India to offer VoA to tourists from U.S. and Australia

China opens new route to Kailash Mansarovar for Indians

Indian travellers eligible for Bahrain e-visa

Tourism Ireland promotes destinations via two short films

Canada promotes British Columbia to Indian travel agents

Two countries one visa agreement for Cricket World Cup 2015

Mauritius Tourism promotes Wedding Tourism in India

Jamaica provides picturesque settings for taking selfies

Change of Guard in the Ministry of Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism has seen a swift change of guard with a new Minister of State (Independent Charge), Dr Mahesh Sharma, and a new Secretary Tourism, Dr Lalit K Panwar assuming office. With the minister promising a Swachh Tourism Policy to be implemented within just three months and with minimum investment, the travel trade industry can surely look forward to better times.

Dr Mahesh Sharma
Minister of Tourism (Independent Charge), Government of India

A ssuming office as the Minister of State with Independent Charge for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, Government of India, the Member of Parliament from Gautam Buddh Nagar, Dr Mahesh Sharma said that his priorities would be to enhance the image of the country by enforcing cleanliness, safety and security measures, and ensuring good reception and facilitation to international and Indian tourists. Dr Sharma has made it clear that promotion of domestic tourism is on top of his priority list.

Tourism Minister Dr Sharma promised that tough action against touts, setting up tourist facility centers and launching heli-service are some of the other priorities underlined by the new Tourism Minister. Towards achieving this goal, a plan is being chalked out and as many as eight sites have been identified including Birsaik, the birthplace of Ravana, Dronacharya temple at Dankaur and Nalagada village to be promoted as tourist-friendly destinations of Noida and Greater Noida. “We will develop and promote domestic tourism as much as possible. The ancient relics of Greater Noida villages will be conserved and promoted as tourist spots. We need to draft a detailed plan in order to conserve the sites. Also, this will open employment opportunities for many,” said Dr Sharma.

On cleanliness, he acknowledged the need for a vigorous drive to keep tourism sites clean and sought three months time to change the scenario. “Just give me three months. All our heritage and tourist sites will be covered under the cleanliness drive and you will see the result,” Dr Sharma promised. Emphasising on medical tourism, Dr Sharma promised. Emphasising on medical tourism, Dr Sharma said that the medical tourism sector has tremendous scope in the medical tourism sector as the treatment cost is less here.

The Appointments Committee of Cabinet has also appointed Dr Lalit K Panwar as the new Tourism Secretary. Dr Panwar previously held the position of Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs. Dr Panwar, a 1979 IAS from Rajasthan cadre holds a PhD in Tourism. Familiar with the Tourism Department in both, home cadre in Rajasthan and in the Centre, Dr Panwar has served as Director – Tourism and Secretary in-charge of Noida, Okhla Bird Sanctuary, and the proposed Night Safari aviation project. Also, there are Shaheed Samarak in Sector-29 of Noida, the model of participation in TTF shows all over India was a major peg underlined by the new Tourism Minister. Towards achieving this goal, a plan is being chalked out and as many as eight sites have been identified including Birsaik, the birthplace of Ravana, Dronacharya temple at Dankaur and Nalagada village to be promoted as tourist-friendly destinations of Noida and Greater Noida. “We will develop and promote domestic tourism as much as possible. The ancient relics of Greater Noida villages will be conserved and promoted as tourist spots. We need to draft a detailed plan in order to conserve the sites. Also, this will open employment opportunities for many,” said Dr Sharma.

Acknowledging that more and more Indians are visiting abroad, he said “Today our youth is keener to visit Malaysia, Singapore and Mauritius than Kangra Valley or Manali. We have so much that we can also attract youth from those countries...There will be sincere efforts to take the tourism to a new high on the world map. Despite many world class attractions, there are about 7 million foreign tourists coming to country which is not enough.”

Dr Sharma, who is also the Minister of State for Civil Aviation said, “We will also be launching heli-services for tourists like the service available at Vaishno Devi for several tourist places to increase connectivity.” According to the plan, Tourism Ministry will launch the helicopter service in Buddhist circuit to begin with. “There is a lot of potential in Buddhist circuit.”

Dr Sharma also said that revival of scrapped airport project at Jewar in Greater Noida would be his priority as well. “The region along Yamuna Expressway attracts a lot of international tourists the Buddhist International Circuit, thus this airport project is essential for the development of the region. We are taking the project forward and will reveal more details soon after consulting officials and experts,” he added. In 2012, Uttar Pradesh government had decided to not go ahead with this aviation project. Also, there are Shahed Samarak in Sector-29 of Noida, the model of participation in TTF shows all over India was a major peg underlined by the new Tourism Minister. Towards achieving this goal, a plan is being chalked out and as many as eight sites have been identified including Birsaik, the birthplace of Ravana, Dronacharya temple at Dankaur and Nalagada village to be promoted as tourist-friendly destinations of Noida and Greater Noida. “We will develop and promote domestic tourism as much as possible. The ancient relics of Greater Noida villages will be conserved and promoted as tourist spots. We need to draft a detailed plan in order to conserve the sites. Also, this will open employment opportunities for many,” said Dr Sharma.

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Fairfest announces TTF&OTM 2015 dates

The tourism industry of Asia-Pacific continues to evolve as shown by the findings of the GBTA report, released at the recently held ITB Asia 2014. Research indicates that Asia-Pacific region is one of the world’s largest travel markets. Its Business Travel sector, including MICE activities, has in particular, shown tremendous growth potential. India is predicted to continue being in the top ten largest business travel markets over the next few years. India’s largest travel trade show network TTF&OTM has witnessed several new travel and tourism companies promoting new destinations as well as popular hotspots within India and abroad. Latest report suggests travellers want to experience the culture, history and heritage of the diverse regions of the countries. TTF&OTM plays the most crucial role as the meeting point of buyers and sellers in the travel and tourism domain in India. Hence Travel News Digest explores the prospects of both the Business and Leisure tourism sectors especially in the Asia-Pacific along with its distinct implications on India in 2015.
Experience the Rhythm... that binds India together!

The time of the year has come, when you can experience the rich cultural heritage of India at one place, as the greatest forms of dance like Odissi, Bharat-Natyam, Manipuri, Kathak, Kuchipudi & Mohini-Attam ... come to life in the Grandest Stage of all -

The Konark Festival.

From the 1st to the 5th of December, the magnificent cultural heritage of India resides right here in Odisha.

Odisha is calling you...

KONARK festival at Open Air Auditorium
Konark, Odisha, India
1st – 5th December
TTF 2015 foresees a booming domestic tourism season

According to a report by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), in order to mould tourism as a tool for inclusive development, domestic tourism requires special policies and focus by the states and union government. Leisure and socio-cultural or religious norms both play a vital role in boosting the volume of domestic tourism. The sector although contains the inherent characteristics of tourism product components, it is thought to vary from the inbound segment nonetheless in a number of ways. Studies from SIGA, YES Bank highlight the primary characteristics of the sector as being a well-extended cognitive connect, sub-3-star category use, allowing for shorter trips, weekend getaways and destinations being easily accessed by road and rail lines. While global tourism may be affected by economic recessions, domestic tourism has the advantage of remaining unaffected by such external events. Experts have found two main factors that have led to this unique occurrence. The first of these being the fact that the domestic tourist is less prone to change travel plans in case of exigencies like epidemic, health scares or security warning. The second element is that Indian citizens still follow traditional customs and place importance on meeting extended family and attending functions. Popularly known as visiting friends and relatives (VFR), this characteristic is often combined with leisure and recreation segment to measure sustained demand for the domestic tourism sector around the year. Other significant factors that have led to the growth of the sector include rising disposable incomes, middle class citizens seeking getaways from their busy work schedule and families seeking to spend more time with their children through short but multiple holidays.

According to market research statistics from the Ministry of Tourism, the number of domestic tourist visits to states/UTs has grown to 114.52 million in 2013 from 104.53 million in 2012, registering an annual growth rate of 9.6%. In 2014, Tamil Nadu has ranked first in attracting domestic tourism with a domestic tourist influx of 2,442 lakhs as compared to the earlier year.

The TTF events have witnessed several travel-related companies promoting tourism to the various states of the country as citizens have expressed their interest in experiencing the culture, history and heritage of the diverse regions of the country. Domestic tourism has also stimulated the business of two-star hotel business.

Research by hospitality consultancy firm HVS states that two-star hotels obtained the growth by increasing average room rate by about 15%, fuelled by a 20% increase in domestic tourists in FY13 year on year. As of the total proposed room supply in the industry, approximately 60% is in the mid-and-small budget category, the sectors are expected to benefit from increase in domestic tourism. Tier II and tier III cities especially are being promoted by the government to not only offer best infrastructure opportunities, retail stores but also provide better air connectivity and several top-class facilities including golf courses as in Kochi, Phailaur etc. States have been paying special attention in developing such cities through adopting appropriate policy measures involving land and capital investment subsidies, municipal concessions, entertainment tax so as to provide better product offerings and boost overall figures of incoming tourists.

OTM 2015 predicts soaring outbound, launches Hall of Fame

National Tourist Offices have been vying to attract India as a source market, seeing the enthusiasm and interest of avid Indian travellers in visiting countries across the globe. Prevalence of technology apps, expanding size of middle-class, availability of flights, global economic conditions, decimation of Indian rupee are the main factors that affected the performance of the outbound travel sector of India. Ministry of Tourism data reveals that number of Indian Nationals Departures (INDs) rose by 11.4% from 14.92 million in 2012 to 16.53 million in 2013. The 2013 figure is close to five times more than that recorded a decade back in 2007.

India has emerged as the world’s fastest-growing outbound market in absolute figures in reference to both volume and spending with only China having a larger net total in this area. The number of Indians travelling overseas is estimated to rise from around the current 11 million to 50 million by 2020. While spending by Indians travelling to Asia-Pacific accounted for $33.3 billion in 2011, by 2030 this figure is expected to grow to $91.2 billion. Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand were seen as the top preferences of the Indian visitors.

It is noteworthy that India’s business and MICE travel market is booming at a rapid pace and several countries, including Canada, Singapore, Macau and USA are capitalising on this segment. An industry report by Amadeus-Frost & Sullivan has stated that business travel represented the strongest growth in travel from India, with close to fivefold increase in travel expenditure for business reasons over the past five years. Of the 16 million people who travel abroad from India, 1.2-1.5 million are reported to go for MICE-related purpose.

Within this rapidly changing scenario, India’s biggest travel trade show OTM is gearing up to make new records in Hall 2015. It has launched OTM Mumbai 2015 Hall of Fame, an honour and award programme aimed at recognising the achievers in travel and tourism industry by Fairfest Media, the organiser of OTM.

Top Travel Producers, Attractions and Hotels for the outbound and domestic Indian travelers will be honored at OTM Mumbai 2015, India’s leading travel trade show. Dozens of countries and states have already confirmed their participation in the program. Outbound tourism from India is on upward swing. The number of Indians travelling overseas is rising steadily, estimated from 1.5 million plus in 2012 to 50 million plus by 2020. Be it group travellers, couples, family or even single tourists, other than Business, MICE and luxury, the middle class has emerged as one of the strongest source market for India Outbound.

The OTM Mumbai 2015 Hall of Fame will have three categories:

• Top Travel Producers of India
• Top International Tourism Attractions for Indian Travellers
• Top International Hotels for Indian Travellers

Based on confidential nominations by National and State Tourism organisations, CVBs, destination suppliers, travel operators, travel trade associations and other industry players will be shortlisted, for another round of industry poll.

The OTM Mumbai 2015 Hall of Fame winners will have special on-site promotions and honorary mentions in Fairfest’s monthly publication Travel News Digest and India’s #1 online travel trade channel www.TravelNewsDigest.in

Selected winner recipients will also be invited to participate in the International Tourism Summit to share their knowledge, speak and contribute to India Tourism.

Rigorous integrity and transparency in the process of nominations and final selections will be implemented in the program.

In keeping with the traditional meaning of the Hall of Fame which is “a structure housing memorials to famous or illustrious individuals usually chosen by a group of electors” the OTM 2015 Hall of Fame will be a modern gallery within OTM 2015, to appreciate and reward excellence in serving global Indian tourists.

