Participants hail OTM as the leading travel show in India

OTM 2014 concluded with a record number of visitors attending the shows at Mumbai and Delhi-NCR taking India’s biggest B2B focused travel trade show to a new high. Over 1100 exhibitors from 40 countries and all over India took part this year. With an array of participation from national tourist organisations, state government tourism departments, tour operators, travel agents, hotels & resorts, airlines, online travel agencies and many other segments of the travel and tourism industry, OTM Mumbai and Delhi-NCR were robust meeting points for the global travel trade in India’s biggest travel hubs. In their feedback participants and trade visitors strongly opined that OTM is the most successful travel trade show in India.
Thank you very much for inviting me. India is a very important country for us and Greek tourist operators are also participating for the first time in OTM. I had the opportunity to go around the fair and I am impressed by the number of countries which are participating here. This is the first time I visited OTM and it is unique and a lifetime experience. I had spoken at the National Tourism Summit, where I spoke about travel to Europe and especially to Greece. I realised from the discussions that people have a lot of interest in Greece.

Ioannis E Raptakis
Ambassador, Greece

This is my second visit to OTM and each time I am pleased with this organisation. Each year participating countries have been increasing here. I have also seen a couple of ambassadors here at OTM. It is a very successful event. Our association here has been very fruitful. Our tourism representations have always worked harmoniously with OTM, especially to promote the Philippines as a destination.

Benito B Valeriano
Ambassador, The Philippines

We are here at OTM to showcase Romania as the new destination for Indian tourists. This is the first travel trade show that we have participated in India. We are very different from other European countries, we still have the “rural” in us. Our traditions go way back, we have a mix of Latin and Byzantine culture which is very appealing. You get the best of both worlds, the West and the East. Indians with a valid Schengen visa can also visit Romania visa-free. We have met many new travel agents here at OTM. What we got here in OTM is more than what we expected. We are here to connect with the tour operators in India and we also hope that we will participate next year. I must say OTM has the same vibe like the big international travel exhibitions abroad.

Razvan Marc
Director (UK, Middle East & India), National Authority for Tourism, Romania

I thank OTM and its organiser FairMedia for giving us a platform to promote China in India. I think OTM is very professionally organised. Many friends from the travel trade and media have come to OTM. I am happy with the benefits, so we will continue to participate.

Li Qianguo
Deputy Director, China National Tourist Office

India is the top source market for Bhutan and there is no better platform to showcase our country than OTM. The experience in OTM has been wonderful. The B2B focus of OTM has been very good. I can see a lot of business happening and our travel agents are getting a lot of queries. We are planning to expand in other Indian regions, especially southern India. We could like to participate in the TTFs held in other parts of the country.

Damcho Rinzin
Manager, Marketing and Promotion Division, Tourism Council of Bhutan

We have been participating in OTM together with our DMCs and hoteliers. It is the biggest travel and tourism show in Mumbai. Indian market is very promising, growing and important. It is relatively new for Turkey and it is not a traditional market like the European market. We hope to take a strong position in India and we will keep participating in OTM.

Özgür Aytürk
Culture and Tourism Counsellor, Embassy of Turkey in India

There has been a 20% increase of Indian tourist arrivals to Russia and we hope for bigger figure. This time we have strong delegation at OTM, with several companies and we hope this year we will make a breakthrough in Indian tourists to Russia.

Alexey A Novikov
Consul General, Russian Federation (Mumbai)

We have been participating in the fair for the last 10 years. India has been a very lucrative market and this time we have a lot of travel agents who have come to this year’s OTM. As per our conversations with our co-participants we have gathered that the B2B focus of OTM is quite promising for our business. So, overall the opportunities here are endless.

Aditya Baral
Senior Director (Tourism Marketing and Promotion)
Nepal Tourism Board

We have been participating in OTM for a long time and have been getting a good response from the buyer market. According to our past experience we have been able to showcase Taiwan to the trade fraternity and consumers in OTM. The response has been good so far for our exhibitors and suppliers at OTM. India has been a potential market for Taiwan and we are trying to expand in other parts of India apart from New Delhi and Mumbai.

Arthur Hsieh
Director, Taiwan Tourism (Singapore Office)
Experience Splendours Songkran Festival (Thai New Year)
12th - 15th April, 2014
The business over here at OTM was better than what I got at the recently held SATTE in New Delhi. I feel the B2B focus of OTM is good. The footfall here has been tremendous and unexpected. I have exhausted my stock of business cards and I don't think anybody in my office thought that we would need extra brochures and promotional materials. Even today I had to bring more materials. I am more than satisfied.

Manuel Mendes  
Manager-Business Operations, Expedia

We are here to spread the message that Egypt is safe for tourists. The experience in OTM was very nice and we got positive feedback. I didn't expect so many visitors here. We will be participating at OTM next year.

Michael Nessim  
Spring Tours (Egypt)

Every year we participate with the Egyptian Tourism Office. The airlines and the tourism body are the two wings of an aircraft. One cannot fly without the other. The organisation of the fair is perfect. We got so many group queries about travelling to Egypt, I congratulate OTM, because year after year it is only getting better.

Medhat Nabil Ismail  
General Manager –India, Egyptair Airlines

Ngorongoro is a unique place because you can meet the indigenous people while you are on a safari. We got a nice response at OTM. We had come here last year and it is fruitful.

Dr. Justice Muumba  
Manager, Community Development  
Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, Tanzania

We have seen three days of business at OTM and we got varied response at our stall. I really appreciate the introduction of the National Tourism Summit this year, which had good panel discussions and presentations by distinguished speakers.

Faisal Siddiqui  
Director, Zaka Group

OTM Mumbai 2014 was a fruitful and successful event for us. Excellent client engagement and networking along with new product sourcing were the key areas we managed to benefit from while exhibiting.

Jaal Shah  
Founder, RezLive.com

Stayzilla.com is an online hotel accommodation platform. OTM is a very good platform for us to brand our website to the B2B and B2C segments. We did good business and got a few bookings, including FITs and GTs. We have participated in other travel trade shows, but OTM is a better platform.

Hari Krishnan  
Associate Vice President (Supplier Relations), Stayzilla.com

OTM is a very good platform for a destination like Argentina to participate. It has a good mix of B2B and B2C and it gives an excellent exposure. The tour operators who have come from Argentina have made good connections. We are sure we will develop a lot of interest for Argentina here. We are very encouraged this year by the response and will be back in OTM 2015.

Medha Sampat  
Director, Knock Marketing (India representative for INPROTUR)

At OTM Mumbai we were ‘mobbed’ and in Delhi there was a queue of visitors who wanted to see our demos. OTM & TTF have shown how travel trade shows should be conducted.

B Chatterjee  
Director, EasyRes Travel Technologies

OTM is always interesting for us. We meet a lot of new agents who are keen to do business for us. We do other trade shows, but I find OTM better because of its wholesome approach of having both B2B and B2C. Even if we have to cut out a lot of things from our budget, we never cut OTM out of it.

Ashish Saran  
General Manager, Rocky Mountainer

This is our first time at OTM. We had excellent days of business. We were very surprised at the response we got. We will come back again!

Pham Ha  
CEO, Luxury Travel (Vietnam)

Experience at OTM was really beneficial and we hope to get more clients to Peru. We are also going to Delhi and hope to have good business too.

Jenny Meza  
Sales Manager, Journey Travel Company (Peru)

We got a good response from both B2B and B2C at OTM. We are really happy. It is one place where we can educate and teach people from the travel trade to sell our packages.

Nomita Paliwal  
Travel Specialist, Swiss Tours

This time there were more trade enquiries at OTM. We are more interested in B2B, and OTM has a good mix of B2B and B2C. Our aim is to promote Russia and it has been fulfilled here.

Manish Synghal  
Director, Dimaz Aviation

We do tours which start and end in London. OTM has been excellent for us this year. We had a good footfall at our counter and we are satisfied with the outcome.

Anjali Vartak  
Tour Manager, Star Tours (U.K.)

We are a B2C company but we have to meet our partners in the industry. This is the first time we are participating in OTM in such a big way and it has really given us fruits. We signed more than 200 contracts in three days which is an amazing number. We will make sure that in the coming years we will keep on participating at OTM.

Jagminder Pal Singh  
Director-Hotels & Holidays, goibibo.com

I have been participating in OTM for a number of years and each year there is some improvement. I had many enquiries and a lot of bookings are taking place. I am happy that I came.

Trudy Corea  
Director-Marketing & Sales, Galadari Hotel (Sri Lanka)
We’re moments

We’re timeless

We’re Egypt

See you on a Nile Cruise

www.egypt.travel
**BTM successfully launched at OTM**

India is the fastest growing business travel market in the world. Mumbai is the business hub of India harbouring major commercial organisations, leading corporations including multinationals, with huge business travel and MICE spending. To cater to this niche, BTM was successfully launched and co-located with OTM 2014.

It provided access to hundreds of business travel and MICE buyers from top companies in the region. BTM also focussed on buyers from corporate travel planners with purchasing authority, business travel managers, meetings, incentives conventions and exhibition planners, film destination managers, etc.

**SanJeet**
DOT, Attaché, The Philippines

"I am a believer in OTM. We have been participating here for a number of years. It is a good opportunity to meet the travel industry from all over India. Agents make an effort to come over here and it is good for us because it is not possible for us to physically reach the travel agents all over the country. I think this is the hallmark of OTM, which is unique to it."  

**Dr Adel El Masry**
Director, Egyptian Tourism Office

"OTM is one of the most important events in India. We have been participating in OTM for the past seven years and we will continue to participate. It is the best opportunity to put Egypt’s private sector and Indian travel agents under one platform. This year more DMCs promoting Egypt have come to OTM because it has a very sharp focus on B2B."  

