.

Kounalakis was visiting India along with the Bay Area Business Council comprising of key business people from the aviation, finance and consulting, hospitality, and information technology industries. She said with a significant number of Indian technology professionals in the Bay Area, the potential for growth through investment and partnership in the tech sector between the two countries is enormous.

"Right now, India is California's 13th largest trade partner and we are looking for ways through which the government can help and lead to support and improve the trade relationships. There is such a strong culture of innovation in California and India and this is a very natural area of cooperation that has a tremendous potential for growth. We are looking for more connectivity, more trade relationships, more exports of California goods into India and more FDI from India into California," said Kounalakis.



"But there are other historic trade elements that we value and we are very sentimental about. Almond trade is a very special part of the relationship and we want to make sure that we can continue to support the export of almonds into India which is the largest international destination for California almonds," she added.

Earlier, Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California who was accompanying Kounalakis said the state views India as the number one opportunity market.

"We see the Indian market as our number one opportunity market. We are getting about 353,000 Indian visitors currently who are spending

about \$ 1.2 billion. We are estimating by 2023 that number will rise to about \$1.5 billion. We have a lot of headroom for this market with a projected 40 million Indians travelling outside of India every year. We see huge opportunities," Beteta said.

While millennial travellers are the target segment for Visit California globally, Beteta said that they will make all efforts to lure the luxury market to California in the next five years. She cited the presence of CEOs of destinations like Santa Barbara, Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and West Hollywood in the sales mission to underscore the same. "We expect the luxury market to grow 70% in the next five years," she stated. Visit California launched a social media campaign, "Now it is time for California", as part of the messaging that the destination promoters want to send out that it understands the Indian market better than anyone else.

During the visit, the delegation also unveiled some filming incentives in California which were presented to the Producers Guild of India and other film professionals in New Delhi. This was in line with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Visit California and the Producers Guild of India, to facilitate film, television and new media content shoots in California.

# Korea Grand Sale 2020,

## 45-day Festival of Shopping, Culture, and Tourism

**V**isit Korea Committee will be hosting the "Korea Grand Sale 2020," a shopping, culture, and tourism festival for foreign visitors, for 45 days from January 16 (Thurs.) to February 29 (Sat.), 2020 throughout Korea.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Korea Grand Sale 2020 will invite foreign tourists to experience rich and colorful joy of Korean tourism under the concept, "Inviting you to the Korea Grand Sale." The festival does not only provide discount benefits for shopping, airfare, and accommodations, but it also fosters "BIG 5 Promotions" for K-Culture contents including K-Pop, K-Food, and K-Beauty that are gaining more and more attention from the people all over the world.

### Special Promotions, from K-Pop to K-Heritage

Korea Grand Sale 2020 differentiates itself as tourism promotion as it not only offers discounts on shopping, airfare, and accommodations, but it also allows you to enjoy Korean cultural experiences. There will be special promotions with the participation of companies and brands that are representatives of Korea. The "K-Culture Big 5 Promotion," which is exclusive in Korea Grand Sale, consists of **K-Pop, K-Beauty, K-Food, K-Winter, and K-Heritage**. This promotion will make your trip to Korea unforgettable.





### K-Pop

You can watch K-Pop shows, including Seoul Music Awards and M-Countdown, in which you can experience Hallyu (Korean Wave) K-POP stars by yourself and feel the passion of their performances. You can also participate in popular K-Pop dance academy operated by 1Million Dance Studio. Participants will be selected through weekly events on Social Media which will be held starting in December.

### K-Food

You will be delighted by all of the Korean foods. "Korea Grand Tasting," offered by hotels and resorts, is a collection of Korean hotel cuisines. Particularly, special promotion, "Nightscape Korea" is prepared for foreigners who want to know more about Korean food, allowing them to enjoy refreshments with the beautiful and modern Korean nightscape in the background. Furthermore, your trip to Korea will be double the fun with the introduction to famous cafes in Korea recommended by the Korea Grand Sale, restaurants recommended by local Korean office workers, and restaurants that were used to film Korean dramas.

### K-Beauty

Together with Sulwhasoo, which has established itself as a world-class luxury brand, will be promoting the true charm of K-Beauty. The whole course of the K-Beauty Class at the Sulwhasoo flagship store will be operated with skincare and makeup products of its own brand, allowing participants to experience the epitome of K-Beauty. Additionally, foreign tourists who bring Korea Grand Sale coupons will be offered a travel kit, receive discounts with the purchase of products, and enjoy a spa service if they make a reservation.

### K-Heritage

The "2020 Visit Cultural Heritage Campaign" will be conducted in order to vitalize tourism associated with the cultural heritages in Korea. This promotion aims to advertise Korean cultural heritages and offer related

experiences to foreign tourists who visit Korea during the period of Korea Grand Sale 2020. The programs include Keritage-Route 5 Certification (visit cultural heritages event), Making Korean Handicrafts operated by the Training Center for Important Intangible Cultural Properties, and Cultural Heritage VR Experience Zone.

### K-Winter

The tourism promotion for the winter will allow foreign tourists to experience Korea's cold season to the fullest by providing them with Winter & Ski Festa, which was organized by 15 Korean domestic ski resorts, as well as winter activity promotions prepared by Korean start-ups that are tourism platforms, including Trazy and Korea Travel Easy.

### Participation of Eight Korean Airlines with Up to 95% Discount for Airfare and Strengthened Regional Routes

All eight Korean airlines will be participating in Korea Grand Sale 2020, enriching benefits and discounted routes. Early-bird promotion and a special price event are currently being offered with up to 95% discount. In particular, the promotion of regional routes by each airline will encourage you to visit Korean local provinces and the connection between international airports and regional tourism contents will allow you to experience the charms of each region.

Additionally, special discounts will be available at over 200 hotels and more than 300 restaurants throughout the country. Diverse and wide-spanning benefits will be offered, including the train that runs the airport railroad (Incheon International Airport↔Seoul Station), as well as "K Travel Bus" and "EG Tour Bus," the local bus tour services.

### Discounts and Convenient Services are a Given

During the period of Korea Grand Sale 2020, shopping discounts according to businesses, as well as discount promotions according to

card companies will be offered at department stores, duty-free shops, shopping malls, and traditional markets. An immediate refund of additional tax will be offered as well.

At duty-free shops, immediate discounts or discount coupons will be provided according to one's total spending amount. Doota Mall, a shopping mall where foreign tourists can shop for their beloved Korean brands as well as international brands, will offer the goods by MONSTA X, the Korean idol group, on a first-come, first-served basis.

During the Korea Grand Sale period, the convenience services will be enhanced to spread a welcoming atmosphere for foreigners who visit Korea. Event Center(Welcome Center) will be established and operated in Dongdaemun as well as Incheon and Gimpo International Airports, the most-visited spots by foreign visitors. "Smart Help Desk" will boost convenience and satisfaction during visitors' tours of Korea by providing information on events and tourism, convenience services such as interpretation, free giveaway events, and experience programs. There will be "Hands Free Service," a luggage delivery and storage service that is available in major spots in downtown Seoul, including hotels and airports, and the special promotion of "Korea Tour Card," a transportation and tourism card for foreigners.

Han Kyeong-ah, the secretary-general of the Visit Korea Committee, said, "We will do our best to prepare for Korea Grand Sale as an inbound tourism promotion together with Korean tourism industry in order to make it a bountiful festival where foreign tourists can enjoy not only the benefits of shopping discounts but also the charm of Korean culture."

Visit Korea Committee is currently promoting Korea Grand Sale by opening advance reservations for flights, accommodations, and activities and through ads online and on social media according to the targeted markets, as well as overseas fairs and briefing sessions.



# South African Tourism

## receives outstanding response at SATTE 2020

**S**outh African Tourism ushered in the new year through a highly successful association with South Asia's leading travel show, SATTE 2020. The tourism board showcased the destination, for the first time ever, at the 27th edition of the trade show that was held at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida in Delhi NCR.

Along with 43 key South African exhibitors, the tourism board introduced novel products and upgraded destination offerings including DMCs, exclusive accommodation facilities, luxury experiences, advanced MICE infrastructure, SMMEs, as well as unique adventure, wildlife and culinary capabilities. The collective South African exhibition witnessed a multitude of productive meetings and new business partnerships with the crème-de-le-crème of the travel and tourism industry.

With indigenous South African performances and wine-tasting pop-ups, the destination board also offered the delegates at SATTE 2020 an experiential cultural indulgence. One of the key agendas for the tourism

board during SATTE 2020 was to put the spotlight on the new regions of South Africa. According to brand research, most Indian travellers include a city, either the Mother City – Cape Town, Johannesburg or Durban on their itineraries and use these cities as a gateway to the rest of these picturesque new regions, including the stunning and relatively unexplored Port Elizabeth, Robertson, West Coast, Drakensberg and Panorama Route.