The preparations ahead for the event have already received excellent response and can be deemed as a reflection of the enthusiasm and eagerness of clients and companies in the travel domain.
Amazing Thailand Destination for Two
Upswing in Asia-Pacific region’s total business travel spending

At the ITB Asia 2014, held in Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Marina Bay Sands from October 29-31, 2014, Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) released the latest figures from Business Travel Index (BTI) outlook report. According to the GBTA report, total global spending has been projected to reach US$1.8 trillion by 2014, with Asia-Pacific contributing to 40% of the total amount. MICE (meetings, incentive, convention and exhibition) sector has specifically shown unprecedented growth, contributing to over 50% of the total business travel market. As an ever-growing segment which is fast taking over the traditional corporate travel, the major advancement of Asia’s travel and tourism markets, has been driven by rising BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) economies and is a sign of the region’s vast resources and talent.

GBTA’s BTI study predicts that China will soon take the lead as the global no.1 business travel market by 2016, while other Asia-Pacific countries such as India and Indonesia will grow by 11-14% annually over the next five years. Several countries in south-east Asia are exhibiting high growth in terms of business travel spending, as seen particularly in the markets of Vietnam, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The industry experts also have said that the recent landslide victory of Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) party in India’s May elections have renewed optimism for more pro-business reforms and accelerated infrastructure investment.

GBTA estimates India to become the ninth largest business travel market within the next five years. In the last 15 years, India has already pushed up its rankings in terms of major global business travel markets from 24th position in 2000 to the world’s 10th ranked market in 2013. India’s presence at ITB Asia stood as a testament to these remarkable efforts being undertaken. The Incredible India pavilion occupied 54 sq metres and had Air India as a co-exhibitor. Numerous historical monuments, propositions in the Wellness segment, namely Ayurveda and yoga, and Beach Tourism and Buddhist Tourism were showcased by the country. Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) and Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) were some of the states that participated at the event. Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board (PHTPB) debuted at the event this year and took the unique opportunity to highlight its Culinary Tourism, the Amritsar Heritage Walk and Farm Tourism in the state. “Our participation would be of a more experiential nature as we wish to tap the South East Asia market and learn about the type of itineraries that suit it,” said B. Raj Kumar, IFS, Executive Director, PHTPB.

GBTA’s BTI: Outlook report, sponsored by Visa Inc., includes the GBTA BTI, ‘an index of business travel spending that distills market performance over a period of time’. As per its earlier report, following a period of economic growth of 5 percent along with inflation that spiralled upwards, total business travel spending for India was forecasted to grow 2.1% in 2014 to USD$12.9 billion. An improved performance in 2015 is expected, with India’s domestic business travel spending projected to reach USD$13.8 billion. Domestic business travel spending continues to perform well, with its main engine of growth being the expanding middle class and a plethora of business centres across India. Although the sector is expected to slow in 2014, with a probable growth of only 2.2%, the recent election results have been foreseen to boost business and investor confidence, with domestic business travel spending expected to regain its stronghold in 2015, soaring up to 7.7% to USD$14.2 billion. “This forecast is a very positive sign for the potential of business travel growth in India in the years to come,” said Welf Ebeling, GBTA Vice President, Operations for Asia Pacific. “The recent landslide victory of Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) party in India’s May elections have renewed optimism for more pro-business reforms and accelerated infrastructure investment.”

International outbound business travel spending, on the other hand, is only expected to gain 1.1% in 2014. However 2015 is expected to see major improvements as GBTA speculates 7 percent growth to USD$2.6 billion owing to revitalised relationships forged with India’s major trading partners including China, Europe and the U.S. “With business travel forecast to experience more growth to and from India, travel will play a vital role in helping grow the Indian economy,” stated Tul Fordyce, Senior Vice President, Global Commercial Solutions, Visa.

India preserves its strong presence in the business travel market

As the first and only Indian tour operator to be present at the event, Tripigator.com, the App produces personalised itineraries that correspond to user preferences. It has integrated maps and pro-location based details which further improve the travelers’ in-destination experience. Tripigator collects data on basic inputs such as timeline, budget and areas of interest and destinations of choice, which are then in no time used to create an array of travel itineraries, ranked according to the users’ experience.

A first of its kind personalised traveler planning engine, Tripigator.com using the latest technology, not only generates travel itineraries but also reduces user’s effort to a large extent by replacing

MoT launches Android app to attract more tourists

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has launched an android mobile application of Incredible India’s official trip planning and destination discovery app - Tripigator.com. Sources in the Ministry explained that the Android application offers travelers a distinct planning experience, facilitating easier travel for all visitors. The app has been designed keeping in mind budgetary concerns and offers a price sensitivity feature. As the first and only instant travel planning engine, Tripigator.com, the App produces personalised itineraries that correspond to

an official travel planner of Ministry of Tourism and can be found on Incredible India’s website.
India to offer VoA to U.S. tourists

The Ministry of Home Affairs is planning to offer US tourists visas on arrival (VoA).

According to sources inside the Ministry of Tourism, the new facility will be valid for 30 days and will be offered to US citizens who do not have a residence or occupation in India, whose sole objective of visiting is either leisure or visiting friends and relatives.

Prashant Narayan, COO and Head, leisure travel, said, “Let’s open the windows let fresh air come in,” referring to his government’s efforts to eliminate obsolete laws. “This welcome, this respect, this enthusiasm I dedicate it to the people of India,” remarked Modi.

During his speech in the packed Allphones Arena in Sydney, Modi said, “Let’s open the windows let fresh air come in,” referring to his government’s efforts to eliminate obsolete laws. “This welcome, this respect, this enthusiasm I dedicate it to the people of India,” remarked Modi.

Modi announced that his government was aiming to facilitate VoA for Australian tourists and stated that the PIO and OCI status will be combined prior to the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas to be held from January 7, 2015, in Ahmedabad. The PM also referred to economic reforms and plans of India transforming into an attractive destination for investment. He further explained that FDI in Railways has increased by 30% and that Australian companies have been anticipated to invest in development of rail infrastructure for the nation.

The PM emphasised on the Clean India campaign saying that more tourists would be willing to visit if the country was cleaner. He also asked the Indian diaspora to extend their support to the campaign, highlighting the possibilities of their contribution in developing the villages they come from. “I request you to contribute. God has given you so much,” he said. “Cleaning up or removing litter, this is a job that must be respected.”

Ranjan Kumar Mishra, managing director of Eastern Voyage Odisha, commented, “The US is the number one source market for inbound tourism to India and it should have been on the list of countries that are offered VoA earlier.”

India began introducing VoAs for five countries in 2010 and currently offers it to 11 nations.

VoA for Australian tourists assured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi is set to ensure Visa on Arrival (VoA) facility for Australian tourists and has declared a two-month deadline for the long-pending merger of Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) status. He additionally spoke of a Sydney Cultural Center being set up by India. This will commence operations by February 2015.

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Hampi: The most searched heritage tourism site on Google

The UNESCO world heritage site of Hampi in Bellary district has been voted as the most searched heritage tourism site on Google site.

According to Google search trends for the past six months, there is a rising interest for Hampi, built by Vijayanagara Empire, among tourists as it emerges as the top searched historical site in Karnataka.

Hampi has been searched the most in Goa followed by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Hampi temple remained one of the top queries on Google.

Google stated Mysore Palace, also known as Ambavilas Palace, is the second most famous heritage site searched in Karnataka. It has been searched the most from Karnataka and followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

With large amount of searches for historical places, Karnataka is fast growing as a popular tourist state among both foreign and domestic tourists especially considering the digital generation from the state looking for regular weekend hangouts.

Tourism Ireland invites applications for Destination Marketing, Travel Trade & PR Services in India

Tourism Ireland is responsible for the overseas marketing of the island of Ireland.

As part of our tender requirements, Tourism Ireland is advertising the following tender opportunity:

**Destination Marketing, Travel Trade & PR Services**

**to represent Tourism Ireland in India**

Interested applicants are invited to apply to provide these services. Please refer to the full text of the Tender Notice and accompanying documentation which may be downloaded at the following website: www.etenders.gov.ie

Enquiries by email to aburns@tourismireland.com

Closing date for receipt of tenders: 26 November 2014 at 12.00 hrs (GMT)

Contracts will be awarded to the most economically advantageous tender consistent with the criteria listed in the Request for Tender documents.
Kerala Tourism, UNESCO sign MoU with for Spice Route heritage conservation

Kerala tourism has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for cooperation in promoting and protecting the ancient Spice Route heritage. The MoU was signed by Shigeru Aoyagi, Director and UNESCO Representative to India, Narendra, and Sri Lanka and Suman Billa, Secretary, Tourism, Government of Kerala, in Kochi.

A P Anilkumar, Minister for Tourism, Government of Kerala, and K M Chandrasekhar, Vice Chairman, Kerala State Planning Board, were present on the occasion.

Under the agreement, the Spice Route Initiative of the Kerala government will form the bedrock of cooperation and partnership between the two sides, along with protection and promotion of historical areas of the state. Both Kerala and UNESCO will generate bilateral and multilateral collaborations with the other countries involved in the ancient spice trade.

“Pandaw River Expeditions launches cruises on the Brahmaputra River

Pandaw River Expeditions has announced an eight-day Brahmaputra River programme in partnership with MV Mahabaahu. The itineraries will commence on March 29, 2015, offering Pandaw guests an off-the-beaten track, luxury exploration of the Assam region in the North East of India. Passengers onboard the 23-suite MV Mahabaahu will visit the largest river island in the world and meet the Mishing people who inhabit the region. Pandaw guests will also experience the living culture of the Assam region with visits to temples, tribal villages, monasteries, ancient palaces and tea estates.

The itinerary also offers travel by boat, jeep and elephant to see single-horned rhinos, buffaloes and tigers at the Kaziranga National Park.

In addition to the cruise, Pandaw also offers pre and post stays in luxury five-star hotels in Delhi and Kolkata, including domestic connecting flights. For bookings made before November 30, the price for the cruise is USD$6,430 per person based on two people sharing a main deck stateroom, inclusive of all excursions, crew gratuities, meals and non-premium drinks.

Uttarakhand government launches Special Badrinath Yatra for senior citizens

Harish Rawat, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand inaugurated the first group of pilgrims of the ‘Mere Jujur, Mere Teerth’ initiative for senior citizens undertaking the Badrinath Yatra. The yatris aged 65 and above will be provided free food, accommodation and travel.

Harish Rawat said, “We are delighted to provide a helping hand for the service of the elderly. We shall continue taking such initiatives in the future too. We ought to maintain the cultural tradition of India and respect for elders.”

The service will be provided only to the senior citizens of the state.

“The State is proud to undertake such an initiative which not only increases the tourism in the state but also takes care of the needs of its people. I request all the pilgrims to promote the message of safe Char Dham Yatra amongst their friends and relatives which will in turn boost tourism in the state” said Dinesh Dhanai, Tourism Minister, Uttarakhand.

As many as 200 senior citizens from all the 13 districts of the state will get the advantage of the free Yatra on a first cum, first serve basis for which the application forms are being submitted to their respective District Magistrates’ Office.

Odisha Tourism promotes Buddhist heritage

As part of its Look East Policy, Odisha Tourism is set to hold roadshows and cultural festivals in South-East Asian countries. The state seeks to promote the Buddhist heritage of Odisha in Japan, Taiwan, China, Vietnam, Laos, Korea, Cambodia, Myanmar, etc. “We want to take advantage of the strong cultural linkages with these countries to promote tourism in Odisha,” said Ashok Chandra Panda, Minister of Tourism & Culture, Government of Odisha.

The Minister said that Odisha is also planning to work closely with other states like Uttarakhand and Bihar to develop travel circuits around Buddhist heritage. He explained that initial talks have been organised on signing MoU among states to jointly promote Buddhist circuit at the recent international Buddhist conclave organised by ASSOCHAM.

Through the programme for attracting more Buddhist tourists, Odisha has commenced work on installing a 100 ft Lord Buddha statue at Deuli in Jaypur district. “It will be a landmark once completed. We have already acquired 39 acres of land for this and another 112 acres will be acquired for landscaping and other purposes,” the Minister said. The work has been assigned to Hindustan Construction Company Ltd. by the State Tourism Department.

The Minister further explained that the air connectivity is a major bottleneck for Odisha, and the state is negotiating with many airline companies, both domestic and international, to resolve this. International carriers like fly-Dubai, AirAsia, Silk Air are keen to fly to Bhubaneswar, the Minister said. Speaking of other initiatives of Odisha Tourism, Dr Arambinda Padhee, Secretary – Tourism, Odisha, mentioned that creating good tourism infrastructure and shaping a brand image for the state are of top-priority. He said that Odisha Tourism Department has ear marked 340 places frequented by tourists for this purpose. Cleanliness and safety and security of tourists would be ensured at places where there are significant tourist numbers.