**Arjun P Shroff**
Managing Director, Shroff International Travel Care, Inc

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**Moushumi Kose**
Manager (Publicity, Public Relations)
Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation

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**Jackson Bloom**
Vice Consul, U.S. Consulate General (Mumbai)

"The visa presentation at OTM 2014 was great and the audience seemed legitimately interested. We got a lot of good questions. The exhibition looks great and it looks like a lot of things are happening. The B2B focus of OTM has helped us connect with the travel agents who in turn help their customers when they apply for a U.S. visa. So, this platform was very good to give information to the travel trade."  

**Umapada Chatterjee**
Director of Tourism & Ex-officio Joint Secretary
Government of West Bengal

"I think our road shows at OTM 2014 were really good and power-packed. OTM is an experience. I am happy that the new participating countries at OTM got to know about West Bengal at the road shows here at OTM."  

**Lisha Krishnan**
Trade Manager, Tourism Office of Spain

"We got some very good enquiries from the travel trade and made some new contacts here at OTM. I am surprised at the number of agents and tour operators in Mumbai itself."  

**Alorino Noruega**
Public Relations Executive, Macau Government Tourist Office

"There has been a big change in OTM over the past 14 years. Initially people used to come to our stall and ask where Macau was located, but now thanks to OTM we are on the map. It makes us happy to see so many other countries each year. I wish OTM all the very best for the future."  

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"It has been a very vibrant OTM and it has given a very good exposure to Philippines. We have been participating year-on-year and we will continue doing so. The B2B focus of OTM makes it better for us because we can focus on the agents who are really interested in doing business with us to promote Philippines."  

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The Route of the African Sun. A once in a lifetime experience that discovers Africa’s great landscapes, whilst following in the footsteps of early explorers who unlocked the Mysterious Continent. Beginning at the famed Table Bay Hotel in Cape Town, journeying through the fabled Palace of the Lost City at Sun City in the Pilanesberg and ending at the magnificent Royal Livingstone Hotel in Zambia by the thundering Victoria Falls, this journey, enjoyed in 5-star resorts, will leave you breathless, awe-struck and filled with a lifetime of memories.

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According to estimates, tourist transport and rent-a-car industry has a $3 billion market opportunity. Tourist and Transport Show (TTS) co-located with OTM 2014 provided a robust platform to market and bring together leading players of the tourist transport industry under one roof.

At TTS, the exhibitors enjoyed direct selling opportunity to institutional buyers, such as fleet owners, tour operators, travel agents, hotels & resorts, airlines, tourism boards, business travel and MICE buyers. Overall it was a happening platform to launch and promote products for tourist transport and also provided a brand building opportunity to the participants.

OTM has been amazing and every year it is getting better and better. We met 500 agents in India. When it comes to B2B focused travel trade shows, OTM is the best.

Murtaza Kalender
CEO, Travel Shop Turkey

We have been participating in this fair for the past few years. I am not exaggerating when I say that the response we got was fantastic. You have done a tremendous job with this fair.

Qaiser Banday
Head-Sales & Business Promotions
Hotel Pine Spring, Srinagar

OTM Mumbai is quite aggressive and we find a lot of people from the travel trade. We met a lot of domestic and international travel agents. The experience over here is quite overwhelming.

Vivek Choudhury
Associate Director-Sales and Marketing
Carlson

We have been participating in OTM since 2007. We have four star properties in J&K and it is the best platform to market our product. Big travel agents visit OTM so that is the biggest benefit we have got out of the B2B focus of OTM.

P C Thakur
Group General Manager-Sales & Marketing
Mushtaq Group of Hotels

We are representing two Radisson Blu Hotels at Nagpur and Indore. I have seen this fair growing and the transformation of OTM from B2C to B2B. I feel Fairfest Media have been pioneers when it comes to travel trade shows. We have seen good number of agents coming in and I feel the marketing of this fair is pretty good.

Anirban Bhattacharyya
Director-Sales & Marketing
Radisson Blu Hotel

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Discover the allure of the Old World and splendor of the new. With more time in port, immerse yourself in the vibrant history, culture and cuisine of more than 330 global destinations with 223 exciting itineraries to explore. Your Oceania Cruises home away from home awaits you with a refined yet relaxed ambiance that ensures your absolute comfort. Our staff warmly welcomes you as you savour the culinary creations of Master Chef Jacques Pepin or simply relax with a massage in our Canyon Ranch SpaClub®.
Cruising is the upcoming holiday option nowadays. According to data released in the Cruise Lines International Association’s (CLIA) annual State of the Cruise Industry findings, the CLIA and its cruise line members are looking forward to a positive year of growth with a 2014 passenger forecast of 21.7 million worldwide guests on CLIA’s 63 member lines.

The leading cruise destination in terms of ship deployments remains the Caribbean, accounting for 37.3% of all global itineraries followed by the Mediterranean (18.9%), Northern Europe (11.1%), Australia/New Zealand (9.9%), Alaska (4.5%), Asia (4.4%), and South America (3.3%).

Similar to 2013, a major attraction at this year’s OTM is the Cruise Hub, showcasing leading brands of the global cruising industry. In OTM 2014, the participating cruise liners are offering an array of feature-rich innovative facilities, amenities and services to passengers who want a perfect holiday at sea.

Cruise Hub gets encouraging response at OTM

We have been participating in OTM for the past couple of years. The Cruise Hub is a very good concept. It is like a market place and people who are interested can come and find all the brands together. We have done group businesses and incentives.

Amit Mathur
Country Head-India, MSC Cruises

We are promoting three brands at OTM - Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Cruises. Cruise is a very affordable holiday option and it is very much in reach for the Indian traveller.

OTM is a great platform to showcase our products.

Midhat Hussain
Regional Manager-Northern India
TRUN Travel Marketing

OTM is a very sound and nice platform for B2B networking and that brings us every year. I must say it does fulfill our purpose of networking with agents from all over the country. In terms of business every year we are able to add on new partners at OTM. Since we are the largest seller of cruises it really helps us.

Anju Tandon
CEO, Arik Travels

Cruise Hub becomes a one-point contact for the buyers and sellers. It is a very good idea to have an area or a pavilion for cruise companies. It gives a branding and then we can take the rest forward. I am expecting more cruise companies next year at OTM. The Cruise Hub has given us a kick-start.

Pradeep Saboo
Partner, Guideline Travels

Thank you for the concept of Cruise Hub at OTM. I think cruises are no longer thought to be a rich man’s game. You get cruises at $700, so it is quite in reach of people.

Ritin Saraiya
Director, Silver Line World Travel

Experience at OTM was very nice. We got a lot of travel agents and corporates who were looking at cruises to do their conferences. The Cruise Hub is a great concept and you should expand on it. We can bring in more brands next year.

Vivek Jain
Managing Director, Griffon (GSA of Pullmantur Cruises)

OTM is a good platform to advertise our long voyages. You can meet more sales people here than you can meet on the course of your sales calls. It is good to have a segregated segment like Cruise Hub. It creates an atmosphere of healthy competition.

Eudora Fernandes
Branch Manager, Stic Travels (GSA of Holland America Line)
In Patan there is a structure called Rani Ki Vav. An elaborate step-well. So ornate are its walls, it almost feels like one is in a temple. I asked for the architect’s name and no one seemed to know. I asked about the sculptors. Even their names were unknown. Here, art precedes the artist. The creation is better than the creator!
Gone are the days when one would automatically think of the friendly ‘Travel Agent’ in the neighborhood to book a flight. This panel discussed the future of travel agents and online travel agents (OTAs) in the face of airlines competing for razor thin margins and prioritizing direct sale to consumers.

It was a contentious topic which brought forth some interesting insights from the panel of speakers which had Jyoti Mayal, Director, New Airways Travel; Ankush Nijhawan, Managing Director, Travel Boutique Online; Faisal Siddiqui, Director, Zaka Group; Biswanath Chatterjee, Director, Easyres Travel Technologies; and Phazhani Murugesan, Managing Director, Pioneer Aero Travels.

The takeaway from the session was that travel agents and OTAs are here to stay, but they must package their products innovatively and add many more attractive services.

Business Travel & MICE is arguably one of the biggest segments of Indian travel market (about a quarter), growing faster than any other countries in the world. The expert speaker panel having heavy weights, such as Ashwini Kakkar, Executive Vice Chairman, Mercury Travels; Subhash Goyal, Chairman, SIC Travels; Arun Hattangadi, Chief Operating Officer, Bonton Tours; and Tarun Malhotra, Director, Inorbit Tours, gave a hands-on experience and insights of operating in the market.

From the discussions it looked like this segment is truly a lucrative market and it will only go from strength to strength, as far as Outbound business travel and MICE markets are concerned. However, to push Inbound travel, the Indian Government must consider giving tax breaks, like it gives to the IT industry.
A very interesting discussion touched upon the issue of the validity of the service tax regime, depreciated Rupee and how will the outbound segment protect itself from the vagaries of future shocks.

The expert panel having speakers Rajeev Wagle, Managing Director, Kuoni India; Manoharan Periasamy, Director, Tourism Malaysia; Anju Tandon, CEO, Ark Travels; Sunila Patil, Director, Veena World; and Gopi R Iengar, Consultant, TUI delved deep into these issues related to the vast outbound sector.

The panel came to a consensus that the foreign exchange crisis is behind us and people have accepted that dollar will be `60 plus. But the high service tax issue is still a challenge and needs a forward thinking from the government.