Addressing the media during the trade event, **Ms. Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head – MEISEA, South African Tourism** said, “We are extremely delighted with the reception South Africa received at SATTE 2020. We are also grateful to the trade fraternity for their support in packaging and endorsing the best of the Rainbow Nation. At South African Tourism, we constantly strive to innovate product and experience to allow each of our source markets a relevant, customized and memorable itinerary. As Indian travellers are looking to pack in a lot of action within shorter time spans, our New Region offerings were

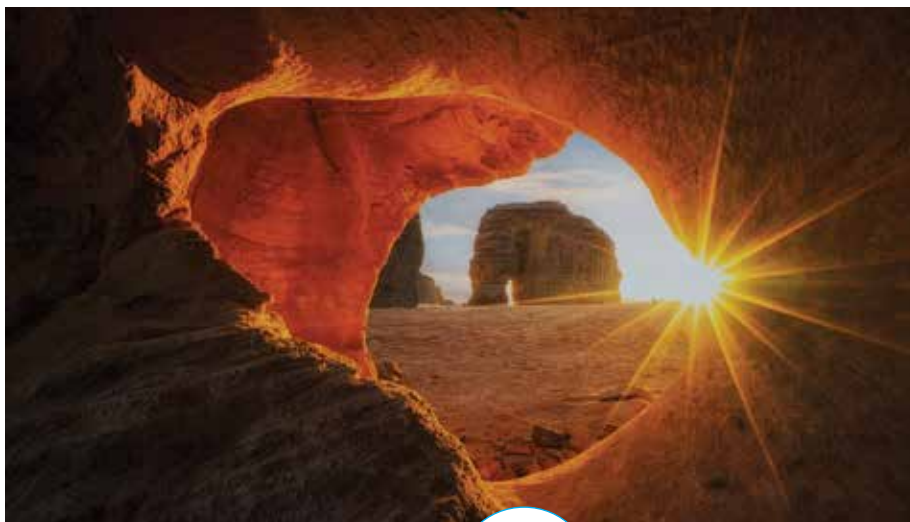
particularly well-received by the travel trade this year.”

“We are also proud to have had 13 SMMEs as part of the exhibitor delegation. One of our core objectives at South African Tourism is to support and grow the local economy. SMMEs play a major role in the travel ecosystem and it is our privilege to partner with these exhibitors who bring unique, off-beat experiences to the table, and help us innovate our itineraries,” she added.

Another major focus area for South African Tourism this year was educating the trade on the massive MICE offerings of the Rainbow Nation. South Africa has continually made great efforts to improve infrastructure in the country in order to provide a more convenient and modern environment to global cricket and football fans, as well as other MICE travellers.

South African Tourism is all set to make 2020 another milestone year for the destination. The tourism board's intensified trade effort in the region is evident from the fact that South African Tourism's 17th Annual Roadshow to 3 Indian cities this year.

# The Royal Commission for AlUla Launches Its Second Winter at Tantora Festival of Culture, Heritage and Celebration in Saudi Arabia



**T**he second Winter at Tantora Festival in AlUla in North West Saudi Arabia starts today – a three-month celebration that will showcase the very best in international music, art and culture connecting East and West as the AlUla county has done for thousands of years.

It comes just months after Saudi Arabia introduced tourist visas to citizens from 49 countries making the Kingdom more accessible than ever with the UNESCO World Heritage site at Hegra in AlUla among those featured in a global marketing campaign.

The festival is part of the Cultural Manifesto that was launched by the festival organisers, the Royal Commission for AlUla, in Paris in October as part of a long-term strategy to transform the region and open the region as a global living museum and place of culture, heritage and the arts.

Winter at Tantora will cover 12 weekends from 19th December and host a wide range of events from the world-famous Dakar Rally; international ballooning festival; the world's second longest endurance horse race; the world's first desert polo tournament



**“Festival visitors will be given a unique opportunity to visit and experience one of the world’s undiscovered places and its spectacular heritage sites before we reopen them to the world in October 2020.”**

and welcome pop-up restaurants from globally renowned restaurants.

The spectacular mirrored wall Maraya Theatre with its 500-seat capacity and operatic sound quality will be home throughout the festival to some of the world's leading performers who range from Omar Khairat to Andrea Bocelli.

Festival visitors will also be able to meet and engage with young members of the AlUla community who are benefitting from a diverse range of training programmes in hospitality;

culture; nature and the environment and studying overseas including 24 men and women at the FERRANDI Paris culinary institute in Paris.

These young chefs will work alongside Michelin-starred experts during the festival creating world-class cuisine that will incorporate local ingredients from the fertile AlUla valley and blending traditional recipes with modern cuisine.

RCU CEO Amr AlMadani says: “Festival visitors will be given a unique opportunity to visit and experience one of the world’s undiscovered places and its spectacular heritage sites before we reopen them to the world in October 2020.

“They will get a tantalising glimpse of a place that been a cultural crossroads for thousands of years and the chance to see it from the serenity of a hot air balloon; the adrenaline of soaring over the desert and mountains in an open seater biplane or exploring hidden canyons in traditional vintage Land Rovers.”

The Royal Commission for AlUla has also completed major infrastructure work at AlUla airport – increasing capacity fourfold to 400,000 visitors a year and upgrading local mountain resorts to enhance the visitor experience.

AlUla will be a worldwide destination for those seeking a unique experience of the full meaning and context of landscape – an experience that integrates the natural and cultural heritage as one living environment. By safeguarding our precious landscapes and cultural heritage this open-air museum will be the Kingdom’s gift to the world creating remarkable and lasting memories.

‘Authentic AlUla’, the opening weekend, is a celebration rooted in AlUla, to mark the start of the winter planting season at the iconic Tantora sundial from which the festival is named. It is the first of 12 specially themed weekends.



# MICE venues in **St. Moritz**



**N**estled in the Swiss Alps, the picturesque town of St. Moritz is a splendid destination for business and corporate getaways. High in the mountains, you can find event space and locations with stunning views of the snowy mountains and the Engadin valley.

St. Moritz has a unique selection of MICE offers to suit any corporate event in the Engadin valley. St. Moritz has specially designed packages to make your event full of fun and adventure. Avail the Adventure Day package which makes for a perfect for an ideal business getaway. There is a wide choice of activities available, ranging from the cultural to hiking, mountain biking and snow sports. the participants can end the day with a memorable again in the evening for a memorable dinner on Piz Nair at 3,057 above sea level. Guests can book more such packages here.

*Other interesting venues:*

## **Romantik Hotel Muottas Muragl**

Muottas Muragl is the ideal location for small-scale meetings. The Romantik

Hotel Muottas Muragl has a seminar room designed to accommodate up to fourteen participants. During a break, guests can enjoy the spectacular views of the Engadin lake plateau or indulge in great culinary delights.

## **Piz Nair**

The small but delightful seminar room on Piz Nair is located at more than 3,057 meters above sea level and boasts stunning views of St. Moritz. The ride up to Piz Nair on the funicular and gondola car makes for a unique experience. The seminar room can accommodate up to 20 people.

## **Chesa Marguns, Marguns Celerina**

Right in the heart of the Corviglia region – renowned for its biking and hiking in summer and skiing in winter – is the Chesa Marguns. This exclusive event location is perfect for staging select, private parties with a rustic flair. The Chesa is located at 2,278 metres above sea level and accommodates a lounge with a fireplace, as well as a dining area and veranda. It is an ideal location to experience the true Swiss charm.



## **Muottas Muragl**

The Villa Lyss is in a former mountain pasture hut. The rustic party restaurant is perfect for all kinds of social happenings for a group of 15-24 persons. Celebrate your special events in an exclusive, informal and relaxed atmosphere. The fireplace is ablaze, the firewood is crackling, the party in your very own private restaurant can begin.

# Thailand gears for Quality and Responsible Tourism in 2020:

## Focus on Luxury and Niche Tourism is slated

**G**earing up to mark its 60th anniversary in 2020, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has reaffirmed its commitment to making travel and tourism the kingdom's most environmentally sustainable, quality-oriented and culturally vibrant sector in the years to come. As tourism is turning into a maturing industry in the country.

With 2019 being the record breaker year touching almost 2 million tourists, the destination is now eyeing an increase by 10% in 2020 from the India market. Klissada Ratanaparuk, Executive Director – ASEAN South Asia and South Pacific Region, Tourism Authority of Thailand and Isra Stapanaseth, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand said Promoting Thailand as a premium destination for Weddings and Golf, Tourism Authority of Thailand is looking forward to maintaining the momentum through B2B as well as B2C promotions. Thailand hosted 400 Indian weddings in 2019. Talking of tier 2 and 3 cities, Isra Stapanaseth said, "After the introduction of the new routes, we are glad to admit that traffic from West Bengal and Guwahati is showing good response. We look forward to maintaining the travel quotient and if the airlines find it profitable, they might introduce newer sectors between India and Thailand this year too."