The Spice Route Project has great potential for promoting world peace and interfaith tolerance, apart from contributing to the sustainable development of the countries involved. In the long run, UNESCO aims to put the Muziris Heritage Project and the Spice Route Project on the World Heritage list,” said Shigeru Aoyagi. Suman Billa informed that the Spice Route Project will create a unique collaboration with countries across different continents.
**Goa Tourism brings out women-only tourist taxi service**

Goa tourism launched women-only tourist taxis for women travellers. These taxis will be driven by women drivers trained in self-defence, soft skills and first-aid. They are termed as ‘travel hostesses’ and will also double up as tourist guides to their passengers when needed.

Manohar Parrikar, Chief Minister of Goa flagged off 10 cars, in the presence of Dilip Parulekar Tourism Minister and Nilesh Cabral, Chairman of GTDC.

Nilesh Cabral said, “The drivers are groomed in basic etiquette, personal hygiene and customer relations to ensure a positive experience. The taxis will be exclusively for women travellers and their families.”

The cars will be equipped with GPS monitoring system, which supports a panic alert button that is linked to the 24×7 control room. A detailed study has also been done on route assessment and journey planning for popular routes.

“To start with, 10 brand new air-conditioned taxis will be available to ply to and from the airport, hotels, railway stations and bus terminals and will be stationed at GTDC residencies. The taxi fares will be government approved,” added Cabral.

**Uttar Pradesh to develop Heritage Arc**

To boost tourism in the state, the Uttar Pradesh state government will develop a ‘heritage arc’ involving Agra, Lucknow and Varanasi on the lines of the ‘Agra-Jaipur-Delhi triangle’.

Akhilesh Yadav, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh said, “Agra, Lucknow, Varanasi will be developed as a ‘heritage arc’ by improving infrastructure, including roads, pathways and condition of monuments, among other things, to attract tourists in a big way.”

According to him, tourism has a direct impact on the economy and image of the state and job creation and investments. Yadav also added that tourism infrastructure development projects will be carried like suitable facilities for tourists, training of guides and setting up of information centres.

The Chief Minister also informed that the ghats in Varanasi will be well restored, bylanes and historical sites will be undertaken, a Mughal museum and theme park in Agra and light and sound show will be revived at Residency in Lucknow.

**Vintage steam train for tourists from Delhi to Alwar**

A tourist train hauled by vintage steam engine ‘Akbar’ has set its journey to Alwar. Manufactured at the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW), the 49-year-old steam engine is one of the last surviving vintage steam locomotives.

According to a senior Railway Ministry official, the two-coach train is hauled by the steam locomotive, carrying visitors for tiger sighting at Sariska National Park. The tourist steam train starts from Delhi Cantonment station and travels to Alwar in Rajasthan via Rewari on a tour package which includes a visit to the Sariska National Park near Alwar.

According to the itinerary, the train will travel between October 2014 to April 2015 on every second and fourth Saturday. The train will leave Delhi at 9:50 and reach Alwar at 15:45 and it will depart from Alwar the next day at 13:00 and reach Delhi at 10:45.

The package has been prepared with a tie-up with the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) for off-board hospitality and IRCTC for on-board hospitality.
MoT asks Finance Ministry to reduce taxes on tourism products

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India has appealed to the Union Ministry of Finance to lower taxation on tourism products and related services, which will result in increasing footfall in the country.

Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State with Independent Charge for Tourism and Culture, Government of India said, “We have requested the Finance Ministry that the taxation on the tourism products and related services should be lowered so that we can attract more visitors to the country.”

According to him, the services like tourist taxis, hotel tariff should have lower taxes, which will make destinations cheaper compared to international rivals. He also stated, “The tax rebate can be offered to hotels so that they will have low tariffs. We have also asked the Finance Ministry to consider cutting down visa fee. We have USD$100 as visa fee while Sri Lanka charges only USD$45. We need to bring the visa fee at par with other destinations.”

The Minister added that the Finance Ministry has agreed in-principle to look into the demand and lower visa charges.

Flydubai begins Mumbai operation with five weekly flights

Dubai-based flydubai rejoiced the arrival of its inaugural service to Mumbai. The announcement updates the number of cities served in India by the airlines to seven and the number of weekly flights to the country to 25. Four years later demand continues to remain strong with the airline announcing five weekly flights from January to June this year up 12.3% on the same period in 2013 and this trend is predicted to continue. Commenting on the launch of the inaugural flight, Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai, said, “The launch of our Mumbai route is a clear indication of the enduring relationship between India and the UAE. Today’s announcement is a reflection of this and in tandem with the decision to increase seat capacity we can now offer enhanced options for passengers connecting to Dubai and other destinations in our network.”

Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Commercial (GCC, Subcontinent, Africa) at flydubai added, “Today’s Mumbai launch will add a new chapter to a rich story of trade, tourism and cultural exchange between the two nations. flydubai remains committed to delivering affordable and reliable travel options but we also take pride in bringing the people, ideas and values of two great countries a little closer.”

Lemon Tree marks foray into apartments sector

Local hospitality firm Lemon Tree Hotels Group has declared a strategic alliance with real estate developer Assotech Realty to manage and run the first Sandal Suites Serviced Residences property, defining its venture into apartments market.

The 210-key Sandal Suites Serviced Residences in Noida will be built in business park Assotech Business Crestera as part of a mixed-use development and is expected to be open by 2015, featuring an all-day dining restaurant, a bar, a private club, banqueting facilities and a business centre.

Lemon Tree subsidiary Caravation Hotels will operate as the strategic partner and day-to-day operator for the project.

Thomas Cook declares 61% growth in PAT

Thomas Cook (India) announced its Consolidated Financial Results for the Quarter ended September 30, 2014 with an Increase in Income from Operations of 40% (₹1.4 bn to ₹5.1 bn), Profit Before Tax of 53% (₹272 mn to ₹417 mn) and consolidated Profit After Tax of 61% (₹176 mn to ₹266 mn). The July-August-September period is the traditional lean season for the Travel Industry, but resilient demand gave a boost to the company’s Leisure Outbound business, with considerable volumes propelling forward its Foreign Exchange business. For the Nine Month period ended September 30, 2014, the Consolidated Results for Thomas Cook (India) Ltd also displayed sturdy growth, with an Increase in Income from Operations by 98% (₹6.3 bn to ₹6.5 bn), Profit Before Tax of 61% (₹605 mn to ₹1.1 bn) and consolidated Profit After Tax of 66% (₹523 mn to ₹869 mn), as compared to the corresponding Nine Month period of 2013.

Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Commercial (GCC, Subcontinent, Africa) at flydubai added, “Today’s launch is a key period and with our forward bookings looking strong, we look forward to building on the positive note for The Thomas Cook India Group.”

PAT for Mahindra Holidays grows by 21%

Mahindra Holidays & Resorts (MHRIL) witnessed a 21% increase in its net profit for the quarter ended September 30, 2014 in contrast to the corresponding period last year. Total Income was up 5 percent to ₹200 crore and EBITDA was up by 29% at ₹54.73 crore for the quarter. The results of the quarter integrate an additional charge on account of depreciation (consequent to change of rules) and consolidation of the results of Bell Tower Resorts Private Limited, post its merger with MHRIL. On a comparison basis, the EBITDA and PBT for the quarter was found to be at ₹50 crore and ₹16.55 crore, up from ₹32.44 crore and ₹7.23 crore, respectively in the same quarter last year.

The transition from traditional avenues of customer acquisition to newer ones like digital is delivering encouraging results. The focus on customer satisfaction remains our top priority - we believe that it is the most effective way of growing this business with a happy customer base,” Arun Nanda, Chairman, MHRIL, said and added that the company is projected to shore up its inventory significantly across properties in this financial year. “Among others, inventory in key properties that will be delivered over the second half include V resorts, Lohaghat, Kerala, Munnar and Udaipur, besides acquisition of new properties under consideration,” he added.
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Jet Airways’ new flight routes connect more Indian cities with Gulf region

Jet Airways is set to significantly enhance global network connectivity with the launch of four new daily direct international flights connecting Ahmedabad, Goa, Lucknow and Pune with Abu Dhabi and beyond, operative from November 2014.

The addition of these new flights will significantly enhance international flight connectivity to the Gulf and beyond to North America, Europe and Africa with its strategic partner, Etihad Airways.

Jet Airways is going to launch three new routes that will boost connectivity between the state of Kerala and the Gulf region.

Furthermore, the airline will introduce new daily flights from Kochi to Dubai and from Kozhikode and Thrivunamathapuram to Doha on November 2014, with the launch of the Kochi and Dubai daily service. This route will join Jet’s extensive list of Gulf connections from Kerala’s state capital, which already includes daily direct flights to Abu Dhabi, Dammam, Doha, Muscat and Sharjah.

Then on December 1, 2014, the airline will start two new daily flights between Kerala and Doha which will add to the airline’s existing daily service between Kochi and Doha.

Jet Airways, with these new enhanced flights, will achieve the landmark milestone of becoming India’s first private airline to operate over 50 daily flights to multiple destinations in the Gulf.

Air India and Air Canada enter into code-share agreement

Air India has signed a code-share agreement with Air Canada. The code-share pact covers Air India’s domestic flights and Air Canada flights to Canada from London, Paris, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Under code sharing agreements one airline can sell seats on another’s network and increase revenue.

Due to wider commercial partnerships and integration of frequent flyer programme with other Star Alliance carriers, Air India is expecting four to five percent growth in its revenue. This will improve business class occupancy on Air India flights, which currently ranges from 45-50%. Frequent flyer programme integration allows passengers to redeem miles on any of the Star Alliance airlines.

Presently, Jet Airways is the only Indian airlines which flies to Canada and also has a code share pact with Air Canada. Air Canada and Air India are members of the Star alliance.
Tigerair: Two additional weekly flights to run on Chennai-Singapore route from December 2014

Goibibo.com offers flight bookings across the world

MakeMyTrip travel apps cross 4 million downloads

Wyndham hones in on India’s mid-market

Flight Shop strengthens its presence in India

In order to re-inforce its existing network and adapt to the increasing passenger traffic, Tigerair will expand its service between Chennai and Singapore by increasing two weekly flights on the route. At present, Tigerair runs seven weekly flights between Chennai and Singapore. Starting from December 4, 2014, Tigerair will operate two other weekly flights on the route.

Explaining the increase in frequency, Robert Yang, Vice President-Indian Ocean, Wyndham Hotel Group, said, “There is certain improvement in the economic scenario and the mid-scale market is looking up after facing a prolonged period of financial instability. The hospitality segment is looking bullish with the new government and the list of incentives it has promised to provide to investors. Additionally, the commercial returns are faster in the mid-market level in India, so we’re venturing mainly to capitalise on this niche segment.”

Rakesh Lamba, New Delhi-based hospitality consultant, explained, “Mid-market hotels in tier II cities are ideal as they record higher ARK, and much better proportional RevPAR than most luxury hotels in metro cities.”

MakeMyTrip has stated crossing four million app downloads across mobile platforms – Android, iPhone, Windows and Blackberry. With this, the company has become the first Indian OTA to reach this goal. The Android platform leads the app downloads tally for MakeMyTrip, followed by iOS.

The mobile platform approach to ensure a seamless and enjoyable look-and-book experience for our customers. Not only is booking on mobile extremely safe and convenient, but our mobile apps are specially designed to operate even in flaky network conditions. This means that the chances of finding a good deal on mobile and successfully paying for it is higher (and faster) than in the web browser.”

Goibibo.com now enables users of the travel site to book flight tickets to and from any destination in the world, with the 'Anywhere to Anywhere flight bookings' feature. Users can now book flights across international destinations on the site and are no longer restricted to outbound or return flight tickets from India alone.

Sanjay Bhasin, CEO, Goibibo, said, “With the introduction of the ‘Anywhere to Anywhere flight bookings’ feature, we enable our users to get the best available fares on all their air tickets. Earlier, they could only avail of the attractive Goibibo rates for flights within or out of India. With the new service, we have gone a step further in ensuring competitive fares for all travel needs of our users irrespective of the destinations.”