Government organisations have been at the fore of destination promotion strategies. The last panel at the National Tourism Summit was a platform for sharing views and experiences. The distinguished panel had Ioannis E Raptakis, Ambassador of Greece; Vipul Mittra, Principal Secretary (Tourism, Devsthan Management, Pilgrimage & Civil Aviation), Government of Gujarat; Manoharan Periasamy, Director, Tourism Malaysia; Dr Adel Masry, Director, Egyptian Tourism Office; Raymund Glen Agustin, India Head, Department of Tourism, Philippines; and Li Qianguo, Deputy Director, China National Tourist Office. The takeaway was that the National Tourism Organisations and State Tourism Organisations have their roles cut, i.e. they should promote destinations and leave the operation of hospitality and transport to the private sector. They must proactively champion for increasing access, like e-visa and visa on arrival. In times of crisis, they must actively and directly engage with the travel trade, to give a personal, credible and factual account of the situation, in forums like the OTM.
Most Influential Persons in Indian Travel Industry at OTM 2014

To celebrate its 25th year of inception, the maiden National Tourism Summit and travel industry’s Most Influential Person (MIP) Awards, were held at the OTM 2014. Nominations for MIP awards were invited from the industry and an initial list was prepared on the basis of desk research and individual recall of long standing players in the industry. As a result, a list of over 300 nominees emerged. The nominees were asked to poll for one another at this stage and 195 responses were received. In a separate round, the nominees were polled by thousands of thought leaders industry wide. More than 700 responses were received in time and considered. 100 Most Influential Persons in the travel trade were selected on the basis of a minimum rating of 0.50 in the first round and at least the same in the second round, which means at least 50% of those who voted for a nominee voted in favour. Nominations for Most Influential Person from National, State Tourism Organisations and certain other categories were selected ex-officio or by the jury.

It is indeed an honor to receive this prestigious award and to be recognised amongst a group of people who have cemented the growth of the industry. I take this opportunity to thank OTM, Travel News Digest, Fairfest Media, NDTV Profit, my industry colleagues that have supported me and my team in our endeavors.

Sheema Vohra
Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing
India Representative, Brand USA

The MIP award is a recognition of Kuoni India’s commitment to create distinct holiday experiences for travelers. We help our customers to consistently achieve business objectives, maximise saving opportunities and offer the best experiences across the customer’s entire travel wallet share. These awards are a great inspiration to strive for excellence and innovation in our future endeavors.

Rajeev Wagle
Managing Director, Kuoni India

The MIP awards are a good idea. The response is very good at OTM. My company (Stic Travels) had a booth in Mumbai and we did very good business. I think the B2B focus of OTM is on the right track.

Subhash Goyal
President, IATO

It was a pleasure being a part of the OTM & NDTV Profit MIP Awards. Who doesn’t like to be recognised in the industry and to be recognised as one of the ‘Most Influential Persons’ is a feather in your cap. Least to say that to be recognised by the industry in an unbiased manner without even our knowledge is the icing on the cake. I am honored to be a recipient.

Jyoti Mayal
Member, Managing Committee, TAAI
The MIP awards and the NTS are good concepts and unique. Fairfest Media has been in the travel and tourism market for long years, the award means a lot and I am sure people will appreciate it. The methodology of picking the winners is very scientific. You have given everyone, new comers and veterans both, a fair chance to be selected as an influential person in the travel industry. The best part I found is that it is not biased.

Ashit Taneja
Country Manager, Jordan Tourism Board

I am very proud of this award. In my 30-year-long career I have accepted countless awards but none as special as this. Over the last five years in India, I’ve received many awards on behalf of Thailand – this award which celebrates personal achievement is very touching. When I came to India, Thailand received 400,000 Indian travellers, a number that has increased to 1 million in a short span of 5 years. I suppose that is why I’m seen as influential and I am extremely grateful for this title. It makes me very proud to have fulfilled my duty here in India.

Sethaphan Buddhani
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (Mumbai)

I feel very honoured to be voted as one of the Most Influential Persons in the travel industry. The award presentation was perfect and professionally arranged.

Runjuan Tongrut
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (New Delhi)

I am still pleasantly surprised and happy to be chosen as one of the ‘Most Influential Persons’ in the travel and tourism industry. Thank you for the honour!

Raymund Glen Agustin
India Head, Philippines Department of Tourism

It is a brilliant feeling to be recognised. I have been working in the travel and tourism industry for a while and it is great to be recognised by the MIP awards.

Mohit Batra
India Representative, Scandinavian Tourist Board

OTM has brought in innovation, new products, brought the world closer. The borders are just lines on a piece of paper. I have not seen anyone else doing what OTM does. To convince somebody it does not require much if you have established yourself and demonstrated great performance year after year. Apart from just exhibiting products of buyers, OTM has added value with the National Tourism Summit and MIP awards this year.

Guldeep Singh Sahni
President, OTOAI

I certainly enjoyed the overall experience at OTM 2014. In fact I strongly appreciate the services rendered by OTM at the awards ceremony. OTM has certainly placed Indian travel trade and industry on the world map. Today when we talk to the international tour operators abroad, they know OTM and they plan to visit India during OTM.

Om Prakash Sahgal
Director, Inorbit Tours

The MIP awards are very encouraging, because recognition is always good. It is a feel-good factor. I am honoured to get the MIP award. I suggest that there should be more seminars.

Rati Dhodapkar
Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent

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Guldeep Singh Sahni
President, OTOAI

I am very proud of this award. In my 30-year-long career I have accepted countless awards but none as special as this. Over the last five years in India, I’ve received many awards on behalf of Thailand – this award which celebrates personal achievement is very touching. When I came to India, Thailand received 400,000 Indian travellers, a number that has increased to 1 million in a short span of 5 years. I suppose that is why I’m seen as influential and I am extremely grateful for this title. It makes me very proud to have fulfilled my duty here in India.

Sethaphan Buddhani
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (Mumbai)

I feel very honoured to be voted as one of the Most Influential Persons in the travel industry. The award presentation was perfect and professionally arranged.

Runjuan Tongrut
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (New Delhi)

I am still pleasantly surprised and happy to be chosen as one of the ‘Most Influential Persons’ in the travel and tourism industry. Thank you for the honour!

Raymund Glen Agustin
India Head, Philippines Department of Tourism

It is a brilliant feeling to be recognised. I have been working in the travel and tourism industry for a while and it is great to be recognised by the MIP awards.

Mohit Batra
India Representative, Scandinavian Tourist Board
Last year I especially flew to Mumbai to meet the Russian delegation because they do not participate anywhere except for OTM, this year I found Romania in Delhi! So, for us association with OTM has been very fruitful. The MIP award is a unique concept and with a wider travel agent audience, it is a good initiative taken by OTM for the industry and I am quite happy with the transparency of the selection process.

Sanjay Aggarwal
Sun & Sand Tours and Travels

The MIP awards and the National Tourism Summit are very interesting concepts. The concept of MIP is very unique and encouraging. This will go a long way from here.

Angshuman Mitra
Starlite Destinations
OTM is not only one of the leading travel trade shows in India, but it includes several other components that are helping boost the country’s tourism including promotion of travel destinations and creating awareness about travel ancillary services that protects travellers etc. Awards are the measure by which society acknowledges exceptional performance. This year, the MIP awards have set the bar high for the travel and tourism industry. In keeping with the nature of these awards and the calibre of people who have received it, this was a coveted honour for me and I thank OTM, NDTV Profit and Travel News Digest for conferring me with this recognition.

Dev Karvat
Managing Director, TrawellTag Cover-More
OTM being one of the largest travel trade shows in the country has been connecting the global travel fraternity for over two decades now. I am humbled to be honoured with this prestigious award from an organisation of such repute and stature.

Bejan Dinshaw
Country Manager – India
Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority
The List of Awardees

BUSINESS TRAVEL & MICE
Ajay Bali - BCD Travel India
Arun Hattangadi - Bonton Tours
Ashwini Kakkar - Mercury Travels
Jehangir Nariman Katpala - Trail Blazer Tours
Madhavan Menon - Thomas Cook (India)
Naren Nautiyal - FCM
Om Prakash Sahgal - Inorbit Tours
Rajeev Wagle - Kuoni India
Ravi Shankar - Vacations Exotica
Rupen Vikasemies - Orbitz Corporate & Leisure Travel
Urshali Kerkar - Cox & Kings (India)
Zubin Karkaria - Kuoni & VFS

AIRCRAFT
Aditya Ghosh - Indigo Airlines
Capt G R Gopinath - Air Deccan
Essa Sulaiman Ahmad - Emirates Airlines
Henry Moses - Qatar Airways
Mithu Chhabria - Air India
Naresh Goyal - Jet Airways
Nerjeet Bhatia - Ethihad Airways
Rahul Bhatia - Indigo Airlines
Rohit Nandan - Air India
Tony Fernandes - AirAsia
V Raja - SpiceJet
Sachin Nene - Air Arabia
Sanjiv Kapoor - SpiceJet

HOTELIERS
Abhijit Bhaya - Sarovar Hotels & Resorts
Capt. C P Krishnan Nair - Leela Group
Dipak Hakkar - ITC Luxury Collection & WelcomHotels
Dilip Puri - Starwood Asia Pacific
Jyotsna Suri - Lalit Suri Hospitality Group
P R S Oberoi - Oberoi Group
Sanjay Suri - Lalit Suri Hospitality Group
Parimal Rai - Government of Goa
B R Reddy - Administration of Daman & Diu
Ashwini Kakkar - Mercury Travels
Sanjeev Churiwalla - Nimbus Tours & Travels
Sameer Shah - Dolphin Tours & Travels
Rati Dhodapkar - Abercrombie & Kent
Rajeshwar Singh - Government of Rajasthan
Raghwendra Kumar Singh - Madhya Pradesh State Development Corporation
R V Suchiang - Government of Meghalaya
Parimal Rai - Government of Goa
R V Suchiang - Government of Meghalaya
Raghwendra Kumar Singh - Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation
Rajeshwar Singh - Government of Rajasthan
Raji P Shrivastava - Government of Punjab
Rakesh Ball - Andaman & Nicobar Administration
Sanjiv Kumar - Delhi Tourism & Transportation Development Corporation
Sanjiv Saran - Government of Uttar Pradesh
Santhosh K Misra - Chhattisgarh Tourism Board
Sonam Choubey - Government of Nagaland