TAT is vigorously working implementing a 360 degree approach for marketing the destination through website, social media and B2B inviting



people for a quality experience in Thailand. The government is also trying to lend full support and ensure a safe environment for women travellers, especially solo women travellers. Besides its known factors such as sightseeing, shopping, luxury resorts and spas, the destination, in its endeavour to tap the "millennials", is positioning "adventure" activities, especially diving, prominently to the segment, inviting them to come and experience the 'sporty' side of Thailand.

Living up to its tagline – 'Open to the New Shades', Thailand, which is much more than a fabulous shopping paradise, is hoping for a spectacular 2020.

In 2020 TAT wants to look at the new challenges emerging from a more demanding sophisticated traveller and face also the issues over environment, sustainability, over tourism in a highly competitive and constantly changing global and regional environment.

Targets for 2020 are to boost total tourism revenues by 10% over the projection for this year in both domestic and international markets. TAT has also set clear directions to move the Thai tourism industry out of mass tourism and towards responsible tourism with an emphasis on revenue-generating quality tourists.





# Tourism Malaysia Honours Tourism Partners in India at Appreciation Awards

**T**he Hon. Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Mr. Muhammad Bakhtiar bin Wan Chik, presented 38 awards at tonight's Appreciation Awards to partners of Tourism Malaysia in India for their strong and continuous support for the growth and development of the Malaysian tourism industry.

The Appreciation Night,

held at The Shangri-La's Eros Hotel on the eve of SATTE (South Asia Travel & Tourism Exchange), was attended by presidents of the tourism associations – TAAI, TAFI and OTOAI, and representatives from major travel agencies, tour operators, online travel agencies, airlines, media, wedding planners, MICE curators along with 40 participants from Malaysia,

comprising a mix of DMCs, hotels, airlines, attractions, and suppliers.

The High Commissioner of Malaysia to India, H.E Dato' Hidayat Abdul Hamid, Director of International Promotion Division Tourism Malaysia, Mr. Mohamad Taib Ibrahim and other Malaysian dignitaries were also present to show their appreciation to India's tourism industry fraternity.

Tourism Malaysia also took the opportunity to update the India travel trade members of Malaysia's tourism developments and launch the new Visit Malaysia 2020 promotional video called Breathtaking Malaysia.

The Deputy Minister thanked all the stakeholders who played a crucial role in driving arrivals to Malaysia in 2019. "India has always been a very important tourism source market for Malaysia. From January to September 2019, Indian arrivals to Malaysia grew by 23.2% year on year. This put India in sixth place in terms of arrivals to Malaysia," he said.

"Tourism Malaysia, in its commitment to developing India as a stronger tourist source market got its biggest ever contingent of participants for SATTE, comprising a total of 40 participants with 13 travel agents, 14 hotels and resorts, seven product owners, three airlines, two state agencies and one Online Travel Agent (OTA)" he added.

The Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign is targeted at achieving 30 million tourist arrivals with 1 million arrivals from India.





# TAT

## targets 3.18 trillion Baht in tourism revenue for Thailand in 2020



**T**he Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is expecting 3.18 trillion Baht in overall tourism revenue for Thailand in 2020, or a 4% year-on-year increase. This includes 2.02 trillion Baht from international tourists (up 3%) and 1.16 trillion Baht from domestic tourists (up 5%).

The outlook for 2020 follows the overall tourism situation in 2019, which is estimated to generate 3.06 trillion Baht (4% increase over 2018), comprising 1.96 trillion Baht (up 4%) from 39.77 million international tourists (also up 4%) and 1.10 trillion Baht (up 3%) from 167 million domestic trips (up 1%). Thailand welcomed the 39 millionth tourist on 27 December, 2019.

Mr. Yuthasak Supasorn, TAT Governor, said, "TAT's target for 2020 is based on several favourable factors, ranging from the government's stimulus measures, TAT's focussed marketing strategies and promotions of emerging destinations, new air routes and the positive outlook of international tourists to Thailand from key source markets."

The Thai government has launched 16 tourism stimulus measures aimed

at stimulating more inbound travel, including the opening of more VAT refund shops and counters, 24-hour cross-border tourism on the Thai-Malaysian and Thai-Lao borders during weekends and holidays, the e-visa service and exemption of the visa-on-arrival fee until 30 April, 2020, and the 50% discount on airport landing fees for international flights from 1 December, 2019, to 30 April, 2020, to name but a few.

Thailand is also seeing new air routes, including Hangzhou-Chiang Rai, Sendai-Bangkok, Munich-Phuket, and Doha-Chiang Mai.

At the same time, some emerging Thai destinations have become more popular among international tourists and gained global recognition. Buri Ram ranked third on Airbnb's list of 20 trending destinations to visit in 2020, while Sukhothai has been designated by UNESCO as a 'Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art'.

Mr. Yuthasak said, "Leveraging these favourable factors and gearing up to mark the 60th anniversary in 2020, TAT is committed to making travel and tourism the kingdom's most economically promising,

environmentally sustainable, and culturally vibrant sector."

TAT's marketing strategies also include the launch of "The MICHELIN Guide Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket & Phang Nga 2020."

In 2020, TAT is seeing a positive outlook of international tourists to Thailand from several markets including the CLMV countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR., Myanmar, and Vietnam), Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Spain, Eastern Europe, Israel and the US. The Chinese, Singaporean and Middle Eastern markets are showing signs of recovery. Meanwhile, the Japanese, Hong Kong, European, Scandinavian, Australian and Latin American markets are expected to remain stable or show a slow growth.

Mr. Yuthasak said, "TAT is also preparing to overcome several challenges, including the effect from global trade conflicts, the rise in consumption tax in Japan, and Brexit. The strong Thai Baht, Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics, World Expo 2020 Dubai and stimulus visa schemes from country competitors have also been taken into consideration when laying out our tourism marketing strategies."



# South Africa

## to offer online visa facility for Indian tourists

- South Africa is also in talks with Indian government for granting 'multiple-entry visa
- If the pilot project goes without any glitch, a full roll out will take place from April 1<sup>st</sup>.

South Africa will put in place online visa facility for Indian tourists on a pilot basis from next week, the African country's Tourism Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane said recently. The minister said the South African government was also exploring the possibility of a third country air transport carrier being allowed to operate a direct flight to Mumbai from South Africa.

Currently, there is no direct flight service between India and South Africa. South African Airways had operated flights between Johannesburg and Mumbai.

Stating that South Africa has taken several measures to provide ease of access to Indian tourists, including bringing changes in the visa regime, the minister said, "the pilot for online visa application system is going to happen from next week".

Kubayi-Ngubane, who is in the city as part of a road show to promote South African tourism, said that if the pilot project goes without any glitch, "a full roll out will take place from April 1".

With 81,316 Indian arrivals as of October 2019, there is a "positive outlook" for the Indian market, as per the South African Tourism Board.

As of September 2019, total expenditure by Indian travellers in South Africa touched a four-year high. In the first half of 2019, average length of stay of travellers from India rose 8% on a year-on-year basis.

The African country is expecting the number of Indian arrivals to grow to one lakh in 2020.

South Africa is also in talks with India for granting "multiple-entry visa," the minister said.

Besides, South Africa is looking to fast track visa process of the Indian travellers who hold US or Schengen visa by way of sharing data of such travellers.

Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane said South Africa is seeing a 30.2% growth in tourists arrivals from India on a year-on-year basis and it could increase to 50% over a period of time.

According to her, segments such as MICE and sports, would drive the growth, and that South Africa has also emerged as a wedding destination.

She said the South African government was exploring whether there was an airline (from a third country) willing to operate direct flights to Mumbai and if there was any, the proposal would be discussed with the Indian government.







# PM Modi announces setting up of five iconic museums, cruise destinations in India

Addressing a gathering of people on the 150th Anniversary of the Kolkata Port, Indian PM Narendra Modi made an announcement about the integrated waterway policy by revamping current port infrastructure and merging it with other modes of transport in a transparent manner.

He said that the government's objective is to make India a major heritage tourism hub. He also said that the dedication of the four heritage buildings namely the Old Belvedere House, Currency Building, Metcalfe House and Victoria Memorial Hall, will start the India-wide campaign to conserve art, culture and heritage of the country as well as to reinvent, rebrand, renovate and re-house the buildings.

Modi also revealed that five

iconic museums will also be established in India, in line with international standards. It will start from the Indian Museum in Kolkata, one of the oldest museums in the world.