Wyndham Hotel Group is focusing in on the midscale segment in India, with 10 more hotels to begin operations by mid-2017. The new properties will be in cities of Gurgaon and Greater Noida, Bengaluru, Chennai, Darjeeling, Jaisalmer, Pali, Lonneer, Dhamanpur and Trivandrum. This is set to increase total by 1,000 rooms across brands like Howard Johnson, Ramada Encore, Days Inn and Planet Hollywood.

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Flight Shop, part of the Australia-headquartered travel company Flight Centre, has begun implementing its expansion plans of a 36-store presence from the current 12 stores across India, with the introduction of their flagship interactive travel store in M Block market, GK in Delhi. The new store will promote a unique interface for diverse travel needs.

Talking about the aspects of the new store, Vicki Parris, National Brand Leader, India, Flight Shop said, “Our new Flight Shop stores are less process oriented and more conversation focused. The stores are a departure from the traditional Brick and Mortar set-up of a bank of desks with consultants behind them, to a relaxing experience in a premium lounge space where clients can help themselves to brochures, browse new and innovative itineraries on large format screens, design detailed itineraries, and discover unique holiday experiences with a dedicated personal travel expert.”

Rakshit Desai, Managing Director India, FCM Travel Solutions and Flight Shop said, “The leisure travel sector in India is growing at a rate of over 15% every year. The globe-trotting Indian, through his travel experiences and greater access to multiple sources of information, is on the look-out for nuanced travel offerings. Our customers now actively seek experience enhancing attributes to their holiday. We see a huge potential for the Flight Shop retail business to grow from its current 12-store presence across three cities in India to 36 stores, spread across 10 cities, over the next three years.”

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Participation Package

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<th>Participation Package</th>
<th>Early Bird Offer</th>
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<td>Mumbai - 4, 5, 6 Feb’15</td>
<td>USD 395/sq m</td>
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Philippines refurbishes airport for more tourists in 2015

The Philippine government is extensively investing in improving the country’s major airport, Manila Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3. "On behalf of the people of India, I thank President Xi for opening a new route through Nathula to Kailash Mansarovar. This will be in addition to the existing route through Uttarakhand," said Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi.

Valte added that, "We expect significant improvement because aside from the fact that we continue to invite more tourists, more visitors to our country, we will have really more visitors next year because we are hosting APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation)," said Valte.

Singapore updates INSPIRE programme for Indian incentive travel groups

Adding facilities such as the customised food menus and VIP access to popular attractions, the In Singapore Incentives & Rewards (INSPIRE) programme has been updated to provide unique and value-added leisure time to Indian incentive travel groups visiting Singapore.

Chang Chee Pey, Executive Director, South Asia, Middle East and Africa, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), said, “The revamped INSPIRE programme is set to bring more exclusive privileges and activities customised to satisfy the evolving preferences of India’s incentive travel segment, who are now looking for experiences that are compelling, immersive, and sophisticated. Significantly, more industry stakeholders are also recognising the value of the INSPIRE programme and have indicated their interest to partner STB in bringing on board more customised and exclusive activities. We are confident that the improved line-up of programme for INSPIRE will continue to develop well-differentiated experiences for our Indian business travellers.”

Adding to it, the qualifying criteria for the INSPIRE programme is now simplified to two tiers—value and premium.

“This new development has been made in response to the interest the INSPIRE programme has gotten from small and medium enterprises in the past year. It is also an indication of the growth and diversity of the Indian economy and STB looks forward to showcasing some of its compelling experiences to incentive groups,” added Chang.

World’s First Cartoon Network Amazone Network opens in Thailand

The highly-anticipated Cartoon Network Amazone Waterpark has opened in Pattaya recently. This unique and first of its kind in Cartoon Network’s heroes to Thailand in this one-of-a-kind attraction.”

Cartoon Network Amazone is Thailand’s first international water theme park, as well as the new home away from home of Cartoon Network’s beloved heroes; such as, the Powerpuff Girls, Ben 10 and Adventure Time. The facility is a licensed agreement between Amazon Falls, the developer of the waterpark, and Turner International Asia Pacific, the owner and operator of the Cartoon Network.

Cartoon Network Amazone Waterpark includes themed-entertainment zones and also offers multimedia entertainment that covers the latest in interactive smart-screen technology. It also includes the Omniverse Zone and the Riptude Rapids.

China opens new route to Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage for Indians

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between India and China, under which the latter has agreed to open a new route for the Indian pilgrims to the Kailash Mansarovar through the city of Shigatse, Tibet, from the Nathu La Pass in Sikkim. The existing road between India and China is through the Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand.

A number of MoUs have been signed between both the countries recently, revolving around the topic of Trade, Railways, Tourism and Culture, Infrastructure, etc. Under Railways, area that were highlighted included speed-raising, studying feasibility of cooperation in high-speed railways, heavy-haul transportation training of Indian Railways personnel, redevelopment of Railway stations, setting up of a Railway University in India, etc.

"On behalf of the people of India, I thank President Xi for opening a new route through Nathula to Kailash Mansarovar. This will be in addition to the existing route through Uttarakhand. The new route offers many benefits. It makes Kailash Mansarovar accessible by a motorable road, which is especially beneficial to the older pilgrims. It offers a safer alternative in the rainy season, makes the pilgrimage shorter in duration, and will enable a much higher number of pilgrims to go there. Our agreements and announcements demonstrate that people-to-people contacts, culture, tourism and art are central to our efforts to strengthen our partnership,” stated Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi.

Bangladesh plans to repair abandoned railway lines connecting with India

Bangladesh’s Railway Minister, Mohammad Maizbul Hoque announced that in order to boost trade and people-to-people contact, the country is looking forward to redevelop the abandoned railway connectivity with India, which existed before the partition.

“After the partition of India in 1947, many railway lines between the two neighbours were snapped. We are considering restoring most of those deserted railway linkages,” Hoque stated. “With the help of Indian investment, preliminary works have started to lay a 16-km railway track to link Tripura’s capital Agartala with Bangladesh’s (southeastern India) Akhaura. The project would be operational at the earliest as the two countries are very serious to execute the plan.”

The total cost for this project has been estimated to be 525 crore. “The Indian Railway Construction Company (IRCON) would lay the new railway tracks on both sides of the border,” said a senior official of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR).

The Dhaka-Tongi and Khulna-Mongla railway line extension and manufacturing of 120 coaches for Bangladesh railways will be covered in the project. “If the old lines including the deserted railway linkages were restored, trade, business, people-to-people relationship and tourism between India and Bangladesh would further develop,” Hoque added.
Indonesia Tourism taps the Indian wedding market

Indonesia Tourism is showing keen interest to tap the Indian weddings market through a B2C effort. “We have come up with the Main B2B initiatives during our sales missions, which will continue, but we will also introduce a B2C interface to garner a larger number of visitors from India,” said Iyunu Masinguoh, Deputy Director of International Tourism Promotion for Asia, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia.

Korea Tourism promotes new region in India

The Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) is promoting a new destination in India—Gyeongbuk-do, which is located in the eastern part of South Korea. While promoting the region, Boris Byungsuun Lee, Director of Korea Tourism Organisation, said, “We are promoting the largest province in Korea as the ‘Jewel of Korea’ and are looking at an annual increase of 30% in the number of Indian tourists.”

Before Gyeongbuk-do, KTO has been extensively promoting Incheon and Jeju Islands.

Myanmar expects a huge surge in tourist arrivals in 2015

The Ministry of Immigration and Population of Myanmar is expecting major tourist arrivals in 2015, due to the recent launch of the e-visa scheme. According to a spokesperson, the e-visa is a system that’s easy to use, so we expect more tourists will visit our country in this season as well as in 2015. Since the launch in September, we have issued e-visas to a thousand visitors already. The number of tourists using the e-visa system is growing rapidly day-by-day and arrivals mostly come from the U.S., the UK, Japan, Germany, France and Italy.”

Following the launch of e-visas, Myanmar is further keen on expanding the e-visa scheme to more EU countries. “The country expects three million tourists by end-2014.”

Ms. Aung, Minister of Hotels and Tourism, from January to August, Myanmar received 607,870 arrivals through Yangon alone.

Mongolia promotes itself as partner country of ITB Berlin 2015

ITB Berlin 2015 is all set to showcase its partner country Mongolia’s new concepts for rail, air, and road transport. Visitors to ITB Berlin, taking place from March 4 to 8, 2015, will find out more about options for traveling in and around the country of the legendary Genghis Khan.

Mongolia can be reached by more than 180 international air lines operated by Mongolian airlines MIAT and Hunnu Air; Turkish Airlines, Aeroflot, Korean Air and Air China. Currently, direct flights to Ulaanbaatar are available from Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris, Moscow, Istanbul, Tokyo, Osaka, Beijing, Seoul, Bishkek, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Bangkok.

In order to meet rising demand a new airport is under construction in Khuuhigt, in the valley of Tuv Province, only 52 kilometres from Ulaanbaatar. As of 2016 two million passengers are expected to arrive here.

Starting in Russia or China, a journey to Mongolia on the legendary Trans-Siberian Express is one of the last railway adventures in the world. International trains connecting Moscow, Ulaanbaatar and Beijing run four times on a weekly basis. Furthermore, to mark the 65th anniversary of the legendary Trans-Siberian Express, the Mongolian government is investing $250 million, part of which will be spent on 15 new passenger-carts from Russia.

Safety is of utmost priority both in air travel and road transportation. “We have introduced ‘Police Reader Equipment’, a system the traffic police can use to monitor the state of vehicles and their safety. Furthermore, GPS equipment has been installed on all buses, which makes it possible to monitor the speed and geographical position of a bus. Particularly for foreigners, public bus transport is an ideal way to explore the most sparsely populated country in the world, its cultural traditions, and to experience the hospitality of the Mongolian people,” Gansukh added.

AirAsia Malaysia to commence flights on Hyderabad-Kuala Lumpur route

AirAsia Malaysia has announced that it will soon commence flight services between Hyderabad and Kuala Lumpur, seven days a week.

“AirAsia Malaysia is proud to announce the commencement of Hyderabad from KL (Kuala Lumpur) on December 8th. The armada is coming,” Tony Fernandes, CEO, Air Asia group said.

Currently, AirAsia runs international flights from Bengaluru, Chennai, Cochin, Kolkata and Tiruchirappalli to destinations like Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Phuket, Singapore and Bali.
Thai Airways launches new increased baggage allowance policy

Thai Airways International Limited (THAI) announced its new baggage allowance policy applicable to all classes. THAI is planning to increase its customer satisfaction level and encourage more people to choose Thai Airways through new offerings.

Suraphon Israngura Na Ayuthya, Executive Vice President of Commercial, said, “In order to increase competitiveness and service level THAI is implementing a new policy to allow an additional 10 kilograms of checked baggage for all classes of travel on all THAI flights, except on flights to and from U.S.”

Royal First Class passengers can now check-in with 50 kilograms of baggage, which was only limited till 40 kilograms before. Royal Silk Class passengers may carry 40 kilograms, from the previous 30 kilograms; and the Economy Class passengers can now bring 30 kilograms, from 20 kilograms previously. Apart from the regular passengers, Royal Orchid Plus members can also enjoy this new facility of additional bag-gage allowance based on their respective member status.

Thai Airways to start three new Kolkata-Bangkok flights

THAI Airways International announced three additional flights from Kolkata (CCU) to Bangkok (BKK) and return, which will start from December 2, 2014. The usual flights TG314/313, will continue in their regular operating schedule with aircraft A330.

Upon this new addition, the frequency will rise December 2 onwards, to weekly ten flights from Kolkata to Bangkok and return on THAI Airways.

Yunnan keen on India’s collaboration for mutual tourism promotion

Duan Yueqing, Director General, Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Commission, announced that he is expecting greater cooperation between Yunnan and India to mutually promote the tourism sector. Keeping this in mind, tourism exchanges and cooperation promotion programmes have been already initiated between India and China.

Recently, Yueqing led a ten-member delegation to Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi for one of such programmes. Following his visit, Xi Jinping, President of China, and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India signed a MoU, announcing that China will celebrate 2015 as ‘Visit India Year’, and India will celebrate 2016 as ‘Visit China Year’.

“Yunnan is a beautiful region that offers a range of tourism products for Indians. The province boasts of snow-capped mountains, hill stations, tropical forests, adventure destinations, festivals, Buddhist attractions, etc. All these make Yunnan, which is situated on the South West of China and close to India, an attractive destination,” stated Yueqing.