ONLINE TRAVEL AGENTS
Abdul Nazar - Akbar Travels India
Ankush Nijhawan - Travel Boutique Online
Deep Kalra - MakeMyTrip.com
Drhuv Shringi - Yatra.com
G M J Thomp - Ria Holidays
Neelu Singh - Ezego One Travels & Tours
Sandeep Murthy - Cleartrip.com
Sanjay Bhasin - Goibibo.com
Shawn Mendes - Expedia.com
Vinay Gupta - Via.com

TRAVEL AGENTS
Balbir Mayal - New Airways Travels
Jyoti Mayal - New Airways Travels
Kishen Biyani - Akur Travels
Sarabjit Singh - Travelite (India) & KTC (India)
Shravan Gupta - Travel Tours
Urvashi D Mohan - Delfly Travels
Sarabjit Singh - Travelite (India) & KTC (India)
Kishen Biyani - Akur Travels
Jyoti Mayal - New Airways Travels
Balbir Mayal - New Airways Travels
Sandeep Murthy - Cleartrip.com
Sanjay Bhasin - Goibibo.com
Shawn Mendes - Expedia.com
Vinay Gupta - Via.com

DOMESTIC TOUR OPERATORS
Abraham George - Intersight Holidays
A V Rao - Southern Travels
Capt. Swadesh Kumar - Shikhar Travels
Tejbir Singh Anand - Holidays Moods Adventures
Vijay Thakur - India Vision Tours & Travels
Vinay Gopal - Engle Holidays

JURY’S CHOICE
Anju Tandon - Ark Travels

Biswaanath Chatterjee - Easyres Travel Technologies
Dev Karvat - TravellTag Cover-More
Gopi R Lengar - TUI
Raymund Glen Agustin - DoT, Philippines
Sunil Patil - Veena World

OUTBOUND TOUR OPERATORS
A Basheer Ahmed - Metro Travels
Ashok Lalchandani - Ashok Travels & Trade Corporation
Ashwini Kakkar - Mercury Travels
B A Rahim - Akquasun Group
B Basu Mallik - Club 7 Holidays
Benazer Nahar - Akbar Holidays
Devendra Parekh - Travels & Rentals
E M Najeeb - Airtravel Enterprises
Gauri Jayaram - Globus Family of Brands
G M J Thomp - Ria Holidays
Guldeep Singh Sahni - Weldon Tours & Travels
Indrajit Sarkar - Voyagers Club Tours
J T Ramnani - Vensimal World Travel
Jayesh Madhavsinh Ashar - Pearl Travels
Kesari Patil - Kesari Tours
Kulkin Shah - Kulkin Kumar Holidays Family
Group Tours
Lokesh Betthalia - Trivay Travel
Madhavan Menon - Thomas Cook (India)
Manish Kripiani - Baywatch Travels
Manoj Mishra - Zenith Holidays
Manoj Saraf - Gainwell Enterprises
Mona Pandey - Millennium Travels
N M Sharefudeen - Omega Travel & Tour Agency
Nalin Kapadia - Incredible Vacations
R Singh - D Pauls Travel
Rajeev Wagle - Kuoni India
Ravi Dhodapkar - Abercrombie & Kent
Ritika Modi - Uniglobe Travel
S K Dewan - Dewan Travels
Sachin Gosavi - Grikand Travels
Sameer Redkar - Prasanna Holidays
Sameer Shah - Dolphin Tours & Travels
Sanjeev Churiwalla - Nimbus Tours & Travels
Shefali Gupta - Amigo Travels
Sudhir Patil - Veena World
Sunil Kumar - R Travel World & Travels
World Holidays
Subhraz Goyal - Stic Travels
Varun Pandya - Lohanas Holidays
Veena Patil - Veena World
Vikas Sarawgi - NCS Travels & Tours
Vikram Madhok - Abercrombie & Kent
Vivek Vasantrao Gole - Bhagyashri Travels

REPRESENTATIVES AND OFFICERS OF NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATIONS BASED IN INDIA (SELECTED EX-OFFICIO)
Arturo Ortiz - Tourism Office of Spain
Ahmad Kraisani - Jordan Tourism Board
Ashish Sharma - Celebrations
Asht Taneja - Think Strawberries
Bejan Djejy - Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority
Carl Vaz - Charsons Advisory
Catherine Oden - Atout France
Christine Mukharji - Austrian National Tourism Office
Chee Pey Chang - Singapore Tourism Board
Dr Adel Gajjar - Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Office
Hanneli Slabber - South African Tourism
Hassan Madan - Israel Tourism
Huzan Fraser Motivalla - Ireland Tourism
Judah Samuel - Israel Tourism
Kajal Somaiya - Global Destinations
Kavi Ghe - Track Representation
Lee, Jae Sang - Korea National Tourism Organisation
Li Qian - China National Tourist Office
Lubaina Sheerazi - Ministry of Tourism, Sultanate of Oman
Manoj Saraf - Gainwell Enterprises
Medha Sampat - Knack Marketing
Mohit Batra - Scandinavian Tourist Board
Neha Bola - Tourism New Zealand
Nishant Kashikar - Tourism Australia
Noel Saxena - Think Strawberries
Ozgur Ayturk - Turkish Culture & Tourism Office
Paranjit Bawa - Destination NSW
Parvez Dewan - India Tourism
Romit Theophilos - German National Tourism Organisation
Rupen Vikamsey - Orbitz Corporate & Leisure Travel
Sanjay Suri - Swissair Travel
Sethapath Buddhani - TAT
Sheema Vohra - Sartha Global Marketing
Shivali Suri - VisitBritain
Stephan Heuberger - Switzerland Tourism
Sunil Puri - Mileage Communications

OFFICERS OF STATE TOURISM ORGANISATIONS OF INDIA (SELECTED EX-OFFICIO)
A R Bardhan - Government of West Bengal
Arvind Jadhav - Government of Karnataka
Ashok Kumar - Administration of Union Territory of Lakshadweep
Ashutosh Jindal - Government of Tripura
B Pradhan - Government of Bihar
B S Bhalla - Administration of Daman & Diu
B Sairangpoo - Government of Mizoram
C Zangpo - Government of Sikkim
Chandana Khan - Government of Andhra Pradesh
Dhrubajyoti Hazarika - Government of Assam
Dr Arvind Padhi - Government of Odisha
Dr Jagdish Patil - Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation
Dr R Kannan - Government of Tamil Nadu
Dr Rajesh Kumar - Government of Manipur
Dr Umakant Panwar - Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board
Kameshblai Patel - Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited
Parimal Rai - Government of Goa
R V Suchiang - Government of Meghalaya
Raghwendra Kumar Singh - Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation
Rajeshwar Singh - Government of Rajasthan
Raji P Shrivastava - Government of Punjab
Rakesh Ball - Andaman & Nicobar Administration
Sanjiv Kumar - Delhi Tourism & Transportation Development Corporation
Sanjiv Saran - Government of Uttar Pradesh
Santhosh K Misra - Chhattisgarh Tourism Board
Sonam Choubey - Government of Nagaland

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS
"Sea-Horse" - Tourism Office of Spain
"Sea-Horse" - Tourism Office of Spain
Indian tourism taking big leaps towards development

India’s Ministry of Tourism is focusing on two prime things this year. Firstly it is targeting new tourist products, such as eco-tourism and adventure tourism. Along with that, India is also highlighting the tourism potential of relatively lesser known products and areas. This tourism strategy aims at increasing India’s share in world tourist arrivals from the present 0.6% to 1% by 2016.

One of the major areas with great potential to attract major tourist arrivals are the Northeastern states, with their rich natural beauty, serene landscapes, and rare flora and fauna. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim stand out in this category. To achieve the desired goal Ministry of Tourism is emerging with latest campaign and other promotional strategies, such as the recently launched international campaign, “Find what you seek.” Along with that, Incredibleindia.org has been equipped with facilities, such as virtual walking tours, easy access, tag, and review the “points of interests,” and viewing the interiors of several key locations. Customers can also book domestic air tickets, train tickets, bus tickets, hotel rooms, and tour packages through the website and get relevant links and information for online visa application form.

MoT launches 2014 Incredible India promotional calendar

The Ministry of Tourism recently launched the “Incredible India Promotional Calendar 2014.” The calendar containing 24 photographs on double sided paper was launched by Tourism Secretary Parvez Dewan. The January month shows the Kalpeni Island, Lakshadweep and Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh. The February month takes the travellers to the Siang River, Arunachal Pradesh and Aizawl, Mizoram. The month of March captures the Jumagah Fort, Gujarat and the Royal Bengal Tiger and Sunderbans, West Bengal. Keeping in view the festival of Baisakhi, the month of April has the picture of Golden Temple and Sri Meenakshi Temple, Madurai, Tamil Nadu. The month of May depicts the scene of the Betta National Park, Jharkhand and the Great Buddha, both Gaya, Bihar whereas the month of June shows the pictures of Maunder Peak, Uttarakhand and Humayun’s Tomb, Delhi.