News has it that PM Modi also said that the government will give priority to river tourism, coastal tourism and cruise tourism. There are plans to set up aquariums, water parks, marine museums, water sports facilities in prime locations along the sea coast. Since a lot of tourists from India visit foreign destinations for cruise vacations, the PM said that work is on to further develop cruise tourism facilities in India. In the coming years, the number of cruise ships on Indian ports will increase to 1000. The PM also mentioned that the Kolkata Port will be named as Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee Port.





## Sanjay Kumar returns to IndiGo as Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer

**A**irAsia India's former Chief Operating Officer Sanjay Kumar has come back to IndiGo, an airline he was associated with for more than a decade before quitting in late 2018. Kumar has joined IndiGo—the country's largest largest airline

— as Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer.

He had quit the carrier in 2018 after serving as chief commercial officer for over 11 years to join smaller rival AirAsia India. He left the latter carrier in November 2019.

Sanjay Kumar has returned to budget carrier IndiGo. This time he has joined the airline as its Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer from this month. He had also been associated with SpiceJet and erstwhile Air Sahara in different capacities.

## Vinay Singh Appointed as Hotel Manager at Le Meridien Jaipur Resort and Spa

**A** trail-blazer in the field of hospitality, with over 18 years of experience in leading Indian and International hotel brands, Vinay Singh is a dynamic and charismatic presence. Defined by more than just

his passion and commitment to the field, he has been a beacon of purpose, innovation and energy during his tenure at Renaissance Mumbai and Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai – Marriott Executive Apartments.

With a Bachelor's Degree in Science and a Master's Degree in Management Studies, Vinay has worked with several globally renowned brands and properties such as Le Royal Méri dien Mumbai, Hilton Worldwide, The Westin Mumbai Garden City, The St. Regis Mumbai and others. As a result of his sheer hard work and diligence, he has scaled exceptional heights and is continuing to make his mark wherever he goes.

In his previous role, Vinay was responsible for managing 773 keys of the Renaissance Mumbai and Lakeside Chalet, Marriott Executive Apartments,

Marriott India's largest multi-dimensional lifestyle establishment as Complex Director of Sales and Marketing.

With boundless determination and a clear vision for the future, Vinay now begins the next exciting chapter of his journey – as the Hotel Manager of Le Méri dien Jaipur Resort and Spa, where he will be responsible for leading the overall operations and management of the hotel.

As a leader, Vinay possesses the vision and capability to see the big picture and make decisions accordingly. As a person, he's a very jovial and extremely approachable and can easily add some fun to a tedious day, making it an absolute pleasure to work with him.

Vinay is extremely passionate about music and has always maintained a balance with his work and personal life.



## Dolphy Lobo appointed as Executive Chef at Le Meridien Hyderabad



**L**e Meridien Hyderabad announced the appointment of Dolphy Lobo as the Executive Chef. He brings with him over 15 years of culinary experience & specializes in Pan Asian, European and South Indian cuisine. An avid foodie he is trained under Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto and Grand Chef Hemant Oberoi.

Chef Dolphy completed his Bachelor of Science in Tourism and Hospitality from Sophia Polytechnic and also holds a Diploma in Hotel Management. He started his career in 2004 as a trainee at Taj Mahal Hotel Mumbai. He has worked with brands like – Taj hotels, Hilton hotels, Marriott international and

award winning Japanese restaurant “wasabi by morimoto Mumbai”. He has received the Top Chef award under the Multi Cuisine category by Gourmet Passport. He was also the part of Conrad pre –opening team where he was working as Executive Sous Chef.

Chef Dolphy has excellent culinary skills and his food philosophy concretes on promoting Farm to Table concepts; wherein he believes in the essence of pure indigenous ingredients.

With an illustrious career Chef Dolphy brings with him vast knowledge and understanding of the hospitality industry. His passion, zeal and dedication towards food industry has



helped him evolve into a versatile personality. He aims towards the highest level of quality, driven by creativity & wants to create a delightful experience for the customers.

Chef Dolphy credits his success to team spirit & his focus on customers. His strong analysis, object orientated nature, leadership allows him to successfully head and train the culinary team at Le Meridien, Hyderabad.

## Rakesh Upadhyay Moves in as the New GM Le Meridien Hyderabad

*Rakesh is a seasoned professional with over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry.*



**L**E MERIDIEN Hyderabad appointed Rakesh Upadhyay General Manager. Prior to joining Le Meridien Hyderabad, Rakesh was serving as the General Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Bhopal, India.

Rakesh is a seasoned professional with over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry. Grown with a core competency in Food and Beverage, his unique perspective on strategy, design and execution has enabled him to gain expertise across all verticals in the sector. Rakesh has been associated with the most reputed Indian and International hotel companies such as the Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, Starwood Hotels & Resorts and the ITC–Luxury Collection before starting his tenure with legacy Starwood hotels. The ITC Grand Central, The Oberoi Bangalore, Westin Hyderabad

are few of the key hotels where he honed his culinary skills and sharpened his principles of management.

Rakesh developed a passion for training and talent development during his tenure at the prestigious Welcome Group Management Training institute, which he considers to be a very valuable career move. The Starwood Career Program gave him the platform that allowed him to make a giant leap towards the management side of operations in the role of a Hotel Manager track and General Manager Track. He was the first General Manager to move from a Legacy Starwood hotel to the Marriott in a cross-pollination program. Alongside his passion for the culinary fine arts, Rakesh enjoys listening to music and rustling up delicious meals for his family, when time permits.

## Bjorn Fernandes Joins Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel as Director of Sales and Marketing

*with over twelve years of experience in Sales and over two years in Revenue Management, Bjorn has closely worked with the Market VP, Area Director – Revenue, Market Revenue Head and General Managers of Mumbai Marriott Hotels gaining proficiency in pricing analysis and decision making.*

**R**ENAISSANCE MUMBAI has appointed Bjorn Fernandes as the Director of Sales and Marketing for Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel and Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai - Marriott Executive Apartments. Prior to this, Bjorn was Market Director of Revenue Management – Mumbai Cluster for Marriott International. He has been a part of the Marriott family for a decade and deeply understands the culture and dynamics of the organization, ensuring a smooth movement into the new role.

With a strong acumen for numbers, Bjorn is expected to bring a new flavor to enhance this profile.

With over twelve years of experience in Sales and over two years in Revenue Management, Bjorn has closely worked with the Market VP, Area Director – Revenue, Market Revenue Head and General Managers of Mumbai Marriott Hotels gaining proficiency in pricing analysis and decision making. Bjorn has also had varied exposure within the sales discipline covering Global Sales, on-property and above property



sales along with revenue management between Taj Hotels and Marriott International.

At Renaissance Mumbai, he will lead the Department of Sales and Marketing and be responsible for driving core sales, creating relationships, promoting brand strategies and creating the best experience for all guests. Bjorn brings to the table his prominent experience in revenue management, analytics and diagnostic acuity and proclivity for numbers giving him an edge in this new position. In this leadership role, he is passionately committed to encourage the zeal of the young team while nurturing a healthy and cohesive work environment.

### INTERNATIONAL

## JNTO to launch “Your Japan 2020” campaign Your Japan. Your 2020. Your Way

**J**apan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) is kicking off their new campaign “Your Japan 2020” by launching a full year

of special experiences and great deals to international visitors on an unprecedented scale.

2020 is the year that the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held in Japan, and throughout the year, every corner of the country will be filled with a festive atmosphere. To share this buoyant mood with international visitors, the campaign offers memorable experiences and deals nationwide, including exclusive public openings, Japan-first special events, free air tickets to local areas, and large discounts.

International visitors to Japan can expect a wide range of unique

experiences only available in 2020, in every season and all over the country. It is an exciting year to visit Japan and for you to find Your Japan, Your Way.

“In addition to world class sporting events taking place in 2020, Japan as a destination provides such diversity across all areas of the country for visitors to truly enjoy. We anticipate that this along with the added benefit of some unique experiences on offer this year, will attract many more travellers of all segments from this region,” explains Yoko Tanaka, JNTO Sydney Office Executive Director.







# VFS Global starts mobile biometrics for Italy

VFS Global has launched mobile biometrics service (also called the visa at your doorstep service) for Italy visa applicants across India. This service allows you to submit applications, documents and enroll biometrics, all from the comfort of your home or office.

Keeping in mind customers' demand for flexibility and superior experience, this 'doorstep' service can be availed by individuals and groups living in all cities in India. A team of VFS Global will visit the customer at the location of their choice to collect their visa application and enroll biometric data.

The mobile biometrics service is optional and applicants will have to pay an additional fee.