Issues like direct and enhanced air connectivity between Delhi and Kunming, capital of Yunnan, direct road connectivity, and India-Myan-mar road project to be extended till Yunnan, as Myanmar shares a border with both India and Yunnan were discussed by the delegation.

To further promote the destination, Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Commission is also planning to organise FAM trip Indian travel trade and media and enlighten them about the region, especially the festivals.

Nepal’s private and public sectors work toward Vision 2020 campaign

The private sector of Nepal is contributing with the government’s ambitious Vision 2020 campaign, which aims at boosting annual tourist arrivals to 2 million. The campaign has also targeted to increase employment in tourism to 1 million.

Hotel Association Nepal (HAN), Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal, Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents, Pacific Asia Travel Association, Nepal Association of Tour Operators and Nepal Mountaineering Association have entered into a partnership to pursue the campaign jointly and conduct various national level tourism promoting events.

“The Vision 2020 campaign is an important event for Nepal’s tourism, but the government has been conducting the preparations at crawling speed,” said Binayak Shah, General Secretary, HAN. “In this scenario, we have decided that we need to make early preparations from our side,” he added.

Air Asia India to start late night and early morning flights in 2015

Air Asia India has announced that it will start its late night and early morning flights from February 25, 2015. These late night flights are popularly known as the red-eye flights and they usually take off between 11 pm and 4 am.

“This is among the pushing-the-envelope plans we have for our airline. It will increase aircraft utilisation for airlines. And for passengers, there will be other attraction apart from low fares as people who do not want to spend on staying the night in a hotel can return to their home cities on these flights instead of waiting for the morning flights,” said Mittu Chandilya, CEO, Air Asia India.

P P Khanna of Diplomatic Travel Point New Delhi stated, “These flights should be aimed at business travellers who fly frequently between smaller Indian cities to destinations where hotel room rates are high, thus offering relief.”

AirAsia India has also announced that they will increase their services from the current six cities in India to ten cities by the end of 2014.
Egypt to boost security at tourist locations

According to Egypt's tourism minister, the country is increasing security procedures at tourist destinations in an attempt to uplift the flagging tourism sector.

Hisham Zaazou, Ministry of Tourism, stated that they had included increasing the number of security cameras at hotels and tourist destinations and obliging tourism industry workers to submit to mandatory background checks. He also said Egypt is strengthening airport security and implementing a comprehensive system for monitoring health standards in hotels.

According to the Tourism Ministry, only 9.5 million visitors came to Egypt in 2013, compared with over 14 million in 2010. Egypt has long been an attraction for visitors interested in ancient sites, sun-bathing on the Red Sea coast, or Nile cruises. This increased security may have some tourism boom.

New cruise terminal at Abu Dhabi’s Port Zayed

A new cruise terminal at Zayed Port in Abu Dhabi is designed to reflect the UAE’s cultural heritage.

The terminal will feature traditional Arabic ornaments, colours and shapes combined with modern architecture, with a lattice-work roof taking the UAE’s national tree – the Ghaf – as inspiration. Sultan Al Dhaheri, the acting Executive Director, Tourism & Culture Authority(TCA) Abu Dhabi, said, “It is a statement of just how serious Abu Dhabi is about cruise tourism. For our part we are stepping up promotion of this particular industry sector with the imminent launch of a dedicated cruise tourism section on our visitabudhabi.ae online destination resource and the creation of highly differentiated shore excursions which lift the value of the Arabian Gulf cruise proposition with Abu Dhabi as both a home port and port-of-call.”

Ground clearance work has started and completion is set to come in 2016. The new building, which covers 8,000 square metres, will have all the key passenger facilities together with souvenir shops, restaurants and office facilities on a mezzanine level.

According to Abu Dhabi Ports Company (ADPC), Zayed Port welcomed 75 cruise vessel calls with 189,000 passengers, in 2013/2014.

The GCC hospitality sector revenues to reach $35.9 billion by 2018

The GCC hospitality industry is set to grow at an annual rate of 9.5% to $35.9 billion by 2018 from $22.8 billion in 2013, according to reports.

The growth is expected to be driven by international tourist arrivals, especially from Asia, stated the new report by investment bank Alpen Capital.

The MICE (Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) segment has expanded significantly in the recent past and contributes to the huge growth. The number of international conferences in the Middle East has more than tripled in the last 10 years.

According to Alpen Capital, by 2020 the airports across the region are expected to handle as many as 250 million passengers.

“the growth of the industry in the region will be fuelled by the shift in global activity from the West to the East, a rise in leisure travel, higher demand for serviced apartments, a shift towards budget travel and a quicker construction pipeline,” said Sanjay Bhatia, the Managing Director of Alpen Capital in Qatar. He also added that in the region, the UAE will be the dominant player with its hospitality industry expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 10% between 2013 and 2018.

Indian travellers eligible for Bahrain e-visa

Indians are now eligible to apply for an e-visa to Bahrain. This facility has started from October. They will also be able to spend longer periods in Bahrain from 2015. Under the new system, visas are valid for a month and can be renewed for up to three months. Additionally, multiple-entry visas are also available for Indian citizens.

The new policy is an important development that places Bahrain among the countries with the most flexible visa policies in the region. Visitors from 66 countries are able to receive visas on arrival in Bahrain, under this new policy.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Isa Al Khalifa, Assistant Under-secretary for Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs at Bahrain’s Ministry of Interior said, “This policy will provide easier and quicker access for businesses with operations in Bahrain and will also help to attract more tourists to the Kingdom. The changes are being implemented as part of wider efforts to continually develop the pass-port and immigration processes and systems.”

Dr. Mohan Kumar, Indian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, said, “India and Bahrain have an economic and trade partnership that stretches back hundreds of years. Indians also make up a sizeable proportion of the Kingdom’s population and contribute significantly to Bahrain’s culture and society. Through this new visa policy I hope that Indian businesses will be encouraged to build on existing ties and explore new investment opportunities in Bahrain and the wider GCC region.”

Turkey’s tourism numbers on the rise

Turkey is enjoying a growing number of tourists visiting this year and it has witnessed a 7% rise in the first eight months of 2014, said the Turkish Tourism Minister. Ömer Çelik said that nearly 37.7 million tourists came to Turkey between January and August compared to 33.7 million over the same period last year.

“This is a very good record because the World Tourism Organization has forecast world tourism growth at 4 to 5% this year, but Turkey’s growth is exceeding 7%.”

Tourism in Turkey continues to break records despite there being so much instability surrounding the country,” added Minister Ömer Çelik.

Germany is topping the list in the number of tourists visiting Turkey, followed by Russia and England, according to the figures provided by the minister.
Mideast hospitality sector to touch $469 million in 2016

The Middle East’s hospitality sector is among the world’s fastest-growing audiovisual markets, according to reports. According to a report from InfoComm International, in the audiovisual market, the hospitality sector is among the fastest-growing in the Middle East and Africa, and is set to grow by 6.6% from $282 million in 2012 to $469 million in 2016.

InfoComm International also revealed that the Middle East and Africa is one of the world’s fastest-growing audiovisual markets, set to reach $4.63 billion by 2016.

The data was revealed ahead of InfoComm MEA 2014, a trade exhibition and summit on the audiovisual market, which was held in October, coinciding with Gitex Technology Week 2014 at the Dubai World Trade Centre in Dubai, UAE. “From boutique hotels to large-scale resorts, the Middle East’s hospitality sector requires holistic audiovisual solutions to differentiate themselves from competition, and attract both leisure and business guests,” said Elie Khairallah, technical director of Dubai-based Venuetech.

Audiovisual technology like blinds, in addition to a huge video library. There is also a 45m personal HD video screen with a 3.5m touchscreen controller and a table which folds out to create a dining table for two people.

Qatar Airways has unveiled its new Airbus A380 jet, which features an unrivalled first-class ‘suites’ layout.

The aircraft has been configured to seat 525 passengers in total across a three-class cabin layout.

The zoo, located in Al Daidgah, is owned by Jasim Ali, General Commander of RAK Police. It is the third-largest zoo in the UAE, after Al Ain Zoo and the Emirates Park Zoo in Abu Dhabi.

Qatar Airways launches new luxury Airbus A380

Qatar Airways has unveiled its new Airbus A380 jet, which features an unrivalled first-class cabin for a luxurious air travel. The upper deck of the plane features eight first-class ‘suites’ — ultra-wide seats. Passengers are also treated to remotely controlled adjustable lighting and electrically operated window shades, in addition to a huge video library. There is also a 45m personal HD video screen with a 3.5m touchscreen controller and a table which folds out to create a dining table for two people.

Qatar says the lounge not only offers passengers an escape from the typical airplane environment but has been designed to exude the feel of a private ‘executive club’.

Qatar’s A380 is the world’s largest airliner, and can seat as many as 525 passengers in total across a three-class cabin layout.

Fares for the first class roundtrip between London and Doha are $3,193. An increase from 780,000 nights, an increase from 288,000 nights during the second quarter of 2013.

Hotel occupancy reached 62% in the quarter from 52% during the corresponding period a year ago. Al Jazirah has 31 hotels, 3,022 units and 4,860 hotel beds.

With the opening of the Ras Al Khaimah Zoo for the first time, the owner and the residents are confident that it will help boost the tourism in the emirate.

The zoo, located in Al Daidgah, is owned by Jasim Ali, General Commander of RAK Police. It is the third-largest zoo in the UAE, after Al Ain Zoo and the Emirates Park Zoo in Abu Dhabi.

Pleased with the opening-day turn out, Jasim Ali said, “There were actually many tourists from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar who followed me on Instagram and Facebook, and a large number of tourists from outside UAE came to the opening.”

“The zoo features African lions, white lions, white tigers, a rare golden tiger, panthers, wolves, deer and birds. The next phase of the project will include the building of an air-conditioned area featuring rare reptiles, birds and an aquarium. It is expected to be completed in the next one-and-a-half, added Jasim Ali. “During the year, we will develop the zoo and over the next 40 years will develop it more and more, because the development doesn’t stop,” he said.

The residents of RAK were pleased with the opening of a zoo in their emirate.

Jordan’s new airport sees record passenger traffic growth

Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA) in Amman, Jordan, has recorded a 13.2% growth in passenger traffic in August which soared to a record 785,685 compared to the same period last year.

Airport International Group (AIG), the Jordanian company responsible for the rehabilitation, expansion and operation of the airport stated that the airport witnessed steady growth in passenger traffic and aircraft movements for the eighth consecutive month this year.

According to AIG report, since the beginning of 2014 and up until August, the year-to-date passenger traffic surged by 12.1% to 4,893 million and aircraft movements rose 9.1% to 49,526 compared to the same period last year.

Peter Goddard, Managing Director of TRI Consulting, Dubai said, “Ajman and the northern emirates have come a long way in a short period of time. There is a significant amount of continued hotel and resort development, predominantly because of existing hotels that are proving to be profitable and government endorsement of hotel development.”

One of the upcoming developments in the emirate is Al Zorah, a lifestyle project spread across an area of 5.4 million square metres by Al Zorah Development. Ajman is also building a new airport, Ajman International Airport, which is expected to serve around one million passengers a year when it becomes operational in 2018 and provide the added boost to the emirate’s tourism sector.

Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD) has also exhibited, for the first time, in World Travel Market (WTM) 2014.

Ras Al Khaimah Zoo opens its doors for the public

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Ajman attracts larger number of tourists in Q2 2014

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Visit Norway promotes winter tourism trends

One of the biggest attractions of Norway is aurora borealis, also known as the Northern Lights. Visitors’ numbers to the Northern Lights are expected to receive a major boost this winter, as the 2014-2015 season is set to offer perhaps the best opportunity to see the Northern Lights in a decade or more.

In the last five years, there has been a 130% rise in commercial bednights in the three most northerly counties in Norway, creating a growth value of NOK 143 million. There are numerous incentives programmes in on offer, which present a unique chance of catching the stunning lights while engaged in exciting and inspiring activities at the same time.

To meet the growing tourism demand, the luxurious hotel capacity, such as Clarion Collection Hotel Aurora and Comfort Hotel Xpress Tromsø, will be increased by 76% during the period 2013-2017. A new free mobile app, available on Android as well as iOS, has also been launched by Innovation Norway, which informs the users about the chances of witnessing the Northern Lights.