July month is depicted with the photos of Cave Temples & Monasteries of Ellora, Maharashtra and Chhitgarh Falls, Chhattisgarh. The pictures of the Jagannathi Temple, Tripura and the Classical Dance Raas Leela, Manipur adorn the calendar month August. Ayy Mandapam, Puducherry and the Tirumala Venkateshwar Temple of Andhra Pradesh are shown with the month of September. October shows the Diu Fort, Damam & Diu and Dzukou Valley, Nagaland.

The calendar ends with the pictures of one-horned Rhinoceros, Kaziranga, Assam, Basilla Blom Jesus, Goa and Lingdum Monastery, Sikkim & Signature Golf Course, Gurgaon, Haryana for the months of November and December respectively.

The calendar has also been launched digitally and can be seen on the Ministry website.

India highlights golf tourism to rope in visitors

India’s tourism industry is focusing on golf tourism in an attempt to promote the country as a preferred golfing destination especially for international tourists.

“The ministry promotes the 15 signature golf courses in India at every roadshow abroad to attract foreign golf tourists and make the country a preferred golfing destination,” Tourism Secretary Parvez Dewan said.

Currently, India has 220 golf courses of which 30 are of professional level and 15 are signature golf courses, which have been designed by renowned international golf course designers. “Japan and Hong Kong have a shortage of golf courses and golfers from these places can come to India and play golf at a comparatively low cost. Golf tourism is growing at a yearly rate of 9.3% and there are about 1.6 million golfers who travel every year to golfing destinations. Hence, there is a huge opportunity and scope for promoting golf tourism in India,” Dewan explained.

Tourism Joint Secretary Anand Kumar claimed that India could easily cater to the European, east and south-east Asian and Japanese and Chinese golf tourism markets. Keeping golf tourism in mind, Tourism Ministry and FICCI will be holding a three-day ‘Incredible India Golf Tourism Summit’, on October 8, 2014.

Jet Airways to operate direct Mumbai-Paris daily flight

Jet Airways has marked Paris as its 21st international destination. From May 14, 2014, a direct daily flight will operate from Mumbai to Paris. Jet Airways further announced that the Paris-Mumbai service will be the only evening departure from continental Europe to the megapolis.

Jet Airways Group is one of the leading airline companies of India which operates a fleet of 113 aircraft, connecting 75 destinations in the country and abroad through 573 flights.

Survey: Goa is the most preferred domestic destination of 2013 for Indians

According to the latest IBM Social Sentiment analysis, Goa was the preferred domestic destination in 2013 for Indians. The findings were suggested with an analysis of 250,000 online conversations between September 1 and December 12 in 2013 on travel preferences of Indian consumers with a focus on consumer interest.

Of all the social media conversations, discussions on tourism and hospitality came up to about 33% with a high volume of discussions on flying, driving, and vacation with family and friends. The analysis revealed that service and experience were travel priorities, while price was the key driver for hospitality and travel agents. The IBM Desire Ratio - the proportion of positive versus negative comments – indicates that 59% of people are “looking forward” to taking vacation this December.

“Measuring social sentiment has the potential to enable the travel industry to design travel offers and services tailored to what travel users are telling us,” said Dr Lata Iyer, Partner, Global Business Services, IBM India & South Asia.

“Big data has the power to offer new insights to the travel industry including airlines, hotels and other travel providers that can translate customer desires into irresistible offers that they will welcome,” Dr Iyer added.

Goa to launch helicopter tourist service next season

Goa is focusing on delivering helicopter tourist service next season. The proposal made by Mumbai-based Pawan Hans helicopters was recently approved by the high-powered committee (HPC) for tourism infrastructure projects headed by Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar. Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) Chairman Nilesh Cabral said the tentative fare offered by the company for helicopter rides is ₹220 to ₹250 per minute.

Under the helicopter tourist service programme, a number of new helipads are scheduled to be constructed around the famous destinations of Goa. Currently Ela Farm, Old Goa, Fort Aguada, Camacona, and Colva helipads will be used to start the service.

HPC has also granted approval for twomore projects which include the GTDC’s sea plane project which is likely to begin in March and will be operated by Maritime Energy Heli Air Services Pvt Ltd, (MEHAIR). The second project which got approval was the ropeway project erected by Reis Magos in Verem to Kala Academy in Panaji spanning the river Mandovi.

Recently, GTDC decided to introduce a women-driver taxi service in collaboration with a private partnership.
LEAVE THE HEAT AND DUST BEHIND

Himachal Pradesh is at its coolest best in summer.

Spend a lazy morning watching splendid landscape or go for an adventure trip. With so much to do, your holiday in Himachal will always be a memorable one.
Malaysia introduces VoA for Indians

Under the plan of Visit Malaysia Year 2014 (VMY 2014) and the Year of Festivals 2015 Malaysian government has announced the facility of visa on arrival (VoA) for the visiting Indians, starting from January, 2014. Further, it was clarified that only those who are arriving in Malaysia from a third country, such as Singapore and Thailand, and holding valid visas for the respective countries along with confirmed return tickets to India, will be provided with the facility of VoA.

“Destinations with ease of visa are popular, and the choice of a holiday destination is most often decided on the factor of ease of visa approval. Malaysia has always been a popular destination among Indians and with the reintroduction of VoA, we hope to see more and more Indians considering Malaysia even as a short break destination for long weekends and last minute travel plans. In fact, this relaxation in visa restrictions is mainly for families and groups travelling to Malaysia on a vacation and for businessmen,” Manoharan Periasamy, Director, Tourism Malaysia said.

Maldives voted best honeymoon destination in the world

Agoda’s Global Honeymoon Survey carried out in January and February asked over 15,000 visitors to choose their ideal destination, and the results revealed the Maldives to be the number one honeymoon destination in the world.

In another development, Maldivian, the national airline of Maldives plans to begin charter flights to India, and negotiations are currently on to start such operations to Delhi, according to Hussain Lirar, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Republic of Maldives.

Some 33,000 Indians visited Maldives in 2013. The island nation received over one million arrivals last year. “The central part of Maldives is already an economic hub. We now want to develop north and south. We already have international airports in the two regions. Now we want to develop lodging facilities to attract tourists to the islands here,” Lirar said.

Indonesia targets youth and honeymooners from India

Visit Indonesia, the national tourism promotional agency of the Government of Indonesia, will promote cities like Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Batam, and Bintan Island in the Indian market. Shelly Chandhok, Country Manager – India, Visit Indonesia said that these destinations are good for shopping, nightlife, business, honeymoon, golf, etc. Further, Visit Indonesia will target the youth and honeymooners from the Indian market, Chandhok informed.

Last year, 200,000 Indians visited Indonesia, which is a 30% increase compared to corresponding year. India is the eleventh largest market for Indonesia in Asia. Both countries are also planning to start direct flight services to enhance tourism, she added.

In a new development a new airport located at Lobam in the north of Bintan in the Riau Islands, is to be constructed to start direct flight services to a new airport located at Lobam in the north of Bintan in the Riau Islands, to be constructed to be operational by 2016. The airport will be equipped to serve Boeing 747-400 aircraft and will have a capacity to serve 3.5 million passengers per year.

South Korea witnesses boom in medical tourism

Korea Tourism Organisation, the official organisation which promotes South Korea, expects medical tourist numbers to reach 560,000 in 2015 and 900,000 in 2020. With such an increase in numbers, the revenue from medical tourism is expected to jump to 3.5 trillion won in 2020 from 1.01 trillion won in 2013.

Since the country launched a promotional campaign to promote medical tourism in 2009, the number of people coming for treatment has increased by 36.4% annually.

The key reason for the increasing numbers and bullish predictions is the growing popularity of South Korea’s medical services in foreign countries, particularly China. According to data compiled by the Bank of Korea, the country’s income from medical tourism reached $187 million in the first 11 months of 2013, up 25.3% from $148 million a year earlier, marking the biggest tally since the central bank began to keep related data in 2006.
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Egypt to provide visa on arrival to Indian tourists

To boost tourism from India, Egypt announced recently that the visa on arrival (VoA) facility has been extended for Indian market for groups of ten people and more. This announcement was made at the TAAI Convention in Bhubaneswar by Elhany ElZayat, Chairman, Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF).

“Egypt has been a popular destination in India and the country is an important and high potential market for us. While there has been a dip in the number of visitors due to the political unrest, we have witnessed a major dip in numbers from the Indian market. The introduction of visa on arrival for groups will help increase visitor arrivals from India,” stated ElZayat.

E’lZayat further mentioned Egypt’s interest in promoting itself as a MICE destination to the Indian tourists with a prime focus on incentives for which special assistance may be provided for visa requirements.

Abu Dhabi golf tourism grows by 49% in overseas rounds

Latest figures released by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) have reaffirmed the emirate’s status as one of the world’s most desirable golf destinations. The figures show growth of its golf tourism offering by 49% in the number of overseas rounds played in 2013 compared to 2012. The figures reaffirm the emirate’s status as one of the world’s most desirable golf destinations, validating Abu Dhabi’s strategy to deliver sustainable golf tourism.

“Total Abu Dhabi course rounds consistently contributed over 30% of all international rounds played in the UAE through the later part of 2013. Abu Dhabi’s ‘Golf in Abu Dhabi’ initiative has effectively offered sustainable golf tourism contributing to a huge surge in overseas bookings. “With an international promotional campaign working in key markets, positioning the emirate’s fluid and straightforward approach to business, there is reason to suggest numbers will continue on this upward trend,” said Chris White, General Manager of the award-winning Yas Links course.