Vincenzo de Luca, the ambassador of Italy said, "The launch of this new service completes the rich offer of visa services for the Indian public. It will allow companies and

individuals to submit their visa applications for Italy literally 'in house'.

"In just one year, the Italian visa offer in India has been thoroughly updated. The mobile collection of biometric data is in fact added to the widest VAC network for collecting visa applications in India, the option of presenting the applications via dropboxes pan-India, the free VFS Global Italy app to monitor in real time the status of the application, and three exclusive Casa Italia Visa lounges in New Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata".

As per VFS Global, there has been a significant rise in travel to Italy. The service has been introduced in view of the rise in travel to Italy from India. According to the Embassy of Italy in India, around 555,000 travellers from India visited Italy in 2019, an increase of 15 per cent over the previous year.

## Five-year multiple-entry tourist visa for the UAE announced



*Prior to this, single or multiple-entry visas were valid only between 30 and 90 days from the date of entry for foreign tourists.*

In a bid to boost tourism in the region, the United Arab Emirates has introduced a new multiple-entry tourist visa for all nationalities, which will be valid for five years. The announcement came on January 6th, 2020, as the UAE Cabinet — headed by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum — approved this new amendment, tweeted the government of Dubai Media Office.

Sheikh Maktoum, who is also the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and ruler of Dubai, also tweeted that the country attracts about 21 million tourists each year. This announcement aims to turn the UAE into a "major global tourist destination."

This new amended system will come into effect in the first quarter of 2020, but the other details including the visa application fee have not been finalised—or released—yet.

Prior to this announcement, single or multiple-entry visas were valid only between 30 and 90 days from the date of entry for foreign tourists. Moreover, the UAE government communication office's Twitter account also issues a waiver for the visa for Mexican citizens travelling to the country.

This announcement comes on the heels of the Dubai Expo 2020, an international trade fair, which opens on the 20th of October, 2020. The Emirates will also complete 50 years in 2021.



# Schengen Visa

## Rules Set to Change as of February 2020 – Here's What You Need to Know

**T**he Schengen visa is undoubtedly one of the most famous visas in the world, and one of the best to have as well. Granting to its holder the possibility of traveling to 26 European countries, 22 of them part of the European Union, the number of Schengen visa applicants has been steadily increasing every year.

Currently, travelers from 104 countries and entities need to obtain a visa to enter the EU for stays up to three-months within the Schengen Zone.

The Schengen Visa has often been dubbed as hard to obtain. However, now the EU is changing some of the rules to the Schengen Visa Code that regulates visa issuance and benefits, in a bid to facilitate the application procedures for travelers and consulate staff.

### **Brief History of the Schengen Visa Code**

The EU Visa Code, which is a set

of rules that regulates application procedures, processing and issuance of short-stay visas to the European Union, officially known as Schengen Visas.

The Code is also known as the Regulation (EC) No 810/2009. It came into force in 2010, and since then, it has been applied by all European Union Member Countries and associate states implementing the Schengen Acquis.

The common visa policy has been an integral part of the establishment of the borderless Schengen area, and has contributed to the enforcement of other Union policies, such as those concerning external relations, trade, education, culture and tourism.

Throughout the years, the Union has used the Visa Code to ensure a better balance between migration and security concerns, economic considerations and general external relations.

### **Why is the EU Updating the Visa Code?**

In May 2018, the European Commission adopted a proposal on the revision of the Regulation (EC) No 810/2009, under the purpose of strengthening the common visa policy while taking into account migration and security concerns.

The revised form of the Visa Code also suggested that the role of the EU's Visa Policy should increase more in relation to cooperation with third countries.

Overall, the Commissioners behind the proposal said they intended to facilitate visa procedures for frequent travelers to the Schengen Area, and by rewarding countries that collaborated in readmission of illegal migrants and other similar fields, with easier visa procedures.

After the Commission adopted its proposal, the European Parliament backed it up in April this year, and then the Council of the European Union gave it the green light later in June, which was the last step towards its implementation.

### **When Does the Updated Visa Code Start Implementation?**

All Schengen Visa applicants lodging an application file from the first Monday of February 2020 and on, will be subject to the new Schengen Visa Code.

Officials of several EU countries implementing the Schengen Acquis confirmed to SchengenVisaInfo.com, that the new Visa Code will start implementation in the same period in all Member States.

*"Since Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 amending Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) is binding in its entirety and is directly applicable in all EU Member States in accordance with the Treaties, all Schengen countries, including Lithuania, will apply it from 2 February 2020,"* an official from the Information Monitoring and Media Division of Lithuania explained for SchengenVisaInfo.com.

A German Federal Foreign Office spokesperson also confirmed that the German mission will apply the reformed Schengen Visa Code from February 2, 2020, as well as officials from the Visa Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Press Office Foreign Affairs of Belgium, and the Foreign Ministry of Denmark.



### **What Is Set to Change for Visa Applicants?**

The new rules will bring several changes to the visa application procedures, and improve the benefits that come with a visa.

The main changes foreseen by the updated code are as follows:

- Higher visa fees.
- Extended application submission periods.
- Electronic application forms in most countries.
- Representative authorities of every Schengen Member must be present in every third-country in terms of visa admission after February 2.
- Frequent travelers with a positive visa history to benefit from visas with lengthier validity.

The new code also introduces a mechanism that asserts, whether the visa fees should change or remain the same, for every three years. Another mechanism that will use visa processing as leverage will also be introduced, in a bid to improve cooperation with third countries on readmission.

### **Higher Visa Fees for Every Applicant**

The first way how applicants will be affected by the new visa code is through the visa fees.

Applicants that used to pay €60 per application will now need to pay €80, while those that had to pay €35 will now need to pay €40. This includes children and other categories that were granted with the benefit of paying lower fees.

Children aged 0 to 6 remain exempt from the visa fees.

The new code also introduces a mechanism that asserts whether the visa fees should change or remain the same, for every three years. Some of the countries cooperating with the EU in terms of readmission of illegal migrants may also benefit from reduced visa fees.

### **Application Form Can Now Be Signed and Submitted Electronically**

In a bid to facilitate visa application procedures, the updated Visa Code instructs Member States allow

application forms to be completed and submitted electronically, where possible.

It also obliges them to allow visa applicants to sign the application form electronically, which electronic signature should then be recognized by the competent Member State.

### **Extended Application Submission Periods**

Another benefit that the new code brings for visa applicants, is that it extends the period within which an application can be lodged, from three months to six months in advance of a trip.

Seafarers in the performance of their duties can as of February, submit an application as early as nine months in advance of their arrival at any of the Schengen ports.

The latest an application can be submitted, however, remains 15 calendar days before an intended trip to the Schengen Area.

### **Highlighted Importance of Travel Insurance**

Travel Insurance remains mandatory for Schengen Visa applicants, despite attempts to make it optional. In fact, the new code highlights the importance of having Schengen Insurance when applying for a visa.

As for travelers applying for a multiple-entry visa, they will have to prove they are in possession in possession of adequate and valid travel medical insurance covering the period of their first intended visit.

In this regard, even the new visa application form established by the EU, has a declaration at the end that states *"I am aware of the need to have an adequate travel medical insurance for my first stay and any subsequent visits to the territory of Member States."*

### **Schengen Members Need to Appoint Representative Missions in Every Country**

The new code obliges all Schengen Member states to be present in every third country, through their embassy/consulate, another Member States, or by outsourcing Schengen visa admission to an external service provider.

The obligation comes in a bid to facilitate visa application, as well, so that the nationals of some countries will no longer have to travel to a neighboring country just to lodge and application.

External service providers will be able to charge a service fee, which should not exceed the amount of the visa fee.

### **More Benefits for Frequent Travelers with a Positive Visa History**

Travelers frequently visiting the Schengen Area, who also have a positive visa history, meaning they have lawfully used their previous visas, they have a good economic situation in the country of origin and a genuine intention to leave the territory of the Member States before the expiry of the visa for which they have applied, will be granted with the benefit of getting a multiple-entry visa valid for up to five years.

This benefit will not be limited to specific travel purposes or categories of applicants. However, Member States are instructed to have particular regard for persons travelling for the purpose of exercising their profession, such as business people, seafarers, artists and athletes.

### **Visa Processing as a Readmission Leverage**

The new visa code foresees using visa processing as a leverage to push third-countries collaborate in terms of readmission of illegal immigrants.

Thus, the Commission will assess regularly, at least once a year, third countries' cooperation with regard to readmission, and find whether a third country is cooperating sufficiently and whether action is needed, in particular in the field of migration.

In cases when the Commission considers that a third country is not cooperating sufficiently the nationals of that country may face longer visa processing periods and higher visa fees. Countries collaborating in this regard, will be granted with shorter visa processing periods, lower visa fees, and visas with lengthier validity.