Shifting from the Northern Lights, Visit Norway is also promoting the coolest cabin of the country—the Rabot Mountain Cabin, the one of the 500 cabins operated by the Norwegian Trekking Association. Situated 1200 meters above the sea level and with 30 beds, it welcomes hikers from all over the world to visit some of the highest mountains of Norway.

Tourism Ireland sees record tourist arrivals: Game of Thrones, Kimye effect

Tourism in Ireland is experiencing a major boost due to its recent due to its involvement in major TV series Game of Thrones and the recent arrival of Television personality Kim Kardashian and her rapper husband Kanye West for their honeymoon.

Ireland Tourism forecasts that the destination is likely to attract 8.5 million overseas visitors in 2014, an eight percent increase over 2013.

Tourism Ireland is also witnessing greater tourist arrivals after Kim Kardashian and Kanye West spent their honeymoon there.

Travel companies are cashing in on this popularity by providing the visitors a number of regular Game of Thrones tours from Dublin and Belfast.

France keen on attracting Indians, facilitates visa service

The number of tourists from India to France increased by 15.7%. Recently while visiting India, LaurentFabius, Foreign Affairs and International Development of France promoted the destination among the Indian travel trade professionals. Fabius also announced imposing new measures to further boost France’s image as a welcoming destination for Indian tourists. He also stated that from 2015 onwards, French visa will be issued to Indian travellers within 48 hours.

Moreover, a French marketing company called The Links has specially developed an app for Indian tourists who are planning on visiting Paris. The app will ensure a smooth and hassle free journey.

Catherine Oden—Director Atout France-France Tourism Development Agency, stated, “To connect with as diverse an audience as possible, in the recent past we have essayed to enhance France’s positioning through mediums such as cinema and OOH advertising. We will actively continue our efforts of promotion through collaborations with the trade, media houses and other innovative platforms, thus encouraging many more discerning Indian travellers to plan a Be There! Do That! French rendezvous.”

Presently, Atout France is supporting the movie, The Hundred Foot Journey, released in India and showcasing the beautiful landscape of France.

VisitScotland to highlight Indian film locations and release Bollywood map

VisitScotland is planning to release a new Bollywood map soon which will highlight those spots in the country which have been used as Indian film locations.

“There is nothing like seeing Scotland’s stunning scenery on the big screen to inspire people, and that’s a fantastic advertisement for the country that money couldn’t buy,” said Sarah Drummond from the Scotland Tourism Board.

“Set-jetting, where people visit their favourite movie locations is a growing trend — we know from research that 1 in 5 people are inspired to visit Scotland having seen it on film or on TV, so there is a huge market for us to explore,” she added.

In 2012, Indian travellers made 18,000 trips to Scotland, resulting in 5, 55,000 bed nights and spending £18 million. Scotland Tourism showed great enthusiasm about the song sequence of Indian film industry’s superstar Rajinikanth’s upcoming flick ‘Lingaa’, which will be filmed amidst the picturesque highlands of Scotland soon.

VisitEngland promotes Yorkshire Tourism

VisitEngland recently promoted Yorkshire as the ‘leading tourist destination’ globally on the basis of its recent studies.

Gary Verity, Chief Executive of Welcome to Yorkshire, announced, “Overall, our attractions have performed well nationally yet again in 2013, which is great news for Yorkshire tourism. The same year also saw a record 35% rise in international spend across Yorkshire, with visits up 11.7% too – all of which shows Yorkshire is now a leading destination not just nationally, but internationally.”

The Flamingo Land in North Yorkshire grabbed the title of the most famous tourist spot, attracting over 1.5 million travellers last year. The National Railway Museum in York came second on the list, followed by the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield.

It is further noted that the recently held Tour de France has also provided a strong platform for tourist arrivals to Yorkshire. Moreover, a combination of more major events and stable weather is expected to welcome more travellers this year.

October 2014 events UK Pro Surf Festival in Scarborough and the Goth Weekend in Whitby are helping the Yorkshire tourism season to grow beyond its conventional season.
Danish University, a huge hit in India

Italy Tourism Board's Mini University

Austria Tourism promotes Tyrolean ski village - St Anton am Arlberg

Library of Birmingham attracts 2.7 million people in first year

Tourism Ireland promotes destinations via two short films

Austria Tourism is extensively promoting the western proving-Tirol and its tourism offerings. Famous for its Central European life, snowu peaks, picturesque valleys, rugged rocks, green pastures, sparkling mountain lakes and breathtaking glaciers, Tirol annually attracts over 8 million visitors from all over the world. The Tyrolean mountain village, with its 2680 inhabitants, Ant am Arlberg has a world-wide reputation for its winter sports area with excellent guest services, Ferri's wheel cable car, the ARLBERG wellcom wellness centre, the finest gourmet cuisine, an excellent walking area and the multi-functional sports centre. Together with the neighbouring villages of Pettneu, Flirsch and Strofen, it fulfills the highest demand and yet still retains much of its originality and traditional charm. Holiday-makers in St Anton am Arlberg treasure the alpine cosiness at 1300 metres altitude as much as the hospitality and international orientation. A mountain village, being traditional and modern at the same time, it has the scenery of a gigantic summit world and the amenities of a worldly holiday resort.

Walkers, mountain and rock climbers will find a large selection of routes, from easily accessible up to high-alpine during the summer. During the winter season, there is guaranteed snow from the beginning of December to the end of April. 97 lifts in the entire Arlberg area which access to 340 kilometres of marked ski runs and 300 kilometres of off-piste possibilities as well as a Fumpark.

Tourism Ireland has unveiled two new short films #LoveDublin and #PictureBelfast to promote the best of both cities and attract more overseas tourists. The #LoveDublin film plays on the cliché "Kiss Me I'm Irish" in which eight couples share a passionate smooth at various iconic Dublin landmarks, like The Guinness Storehouse, Ha'penny Bridge, Temple Bar etc. The unique thing about the video is that half of the couples are real-life partners, while the other half is complete strangers.

The other film is the #PictureBelfast Film vs App Challenge. This movie follows two photographers, one with a vintage camera and another with an iphone, who are clicking pictures of some of Belfast's foremost tourist attractions.

Viewers are invited to guess which of the images are taken via vintage camera and which of them are actually snaps from a filter applied iphone's camera.

According to Tourism Ireland's Vanessa Markery, she explained, "Our latest campaign should prove to be a great way for us to engage with our target audience, raising awareness of some of the many great, vibrant experiences on offer in both cities."

Tour Operators and Travel Agents on the various tourist offerings of Ireland, ENIT, Italy's official tourist board, organised this in depth training program to promote destination Italy among Indian travellers.

Two consecutive events were held, the first mini university was held on the August 20, 2014 at the Oberoi Grand, Kolkata and the second was held on the September 5, 2014 at the Park Hotel, Bengaluru.

Both events were accompanied with an Italian cuisine lunch. This initiative was undertaken by ENIT to enable their travel partners to offer more exclusive Italian products to their clientele.

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Spain witnesses record surge in tourist arrivals

Spain Tourism witnessed a huge surge in tourist arrivals during the first eight months of 2014 with a record 45.3 million foreign tourists arriving in the country. Catalonia received the highest number of tourists in August i.e. 2,411,942, which is 26.6% of the total and was achieved due to a year-on-year increase of 7.9%. This was followed by the Balearic Islands, with 2,933,677 tourists (increased by 6.2%) and Andalusia, with 1,166,226 tourists (rising 5.6%).

During the period of January to August, 72.7% of total arrivals were via air, while 24.6% was via road and 2.6% of all inbound tourists arrived by other means.

The Netherlands receives Green Globe for practicing sustainable tourism

The Netherlands has recently received the Green Globe Certification for following sustainable tourism practices. From budget stays, to chic boutique hotels, luxury seaside resorts to major conferences and business hotels, there are a number of certified properties from both famous and local brands such as InterContinental, Mövenpick, Conservatorium, etc. relocating in major and regional cities like Amsterdam, The Hague, Maastricht, Voorburg, etc.

“The criteria satisfy the highest international standard for sustainable tourism. And because the criteria are applied the same in every country, it allows a transparent understanding of the hotel’s sustainability achievements. This is especially important in a city like Amsterdam, which hosts offices of numerous international companies,” said Dr. Sarah Jenny, Director at Duuzzame Hotels, a partner with Green Globe.

“Moreover, Green Globe is about much more than saving water and energy. It is also about caring for your employees, letting the local community benefit from your hotel business, maintaining cultural heritage, knowing your suppliers and giving preferences to sustainable practices and products. By implementing the Green Globe criteria, hotels are not only implementing sustainable practices, they are improving the way they operate,” added Dr. Jenny.

It turned out that Green Globe Certification has proved to be a major criteria in the process of hotel booking as meetings and conference planners are particularly keen to know if a particular hotel is carrying any internationally recognised certification.

Swiss tourists: The biggest spenders on accommodation in India

Swiss tourists are turning out to be the biggest spenders in India as per a recent report from Hotels.com. Visitors from Switzerland spent the most for stay in India with a rise of 17%, from ₹7,327 a night in 2013 to ₹8,590 a night this year.

This was followed by travelers from Hong Kong who spent ₹7,795 while those from Italy shelled out ₹7,571. The Indians are also the most extravagant spenders, paying 36% more than last year. The French spent the least, followed by visitors from Taiwan and Malaysia, according to the report.

According to tourism ministry data, foreign tourist arrivals in India between January-July this year were 45.15 lakh with an increase of 6.2% as compared to 38.74 lakh last year.

This gives a boost to tourism in India, as the sector has the potential to be a major revenue earner for India, as in several other countries.
Canada promotes British Columbia to Indian travel agents

The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) organised a Familiarisation (FAM) trip for Indian travel agents to enlighten them about the province of British Columbia. The FAM trip helped inKelowna, Vancouver, Victoria, Whistler, Butchart Garden, Capilano Suspension Bridge and Flyover Canada as the group visited the each tourist spots.

Chandrika Rastogi from Luxury Roots said, “The trip was very well organised and the itinerary was full of activities and indulgences for all age groups. The highlight was the numerous attractions all along. The wilderness and the warmth of the people are worth a mention. The food was delicious with a wide variety to suit all food palates.”

Anupama Singhji from Travels & Rentals stated, “British Columbia is a never-ending land of beauty, adventure, culture and great hospitality.”

Tourism Toronto conducts first ever roadshow in India

With the aim to introduce Toronto as a preferred MICE destination, Tourism Toronto recently organised roadshow in Bengaluru and Kolkata. The objective of this program was to educate travel agents within these cities on various features offered by the destination as well as aid them in planning itineraries and handling MICE queries.

The roadshow witnessed participation from over 80 potential agents from key target markets – Bengaluru and Kolkata. The event consisted of a product briefing and a FAQ round with the travel agents. Tourism Toronto provided information on various attractions including the newly introduced Edge Walk on the CN Towers, various Indian restaurants, venues for seminars and meetings, shopping centers, premium lodging options and heritage locations that feature in the city.

These seminars served as a promotional platform to engage with travel trade and create awareness about Toronto and its significance as a MICE location. The event ended with a networking lunch and a positive feedback from the attendees.

NYC & Company leads tourism delegation to India

NYC & Company, the City’s official marketing, tourism and partnership organisation, recently led a tourism delegation to Bengaluru, Mumbai and New Delhi to promote travel to New York City. The goal was to highlight travel to New York City’s five boroughs—Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx and Staten Island, NYC member companies, Broadway Collection and Empire State Building were the part of the delegation, to conduct one-one meetings and workshops with various travel trade partners and attend the Brand USA Roadshow.

New York City welcomed an estimated 23.1 million visitors from India in 2013, reflecting a growth of 7% since the previous year. I am very pleased to see the progress being made each year towards strengthening and increasing the tourism link between India and New York City,” shared Fred Dixon, President & CEO, NYC & Company.

“India is a growing market and to tap into that, this year we decided to also focus on Bengaluru other than Mumbai and Delhi. As an IT city, we see major potential for outbound business travel from Bengaluru to NYC,” said Makiko Matsuda Healy, Senior Vice-President and Government Affairs, National Restaurant Association. “Restaurateurs today know a lot more about how sustainability can reduce utility costs and, in some cases, increase profitability.”

New York introduces $5.5 billion development projects

New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has selected Williamsburg as October’s “neighborhood highlight” for its Neighborhood x Neighbor- hood campaign.