“It’s without doubt one of the world’s finest golf destinations,” commented Matteo Manassero, Abu Dhabi Global Ambassador. “At every corner of the globe I travel for golf tournaments, I am inundated with people asking me about Abu Dhabi and what experiences are on offer. I tell them it’s where I spend my time practicing between events, because of the golf facilities and because of the hotels and relaxation it affords visitors. It is number one for me.”

Israel begins 2014 with record number of tourists

Some 200,000 tourists entered Israel in January 2014, 19% more than in January 2013 and “an all-time record for the month,” according to figures released by the Tourism Ministry.

Last year, Israel set a number of tourism records with more than 3.5 million visitors, a 0.5% increase over 2012, generating more than $13.5 billion in revenue for the Israeli economy.

Private companies like Goway Travel, whose Africa experts sell Israel tours along with other countries in the region, have seen demand for Israeli tours increase by 24% year on year.

Jordan Tourism recognises opportunities in MICE

Jordan has identified the MICE sector to have high growth potential in its tourism industry with around 10 to 15% of all visitors being MICE related. The destination is known for its historical attractions, the ancient city of Petra, and modern hotels and convention centers, and to further elevate its popularity, the government has made huge investments for the development of tourism-related infrastructure.

In order to increase this percentage, the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) has scaled up its level of participation in this year at Gulf Incentives, Business, Travel and Meetings (GIBTM), which takes place at Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) from March 24-26, 2014.

“MICE business is extremely important for Jordan, and the kingdom enjoys a reputation as a host for high profile events of global significance, such as the World Economic Forum, which has taken place here no less than seven times,” said Abed Al Razzaq Arabiat, Managing Director, Jordan Tourism Board.

Pelé becomes brand ambassador of Emirates airline

Brazilian football legend, Pelé, has become the brand ambassador of Emirates airline, an Official FIFA World Wide Partner.

“Emirates is one of the most outstanding brands in global sports today. Having just flown on Emirates’ A380 from Zurich to Dubai, I can say from personal experience that it is also an outstanding airline. It would be great if Emirates would fly the A380 to Brazil for the FIFA World Cup.

“My flight was very comfortable and it was delightful to be on board with their helpful and friendly staff. And with such an international mix of passengers, Emirates is truly a global airline just like the global game of football. Emirates is a proud supporter of sports around the world, and I am honoured to be its Global Ambassador,” Pelé said.

As the much awaited FIFA World Cup-2014 is to be hosted in Brazil, the partnership between Emirates and Pelé will further promote the fact that through sponsorship of sports, as well as its operations as an airline, Emirates connects with people, places, and passions around the world.

Qatar to expand codeshare agreement with US Airways

According to recent news, Qatar Airways has announced the expansion of a codeshare agreement with US Airways for flights via Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) which will provide millions of Americans the opportunity to fly internationally with Qatar Airways out of PHL using the seamless connection service on select codeshare flights operated by US Airways.

The Doha-based carrier which is currently offering daily non-stop services from New York, Chicago, Houston, and Washington, to their hub in Doha, connecting travellers to destinations throughout the Middle East, Western Africa, Southeast Asia, and Australia will be launching the daily non-stop service from Philadelphia to Doha, Qatar on April 2, 2014.

Akbar Al Baker, Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Airways said, “Expanding the locations from which our U.S. customers can fly Qatar Airways is a priority, and we are excited that the expanded codeshare program with U.S. Airways will be in effect when we begin flights from Philadelphia next year.

Through this strong partnership we are furthering our goal to expand on the number of travellers who can fly internationally on our 5-star airline.”
Tourism Fiji conducts multi-city roadshow in India

Fiji’s tourism industry contributed about 37.8% towards the national GDP last year which amounts to $2.6 billion, said Attorney-General and Minister for Tourism Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum. To strengthen its hold in the market Tourism Fiji has announced the establishment of a dedicated public relations unit, based in the organisation’s head office in Nadi. The unit will be responsible for developing and implementing Tourism Fiji’s public relations strategy across the core source markets in which the organisation operates.

Recently Tourism Fiji held a multi-city roadshow in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru with over 350 product planners and frontline staff attending the event. A delegation of 13 Fijian companies consisting of high-end resorts, cruise companies and inbound operators, presented their products to the Indian travel fraternity. The delegation was accompanied by Elizabeth Powell, Permanent Secretary for Tourism and Rick Hamilton, CEO of Tourism Fiji. Tourism Fiji will also restructure its online training programme for tour operators, Fiji Maitai Specialist Programme and launch the same by this year or the first quarter of 2015.

U.K. contributes 15% leisure travel spend in Australia

Statistics on U.K. visitor numbers to Australia show a 4.5% increase for the year ending November 2013 against the same period of 2012. Tourism Australia is attributing this increment to a range of factors including the British & Irish Lions Tour to Australia, the CNN’s ‘The Best Jobs in the World’, commonwealth Bank Ashes Series, and global campaigns, such as ‘The Best Jobs in the World’. The U.K. remains Australia’s most valuable international leisure market in terms of total spend, with an annual total spend of AUD$4.4 billion recorded that marked contribution of 15% of the total spend for all inbound leisure visitors to Australia.

Denise von Wald, Regional General Manager U.K./Northern Europe, Tourism Australia explained, “Our ‘There’s Nothing Like Australia’ campaign resonates well in the U.K. market and by working with airlines, distribution, and media partners we are moving the dial, taking advantage of the improving economic climate and improving consumer confidence over here. ‘Globally Tourism Australia is working towards increasing the overall expenditure of visitors in line with our 2020 Strategy. In the U.K. we focus on attracting affluent long haul travellers aged over 50 and Working Holiday Makers aged 18-30’.

New Zealand sees tourism growth after Hobbit movie success

The year 2013 saw the biggest annual increase in tourist arrivals in New Zealand since 2004. New Zealand’s tourism industry has forecast arrivals of 2.7 million people, a 10% rise from the arrivals of 2012. Tourism New Zealand Chief Executive Kevin Bowler has attributed this positive change to the British and American visitors coming back after the recession, the emerging Chinese tourist market, and the successful Hobbit movies shot in the country.

Bowler further added that travel markets of Brazil, Indonesia, and India will be key targets in 2014.

Sydney Harbour celebrates 178th Australia Day Regatta

Australia Day, the national day of Australia celebrated on 26 January, is fast becoming a ‘must do’ travel experience in Sydney with the Sydney Harbour packed full of activities.

Destination NSW CEO Sandra Chipchase said, “The Australian Day celebrations in Sydney are a must do experience - from the Ferrython races to the Great Australian Swim around Farm Cove. The Sydney’s Tall Ships fleet to the aerial displays by the Royal Australian Air Force and the Australia Day Regatta - the harbour is buzzing during this annual spectacle. It is a very special time.”

Hundreds of participants took part in the Great Australian Swim Series Final. Moreover, the Sydney Harbour Concert Series featured live music performances onboard an impressive floating stage at Blues Point, Athol Bay, and Darling Harbour.

Other harbour highlights included the ever-popular Ferrython races and a 21-gun salute followed by an aerial display by FA 18 Hornets from the Royal Australian Air Force. Sydney’s Tall Ships led a fleet of historic vessels from Bradley’s Head to the Harbour Bridge, while the 75th Australia Day Regatta turned the harbour into an aquatic spectacle.

The celebrations continued to Darling Harbour in the evening, with the Darling Harbour Australia Day Spectacular. The renowned show featured a stunning multimedia symphony of lights and music, culminating in a fireworks extravaganza over Cockle Bay.

Tourism New Zealand

John O’Sullivan has been appointed as the new Managing Director (MD) of Tourism Australia, replacing Andrew McEvoy.

“Having the opportunity to take on this position at such an exciting and pivotal time for the industry is a great honour. I am looking forward to working with the team at Tourism Australia and across industry stakeholders, continuing to build on the momentum created to drive opportunity and growth towards 2020. Tourism is rightly starting to be acknowledged as a key driver of our country’s future growth and prosperity and I look forward to being part of that exciting journey,” John O’Sullivan said.

Currently a member of the Tourism Transport Forum Advisory Board and the Chief Operating Officer at Fox Sports, O’Sullivan has an extensive experience in executive positions with Events Queensland and Football Federation Australia, Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Organising Committee, the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and the 1994 World Masters Games.
VisitBritain launches Sounds of GREAT Britain campaign

VisitBritain is calling on tourists to “feel the love” in a new £4.1 million ‘Sounds of GREAT Britain’ campaign to promote the U.K. abroad. The campaign, created by agency Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/Y&R, uses distinctive British sounds, such as pouring a cup of tea, a black cab beeping and the chimes of Big Ben and hit song ‘Feel the Love’ by band Rudimental in a colorful engaging TV ad and interactive online video. It is launching across the USA, Brazil, China, India, and Gulf states.

Online potential visitors can pick between 14 destinations and their corresponding sounds to make their own audio mash-up and trip itinerary. The website then directs participants to learn about the attractions they chose on VisitBritain’s LoveWall.

Philip Taylor, Head of Marketing, VisitBritain, said that the tourist board felt it “needed to tell the story of Britain in a slightly different way,” and the ad is a mix of “second and slightly more surprising” locations in the U.K.

The campaign runs under the “GREAT” branding with VisitBritain’s “You’re invited” strapline. The emphasis on music was driven by the timing of the campaign’s launch, which follows the 50th anniversary of the Beatles’ arrival in the U.S.

Zagreb voted second best European destination

Zagreb, the capital city of the Republic of Croatia, has been voted the second best destination in Europe, according to an online opinion poll conducted by the European Best Destinations Portal. Porto, Portugal, ranks first on that list. Zagreb is ahead of 16 other European cities. The Brussels-based European Best Destinations is a nonprofit organisation that promotes culture and tourism throughout Europe.