# South African Tourism Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane Visits India, Announces E-visa Programme for Indian Travellers

**W**ith the aim of reinforcing and strengthening tourism ties between India and South Africa, South African Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane and Sthembiso Dlamini, Chief Operating Officer – South African Tourism, visited India. The high-level delegation engaged with key representatives of the travel and tourism ecosystem, and reiterated commitment to enhance destination-marketing support in India, its 8th largest international source market.

The newly appointed Minister, along with the COO charted out the tourism board's India-specific growth strategy for the new year. As South African Tourism sets its sights on doubling

international tourist arrivals from 10.5 million to 21 million by 2030, India is expected to play a significant role in achieving this long-term goal. From January to October 2019, the destination welcomed 81,316 Indian visitors to South Africa – a 5.48 per cent YoY increase. Average length of stay saw an 8 per cent YoY increase in the first half of 2019 from 25 nights to 27 nights. Total Indian traveller spends in the first half of 2019 were at a four year high with South African Tourism achieving 64 per cent of its annual spends target within this period.

Shares update on upcoming testing of e-visas for Indian visitors | Looks at doubling international tourist arrivals from 10.5 million to 21 million by 2030

In 2019, South Africa piloted a new e-visa system in New Zealand. On successful completion, there is intention to begin rolling-out e-visas in other countries, with India being amongst top priority markets. With the aim to further stimulate travel and tourism from India, the Minister indicated that the piloting of e-visas for the market was under serious consideration and would be initiated shortly. This comes close on the heels of an initiative launched in 2018 pre-vetted visas for top tour operators to fast-track visa processing.

In November 2019, the South African Minister of Home Affairs announced that the country was doing away – with immediate effect – the need for unabridged birth certificates previously required by minors visiting from international countries.

South African Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane announced that, “South Africa has taken several measures to provide ease of access to Indian tourists including bringing changes in the visa regime. The online visa application system pilot testing will happen from next week and if the pilot project goes without any glitch, a full roll out will take place from 1st April 2020. We have a positive outlook for the India market and are also in talks with India for granting multiple-entry visa to South Africa.”

“MICE and sports tourism are predicted to drive arrivals growth for South Africa. South Africa has also emerged as a popular wedding destination for Indians. The South African government is also exploring interests from third country airlines willing to operate direct flights on the India-South Africa routes and any relevant proposals would be discussed with the Indian government,” added the Minister.

From January to September 2019, MICE accounted for 24 per cent of the Indian traveller visits. 43 per cent of overall Indian arrivals to South Africa were repeat visitors. 2019 witnessed a 36.6 per cent increase in Indian traveller spends on shopping and a 26 per cent increase in spends on leisure activities in South Africa.

# Schengen Countries Confirm:

## New Visa Code to Be Implemented as of February – Visa Fees Increase to €80



All Schengen Visa applicants lodging an application file from February 2020 and on, will be subject to the new Schengen Visa Code, which among others foresees an increase in visa fees by 33.3%.

The updated Visa Code was adopted by the EU Council in June 2019, and it applies to all European Union Member States and associate countries that participate in the Schengen Agreement.

The new code also foresees the extension of the available application period from three to six months prior to the trip and a harmonized approach to the issuing of multiple entry visas to regular travelers with a positive visa history for a period, which increases gradually from 1 to 5 years.

In an exchange of emails, officials of several EU countries implementing the Schengen Acquis confirmed to Schengen Visa Info that the reformed Visa Code binds all Schengen member countries in starting its implementation in the same period.

*“Since Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 amending Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) is binding in its entirety and is directly applicable in all EU Member States in accordance with the Treaties, all Schengen countries, including Lithuania, will apply it from 2 February 2020,”* an official from the

Information Monitoring and Media Division of Lithuania explained for SchengenVisaInfo.com.

A German Federal Foreign Office spokesperson also confirmed that the German mission will apply the reformed Schengen Visa Code from February 2, 2020, as well as officials from the Visa Unit of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Press Office Foreign Affairs of Belgium, and the Foreign Ministry of Denmark.

*“According to Article 3 of the EU Regulation 2019/1155 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019: This regulation shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in*

*the Official Journal of the European Union. It shall apply from 2 February 2020,”* a specialist from the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia further highlighted for SchengenVisaInfo.com.

This means that as of Monday, February 2, 2020, Schengen visa applicants will need to pay a fee of €80 instead of €60 per application as it has been so far.

At the same time, applicants will be able to file an application 6 months in advance of their intended trip to the Schengen area, unlike now, when this period is three months in advance. The latest that an application can be submitted, however, is two weeks.

The new visa code obliges Schengen member countries to outsource visa admission to another Schengen member country, or a visa processing service center in those countries they do not have representation so that visa applicants no longer need to travel to another country just to file an application.

The new code also introduces a mechanism that assesses whether the visa fees should change or remain the same, for every three years. Another mechanism that will use visa processing as leverage will also be introduced, in a bid to improve cooperation with third countries on readmission.

**The updated Visa Code was adopted by the EU Council in June 2019, and it applies to all European Union Member States and associate countries that participate in the Schengen Agreement.**

# Informa Markets in India



**inaugurates  
the 27th  
Edition of  
SATTE at  
Greater  
Noida**

*~South Asia's leading travel and tourism show~*

*~The key focus continues to map trends and build partnerships ~*

Informa Markets in India inaugurated the 27th edition of SATTE, a leading B2B travel trade engagement show taking place at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida, Delhi – NCR scheduled from January 8th – January 10th, 2020. The three-day expo has brought over 1,050 exhibitors, 1/200 foreign buyers from over 50 + countries and 500+ domestic hosted buyers from 104 Indian cities. More than 30,000 travel and tourism professionals are set to attend the show.

The marquee expo was inaugurated by Chief Guest, Shri Prahalad Singh Patel Ji, Union Minister for State for Tourism & Culture (I/C), Government of India along with key dignitaries- Mansukh L Mandaviya Ji, Minister of State (I/C) for Shipping, Govt. of India; YB Tuan Muhammad Bakhtiar bin Wan Chik, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia; Ms. Nia Niscaya, Deputy Minister of Tourism Marketing, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia; Mr. Michael Goh, President, Dream Cruises & Head of International Sales, Genting Cruise Lines;

Mr. Subhash Goyal, Hony. Secretary, FAITH, Mr. Michael Duck, Executive Vice President, Informa Markets – Asia; Mr. Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, Informa Markets in India and Ms Pallavi Mehra, Group Director, Informa Markets in India, amidst an august gathering.

With a focus on building new business partnerships and announcements, the three-day expo will talk about the current trends in the industry. Keeping up with their annual promise, SATTE 2020 is delivering an exciting line-up of conferences to enlighten the industry by addressing the challenges faced and opportunities that Indian tourism offers. This year as well, SATTE received support from international organizations/associations and Indian travel trade associations such as Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), IATA Agents Association of India

(IAAI), India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB), Universal Federation of Travel Agents Association (UFTAA), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Skat and Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) amongst others.

SATTE 2020 is hosting a series of sessions and workshops, presented and lead by high profile speakers and industry stalwarts, covering topics from all aspects of the industry. The first panel discussion on 'Global Economic Scenario, Tourism Trends and India' on Day 1 discussed about the emerging scenario in global travel and tourism industry and in India. The second panel discussion : 'Adventure Tourism: Unlocking New Avenues' will focus on major challenges in adventure tourism. Day 2 of SATTE 2020 Conference will once again be a Corporate Travel Day powered by the Corporate Travel Community (CTC) that are set to organise two powerful sessions on Airline Programmes + NDC Education Forum and 'The Accommodation Outlook and Technology Innovations



Education Forum'. Apart from these, the Network of India MICE Agents (NIMA) will hold a set of 5 sessions and 2 workshops on MICE tourism.

Chief Guest Shri Prahalad Singh Patel Ji, Union Minister for State for Tourism & Culture (I/C), Government of India said, "SATTE 2020 is the 27th edition of the event which is proof that we are thinking and moving continuously ahead for the betterment of the tourism sector. I would like to congratulate SATTE for achieving this feat and thank them for giving representation to states such as Leh-Ladakh in their esteemed event. India is the only country that has a different cultural identity across dimensions and geography. Events like these showcase our rich culture in a great way. I hope foreign guests and visitors attending the event get a glimpse of our country."

Shri Mansukh L Mandaviya Ji, Minister of State (I/C) for Shipping Govt. of India, said, "I would like to congratulate the organizers of this tremendous travel event. From the shipping ministry perspective, cruise tourism amongst Indians has become very popular; India's coastal line boasts of 7,500 kms which increases immense potential for cruise tourism. Keeping

With a focus on building new business partnerships and announcements, the three-day expo will talk about the current trends in the industry.

this in mind, we have built International cruise terminals such as the one in Mumbai. A few in Goa, Mangalore, Kochi, Paradip and Kolkata are in the pipeline as the ministry and its stakeholders are continuously working to build the tourism sector".