“Conveniently located near the L and G trains, Williamsburg has evolved into one of New York City’s most dynamic neighborhoods, known for its world-class restaurants, one-of-a-kind clothing and jewelry stores, vibrant music venues, several ethnic groups, trendsetting residents and more,” according to New York City & Co.

Sustainable practices: The latest trend in U.S. restaurants

The National Restaurant Association revealed a new research that presents a substantial number of operators are applying best practices of sustainability into their businesses.

The survey of 1,000 full-service and quick-service operators showed that nearly three quarters of operators recycled used fryer oil, fats and grease; some recycled their cardboard and paper, used compact fluorescent lighting and bought products made of recycled materials and many installed faucet aerators to conserve water.

“More operators are looking at ways to increase efficiency – environmentally and fiscally,” said Scott DeFife, Executive Vice President, Policy and Government Affairs, National Restaurant Association. “Restaurateurs today know a lot more about how sustainability can reduce utility costs and, in some cases, increase profitability.”
Hawaii promotes Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Hawaii Tourism is showing keen interest on promoting the destination as one of the leading heritage and cultural destinations. During the recently held Hawaii Heritage & Hospitality Forum, Andrew Witt, Executive Director, St. Johns Cultural Council in St. Augustine, Florida explained the importance of Heritage Tourism in Hawaii.

“Basic demographics are upper-income tourists who stay longer and spend more. Most studies, even those that go back 20 or more years, show that cultural and heritage tourists spend 15% more than other tourists. Plus, the boomers now retiring has more money and more time and is looking for new and interesting destinations and most of all experiences. They may have been to Hawaii once or twice, but if that’s the bucket list and they are looking for something new, what can destinations do to get them to return again and again? Offer experiences and stories and things to see and do that they didn’t do before due to travel with children, time or money,” said Witt.

“Next year marks the 450th anniversary of the founding of St Augustine, Florida, by the Spanish in 1565 and, therefore, of America,” Witt added giving an example of Heritage Tourism in Hawaii.

Visit Florida launches Official Florida Guide app

In order to connect with the enthusiasm of a rapidly growing global fan base, Visit Florida has introduced seven Florida Guide applications (app) for tablets, which can be downloaded free of cost.

The themes for the travel guides are beaches, theme parks and shopping, which represent the most popular desires of Florida’s international visitors. The content also caters specifically to each audience, with videos, photography and stories translated and curated according to their special interests.

The tourism board has launched English-language version of the app for India, an emerging travel market with substantial micro-communities of family and friends throughout Florida. The app has been launched in seven languages including English and Mandarin.

Will Seccombe, President and CEO, Visit Florida said, “These international apps reflect our commitment to telling Florida’s great story. We want to be as sophisticated in our storytelling internationally as we are domestically.”

The English, Spanish, German and Portuguese apps are downloadable now from the Apple App Store for iPads. The apps will be available for Android devices via Google Play soon.

The apps can be used offline, the travellers can download the travel guide before they embark in order to have the content at hand regardless of internet connectivity when they arrive.

“These apps will give Florida’s visitors a digital concierge to help them access all that Florida has to offer – in their own language, without roaming charges,” stated Susan Costello, Vice President of Global Brand for Visit Florida.

Oklahoma City promotes tourism via social media

Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau is promoting its recent urban renovation and significant progress in potential tourists and meeting planners with a brand new campaign.

In order to boost the city’s image and its tourism brand, Oklahoma City is promoting the hashtag #SeeOKC and encouraging the visitors as well as locals to share photos, videos and other content that highlights the destination’s tourism, businesses and attractions.

The city will also be sharing its new logo, which incorporates the Skydance Bridge, and tagline, “OKC-ing is Believing,” via digital billboards.

Visit Oakland releases $195,000 tourism advertising campaign

Oakland Convention and tourism bureau has recently launched its “official destination training programme”, with an aim to impart knowledge to customer service workers and hospitality workers about the tourism products the city has to offer and turn them into brand ambassadors. The training programme has been initiated as part of Oakland’s efforts to promote the city as a leading as a travel destination.

“Oakland has received a lot of attention recently as a tourism destination, yet there is a need for hospitality staff who can recommend the best places Oakland can offer, rather than direct them to other nearby cities such as San Francisco, as some workers have apparently done in the past,” said Kim Bardakian, Director of PR & Partnerships, Visit Oakland.

Moreover, Visit Oakland has also initiated a new branding project and $195,000 advertising campaign in order to attract business to Oakland hotels and other tourism businesses.

“Tourism is a $1 billion industry. We need (visitors’) experiences to be positive and successful, from their time with a cab driver to the person checking them in at the hotel to their waitress,” Bardakian added.

Orlando targets more women and international visitors through tennis

Visit Orlando recently partnered with the United States Tennis Association (USTA) to sponsor the two-week US Open, the start of a year-long partnership that will give the destination marketing organisation access to USTA’s 750,000 members.

Orlando is one of the most visited U.S. destinations among international tourists.

Visit Orlando was the exclusive tourism sponsor of the two-week event and Emirates Airlines was also an event sponsor.

The marketing partnership also comes right after news that USTA’s headquarters are set to move from New York to Orlando where USTA will be building a 100-court training and player development facility.

“We will be able to state that Orlando is the home of American tennis. We think it’s a pretty interesting level of awareness,” said George Agel, CEO Visit Orlando.

Visit Orlando will continue its partnership throughout the year through print and digital marketing platforms. The organisation is focused on targeting women, which accounts for 53% of the association’s member base.

“The most qualified part of the USTA membership is females. Mothers and women are always an important part of the vacation planning process,” explains Agel.

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Argentina Tourism witnesses rise of nearly 21% in tourist arrivals

A total of 444,200 tourists visited Argentina in August, marking a rise of 20.9% during the same month in 2013. 231,100 foreigners entered the country by air and spent a total of nearly U.S. $72 million to Peru's economy.

Chile promotes Adventure Tourism potential

Chile is all set to promote its Adventure Tourism potential to about 700 delegates from all across the globe. The destination has been honing its adventure sector to connect it more deeply with the U.S. $1 billion adventure travel sector market.

Brazil engages in sustainable Eco-tourism development

Eco-Tourism has always been a major sector of Brazil, with a regular increase rate of 15-25% annually. According to the Brazil Ministry of Tourism, the destination is working towards developing Eco-Tourism by using the natural resources in a more planned and structured way. Focusing on the top destinations such as Amazon, Marajó Island, Pantanal and Caiman Ecological Refuge, Brazil has been practicing the sustainable methods of developing Eco-Tourism.

Peru: Second nation in Latin America with highest tourist spending

Magali Silva, Head, Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism, commented, “Much of the money is being spent in the nation’s capital of Lima as well as the city of Cusco. While Cusco boasts the mega-tourist attraction that is Machu Picchu, an obvious money-maker for tourism, Lima often acts as the point of layover for travelers going elsewhere in the country. The growth is driven by significant improvements in the country’s offerings in tourism to strengthen this trend it is necessary to know in detail what kind of people visit us and how much they spend.”

Last year, foreign travelers contributed a major amount of nearly U.S. $72 million to Peru’s economy.

Space Tourism emerges as a unique travel experience

Under the unique tourism idea, U.S. Space Tourism company Space Adventures has offered a special space-flight around the moon for private tourists on the Russian Soyuz spacecraft. “Using flight-proven Russian space vehicles we will fly two private citizens and one professional cosmonaut on a free return trajectory around the far side of the moon. They will come to within 100km of the moon’s surface,” said a statement posted in the company’s website. It is expected that Space Adventures will launch its first mission by 2018.
Two countries One visa agreement for Cricket World Cup 2015

Michael Woodhouse, Immigration Minister, New Zealand, made the announcement that a ten week window will apply to the Trans-Tasman visa agreement for Cricket World Cup 2015. An extended window for the visa arrangement will also enable fans to visit New Zealand before or after the official tournament. The ICC Cricket World Cup will take place from 14 February to 29 March 2015. “From January 26 to April 5, 2015, cricket fans and other visitors to Australia and New Zealand will only need to apply for one visa under a new Trans-Tasman Visa Agreement. Over this period, New Zealand will grant a three month visitor visa on arrival to those who already hold an acceptable Australian visa. This will make it easier for cricket fans to follow their team in both countries, and encourage those who may not have planned to visit New Zealand, to do so,” Woodhouse said. This agreement will permit people in Australia on permanent or temporary visa types to go to New Zealand. Through the Advance Passenger Processing System used by both countries, the authorities will be able to determine if an airline passenger holds an acceptable Australian visa at the time they board their flight. “The new arrangement will substantially benefit the tourism sector in both countries by streamlining trans-Tasman travel for the Cricket World Cup,” stated Woodhouse.

New Zealand sets goal to achieve $41 billion tourism revenue

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment foresees the number of tourists visiting New Zealand is likely to strongly rise until at least 2020. Tourism New Zealand chief executive Kevin Bowler said, “The forecast growth followed a very successful two years for the sector, and tourism operators would take away the message that now was likely to be a good time to invest in their businesses.” The global economy is appeared to be recovering from the worst of the global financial crisis and it estimated annual spending by foreign tourists would increase by a quarter to hit $8.3 billion by 2020. Kevin Bowler also stated, “International visitor spend in New Zealand lifted 11% in the 12 months to the end June 2014. We are well on the way towards achieving the Tourism 2025 aspirational target of $38bn total tourism revenue by 2025.” The 2025 target includes spending by international and domestic tourists.

Fiji to concentrate on niche products to increase tourist income

Tourism Fiji’s new Chairman says that the country’s tourism industry needs to move away from mass market appeal based on sun, sea and sand to a niche market that draws on unique cultural experiences. Tourism Fiji Chairman Stefan Pichler stated, “We have a lot of room for improvement...We have to create new products for Fiji that are not designed for mass market tourists but which enable very individual, very unique experiences.” He also said that, competing in the mass market is not the smartest thing to do because then sun and beach competes against sun and beach, and price competes against price, so what needs to be done is create added value products and these should make the tourists more happy and bring more income to the country. The tourism industry adds 38% to the Fiji’s gross domestic product and it’s the country’s biggest employer. “We can stimulate the market, where people spend more money on the ground doing excursions, participating in events, et cetera, et cetera,” Pichler said.

New Zealand gains popularity with Indian students

New Zealand’s high commissioner to India said that the country has emerged as a popular destination for Indian students. The number of students visiting India between January and July this year, had an increase of 83%, compared to the same period last year. “New Zealand’s economic future is very much tied to our key relationships. India is a key export market for New Zealand, and is one of the fastest growing large economies in the world,” said New Zealand High Commission to India, Grahame Morton. Immigration New Zealand Area Manager Nathanael Mackay said that the country has made changes to its work rights programme which permits more international students to earn and learn. In 2013, 14,664 Indian students were studying in New Zealand, representing 12% of the international student population in the country.

Australia promotes Indigenous tourism experiences via new film

Tourism Australia has entered into a partnership with the renowned Directors Warwick Thornton and Brendan Fletcher in the making of a three-minute film promoting Australia’s Indigenous tourism experiences and services to international visitors. Talking about the project, John O’Sullivan, Managing Director, Tourism Australia said, “The project aimed to bring to life the range and depth of Australia’s world-class Indigenous tourism experiences on film to motivate international visitors to experience it for themselves. Australia’s Indigenous tourism experiences are a unique and important part of Australia’s tourism offering for international visitors. Tourism Australia is committed to bringing Indigenous tourism experiences to the fore through its global marketing of Australia.” The film will showcase the popular foreign tourists’ activities, such as adventure, remote cultural immersion experiences, iconic Red Centre and outback experiences, rainforests in the tropics and urban cultural experiences. Upon completion the film will be shown worldwide in major popular channels and in places where tourist traffic is high such as in airports. Australia Tourism is currently witnessing around 14% overseas visitors to take part in an Aboriginal cultural experience, generating $5.6 billion annually. Through the film and by promoting Indigenous tourism experience, Australia is expecting to boost this figure.
Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority promotes Wedding Tourism in India

In an initiative to promote Mauritius as a preferred luxury wedding destination for Indian tourists, OM Luxe and Mauritus Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), associated with India’s famous couturier Charu Parashar to present her Bridal Couture 2014/15 collection recently. Charu Parashar showcased the best of trends and designs in bridal couture, inspired by the Mauritian landscape, which enhanced the visibility of Mauritius as a Wedding Destination. Mauritius, with its spectacular white-sand beaches, turquoise sea, beautiful mountains that seemingly rise up from the crystal clear waters of the Indian Ocean, is showcasing itself as an ideal destination for Wedding Tourism. “The incredible natural beauty of Mauritius is complemented by some of the best and most luxurious seaside resorts in stunningly picturesque surroundings. The island is the right place to exchange vows; a dazzling experience that one always dreams of and which can be brought to reality with perfection” said Vivek Anand, Country Manager, MTPA. “MTPA gives cash incentives and many other facilities to wedding groups of over a 100 people going to Mauritius for a minimum of two nights for the event,” Anand added.