Zagreb’s rising popularity can be ascertained from the fact that the city registered a 6% rise in the number of visitors in January, with the number of foreign guests increasing by 4%, and most of them arriving from Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Germany.

The head of the Croatian Tourist Board (HTZ) Main Office, Meri Matesic, said that the HTZ was investing a lot into on-line marketing tools and channels and that the HTZ’s Facebook page “Love Croatia” was one of the most visited Croatian Facebook pages, with more than a million fans.

NCFA promotes Armenia in Indian market

The National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia (NCFA) is trying to promote Armenia in the Indian market, and establish new partnerships for the realisation of tourism products. Recently the NCFA delegation conducted meetings with tourism authorities of India to discuss the possibilities for bringing the mutual tourism communications to a higher level. Meanwhile, the NCFA, the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Armenian Branch signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for strategic collaboration to develop and implement eco-tourism activities in and around specially protected nature areas of Armenia.

The MoU was signed by NCFA CEO Arman Khachaturyan, CNF Executive Director David Morrison and WWF Armenia Director Karen Marvelyan.

As a result of the MoU, the three organisations will work together to develop and implement programs to promote eco-tourism development and draw investment to the protected areas and adjacent communities. In 2013, 924,965 tourists visited Armenia, a 9.7% increase over 2012.

Bulgaria receives encouraging response from the Indian market

Bulgaria’s Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism and five Bulgarian tour operators, held direct meetings with the Indian companies in New Delhi. The Indian companies showed interest in combined routes including trips to the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, as well as to the resorts at the North and South Black Sea coast.

To carry on with the agreement between India and Bulgaria regarding exploring the growing tourism opportunities in both the countries, the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism had showed nine leading Indian tour operators around Bulgaria in September 2013.

Now, Bulgarian tour operators are already working on the finalisation of concrete groups of corporate Indian tourists comprised of more than 50 people. They are expected to visit Bulgaria in the summer of 2014.

GTNO to promote MICE tourism in Indian market

The German National Tourist Office (GNTO) is now ready to promote MICE tourism in the Indian market this year. The MICE segment is an important contributor to Germany’s economy, said Romit Theophilus, Director – Sales & Marketing, German National Tourist Office, India.

In addition, segments involving Festival Tourism, Culinary Tourism, self-drive holidays, and Wine Tourism will also be focused on. Theophilus added that an increase in FIT travel and family trips, especially from Northern and Western regions of India, was highly expected this year.

Theophilus also noted, “MICE associations in many countries are trying to steer the industry to adopt a ‘greener’ policy. Associations are promoting and cooperating with conference centres, hotels and airlines, which adopt environment-friendly practices. Germany is an industry leader when it comes to innovation in organising ‘green meetings’.”

GNTO with its India Pool will invest over €50,000 on marketing and communication activities to enhance visibility of Germany. Furthermore, Germany for young people will be the prime theme for 2014.

Greek tourism notes 15.5% growth in 2013

Tourism in Greece witnessed an upsurge of foreign arrivals with record-breaking numbers in 2013. The country island welcomed over 17 million foreign tourists in the first ten months noting a growth of 15.5% from the same period in 2012. Tourism revenue reached €31.6 billion up to the end of October with an annual growth of 14.8%.

Visitors from Russia made the highest number of tourists with an increase of 55.2%.

Arrivals from the U.S. rose by 29.2% from 2012. Visitor arrivals from France and Germany grew by 16.4% and 7.6%, respectively. Tourist numbers from Britain fell by 4.6% from 2012.

Noting the stupendous rise in tourism, air carriers have planned for 1 million additional seats to Greece for 2014. The Greek presidency of the European Union in the first half of next year is also expected to add to the country’s positive publicity.

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Mexico: After a successful 2013, it’s a busy 2014 with ITB Berlin

The year 2013 proved to be highly successful for Mexico tourism, with almost 11.8 million international tourists visiting the country. The Mexican government, through the Federal Ministry of Tourism, has announced that arrivals increased 9% than last year. The ministry also released data which showed that tourist arrivals from Canada increased 1.8% than the previous year. Visitors from Colombia rose 60.4%, from Russia it is 39.9%, and Peru’s contribution increased 39% than previous year. Similarly, 26.6% more Chinese visitors arrived in Mexico in 2013, the same figure for Korea is 24.4%, for Sweden it is 17.1%, and United Kingdom and Japan contributed 14% and 13.5% more in tourist arrivals, respectively for the year 2013.

Bank of Mexico revealed that from January to November, 2013, Mexico received revenue of $302,012,000 from 21.2 million international tourists- 6.79% more than the year 2012. The management of Messe Berlin has officially selected Mexico as the next partner country of the ITB Berlin 2014, world’s leading travel trade show. “Mexico is a country that is always full of surprises. We are confident that in its role as the partner country of ITB Mexico will provide a successful display of its quality tourism products to the international market and that it will be the focus of attention,” said Dr Christian Goerke, CEO of Messe Berlin.

Mexico will initiate its role of partner country of ITB Berlin 2014 by organising the opening ceremony in the eve of ITB Berlin, which is on, 4th March 2014 in the International Congress Center (ICC Berlin). Mexican Ministry of Tourism and the Mexican Tourism Board will then host a number of other events throughout the show.

Brazil equips itself for FIFA World Cup 2014

Brazil is all set to host the FIFA World Cup 2014 and welcome as many football fans as they can from all over the world. For this, Brazil’s four major airlines-TAM, Gol, Avianca, and Azul have announced that they will put on almost 5,000 additional flights, connecting the 12 host cities spread across Brazil. The flight tickets are selling fast leaving passengers in front of ‘booked’ or ‘tickets not available’ signs. Further, travellers are spending as much as $4,000 on tickets and are ready to face up to 38 hours travel time just to reach their favourite match venue on time. Meanwhile, the return flight fares are soaring above $6,000.

“We made a large request for additional flights to meet passenger demand based on the geographic distribution of host cities and match dates,” says TAM Airlines Chief Executive Claudia Sender.

Flavio Dino, President of state tourism board Embratur has recently stated that foreign and Brazilian tourists are expected to spend $10.4 billion during FIFA World Cup 2014, which would be more than the public funds invested for staging the event.

“These are important resources which fuel economic sectors of all Brazilian regions, from aviation to the informal economy,” said Dino. The revenue collected from this event is going to go to a great extent to boost and upgrade urban mobility projects in major cities of Brazil. The FIFA World Cup will begin on June 12, 2014 and end on July 13, 2014.

Customers benefit from American Airlines, U.S. Airways code-share

Customers can now benefit from the first phase of American Airlines and U.S. Airways code-share, which started from January 13, 2014 for travel from January 24, 2014. Under this code-share, one airline will sell tickets operated by the other carrier, using its own code and flight number, and customers can easily combine and book flights operated by each airline on a single itinerary.

“This code-share marks another step toward providing more convenient travel choices for customers, including service to more destinations, improved schedule options and a truly global network. Implementing this code-share so early in the integration process allows us to begin realizing significant revenue synergies, which are estimated to exceed $1 billion annually by 2015,” said Scott Kirby, President, American Airlines.

Addition to this, customers, who are availing the flights which are under code-share, can transfer bags when travelling on an itinerary that includes flights operated by both carriers.

Brand USA, Thomas Cook enter in a multi-million dollar deal

Brand USA and Thomas Cook recently announced a major multi-million dollar partnership which will aim to promote USA as the world’s leading destination for European visitors. This promotion will include traditional gateways, such as Florida, California and other gateway destinations, as well as Texas, Hawaii, and the cities of Boston, Philadelphia, Washington D.C. and New York. This three month partnership will eventually start from January 2014 and will run simultaneously across the U.K., Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

The campaign will include in-store promotions across Thomas Cook’s retail estate, a variety of social media activities and dedicated sign up by Thomas Cook staff to Brand USA’s new agent training tool – the USA Discovery Program; as well as innovative print and digital marketing activity.

Peru’s Colca Valley sees more number of tourists in 2013

Peru’s Colca Valley received a rising number of foreign tourists in 2013. As per the Autonomous Authority of Colca (Autocolca), this figure surpassed last year’s target of 250,000 visitors while in 2014 tourist arrivals are expected to reach 260,000.

Major number of tourists arrived from France, Italy, Germany, Spain, the United States and Canada, among other countries. The valley is receiving a rising number of Peruvian tourists, as well.

“An increasing number of European tourists are interested in visiting the natural landscapes of Colca Valley as well as its pre-Incan archaeological sites,” said Fredy Jimenez, Head of Autocolca.
Kenya targets gargantuan growth in Indian tourist arrivals in 5 years

Kenya is set to claim a share in the Indian outbound tourism market with its attractive destinations and is targeting to increase the number arrivals around eight times in the next five years. India is currently Kenya’s largest source market in Asia. It accounts for a market share of 6.5% at present. Overall, in arrivals, India ranks fourth, after the U.K., U.S., and Italy.

“The potential of Indian tourists is big and vast and that is why we are here to market. We have roughly 62,000 Indian visitors to Kenya and want to increase more,” said Ambassador of Kenya in India Florence Mwase. According to her, as an added advantage on Kenyan Visa, Indians visiting Kenya could also visit two other East African countries—Uganda and Rwanda.

Zambia Tourism keen to augment growth in Indian market

The Zambia Tourism Board (ZTB) is set to tap the growing Indian market actively in 2014 with a stronger marketing campaign in India this year comprising of road shows, workshops and familiarisation trips for the Indian travel trade and media.