Speaking on the travel and tourism industry at the inauguration of the 27th edition of SATTE 2020, Mr. Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, for Informa Markets in India said, "Despite the current economic and political crackdown, tourism industry still remains one of the fastest growing sectors. The reason for this could be government initiatives like e-visa, which has helped in attracting various international tourists. Under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, 13 thematic circuits in the country have been selected for development of tourism infrastructure with an aim to boost domestic and international travel."

"This is the largest version of SATTE this year due to outstanding participation. It has always been an insightful exhibition for us because of its ambitious nature. It has emerged as one of South Asia's largest international travel shows that both the exhibitors and buyers from across the world participate to showcase as well as shop for the diverse global travel and tourism products and services. Not only tourism, SATTE has the potential to harness rural development as well. The overwhelming response from the exhibitors and the upcoming discussions at the conference related to trending subjects like Tourism and Jobs, Corporate Travel, simplification of e-visas, destination weddings etc. will provide great insight into the industry. Through SATTE, we hope to provide viable solutions to help businesses thrive in the ever-evolving industry over the three days." He further added.

## Polish visa centres open in New Delhi and Mumbai

VISA

VFS Global, a leading outsourcing and technology services company serving governments and diplomatic missions worldwide, has launched Polish visa services in New Delhi and Mumbai. Prior to this, travellers had to visit the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in New Delhi or the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Mumbai to apply for their visas. Other Indian cities where VFS Global will commence Polish visa services are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru,

Bhopal, Chandigarh, Chennai, Hyderabad, Jaipur and Kolkata.

As a destination, the Republic of Poland has been witnessing a rapid increase in tourist and business arrivals from India over the years, with 2018 having a footfall of over 16,000 from the market. Elaborating on this, Adam Burakowski, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Republic of Poland to India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan said:

"Poland is becoming more and more attractive for Indians, with its rich business opportunities, various touristic destinations and excellent universities. The number of visa applicants is growing fast. "Also the opening of the direct flight between Warsaw and New Delhi is a major step. We look to the cooperation with VFS Global with high hopes. We would like to make the visa application process easier and more accessible for people."



# Travelport

## becomes sole GDS provider of Air India Domestic Flight content in India

- Sole provision fully effective as of 1 January 2020
- Significant growth in operational profit and cost reductions already achieved by Air India

**T**ravelport, a leading technology company serving the global travel industry, today confirmed that the company is now the sole global distribution system (GDS) provider of Air India's domestic flight content in India.

The contract, which was awarded to Travelport following a competitive bidding process, came into effect in November 2018 and was fully implemented as of 1 January 2020. It means, Travelport is now the only GDS provider through which travel agents in India can receive both Air India's domestic and international flight content. The company also continues to provide all domestic and international flight content from the carrier to its wide network of travel agents across the world.

As Air India is signed up to Travelport's leading merchandising solution, Travelport Rich Content and Branding, travel agents booking through its platform benefit from a graphically rich experience when searching for and booking the airline's branded fares, as well as greater access to its ancillary offers.

The milestone comes just one month after Meenakshi Malik, Executive Director of Commercial Operations at Air India, revealed that the carrier had already seen "growth of 22 per cent" in operational profit and "cut down cost by around Rs. 300 crore" since it began changing its distribution strategy. Malik also projected a saving of "Rs. 3200 crore in five years".

Travelport has seen a rapid expansion in India in recent years and now has an extensive agency partner network in the country. This includes major online travel agencies such as MakeMyTrip, Ibibo, Yatra, EaseMyTrip and ClearTrip, as well as major corporate travel agencies and newer entrants to the travel sector such as PayTM. In addition to industry-leading airline content, Travelport has a significant footprint with leading hotel groups and aggregators in India such as Oberoi, Taj, Treebo and Trident.

Martin Herbert, Regional Managing Director for India and Sri Lanka at Travelport, said: "We're delighted to reach this landmark. Wide and cost-effective distribution, coupled with

impactful merchandising, are important to all airlines and we're proud we are now the sole GDS provider of these services to Air India when it comes to both domestic and international content in India. The results the carrier has already achieved since it started adjusting its distribution strategy have been extremely positive. We now look forward to taking performance to the next level for the benefit of the airline and its customers."

Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Operating Officer at InterGlobe Technology Quotient, said: "Since inception, this partnership between Air India and Travelport has presented impressive prospects. Now that we have had a glimpse of last year's performance, with respect to positive reflections on growth, cost and savings for our partner - Air India; the future only seems bright from here. As the sole GDS distributor of Air India's domestic content, we are aiming at easing the process, cutting down unnecessary stages and offering value-added advantage in booking Air India branded fares and ancillary services, both simply and seamlessly."

# RezLive.com

aims to revolutionize India's travel agencies managing corporate travel



**R**ezLive.com, a global player in B2B online travel reservation space from the house of Travel Designer Group, announced the launch of 'Affiliate.Travel' at SATTE 2020, South Asia's leading travel and tourism event. Affiliate Travel will be a game changer to revolutionize India's corporate travel by empowering travel agencies and professionals managing business travel with their own booking engines without investing in technology. As per a KPMG report, India's business travel market is expected to reach over US\$ 93 billion by 2030. Realising the potential in this segment, Indian travel agencies and tour operators are gearing up to encash the growth opportunities. Affiliate.Travel will help Indian travel and tourism industry to create new success avenues with the rise of business travel in the country.

Affiliate.Travel allows travel agents to distribute their own booking platform to their corporate clients for managing reservations. This booking platform is powered by RezLive.com's robust booking engine with access to over 250,000+ hotels, 45000+ sightseeing options and 5000+ transfer options. The booking tool is packaged with the innovative features of RezLive.com, complete with a payment

gateway for seamless payment collection from corporate clients.

RezLive.com also celebrated the success of RezRewards, the renowned loyalty program at SATTE. This programme has registered over 10,000 travel agencies across 60 countries to earn and redeem RezReward points. RezRewards is one of the very few loyalty programs in the B2B space that has gained enormous popularity. A shining star in the travel segment, RezRewards has proved that loyalty can be inspired among clients in a highly competitive travel industry.

Speaking about the launch of Affiliate.Travel and sharing insights on new industry trends, **Jaal Shah, Managing Director, Travel Designer Group** said, *"Digital revolution has given way to an overload of information that has transformed customer behavior in the travel industry. While there are multiple challenges that need to be tackled, we believe that there are immense opportunities to the travel agents, who can step in as experts in designing and executing travel plans. RezLive.com is here to support with its unique offerings in product, service, payment modes and booking features for the travel agents to service their end customers seamlessly. We are confident*

*that Affiliate.Travel will help travel agent community to take business travel segment in India to new global heights."*

He further added, *"We are grateful to SATTE for presenting a comprehensive platform to propagate businesses like ours and for providing an excellent opportunity to network with the global market leaders and the travel agents community across India. The event facilitates in-depth and insightful conversations on topics affecting the travel industry along with key business partnerships and alignments that every company in the travel sector can leverage upon."*

India's inbound and outbound tourism pictures a very positive sentiment, which players like RezLive.com want to tap and utilize effectively. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that India will account for 50 million outbound tourists by 2020 whereas a recent report by FICCI-YES Bank stated that India's inbound tourism will touch INR 35 trillion by 2029.

RezLive.com was recently awarded as Asia's and India's Leading B2B Travel Provider 2019 at World Travel Awards, regarded as a milestone event in the industry calendar that acknowledges, rewards and celebrates excellence across all key sectors of the travel, tourism and hospitality industries.





## Amazon to create one million jobs in India by 2025, says Bezos



**W**orld's largest online shopping platform Amazon on Friday announced plans to create one million new jobs in India over the next five years as it firefights comments from Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on the firm not doing a favour to the country by making the investments.

Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, in a statement on Friday, said the company plans to create one million new jobs in India over the next five years. The new jobs - created both directly and indirectly - will be across industries, including IT, skill development, content creation, retail, logistics, and manufacturing.

These jobs are in addition to the seven lakh jobs Amazon's investments have enabled over the last six years in the country.

The statement comes a day after Goyal said the US-based company was not doing a favour to the country by the investments, and questioned how the online retailing major could incur such "big" losses but for its predatory pricing.

Bezos, who is in India this week, had on Wednesday announced USD 1 billion (over Rs 7,000 crore) investment in the country to help bring small and medium businesses online and committed to exporting USD 10 billion worth of India-made goods by 2025.