Air Seychelles plans direct India-Seychelles flights

Seychelles Tourism and Culture Minister, Alain St Ange announced that Air Seychelles is planning to commence three direct flights per week between Mumbai and Seychelles by the end of 2014. Air Seychelles is expected to use A320 aircraft on this route, after it gets approval from India’s Ministry of Civil Aviation. “India’s outbound tourism potential is unparalleled and we are here to claim a share of this growing market. Presently, Indian travellers can reach Seychelles via Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Colombo. Indian filmmakers will also have an opportunity to gain access to the stunning and unexplored locations of Seychelles through direct flights,” stated Ange. He further announced that several talks are being held to include India’s Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands Regional Organization. Lubaina Sheerazi, Head, Blue Square Consultants, which represents Seychelles Tourism Board, said, “We are targeting honeymoon, luxury, adventure and experiential travellers, and leveraging various media to reach out to and engage with them. We will also be conducting roadshows and destination trainings, participating in trade fairs, investing in marketing activities and scheduling FAM trips as part of our strategy.”

Kenya promotes Honeymoon Tourism

Kenya is promoting itself as an ideal honeymoon destination, which has a large variety of backdrops to offer, including iconic wildlife, epic landscapes, ancient wonders, and variety of cultures. Whether it’s the Jungle Safari, roaming around the city or simply enjoying a Leisure holidays and relaxation, the country boasts stunning Africa’s best wildlife.

For tourists who prefer the Leisure holidays and relaxation, the country boasts stunning white sandy beaches, and great lakes overflowing, some truly fascinating towns and villages, including Nairobi, the thriving capital city.

South African Tourism Board appoints new Chairperson

Minister of Tourism Derek Hanekom has appointed Zwelibanzi Mntambo as the new Chairperson of the board with immediate effect, as Frank Kilbourn the Chairperson of the Board of South African Tourism has resigned. Minister Hanekom congratulated the new Chairperson and said, “I am very pleased to have Zweli as the new leader of the board. His vast experience in the tourism industry coupled with his strategic leadership and management skills will certainly ensure that South African Tourism achieves its mandate. Tourism is a very important sector in our economy and as we put all our efforts in ensuring that we achieve the goals as set out in the National Development Plan (NDP), we need a capable leader who is innovative and results driven. I know that in Zweli, the board has all these qualities and that he will guide the organisation in better serving the industry and ensuring that this sector continues to grow.”

Zimbabwe strengthens its presence in new tourism markets

Walter Mzembi, Tourism and Hospitality Minister, said that Zimbabwe’s tourism sector is increasingly adopting a universal approach to gain new source markets from both the East and the West. He further stated, “East, West, home is always best. The ideal investment partners for our natural resources stock are ourselves Zimbabweans: Zimbabweans partnering with Zimbabweans in the first instance, but history and fate has developed us in a skewed sense, endowing and favouring those other parts of the world with a head-start on capital, technology and skills, whilst we have caught fast on the increase in European arrivals, with Germany accounting for 35% at 10,241 from 6,618 and the UK growing 9% to 20,812 from 19,607.”

Zimbabwe Tourism Authority recently noted in its 2014 preliminary report that Zimbabwe registered a 1% increase in tourist arrivals to 867,663 compared to 860,995 in the same period last year. The authority attributed this growth to support by the increase in European arrivals, with Germany accounting for 35% at 10,241 from 6,618 and the UK growing 9% to 20,812 from 19,607.
Jamaica provides picturesque settings for taking selfies

Jamaica’s natural beauty, heritage and unusual locales provide a unique backdrop for selfies that will help visitors to capture special moments which can be cherished eternally. There are several sites to choose from such as the Blue Mountain Peak which at 7,402 feet is the highest point on the island. Nature lovers can also look forward to sunsets at Negril that offer an amazing backdrop for selfies, as tourists gather by the cliff side and are awed by the transitioning sky. Meanwhile for tourists who enjoy sand and surf, nothing says vacationing in Jamaica quite like sipping on a coconut jelly while lounging on the beach.

For those interested in swimming and water related activities, they can bring their latest waterproof gadgets to capture underwater adventures. The deep sea beyond Jamaica’s shore is home to brilliant tropical marine life from exotic species of fish to spectacular coral reefs. Jamaica also happens to be blessed with a handful of waterfalls, all equally charming. Crystal water cascading down layers of rocks surrounded by an enchanting rainforest, definitely are a perfect setting for selfies! Visitors can also relax while rafting downstream, and can capture the beauty of the lush green trees and colourful flora overwhelms.

In terms of entertainment and music, tourists can seek out the Pelican Bar is one of the most unique bars in Jamaica and the world by extension, located just a quarter of a mile out at sea from Treasure Beach (St. Elizabeth). The perfect selfie can be clicked right by the Pelican Bar sign or on the makeshift boardwalk at a little distance from the actual structure. At the Bob Marley Museum Statue, tourists can click memorable selfies with ‘a legend’ even if it is a statue.

The Jamaica Tourism Board which earned the WTAs vote for the Worlds Leading Cruise Destination, Caribbean Leading Destination and Caribbeans Leading Cruise Destination for the seventh consecutive year, has been involved in developing these sites and several others around the nation to offer exotic travel options for its visitors.

Nevis Tourism revenues rise 42% in 2014

Nevis Tourism revenues are really doing that is bringing Nevis is unlike the rest of the Caribbean,” Phillip said.

According to him, “Airlift is completely critical to our tourism industry...It includes conversations and opportunities that we can secure with international carriers, even though they do not fly into Nevis. It’s critically important to have somebody on board who knows and understands the language and who is an expert in that field.”

Dominican Republic showcases Golf Tourism, targets €240 million

It is expected that by the end of 2014, Dominican Republic will welcome 125,000 golf tourists and by 2016 golf tourism will generate about €240 million. The destination has 18 professional golf courses and more than 350 holes, and 57 of them have an exclusive sea-view, a feature which none other golf destinations posses.

With top class golfing facilities, developed infrastructure, air and land connections, hotel facilities, stunning golf courses and adding to it-beautiful weather, Dominican Republic holds the potential to become the leading golf tourism destination.

Richard Sealy: New Chairman of Caribbean Tourism Organization

Richard Sealy, Barbados Tourism Minister, has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organization. He was chosen during the CTO’s Annual General Meeting at the conference.

“I look forward to putting my very best foot forward and working along with all of the other entities in the region to deal with some of the vexing problems that we have right now with tourism and of course to continue the good work that has been done by this organization recently,” Richard Sealy said.

Sealy will be in service for a two year term. He succeeded outgoing CTO Chairman Beverly Nicholson-Doty, who is the Tourism Commissioner of this year’s conference host, the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Huge increase in cruise ship arrivals in Puerto Rico

The number of summer cruise ship passengers visiting the U.S. territory has increased in the past three years, according to officials in Puerto Rico.

Port Authority Director Victor Suarez said that through the first eight months of the year, the number of cruise ships visiting Puerto Rico increased by 41% over 2013 and by 126% compared to 2012.

He also stated that more than 175,000 passengers visited the island in July and August, a 28% increase from the same period last year and a 135% increase from 2012.

Puerto Rico is preparing for the first visit of Royal Caribbean’s Quantum of the Seas, which can carry more than 6,000 passengers. To accommodate ships of that size, the government is expanding a pier in historic Old San Juan.
WTM London 2014 facilitates $6.5 bn in travel trade

The World Travel Market Portfolio facilitates more than $6.5 billion in travel and tourism industry deals. The WTM Portfolio consists of the four leading business-to-business travel trade events in the world with World Travel Market, Arabian Travel Market, WTM Latin America, and WTM Africa.

World Travel Market, which takes place in London every November, is the WTM Portfolio’s largest event spanning 35 years with 5,500 exhibitors and 180,000 participants. World Travel Market 2013 was responsible for $3.7 billion in industry contracts for exhibitors negotiating business deals with more than 8,500 buyers from the WTM Buyers’ Club.

World Travel Market Portfolio, Director, Craig Moyes said, “The WTM Portfolio offers unrivalled business opportunities for its exhibitors making its events the places where the travel and tourism industry conducts its business. World Travel Market is a fixture in the global industry’s calendar, attracting the world’s most influential buyers.”

In total, the WTM portfolio has 1,508 Main Stand Holder exhibitors, 7,907 Stand Sharer exhibitors, 14,639 buyers (including 479 Hosted Buyers) and 46,766 visitors.

Tourist boards, luxury operators, emerging destinations and technology specialists from a wide range of sectors and countries are among the 212 new exhibitors confirmed for World Travel Market 2014, the leading global event for the industry. Another show at WTM – A Taste of ILTM at WTM – attracted 39 new exhibitors, some of those making their debut in the Europe region.

All WTM regions hosted new exhibitors: Asia has wooed 19 new exhibitors, as has the UK and Ireland zone; while Africa has fifteen, the Middle East has eight; and North America has five. The Global Village wooed 19 new exhibitors, as has the UK and Ireland region.

ITb Asia 2014 becomes carbon neutral event

Marina Bay Sands sponsored Messe Berlin (Singapore), the organiser of ITb Asia 2014, transformed this year’s show into the first-ever carbon neutral event. The integrated resort’s team of sustainability experts guided ITb Asia 2014 (October 29 to 31) to reduce its carbon footprint by 5% from 399 tonnes in 2012.

This was achieved through a range of measures such as choosing locally sourced regional food for the Harvest Menu, putting to use newly activated in-room motion sensors to ensure maximum lighting efficiency in the meeting rooms and setting a room temperature of 24 degrees.

The carbon footprint generated during the three-day event was also offset entirely. The carbon credits will in turn be invested in two regional climate change mitigation projects, Sungai Kerling Hydropower in Malaysia and Wayang Windu Geothermal in Indonesia through the integrated resort’s partner Carbon Story. In order to reduce garbage, items, such as unused stationery and pens, were collected at the end of the show. They were donated to the resort’s charity partner Food from the Heart. Leftover brochures at the booths were also collected and recycled, a first for ITB Asia, as well as Marina Bay Sands, an ISO 20121 certified venue host.

The green statistics will be used for the preparation of the Sands ECO 360° Event Impact Statement. This statement will consolidate the sustainable event metrics, such as energy and water consumption, recycling rate, carbon emissions and highlights of the sustainable initiatives.

Taking it forward, Marina Bay Sands will also put together accommodation data of ITB-hosted delegates – such as energy and water consumption in the hotel rooms – to offer the organiser with a more detailed overview of the total carbon footprint of the event. Sands Expo is the first MICE facility in South East Asia to acquire the ISO 20121 Sustainable Events Management System certification in February 2014 and the first MICE facility in Singapore to adopt the Singapore Tourism Board’s sustainability guidelines for the MICE industry in 2013. In May 2014, Marina Bay Sands received the EarthCheck Silver Certification for its stewardship in sustainability.

“As a leader in Asia’s green meeting space, Marina Bay Sands will guide and support Messe Berlin at every step of its green journey. ITB Asia is an important platform to communicate and generate greater awareness about sustainability to key decision-makers in the travel industry. Through our leadership efforts, we hope to further the conversations on sustainability and spur more companies and individuals to go green wherever possible,” said Benny Zin, COO and Vice President of Conventions & Exhibitions, Marina Bay Sands.

“Leveraging on our position as the premier trade show for the Asian Travel Market, it makes perfect sense to build on our reputation and lead the industry towards creating Responsible Tourism products and services. ITB Asia and all that it entails can have a tremendous impact on the environment. With a little mindfulness, we can all take measures to reduce the show’s ecological footprint and I urge all exhibitors to join us and roll on the green revolution,” said Nino Grutke, Executive Director, ITB Asia.