Mato Shimabale, Director Marketing, Zambia Tourism Board said, “India is a very important market with great potential as it is among the top ten in terms of arrivals. We have seen Indian arrivals of around 50,000 in the last two years and are looking at doubling the numbers in the next few years. We will work closely with our India representative Blue Square Consultants to improve the leisure arrivals with increased destination awareness in the Indian market.”

Zambia Tourism debuted in the Indian market in 2013 when they participated at OTM and also won the award of ‘Best New Destination’ at the event.

South Africa aims at luring Indian tourists in 2014

South Africa is looking towards a promising 2014 in its tourism sector. January was fully-packed with various multi-city campaigns and on ground activities organised to attract and engage with potential travellers.

The New Year started with the launch of Cinema Campaign which reached out to seven cities and 94 cinema halls. This innovative campaign ran a 60-second video to celebrate South Africa, its stunning beauty and thrilling experiences. And now for the first time ever, the movie-goers in India can go through and shop for their preferable South Africa holiday package right at the cinema hall.

The Cinema Campaign was followed by a highly successful 22 city Outdoor Campaign showcasing South Africa and highlighting the best experience, offers, and places the country is offering to the Indian travellers, keeping in mind their interests.

South African tourism recently organised their road show across, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai. The road show was a great success with 66 product owners and suppliers from South Africa and 1200 travel agents from across the country participating in it.

South Africa continues to be a top destination for India, with a total of 84,202 Indian tourists visiting the country from January to September 2013, which is an increase of 6.2% than in 2012.

Mauritius woos GCC countries with $1 million promotional campaign

Mauritius wrapped up its promotional $1 million campaign in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, said Michael Yeung Sik Yuen, Mauritius Minister of Tourism and Leisure.

Mauritius is keen on increasing visitor numbers from the GCC countries, where it sees great potential. It received 12,000 visitors from the GCC in 2013, up 50% from 8,000 in 2010, according to Sik Yuen. He added that Emirates airline has proposed a special tariff for MICE visitors to Mauritius, which is expected to be finalised soon.

During their visit, the Mauritian delegation had several meetings with the press members including those specialised in tourism, travel, and discovery. These meetings and workshops were a good networking opportunity for the MTPA and the local stakeholders.

The Mauritian partners who participated in this promotional tour were Constance Hotels, Alizee Resorts, Sun Resorts, Mauritouer, Lux Island Resorts, Beachcomber Hotels, Heritage Resorts, Starwood Hotels, Attitude Resorts, Luxe Voyage Ltd, Preskil Beach Resort, and ATP (South Gate Travel and Tours).

UNESCO registers Meskel festival of Ethiopia as intangible cultural heritage

Ethiopia’s tourism sector has another reason to cheer this year. After Addis Ababa was listed by The New York Times as one of the 52 places in the world that should be visited in 2014, the country’s unique Meskel festival has now been declared an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

The festival is celebrated in September with yellow Meskel daisies placed on top of huge bonfires that are lit in the evening in front of revellers. The main Meskel celebration includes the burning of a large bonfire, the Demera, in Meskel Square in Addis Ababa.

Millions of followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church celebrate it every year throughout the country. It is believed that tourists who take part in the celebrations often find an urge to come again and again to witness this festival.

Visitors and average length of stays increase in Seychelles

According to the Seychelles National Bureau of Statistics, visitors coming to Seychelles during the month of January 2014 increased by 5% compared to January 2013. The average length of stay of tourists in Seychelles also jumped up to 10.9 days in January 2014.

This year began on a positive note for the island nation with the prestigious Hello magazine listing it as one of the Top 10 Holiday Destinations for 2014. Buoyed by this positive growth in visitor arrivals for January 2014 coupled with an increase in visitor length of stays, the Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture rightly said that the tourism of Seychelles remains on a firm footing.
Cheaper cruises and airfares to Caribbean in 2014

Tourists to the Caribbean can enjoy the benefits of last-minute cruise deals for January that have already dropped below $60 per night in some cases, which represents discounts of more than 50%. Caribbean cruises are expected to stay cheap in 2014 as lines launch new routes and bring new ships, such as Carnival Splendor and Norwegian Getaway.

Airfare too on the other hand is likely to get cheaper. JetBlue has recently announced that it would expand services to the Caribbean, adding five new routes to two new destinations, Port-au-Prince in Haiti and Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago.

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism celebrates 50th anniversary

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year with the Prime Minister declaring 2014 as the “Year of Culture” as culture is the mainstay of tourism offerings. The Promotion of Tourism Act came into effect in 1964 which gave birth to the Ministry of Tourism, and aggressively promoted tourism internationally. The Act changed The Bahamas from a mere winter destination to a premier year-round tourism destination in the world. Moreover, 50 years later, tourism accounts for more than 60% of the nation’s economy and jobs and continues to dominate the economic landscape of The Bahamas.

The Ministry of Tourism commenced the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Promotion of Tourism Act in a national service of thanksgiving during a 9:30 a.m. Mass at Christ Church Cathedral on Tuesday, 7th January 2014.

Cuba Cruise sets sail from Havana for 7-day trip

According to recent news, the cruise ship LV Louis Cristal has set sail from Havana on the first of its round-the-island trips, marking yet another effort to establish Cuba as an attractive and profitable cruise industry destination. Cuba Cruise, which is based in Calgary, Canada, has chartered the vessel this year for weekly trips which will take on passengers in Havana or Montego Bay, Jamaica, for seven-day circumnavigations of the island for $726 and up.

The 1,200-passenger vessel ‘Cristal’ which operates largely in the Mediterranean, will be making stops in Havana, Holguin, Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos, and Punta Frances on the Isle of Youth, and would be offering tours of beaches, nightclubs, and colonial-era fortresses and architecture.

Jamaica welcomes its 2-millionth visitor

Jamaica welcomed its two-millionth visitor to the island for the year on December 30, 2013, the first time ever the Caribbean island received this number of tourists over a period of one year.

With the arrival of American Airlines Flight 300 from Miami, Florida at the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, St James at 15:50 hrs, the island achieved this milestone.

Tourism Minister Dr Wykeham McNeill, Director of Tourism John Lynch, and Mayor of Montego Bay Councillor Glendon Harris are expected to participate in a welcome reception at the airport.

Caribbean Travel Marketplace kicks off in Jamaica

With an aim for a lucrative 2014 in the Caribbean, hundreds of delegates gathered at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in Jamaica this week for the two-day Caribbean Travel Marketplace, starting Sunday evening.

The conference is bringing together hundreds of stakeholders of the region’s tourism industry, including tour operators, tourism officials, hoteliers, government Ministers, and others.

Caribbean Travel Marketplace, which is put on by the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA), is one of the leading conferences in an industry that is the Caribbean’s largest economic driver.

St Lucia breaks visitor record in 2013

St Lucia has set a new record for stopover arrivals in 2013 with 315,000 visitors, breaking the all-time high record of 2012 of 312,404 arrivals.

The island saw the largest growth from the United States with an 11% increase.

“Several factors played an integral part in the success we’ve had this year, each as necessary as the other, from increased airlift accessibility and strategic marketing initiatives to the enhancements made by our hotel partners,” said Tourism Minister Lorne Theophile. “We look forward to starting 2014 on a high note and striving to make this year more productive than last.”

Bermuda to operate casinos within hotels

At a recent press conference Bermuda Tourism Minister Shawn Crockwell announced that casinos will be operated within existing or new hotels rather than as stand alone facilities. This legislation for legalising gambling is due to be passed, however, training programmes will be provided to Bermudians to launch careers in the gaming industry.

Crockwell insisted that these measures will enhance the island’s tourism infrastructure. “We are also confident that the majority of Bermudians support the introduction of casino style gaming. This is supported by recent poll results which suggest that approximately 70% of Bermudians favour the legalisation of gaming in Bermuda to assist in bringing jobs, increase tourism and generate revenue on the Island,” he said.

The public is also invited to have a say in the process by providing ideas and feedback on a dedicated website, while six town hall meetings are scheduled for next month.
As the 48th ITB Berlin 2014 is just around the corner, final preparations are under way to give the event a successful opening on March 5th and lead it to a perfect closure on March 9th, 2014. This year the focus is on Mexico, which is also the partner country of ITB and will be organising the opening ceremony. Messe Berlin is expecting around 10,000 exhibiting companies and organisations from more than 180 countries to be present in the 26 halls at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds.

"Compared with last year the number of bookings at ITB Berlin 2014 has remained consistently high. The majority of the halls are already booked up and there are now waiting lists. One noticeable trend is that exhibitors are booking larger stands. This demonstrates that the world’s largest travel trade show is a reliable economic indicator which accurately mirrors the industry’s developments. This year it will once again unite supply and demand from around the world and send out an important message for the future. The ITB Berlin Convention’s agenda features up-to-the-minute and forward-looking themes and leading experts will be taking part in the debate," said Dr Martin Buck, Vice President of Travel & Logistics at Messe Berlin.

As Mexico is going to be the partner country of ITB Berlin 2014, officially selected by the management of Messe Berlin, it will organise the opening ceremony on the eve of ITB Berlin, which is on 4th March 2014 in the International Congress Center (ICC Berlin). Mexican Ministry of Tourism and the Mexican Tourism Board will then host a number of other events throughout the show.

Mexico’s Minister of Tourism Claudia Ruiz Massieu said, “The decision to choose Mexico as the official partner country of ITB Berlin 2014 sends out a clear message and underlines the country’s importance as a travel destination and the awareness that Mexico and its destinations have in this important market.”

Dr Christian Goeke, CEO, Messe Berlin noted that Mexico’s tourism sector has a vast area to grow. “No other country combines traditional elements with the advantages of a modern travel destination in the same way as Mexico. International tourists benefit from its continuous investment in the hotel trade and infrastructure,” he added.
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