"We've seen huge contributions from our employees, extraordinary creativity from the small businesses we've partnered with, and great enthusiasm from the customers who shop with us - and we're excited about what lies

ahead," Bezos said in the statement on Friday.

The company noted that the Indian government has prioritised job creation and skilling initiatives including the training of more than 400 million people by 2022 in rural and urban areas.

"Amazon's job creation commitment and investment in traders and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) complement these social inclusion and social mobility efforts by creating more opportunities for people in India to find employment, build skills, and expand entrepreneurship opportunities," the statement added.

The company's new investments will help hiring talent to fill roles across the company in India, including software development engineering, cloud computing, content creation, and customer support, it said.

Since 2014, Amazon has grown its employee base more than four times, and last year inaugurated its new campus building in Hyderabad Amazon's first fully-owned campus outside the United States and the largest building globally in terms of employees (15,000) and space (9.5 acres).

The e-tail giant had previously committed USD 5.5 billion investments in India - Amazon's most important market outside of the US and a key growth driver.

The investments, Amazon said, will also help in expanding growth opportunities for the more than 5.5 lakh traders and micro, small, and

medium-sized businesses including local shops through programs like Saheli, Karigar, and I Have Space.

In a post on the Amazon.in website, Bezos said more than 60,000 businesses are exporting 'Make in India' products globally with cumulative exports exceeding USD 1 billion.

"I fall more in love with India every time I return here. The boundless energy, innovation, and the grit of the Indian people always inspire me," he wrote.

Bezos' visit has been marked by Competition Commission of India initiating a formal investigation into alleged deep discounts, preferential listing and exclusionary tactics adopted by Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart. Many store owners, led by traders' body Confederation of All India Traders, had also organised protests in 300 cities against online retailers alleging that these e-commerce companies were violating FDI rules and following predatory pricing in India.

Last year, the government had tightened rules for e-commerce marketplaces with foreign investment. These rules barred such platforms from offering products of sellers in which they hold a stake and banned exclusive marketing arrangements among other clauses. Following this, Amazon restructured its joint ventures to ensure compliance.

The government has asserted that e-commerce companies have to follow Indian rules in letter and spirit and not find loopholes to make a back-door entry into multi-brand retail segment.



packages by Discover Qatar and Qatar Airways Holidays, all of which will help further boost visitor numbers. We are also thankful to the Ministry of Interior who have agreed to fast track visa applications within 24 hours for anyone identifying Shop Qatar as the reason for their visit to Doha. This is in addition to the 80 countries who already enjoy visa-free access to Qatar, ensuring that we are able to welcome as many visitors to our nation as possible.”

Running until the end of January, Shop Qatar will showcase the work of local, regional and international designers,

with a series of fashion shows and makeup masterclasses with celebrity artists and influencers. The celebrations will end with Chinese New Year festivities. There will also be an array of mall activations, children's entertainment shows and a host of live music concerts.

Following Shop Qatar is an exciting programme of events in 2020, including Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition (24 to 29 February), Qatar International Food Festival (24 March to 2 April) and Doha Design Week (18 to 28 March). This is in addition to the year-round activities on offer in Doha such as outdoor adventures, cultural attractions and fine dining.

Qatar Airways currently operates a modern fleet of more than 250 aircraft via its hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA), to more than 160 destinations worldwide. The world's fastest-growing airline added several exciting new destinations to its growing network last year, including Rabat, Morocco; Izmir, Turkey; Malta; Davao, Philippines; Lisbon, Portugal; Mogadishu, Somalia; Langkawi, Malaysia and Gaborone, Botswana. The airline will add Luanda, Angola; Osaka, Japan; Dubrovnik, Croatia and Santorini, Greece to its extensive route network in 2020.

# Qatar Airways

## is proud sponsor of the Fourth Edition of Shop Qatar

*The 2020 edition will run until the end of January*

**A**n array of exciting fashion shows, beauty masterclasses and entertainment are on offer

Qatar Airways is offering special fares from select destinations, stopover and travel packages for visitors to Qatar

Qatar Airways is the Official Airline Partner and proud sponsor of the fourth edition of the Shop Qatar festival, currently taking place until 31 January 2020 in various shopping malls across Doha. The official launch was held on Tuesday 7 January with dazzling fashion and entertainment events held at Barahat Msheireb.

The launch event treated guests to a fashion show by Qatar's Hind Al Rumaihi, followed by French fashion collective Faith Connexion. A traditional

Chinese lion show ended the evening, as a prelude to the week-long Chinese New Year celebrations that will happen for the first time ever.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive and Secretary-General of QNTC, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, who spoke at the event said: “As the national carrier of the State of Qatar, we are proud and committed to continuing to promote Doha as a stopover destination, and Shop Qatar is the first in a line-up of great events that will be happening in 2020.

“As the Official Airline sponsor, Qatar Airways is offering international guests special offers to Doha as a part of the Shop Qatar festival. These offers will include special airfares from select destinations, stopover and travel



## Madhya Pradesh Tourism announces 'Namaste Orchha'

Lonely Planet. The Madhya Pradesh Government has identified tourism as one of the leading sectors for development and aims to promote MP as an attractive destination for both domestic and international travellers. There is a sustained focus on infrastructure development, restoration of heritage sites, development of natural reserves and biodiversity, promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism as well as rural tourism.

Faiz Ahmed Kidwai, Secretary Tourism, Govt of Madhya Pradesh and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board said, "Madhya Pradesh is among the most exciting tourist destination in the country and has immense potential to grow inbound tourism. Under the vision of the Honourable Chief Minister, tourism has been identified as a key focus area. We are creating new opportunities and initiatives to promote the state and its rich cultural, natural and architectural heritage and its traditions and history. This festival will find a place of pride in the lives of the local populace of Orchha, sharing their home and heart with visitors. It will also bring the very best of Madhya Pradesh together in a meaningful celebration."

There will also be 'gram' and 'farm' stays to promote rural entrepreneurship; workshops and site-visits for photography, film-making, performing arts; exhibitions showcasing the state's handicraft heritage and legacies, sustainable fashion and design presentations in collaboration with master-craftsmen and well known global-local brands. It will also offer opportunity for local businesses to expand tourism offerings and weddings industries to exploit the yet untapped potential in the state.

Yasmin Kidwai, Festival Director and Curator, Director of Spring Box Films said, "Orchha is a hidden gem

in Madhya Pradesh and thrives on its celebrated heritage, natural beauty, culture and creativity. Our thought is to create an annual event in the cultural calendar of Madhya Pradesh that will help to discover this fascinating place and bring in the confluence of ideas and creative collaborations."

Just under 500 kms from Delhi, Orchha is a perfect weekend getaway as it is easily accessible from the national capital via road (approx. 8 hours), by train up to Jhansi Junction (approx. 5-6 hours including a 30-minute drive from Jhansi to Orchha) and by air up to Gwalior (approx. 4 hours including a 3-hour drive from Gwalior to Orchha).

The Orchha Fort Complex hosts the legendary and unique Ram Raja Temple, built in honour of Lord Ram and is the only place where he is worshipped both as a god and as a king. There is the imposing Chaturbhuj Temple, with a blend of temple, fort and palace architectural features, the royal palaces- Raja Mahal and the Sheesh Mahal, which is now converted into a heritage hotel; the Jahangir Mahal built by Maharaja Bir Singh Deo in honour of a visit by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir; and the Phool Bagh, an architectural marvel built for natural cooling through a water ventilation system. Numerous cenotaphs or chhatris, constructed in honour of various erstwhile rulers of the city, dot the vicinity of the fort and the Betwa river.

The rich and unfettered natural resources, biodiversity and pristine landscape are also an unparalleled attraction for nature and adventure lovers to explore Orchha. From guided tours of the Orchha Wildlife Sanctuary to adventure sports along the Betwa river, picturesque natural beauty to an experience of rural life, there's something for every traveller to take home.

Adding to its ongoing initiatives to promote Madhya Pradesh as a leading tourism destination in the country, the State Tourism Board announced 'Namaste Orchha', a new festival scheduled to be held from March 6-8, 2020, celebrating the cultural landscape of the state in the historic town of Orchha. The festival was announced at a curtain raiser in New Delhi.

The three day extravaganza in this ancient and quaint town will feature diverse activities of music, art, wellness, travel, nature, adventure, history and culture. These activities would be led by experts in their respective fields with participants comprising invited delegates. An immersive visual spectacle of Maha Aarti will be curated at the banks of river Betwa. Designer Anupamaa Dayal, the pioneers of fusion rock Indian Ocean, renowned sculptor and nail art painter Wajid Khan are some of the artists who will create engaging experiences for the audiences at the festival.

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has recently won 10 National Awards and the state has also been listed among the Top 3 'Best Value Destination' of the world by



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